



Disability Federation of Ireland

Newsletter

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

December 2008

Hold the Vision

The week past saw the 60th Anniversary of the Universal Declaration of Human Rights and just ahead is Christmas which celebrates another anniversary. The language around one is of human rights and the other the sanctity of human life. They can easily be drawn together by a consideration of human dignity. In the National Disability Strategy (NDS) we recognise the commitment of our State to deliver dignity to people with disability by setting out to ensure that they can fully and freely participate in all aspects of life in Ireland by having sufficient income, access to social and public services and ensuring that they can maximise their autonomy.

Christmas and the Human Rights Convention in their own ways are about holding onto, and the giving of, hope. So too is the NDS. We are in difficult times economically and they are set to continue. We clearly see our work as trying to minimise cuts and preserve and grow services for disabled people. It is all of that, but strongly within the context that people have human rights, that life is sacred and that human life must be lived with dignity. Express it as you will but the bottom line is the same.

From DFI every good wish for a happy and peaceful Christmas and the hope that we will all bring a renewed vigour and energy to the major challenges that face us in the New Year.

John Dolan
CEO

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The first Newsletter of 2009 will be a January / February issue and will be available to download in February

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

NEW MEMBERS

DFI would like to welcome the following new organisations to our growing membership.

Bluestack Special Needs Foundation Ltd

DFI welcomes The Bluestack Foundation as General Members. The Foundation is a voluntary, not for profit organisation run predominately by parents of children with special needs and professionals who not only work, but have a personal interest in the field. The Foundation was set up in Donegal by the Magee Bluestack Challenge Committee who, since 2002 has organised a sponsored hill walk to raise much needed funds for people with Special Needs. The Foundation supports a registered family base of 132 families. The aim of the Foundation is to enhance the lives of people with special needs.

GROW

Grow have recently joined DFI under our General Membership. Grow works to promote mental health and well being for all to prevent mental ill-health for people who are at risk and to support people with mental health problems during their recovery.

Extra Care

Extra Care have recently joined as a DFI Associate. Extra Care is the largest, not for profit domiciliary care provider in Northern Ireland and the Republic of Ireland. Extra Care provides a range of domiciliary care services and carer support services to promote independent living. The Organisation works mainly with older people and dependent adults with chronic conditions, physical disabilities or rehabilitation needs who require short or long term care in their own homes.

ORGANISATIONAL DEVELOPMENT

Congratulations To First Graduates Of Skill Project Training Programme!

The first graduation ceremonies of the SKILL Project Training Programme 2006 / 2007 took place in Cork, Galway and Dublin throughout November. Over 500 staff from the health sector, including 84 staff from ten DFI participating member organisations took part in graduating ceremonies where staff received awards for Fetac Level 5 Health Service Skills and Fetac Level 6 Supervisory Skills.

These ceremonies mark the success of SKILL Project for those staff who went through the first year of this unique training project. Congratulations to all staff and their families who faced the challenge of returning to training, often after a long time out of education.

Congratulations also to line managers from all DFI participating member organisations who supported staff throughout this process. The support of line managers has been integral to peoples individual success on SKILL Project. There was a strong sense of solidarity and celebration for all those present on the day as participants, their families and friends joined together with the National Steering Group, the SKILL Project Team and SKILLVEC to celebrate their successful completion of this unique training programme.



Left to right

Jon Hinchliffe, Service Manager (Alzheimer Society of Ireland), Grace Imasogie, (Alzheimer Society of Ireland), Maureen Mannion, (The Peter Bradley Foundation), Derek O'Farrell (The Peter Bradley Foundation), Halina Downes, (The Peter Bradley Foundation), Irina Mikolakhina, (The Peter Bradley Foundation), Alan Smith, General Manager, (The SKILL Project).



Left to right

Paula Mangan, Elaine Behan, Janet Healy (the Irish Wheelchair Association) with line manager Rose Mc Coy.

Skill Project Promotion 2009 / 2010

The goal of SKILL Project is to provide accredited training and upskilling of staff within the health sector, and thereby to increase efficiency and effectiveness within the workplace and in turn to increase the quality and standard of services provided.

The SKILL Project brings support staff and line managers / supervisors from the voluntary disability sector, the HSE and acute hospitals together for the first time on a national basis to undergo a year of training in FETAC Level 3, 4, 5 & 6 accredited programmes. SKILL Project allows each unique perspective on the provision of care within a community, residential and or hospital based setting to be shared and discussed during training.

Support staff are provided with training through ring fenced funding from the Department of Finance, with employing organisations further supported with a backfill financial contribution per staff member per year. If your organisation would like to avail of SKILL Project for training of your staff in 2009 / 2010 or for further details please contact Cathy McGrath on 01 4250124 / cathymcgrath@disability-federation.ie.

“Count Me In!”

Disability and Local Government

DFI Conference

DFI has begun planning a One Day Conference, “Count me in”, to address the challenge of ensuring people with disabilities have access to services and facilities in the local areas where they live.

The purpose of the Conference is to bring stakeholders together to discuss how we can all work collaboratively so that the wide variety of needs of people with disabilities are represented within local government structures, and the full range of services and facilities offered by Local Authorities and other State agencies can adapt to meet these needs.

DFI is being assisted by several Local Authorities to ensure that the conference programme appeals to both those working in local government and those in voluntary disability agencies. Key themes include housing for people with a disability, the co-ordination of local services and ways in which the statutory and non statutory sectors can engage productively with each other at the local level.

The day will consist of a mix of workshops, presentations, a panel and open discussion. The Conference will be held on the first week of March. The Conference brochure and registration forms will follow. These will be made available on DFI’s website shortly.

Carmichael Centre for Voluntary Groups Training

The Carmichael Centre for Voluntary Groups has released details of the Training Programme for Spring 2009. For a full description of Management Training Programme courses see

www.carmichaelcentre.ie/trainingandsupport/courses.php.

The Carmichael Centre also offer other services to their members. Members and associated groups nationwide can access advice and practical assistance concerning their day to day operations as well as receive assistance with long term planning and governance issues

Course Title	Date
Branding for Community & Voluntary Groups (NEW)	Tues 17th Feb & Tues 3rd March (2 days)
Taking Effective Minutes	Mon 23rd February
Writing Successful Grant Applications (NEW)	Thurs 5th March

Time Management	Fri 6th March
Board Roles & Responsibilities	Mon 9th March
Board Roles & Responsibilities	Wed 11th March (CORK)
Setting up a Charitable Organisation (NEW)	Thurs 12 th March
Diversity & Equality Awareness (NEW)	Fri 13 th March
Managing Organisational Change (NEW)	Thurs 19 th & Fri 20 th March (2 days)
The Media as your Ally (NEW)	Wed 25th March
Project Management	Thu 26 th March
Good Practice for Management Committees (NEW)	Mon 20 th April (GALWAY)
Conflict Resolution	Thu 23rd April
Finance for Non-Financial People	Fri 24th April
Financial Reporting for Charitable Organisations	Wed 29 th April
Dealing with Grievance & Disciplinary	Thu 30 th April
Writing a Marketing Plan (NEW)	Thu 14 th May
Effective Board Meetings	Mon 18 th May
Corporate Fundraising	Wed 20 th May
Producing an Annual Report	Thu 21st May

HEALTH

DFI Overall Comments on Health Issues at the Close of 2008

This year has been characterised by a number of issues. The sharp downturn in the economic climate has important implications for Irish society, not least in terms of delivering on Governments commitment to the National Disability Strategy. Budget 2009 is testament to these challenges. The HSE will be contacting all organisations who are in receipt of funding from them in relation to the 1% cut announced in this Budget.

The HSE has also put particular focus on the development of Service level and Grant Aid Agreements between it and voluntary disability organisations. As these are still in the process of negotiation we are not yet in a position to advise organisations in relation to signing any new agreements. We urge all organisations to take stock of the impact that these two developments will have on their capacity to continue to provide the necessary services to people with disabilities.

This year is also marked by the crisis in disability funding. Although the imposition of 1% cuts and the development of new Agreements may provide some response to this crisis, as the C&AG Annual Report 07 has noted the key challenge facing our sector is ensuring that money directed to disability is actually delivered. It is recorded that €53 m provided for disability in the 2007 Budget was diverted to other areas of the HSE. In 2008 €17 m of disability funds was also not delivered. In the current economic climate we must ensure that in 2009, in addition to finding efficiencies in the current Budget, that these savings as part of the overall voted funding for disability and mental health services is fully committed into those areas. DFI will continue to vigorously pursue this matter.

HSE 1% Cuts to Voluntary Disability Organisations

DFI along with the Not for Profit Business Association and the Federation of Voluntary Bodies were recently invited by the HSE to the first of a series of meetings in relation to administering the 1% cut in '09 budgets to voluntary disability organisations, further meetings will be held between now and April '09. The HSE informed us that their intention is to impose 1% cuts through LHO budgets.

The key focus of the meetings between the HSE and the umbrella bodies will be to monitor the implementation of the 1% cut and preparing for how emergency cases will be dealt with during '09. The HSE will be writing shortly to LHOs to introduce the cuts on the '09 Budget for organisations. The HSE has informed DFI that they expect that budget determinations will continue to be calculated in the same manner as in previous years for each specific organisation and that the cut will be applied after adjustments have been made for '08 service developments and balance of '08 pay awards.

The HSE will be requiring the information on how each organisation will apply the cut to be returned to them in three weeks from the date they forward the request to organisations.

If you require assistance please contact the DFI Support Officers in the area of your organisation.

To assist DFI in the process of monitoring the 1% cut please:

- notify us of any significant differences in how the cut is being applied across each of the ten HSE Local Health Offices

- inform us of how your organisation applied the cut and what effect it has on your organisation.

Send information directly to John Doyle at johndoyle@disability-federation.ie

HSE Complaints Reporting

In line with the requirements of Part 9 of the Health Act 2004, the HSE collects statistical data on complaints received and dealt with by the service providers if they receive funding under Section 38 of the Act, receive funding under Section 39 of the Act, or use HSE facilities, for example to hold meetings. To facilitate the process and to avoid duplication of work, the HSE needs to establish which voluntary organisations will be submitting statistics on a national basis from their head office. Please confirm if your organisation is submitting statistical data on complaints on a local or national level please contact Jacqueline Thomson, Support Officer DFI at 01 454 7978 or jacquelinethomson@disability-federation.ie.

Research Underway on Children as Carers

The Child and Family Research Centre (CFRC) at the National University of Ireland, Galway has been commissioned by the Office for the Minister for Children (OMC) to conduct a study of young carers in the Irish population. This research will involve interviewing children and young people aged between 5 and 17 years about their experiences of providing care to a family member in the home.

If you are someone who is in contact with young carers, CFRC would welcome hearing from you, with a view to including these children and young people in their study. The research itself involves looking at the impact providing care to a family member has upon their lives. The Centre is also exploring ways of better supporting these young carers.

If you are in a position to help, please contact David Cairns at the CFRC at 091 495731 or david.cairns@nuigalway.ie.

Adult Funded Day Services

The HSE organised a National Seminar that took place on Wednesday November 19th 2008 in the Mullingar Park Hotel titled "Demonstrating Change in the Provision of Day Services to People with Disabilities". The purpose of this Seminar was to demonstrate recent day service practice in some of the key themes that will underpin the outcomes of the Review report:

- Person centeredness
- Collaborative working
- Development of advocacy services
- Community integration.

The Seminar consisted of examples of innovative practice and demonstrated the sector's ability to implement the changes that will be required to activate the recommendations which will be contained in the report of the Review.

During the next three months all of the Reports from the census, research and consultation will be used by the National Working Group to map out a vision for the future delivery of day services. Whilst this work is ongoing there are a number of other key tasks that need to be completed so that the recommendations arising from the Review are compliant with current legislation and in line with relevant strategies for meeting the needs of people with disabilities. This will include:

- Engagement with National Service Providers in preparation for the delivery of the report of the Review.
- Discussions with National Service Providers in relation to the potential for shared learning arising from recent innovations implemented by Service Providers.
- The sharing of successful service change initiatives in the context of progressing a modern person centred service.

Despite a number of operational challenges, the work of the Review is largely on target and a report will be submitted for the consideration of the National Disability Steering Group at the end of November.

HIQA Residential Standards for People with Disabilities

The consultation process for the HIQA standards has now been completed. Overall, the feedback was very positive with only minor amendments to be made to the document. The document will now go to the HIQA Board for sign off prior to it being sent to the Department of Health and Children so that it can undergo a Regulatory Impact Assessment, then it will go to the Minister.

As part of the standards process, HIQA intends to develop a new set of standards for all children in receipt of services. This is a medium term project and it may happen that the centres for children with disabilities will require to be registered before the new standards are in place. For this reason, a set of interim standards are being developed for the purposes of registration and inspection of residential centres for children with disabilities. These interim standards combine elements drawn from current standards, both for children's services and the draft standards we have been working on within the Group. Feedback on this document is requested by 17th December.

If you would like to view this document and contribute to the consultation, or if you would like further information on the standards and issues in relation to Health please contact Jacqueline Thomson, Support Officer DFI at 01 454 7978 or jacquelinethomson@disability-federation.ie.

Department of Health and Children Sectoral Plan Review

DFI have submitted a document for the Department of Health and Children Sectoral Plan review that is currently underway. In our document, DFI covered a number of important issues for consideration while the Department is completing this review including:

- Funding issues
- Independent Assessment of Need (IAN)
- Relationship with the community and voluntary sector

DFI also highlighted in our Submission that there are a number of key areas that the reviewed Sectoral Plans must successfully engage with, namely:

- That credible and timely information is provided
- That voted funding is fully delivered as intended

- Ensuring that there is full working of, and engagement with, the partnership structures between the voluntary disability sector and the statutory health sector
- That the DoHC operates in a leadership role to promote and protect the health aspects of the NDS within the context that it is a stated priority for Government
- That the health aspects relate to both specialist and mainstream health services

National Strategy for Service User Involvement in the Irish Health Service 2008-2013

The “*National Strategy for Service User Involvement in the Irish Health Service 2008-2013*” was launched in May 2008. The Strategy was produced by a Steering Group who were established by the Minister for Health and Children, Ms. Mary Harney T.D. The group was representative of service users, advocacy groups, the Department of Health and Children and the Health Service Executive in consultation with the Health Services National Partnership Forum.

Responsibility for implementation of the Strategy now rests with the Office for Consumer Affairs in the HSE. DFI, as a representative of the Community and Voluntary Pillar, participated in a recent meeting of the Consultation Group that has been established by the HSE to oversee implementation of the Strategy.

At this meeting Community and Voluntary Pillar Representatives raised a number of issues including

- The need to develop a clear transparent Implementation Plan
- The challenge faced in terms of implementing the Strategy across the National Hospitals Office (NHO) and the Primary Continuing Community Care (PCCC).
- The need to ensure that capacity of individuals to participate and represent (parity of esteem)
- The importance of working in collaboration with the voluntary and community sector-existing structures that can be developed, not duplicated

It was agreed in principle that this Consultative Group would meet again in 2009 to discuss in greater detail the implementation of this Strategy

Policy / Strategy for the Provision of Rehabilitation Services

Call for Submissions

The Department of Health and Children and the Health Service Executive are developing a National Policy / Strategy for the Provision of Rehabilitation Services. A Working Group has been established which includes key stakeholders and experts to assist with this process.

The Terms of Reference of the Group are:

“To consider the rehabilitation needs at acute and community levels of people at all stages of the lifecycle with:

- Static and progressive neurological conditions;
- Traumatic and non-traumatic brain injury; and

Other physically disabling conditions who may benefit from medical, psychological and/or social rehabilitation service provision.”

The objectives of this process are the development of:

- An appropriate policy framework;
- A strategy for service provision; and
- A preferred model of care.

A report will be prepared for submission to the Secretary General of the Department of Health and Children and the CEO of the Health Service Executive.

To assist and inform the Working Group to deliver on its task, we are inviting submissions from organisations and individuals in relation to the above Terms of Reference.

Written submissions should be forwarded

By e-mail to: rehabilitationconsultation@health.gov.ie

By post to:

Strategy for Rehabilitation Services Consultation

Room 6.29

Office for Disability and Mental Health

Department of Health and Children

Hawkins House

Dublin 2

Latest date for receipt of submissions is Monday 26th January 2009

Mental Capacity Bill

The Department of Justice, Equality and Law Reform has published the heads of the Mental Capacity Bill. The scheme can be found at

http://www.justice.ie/en/JELR/Pages/Scheme_of_Mental_Capacity_Bill_2008 and the press release at

<http://www.justice.ie/en/JELR/Pages/Minister%20Ahern%20announces%20proposals%20for%20a%20Mental%20Capacity%20Bill>. This Bill is reforming the existing Ward of Courts system in so far as it applies to adults, and will effectively replace it with a modern framework governing decision making on behalf of persons who lack capacity. It will have an impact on anyone who lacks capacity in their decision making.

We would be interested to know what you think about it. Please send us any comments on the bill to jacquelinethomson@disability-federation.ie by Wednesday 14th January 2009.

TOWARDS 2016 / NDS

Monitoring implementation of the National Disability Strategy

The National Disability Strategy Stakeholders Monitoring Group met to review progress on 19th November. This Group consists of the six disability organisations (including DFI) in the Disability Stakeholders Group (DSG) and senior officials from the six departments with sectoral plans plus

the Departments of Finance, Education and Science, Justice, Equality and Law Reform and the NDA. The Taoiseach's Department chairs the meeting which takes place twice a year.

The discussion was based on a progress report for the period July – December 2008 provided by the government side

Unsurprisingly, given the extension of the long term goals beyond 2016 announced in the Midterm Review of *Towards 2016* and the cutbacks announced in Budget 2009, the Government's Report contains news of delays and further a tightening of resources across a range of areas as well as some evidence of progress. The report on health services caused particular concern.

- The Independent Assessment of Need for health, personal support and educational services will not be extended to children aged 5-18 years by 2010 as originally planned. Indeed the commencement of the relevant sections of the *Special Education Needs Act 2004* is postponed indefinitely, and it is not known when the health entitlements provided in Part 2 of the Disability Act 2005 will become operative for people with a disability.
- A review is to be undertaken of non-statutory providers of disability services to assess the scope for further efficiencies. The remit fails to reflect the partnership role played by voluntary organisations in delivering services.

The DSG representatives focussed on problems with HSE funding of disability services, notably the diversion of funds targeted for disability and mental health away to other areas, and the adverse impact on people with a disability of the funding cutbacks imposed on voluntary disability organisations.

On a more positive note the quality of the Government's reporting has improved, giving a clearer picture of what has (and has not) been achieved against the benchmark of T16's long term goals for people with disabilities. DFI will continue at every opportunity to make the case for reinstating NDS implementation as a top priority.

Charities Bill 2007 passes 4th Stage in Dáil and is Debated in Seanad:

The Charities Bill 2007 passed through the fourth Stage in the Dáil on November 5th and was discussed in the Seanad on November 26th. A number of recommendations made by DFI, the Wheel and other organisations within the voluntary sector were taken on board in the Dáil debate. However, amendments proposed by the Opposition to include the advancement of human rights, promotion of equality, social inclusion, social justice and civic participation on the list of charitable purposes were rejected. The Minister noted that the Bill is not seeking to expand the list of charitable purposes and that human rights is not currently recognised as being a charitable purpose by the Revenue Commissioners.

Some of the key amendments that were passed in the Dáil include:

- A Government tabled amendment will exclude organisations that promote a political cause from the register of charities only if they are: (a) a political party, or a body that promotes a political party or candidate or (b) a body that promotes a political cause, "*unless the promotion of that cause relates directly to the advancement of the charitable purposes of the body*". (**Amendment 6**).
- An amendment was passed to include the "*exclusion of bodies that promote purposes that are contrary to public policy*" in the Bill, which it is understood to refer to the legal principal that a person is not allowed to do anything that would be harmful to or against the public good rather than Government policy. (**Amendments 8 & 47**).

- Provision will now be made for organisations that are currently registered for charitable tax exemption with the Revenue Commissioners to be automatically registered with the new Charities Regulator until such time as they can be comprehensively endorsed by the Regulator. This would mean that no existing charity would lose charitable status during the registration period allowed for with the Regulator (**Amendments 12,32,44,45 & 86**).
- The issue of Dual reporting, whereby an organisation would have been required to submit accounts and documentation to both the Companies Office as well as the Charities Regulator has also been dealt with. An Amendment proposes that the Companies Registration Office will send a copy of the annual return and all documents attached to the Regulator for charities that are companies. However, *“charities, that are companies, and that are not required to attach financial returns to their annual return under company law, will be required to send them to the Charities Regulator with their Annual Activity Report”*. The Annual Activity report will be a requirement for *all* charities. All other charities will be required to supply financial statements to the Charities Regulator together with their Annual Activity Report (**Amendments 43, 66, 68, &77**).

TV ACCESS FOR ALL Group

The organisations involved in the TV Access for All made a submission to the Broadcasting Bill 2008. We are pleased to announce that the latest amendments to the Broadcasting Bill proposed by the select committee include two of the three changes that were recommended in the TV Access For All Submission. These state that the new Broadcasting Authority or Ireland and the boards of RTÉ and TG4 must include at least one member who has experience or capacity in matters pertaining to disability, ageing, broadcasting and digital media technologies.

If passed, this would give the disability sector effective representation within the structures that will regulate broadcasting in the future. As such it would be a significant achievement for the TV Access Group.

The select committee amendments can be downloaded from the Oireachtas website but only as a PDF document.

The URL is www.oireachtas.ie/viewdoc.asp?fn=/documents/bills28/bills/2008/2908/B29b08S-DCN.pdf. Our amendments appear as numbers 14 and 142. For further information, please contact mark Magennis, Director Centre for Inclusive Technology, NCBI, mark.magennis@ncbi.ie or Joan O'Donnell, Support Officer with DFI, joanodonnell@disability-federation.ie. For further information on the submission made to the Broadcasting Bill 2008 as well as the campaign for Accessible Television, please refer to the website: www.tvaccess.ie.

SOCIAL INCLUSION

Department of Social and Family Affairs: Making services accessible to customers with disabilities

In recent years the Department has been making a particular effort to make its services as accessible as possible to all customers including those with disabilities. These services include:

- A fully accessible website (www.welfare.ie) that meets required standards
- Online request facility for forms and leaflets

- Information available in alternative formats such as large print, Braille and audio tape on request
- Sign Language Interpreter available on request
- A building and refurbishment programme
- Disability Consultative Forum providing stakeholder organisations with an opportunity to express their views and suggestions on services provided
- Disability awareness training for staff
- Supporting Advocacy services provided through Citizens Information Centres (CICs).

However, the DSFA is aware that making their services accessible and customer friendly is a continuous process of development and improvement.

The Disability Act 2005 places significant responsibilities on public bodies including the Department of Social and Family Affairs, to make their services accessible to people with disabilities. The Act also provides that a person can make a complaint in relation to:

- physical access to offices;
- the provision of written information and communications in an accessible format;
- information provided electronically which must as far as practicable be compatible with assistive/adaptive technology.

To enhance compliance with these requirements the Department has:

- developed its existing Comments and Complaints System to accommodate the recording of comments and complaints regarding access to our services.
- appointed 23 Access Officers on a nationwide basis, who, with other responsibilities have specific roles in the comment and complaint handling process including: overseeing/monitoring all complaints made under the Disability Act 2005 and ensuring that the necessary action is taken to address them.
- appointed an Inquiry Officer who will investigate and report on the complaint where the complaint has not been resolved to the customer's satisfaction.
- initiated a review of the comment and complaints process itself to ensure that all customers including people with disabilities are provided with every support in making their comment or complaint.
- issued circulars reminding staff of the various facilities available to make services more accessible, for example, internet site, loop system, minicom, or formats such as Braille, large print or sign language.

How to Complain?

A customer with a disability or a person on their behalf can make a complaint by any of the following methods:

1. **log on** to www.welfare.ie to download a comment and complaint form. (This form is reproduced below for your information.
2. **telephone or call in** to the Social Welfare Local Office
3. **write to** Customer Services, Social Welfare Services, College Road, Sligo.
4. email QCS@welfare.ie

The Department's staff will try to resolve all complaints as soon as possible. If the customer is unhappy with the response, the complaint can be reviewed by the local office manager/supervisor.

If after this review the customer is still not satisfied with the response, he or she can have the complaint referred to the Inquiry Officer designated to handle complaints under the Disability Act. The DSFA Information Service phone number is LoCall 1890 66 22 44.

Note that the rates charged for the use of 1890 (LoCall) numbers may vary among different service providers.

This information has been provided by the DSFA to your DFI representative Louise Mc Cann at the DSFA Disability Consultative Forum. For more information on DFI work with the DSFA please contact Louise directly at louisemccann@disability-federation.ie or 01 4250126.

The Organisation for Economic Co-Operation and Development (OECD) Report Sickness, Disability and Work

Framed in the context of the NDS and the challenges to its implementation, DFI welcome the findings of the OECD Report *Sickness, Disability and Work* focusing on the policy challenges in this area in Ireland and three other OECD countries (Denmark, Finland and the Netherlands).

In his address at the launch of the report, John P. Martin, Director for Employment, Labour and Social Affairs at the OECD recognised that inactivity is increasingly caused by health problems. This highlights the fact that disability is a broad issue across the population and must be addressed irrespective of the economic climate. The report supports continued welfare system reform to provide the right incentives for people with disabilities to access the labour market, or to return to work on acquiring a disability such as physical or mental health problems. It recognises that hiding unemployment in the “wrong” welfare system is a failed and costly strategy. For instance people on disability allowances are not accounted for on the live register.

The Irish Government policy of Activation goes some way to addressing the recommendations in this report in recognising the value and need to support people with disabilities to become activated and enter employment, training or education to the best of their ability. However, the report makes a number of recommendations that DFI has called for in the past with regard to activation and the removal of barriers to employment for people with disabilities. These relate to the following issues:

- The loss of secondary benefits continues to deter many people with disabilities from returning to work
- Access to health care needs to be improved by making the entitlement to a Medical Card independent of benefit status and linked to need
- In the current system people with disabilities can keep their medical card for three years on moving from DA into employment. However this is not sufficient for those with significant medical costs. The medical expenses do not go away after 3 years, particularly for those with progressive disabilities. It may simply be too costly for them to remain in employment once the card is removed. Overall the policy of linking medical cards to benefit as opposed to need is a deterrent to work for those with costly or progressive disabilities.

DFI strongly supports the recommendation by the OECD that adequate Cost of Disability(COD) payments need to be considered and that they should be independent of work status and separate from income support payments. This will support the inclusion of people with disabilities, particularly the most vulnerable.

GENERAL NEWS AND EVENTS

International Council for Education of People with Visual Impairment(ICEVI) 7th European Conference

Living in a Changing Europe

Venue: Trinity College, Dublin

Date: 5th to 10th July 2009

To be hosted by: St. Joseph's Centre for the Visually Impaired, Dublin.

The focus of the conference will be on early intervention, education of children and the rehabilitation of adults, multi-disabled, deaf-blind and elderly people.

Conference Themes

- What are the changes for Europe today and for the future?
- What are the changing demands for the person with a visual impairment?
- What are the implications for professionals?

Ancillary Conference Activities

An exciting social programme will be on offer allowing delegates an opportunity to sample the best in Irish hospitality and culture.

For further information on the conference, or to register please go to www.icevidublin2009.org.

Call For Proposals for European Associations

The European Union is calling for proposals from European associations active at European Level in the field of education and training.

The overall objective is to support the activities of European associations in the field of education and training or which pursue an objective which is part of an EU policy.

The objectives of this call for proposals is to support the existence of high-quality European Associations active in the field of education and training.

The deadline is the 23rd of December 2008.

For further information contact please contact:

Ms Ilona Pokorna, Tel.: + 32 2 295 83 94 or email Ilona.Pokorna@ec.europa.eu.

Details available on:

Call for proposals:

<http://eur-lex.europa.eu/LexUriServ/LexUriServ.do?uri=OJ:C:2008:276:0094:0096:EN:PDF>

Self Advocacy Skills Training

The Gateway Mental Health Project & Rathmines Community Partnership are starting a self-advocacy skills training course in February 2009 for people with self-experience of mental ill-health.

Self-advocacy means to advocate for yourself - to voice your opinion, express your decision and speak up for your rights.

Self-advocacy skills training aims to help people develop their confidence and communication skills, increase their knowledge of their rights and improve their ability to assert their rights. The training aims to enable people to have more choice and control in their lives.

For more information please contact : Martha or Mary in Rathmines Community Partnership, Tel 01 4965558. Email mary@rathminespartnership.ie or martha@rathminespartnership.ie

Study on Maternity and Early Childhood Services in Ireland

Are you interested in talking about your experience of maternity and early childhood services in Ireland? The School of Nursing and Midwifery Trinity College Dublin currently have a maternity study underway exploring the strengths and weaknesses of the publicly funded health services for women with disabilities during pregnancy, childbirth and early motherhood. The study will be recruiting till June 2009. The study will provide valuable information about women's experiences and may improve maternity and childhood services in Ireland.

For further information contact: Denise Lawler, Tel: 086 3789758, Email: lawlorde@tcd.ie

National Disability Authority and Department of Justice, Equality and Law Reform

Conference on Mental Capacity – 5th February 2009

Early next year, the National Disability Authority and the Department of Justice, Equality and Law Reform will host a conference on the Government's proposals to reform the law on Mental Capacity. The conference is in Dublin Castle on 5 February, 2009, and runs from 8.30am to 1.30pm.

The purpose of the conference is to facilitate discussion of some key areas surrounding the proposed legislative reforms. Minister Dermot Ahern, T.D., Minister for Justice, Equality and Law Reform will deliver the Opening Address. Details in relation to the Conference will follow from the NDA. For further information contact Heather O'Leary, NDA, Email : HCOLeary@nda.ie.

Traineeships for people with disabilities at the European Commission

The European Commission is launching a traineeship for people with disabilities in order to facilitate their professional integration. The purpose of this action is :

- to offer persons with disabilities a working experience as a trainee in the European Commission, thereby enhancing their opportunities for future employment;
- to allow them to become familiar with the workings of the European Institutions;
- to apply the European Commission's equal opportunities principles to young university graduates with disabilities ;
- to raise awareness of disability among Commission staff and to remove barriers to the integration of people with disabilities;
- to provide the European Commission with the contribution and positive experience that disabled trainees will bring to its work and culture.

Here is the link where the complete information can be found: http://ec.europa.eu/stages/index_en.htm.

For any question please contact: eac-stages@ec.europa.eu.

FUNDING

International Fund for Ireland

The International Fund for Ireland (“the Fund”) is an independent international organisation set up by the British and Irish Governments in 1986. The Fund’s objectives are:-

- To promote economic and social advance; and
- To encourage contact, dialogue and reconciliation between nationalists and unionists throughout Ireland.

The International Fund for Ireland is seeking applications for Building Foundations -Community Based Economic & Social Regeneration Programme.

For further information: <http://www.internationalfundforireland.com/>

RESEARCHER (PART-TIME) IRISH CENTRE FOR SOCIAL GERONTOLOGY

Applications are invited for a part-time one year fixed term contract researcher at the Irish Centre for Social Gerontology (ICSG). The Irish Research Council for the Humanities and Social Sciences (IRCHSS) has recently awarded funding to ICSG to investigate how third sector lobbies use the lifecycle approach in national level partnership agreements. This project is a collaboration between ICSG, the Centre for Innovation and Structural Change, the Child and Family Research Centre and the Centre for Disability Law and Policy at NUI Galway.

The successful candidate will work closely with Principal Investigator, Dr. Gemma Carney, at the ICSG. This project uses an innovative research methodology called participatory policy analysis. As such, experience of action research or participatory research methods is essential for the post. Knowledge and experience of social partnership and/or the community and voluntary sector is also essential. The post will involve some travel. The successful applicant will work 3 days/23.5 hours per week.

Informal enquiries about this position may be made to: Dr. Gemma Carney, Irish Centre for Social Gerontology. Email: gemma.carney@nuigalway.ie Tel. + 353 (0)91 49 5461

The closing date for receipt of applications is 9th January 2009 at 5pm.

Newsletters

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@cwic.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 18

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@irishdeafociety.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: kerryPWDI@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

DeafHear.ie - Link Magazine - Tel: 01 8723800, E-mail:
info@deafhear.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

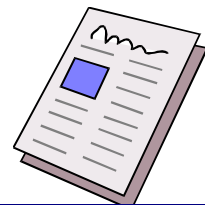
S.I. News - Schizophrenia Ireland, Tel: (0)1 8601620
E-mail: info@sirl.ie

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 a national support and representation mechanism for voluntary disability sector organisations, covering all areas of disability and disabling conditions. There are currently over 100 voluntary disability organisations in the DFI Membership.

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