



ACTING CEO REPORT

Welcome to our 12th newsletter.

Claire Whelan

Welcome to the final Newsletter of the year!

It has been a significant year for Reach Deaf Services, and we hope you enjoy learning about it in this Newsletter.

In 2022 we wished farewell to Tara McBreen who stepped down from the CEO position to spend more quality time with her family. With the transition from St Joseph's House to the creation of the Supported Living Service, Tara's work had a massive positive impact on the lives of people who use the service. Since Tara's departure, Mary Stringer has been appointed as the CEO. Mary's on-going commitment and vision for the service brings huge excitement for the future! While Mary is on Maternity Leave, I am covering her position and I look forward to implementing the next phase of the Strategic Plan.

At Board level there were a number of changes this year. Chairperson Geraldine Tallon resigned and was replaced by Nesson Vaughan. Nesson was a member of our governance committee and brings a wealth of experience to the role. In terms of Board Members, Ger Deering and Andrew Fagan stepped down; they brought vast experience from their areas of expertise and their support to the organisation has been invaluable. We have just recruited new Board Members and you will be introduced to them in our next Newsletter!

I am proud to note that the management team, Committees, and the Board are a group of individuals who care deeply about all people who use the service and all staff. We are really looking forward to working together for another year of service development. An important part of this development is the recent establishment of an ISL forum that will lead on a ISL strategy. We want to make sure ISL is the primary focus of how we are providing services.

We hope you enjoy the news we are sharing with you!

HR GENERALIST REPORT

Kristina Harris

Over the past year, Reach Deaf Services have run a robust recruitment drive across many areas of our services including Boarding & Community. This has resulted in 15 new recruits across our Support and Social Care departments.

In more recent months we opened a position for an IT Manager of which Gerry Philpott was appointed and has since been providing valuable IT support for our future service needs. In November 2022 Mary Stringer was appointed as Chief Executive Officer of Reach Deaf Services. Mary has been with Reach Deaf Services for the past 9 years and we congratulate her on her new position.

We wish all who joined us this year a warm welcome, we look forward to continuing work with you all into the new year.

With the ease of the pandemic restrictions, Reach Deaf Services were able to resume a full schedule of employee in person training. These trainings included many mandatory courses such as manual & people moving and handling, medication management, safeguarding and child protection training and for the community service, Social Role Valorization (SRV) training recommenced. We also seen the introduction of new training such as the HSE National Consent Policy for all employees with further new training courses to be introduced in 2023.

Our team of ISL teachers have continued to provide quality ISL teaching and development support to all employees across services on a 1 to 1 basis and in September, members of all services management met to discuss further improvement initiatives for the use of ISL.

In mid-2022, we completed the rollout of our new employee time management system and moving into 2023, a large focus will be on the implementation of further technology and systems to support our employees and service users in line with the Reach Deaf Services Strategic Plan 2022-2027.

HEAD OF BOARDING CARE

Claire Bowe



REPORT

A lot has happened in the Boarding since the last Newsletter. The opening of the Independent House was a significant day for us. The aim is to provide our boarders with Independent living in their final year of school. They will learn new skills such as cooking, managing personal budgets, as well as crucial soft skills such as being more organised, negotiating and sharing household tasks under less supervision from staff. Kalem, Noah, MJ and Marcus from St Joseph's campus, spent some time there before they left in May 2022 and they have given the Independent House a name, 'The Hide Out'. The feedback we received from the boys and their families is very positive. This year the girls will be moving into The Hide Out. We are excited for them and hope it will be a positive experience.



We have said goodbye to some staff and have welcomed others. Antoinette has left us after many years, and we would like to thank her for all her work at Reach Deaf Services. Conor and Emma have gone on career breaks, and we wish them all the best during this time. We also said goodbye to Lisa, Liz and Sara who have moved onto new career endeavours and adventures. We have welcomed the following new staff to our service, Shauna, Rachel and Chigo. Ruth has returned to us as a Care Manager. We would like to congratulate Shauna O'Connor and Ciara Duignan on their new arrivals, Daisy and Tom.

We also said farewell to our previous boarders Sinead, Sheena, MJ, Marcus, Noah and Kalem who left us in May 2022 for the big wide world and we wish them all the best for the next chapter of their lives. The graduation gala for our leavers took place in Deaf Village Ireland. This was held to honour our boarders as they embark on a new chapter in their lives. A sumptuous four course dinner was beautifully prepared and cooked by our wonderful catering staff Clodagh and Ann



This was followed by speeches given by Claire Bowe, our Head of Care, Ashling Donegan, our Care Manager and staff celebrating their life and times in boarding and wishing them happiness and success in their future. It was a thoroughly enjoyable evening. We would like to thank Michelle McLoughlan, Sara Kelly, Emma Shaw and Liz Quinn for organizing such a beautiful and memorable event.

Our older boarders had a thoroughly enjoyable evening preparing and attending the Debs Ball at the Red Cow Hotel, Dublin. Great work and preparations were made in relation to having a Pre- Debs ambience in both Boardings. Boarders and staff put a huge effort into decorating the DVI's reception area and providing refreshments. On the day there was a barber/hair stylist available where all availed of his services. All the debutants looked elegant, stylish and dapper. The boarders' parents came to enjoy the evening and support their sons and daughters for the evening ahead.



We would like to say congratulations to Sona, Sean, Shane, Kiera and Chloe who completed their Junior Cert Examinations in June. They worked and prepared well for their exams. Excellent results were achieved. We are very proud of you all.



The Boarding went through a difficult time during the COVID-19 pandemic where there was a limitation on the activities we could safely provide due to social distancing restrictions, and we were glad when it was finally safe to offer a range of activities again, including workshops and outings. There was a welcome back BBQ party in September for the boarders, which was a great way of catching up with everyone over some lovely food and fun games. We organised many activities over the year. We went on a fun hike in the Dublin Mountains to see the ruins of the Hell Fire Club building,

where a staff member shared the stories behind it. They claimed they saw a ghost! We went to Farmaphobia for our Halloween trip. There was great laughter, excitement and very scary moments. Everyone enjoyed the evening. We hosted a Halloween Party at St. Joseph's boarding campus and the boarders had lots of fun playing different games. In one of the games the boarders had to guess which food they were eating while blindfolded! We organised a trip to Dundrum in November and the boarders were shocked to see the enormity of the Dundrum Shopping Centre! We are currently planning our next trip to Funderland in January.



There were various workshops organised for the boarders during the year. The boarders attended a Drugs and Alcohol Awareness workshop, as well as a Maintaining Healthy Relationships workshop which were delivered by the boarding staff as part of their Life Skills Programme. During the International Week of the Deaf, the Boarding celebrated the week by attending 2 different talks organised by the Boarding's Activities Committee. Caroline McGrotty and Eoin Nolan talked about their experiences in third level education and employment, including the barriers they overcame as Deaf people. Teresa Lynch presented on the importance of embracing Irish Sign Language. The boarders were very engaged and asked lots of questions!



We visited The Deaf Heritage Centre. Liam Breen was our host. Liam talked about cherishing Deaf history. That is why the Deaf Heritage Centre was set up. The aim is to collect, maintain and protect the artefacts and records of the Deaf Community going back 200 years. The exhibition stands display various historical materials, resources and records for the Deaf Community. Liam gave a very informative presentation and the group were very much engaged with the history and were fascinated by the artefacts. We have our own staff delivering workshops also; Redmond gave a presentation on the 112-emergency text line, and Justin and Nick gave a presentation to the boarders on Mental Health. We have many more events like this organised for next few months as part of our Life Skills Programme.



As part of our Life Skills Programme, we support the boarders with transport training, and for those who can travel independently, they have been going out in the evening time with their friends to various places such as Blanchardstown Shopping Centre or McDonalds. The Boarding service works with Deaf Sports Ireland to provide a range of sports such as basketball, swimming and football. The activities had been on hold due to the COVID-19 restrictions, but we are pleased that these activities are back up and running again, with more sports to come after Christmas.

The decorations are now up for Christmas and Santa Claus sent one of his elves down to St. Joseph's Boarding and he has been up to all kinds of mischief! Our Chefs cooked delicious Christmas dinners for both boarding campuses. Both boarding campuses joined together for our annual Christmas party where we had a visit from Santa Claus and everyone received presents and played fun games. We also hosted our Annual Christmas coffee morning with the staff from the Holy Family School- it was great to meet everyone who attended and take some time out to enjoy the festive season. From all of us at Boarding, we wish you all a Merry Christmas and a very Happy New Year.



HEAD OF ADULT SERVICES

Linda Tierney



LINDA REPORT

The Final quarter of the year has been a busy one for Supported Living Services. The recruitment process remains ongoing and has required a lot of focus and effort from HR and Community Support Managers. We have seen a rise in filling positions and interest in roles and look forward to completing our full staff team in early 2023.

We finally got to celebrate the closing of St Joseph's House in the Castleknock Hotel, it was a fabulous evening catching up with everyone, dancing and having fun at the photobooth. It was important that we acknowledged all the people we support, staff, family members and all the stakeholders involved in ensuring the transition from St Joseph's house was completed on time. While this was achieved, we have also acknowledged it is just the start of the journey and we are dedicated to developing our new service model of empowering the people we support to live a life of their choosing in their own home. This model is based on a Social Role Valorisation Theory and Self - Directed living model which staff are coached on by our SRV Practitioner Kathleen Morris. We have also held specialised training in Complex needs and Autism to enhance staff skills to support people's specific needs.

We sadly said goodbye to two people we supported Noel Ivory and Adrian Kearney. Noel had transitioned to Curam Care but we were delighted he got to celebrate with us on Castleknock and have fond memories of supporting him of his time in SJH. We are very sad to have said goodbye to Adrian, who brought so much fun and laughter to all, he is also sadly missed by his loving partner Mary to whom he was dedicated to and shared a happy life in their own home.

I want to thank all the staff across all departments for all their commitment and support throughout 2022 we would not have got through this year without the dedication from staff and support to the people availing of our support service. We shared a Staff Appreciation Gift to acknowledge and Appreciate all our staff do in their roles. We are dedicated to supporting and ensuring all staff are supported in their roles and trained with the skills they need to provide the supports people need to live well in their own home.

As we are preparing to celebrate the festive season, we have also been busy planning a lot for next year. We have had two consultant reviews in the areas of Policy & Procedures and Clinical Support, both of these reviews have provided us with recommendations to improve our service delivery and guide us in the direction of a quality service which we are dedicated to achieve. We also held a workshop on Process Mapping to review all the processes in our service and will ensure all staff are fully informed on the process most relevant to their roles.

Safeguarding and Human Rights

We held a coffee morning to mark the National Safeguarding Awareness Day on November 11th and to remind the people we support and staff the importance of reporting any signs of abuse. As a service we promote the right to live a life free from abuse and to have people's rights upheld. We continue to stay informed of the implementation of the Assisted Decision-Making Act and will ensure all the people we support are in control of the decisions in their lives.
(more about it in the next page)

I would like to wish all individuals you avail of our support service and staff a very Happy Christmas and Happy New Year for 2023.

How Wrong I Was

The title will explain itself as I tell my story.

In the 90's my mother heard about St. Joseph's House for adult deaf and decided to put my sister's name down believing that in time it would provide her with a good home. My sister became a resident in 2004, was happy living there where she was looked after by the wonderful staff. But in 2018 the management of St. Joseph's announced that the residents were to be moved from the congregated setting of St. Joseph's to independent living in houses within the community and that St. Joseph's was to be sold. This move was entirely in keeping with the view that people with a disability who are capable of living independently in their own home with support can lead a more fulfilled life than if they live in a congregated setting such as St. Joseph's.

The families of the residents, including my own family, were not receptive to this idea, indeed it would be true to say that we were not receptive to change of any kind as we were very happy with St. Joseph's as it then was. We also felt that our family members who resided in St. Joseph's were happy there and were well looked after. The families formed a group to lobby against the proposed closure of St. Joseph's and for the retention of the status quo. The group held a number of meetings in St. Joseph's at which management and staff explained the purpose of the change in the living arrangements for the residents. Despite our objections the move went ahead, the residents were moved to houses in the community and St. Joseph's was sold.

My sister moved into a lovely house which she now shares with a companion, also deaf, from St. Joseph's. There is a support team from Reach Deaf Services who work with them both teaching them how to manage their own lives, to budget, cook etc. On a visit to her home I asked my sister how she felt about the move to her new home and both she and her companion said that not only were they very happy with the move but that they preferred it to living in St. Joseph's.

So much has become clearer to me since my sister has commenced this new phase of her life. My sister now has a more fulfilled life living independently in her own home with support, she has her own place in the community and enjoys a better quality of life than when she lived in a congregated setting. Today she is a very happy person, accepted in society, leading and enjoying a full life.

I am very happy that all this has come to pass despite my objections, and I am very grateful to Reach Deaf Services for all that they have accomplished.

Finally an anecdote from the very last meeting of the group lobbying to save St. Joseph's. One of the residents present at that meeting was a man who was both deaf and blind signed through his companion and I quote "I have been 50 years living here and I would like a change". I marveled at his saying such a thing when I was arguing against change, but now I know that he could see what I couldn't. To quote Shakespeare, "All's well that ends well".

"All's well that ends well"

SHARON MURPHY REPORT

Most of the service users from our Supported Living Service attending an event organised by Reach Deaf Services in Cabra Library today to get a presentation from the Chairperson of Safeguarding Ireland, Patricia Rickard-Clarke.

Patricia talked to our service users about their rights and the value of setting up an Enduring Power of Attorney (EPA), creating an Advanced Health Directive (AHD) and a Will;

- what's involved
- what their rights are
- how to make sure their rights are protected and
- how to set all these up.

Patricia spoke about the Assisted Decision Making act and how all our service users' wishes and preferences should be followed and how best to go about making sure this happens. People who have an EPA and AHD in place are less at risk from abuse.

This is a first step in introducing the Assisted Decision Making Act, Enduring Power of Attorney and Think Ahead Planning to our service users and we will continue to ensure all our service users are aware of their rights.

We look forward to working more with Safeguarding Ireland in the future



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