

Annual Report 2014



Contents

Introduction	3
PPSG Organisational Structure	4
Chairperson's Report	5
Annual Conference & AGM	7
New Board	9
Some Highlights of the year	10
Fundraising Activities	13
Summary of Service Provision	15

Introduction

The mission of the Post Polio Support Group is to create awareness and to provide information regarding the late effects of Polio among Polio Survivors, statutory agencies and the wider medical profession, and to ensure that the needs of Polio Survivors relating to their condition are met to enable them to live with dignity.

The Post Polio Support Group was established for Polio Survivors by Polio Survivors. The Group was formed in 1993 and is run by a voluntary Board of Polio Survivors and volunteers. It is supported by voluntary committees, active members and a small executive staff at the office in Dublin. PPSG is the only organisation in Ireland providing practical support to those unfortunate enough to have contracted Polio. The Group currently has 917 members across the country.

PPSG assists Polio Survivors by providing aids to daily living, stair lifts, callipers, bespoke footwear, electric scooters and wheelchairs. The Group also helps Survivors access Physiotherapy, Occupational Therapy and Respite Breaks, and it provides those who need it with assistance with their heating bills. The Group employs two Service & Information Co-ordinators who provide information, respond to requests for assistance from members and, perhaps most importantly, provide a listening ear to Survivors in need.

PPSG has a network of 22 social support groups around the country and also offers a telephone support service for those members who have difficulty in attending meetings.

The Group works tirelessly to:

- Create awareness of Post Polio Syndrome
- Provide information on Polio and its late effects
- Ensure the needs of Polio Survivors relating to their condition are met to enable them to live with dignity

Any of the estimated 7,000 Polio Survivors in Ireland can contact the Group for support irrespective of whether they are a member or not.

Funding for the Post Polio Support Group is provided by the Health Service Executive; Department of Environment, Community & Local Government; the Polio Fellowship of Ireland; The National Lottery and various grants from statutory and private bodies and fundraising by members, families and friends.

Organisational Chart



Chairperson's Report

I am pleased to say that last year was a more stable one in the life of the PPSG. This has been achieved by the dedication and hard work of so many people . Staff, Volunteers, Committees and the Board. The successful existence of an organisation such as ours relies on the various components coming together in a spirit of understanding and goodwill - no one component is of greater importance than any other . all make an equally valuable contribution.

Having said that, we continue to face a number of challenges. Firstly, how our Group is funded. We were able to secure funding from a number of sources last year, the main ones being the HSE, Polio Fellowship of Ireland, the Department of Environment, Community and Local Government and our own fundraising efforts. In the case of the Rehab Group/Polio Fellowship of Ireland although they gave us a grant of " 25,000 they also informed us that they would not be able to provide us with any funding in 2015. This clearly leaves a large hole in our income that we cannot replace. We will be raising our concerns regarding this development with the Rehab Group in 2015.

Last year, we applied for a grant from the Department of Environment, Community and Local Government under the Scheme to Support National Organisations (SSNO) in order to fund our two Development Officer positions. Along with a number of other smaller charities, we were turned down in June, just as the previous funding was about to run-out. In consultation with the Disability Federation of Ireland, we commenced a campaign to have the funding reinstated. Representatives of the PPSG attended a session in the Dail to demonstrate our outrage at the withdrawal of this funding. While the funding was reinstated for one year by the newly appointed Minister we were advised that a review of this grant system would take place. We hope this review will result in the continuation of the funding for disability organisations such as ourselves long-term.

Last year was quite a successful one for Fundraising. " 76,000 was raised in respect of 2014 and another " 25,000 for 2015. We were able to secure sponsorship of " 10,000 for the Polio Day lunch in October which helped the event achieve a profit of " 25,378. Fundraising is an important source of income for the Organisation and we are very grateful to those who have organised or carried out such activities for the Group. However, more initiatives are required in this area in order to compensate for the loss of income from statutory resources over the past five years.

Last year we examined every area of our expenditure to see where savings could be made. As a result, although our income in 2014 was down, so were our outgoings. The Accounts for the year show a surplus as opposed to a deficit in 2013 and, in that respect, our finances are in a much healthier state now. During 2014, Fran Brennan, our new CEO, restructured our accounting system to simplify our procedures and



enable us to meet the demands of those who require details of our financial affairs with accuracy and transparency.

At the beginning of this report, I mentioned that our organisation was in a more stable period. However, we cannot afford to be complacent. We must ensure that the Group is sustainable in the short to medium term and is fit for purpose to achieve this. Last autumn, we embarked on a process of creating a stronger, more vibrant and effective Group that would be capable of facing the challenges of the future. In order that the whole membership would have the opportunity to contribute to these discussions, we arranged a series of meetings around the country to which all members were invited. The feedback from these meetings will be taken up by the Social Support Committee and they will prepare recommendations on how to achieve this objective.

Over the next few years, we may also need to examine other aspects of the Group's work in order to ensure that we have the appropriate structures, personnel, work practices and procedures to sustain this Organisation. The fact that the needs of Polio Survivors will increase in the short term is well documented and we must ensure that we have the wherewithal to provide appropriate supports. We also have to face increased demands from external sources such as the complexity of the Service Level Agreements we have with the HSE, the statutory functions of the Charities Regulatory Authority, the accounting procedures required by the Standard of Recommended Practice and so on. Change is not always easy but it is important that we are willing to adapt to the changing environment in which we operate in order to continue to meet the needs of Polio Survivors.

I am confident that, with the help of everyone concerned with the PPSG we can meet the challenges of the future and continue to serve the needs of Polio Survivors.

A handwritten signature in dark ink, reading "Susan Dowling." The signature is written in a cursive, flowing style.

Susan Dowling

Chairperson

Annual Conference & AGM 2014



The 2014 Annual Conference and AGM was held in the Green Isle Hotel, Dublin. Due to reduced funding this year, the event was confined to one day. In practical terms this meant a half day to allow delegates to travel to and from in the one day. This significantly curtailed the agenda for the conference and also had the effect of limiting the very important social dimension to the event. Nevertheless 184 members attended on the day which demonstrates just how important the conference is for many Post Polio members.

Deirdre Murray presenting to delegates

Keynote speaker was former CEO Eamonn Farrell who regaled the members with stories both humorous and poignant from his varied career and many interests. Dr. Deirdre Murray, a Senior Research Physiotherapist at Beaumont Hospital, who has conducted research among Polio Survivors was the other guest speaker. Deirdre presented the findings of her studies on the benefits of upper body exercise for Polio Survivors.

Perhaps the most important aspect of the day is the election of new Board members. This year the entire Board stepped down to facilitate restructuring of the Board. Two out-going Board members, Marie Boland and Rose Russell O'Donovan decided not to seek re-election. 11 candidates stood for election for 8 places on the Board.



Eamonn O'Farrell addressing delegates

The following candidates were elected to the Board:

Joan Bradley - outgoing

Jim Barrett . outgoing

Jim Costello . outgoing

Roisin Nolan . outgoing

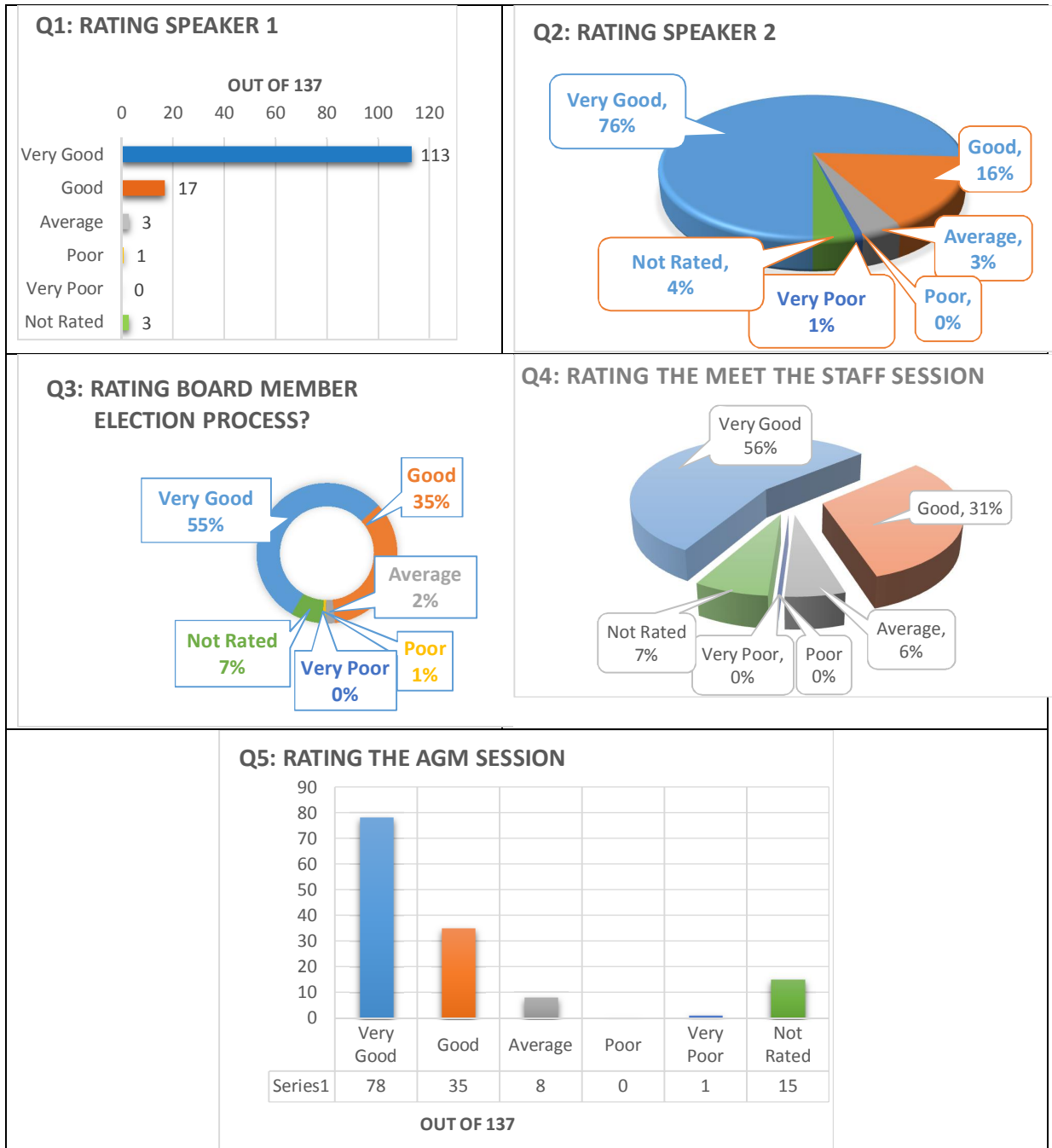
Susan Dowling . outgoing

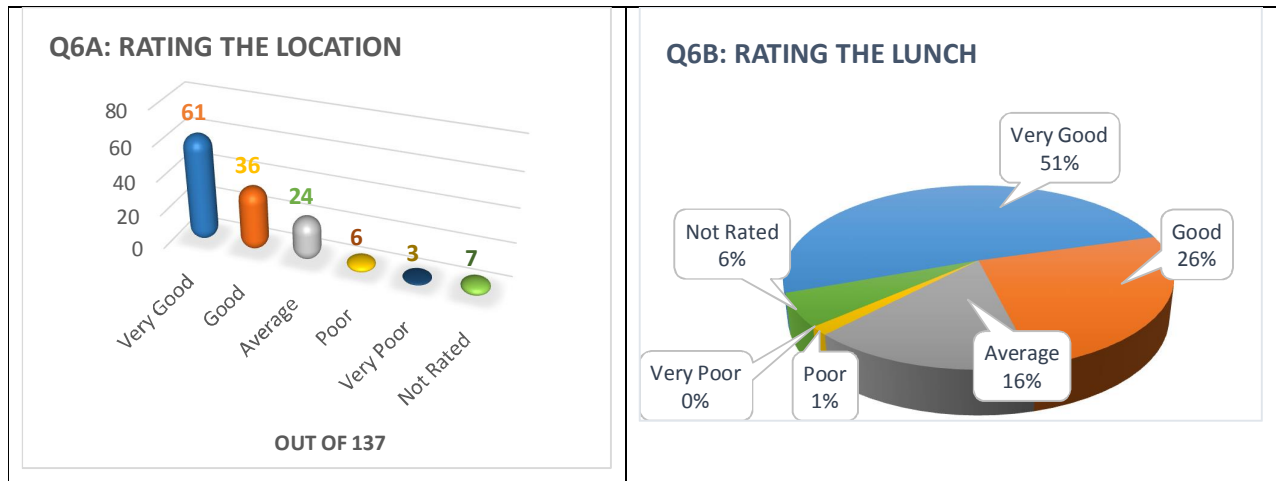
Pat Guy - outgoing

Evelyn Wainwright - outgoing

Joyce Henderson . new

Former Board member Paula Lahiff, undertook an evaluation survey of delegates to the Conference. 137 survey forms were returned which was a very good percentage of the delegates. The feedback is summarised in the charts below:





New Board 2014 - 2015



New Board member, Joyce Henderson



New Board member, Pat McGillion

At its first Board meeting, the new Board for 2014 - 2015 agreed to co-opt Pat McGillion to the Board and elect the following officers:

Susan Dowling:	Chairperson
Jim Barrett:	Deputy Chairperson
Jim Costello:	Company Secretary
Pat McGillion:	Treasurer
Pat Guy:	Minutes Secretary

Some Highlights of 2014

CEO Changes

Ruth replaced Eamonn Farrell as CEO of the PPSG in January 2013. In December 2013 Ruth announced her decision not to renew her contract as CEO. The Deputy Chairperson of the Board, Jim Barrett, expressed regret at her departure and thanked Ruth for her hard work on behalf of the members of the PPSG. Ruth responded that she had learned a great deal during her tenure and gained great insights into the experiences of Polio Survivors. She wished the Board and the new CEO every good wish and hoped that the PPSG would go from strength to strength.



The new CEO, Fran Brennan, took up the position in January 2014. Fran has a background in general management, fundraising, marketing and Board Directorships in both the private and voluntary sectors. At the first Board meeting of 2014 Fran thanked the Board and members of the PPSG for the very warm welcome he had received since his appointment. Fran also thanked his predecessor, Ruth Barror, for the help and support she afforded him as he settled into the role.

Fran commented that he was struck by the commitment of everyone to the work of the Group and he looked forward to working with the Board, members and staff to strengthen the organisation and improve its services to Polio Survivors.

Anne Shanahan



Jimmy Andrews presenting a bouquet to Anne at the AGM on behalf of the Dublin South West Social Support Group

In January Anne Shanahan retired as Regional Development Officer. Anne had made the RDO role her own since her appointment in 2008. Anne was the champion for the Social Support network and through her report Beacons for the Future showcased the value of social support to Polio Survivors and the organisation as a whole. Anne's ground breaking work was presented by her to the AGM of the European Polio Union in Copenhagen in 2011.

As a polio survivor herself, Anne felt that she was in a unique position to understand and empathise with the daily problems confronting Polio Survivors. She also commented that she herself benefited greatly from regular interaction with members. While retiring as RDO, Anne made it clear that she hoped to continue to play an active role as a member of PPSG in the future.

New RDO, Julie Scully

In March the new Regional Development Officer, Julie Scully was appointed. Julie is from Ballybrittas in County Laois, and has many years of experience of working in community and voluntary organisations. Julie immediately established a strong rapport with the social support group convenors and many members around the country.

Visit to the Áras



Members of Castleblayney Social Support Group with President Michael D. Higgins

On Wednesday, 2nd July 2014, eight members of the Castleblayney Social Support Group visited Áras an Uachtarain. On arrival at the Áras, members were treated to a rare glimpse of the President's vehicles and armoured personnel carriers which were on display outside. These were used by former Presidents of Ireland and Irish troops on United Nations peace keeping duties.

Inside the Áras, members were introduced to President Michael D. Higgins and Mrs. Sabina Higgins by a member of the Áras staff. The Group then went to the Hyde Room for lovely food and refreshments. Afterwards, it was out to the marquee where members had drinks and entertainment and where the group admired one of the President's lovely Bernese mountain dogs, Shadow.

The entertainment was introduced by Master of Ceremonies on the day, Mr Ray D'Arcy. Music was provided by the first lady of country, Margo, who had the guests clapping and tapping. After fifty years in show business, her voice was as wonderful as ever. Other entertainment was provided by Rackhouse Pilfer and We Banjo 3.

Later in the afternoon, guests were treated to a unique walkabout by President Higgins in the gardens of the Áras. Some guests had an individual photo with the president. The day ended with a tour of the formal rooms. Everyone agreed it had been a fantastic day out and the staff were very friendly.

Fundraising Activities

Several exciting and successful fundraising events took place in 2014. Among these was a mother and daughter sponsored climb of Kilimanjaro, a masquerade ball and a lunch for World Polio Day with comedians Colm O'Regan and Barry Murphy. Several volunteers took part in the 2014 Ladies Mini Marathon, and Dublin city and Cork marathons on behalf of PPSG also. Two extremely successful member draws also took place during the year.

In addition, many fundraising activities were undertaken locally nationwide by members and volunteers. These included church gate collections, fun runs and supermarket bag packs. Donations by members and businesses also made an important contribution to PPSG funds.

World Polio Day Lunch - A Hearth Warming Success



The Post Polio Support Group's World Polio Day Lunch on Friday, 17th October was a tremendous success. With all the monies the final tally was an incredible " 25,378!

Thanks to the success of the event, the PPSG was able to allocate the full heating grant of " 125 to those members who needed it to get through the winter. All those who benefitted are very grateful for this much needed support.

Many of Ireland's leading companies and business people supported the Lunch including Bord Gais, A & L Goodbody, CRH, NTR, Lagan Cement and Gaelectric. Guests from business sectors as diverse as media, horseracing, property, hospitality, technology and leisure attended.

Last year, for the first time, we secured an overall sponsor for the event. Davy Group contributed " 10,000 towards the cost of hosting the event. This sponsorship catapulted the funds raised to a completely new level. We are very grateful to Davy Group for this invaluable support.

While the lunch was a serious fundraiser it was also a great afternoon's entertainment. Irish Pictorial Weekly's Barry Murphy in the guise of renowned Bundesbank Economist, Dr. Günther Gruhn, hilariously took the guests to task for their extravagant ways. Barry

was joined by author and comedian Colm O'Regan. Colm had his audience in stitches with his descriptions of unique Irish personalities and behaviour that we all recognised.

Kilimanjaro Sponsored Trek

Mother and daughter team Anne and Francesca Hunt presented a cheque for **€6,264** as a result of their very successful trek up Kilimanjaro to the Bray Post Polio Support Group at its meeting in the Glenview Hotel on 5th August.

During her presentation to the Group Francesca Hunt commented; *"We are delighted to be able to support the Post Polio Support Group. We are keenly aware of the work this small organisation does in supporting Polio Survivors throughout Ireland. We hope this money will help in assisting the efforts of PPSG to allow Polio survivors live in their own homes, with dignity and independence, for as long as possible."*



Left: Francesca & Anne on their way to the top of Kilimanjaro.

Above: Presenting a cheque for €6,264 to Bray Polio Support Group – L to R Francesca Hunt, Aggie Bain, Marie McGuirk, Frances Hill and Anne Hunt.

Service Provision

The Post Polio Support Group provides a range of services to Polio Survivors. These include information, support with aids and appliances, a variety of therapies, respite, stairlifts and heating grants. These supports are administered by a Service and Information Co-ordinator (SIC) and an Assistant SIC. The Post Polio Support Group would like to gratefully acknowledge the financial support of the HSE in particular, the Polio Fellowship of Ireland and a variety of other grant making trusts who make these services possible.

There are over 7,000 Polio Survivors in Ireland. In addition to the original physical disability from Polio around 60% of survivors may be experiencing Post Polio Syndrome which can occur many years after the original infection.

The membership of the Group currently stands at 917. In addition between 200 and 250 additional non-member Polio Survivors approach the Group for help from time to time. The Group does not distinguish between members and non-members when allocating supports.

Social Support

The PPSG runs 22 social support groups around the country in the following locations:

Athlone, Co Westmeath; Bray, Co Wicklow; Castleblayney, Co Monaghan; Carlow; Carrick on Shannon, Co Leitrim; Ennis, Co. Clare; Cork, Finglas, Swords, Clontarf and Tallaght in Dublin; Donegal; Enniscorthy, Co Wexford; Galway; Kilkenny; Limerick; Navan, Co Meath; Kildare; Castlebar, Co Mayo; Portlaoise, Co Laois; Sligo; and Kerry.

Telephone Support

Telephone support is provided both formally and informally from home to home by and for Polio Survivors across the Republic through our RingRing and PhoneChat services. 86 members availed of the RingRing service while 15 benefitted from the PhoneChat service in 2014.

A total of " 37,916 was spent on social, telephone and other support in the year.

Aids & Appliances

63 people received Aids & Appliances during the course of the year. Total expenditure on Aids and Appliances was " 97,730.

Therapies

82 people availed of services such as Physiotherapy, Occupational Therapy, Chiropody and Respite at a total cost of " 22,080.

Winter Heating Grant

The Group provides a heating grant to those members who have difficulty in meeting their heating bills. In 2014 we helped over 300 members with a heating grant of " 125

each at a total cost of " 36,000. All of the money spent on the winter heating grant is sourced through fundraising

Other Supports

Other supports provided to members include assistance towards meeting the cost of installing stairlifts and a hardship fund for those Polio Survivors in acute need.

Complaints

The Group has a complaints procedure and the Company Secretary maintains a register of all complaints and actions arising. There were no complaints registered in 2014.