



DISABILITY FEDERATION OF IRELAND

NEWSLETTER

Advocate for the Voluntary Disability Sector
Supporting Organisations to Enable People with Disabilities

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*DFI WISHES ITS
MEMBER
ORGANISATIONS
A VERY HAPPY
CHRISTMAS AND
A PEACEFUL NEW
YEAR*



Response to Budget 2008

In its recent Programme for Government (June 2007), Government stated that:

“This Government is determined to continue to prioritise the interests of people with disabilities over the next five years, through a series of significant measures. We are committed to ensuring that the Strategy is driven and managed from a whole of Government perspective and it will be overseen and supported by the Department of An Taoiseach. This Government, will for each year of the Programme for Government, set out the objectives and outcomes to be reached in the NDS having regard to the vision and long terms goals for people with disabilities as set out in *Towards 2016*. This approach will be properly monitored and we will ensure that at least half of the strategy is implemented by 2010”.

In light of this commitment to prioritise disability through the implementation of the National Disability Strategy, DFI is

extremely concerned that this Budget has not progressed the inclusion of people with disabilities in Ireland. This is incredible given the renewed commitment in the Programme for Government.

The Minister for Finance stated that the priority in the Budget is protecting the vulnerable. However, it is Government policy not simply to protect the position of people with disabilities as a vulnerable group, but to ensure their full participation, engagement and inclusion.

Disabled people no longer expect their position to be simply protected. They need to see real evidence of progress to full participation and inclusion. There has been:

- No move to introduce the Cost of Disability Payment
- No evidence of funding to shore up basic services being provided on the basis of fundraising. (Research show, for example, that eleven DFI member organisations had a total income between them of €33m in 2006 of which €16m was fundraised. These are organisations providing health and social services to people with disabilities.)
- No evidence of outcomes to be reached in 2008 as part of achieving 50% of the NDS by 2010

A range of basic unmet service needs recently identified by the Health Research Board, including approx 15,000 people requiring therapeutic intervention and rehabilitation services, 7,500 requiring assessment for personal assistance and support services and over 5,000 people awaiting respite services (Health Research Board, Statistics Series 3, Dec 2007).

Furthermore, we are concerned that the 2008 draw down of the multi-annual funding package, announced in Budget 2005, has not been fully provided for. We are now urgently requesting the Minister to respond clearly to this Government's commitment that they would set out annually the outcomes to be reached through the NDS in line with the commitments in *Towards 2016*.

We acknowledge the increases in income supports for people with disabilities and carers as being very welcome.

The Budget is strong in pushing forward the economic infrastructure, through a renewed commitment to the NDP, but social infrastructure such as the long awaited disability strategy must also be pushed forward, in parallel, and with the same intensity.

This Budget gives no comfort that Government has the confidence to deliver the National Disability Strategy.

NEWS

DFI MEETING WITH HSE

A meeting took place at the end of November with Seamus McNulty, Ger Reaney, Deirdre Scully and other HSE. The main issues raised by DFI included funding issues, particularly the core deficit validation process, the corporate relationship between the HSE and DFI member organisations, the Physical and Sensory Disability Database, and the development of replacement structures for the Regional Co-Ordinating Committees. The need for consistency of engagement rather than sporadic and intermittent contact was discussed, particularly in the context of ensuring that our member organisations can fully engage with the Independent Needs Assessment roll out.

The actual process of engagement was highlighted, in terms of facilitating full participation with the Transformation process. Service Level Agreements were also discussed, as was the general progression of the NDS in the context of health issues. The issue of capacity building and organisational development for our member organisations was raised. Other issues related to the relationships between the PCCC and the voluntary disability sector, the Department of Health and Children Sectoral Plan, and the National Physical and Sensory Disability Database.

Further meetings will take place with the HSE on these and other topics, and it is planned to schedule these meetings on a regular basis throughout 2008.

Further information from Toni Gleeson, E: tonigleeson@disability-federation.ie, 086 600452



SKILL PROJECT

Niall Byrne, Head of HR & Service Quality, Cheshire Ireland and Head of the DFI SKILL Project Steering Group receiving SKILL Project Backfill Financial Contribution from John Dolan, CEO, DFI.

SKILL Project is aimed at addressing the need for improved access to education, training and development opportunities for staff working in support grades within Irish health and personal social services. Two Fetac Accredited awards are currently provided within SKILL Project – Fetac Level 5 'Health Service Skills' and Fetac Level 6 'Advanced Certificate in Supervisory Management Skills'.

Increased Funding to Organisations: SKILL Project has recently announced an increase in this funding to a sum of €3,000 per person per programme. This financial contribution is made by the SKILL Project towards the costs associated with participants attending programmes. This recent increase will be of significant benefit to the 16 DFI Member Organisations that have taken up the unique training opportunity provided by SKILL Project over the past two years.

Briefing Sessions: A series of VEC / SKILL Project Team Building Sessions for line managers / supervisors and support staff will be held in January and February 2008. These will provide details of SKILL Project and how it can benefit your staff.

Call for Expressions of Interest: DFI is now calling on any DFI Member Organisations with an interest in the SKILL Project to submit an Expression of Interest in the SKILL Project Training Programme 2008 / 2009. The form for this purpose is available to download from the DFI website or by contacting Cathy McGrath on 01 4250124 / cathymcgrath@disability-federation.ie Closing date is 15th February 2008.

COMPLAINTS PROCEDURE

As stated in September's newsletter, under Part 9 of the Health Act 2004 each voluntary organisation has obligations which concern the establishment of complaints procedures if it:

- Received funding under Section 38 of the Act
- Received funding under Section 39 of the Act
- Used HSE facilities, for example to hold meetings.

Each organisation covered by Part 9 of the Health Act is obliged to ensure its complaints procedure is compliant with the Act.

To assist organisations in developing their complaints procedures, the HSE has developed a template of standardised headings. Further information and the document template can be found on DFI's website www.disability-federation.ie.

CHARITIES BILL 2007

The Charities Bill 2007 was debated in the Dail in November and is now ready to move to Committee stage in January when it will be considered by the Joint Committee on Arts Sport, Tourism, Community Rural and Gaeltacht Affairs. This provides all organisations with a window of opportunity to submit suggested amendments or concerns to the Committee, Minister and Department, which can be tabled by members and voted on when the committee meets.

It is unfortunate that the Bill falls short of stated Government policy with regard to the regulatory framework that it adopts. The Charities Bill 2007 aims only to ensure financial and trustee accountability and better administration within the charitable sector.

DFI considers that the primary purpose of the Bill should be "to promote the spirit of active citizenship and the full involvement of all persons residing in the state towards the enhancement of public benefit which derives through supporting the charitable sector" (Programme for Government 2007; *Towards 2016*).

DFI has been actively engaged with the Wheel and with Irish Charities Tax Research Ltd (ICTR) in teasing out some of the issues with the current draft, and assisting members to understand the implications of the Bill for them. To this end, DFI held a very informative meeting on 15th November at which Sheila Nordon, Director of ICTR, Kathryn Burns, Institute of Public Chartered Accountants, and Ivan Cooper, The Wheel, answered some of the concerns of members regarding the introduction of the new regulatory framework for charities, as well as the development of guiding Principles for Fundraising.

DFI has raised a number of issues regarding the Bill including the omission of "human rights" as a charitable purpose, the dual role of the Regulator as enforcer and advisor, and the potential to increase dual reporting requirements to both the Regulator and the Companies registration Office.

Some of these issues have been addressed in Minister Éamon Ó Cuív's summing up speech in the Dail.

DFI's submission is available on www.disability-federation.ie and the ministers comments were presented at the recent meeting in DFI offices, notes of which are available form joanodonnell@disability-federation.ie.

Codes of Good Practice in Fundraising:

Irish Charities Tax Research Ltd has carried out research to make recommendations on how the operational aspects of charitable fundraising can be effectively regulated through Codes of Good Practice.

Through extensive consultation with the sector, The Working Group completed a draft statement of 'General Principles for Fundraising' setting out a proposed list of overarching principles for fundraisers in Ireland. The draft statement can be downloaded from www.ictr.ie.

NATIONAL IMPLEMENTATION GROUP - ASSESSMENT OF NEED (AON) – 0-5YEARS NATIONAL DISABILITY STRATEGY

There have been a number of developments regarding the Assessment of need for children from 0 – 5 years in the past few months;

Information: An explanatory leaflet or 'frequently asked questions' for parents, explaining the Assessment of Need process will be prepared and circulated with the Assessment Report and the Service Statement. It will explain the respective roles of the Assessment Officer and Case Manager. It will also explain the key points of the Disability Act and assist in managing expectations. It is recognised that information is currently being provided to families by Assessment Officers, but the implementation group felt it important to have this information available on a written basis

Each LHM will have responsibility within his/her own area to establish the length of the transition period which is required before all assessments can be dealt with through the Assessment Officer. Parents of children currently on waiting lists or who are in line for assessments must be informed of their rights under the Disability Act. The transition period required to achieve the above should be as short as possible.

Reporting: The Assessment and Summary Report were prepared by a multidisciplinary group comprising staff of both voluntary and statutory agencies, and had been designed to comply with the requirements of the legislation. It was proposed to review the Assessment Report before the end of 2007, in light of the feedback received and in particular to focus on the language used. In relation to the question on the permanency of the disability, it was felt that a 'Yes' or 'No' answer is necessary to comply with the requirements of the legislation. However, an additional clause will be prepared for insertion with the report which would emphasise the context for this answer and include positive and realistic statements around the potential for progress and development for children with disabilities.

Format of the Service Statement: The format of the Service Statement is currently being finalised. It will include the services to be provided, the name of the service provider, the location where the services will be provided and the timescale within which they will be reviewed. It will also include the service needs which are being addressed by these services.

Unmet needs: Any service needs identified in the Assessment Report which are not being addressed due to a lack of resources will not be included in the Service Statement. However, they will be included in the covering letter. Parents and voluntary organisations need to be confident that unmet needs are being recorded and that services are being planned to address those needs. Nationally, unmet needs will be included in the Annual Report forwarded to the Minister. On an individual basis, Case Managers/Liaison Officers are required under the legislation to review the Service Statement on an ongoing basis in the context of any changes either in the circumstances around the individual or in the level of resources available.

Early Intervention Services: The availability of co-ordinated Early Intervention Services within an LHO has been identified as contributing to a more streamlined and efficient response to the requirement for assessments of need. Each LHO will be requested to plan and implement a co-ordinated early intervention service as a matter of urgency. This should include all publicly funded providers of early intervention services to children with disabilities. A structure (steering group/forum) to support this co-ordinated early intervention service should be put in place. The co-ordinated early intervention service should address the needs of all children with disabilities and provide one point of entry to services.

The above proposal is not prescriptive as to how this should happen. The development of the early intervention service in each Local Health Office area may reflect the history and the current stage of development of existing services. A lead person may need to be identified to progress this.

Further information from Toni Gleeson, tonigleeson@disability-federation.ie

Revised Housing Adaptation Grant Schemes: Will They Meet the Need?

The revised Housing Adaptation Grant Schemes that the Department of the Environment, Heritage and Local Government outlined in its policy statement last February came into effect on 1 November, 2007. These include the Mobility Aid Grant Scheme, the Housing Adaptation Grant for People with a Disability (HAG) and the Housing Aid for Older People. Application forms for the grants can be obtained from the Local Authority where the applicant resides.

The Department revised its schemes following criticism of the Disabled Persons Grant Scheme by the voluntary disability sector, and a research report on its operation by the National Disability Authority (NDA). The Department has explained that the new schemes “are designed to ensure that available funding is targeted at lower income households and those whose accommodation needs are greatest ... [and to] involve a more streamlined operation...” (*Delivering Homes: Sustaining Communities* page 61)

DFI welcomes some new features of the schemes, but is concerned that their implementation does not preclude the house adaptations necessary for people with disabilities to be able to live as independently as possible. Areas that require careful monitoring include the upper limits on the amount of grant available, the means-testing for eligibility under the schemes, and facilitation in completing the grant application fully.

The Department will be actively monitoring the schemes during their first year of operation, and early in 2008 DFI’s Housing Subgroup will consider how organisations can assist in that process. Meanwhile anyone using the revised schemes (or unable to since ineligible) might let DFI know about their experience - positive or negative. Please email lillianbuchanan@disability-federation.ie.

The National Economic and Social Forum (NESF) is a social partnership organisation which advises the Government on policies to achieve greater equality and social inclusion. They recently launched a report, *Mental Health and Social Inclusion*, which reveals the huge economic and social costs of mental health and recommends a radical shift in the way mental health is dealt with by employers, local authorities, trade unions and the health sector. Copies of the report can be downloaded at www.nesf.ie.

Housing for People with Disabilities

It is recognised that many people in unsatisfactory housing situations have not applied to their local authority for housing because there is little prospect of obtaining accommodation tailored to their needs. The research report jointly commissioned by the Citizens information Board and DFI, which is to be published in a few weeks, describes the barriers faced by those seeking more appropriate housing. Due in part to these barriers, the last triennial assessment of housing need in 2005 reported only 480 households, or just over 1% of all those assessed, as “disabled or handicapped persons” in housing need.

Another housing needs assessment will take place in March 2008. Although there has been inter agency discussion about improving the assessment process, this next assessment will happen in much the same way as the previous ones. With few exceptions, people must apply for housing, and be on the waiting list, to be counted.

At the same time the Department of Environment, Heritage and Local Government is proposing that local authorities include, “a certain percentage of housing projects that cater to the specific housing requirements of special needs applicants.” [*Provision of Social Housing Support*, page 8]. When local authorities develop their Housing Action Plans for 2009-2013, the results of the coming housing needs assessment will influence their investment plans, particularly the percentage of housing tailored to meet special needs.

While there is the real prospect of better social housing provision in future, applying for it is still a laborious process. Voluntary organisations can advocate on behalf of their members to ensure that their names are on the waiting list, preferably by March 2008. The application form for social housing can be down-loaded from most Local authority websites.

DFI’s Housing Subgroup will be developing a strategy early in the New Year to promote access for people with disabilities to appropriate housing and supports.

For further information, please contact Martin Naughton at martinnaughton@disability-federation.ie or Lillian Buchanan at lillianbuchanan@disability-federation.ie.

2006 Census

The 2006 Census provides an interesting snapshot of the situation of people with disabilities in Ireland. In addition to describing the nature and extent of disability, the information underlines the challenges faced in implementing the National Disability Strategy and *Towards 2016* to achieve the agreed “vision of an Ireland where people with disabilities have, to the greatest extent possible, the opportunity to live a full life with their families and as part of their local community, free from discrimination.” Voluntary organisations, as key activators in enabling

people with disabilities to participate in mainstream activities and benefit from disability specific developments, will play an instrumental role in ensuring that the next decennial census shows a more positive picture.

The following are some statistics relating to people with disabilities.

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- **Housing and Accommodation**

The 2006 Census provides information on the living and accommodation experienced by people with disabilities. The following just touches on the statistics contained in this rich source of data.

- While 38,861 people with a disability lived in communal establishments, the vast majority (99%) were in private households
- Of the 346,844 persons with a disability in private households, 30% said that they were the head of their household, 20% were the spouse, 20% were children and 30% were classed as 'other' (e.g., unrelated)
- Of those classed as children, 27% were 25 years or older
- 21% of people with disabilities in private households lived alone (13,122 persons). County Cavan was the home for 278 persons living alone while Dublin was home for 3,399
- Three fourths of people with disabilities living in permanent housing units (259,255 persons) were in owner-occupied housing
- Another 12% were in council housing and 3% in units provided by voluntary organisations
- The private rented sector housed 6% of people with disabilities
- Of the 17,044 in private rented furnished quarters, 28% had a "condition that substantially limits one or more basic physical activities" and 26% had a "psychological or emotional condition"

Although the accuracy of the Census statistics regarding the nature of occupancy has been questioned, the Census provides a comprehensive record of living situations in Ireland.

- **Health/ Ill health:**

According to the Census 394,000 persons reported that they had a long-lasting health problem and/or difficulty doing certain activities, equivalent to 9.3% of the population in 2006. Amongst children aged 0-14 years, for example, there were 33,256 with a disability, 20,592 of whom had difficulty in learning, remembering or concentrating. Amongst adults aged 65 years or older, there were 26,379 with a disability, 8,870 of whom had difficulty in learning, remembering or concentrating.

The 2006 Census records a more comprehensive range of disabling conditions than did earlier census, focussing as much on the activities affected as on the medical diagnoses. For example, there were 177,085 persons with a condition “that substantially limits one or more basic physical activities”, 113,133 with a “difficulty in learning, remembering or concentrating” and 64,955 with a “psychological or emotional condition”. Amongst all those with disabilities, 62% had more than one type of disability.

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- **Disability Across the Life Cycle**

Amongst 0-14 year olds covered in the Census, 4% had a disability while amongst those 65 years or older 30% had a disability. This pattern implies that more people will have a disability in future as the Irish population ages. Other patterns reported in the Census include on the one hand the lower incidence of disability amongst people who are married compared with those classed under other types of marital status in the same age group, and amongst people of EU nationality (excluding Irish and UK), compared with non EU nationalities in the same age group. On the other hand the Census reports a very high percentage of Travellers with a disability in every age group under 85 years.

- **Educational Disadvantage:**

The disadvantages still faced by people with disabilities are starkly portrayed in the Census information about educational attainment and employment rates.¹

Looking at all those aged 15 years or older, 17% who had a disability attained third level education compared with 31% of the total population. One quarter of men with a disability aged 25-44 years had third level education compared with 38% of all men in that age category. Amongst the women, 31% with a disability had third level but 48% of all women aged 25 to 44 years had achieved that level.

- **Employment disadvantage**

The educational disadvantage reported in the 2006 Census helps to explain the relatively low level of employment amongst people with disabilities and consequent impact on incomes. Looking again at people aged 15 years and older in 2006, 57% of the population were in employment compared with 22% of people with disabilities. This lower rate of employment amongst people with disabilities occurs across all the age cohorts. For example for the 25-44 age group 45% of those with a disability were employed, compared with 79% of all people in that age category.

For a more detailed examination of the 2006 Census, for example, on employment and education by type of disability, or on the housing of people with disabilities and their access to key consumer items, readers can go to the website of the Central Statistics Office at http://www.cso.ie/census/census2006_volume_11.htm

DESSA's Childcare Inclusion Programme

The Disability, Equality Specialist Support Agency (DESSA) is a national community development organisation whose mission is to support the inclusion and active participation of disabled people in Irish Society through community development action. In 2006, DESSA secured funding under the EDS Programme to develop the Childcare Inclusion Programme, in partnership with Dublin City Childcare Committee and Dublin Inner City Partnership. The

¹ The CSO recommends against comparing Census 2002 results with Census 2006 because the questions on disability changed.

central vision of this programme, a social inclusion initiative, is that all children and their families will have access to childcare and play settings of their choice. They have recently launched their report "A Profile of Inclusion" which calls for appropriate tailored training to be made available to all childcare and play practitioners. It also suggests that there is a need for policy frameworks related to the inclusion of children with specific needs to be introduced and advocates for the establishment of a key agency with responsibility for this process of inclusion. Further information from DESSA, Tel: 01 4536864.

DFI NATIONAL CONFERENCE

“WE CAN’T OPT OUT OF THE FUTURE.”

Voluntary disability organisations have been to the forefront in promoting the inclusion and wellbeing of people with disabilities. They have a critical role to play in assisting people with disabilities to gain access, as equal citizens to all aspects of Irish life; this includes the provision of specialist services and in enabling people with disabilities to access services available to members of the public.

DFI’s Conference, which took place on 21st and 22nd November in the Heritage Hotel, Portlaoise, focused on the continued importance and changing role of disability organisations in the new environment being shaped by the Government’s commitments in the National Disability Strategy (NDS) and ‘Towards 2016’ to the mainstreaming of supports and services to people with disabilities. A key tool to achieving this goal will be the ability of all organisations, both voluntary and statutory, to work better together.

The Conference was addressed by Minister Jimmy Devins T.D., Minister of State at the Department of Health and Children with responsibility for Disability and Mental Health.

Stephen Rourke presented a paper entitled ‘Collaboration and Inter-Organisation Work within the Disability Sector’. Tom Ronayne presented a paper called ‘Working Together for the Public Good’. Tom is a Director of WRC Social and Economic Consultants.

Nuala Crowe Taft, together with Marie Vaughan, Enable Ireland, presented a paper entitled ‘Our Stories – Current Examples of Inter-Organisational Work within the Disability Sector. Nuala has been involved with the disability sector for over 25 years and recently has been working independently on development projects. Marie is a Service Co-Ordinator with Enable Ireland.

Presentations were also made by Peter Cassells, Chairperson of the National Centre for Partnership and Performance, Brendan Broderick, Chairperson of the National Federation of Voluntary Bodies and CEO of the National Centre for Partnership and Performance, and Ger Reaney, Local Health Manager, HSE, West Cork.

Panel discussions took place on each day of the conference, and these were facilitated by Mark Little and Sarah Burke.

The Panels included Geraldine Clare, Paul Ledwidge, John Dolan, Peter Cassells, Deirdre Garvey (The Wheel), Helen Lahert (HSE), Tom Ronayne, Stephen Rourke, Ger Reaney,

Nuala Crowe Taft, Eithne Frost, Consultant, Eithne Fitzgerald (NDA), Des Kenny (NCBI), and Dr Fergus O’Ferrall (Adelaide and Meath Hospital Society).

A Conference Report is being prepared and will be available in the near future.

INFORMING FAMILIES OF THEIR CHILD’S DISABILITY NATIONAL BEST PRACTICE GUIDELINES - CONSULTATION AND RESEARCH REPORT

The National Federation of Voluntary Bodies has recently published a report, “Informing Families of their Child’s Disability”. The organisation is the national umbrella body for voluntary/non-statutory agencies who provide direct services to people with intellectual disability.

The report sets out evidence based national best practice guidelines in relation to the how parents are informed of their child’s disability. The report includes guiding principles for health professional while at the same time embracing that each situation and disclosure is unique. The report highlights the importance of communication, information and support, culture and language for the families involved as well as training and support for professionals.

For further information please check the website www.fedvol.ie or email secretariat@fedvol.ie.

DUN LAOGHAIRE RATHDOWN COUNTY COUNCIL DISABILITY CONSULTATION GROUP - CALL FOR NOMINATIONS

Dún Laoghaire-Rathdown County Council became a signatory to the Barcelona Declaration on the 10th of February 2003. To help the County Council deliver on this commitment, the local authority agreed to set up a consultative forum involving both persons with a disability and organisations with work with and support them. This group has been meeting for over three years, and is called the Disability Consultation Group (DCG).

The DCG advises Dún Laoghaire-Rathdown County Council in three main areas:

- The enhancement of the delivery of its services with particular regard to accessibility issues.
- The enhancement in the access, circulation, and egress of the built environment.
- The enhancement of access to information and communication technology.

The County Council believes that the DCG is a very important resource which can help them make their services more accessible. It also sees the Group as a forum in which to develop

good practice and innovative ideas based on a spirit of social inclusion, community involvement and mutual respect and understanding.

The DCG is now in a position to invite nominations from organisations to fill 2 representative seats on the Group. Interested organisations must have a local (i.e. County of Dún Laoghaire-Rathdown) remit (national organisations working in the county are also welcome to apply) and/or be focused on access and disability issues. They should be comfortable working in a co-operative and inter-agency/inter-organisational environment, and be able to commit to meetings (currently on Wednesday mornings) approximately every 6-8 weeks.

If there are more organisations interested than there are places available, a selection process will apply. Nominated representatives may be interviewed by members of the DCG to ensure their suitability.

Letters of nomination should be submitted to Torry Schellhorn (contact details below) by 31 January 2007. FI is pleased to support the DCG and we would ask that you give serious consideration to nominating a representative. or more information on the DCG, please contact:

Ray Byrne, Chairperson, DCG, Disability Interest Group, 087 258 4637
raybyrne@clearwire.ie

Anthony Carrick, Vice Chairperson, DCG, Disability Federation of Ireland, 086 820 6736
anthonycarrick@disability-federation.ie

Torry Schellhorn, Secretary, DCG, Dún Laoghaire-Rathdown County Council
(01) 204 7924 tschellhorn@DLRCOCO.IE

For any issue or information relating to accessibility of DLRCO services, please contact:
 Pat Coffey, Dún Laoghaire-Rathdown County Council. Equality and Access Officer
(01) 2047269 access@dlrcoco.ie

GENERAL INFORMATION

PARTNERS WANTED FOR EXCITING TELEPHONE SUPPORT PILOT PROJECT

Community Network is seeking organisations to work with them on piloting a new approach to social inclusion and low level care. Since 1989, Community Network, a U.K. registered charity, has used telephone conference call technology to develop the concept of social telephony as a means of combating social isolation. With a client database of 760(plus) voluntary and community groups last year it facilitated circa 9,000 conference hours.

Community Network offers voluntary and community organisations a cost-effective opportunity to reach out to and support individuals by telephone networking from their own homes. For individuals unable to physically attend a meeting, a conference call will allow them to contribute to, and remain a part of, the wider community. Friendship circles, carers' support meetings are all held over the phone - new friends made and stories told.

Community Network is seeking a range of organisations for this exciting pilot. This is a free opportunity to test out a new way of working and see if and how it will work for your organisation. Each participating organisation will have one telephone conference a week for a six month period for 6 - 8 participants plus a host. **There are, however, not many places remaining for organisations, and if you are interested it is advisable that you contact Community Network as soon as possible.**

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The host, a volunteer from your organisation, will be trained, by Community Network in how to manage the conference call and maximise the experience for all concerned. Everyone will be called out from Community Network and therefore not incur any costs at all.

Contact julian@community-network.org, Tel: +44 20 7923 5251, and tell them why you think your organisation should be part of this opportunity. As a big response is expected to this offer please reply as quickly as possible to avoid disappointment.

No special equipment needed to take part - just a phone and no costs to participating organisations. For more information visit www.commuity-network.org. BT is sponsoring this project.



Director of The Personal Advocacy Service

The Citizens Information Board (CIB) is the statutory agency responsible for supporting the provision of information, advice and advocacy to the public on the broad range of social and civil services. The Citizens Information Act 2007 sets out the Personal Advocacy Service which is to be provided by the Board to people with a disability who are qualifying persons. This service is an important strand of the Government's commitment to ensuring that people with a disability have access to the broad range of social services and will work closely with the 40 + Advocacy Projects in the Voluntary Sector funded and supported by the CIB and the national network of Citizens Information Services.

The role of the Director of The Personal Advocacy Service will be to develop and implement the CIB's strategic approach to the delivery of advocacy services in conjunction with the Board, the Chief Executive and Senior Managers., establish The Personal Advocacy Service in keeping with the statutory responsibilities as outlined in the provisions of the Citizens Information Act 2007 and the Disability Act 2005, and develop and manage the Personal Advocacy Service to meet the needs of people with disabilities in a changing environment.

Full job description is available on www.citizensinformationboard.ie or by contacting the Citizens Information Board's Head Office on 01 605 9000. Closing date for applications is 5 p.m. on 4th January 2008.

Midlands Fibromyalgia Group

The Midlands Fibromyalgia Group is moving offices. Their new address is c/o Offaly CIL, Clonminch Road, Clonminch, Tullamore, Co Offaly.

The group has a helpline that people can call if they are looking for information about Fibromyalgia (1800 20 10 68) on Tuesdays from 10-12. They also run a support group on the last Tuesday of every month from 8pm at the Day Care Centre, Arden Road, Tullamore (except December, July and August).

For further information please contact their helpline or look on their website

<http://local.mobhaile.ie/mfsg/Home/tabid/4188/Default.aspx>.

Signed Play Opens Up a New Field in Limerick City's Dramatic Arts

The first interpretation of a play, John B Keane's 'The Field', for the deaf and hearing impaired took place in Limerick recently at the Belltable Arts Centre.

Alona Troy, enhancing disability services co-ordinator with Paul Partnership, who were one of the organisers of the initiative, commended the collaboration between The Belltable Theatre, Heart 'n' Crown Theatre Company and Signing Information Mid-West. Ms. Troy noted that she hoped that this is going to be the first of many interpreted performances.

On the night, two interpreters performed the play on stage at the O'Connell Street arts venue and Sandra Morrissey, development officer with the Limerick Deaf Community Centre, said she received dozens of texts from their members saying how much they enjoyed the production. Ms. Morrissey commented that events such as these are badly needed, if we are serious about integration and inclusion.

At the launch the Ms. Morrissey called on Government to provide funding to institutions such as the Limerick Deaf Community, which caters for the entire Mid-West region. She noted that "We have been unbelievably busy since we've opened in September. In the past three months, we've had 170 members sign up. But if we received Government funding we could do so much more for them. We could have more social nights and we want to set up a deaf group for people with learning disabilities," she said. The centre is currently funded through fundraising events organised by the Mid-West Deaf Association, and has also received donations from JP McManus. The centre, which opened on 96 O'Connell Street this September, caters for both the deaf and hearing impaired. For more information visit www.dccclimerick.eu.

National Gallery of Ireland ISL Tours

The National Gallery of Ireland has arranged a further of Irish Sign Language tour on Thursday, February 7th 2008. This tour will take place at 6.30 pm, meeting in the Shaw Room and no booking is required.



DFI Newsletter Information

DFI Newsletters are available for download from our website: www.disability-federation.ie

Newsletter submissions by e-E-mail to: newsletter@disability-federation.ie

Send newsletter subscription requests by e-E-mail to: newsletter@disability-federation.ie
or <http://www.disability-federation.ie/newsletters.htm>

Newsletters Available

For information please contact the relevant organisation directly.

Ability - Newsletter of the Irish Association for Spina Bifida and Hydrocephalus, Tel: 01 4572329, E-mail: info@iasbah.ie

Arthritis Ireland - Newsletter—Tel: 01 661 8188
E-mail: info@arthritisireland.ie

Aspire - Asperger Syndrome Association of Ireland. 01-8780027/9, E-mail: admin@aspire-irl.org

Asthma Society News - Tel: 01-8788511,
E-mail: office@asthmasociety.ie

Brainstorm - Migraine Association of Ireland, Tel: 01-8064121, E-mail: info@migraine.ie

Brainwave - Quarterly Newsletter, Tel: 01 4557500,
E-mail: info@epilepsy.ie

Care Alliance Ireland - E-mail: ndo@carealliance.ie

Clar na nÓg - National Youth Council of Ireland Tel: 01-4784122
E-mail: info@nyci.ie

Cleft Lip and Palate Association of Ireland -
www.cleft.ie/newsletter/index.htm, Tel: (01) 2848227,
E-mail: georginawade@cleft.ie

Community Exchange Newsletter, E-mail: info@activelink.ie, Tel: +1 667 7326

Connect - Irish Motor Neuron Disease Association. E-mail: info@imnda.ie,
Freefone 1800 403 403

Community Workers' Co-operative – Community Work News.
E-mail: info@cwci.ie, Tel: +353 (0) 91 779 030

Cornerstone - Homeless Agency -
<http://www.homelessagency.ie/research/cornerstone.asp>, Tel: 01 7036100,
E-mail: homeless@dublincity.ie

Cumhacht - People with Disabilities in Ireland
http://www.pwdi.ie/news_events/newsletter/index.htm, E-mail: info@pwdi.ie,
Tel: 01-8721744

Debra Ireland Newsletter, Tel: 01 678 5044, E-mail: info@debraireland.org

Down Syndrome Ireland - Tel: 01-8730999, E-mail:
info@downsyndrome.ie

Enable Ireland - Newsletter—Tel: 1850 204 304 E-mail:
communications@enableireland.ie

Equality News - Tel: 01-4173333, E-mail: info@equality.ie

E-Info Deaf Source— E-mail: info@irishdeafociety.ie. Tel: +353 1860 1878

Féach - Support to parents of blind and visually impaired children. Tel: 01 493 1896, E-mail: info@feach.ie

Fighting Blindness - Tel: 01 7093050, E-mail:
avril.daly@fightingblindness.ie

Frontline of Learning Disability -Tel: 01-2862649. E-mail:
frontline@indigo.ie

GROWing - Information on Mental Health, Tel: 1890 474 474,
E-mail: info@grow.ie

Guidelines - Irish Guide Dogs Association. Tel: 021 4878200 E-mail:
info@guidedogs.ie

Headway Ireland - National Association for Acquired Brain Injury -'Making Headway', Tel: 01-8102066, E-mail: info@headway.ie

Heart News: - Newsletter of Irish Heart Foundation. Tel: 01 668 5001
E-mail: info@irishheart.ie.

Heartstrings - Newsletter of Heart Children Ireland, published quarterly,
Tel: 1850 217017 E-mail: heartchildren@eircom.net

Heatwave - Irish Raynauds Scleroderma Society,
E-mail: info@irishraynauds.com, Tel: 01 2020184

HOPE - Huntington's Disease Association of Ireland. Tel: 01-872 1303, E-mail: hdai@indigo.ie

Inclusion Ireland - Tel: 01 8559891, E-mail:
info@inclusionireland.ie

Irish Deaf News - Irish Deaf Society. Minicom: 01-8601910; 01-8601878; E-mail: info@irishdeafsociety.ie

Irish Wheelchair Association - 'Spokeout' , Tel: 01-8186 400, E-mail: Joanna.marsden@iwa.ie

Kerry Network of People with Disabilities - Network News 066-7180611, E-mail: kerryrwdi@eircom.net

MS News—Newsletter of MS Ireland. Tel: 01 6781600,
E-mail: info@ms-society.ie

Muscular Dystrophy Ireland - MDI News Update Tel: 01-8721501, E-mail: info@mdi.ie

National Association for Deaf People - Link Magazine - Tel: 01 8723800, E-mail: nad@iol.ie, Minicom: (01) 817 5777

NCBI News - Newsletter of the National Council for the Blind of Ireland, Tel: 01 8307033, E-mail: press@ncbi.ie, www.ncbi.ie

Neuro News - Neurofibromatosis Association of Ireland, Tel: 01-8726338, E-mail: nfaireland@eircom.net

People First - Central Remedial Clinic Tel: 01-8057400
E-mail: vmmcutch@crc.ie

Post Polio Support Group - Newsletter, Tel: 071 64791
E-mail: newsletter@ppsg.ie

Poverty Today - Combat Poverty Agency. Tel:01-670 6746

Rehab News -Tel: 01-2057200 E-mail: dara.duffy@rehab.ie

Simon News - Simon Community, Tel: 01-6711606
E-mail: info@simoncommunity.com

S.I. News - Schizophrenia Ireland, Tel: (0)1 8601620
E-mail: info@sirl.ie

Social Housing - Irish Council for Social Housing Tel: 01-6618334; E-mail: info@icsh.ie

Speaking up for Advocacy - Comhairle Newsletter on advocacy.
Tel: 01 6059035, E-mail: mairide.woods@comhairle.ie or
davin.roche@comhairle.ie

Volunteer Stroke Scheme News- Tel: 01-4559036.
E-mail: info@strokescheme.ie

Wheel E-Bulletin Tel:01- 454 8727,
E-mail: info@wheel.ie



Disability Federation of Ireland is the national support mechanism for voluntary disability organisations in Ireland covering all areas of disability and disabling conditions: intellectual, physical, sensory, hidden and mental health. DFI has ongoing involvement with over 150 organisations and groups across the country, 70 of which currently comprise its National Council, and 42 of which are Associate Members. Allied to this, it works with and supports over 200 organisations and Groups around the country that have a significant and growing disability interest, mainly coming from the statutory and voluntary sectors.

DFI provides:

- Information
- Training and Advice
- Organisation and Management Development
- Research and Policy
- Advocacy and Representation

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