



**Reach**  
DEAF SERVICES



## CEO REPORT

### MARY STRINGER

Welcome to our 16th edition of the Reach Deaf Services newsletter. I returned at the start of November from a year of maternity leave. I am very excited to be back working with the team in Reach Deaf Services. I would like to thank all the staff, the board and the Chairperson for their warm welcome back and their ongoing support in helping me catch up on all the exciting things that have happened over the past year. I particularly want to thank Tara McBreen and Keith Adams for stepping into the role and keeping organisation on the right track.

Since my return we have celebrated Irish Sign Language Day. A special thanks to the ISL teaching team (Wendy, Eugene and Genevieve) and their team leader (Tracey) for organising the Christmas ISL catch up afternoon. It was a big success and a lot of fun was had.

We are busy preparing for Christmas and everything that the end of the year brings with it. It also gives us an opportunity to reflect on the past year and start to plan for the year ahead. I am looking forward to next year and continuing to work towards achieving our strategic goals.

I hope you enjoy this edition of the newsletter.

I wish you all a very Happy Christmas and a Happy New Year.

# HR GENERALIST REPORT

KRISTINA HARRIS

Over the past 12 months, Reach Deaf Services have remained robust in Recruitment efforts across many departments including Frontline Social Care & Support Workers. Across the year there were also many opportunities for internal staff to commence acting up positions in roles such as, Social Care Team Leader & Community Support Manager and Care Manager positions which have provided a great opportunity for staff to gain further experience in their career fields.

In recent months, we have been successful in recruiting an HR Manager Tara Daly, we have also been successful in recruiting a Community Roster and Training Coordinator Mary Cardiff. Both Tara and Mary commenced their positions in early December, and we wish them both a warm welcome to the team.

In the New Year, there will be further recruitment opportunities across some of our services departments for full-time Night Porter, Cleaner, Bus Transport Escort, Fixed-Term Practice Lead, Support & Social Care Worker roles along with others.

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

On the training front, All Mandatory training schedules were maintained across all departments in training such as, Manual & People Moving and Handling, Medication Management, Children & Adult Safeguarding. In more recent months, some staff in the community service attended a new training course in "CPI" with the safety intervention Foundation. Their accreditation will also enable them to teach CPI to other staff. A new training was also introduced this year for all staff in "Dignity at Work" with a total of 47 staff completed to date and further groups to be held in the new year. The ISL Teachers have also provided consistent training in ISL throughout the year with a total of 19 staff currently receiving 1:1 ISL training.

In the new year, Reach Deaf Services hopes to proceed with the instalation of a new fully Intergrated HR and Care system which will provide a much-improved workflow and delivery of services to all departments across the organization.



# HEAD OF SUPPORT SERVICES

LINDA TIERNEY



## LINDA TIERNEY REPORT

As we approach the end of 2023, we are delighted to see how far we have come and the progress we have made providing support to service users and staff whilst the ongoing staffing crisis continued throughout the year.

We have had ongoing vacancies across the service which has had an impact on service delivery but we are delighted with the recent recruitment of roles such as HR Manager, Roster & Training Co-ordinator and Think Ahead Co-ordinator, as these roles will provide additional support across the service and develop the quality of the service. We are actively and continuously advertising to recruit more support staff and social care staff to fulfil the support team.

I have now taken on the role as Head of Support Services which will mean I am responsible for all our Support Services which include our Supported Living Service and two Boarding Campus's this will give opportunity to develop the service and collaborate internally to improve service delivery. There have been many individual success stories and ongoing improvements in the quality of service users lives as they continue to live a life of their choosing. We look forward to the Think Ahead Co-ordinator meeting with service users to confirm their future plans and take control of their decisions.

We have had a high level of training across the year and continue to promote Social Valued Roles so the people we support can become active members in their community. Training is key in delivering a quality service and we have introduced and broadened our training to meet the needs of the people we support. We are delighted to have our CEO Mary Stringer back on board and look forward to a positive and successful year in 2024.



## THINK AHEAD

With the introduction of the Assisted Decision Making Act Reach Deaf Services have been working to implement the new act and support our service users to be in control of the decisions they are making now and in the future.

To support this we have recruited a Think Ahead Planning Co-Ordinator, who will work with the Supported Living Services' Practice Team to create, with the service user, a plan for how they want to be supported now and in the future. Our previous Director of Care from St Joseph's House, Geraldine Gallagher, has been selected for this role.

Our aim is that all service users who wish to engage will complete the Irish Hospice Think Ahead Planning Pack so that their wishes are followed in the event they are unable to make decisions for themselves in the future, and are linked in with the additional supports they may need to ensure this is carried out; eg., the Decision Support Service and / or a solicitor.

Our Practice Lead Kim Goos has also been selected by the HSE to take part in a new Assisted Decision Making Mentoring Program, to support implementation of the Assisted Decision Making Act and the Decisions Support Service. The program will run for 12 months and will support our service on how to navigate implementing the act for our service users.

We held an Afternoon Tea with our service users on National Safeguarding Day, 10th November, to launch our Think Ahead initiative.

## SLIS INFORMATION SESSION

We held an information session for our services users on 3rd November with SLIS (Sign Language Interpreting Service).

SLIS discussed the IRIS Booking System; what it can be used for, the updates to this to include Deaf Blind users and most importantly how to book the service.

SLIS also updated our service users on the ISL Voucher scheme, what it can be used for and how to avail of this service.

Our service users we're delighted and we're making plans to use the Voucher Scheme at the end of the meeting.



# HEAD OF SUPPORT SERVICES

LINDA TIERNEY



## **RUTH KELLY & REDMOND O'SHEA REPORT**

We cannot believe we are into December already. Both St. Joseph's and St. Mary's campuses are looking very festive with all the decorations. We are currently planning our Christmas activities, and the boarders are counting down the days until the Christmas break!

Since the last newsletter, we have welcomed Ronan Dunne and Emilia Andrioaia to our team, and they both are based at St. Joseph's Boarding. We said goodbye to Emma Shaw, who has been with us since 2018 and she will be missed. We would like to thank Emma for everything she has done for Boarding and we wish her all the best with her new job. We welcomed back Ciara Duignan from her maternity leave, and we are delighted to have her back.

We would like to say well done to some of our boarders' parents who completed the Parents Plus Adolescent programme with us. It is an evidence-based Parenting course promoting communication and positive relationships in families. If you would like more information about Parents Plus, please contact Jackie at [jobrien@reachdeafservices.ie](mailto:jobrien@reachdeafservices.ie).

### **What our boarders have been up to:**

#### ***Luize Klusenkova***

We would like to congratulate Luize on passing her driving test on the first try!

#### ***Deaf Not Dumb***

Our older boarders featured in RTE's documentary called, Deaf Not Dumb. We are proud of how confident and assertive they were in discussing their experiences of being Deaf.

#### ***Halloween***

We had our annual Halloween Party at St. Joseph's. We all dressed up and Nicole and Justin organised some games. The boarders thoroughly enjoyed themselves. Some of our brave boarders visited The Nightmare Realm at the Royal Dublin Society and reported that it wasn't even scary. The staff, however, felt differently...! Our younger boarders paid a visit to a pumpkin patch and the boarders particularly enjoyed the maze. They brought back pumpkins and got creative with their pumpkins. The boarders also have been involved in swimming and boxing this term. We also started a Study Club; we have a tutor coming in and sharing tips on different things such as revising or writing an essay.

### ***5th World Deaf Futsal Championships***

We are delighted to say that Caoimhe O'Connell was selected to represent Ireland at 5th World Deaf Futsal Championships in Brazil. This is such an amazing achievement and we all are so proud of Caoimhe. We had a good luck party before she went to Brazil. We managed to watch some matches and Ireland came 5th. Caoimhe wrote about her experience below:

Recently I went to Brazil with Irish Futsal Women team for World Deaf Cup. It was a difficult tournament and the matches were very hard, but we learnt a lot and gained a lot of experience. It was hard to play in the heat too. The food, weather and everything was lovely. I watched Brazil's women team play and they were fabulous. It was a good experience overall.



## Christmas Party

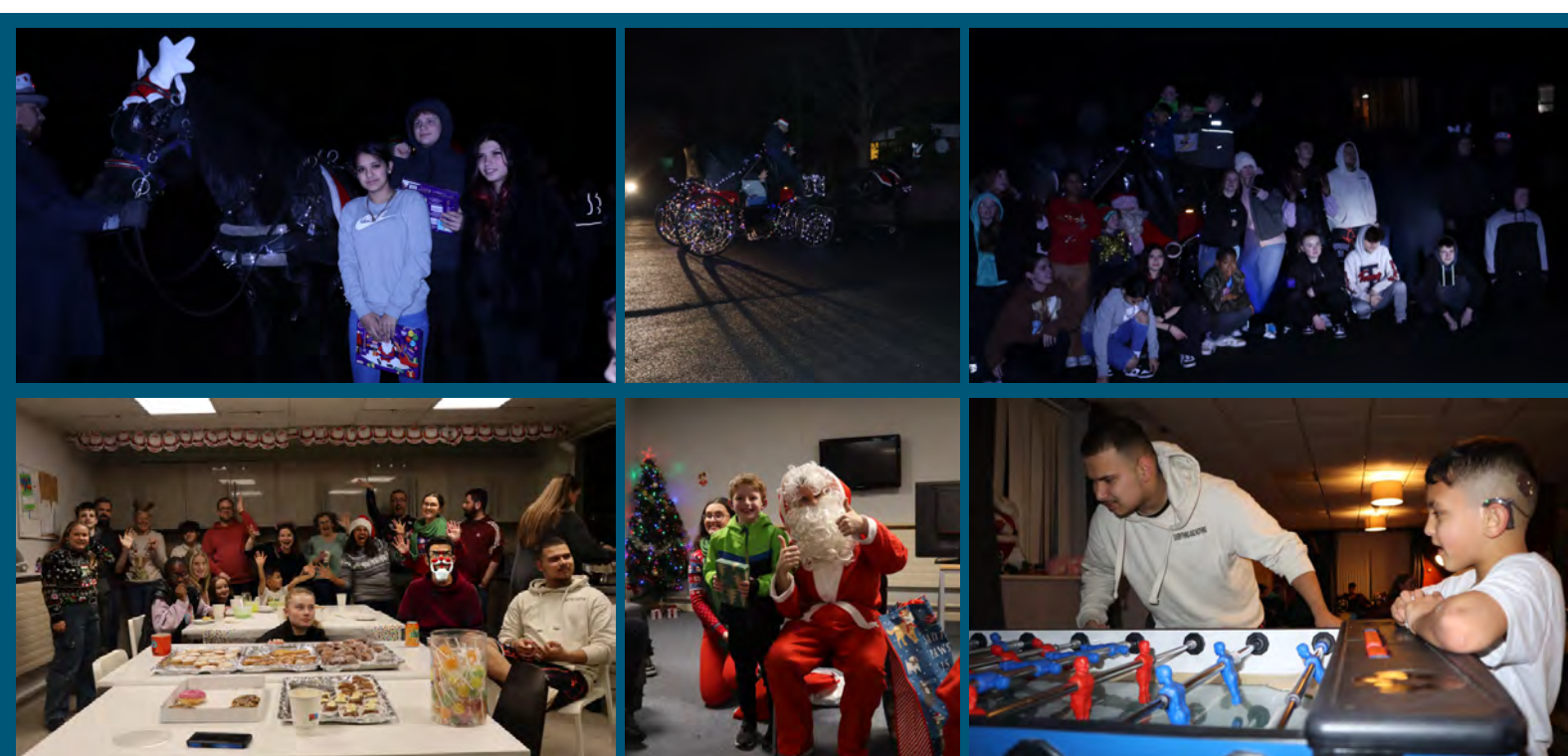
We had a visit from Santa, and everyone got presents. There were games and plenty of baked goodies from Ann, our chef. The boarders got a ride in a horse-drawn carriage; and as you can see from the pictures, the boarders loved this surprise! Thank you to Charlene for organising this.

## College Awareness Week

A nationwide initiative called College Awareness Week seeks to highlight local role models, assist kids of all ages in becoming college-ready, and highlight the advantages of attending college. This is particularly relevant when it comes to young members of the Deaf Community. AHEAD's report on Students with Disabilities Engaged with Support Services in Higher Education in Ireland 2021/22 found that while disabled people make up only 6.9% of Undergraduate students, Deaf students are just 2.8% of this number. At Boarding, it is important that we make sure boarders are aware of all the options for third level education, and other pathways to work, and empower them to know that all these options are available to them.

As part of College Awareness weeks' mission, we invited some members of the Deaf Community who have been through the College system to talk about their experiences and answer any questions the boarders may have about college. Sofiya Kalinova and Teresa Lynch attended this workshop. The boarders were well engaged and asked plenty of questions. The presentation was immensely informative, and we thank the wonderful presenters for providing us with their time and expertise.

We also have an upcoming workshop from a member of staff regarding the logistics of applying for college. This includes a number of accessibility routes such as Higher Education Access Route (HEAR), Disability Access Route to Education (DARE), and SUSI – a grant system available to students from working class areas or low income families, and how to apply to the national college application system, the CAO. Our staff will also be here to support boarders in doing these applications.





## **Work Experience**

In November, our boarders completed two weeks of their work experience placements near their home locations. This was a great achievement for each one of them and we are very proud of them. We asked our boarders to share their experiences.

### ***Sean McManus:***

Sean Mc here, just a few words about my recent work experience. I had a great time in my first week in the Deaf Village Ireland where Martina was my lovely Boss. For my second week, I worked in a hardware shop near my home where I was responsible for checking stock, serving customers and keeping the shelves nice and tidy. Overall, I had a great time, made lovely memories, and wonderful friends, and best of all. I got paid!!!! Don't tell anyone!!!!

### ***Sean Brady:***

My name is Sean Brady. I completed my two weeks work experience in Tesco. My daily tasks included helping the deli staff closing and cleaning up, organising all the trolleys, taking out all the rubbish and stocking the shelves. My favourite part of my work experience was breaking down all the cardboard boxes and placing them in the recycling bin. All the staff were very nice to me and I really enjoyed my time in Tesco. I won't miss the early morning starts though!

### ***Angel Jili:***

My name is Angel and I had my work experience placement at a pharmacy, McCauley's. One of my duties was checking medication for their expiry dates. If they were out of date, I had to throw them away and if they were in date, I would leave them on the shelf. This was a lengthy task and took me a day to complete. I added security tags to Christmas products and put them on shelves and I also added prices to show how much they were and whether they were on sale. A lot of the products were for Christmas gifts. I checked stock and added new stock if needed. For my work experience, I woke up at 7am and I walked to the pharmacy. I started at 10am, and I had an hour break every day where I would eat my sandwich and rest! I worked there for two weeks. On my last day, I was sad because I enjoyed the placement, but I had to go back to school. The team at the pharmacy gave me a really nice present consisting of different things such as an expensive bag, skin care products and a perfume. I was really thankful for the present and the management and the team said I was the best worker! I said my thanks and goodbyes on the last day and went back to school.

### ***Tina Lucinaviciute:***

My name is Tina and I did my work experience placement at Deaf Enterprise in Cork for two weeks. I did many different things such as using a sewing machine to create a covering for a sofa, getting the old material off furniture, and putting on the new covering. I also did some office work and worked with customers. I also worked on bikes. It was a good experience.



May Christ's birth  
bring you his love & joy  
to one and all



## Christmas Eve 24th December

**St Mary's church - Drogheda 11am**

<https://www.churchservices.tv/droghedastmarys>

**Confession - Deaf Village Ireland 3:30pm**

**Christmas Eve Mass - Deaf Village Ireland 4:00pm**

<https://www.churchservices.tv/dvi>

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### MUNSTER

See information on NCDP Facebook

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### BELFAST

St Joseph's Hannahstown - 6:00pm

(Hannahstown is in Belfast)

## Christmas Day 25th December

St Patrick Church - Dungiven 11:30am





Merry  
Christmas  
&  
Happy New Year



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