



Disability Federation of Ireland

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

NEWSLETTER JANUARY / FEBRUARY 2010

Ensuring Better Services for People with Disabilities

There was a lot of coverage recently of the first two years of operation of the Health Service Executive complaints process in relation to disability services. DFI contributed to the discussion in the media and stated that, "In Ireland we now know enough about the importance of having robust systems to deliver and monitor the quality of person centred services to people who can be vulnerable. Timely and effective systems for governance, management and performance review as well as complaints and redress systems are essential elements of that."

We must continue to work with the HSE to ensure that lessons are learned from the complaints gathered to date, and we must actively support any changes and developments that are required. The findings of the Value for Money and Policy Review of Disability Service, due to be published in September of this year, must equally support organisations in their efforts to provide appropriate and necessary health and personal social services to people with disabilities.

Almost two hundred submissions were received by the Department of Health and Children following their recent Consultation on the Review of the Efficiency and Effectiveness of Disability Services in Ireland. It is anticipated that the Department will be holding further consultation with the public in relation to disability policy and service delivery.

DFI would encourage all organisations to contribute to this consultation process, and to prepare for the publication of the Review later this year. This is a key element of DFIs work for 2010 and we are very interested in working with all member organisations on this.

John Dolan
CEO

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DFI BOARD AND NATIONAL COUNCIL

New DFI Board Member

DFI welcomes George Kennedy, Chief Executive of Spina Bifida Hydrocephalus Ireland (SBI) as a member of the Board. George was co-opted onto the Board in January 2010.

New Member Organisations

DFI would like to welcome Voluntary Services International and West Limerick Independent Living as new members of the Federation.

Voluntary Services International (VSI) joined DFI as an Associate Member. VSI is the Irish branch of Service Civil International, a worldwide peace movement that began in 1920. The organisation works to promote peace, social justice, sustainable development and intercultural understanding through volunteering abroad and in Ireland. www.vsi.ie

West Limerick Independent Living has joined DFI as a General Member. The organisation is a not for profit company established in 1997 by a small group of people, many of whom have a disability. The main objective of the organisation is to develop and deliver high quality Personal Support Service for people with disabilities in the Mid West region of Ireland. Personal Support Services include Personal Assistant (Self Directed) services, Personal Care Assistant (Supported) Services, Advocacy Service and Accessible Transport. www.westlimerickcil.com

ORGANISATIONAL DEVELOPMENT

Essential HR – Garda Vetting

For some time DFI has been providing a Garda vetting gateway through a number of Lead Agencies for those organisations that are unable to obtain vetting for their staff and volunteers in their own right. Whilst some members have begun to utilise this avenue, DFI is concerned that many members still have not implemented proper Garda Vetting procedures.

We would like to remind members that Garda vetting is an essential part of any HR management system. Not only does Garda vetting apply to newly appointed staff and volunteers, it also has to be part of the organisation's on-going management process. The Garda Vetting Unit recommends that staff and volunteers should be re-vetted at least every three years, or even sooner should the need arise.

Apart from the obvious benefit of having peace of mind that staff and volunteers have been vetted and are therefore suitable for the organisation, there is also another important reason to have a vetting system in place.

Most DFI members receive funding from the HSE to provide their services. As part of the funding agreements, i.e. Service Level Arrangements, recipients of funding are obliged to have systems in place to ensure that staff and other workers who are in direct contact with vulnerable children and adults are fully vetted. If those systems are not in place, funding may not be granted in future.

Therefore, we urge all DFI members and associated organisations to ensure that a suitable vetting strategy is in place. Organisations that do not have a system in place and who wish to participate in the DFI led vetting network, can also avail of a Garda Vetting Procedure template, which is available free of charge on request from DFI.

For more information contact your regional Support Officer or Eleanor Reece at DFI National Office eleanorreece@disability-federation.ie Tel: 01-708 0101

Quality Assurance Systems NGO / Not for Profit / Voluntary Organisations

Recent research has recognised the value of quality assurance tools as good practice models for NGO / Not for Profit / Voluntary Organisations.

Quality is about trying to do better – better both in the services an organisation offers its users and in the way the organisation is run. An organisation that is effectively and efficiently run offers better quality services to its clients. A quality assurance system is a systematic and consistent way of implementing quality in an organisation. A key support offered by DFI to its member organisations is training in the implementation of a quality assurance system, PQASSO (Practical Quality Assurance System for Small Organisations).

PQASSO is a straight forward, user-friendly quality assurance system intended to help run organisations more effectively and efficiently. It offers a flexible approach to quality which allows an organisation to work at its own pace. It helps organisations take a systematic look at what they do, identify areas where they are doing well and not so well, and decide exactly where improvements are needed. It helps organisations plan, budget and allocate resources for making these improvements over a realistic time period.

Research carried out between 2003 and 2007 by the Luis Vives Foundation in Spain, and funded by the Spanish Ministry of Work and Social Affairs, sought to examine Quality Management Systems in Non Governmental Organisations (NGO) or Not for Profit Organisations (NPO) as social services providers, and to implement a system in seven Spanish social organisations. carried out between 2003 and 2007.

The objectives of the research project were to study the Quality Management. The project is ongoing and works with a set of organisations each year as a “Permanent Excellence Programme”. The main purpose of the study was to gain better knowledge about the use of quality management tools, and the adequacy of those tools in implementing a quality assurance system in NGO / NPO / Voluntary Organisations. The project set out to identify good practice case studies among these organisations in different countries.

Social organisations, NGO, social services umbrella organisations and standardisation bodies world wide were contacted and requested to supply information relating to specific quality standards, models, systems or regulations applied or that could be applied to NGO / NPO /

Voluntary Organisations in their countries. Participating organisations had to offer services to marginalised groups, including people with disabilities. The main conclusions of the study are listed below.

- 73 quality assurance instruments are in use by NGO/Not for Profit/Voluntary organisations worldwide. All of them offer a structured way to match their needs with quality criteria. Some are quality assurance systems, others are quality products or quality services standards
- When implementing quality assurance systems, NGO/Not for Profit/Voluntary organisations need to plan, assign resources, take decisions to change the way they work and assume responsibilities. There are systems designed to meet the needs of even very small organisations.
- One of the most important conclusions of this work was the recognition of the value of PQASSO as a useful tool and a good practice model for NGO/Not for Profit/Voluntary organisations. PQASSO is particularly suitable for use in small and medium size organisations
- In many European countries it was not possible to find a national quality instrument specific to the Third Sector. The research concluded that in European Member States generally, there is a lack of specific tools for NGO/Not for Profit/Voluntary organisations, especially for small and medium organisations
- Some of the small and medium NGO/Not for Profit/Voluntary organisations were using the Excellent European Model EFQM or ISO 9001 standard. The EFQM model was found to be flexible, but it is neither affordable, nor user friendly and was not seem as appropriate for small voluntary organisations with a minimum number of staff

NOTE: Additional information on the Research is available only in Spanish through the editorial organisation (Fundación Luis Vives).

If you would like to have further information on DFI's PQASSO training programme, please contact your DFI Support Officer.

Carmichael Centre and DFI Course

' Chairing the Organisation'

In collaboration with Disability Federation of Ireland, the Carmichael Centre is running the following course **FREE of charge** to ten DFI Member organisations. The aim of this course is to help those who are, or are about to become Chairpersons of Community & Voluntary Organisations understand their role more fully and to develop the skills needed to undertake that role successfully.

The course will run on Tuesday 23 and Thursday 25 February 2010 from 7pm to 9.30pm in Carmichael Centre. Please note: first come first served basis. For your own benefit, the

Carmichael Centre would kindly request that you reserve your place only if you can attend both evenings. See below for link to the course content:

<http://www.carmichaelcentre.ie/trpath/chairing-organisation>.

Contact tssinfo@carmichaelcentre.ie for more information.

“This course has answered a lot of questions – a very useful and helpful tool for any chairperson”

Comment from participant - Autumn 2009

The Wheel – Events

Finance and Fundraising Strategies

When: 17th February 2010

Where: Carmelite Community Centre, Aungier Street, Dublin 2

Time: 9.30 am to 12.30 pm Registration from 9.15 am

Part of The Wheel recession-busting supports for organisations.

Research conducted by The Wheel in 2009 shows that the majority of Irish community, voluntary and charitable organisations are dependent on statutory funding for at least 50 % of their total income. However, with statutory funding on the decrease, organisations are now being pressed to rethink how they will deliver on their mission and objectives. If they don't, they will either have to suspend some of their activities and make staff redundant, or find themselves running out of cash to pay the bills.

How to Make Headlines: a Publicity Masterclass for Community and Voluntary Organisations

When: 23 February 2010

Where: Filmbase, Curved Street, Temple Bar, Dublin 2

Time: 09:30-12:30. Registration from 09:15

Publicity is the most cost-effective way of raising your organisation's profile without spending a fortune on advertising. Nevertheless, getting media exposure can be a real challenge in an environment where hundreds of organisations and interest groups are clamoring for attention. To succeed you need to combine careful planning with a good understanding of the way the media works.

This workshop will teach you everything you ever wanted to know about the media and public relations, but were too afraid to ask. The workshop is aimed at anyone with an interest in communications and marketing as it applies to the community and voluntary sector. Jack Murray, a former journalist and founder of Mediacontact.ie, Ireland's leading publisher of media intelligence, will facilitate the workshop.

The bottom line is that organisations across the sector are already dealing with this recession by both cutting costs and exploring new sources of income. This workshop has been designed for people who are in charge of the above mentioned responsibilities: it will explore tools for effectively managing and controlling your organisation's finances, as well as providing a framework and practical suggestions for broadening and increasing your non-statutory income. Deirdre Garvey, CEO of The Wheel, will be the Speaker at the event.

Workshop Objectives are to explore tools for effectively managing and controlling finances, ensuring that your organisation won't have unpleasant surprises, to provide a simple framework for developing and growing your non-statutory income, and to share practical suggestions and examples of what to do and what not to do, based on tried and trusted experience.

The Workshop will suit those people who are responsible for finance and fundraising strategies and their implementation - whether in paid or unpaid roles. Although people from large organisations will gain from the shared experiences and examples provided, the workshop is most applicable for medium sized organisations.

Fee: Members of The Wheel: 45 euro ; Non-members: 80 euro www.thewheel.ie

VAT and the Charities Sector

The Irish Charities Tax Research Group (ICTR) is calling on the Government to initiate discussions with the Department of Finance, Revenue Commissioners the Charity Sector to allow an agreement be reached to resolve the anomaly of unrecoverable VAT. Such a process led to the successful introduction of an agreed VAT Compensation scheme in Denmark recently. There is now an opportunity for charities in Ireland to continue to highlight this issue to Government in the run- up to the Finance Bill and to build momentum towards achieving a compensation scheme.

In the last Budget the Minister for Finance indicated that he will be examining taxation issues again for the Dec 2010 Budget (having concentrated mainly on expenditure reductions in Dec 2009). The Government had previously indicated a willingness to examine the VAT issue for charities but it became deferred due to the sudden economic downturn. The ICTR is encouraging Charities to:

- Designate a person in charge of VAT and VAT Compensation issues
- If not already doing so identify the level of VAT paid by the charity or, at a minimum, the five largest expenditure items that attract unrecoverable VAT in your charity
- Utilise any contacts with Government Ministers to highlight the impact of VAT on your charity. Include a paragraph on the impact of unrecoverable VAT in any financial or grant submissions to Government
- Phone, write, email, or otherwise canvass TDs whom you are in contact with, emphasising the unfairness of the VAT 'levy' on charities. Ask for their support

- Include data on the impact of unrecoverable VAT on your charity's website.

The issue of VAT paid by charities received very significant coverage on RTE's Liveline, with a number of charities (and ICTR) on air explaining the issue. ICTR proposals for VAT compensation were fully explained. You can listen back at <http://www.rte.ie/radio1/liveline/> (fast forward to 43.19 mins into the show on Friday 15th January 2010). For further information on this issue, please contact Sheila Nordon, at Irish Charities Tax research Ltd by email: info@charitytaxreform.com. Website: www.ictr.ie.

Accounting Practices for Charities

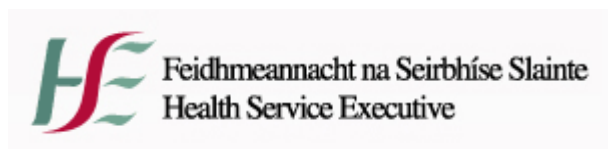
Make Your Views Known

The Charities Act 2009, when commenced, will provide for the introduction of both activity and financial reporting for charities operating in Ireland. Independently of developments under the Charities Act, the Accounting Standards Board (ASB) for the UK and Ireland has issued a consultation paper 'Policy Proposal: the Future of UK GAAP (Generally Accepted Accounting Principles)', which sets out its proposals for the future reporting requirements for UK and Irish entities, including public benefit organisations.

The ASB aims to develop a specifically designed stand alone Accounting Standard for charities to take into account the specific differences between charities and commercial enterprises. It will also recognise the importance of narrative reporting as well as financial reports and the relative size of different organisations. It is likely that the outcome of this consultation process will inform the financial reporting arrangements to be introduced for charities in Ireland under the Charities Act, and which itself will be the subject of consultation with the Irish charities sector in the future. Information on the ASB consultation process is available at www.frc.org.uk/asb/technical/projects/project0072.html. The Irish Charities Tax Research Group Ltd held a seminar on this topic in January 2010 and the presentations are available for download on www.ictr.ie.

INFORMATION AND COMMUNICAITON TECHNOLOGY (ICT)

Get access to the HSE's online resource for Learning & Development



HSELand contains online learning programmes, resources, assessment & planning tools, to provide for and support you and you organisation including your

eReference Resources



personal and professional development. This site is a must have for all voluntary organisations. There is lots of information around HR, Knowledge Management, Online learning and both ICT and soft skills. The online learning section deals with many areas including Computer Skills, Clinical Skills, Conference and Training events, Learning and Development Specialists Network Programmes and Personal Effectiveness Skills.

There is also a Personal Development Portal site that allows you to plan and progress your own development using the tools and training within the site.

There is a large amount of information available on the site that can't be covered in a short update. The registration link is provided below. The employee numbers is requested when registering. However it is possible to access the site by inputting any five digit number. For further information please contact your DFI Support Officer. <https://www.hseland.ie/tohm/registration.asp>

Cutting ICT costs by 50%



If your organisation receives Government funding and you have an ICT budget, please read on. As part of a Department of Finance initiative your organisation can drastically reduce its ICT cost through participation in this scheme. The Department of Finance, in collaboration with public service inter organisational groups, has established a number of procurement arrangements in the areas of IT







Hardware, Telecommunications, and Data Networking. These arrangements provide the benefits of aggregated procurement power to obtain value for money and the provision of services under Government terms and conditions. In addition, use of these arrangements reduces the complexity, cost and timing of procurement. Further information is provided below. Under the scheme you can purchase Laptops, Desktops, Printers and Phones. Most of the major suppliers are covered in the scheme, so it should not affect your desktop strategy, if you have one.

The Process

1. Send an email with your request to a defined address using the template provided - (you can't pick Dell over Lenovo, you must define the specification you need, so you would indicate, for example, 6 pc's with 4GB Ram, Windows XP and next day support)
2. All participants of the scheme will receive your request automatically
3. They will reply to you individually within the timeframe you require
4. You pick the winner according to the criteria you set
5. You place the order and, in some cases, you can even stay with your current supplier.

The above is a simple outline of the process. However, you will need to read the documentation carefully and ensure that you clearly understand the process. Once you use the framework you will never look back. DFI has used the framework to purchase equipment, and can provide

assistance if necessary. Below are the contact details for the various components of the framework. However, before you begin, we recommend you flick through the information provided here in this link: <http://share.icthub.ie/Shared%20Documents/Forms/AllItems.aspx>

	<h3>PC Framework</h3> <p>Supply of Personal Computers plus associated products and services. Term: Effective from 1st May 2006 to 30th April 2009. Email: ictframeworks@gov.ie URL: http://pcframework.gov.ie * Tel: (01) 604 5021</p>
	<h3>Notebook Framework</h3> <p>Supply of Notebook Computers plus associated products and services. Term: Effective from 8th Dec 2006 to 7th Dec 2008. Email: ictframeworks@gov.ie URL: http://notebookframework.gov.ie * Tel: (01) 604 5021</p>
	<h3>Monochrome Laser Printer Framework</h3> <p>Supply of Mono Laser Printers plus associated products and services. Term: Effective from 21st January 2008 to 20th January 2011. URL: http://monoframework.gov.ie * Tel: (01) 604 5021 Email: ictframeworks@gov.ie</p>
	<h3>Colour Laser Printer Framework</h3> <p>Supply of Colour Laser Printers plus associated products and services. Term: Effective from 23rd June 2008 to 22nd June 2011. URL: http://colourframework.gov.ie * Tel: (01) 604 5021 Email: ictframeworks@gov.ie</p>
	<h3>Mobile Voice and Data Framework</h3> <p>Supply of Mobile Voice and Data plus associated products and services. Term: Effective from 1st February 2008 to 31st January 2011. URL: http://mobile.gn.gov.ie * Tel: (01) 604 5018 Email: mobiles@gov.ie</p>
	<h3>Government Networks (Template RFTs)</h3> <p>Supply of Data, Voice and Video Network services. Term: Effective from 1st May 2006 onwards. URL: http://gn.gov.ie * Tel: (01) 604 5037 Email: gn@gov.ie</p>

If you require any further help please contact your DFI Support Officer (contact details are available at the end of the newsletter).

HEALTH

Changes Agreed to Part 1 of the HSE Service Level Arrangements

Changes have been made by the HSE to a number of clauses in Part 1 of Service Level Arrangements. Although we have not yet received the contracts incorporating the revisions, we have been given information on the changes, as outlined below. All the changes apply to both Section 38 and Section 39 Arrangements.

The new version tightens a number of provisions to the advantage of the Service Provider. It includes obligations on the HSE to give advance notice in more situations and spells out the Provider's right to terminate. Providers will be able to discuss the need for improved insurance coverage. The HSE Regional Director is named as the lowest ranking official authorised to issue non compliance notices, to act in dispute resolution matters and termination.

Resolution regarding a few provisions, such as non compliance in place of Clause 13.5 on 'Exceptional Circumstances, is to be addressed when the SLAs are reviewed later this year.^[1]

Details of the SLA amendments

1. Clause 1.1 on Definitions has a few changes. Regarding the duration of a SLA, it can be terminated or renewed within the year, based on a review initiated by the HSE
2. Clause 1.1 (ii) 'major incident' has additional trigger: if a demand surge occurs that causes x% increase in the Provider's resources, then ... The 'x' is to be agreed with each Provider
3. Specification of hours of work and of business
4. The Appointment and Principles clause clarifies that the extent of services to be provided under SLA are specified in Schedule 3. And that obligations, requests etc in SLA only cover those services. (Clause 2.1, 2.3)
5. Clause 6 requires that HSE give at least 14 days written notice by the HSE of a set-off and withholding of funds
6. Clause 9 qualifies the obligation to comply with HSE requests (which are to be in writing) for information where these need consent of a third party, so long as Provider tries to get that consent, e.g. re Parliamentary questions. Also it explicitly says information obligations, post SLA termination, are decided by law /policy, not just by HSE Again, a 14 day notice period is required before HSE withholds funding if Provider failed to provide information(Clause 9.6, 9.7)

[1] Laverne McGuinness last February in correspondence wrote that a standing committee comprising lead LHMs, the HSE Business Support Unit and umbrella bodies would identify and record issues that arise during implementation of the SLAs. This, she explained would "inform the review of the Service Arrangement documentation which will take place in twelve months time". If you have any issues or experiences that you would like to inform this review please contact DFI.

7. Clause 13.3 on Effect of Non Compliance, limits the HSE's right to provide or procure provision of a service(s) at the expense to the Provider to the amount of funding contracted for same service(s)
8. The relevant Regional Director of Operations (at the least) must authorise notices under 13.3 on the effect of non compliance (Clause 13.4) also for 30.2 and new 30.6 on dispute resolution
9. The review of the SLA will deal with situations where the HSE considers the Provider non compliant with consequent risks, and 13.5 on Exceptional Circumstances is eliminated from the Arrangement.
10. When HSE requests improved insurance coverage, the parties will discuss whether or not funding should be increased, and if so, to insert this in Schedule 10. Also the HSE may step in if agreed cover is not provided (unless narrowly defined circumstances beyond Provider's control) (Clause 14.5, 14.7)
11. Sub clauses of 16.14 on Provider Personnel have been dropped, to be re-examined in the review of the SLA
12. Clause 24.4 protects slightly the Provider's obligations to disclose confidential information, and in clause 27.2 the Providers obligations to protect personal data. However 26.6 extends HSE protection against liability for information disclosure – if in accordance with this clause on freedom of information
13. New additional clause 28.5 on Major Incidents states where a difference between the HSE and Provider about the Provider's response, the discussion will focus on the best interests of the service users. The Provider will implement actions 'recommended / agreed' with the HSE. Any funding changes go into Schedule 10
14. Clause 31.1 on Termination again requires at least the Regional Director of Operations to authorise, and the HSE must give 3 months written notice (or agreed notice period). Previously termination could have had immediate effect. New clause 31.2 states that if a serious breach by the Executive, the Provider has right to terminate with the same notice requirements applying (and consequent adjustments in 31.3,.4)
15. New clause 31.8 defines in a non exhaustive way 'serious breach', first for clause 31.2 where HSE triggers termination and second where Provider does so
16. New additional clause 33.9 © is a provision about agreeing to discuss any adjustment in funding or services required due to changes in law, direction etc that cause "a demonstrated material increase or decrease in costs of x % or greater to the Provider" – where 'x' to be agreed with each Provider.

If you have any questions about these changes, or other comments on the SLAs, please contact lillianbuchanan@disability-federation.ie .

HSE National Service Plan 2010

The HSE National Service Plan for 2010 includes the following issues in the context of disability:

- Core disability service levels to be maintained at the same level as 2009
- Demographic Service Pressure funding for disability services to provide for a growth in demand for residential, day places and additional hours of personal assistant / home supports
- Innovation funding to support the transition from institutions to person centred models of care in disability and mental health

Government is continuing its review of the efficiency and effectiveness of the health and personal social services for people with disabilities, as part of its Value for Money and Policy Review Programme for 2009 – 2011.

Health Research Board Report

‘Resource Allocation for the HSE’

A research Report published recently, ‘Resource Allocation for the Health Service Executive, a Model for the Primary, Continuing and Community Care’, has found that there is huge inequity in the way funding is allocated for primary, continuing and community care across the 32 local Local Health Office (LHO) areas of the HSE. The research, carried out by Dublin City University, University College Dublin, and NUI Maynooth The researchers examined the distribution of the €4.9 billion primary, continuing and community care funding channeled through the HSE LHO areas in 2007 and found that there were wide variations in spending per capita in each area. Spending was lowest in the Dublin West LHO area at around €537 per capita and highest in the West Cork LHO area at an estimated €4,515 per capita.

The research was commissioned and funded by the Health Research Board (HRB) and the HSE, and was undertaken in a bid to come up with a more equitable model for allocating resources to primary, continuing and community care services in the State. These services include mental health, child care, disability, elderly and nursing home care, speech and language therapy, public health and paramedic services.

The research looks to identify a way of allocating resources on the basis of the age, sex and needs of people in each LHO area. However, the authors point out that this was difficult because of limited data and different information systems across the healthcare system.

The Report notes that “This exercise has shown with great clarity the inadequacy of current Irish health information systems for the management of HSE. Fixing this must be a priority. One of the

Report's authors, said there were currently no unique personal identifiers that run across the health system. "This leads to significant costs and a risk of serious errors," he said.

The Report is available from www.hrb.ie/publications

National Physical and Sensory Disability Database (NPSDD)

Research Findings

The latest Bulletin published by the Health Research Board on measuring activity and participation (MAP) focuses on participation and aging. It reports within the limits of the data captured by the NPSDD, notably the restriction of coverage to people aged 65 years or less. The findings underline the complexity that exists regarding the extent of restrictions experienced due to disability, the barriers experienced, supports and services used and/or needed, depending on the age of the person, the diagnosed disability and the type of participation under consideration.

The findings confirm the appropriateness of adopting the person-centred approach to public services as advocated in the social partnership agreement, *Towards 2016*. For example, 16-24 year olds, where the predominant diagnoses were congenital deafness, cystic fibrosis and cerebral palsy, name peer support and driving instruction as important requirements for assisting socialising. By contrast, those aged 25-44 years referred to personal assistant services and those 45 to 65 years to home help. That said, physiotherapy and occupational therapies were considered the most important requirements amongst those across all the age categories who had experienced some restriction in socialising due to their disability.

MAP Bulletin number 4 is available on the Health Research Board website: www.hrb.ie

SOCIAL INCLUSION

DSFA Disability Consultative Forum Meeting December 2009

DFI sits on the Department of Social & Family Affairs Disability Consultative Forum, which meets four times a year. The most recent meeting took place on the 1st December 2009. The notes below provide a synopsis of the issues raised at the meeting.

Medical Review and Assessment Service (MRAS)

On a number of occasions members of the DSFA Disability Consultative Forum have raised concerns that disabled people with certain conditions are being refused the Disability Allowance. In response to this concern, Mr Liam Feeney from the Medical Review and Assessment Section of

the Department gave a presentation on its work and took questions from the disability representatives present.

The function of the Medical Review and Assessment Service (MRAS) unit is to confirm the eligibility for illness, disability and carer schemes, based on medical certification and reports provided by the claimant's medical practitioner, or based on medical examinations undertaken by departmental Medical Assessors.

There are 23 Medical Assessors (MAs) in Ireland, and over 50 Medical Review and Assessment Centres nationwide. Advocacy services are facilitated by MRAS. This may be done in consultation with CIB or other representative group but must be requested in advance. Interpreters may also be facilitated. The disability representatives suggested that letters requesting customers to attend examinations should state that advocates or interpreters may be facilitated. This will now be considered by the Department. In 2008, over 40,000 In-Person Assessments were completed while a further 70,000+ Desk Reviews were undertaken.

Another issue reported to the Department at the meeting was that some service users have had to pay for medical certificates, despite having a medical card. There should be no charge to the customer for issuing certificates for Illness benefit . With regard to long term schemes, DA, Invalidity Pension, etc., there should be no charge to the customer when their medical report form for the scheme is completed by a GP who is on the DSFA panel. If the customer chooses to go to a GP who is not on the DSFA panel the GP may charge the customer, as the GP is not paid by the Department in this situation. The option is there for the customer to contact the department to identify a GP on the DSFA panel for completion of the medical report section of the application form. If the customer does not have a medical card, and the GP has to examine him/her, then there may be a charge for the exam if the DSFA assessment is part of this routine GP visit. However, in principle, where a GP who is on the DSFA panel is completing an assessment for a DSFA scheme, there should be no charge.

In the context of the new IT system developed for the MRA process, this will soon be known as the MRCM (Medical Referral and Case Management) system, and the case management element of the programme will feed into the department's Employment Strategy for people with disabilities as part of the wider activation agenda. Medical Assessors would obviously be involved in any assessment for potential activation. Currently, approximately 20,000 DA customers and 10% of Invalidity Pension customers are availing of exemptions or have permission to work. The whole area of partial capacity is under review. This issue is of specific interest to the voluntary disability representatives present and DFI will keep you informed of more developments as they occur.

Update on DSFA Sectoral Plan 2010-2012.

The new Department of Social and Family Affairs Sectoral Plan has been submitted to the Department of Justice, Equality and Law Reform. It has yet to go before the Houses of the Oireachtas. DFI and members of the Disability Stakeholder Group (DSG) have played an

important role in lobbying the Department to ensure that the Sectoral Plan maps out significant actions around disability over the next two years. DFI will inform members when it is published.

Disability Allowance Review

The DA review will be presented to the DSFA Policy Review Committee for consideration. It is hoped to do so within the next few weeks and hopefully this can be expanded upon at the next Forum meeting. Principle policy personnel from all areas sit on the Review Committee. DFI will inform its members through the newsletter when this important document is published.

For further information on the DSFA Disability Consultative Forum or information that you would like to feed your representative, please contact Louise Mc Cann (DFI Support Officer) at louisemccann@disability-federation.ie or 01 4250126.

NCSE Report - Education of People with Autism Spectrum Disorders

The National Council for Special Education (NCSE) was formally established in 2005 under the Education for Persons with Special Education Needs Act 2004 (EPSN) to improve the delivery of education services to persons with special educational needs, with particular emphasis on children. Commissioning, conducting and publishing research to provide an evidence base to support the NCSE's work are some of the key functions of the NCSE. It is now widely acknowledged that research evidence has a very valuable role to play in the development of policy and practice.

This research report, 'International Review of the Literature of Evidence of Best Practice Provision in the Education of Persons with Autistic Spectrum Disorders', was commissioned to provide the NCSE with an overview of the international literature on educational provision for persons with autistic spectrum disorders. The report updates our knowledge of the field, particularly in relation to how it has developed since the publication of the Report of the Task Force on Autism in 2001. The researchers have systematically compiled key lessons from a very broad range of international literature. They have also identified a number of recommendations arising, which the NCSE will now need to consider in carrying out its work and in developing its own policy advice to the Minister for Education and Science.

Reports from the full NCSE research programme, including this one, will be key sources, amongst others, that will assist the NCSE in carrying out its work and in developing policy advice to the Minister for Education and Science on special education matters, another of the NCSE's statutory functions. The reports will also assist in identifying and disseminating to schools, parents and other appropriate stakeholders, information relating to best practice concerning the education of children with special education needs. The Report is available on the NCE website, www.ncse.ie, as is further information on the NCSE research programme

National Disability Survey 2006, Volume 2

The release of this report by the CSO significantly enhances information about the situations of people with disabilities before the onset of the current recession. There is detailed analysis of many areas of life, including caring and help from other persons, attitudes of other people to disability, transport, accessibility to the built environment, education, work and training, social participation, sport and exercise. Additional health-related information is provided that supplements the data contained in Volume 1.

- The report reveals that 56% of persons with a disability who lived in private households received help with their everyday activities. 42% of those in private households received help from family members who lived with them
- One-third of adults with a disability in private households had some difficulty with routine tasks inside their home because of their disability, while a further 19% had a lot of difficulty
- A lack of money was the most common reason given for not having specialised features in the home
- People with a disability in private households were much more likely than people living in nursing homes, hospitals and children's homes to have gone out on a social venue with family or friends (61% versus 22%). That said, this indicator suggests that for many people social participation was restricted

Many more insights can be gleaned by thorough study of the 200 or so tables in the report. DFI will incorporate the evidence from the survey into its work promoting implementation of the National Disability Strategy. The report is available on the CSO website: www.cso.ie

NDS / TOWARDS 2016

National Housing Strategy for People with Disabilities

Development of this Strategy is progressing at the Department of the Environment, Heritage and Local Government, guided by advice from a representative of stakeholders who sits on the National Advisory Group. Most of the chapters of the Strategy have been drafted, including some specifically dealing with accessibility of housing, mental health issues, and promoting inter-agency co-operation. There will also be a chapter on housing issues related to intellectual and developmental disability, which will incorporate the learning from the congregated settings project. Further work is required to map out an implementation plan for the Strategy and to identify key performance indicators. The Department hopes to finalise the strategy within the next few months. For further information, please email: lillianbuchanan@disability-federation.ie.

Public Funding for Housing

The Department of the Environment, Heritage and Local Government reports that its initial allocation for Capital Assistance Funding in 2010 will be about 30% higher than the level in 2009, i.e., approximately €143 million. This funding supports housing associations to finance housing projects for people with disabilities and for older people. According to the Department, the other main source of additional housing for this cohort will be provided through leasing arrangements.

Departmental initial funding allocations for housing adaptation grants for people with disabilities and older people are also planned to increase from €60 million to €80 million. It will be important for local authorities to find their 20% contribution to these grants. Publication of the evaluation of the grant schemes commissioned by the Department is expected in the first quarter of 2010.

FUNDING

Two new funding opportunities are available, which do not look very obvious at first sight, may be of some interest with a closer look. The two funds are the European Refugee Fund and the European Integration Fund. Both funds target, amongst other groups, people with disabilities, across all disability disciplines. Projects in relation to People with disabilities attract the higher funding percentage of up to 75% (normal support 50%). Project size: € 50k - € 300k, collaboration is encouraged, and there is flexibility around match-funding. Project duration is 18 – 36 months. This funding could be suitable for the areas of Advocacy Services (collaboration with CIB), web-based support services, mentoring services, and training.

European Refugee Fund (ERF) 2009

The ERF funds reception and integration activities supporting asylum seekers and refugees. Applications for funding are invited from Community and Voluntary/Non-Government Organisations (including minority ethnic led organisations) at national, regional or local level, Integrated Local Development Companies, Urban Partnerships, Local Authorities and other public sector organisations. The ERF is a co-funding measure. ERF contributions must be matched by funding from other non-EU sources.

The deadline for applications is 5pm on Friday 26th February 2010.

For further queries, please contact either Ronan Tierney on (01) 5117124 / rtierney@pobal.ie or Ciara Flanagan on (01) 5117286 / cflanagan@pobal.ie

European Integration Fund (EIF) 2009

The EIF funds actions supporting the integration of third country nationals. Applications for funding are invited from Community and Voluntary/Non-Government Organisations (including minority ethnic led organisations) at national, regional or local level, Integrated Local Development Companies, Urban Partnerships, Local Authorities and other public sector organisations. The EIF

is a co-funding measure. EIF contributions must be matched by funding from other non-EU sources. Pobal has organised four information sessions on the ERF and EIF 2009 Calls for Funding.

The deadline for applications is 5pm on Friday 26th February 2010.

For further queries, please contact either Ronan Tierney on (01) 5117124 / rtierney@pobal.ie or Ciara Flanagan on (01) 5117286 / cflanagan@pobal.ie

Link to the relevant web-site with application guidelines, application forms, etc.
<http://www.pobal.ie/Funding%20Programmes/integration/Pages/Funding.aspx>

GENERAL INFORMATION

Older People's Network

DFI operates an older people's email network which from time to time mails members on issues relating to older people and disability. If you would like to be included in this email list, please contact Joan O'Donnell, Support Officer, joanodonnell@disability-federation.ie

Care Alliance Ireland

Care Alliance Ireland is part of the 'Life After Care Project' an EU project that is looking at the needs of Family Carers after their caring has ended. Specifically the researchers are seeking input from a number of people who have ceased caring within the last two years and who are prepared to meet up and share their experiences in Athlone on Tuesday February 23rd.

Liam O'Sullivan would be delighted to discuss any aspects of the project with you. Tel: 087-2073265 or by e-mail: ndo@carealliance.ie

Further details of the Life After Care project can be found at www.lifeaftercare.eu

Children's Rights Alliance

Report Card on Government Commitments to Children

The Children's Rights Alliance (CRA) has published its second report grading the Government's progress in honouring its promises to children in the social policy areas of education, health, material wellbeing and safeguarding childhood. Only in education was a respectable grade (C+) awarded, primarily because of initiatives taken on early childhood education and care.

The Report gives detailed analysis for each policy area. These commentaries are relevant to children with disabilities, such as the F grade assigned to public commitments on primary health care. The Report points out that, although investment in the primary care infrastructure was already far behind schedule, Budget 2010 gave no funding for development. It notes that the area of primary care is where early intervention for children takes place.

Mental Health Services performs little better, getting a D grade. In this area, the CRA calls for action, including publication of an implementation plan for *A Vision for Change*. Attention to commitments to children with special educational need gains a C grade, mainly based on renewed promises in the *Programme for Government* in October 2009.

The inadequacy of information about children with special educational needs and the services and supports they receive is highlighted, given the incomplete commencement of the EPSEN Act. The Report estimates that nearly one in five children has special educational needs.

The CRA Report is available at: www.childrensrights.ie

Contribute to the Development of the HSE Single Assessment Tool for Older People:

Ensure that your Service Users Needs Are Taken Into Account

The HSE has set up a group, the 'Single Assessment Tool Group', to select, pilot and recommend a single assessment tool or suite of tools to be utilised for the care needs assessment of older people nationally under the 'Taskforce on the Implementation of the Fair Deal'.

Age Action Ireland is setting up an expert support group to feed into the HSE Group. They are now looking to establish a group of interested parties with an knowledge in this area, and also experts in the area of assessment tools, carers, capacity and 'personal wishes' and user groups.

If you and your organisation have an interest in being an active member of this group and/or would like to receive meeting notes and support documents etc, please contact Lorna Roe, Social Policy Officer, Age Action Ireland Ltd, Tel: 01 4756989 Mobile: 087 7812127

Email: policyinclusion@ageaction.ie Website: www.ageaction.ie

Web Accessibility

02. ie recently launched an accessibility tool for Web surfers who live with mild visual impairments, learning disabilities, such as dyslexia and literacy difficulties, can now listen to content on 02.ie.

Have You Experienced Discrimination Because of Mental Health Difficulties?

A research team at Dublin City University, in partnership with people who have experienced mental health difficulties, and on behalf of Amnesty Ireland are conducting a study, 'Exploring the Experience of Discrimination as Reported by People with Mental Health Difficulties'.

If you are over 18 years old and are interested in hearing more about this study, would like to get involved, or participate by sharing your experience, please contact Muriel Redmond on Tel: 01

700 7923 or Email: muriel.redmond@dcu.ie. Please leave (a) your full name (b) your contact phone number and (c) your county location with Muriel or on her voicemail if outside office hours.

The research itself is carried out by school of Nursing at DCU on behalf of Amnesty International. Any involvement in the study would be confidential.

ICSH Seminar - Leasing for Housing Associations

The ICSH is holding a seminar on the new social housing leasing initiative in response to a considerable number of members who have requested guidance on this. This initiative is now open to housing associations and members who are interested in providing accommodation under this scheme are encouraged to attend. The seminar will provide members with details and guidance on the operation and progress of the new scheme including financial details, legal agreements, allocations and management issues. Speakers include Rosalind Carroll from the Department of the Environment, Heritage and Local Government, Linda Chelton, Hyndburn Homes in the UK who will speak about implementing Choice Based Lettings, as well as practitioners involved in the scheme.

The event will take place on 10th February 2010, Ashling Hotel, Dublin City Centre. For queries please call Irene Byrne on 01 6618334.

Acquired Brain Injury Ireland

Brain Aware Training Programme

Acquired Brain Injury Ireland have published the 2010 schedule for its Training Programme, suitable for family members caring for and supporting someone with an acquired brain injury who would like to develop skills and knowledge of ABI to help in the caring role, in an environment with other family members. Training Programmes are being run throughout Ireland in 2010, and topics covered will include:

- Introduction to Acquired Brain Injury
- ABI & the Family - How Families Cope with Acquired Brain Injury
- Meaningful Every Day Routines and Achieving a Meaningful Life
- Health Promotion and Wellbeing of Carers
- Emotional and Behavioural Changes Following Brain Injury
- Communication and the Challenges after Brain Injury
- Attention and memory difficulties following brain injury
- Children with an Acquired Brain Injury

Briefing sessions will be held where those interested can have a chat and find out more about the

Training Programme before deciding to attend. For more detail please contact: Una Kinane at (01) 2804 164 Ext. 207_Mobile: (087) 257 8235_Email: ukinane@abiireland.ie

This Project has been supported by Government through the Dormant Accounts Fund

Institute for Public Health in Ireland

Seminar: Climate Change: Whose Health Will Be Affected

The Copenhagen Summit provided a focus for Climate Change at the end of 2009. To build on this in 2010 the Institute of Public Health in Ireland invites you to participate in an all-Ireland event on the health effects of climate change.

The aims of the event are to raise awareness of potential health impacts of climate change and action needed to reduce likelihood of adverse health outcomes, to bring together stakeholders with a role in the climate change agenda.

Participants gain increased knowledge of potential health impacts of climate change, be aware of how climate change impacts on different groups within the population, be able to identify key groups including professionals, politicians, policy makers and community groups who have roles to play in reducing likelihood of adverse health outcomes from climate change, and be more aware of what action is needed to reduce likelihood of adverse health outcomes.

The event will take place at The Greenhouse, 17 St Andrew's Street, Dublin 2 on Thursday 25th February 2010, from 10 a.m. to 1 p.m. Further information on IPH can be accessed from <http://www.publichealth.ie>.

Please confirm attendance with Aisling O'Connor - Email: aisling.oconnor@publichealth.ie or Tel: +353 1 478 6300 by Friday, 5 February 2010.

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

Central Remedial Clinic – People First Tel: 01-8057400
jloughton@crc.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@irishdeafsociety.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: 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

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

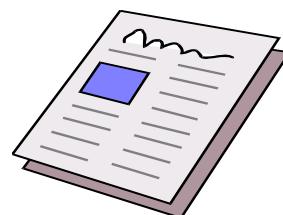
S.I. News - Schizophrenia Ireland, Tel: (0)1 8601620
E-mail: info@sirl.ie

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

Sonas aPc – Tel (01) 2608138. sonasapc@iol.ie
www.sonasapc.ie.

Speaking up for Advocacy – Citizens Information Board 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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