**WATERFORD CENTRE FOR INDEPENDENT LIVING**

**IMPLEMENTING “IMPROVING QUALITY” STANDARD**

**– THE EXPERIENCE AND LEARNING GAINED –**

Waterford Centre for Independent Living CLG is a grassroots organisation whose main aim is to Empower and Enable people with disabilities to achieve Independent Living, Choice and Control over their own lives, and full participation as equal citizens in Irish society. It is run by people with disabilities, for people with disabilities. Waterford CIL was established in 1995 and is linked to the national and international Living Movement. There are 7 Directors on the Board and 27 staff, made up of 15 Community Employment and 12 Health Service Executive employees.

Waterford Centre for Independent Living (WCIL) had been working with the PQASSO/Trusted Charity (TCM) Standard since March 2012. In June 2019 we changed over to the recently launched “Improving Quality” (IQ) Standard, finding it better suited to our needs.

We found “Improving Quality” (IQ), to be straightforward and uncomplicated. Our experience was that it was less time-consuming, more straightforward, while providing the same rigour as PQASSO/TCM and at a cost that was realistically within the budget of a regional charity. We assessed WCIL against the guidance on good practice using the four IQ “ELEMENTS” covering all aspects of Management and Service Delivery:

1. Accountable – governance, leadership and management
2. Welcoming – equality and diversity, service users and staff
3. Effective – planning, delivery, monitoring and evaluation of services
4. Sustainable – management of resources and risk.

Thanks to the commitment of our stakeholders, mentoring from Dermot O’Donnell, Disability Federation of Ireland (DFI) Governance and Quality Development Manager, support from the DFI South-East Regional Development Manager PJ Cleere, tremendous work has been carried out in creating and improving our policies and procedures, while taking into account each and every aspect of our activities.

During our IQ External Assessment which took place over the 16th and 17th December 2019 our IQ Assessor was most capable and efficient in understanding the complexities of our diverse and busy organisation.

Gaining the IQ Standard accreditation at “Foundation” Level on the 14th January 2020, provided assurance to our service-users, local communities, Funders and Regulators alike, of WCIL’s professionalism in providing quality self-directed services effectively and efficiently and of the commitment of our Board to pursue its mission - “To empower and enable people with disabilities to achieve independent living, choice and control over their own lives and enable full participation as equal citizens in Waterford city, county and south Kilkenny areas”.

Additionally, the improvement actions we put in place while preparing for our IQ Assessment meant that when it came to completing the Charities Regulator’s Annual Compliance Form, we had everything up to date and at our fingertips, making demonstrating our compliance a straightforward and stress -free exercise.

Our immediate ambition is to continue working towards achieving the Improving Quality Standard accreditation at “Progression” Level.

The Waterford CIL IQ Implementation Team