



## NEWSLETTER | JANUARY 2015

### Disability Federation of Ireland

An advocate for the voluntary disability sector

Supporting organisations to enable people with disabilities

Like many of you reading this, I found the footage from Áras Attracta on Prime Time on the 9<sup>th</sup> December distressing and shocking, and I woke up the next morning feeling distinctly hung over. It is appalling that someone could behave in that manner towards another human being. There was a lot of talk about lack of training and poor inspection processes, but the issue goes much further than that. This is about basic respect for another person, and acting towards others in a way that is respectful and dignified. No amount of training could ever solve that!

People with disabilities and their families around the country who are accessing disability services will undoubtedly feel concerned and anxious by what they saw, and by the revelations that have come after. It is unacceptable that some people in residential services have been living in and subjected to these conditions. People with disabilities, regardless of their health condition or where their place of residence may be, are entitled to high quality services, where those charged with supporting them are not the source of fear or hurt to them.

Going beyond what we saw, we consider the societal wide implications as, possibly for the first time, we are confronted with the reality that our governance systems and organisational culture are not sufficiently strong to protect the basic rights to bodily integrity and simple human respect for others. We need stronger and more potent means of being able to hear and listen to what people with disabilities are experiencing in their own environments. People with disabilities need to be respected and supported to flourish throughout their lives in what I would like to see as "the best little country in the world" for people with disabilities to live their lives.

Minister Howlin has just stated that engagement will start in the latter part of this year with public service unions in relation to pay. The question for 600,000 people with disabilities and their families is, will the political parties and groups regard disability as a major and long standing issue for Ireland to deliver on as they position and plan for the general election.

***John Dolan, CEO***



## DFI News and Events

### Looking Towards 2015

**Wishing you all a wonderful 2015 from all of us here at DFI. Before we begin looking towards the New Year, we will recap of some of our highs and lows from the past 12 months.**

We had an eventful 2014, with highlights including the successful restoration of SSNO funding to over 20 disability organisations, the establishment of six working groups under the Value for Money scheme, our “Ask Three Questions” campaign for the local and European elections, the extension of local property tax relief for people with disabilities and the establishment of a Charities Regulatory Authority. Our conference on Citizen Engagement in April was very well received by everyone in attendance, and work continued throughout the year advancing this subject. We also launched our report ‘Access to Life’ in February, looking at Personal Assistance (PA) services in Ireland.

However, 2014 also brought us a range of challenges such as the slow implementation of the NDSIP so far, the failure of Budget 2015 to meet people with disabilities’ ambition to live in the community with dignity and independence, the appalling behaviour towards those with intellectual disabilities at Áras Attracta, the decision to discontinue the diet supplement for new applicants and the changes to Housing Adaptation Grants Scheme.

Our work in Europe has been continuing in earnest too, our emphasis this year has continued with ongoing engagement with the European Association of Service of Providers (EASPD) and with the European Disability Forum (EDI). DFI concentrated on a number of crosscutting issues and these Irish disability concerns were represented by John Dolan making a number of key note speeches in Europe in the areas of employment and housing to mention just a few. Another area of our focus this year was on the European Semester Process, DFI held a number of successful regional and a national events to highlight how this

process operates and how best to influence it. We also produced a response to the 2014 Country specific recommendations and made a submission to the Mid-term review of the Europe 2020 Strategy.

Not everything is a clear win or lose, for example while the 2015 HSE Service Plan allocation of an extra €20 million to disability services is good news, it still does not go far enough. This year will also be the 10 year anniversary of the publication of the Disability Act, and two years since the mobility allowance and motorised transport grants were abolished. These anniversaries highlight where Government promises are not being fulfilled for people with disabilities. More needs to be done to ensure those with disabilities will not get left behind in 2015.

### **EVENT: “Outcome and Impact Measurement”**

**Two day training course for Community & Voluntary Organisations – Wednesday and Thursday 04<sup>th</sup> and 05<sup>th</sup> February 2015**

DFI Offices, Fumbally Court, Fumbally Lane, Dublin 8



DFI are hosting, as part of a series of two day courses in 2015, training which will be delivered by Consultant Trainers from the CES (Charities Evaluation Services) in the UK, the inventors of the PQASSO Quality Management. DFI is the only location in Ireland where CES deliver this training.

CES will deliver a two day training course on “Outcome and Impact Measurement” on **04<sup>th</sup> and 05<sup>th</sup> February 2015** in the DFI Head Office in Dublin.

#### **Course summary**

This two-day core course is based on the Charities Evaluation Services, evidenced based self-evaluation model, which is an aims and objectives model of evaluation with a strong Outcomes focus.

This introductory course offers a practical approach to linking monitoring and evaluation of outputs and outcomes to the planning and delivery of an organisation’s work. This course may assist organisations with implementing and evidencing some of the Quality Areas in

PQASSO such as Quality Area 1, Planning; Quality Area 4, User-Centred Service and Quality Area 11, Monitoring and Evaluation.

Using case studies and examples, participants are offered the opportunity to apply their learning to their own projects. Participants bring their learning together into a self-evaluation framework that will enable them to collect vital information both for internal use and for funders and other stakeholders.

### **Is this course for you?**

The “Outcome and Impact Measurement” two-day training course is appropriate for small to medium sized voluntary sector organisations, and/or organisations that are just beginning to implement a monitoring and self-evaluation system to collect information on their outputs and outcomes.

You will benefit most from this course if you:

- are new, or fairly new, to monitoring and self-evaluation
- wish to have time within the training to explore issues of monitoring and self-evaluation
- want to implement a comprehensive monitoring and evaluation system in your organisation to collect information on the outputs and outcomes of your work
- are implementing PQASSO or other quality management system in your organisation.

### **Course Outcomes**

By the end of the two-day course, participants will be able to:

- a better understanding of monitoring and evaluation
- improved ability to identify and describe the outcomes and impact of their work
- increased knowledge of how to develop a robust monitoring and evaluation framework
- increased awareness of some simple ways to collect information

If you would like to register for this course, or for more information on the course or on the PQASSO QMS, please contact Dermot O’Donnell, Support Officer for Organisations and Licensed PQASSO Mentor and Peer Reviewer, on 086-780 8639 or by email on [dermotodonnell@disability-federation.ie](mailto:dermotodonnell@disability-federation.ie)

## Registration Fee and Terms and conditions

Fee for the 2 days training course is **€275** per place. If two or more people from the same organisation book onto the same course a further discount may apply. Please contact Dermot O'Donnell for further information. Tea, coffee, scones, and lunch is provided within the fee. All places will be confirmed in writing.



## Value for Money

**Work has been continuing on the implementation of the recommendations of the Value for Money and Policy Review of the Disability Services Programme, through the national implementation framework.** Six working groups have been established to drive this change programme, and DFI has representation on each of them.

All of the working groups are progressing at different speeds, and some of them have changed their terms of reference, and this is concerning. There is also a concern that the working groups are not linking with each other, even when there are complementary outcomes and mutual priorities. This is an area that DFI will keep an eye on.

There will be a special edition newsletter published on the Value for Money and Policy Review early in 2015.

For further information, please contact Jacqueline at [jacquelinegrogan@disability-federation.ie](mailto:jacquelinegrogan@disability-federation.ie).

## Social Care Division Operational Plan 2015

**The Social Care Division Operational Plan 2015 was published at the end of December by the HSE.** It can be found at

<http://www.hse.ie/eng/services/publications/corporate/socialcareopplan.pdf>.

There are a number of service priorities detailed in the document:

- Implementation of Value for Money and Policy Review
- Reconfiguration of day services for school leavers and rehabilitative training
- Improvement of therapy services for children (0-18s)
- Enabling people to move from congregated settings
- Continue to drive service improvements

There are also specific actions detailed under safeguarding vulnerable person's at risk of abuse, with a 6 step change programme detailed for residential disability services and the development of long term sustainable and evidence based safe guarding practices and training programmes.

The main focus of the actions in the priority areas are on the six Value for Money working groups and the work of the service improvement team, with time frames detailed for all actions.

The funding information in the back of the document, and a number of the actions detailed, have been broken down by the new Community Healthcare Organisation areas. The document also details dormant accounts funding of €1.7m to implement a range of measures, taking account of disability priorities and the need to encourage innovation in service delivery (page 38).

While we welcome the additional funding to disability services and see it as a move in the right direction to meet people's needs, we feel that it doesn't go far enough to start plugging the gaping hole that has been left by successive cuts since 2008. We feel that this modest allocation will be subsumed by the increasing demand on disability services, therefore it will only allow services to stand still and not to be further developed.

If you have any questions or comments on the plan, please contact Jacqueline Grogan at [jacquelinegrogan@disability-federation.ie](mailto:jacquelinegrogan@disability-federation.ie).

## Access Officers

**DFI has been working with the HSE's Office of Patient and Staff Engagement on the training of Access Officers within the HSE.** The appointment of Access Officers is a legal obligation under Part 3 of the Disability Act 2005, which requires that Access Officers be appointed to all sites where the general public use health and social services. Section 26 (2) of the Disability Act 2005 requires health and social care services to authorise at least one member of staff to act as an 'Access Officer', to provide or arrange for and co-ordinate the provision of assistance and guidance to persons with disabilities in accessing its services.

Given that the HSE provides health and social care services in hundreds of locations throughout the country, Access Officers are necessary where there are service users, patients and clients; for example, hospitals, primary care centres, health and social care clinics and / or locations where health and social care is delivered. The role is not limited to physical access, such as car parking, ramps or wheelchair access, but extends to all aspects of the patient / service user journey including the provision of accessible information, consultations and procedures, appointments and applications for service provision.

It is the duty and role of all health and social care professionals at all levels to attend to the access needs of people with disabilities. Access Officers will not replace this duty. Rather, Access Officers will provide additional support to frontline services to attend to the access needs of people with disabilities.

So far, around 50 HSE staff have been trained to become Access Officers, and they will commence their new role in early 2015. Once a number of Access Officers have been trained, their contact information will be circulated.

For further information, please contact Jacqueline at [jacquelinegrogan@disability-federation.ie](mailto:jacquelinegrogan@disability-federation.ie).

## Self-Management Message Finally Getting Home in Mayo

**In 2013 DFI, in partnership with the Neurological Alliance of Ireland (NAI), held two Self-Management Introductory Workshops in the Ballybann Resource Centre, Galway.**

These workshops were run primarily to introduce the concept of Self-Management to our respective and mutual member organisations in the West region, but other interested parties, such as the HSE, were also welcome to attend.



The event was a success with a good turnout from service providers, advocacy groups, individuals living with chronic conditions, and the HSE. The workshops were very informative and created an interesting new approach for organisations to take with clients.

As a result of those workshops a new programme (a collaboration between DFI, MCIL, MSI, and the HSE) has now been set up in Mayo. The programme is titled "Self-Care to Wellness Program Mayo". The training of facilitators has already commenced, with twenty-five trainees signed up to become facilitators.

Two information evenings were held in September and October in Castlebar and Ballina. It is expected the programme will start to be delivered for individuals living with chronic conditions in January or February.

In Mayo it was decided not to limit the programme to disability but to make it more mainstream, and it was broadened to include all persons living with a chronic condition. The training and delivery is being done within and on the model developed at Stanford University.

## Lenus Documents

**Open Access (OA) repositories are online repositories which collate scholarly outputs in digital format which are free of charge and free of most copyright restrictions.** All documents are available to the public free of charge. It is estimated that inclusion of research within OA repositories may increase the number of citations of a given piece of research by up to 300%. OA repositories are being used by multiple third-level institutions to expand their research reach, alongside state and semi-state bodies like the HSE & HIQA. Government departments are using OA repositories to find relevant policy and research documents. The use of OA repositories also helps make information accessible to all. We would encourage all our member to contact Lenus and work to ensure their research and policy papers are available (where possible).



DFI has been working with Lenus, the primary health research repository in Ireland (run by the HSE) and now have a dedicated section in the repository which houses our policy and research documents <http://www.lenus.ie/hse/handle/10147/209732>

If you wish to browse there, we are housed under:

Communities> other Irish health organisations> charitable and advocacy organisations> Disability Federation of Ireland.

## Landmark Decision by European Medicines Agency Strengthens Warnings on use of Valproate Medicines in Women and Girls

**Some time back DFI was made aware of a rare condition called Fetal Valproate Syndrome (also known as FACS).**

**FACS is caused when a mother takes anti-convulsant medication (also known as anti-epilepsy drugs, or AEDs) during pregnancy.** The risk of disability varies according to the specific drug taken. These drugs are also used to treat various non-epilepsy central nervous system (CNS) such as migraine and bipolar disorder. It was brought to our attention by Karen Keely, who has three sons, two of whom have the condition.



Image by Holoholand, courtesy of freedigitalphotos.net

Concerns relating to Anti Epilepsy Drugs (AED's) and Fetal Anti Convulsant Syndrome (FACS) have been growing steadily in recent years in many countries in the European Union and worldwide. DFI has worked with Karen to support her organisation, Organisation for Anti-Convulsant Syndrome (OACs) Ireland, to get recognition for this condition. We also brought the different groups Karen was engaging with together to form FACS Forum Ireland to advocate for better warnings and information from the Department of Health in Ireland on the side effects to expectant mothers of drugs that contain valproate.

We are asking the Department of Health to act urgently to prevent more children being born with the severe physical and developmental disabilities associated with FACS and to ensure adequate support is provided for those already with the condition.

We are asking for a Task Force to be established that would include patient and representative groups. The FACS Forum members are also advocating that young people and adults with FACS and their families are sufficiently supported to deal with the wide range of severe problems that are associated with this condition.

DFI very much welcome the landmark decision by the European Medicines Agency on the 21 November 2014 to put strict curbs on the use of valproates by expectant mothers. It can be downloaded at:

[http://www.ema.europa.eu/docs/en\\_GB/document\\_library/Referrals\\_document/Valproate\\_and\\_related\\_substances\\_31/Position\\_provided\\_by\\_CMDh/WC500177637.pdf](http://www.ema.europa.eu/docs/en_GB/document_library/Referrals_document/Valproate_and_related_substances_31/Position_provided_by_CMDh/WC500177637.pdf)

### Study Results

The European Medicines Agency have highlighted that recent studies have shown a risk of developmental problems of up to 30 to 40% in pre-school children exposed to valproate in the womb, including delayed walking and talking, memory problems, difficulty with speech and language and lower intellectual ability. In addition, data show that children exposed to valproate in the womb are at an approximately 11% risk of malformations at birth (such as neural tube defects and cleft palate) compared to a 2 to 3% risk for children in the general population.

- ❖ *NOTE: It is important to emphasise that girls/women should not abruptly stop or make any changes to medication without the advice and supervision of their specialist or GP. The danger from uncontrolled seizures to both mother and baby is a serious one in pregnancy.*

For further information contact FACS Forum members:

Joan O Donnell (DFI) [0863834587](tel:0863834587)

Philip Watt (MRCG) [0876370557](tel:0876370557)



## Monitoring the Implementation of the National Disability Strategy

### DFI Mid-Term Review of the National Disability Strategic Implementation Plan (NDSIP) Submission

**DFI submitted to the mid-term review of the NDSIP, which was published in July 2013.**

The half-year delay in the publication of the Plan was probably the earliest indication of a lack of clear priority given by the Government towards the strategy. In addition to the delay, there is an issue of weak or inadequate timelines. Of the 91 named actions in the plan, 62 have target completion dates of 'ongoing', making it almost impossible to assess in terms of measuring progress. The absence of completion dates is symptomatic of the clear lack of overall ambition by the Government in ensuring people with disabilities can fully participate in all areas of public life and the community.

Budgetary decisions have also particularly demonstrated a clear lack of ambition and disregard for people with disabilities, pushing them further into poverty and disadvantage. Although some of these decisions were revoked following DFI campaigns, the fact funding cuts took place at all makes it painfully clear that there is no real vision across Government Departments around the issue of disability.

Despite the disappointing implementation of the Plan thus far, DFI is still committed to working with the NDSIG to try achieve some difference. However, we still have serious concerns about cross Departmental communication and we feel there has been a systematic failure to coordinate and monitor the work of the various Departments.

#### **Conclusion**

The NDSIP's progression has been set against the backdrop of austerity, and as such its implementation has had to evolve to survive the wave of withdrawals and cutbacks.

However, with many of the targets ongoing at its mid-point, the implementation is not progressing at an adequate pace. For people with disabilities, these setbacks are infringing on their autonomy.

While there are a number of policy actions which have emerged through the NDSIP, if we balance these with actions which have not been successfully implemented or are immeasurable due to their lack of timeframe, it is clear that there is much more to do in the upcoming phase of the NDSIP.

### **DFI Genetic Testing Submission**

**DFI has submitted a document on Review of the Operation of Part 4 of the Disability Act 2005 (Genetic Testing).**

DFI raised concerns regarding the use of family histories and the lack of clarity within the Act, however we acknowledge there are some aspects that are working well.

One of the most valuable aspects of the Act is that individuals are protected against third parties requesting a genetic test be taken, or asking for results of a previous test (for example employers, insurance or mortgage companies). This privacy enables people to undergo a genetic test, which can be vital for early diagnosis and timely access to therapies and treatments. Early detection can be cost effective for the health service, as well as saving lives.

However, there is a large loophole that is evident in the Act, namely that third parties can still request or acquire family histories, which results in companies making assumptions and loading policies. Fear of this has also led, in some cases, to family members refusing to get a diagnosis in order for their adult children not to be discriminated against.

Leading on from this, there is also the issue of individuals getting a genetic test with a favourable outcome, but because they cannot disclose this to the company they are still being discriminated against based on their family history, placing them in a 'no win' situation which the Act was designed to avoid.

In light of the above issues, DFI recommends that family history be treated as genetic information as part of the Act.

Other potential problems with the Act includes very specific wording in Section 42 which risks missing new purposes of genetic testing when they become available in the future. The 'consent' section also needs to take into account the Assisted Decision Making Bill that is currently being discussed by the Oireachtas.

Finally, it is disappointing that the Minister was late initiating the review of the Operation of Part 4, and in light of potential advances in genetic testing we feel that the next review should take place in 5 years.



## Focus on Europe

### Chief Executive of DFI Attends EASPD Annual Conference

**CEO of the Disability Federation of Ireland, John Dolan, recently represented the organisation at our European partners, The European Association of Service Providers (EASPD) conference in Oslo, Norway, last October.** He called for a clear commitment on how to achieve housing for all, a community based, person centred service.

The EASPD promotes the equalisation of opportunities for people with disabilities through effective and high quality service systems in Europe. EASPD represents over 8,000 service provider organisations across Europe.

Mr Dolan also participated in the Board Meeting, General Assembly Meeting and Policy Impact Group of the EASPD which were held in conjunction with the conference.

Franz Wolfmayr, EASPD President, welcomed the participants and introduced the session by reminding the importance of complying with the United Nations Convention on the Rights of Persons with Disabilities. "The UN Convention marks a starting point to a new shift which opens new pathways to inclusion for persons with disabilities".

Maarit Aalto, from the Nordic Centre for Welfare and Social issues, highlighted that "there is still a lot of work to do to achieve inclusion and to allow that everybody can choose who

do they want to live with and where do they want to live". All public authorities have the duty and obligation to promote and protect this human right, but, according to Aalto, due to the financial and economic crisis, public authorities have often been encouraged to reduce public spending in this area. Consequently housing prices have increased considerably and this has led to discrimination in terms of accessing social housing.

In that sense, Dominic Richardson, Policy analyst at the Organisation for Economic Co-operation and Development (OECD) pointed out that "governments only dedicate around 2% of their national budgets for social housing policies".

### Better Europe Alliance Conference

**DFI is a member of the Better Europe Alliance**, which consists of civil society organisations who have come together to provide a forum for dialogue among a wide range of stakeholders on how to bring about a more inclusive and sustainable European Semester and Europe 2020 strategy.

DFI received funding via the Alliance to conduct two workshops to make people more aware of the European Semester process and the experience of social exclusion in Ireland. We organised two workshops in November to look at how the European Semester process is influencing Irish budgets, and what we need to do to ensure that the levels of poverty and social exclusion experienced by people with disabilities is heard at European level.

We looked at the opportunity offered by the Semester process to influence policy making here in Ireland and to ensure better policy outcomes for people with disabilities. Over 30 people attended the events in Dublin and Galway, and these event led to a national conference held in Dublin on December 5<sup>th</sup>.

The conference is available to watch on Youtube: <http://goo.gl/dP9cR1>

The Alliance also produced a publication which is available for download here:

<http://goo.gl/RzgdMp>

For further information please contact [joanodonnell@disailbity-federation.ie](mailto:joanodonnell@disailbity-federation.ie)

The conference was chaired by DFI, with Marian Harkin MEP as keynote speaker and contributions from the European Commission Semester Officer, Patrick O’Riordan, as well as Rory Montgomery, Second Secretary General in the Department of the Taoiseach.

## Study Visit by the Moldavian Ministry of Labour, Social Protection and Family

DFI, in cooperation with the SOCIEUX programme of the European Commission, and in collaboration with the Rehab Group and National Disability Authority, recently organised a study visit by a delegation from the Republic of Moldova. The aim of this visit was a fact finding mission to better inform Moldova on best practices in providing services for persons with disabilities.

SOCIEUX - Social Protection European Union Expertise in Development Cooperation - is a technical assistance facility which has been set up by the European Commission’s Directorate General for Development and Cooperation - EuropeAid - in order to support the efforts of partner countries to better design and manage their social protection systems.

The SOCIEUX programme of the European Commission is currently working with Moldova in the area of social protection for persons with disabilities. More precisely, the Republic of Moldova is planning to open a department of vocational rehabilitation services giving priority to persons with severe disabilities. This study visit on vocational rehabilitation services to Ireland provided the Moldovan authorities, through concrete examples, a better understanding of subjects such as:

- the actors involved in vocational rehabilitation from legislation to delivery of the service and how they work together
- the relevant legislation on vocational rehabilitation and its application
- how a vocational rehabilitation centre is organised and how it functions
- the needs of persons with disabilities who are in need of vocational rehabilitation

During their visit the group spent an informative day hosted by Co Roscommon Disability Support Group (RSG). RSG provides a varied range of services in all aspects of daily living to



The Moldavian Flag in the shape of the country. Image by Taesmilessland, courtesy of freedigitalphotos.net

people with disabilities, older people and children to enable them to live independently at home.

The Moldova delegation was presented with a number of seminars which included one on RSG as a service provider and Project DAWN (RSG's Disability Activation Project).

Both DFI and County Roscommon Disability Support Group were delighted to contribute to the Moldovan study visit, and we believe that the trip to Ireland for the Moldovan delegates was useful and informative.

### Survey on passengers' rights: EDF wants to hear your stories

**Denied boarding because of your disability? Damaged wheelchair? No accessible information at the train station? European Disability Forum (EDF) is currently doing a small survey to identify the problems existing in different countries concerning passengers' rights.**



It has been a little more than a year now that the European Union has laws on passengers' rights in all transport modes: air (Regulations 1107/2006 and 261/2004), rail (Reg. 1371/2007), bus & coach\* (Reg. 181/2011) and sea (Reg. 1177/2010). What interests us now is to see if these laws have changed anything in the everyday lives of EU citizens – you!

This is why we decided to launch a small survey to learn more about your experiences, whether you travel every day or only once a year doesn't matter. If you have recently used any of those transport modes (or you wanted to but could not because it was not accessible) and you would like to share your stories with us, EDF would like to receive your feedback. We will use this information in our advocacy work to set our priorities and also to illustrate the problems that persons with disabilities face when travelling with your real life examples.

To inspire you, we have compiled some questions that might help you:

- In which transport mode and in which country did the incident occur?
- What happened exactly (lack or low quality of assistance, damaged/lost mobility equipment, denied boarding, lack of information, inaccessible facilities....)?



- Did you lodge a complaint afterwards? If yes, to whom? The transport provider (airline, railway undertaking, bus company, etc.)? The competent authorities or another body (Ombudsman, mediator, other dispute resolution mechanism)? Did you go to court?
- How did the transport provider react? Did you get any reply? Did you get compensation?
- Did you know about your rights as a passenger and especially as a persons with reduced mobility?
- What could be improved to avoid these situations in the future?
- Do you agree that EDF can use the information you give anonymously in its advocacy work?

Please send your stories to [marie.denninghaus@edf-feph.org](mailto:marie.denninghaus@edf-feph.org)

Alternatively, you can also submit contributions on [facebook](#) or [twitter](#) by using the hashtag #FreeMove. We would be happy if you could forward this request to other interested parties, the more examples the better!

\*Please note that this does not concern urban buses but only long-distance travel of 250 km or more.



### Hollyfort Services and DFI Preventative Maintenance Programme

DFI is pleased to announce that it has partnered with Hollyfort Services, a specialist service in Healthcare Facilities Installation and Maintenance, to offer DFI member organisations an exciting opportunity to avail of an exclusive, new Preventative Maintenance Programme (PMP) service. The service, which will be offered to DFI members

at a specially discounted rate, has been custom designed to help charitable companies meet their statutory obligations by reviewing their level of compliance with all relevant regulations, including HIQA requirements, providing them with technical support and assistance and offering recommendations for the future.

### **Benefits of Hollyfort Services**

Hollyfort Services is a privately owned Irish Company, which provides a specialist service in Healthcare Facilities Installation and Maintenance to a range of clients in the Disability and Healthcare Sectors. Their continued success over the years is a testament to the quality of work provided in the delivery of specialist projects and services.

Hollyfort Services understands that special facilities require specialist services and have designed a special programme that targets the specific needs of your facilities. In addition, Hollyfort Services consider people with different abilities and disabilities when carrying out inspections.

The **P**reventative **M**aintenance **P**rogramme (PMP) is a specialist programme designed for your organisation to suit each property in order to save you time and money. It gives you an increased level of service compared to existing service contracts and greater longevity on installations and overall building fabric. The added bonus you get when you use this service is that Hollyfort Services can help your facility contribute positively and effectively in ensuring that the various objectives, guidelines, requirements and statutory codes are observed and adhered to. It covers all areas required to comply with HIQA, HSA and many others.

Further information can be found on our website <http://www.disability-federation.ie/index.php?uniqueID=10945>

Call Hollyfort Services on (01) 4999 099 to arrange a free, no obligation facilities assessment.

Martin Dormer, Hollyfort Services, Lower Dodder Road, Rathfarnham, Dublin 14

Email: [info@hollyfortservices.ie](mailto:info@hollyfortservices.ie) | Web: [www.hollyfortservices.ie](http://www.hollyfortservices.ie)

Alternatively, you can contact your DFI Support Officer in the usual way or at (01) 454 7978, [info@disability-federation.ie](mailto:info@disability-federation.ie).

## HR & Employment Law Update

**Adare Human Resource Management provide HR and Employment Law Support Services to a large number of Organisations within the Community and Voluntary Sector.**

Disability Federation of Ireland, in conjunction with Adare Human Resource Management, has in place a support structure for member Organisations to avail of discounted Human Resource and Employment Law Support Services exclusively for DFI members.

### Disciplinary Procedures

**Managing workplace discipline can be daunting. It is an area which can leave an Employer feeling as though it is impossible to deal with poor performance, attendance or misconduct by an Employee.** However, this need not be the case and any Employer who takes a structured approach to

ensure that disciplinary procedures are applied fairly and consistently should be in a position to confidently address Employee shortcomings at work.

The aim of utilising the disciplinary procedure should be corrective, not punitive. Whether addressing poor performance, conduct or attendance, in the majority of cases the purpose of the procedure is to encourage an improvement in the Employee's behaviour. Ultimately, any disciplinary sanction must be based on one of the following to be fair and to ensure that the Employer can stand over any subsequent dismissal:

- Competence
- Conduct
- Capability

It is a requirement of the Unfair Dismissals Acts that every Employee be provided with a copy of their Employer's disciplinary procedure not later than 28 days following commencement of employment. In accordance with legislation, all dismissals are

### Adare's Employment Law and HR Services at a Glance

- **Contracts** of Employment & Employee Handbooks containing policies & procedures - drafting / review / update
- **HR Helpdesk** – provision of on-going access to Phone / Email HR Advice and Support
- **Representation** at Workplace Relations Commission, Rights Commissioners, Employment Appeals Tribunal (EAT) and other external employment bodies
- **HR Consultancy Services** – Recruitment / Investigations / Dispute Management.

considered unfair, unless the Employer can demonstrate otherwise. Therefore, an Employer must demonstrate that a reasonable decision was made in dismissing an Employee and that a fair procedure was followed. In order to do this, it is important that the Employer retains adequate documentation of the disciplinary process.

The Code of Practice on Grievance and Disciplinary procedures sets out principles which must be adhered to in any disciplinary situation. It sets out the rights of an Employee which must be upheld throughout the disciplinary procedure. A breach of the Code of Practice may lead to any dismissal being deemed to be procedurally unfair. The general principles set out in the Code are as follows:

- The procedure must be rational and fair.
- The basis for any disciplinary action must be clear.
- The range of penalties must be well defined.
- There must be an internal appeals mechanism.
- The procedure should be reviewed in line with current practices.
- Disciplinary procedures should generally commence with an informal stage where the Employees Manager addresses the issue directly with the Employee prior to the formal process commencing.
- The principles of natural justice must be adhered to:
  - Details of any allegations must be put to the Employee;
  - The Employee must be afforded an opportunity to respond;
  - The Employee should be afforded the opportunity to avail of representation, defined in the Code of Practice as a colleague, or member of a registered Trade Union, but not any other person or body unconnected with the enterprise;
  - The Employee has a right to a fair and impartial determination of the issues concerned taking account of relevant factors and evidence.
- It may be appropriate to provide written copies of complaints/ allegations, revealing the source of same and allowing the Employee to confront and question any witness/witnesses.

- The consequences of an Employee's departure from the rules or expectations of the Employer should be explained in policy and procedure, particularly those that may warrant dismissal or suspension.
- Disciplinary action may include a verbal warning, a 1st written warning, a final written warning, demotion, suspension without pay, transfer, other action short of dismissal and dismissal.

Steps should generally be progressive, however in certain situations an issue may need to be escalated to later stages of the procedure without recourse to the earlier stages of the procedure.

An Employee may be suspended on full pay pending the outcome of an investigation.

The procedure should set out levels of responsibility in terms of who will apply various stages of the procedure.

Warnings should be removed from the Employee file after a specified period, and the Employee advised of same.

Adequate records must be kept in relation to disciplinary situations.

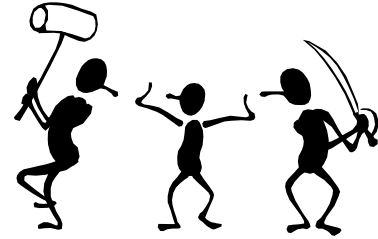
Having a disciplinary procedure in place ensures that Employees are aware of how poor performance, conduct or attendance will be dealt with. Employees should be aware of the potential negative consequences of these situations.

Where an Employer wishes to skip steps of the procedure, care must be taken to ensure that this is done consistently in line with situations of a similar nature and that the Employee could reasonably have been expected to know that the issue was so serious as to warrant the Employer doing this. In certain situations, the Employer may commence the procedure at the final stage, this would generally only occur in cases of gross misconduct, and a disciplinary hearing must always be held before deciding to dismiss. A disciplinary procedure should have an appeals mechanism as per the Code of Practice which should be consistently applied. A failure to provide the option for an appeal may render a disciplinary or dismissal unfair.

## Conflict and Dispute Management

**Conflict in the workplace is viewed as being inevitable.**

Managed incorrectly, legitimate differences between Employees may escalate, resulting in situations where team work and collaboration is eroded, productivity reduced and valued Employees potentially departing the Organisation. In order to resolve conflict when it arises, it helps to take an informal positive approach where the focus is on the issues rather than the personalities involved. If this approach is followed, along with willingness from the parties involved to explore possible solutions properly, conflict can often be resolved effectively.



In instances, where informal means have been exhausted or it has been determined that informal means are inappropriate based on the issues under consideration, Employers are encouraged to have an internal formal procedure in place for resolving grievances and complaints. Given the range of demands, beliefs and personality types that come together, it is inevitable that conflict arises.

Ignoring conflict and hoping that that it will resolve itself is not the most effective or valuable way of problem solving. Often times, what may have originally been a minor issue initially turns into a significant problem if not resolved at an early stage. Where conflicts are not addressed effectively, individuals and suffer and can add significant cost to the Organisation. Some of the consequences of unresolved conflict in the workplace can include:

- Increased Employee turnover and loss of key / valued Employees
- Loss of Productivity
- Escalation of sick leave absenteeism
- Stress, frustration, and anxiety
- Formal Grievances and external legal action
- Strained and damaged relationships

Unresolved workplace conflict can create stress, strain resources, damage team working and hamper innovation and creativity. Mediation is a method of conflict resolution that brings together those in disagreement with an objective third party in order to try and find a

solution to the satisfaction of all parties. The mediator doesn't propose solutions; doesn't make judgments about right or wrong and doesn't assess culpability or assign blame. Mediation can act as an effective way of creating safe and compassionate dialogue. In doing so, mediation enables the parties to engage in a more emotionally intelligent conversation which is based not on fault or reprisal, but on understanding, empathy, and positive regard. Mediation can be an effective way of resolving workplace disputes in instances involving:

- Difficulties which arise from change
- Interpersonal conflicts
- Unresolved disputes
- Issues around allegations of discrimination, harassment, bullying
- Differences in working style and perceptions
- Communication breakdown

In many cases, conflict is resolved to the satisfaction of all parties through effective early intervention by the Line Manager. However, there will be instances in which a more formal investigation is required, where the informal approach has been unsuccessful or has been exhausted or where issues have arisen with no prior warning. Recognising the moment at which informal approaches to resolving disputes have failed and when a more formal investigation is required is an important decision that the Organisation must make. In the event of a formal complaint, Tribunals will look to see that processes for handling complaints have been fair and equitable.

Having appropriate policies and procedures in place provide a framework which allows workplace issues and problems to be resolved. In addition, they allow the Employer to clearly set out what is acceptable in the Organisation and take action when these standards and rules are not adhered to. Policies and procedures should be in writing and in a format and language that is clear and easily understood. All Employees should receive a copy of the Organisation policies and procedures on the commencement of employment. All members of Management, Supervisors and Employee Representatives should be fully aware of these policies and procedures and adhere to their terms.

If you have any questions relating to Disciplinary or Conflict & Dispute Management do not hesitate to contact us. For further information on the HR Support Services provided click on the link: <http://www.disability-federation.ie/index.php?uniqueID=50>



## Social Protection

### DFI Statement on Water Charges

**In November last year the Government announced a new format of water charges, which it said would allow for greater certainty, affordability and simplicity for all.**

DFI believes that these new changes do not address the cost of living with a disability. We are concerned that the new charges do nothing to deal with the cost of extra water usage for people whose disability means that they have an extra requirement for water.

We are very disappointed that the concept of the €100 allowance has been changed to a conservation grant. Although it doesn't change the amount people are entitled to, it does change the rationale for subsidising payments and may have long term implications for people on low incomes.

DFI now looks forward to the commencement of a Public Forum, in which we hope to engage with Irish Water on matters such as delivery of the programme and service standards.

### Water Charges FAQ

As it stands, water charges are the exact same for people with disabilities and the general public. Here are the main points you should know:

- You will be charged from January 2015, with bills being issued from April 2015
- Capped annual charges will be €160 for a single adult household and €260 for all other households until the end of 2018
- Domestic households are eligible for the conservation grant of €100





- Total yearly cost will therefore be **€60 for single adult households or €160 for all other households** until the end of 2018
- The conservation grant will be available in September 2015
- If you have a meter installed and your charges are lower than the annual cap you will receive a rebate. The volumetric rate is €3.70 per 1,000 litres, with an additional 21,000 litres allowance per child.
- If you fail to register with Irish Water you will be billed €260 yearly regardless, and unable to receive the conservation grant
- If you are unable to pay your bills and have not set up a payment plan you will receive an additional penalty of €30 for single adult households and €60 for other households every year.

In order to get the conservation grant customers must return their application forms to Irish Water, ideally before February 2nd 2015. Irish Water will not require your PPS, however the Department of Social Protection will require it to administer the payment.



You can register with Irish Water at [www.water.ie](http://www.water.ie) using your original pin and application number, by downloading the revised application form and posting it back, or by phone on 1890 448 448 or 01 707 2834 (lines open 7 days, 8am to 8pm).

For more detailed information about water charges please check the Citizens Information website:

[http://www.citizensinformation.ie/en/environment/water\\_services/water\\_charges.html](http://www.citizensinformation.ie/en/environment/water_services/water_charges.html)

Or the Frequently Asked Questions section on the Department of Environment website:

<http://www.environ.ie/en/PublicationsDocuments/FileDownload,39547,en.pdf>



## News and General Information

### Open College Graduate Awards Ceremony 2014

**Congratulations to all the recent graduates of the Open Training College who attended the Conferring of Awards ceremony on Saturday, November 15th at the Concert Hall, RDS Dublin.** Almost one hundred graduates achieved third level awards in the areas of Social Care and Management in the disability and wider non-profit sectors.

Special mention goes to Aenid Doherty (The Gerry Clarke Award), Peter Shiels (Social Care Ireland Award for Academic Excellence), and Paul Foster (The Wheel Management Award for Academic Excellence) for achieving their respective 'Student of the Year' awards on the day.



97 Graduates received accredited awards for courses in:

- BA in Applied Social Studies (Disability)
- Certificate in Applied Management (Nonprofit/Human Services)
- Person Centred Planning - Focus on the Individual
- Certificate in Supported Employment
- Honours BA in Applied Social Studies (Disability)
- Teaching Independent Living Skills
- Higher Certificate in Applied Management (Nonprofit/Human Services)
- BA in Applied Management (Nonprofit/Human Services)

Each course is delivered through the award winning 'Supported Open Learning model' which is designed specifically to allow frontline workers and managers benefit from access to accredited, flexible educational opportunities that transform their ability to implement best practice within human services in Ireland today.

More information about OTC courses can be found on the College website [opentrainingcollege.com](http://opentrainingcollege.com), by calling Conor on [\(01\)2990580](tel:(01)2990580) or by emailing [enquiries@opentrainingcollege.com](mailto:enquiries@opentrainingcollege.com)

### Sign up for updates from The Advocacy Initiative Legacy Partners

**After a busy and eventful three years, The Advocacy Initiative came to an end in the middle of last year.** The project was the result of a collective vision and would not have been possible without the involvement of thousands of people across the community and voluntary sector, as well as policy-makers, trade unions, academics, media, and those directly experiencing poverty and exclusion.

The Advocacy Initiative would like to thank all those who were involved and attended and contributed to events and research. Together we have built a research portfolio, created opportunities for reflection and dialogue along with developing tools, which the Initiative hopes will have lasting value for everyone concerned with social justice advocacy.

In order to enable continued access to our resources and learnings, a new legacy website has been launched and is available to view at: [www.advocacyinitiative.ie](http://www.advocacyinitiative.ie).

As part of the legacy, the Initiative selected seven legacy partners to continue and evolve a variety of our initiatives including the Knowledge Exchange Forums and public opinion polls until 2017.



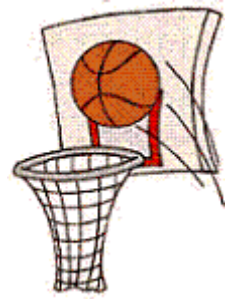
If you would like to hear about future events, **please sign up to receive news and updates at:** <http://eepurl.com/0tQsn>.

DFI has been involved with the Advocacy Initiative since its inception, and has been represented on the Project Management Group and Steering Group. We are proud to be taking on one of the legacy initiatives, a toolkit to advance reflection and practice in relations to developing indicators to support social policy work. If you have a specific interest in following developments in this area, please contact Joan O'Donnell, [joanodonnell@disability-federation.ie](mailto:joanodonnell@disability-federation.ie).

## Wanna roll with us?

**IWA-Sport is delighted to launch its 'Wanna roll with us??' wheelchair basketball promotion.**

The aim of this promotion is to encourage new players, children and adults, to try out the sport of wheelchair basketball in any of the 26 club programmes that take place all over Ireland. Once you get involved you can choose to play recreationally, or get involved in our league which runs from October to May annually.



Wheelchair Basketball is basically the same game as its running equivalent, with the major obvious difference being all players use a custom-built basketball wheelchair to play the game. The game was first introduced to Ireland in the 1960's and has developed hugely popular from then. In recent years the league has expanded due to the development and good work by clubs to increase the number of people playing wheelchair basketball.

Remember, you don't have to be a wheelchair user to play the game - able bodied players are welcome too!

For more information please contact [wheelchairbasketball@iwa.ie](mailto:wheelchairbasketball@iwa.ie) or call 087 279 1811

## Young Adult Carers Booklet

**A key deliverable of the Together for Young Adult Carers (ToYAC) project was the development of a new booklet, aimed at those with an interest in supporting Young Adult Carers.**

The 16 page booklet was developed originally in English, and then translated into Italian and German with some country-specific modifications. The booklet is intended for anyone working with, or who has an interest in, Young Adult Carers. It summarises why this group needs special support, gives examples of the types of support already available in the 5 project partner countries, and makes recommendations for those considering supporting Young Adult Carers in their own work.

The booklet is available now to download from our website. <http://bit.ly/1j5EQHJ>. A small number of hard copies are available on request by emailing [info@carealliance.ie](mailto:info@carealliance.ie). A fee of €5 per hard copy to cover the cost of printing and P&P will apply.

## NCSE - Information Booklet on Post School Options in Education and Training for Adults and School Leavers with Disabilities

**NCSE has prepared an information booklet with a range of providers and agencies, including the National Disability Authority.**

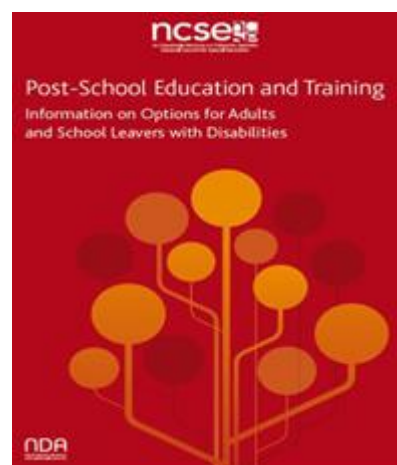
It contains summary information about the relevant programmes and supports for people with disabilities in the areas of Higher Education, Further Education and Training, Community Education, HSE Rehabilitative Training and Adult Day Services. It also includes links and signposts to more detailed information and guidance sources.

The booklet may be read and downloaded on [www.ncse.ie](http://www.ncse.ie)

NCSE will update the booklet to reflect future changes.

NCSE will welcome any comments or suggestions. Please forward any comments to

[adulthoodeducation@ncse.ie](mailto:adulthoodeducation@ncse.ie)



## Features and Opinions

*If you have any ideas or would like to submit an article for the Features and Opinions section, please email Philippa Brennan at [philippabrennan@disability-federation.ie](mailto:philippabrennan@disability-federation.ie)*

# DFI MEMBER ORGANISATIONS | NEWSLETTER DIRECTORY

For information, please contact the member organisations directly.

## **ACTS (Accessible Community Transport Southside)**

Newsletter available at [www.actsltd.ie](http://www.actsltd.ie)

## **Acquired Brain Injury Ireland**

Newsletter available at [www.abiireland.ie/publications.html](http://www.abiireland.ie/publications.html)

## **Arthritis Ireland**

Subscribe to e-zine at [www.arthritisireland.ie](http://www.arthritisireland.ie)

## **Aware**

Subscribe to e-newsletter at [www.aware.ie](http://www.aware.ie)

## **Bodywhys**

Subscribe to newsletter at [www.bodywhys.ie](http://www.bodywhys.ie),

## **Bray Lakers**

Visit [www.braylakers.ie/Newsletter/190](http://www.braylakers.ie/Newsletter/190) for newsletters

## **Care Alliance Ireland**

Visit [http://www.carealliance.ie/publications\\_newsletters](http://www.carealliance.ie/publications_newsletters)

## **Carers Association**

Subscribe at [www.carersireland.com/newsletters.php](http://www.carersireland.com/newsletters.php),

## **Carmichael Centre**

Sign up for news at <http://www.carmichaelcentre.ie/news>

## **Disabled Drivers Association**

Subscribe to newsletter at <http://www.ddai.ie>

## **Down Syndrome Ireland**

Twice-yearly magazine available to members of the organisation

## **Dyslexia Association of Ireland**

Visit <http://www.dyslexia.ie/about/download-section/>

## **Enable Ireland**

E-newsletter at <http://www.enableireland.ie/newsletter>

## **Epilepsy Ireland**

Visit <http://www.epilepsy.ie/index.cfm/spKey/news.html>

## **Féach**

Subscribe to newsletter at <http://feach.ie/index.php/newsletter>

## **Fighting Blindness**

Visit <http://www.fightingblindness.ie/news/email-newsletter/>

## **GROW**

Subscribe at [http://grow.ie/blog/publication\\_titles/newsletters/](http://grow.ie/blog/publication_titles/newsletters/)

## **Irish Guide Dogs Association**

Visit <http://www.guidedogs.ie/iopen24/newsletters.php>

## **HAIL (Housing Association for Integrated Living)**

Download newsletters at <http://www.hail.ie/publications.htm>

## **Headway**

Monthly e-newsletter at <http://www.headway.ie/stayintouch>

## **Heart Children Ireland**

Subscribe at <http://www.heartchildren.ie/sign-our-newsletter>

## **Huntington's Disease Association of Ireland**

Visit <http://www.huntingtons.ie/content/hope-newsletter-0>

## **Irish Haemophilia Society**

Subscribe at <http://www.haemophilia.ie/newsletter.php>

## **Irish Kidney Association**

Visit <http://www.ika.ie/services/support-magazine-archive>

## **Irish Motor Neuron Disease Association**

Subscribe to newsletter at [www.imnda.ie](http://www.imnda.ie)

## **Irish Wheelchair Association**

Visit [www.iwa.ie/information/publications/spokeout-magazine](http://www.iwa.ie/information/publications/spokeout-magazine)

## **Livability**

Subscribe to e-mail updates at <http://www.livability.org.uk/>

## **Migraine Association of Ireland**

Subscribe to monthly e-zine at <http://www.migraine.ie>

## **Move 4 Parkinsons**

Visit <http://www.move4parkinsons.com/join-move4parkinsons/>

## **Multiple Sclerosis Society of Ireland**

Subscribe to e-newsletters at [www.ms-society.ie](http://www.ms-society.ie)

## **Muscular Dystrophy Ireland**

Subscribe at <http://www.mdi.ie/newsletter-by-email.html>

## **National Council for the Blind of Ireland**

Magazine at <http://www.ncbi.ie/news/ncbi-news-magazine>

## **Neurofibromatosis Association of Ireland**

Subscribe to newsletter at [www.nfaireland.ie](http://www.nfaireland.ie)

## **Offaly Centre for Independent Living**

Email [sarah@ocil.ie](mailto:sarah@ocil.ie) to subscribe to monthly newsletter

## **Neurological Alliance of Ireland**

Sign up to newsletter at <http://www.nai.ie/>

## **Parkinsons Association of Ireland**

Visit [http://www.parkinsons.ie/mediacentre\\_publications](http://www.parkinsons.ie/mediacentre_publications)

## **Post Polio Support Group**

Newsletters at [http://www.ppsg.ie/publications\\_survivor.html](http://www.ppsg.ie/publications_survivor.html)

## **Rehab Group**

Visit <http://www.rehab.ie/about/rehabnews.aspx>

## **Roscommon Disability Support Group**

Email [mganly@rosdisabilities.ie](mailto:mganly@rosdisabilities.ie) to request copies of newsletters

## **Spina Bifida Hydrocephalus Ireland**

'Ability' magazine at <http://www.sbhi.ie/ability-magazine.html>

## **Special Olympics Ireland**

Subscribe at <http://www.specialolympics.ie/home.aspx>

## **Spinal Injuries Ireland**

'Spinal News' at [http://www.spinalinjuries.ie/?page\\_id=164](http://www.spinalinjuries.ie/?page_id=164)

## **Walkinstown Association**

Visit [http://www.walk.ie/info\\_newsletter](http://www.walk.ie/info_newsletter)

## **Yoobyoo (formerly Children In Hospital Ireland)**

Subscribe to newsletter at <http://yoobyoo.ie/>

## DFI SUPPORT OFFICERS | CONTACT DETAILS

### National Office

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**Representing the interests and expectations of people with disabilities to be fully included.  
Comprising organisations that represent and support people with disabilities.**

**The Disability Federation of Ireland (DFI) represents the interests and the expectations of people with disabilities to be fully included in Irish society. It comprises organisations that represent and support people with disabilities and disabling conditions.**

The vision of DFI is that Irish society is fully inclusive of people with disabilities and disabling conditions so that they can exercise their full civil, economic, social and human rights and that they are enabled to reach their full potential in life. DFI's mission is to act as an advocate for the full and equal inclusion of people with disabilities and disabling conditions in all aspects of their lives.

There are over 120 organisations within membership or as associates of DFI. DFI also works with a growing number of organisations and groups around the country that have a significant disability interest, mainly from the statutory and voluntary sectors. DFI provides:

- Information
- Training and Support
- Networking
- Advocacy and Representation
- Research and Policy Development / Implementation
- Organisation and Management Development

DFI works on the basis that disability is a societal issue and so works with Government, and across the social and economic strands and interests of society.

**Disability Federation of Ireland, Fumbally Court, Fumbally Lane, Dublin 8**

**Tel: 01-4547978 Fax: 01-4547981**

**Email: [info@disability-federation.ie](mailto:info@disability-federation.ie) Web: [www.disability-federation.ie](http://www.disability-federation.ie)**

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