



CEO REPORT

MARY STRINGER

Welcome to our 18th edition of the Reach Deaf Services Newsletter.

We have been kept very busy during the first six months of the year. Since the last news letter we have completed our financial audit. A lot of work goes into the planning and organising of the audit each year and this year was no exception. I would like to thank the finance team who worked hard to ensure the audit was completed on time.

The National Deaf Village Sports and Leisure Company, which is the subsidiary company of Reach Deaf Services, appointed a new Executive Officer, Andy Caffey. We wish Andy the best of luck in his new role and look forward to strengthening the relationship between the two organisations.

We are continuing with the process of reviewing the Chaplaincy service and exploring the options available to us. We will continue this during the summer and we are hopeful that the review can be completed by the end of the year.

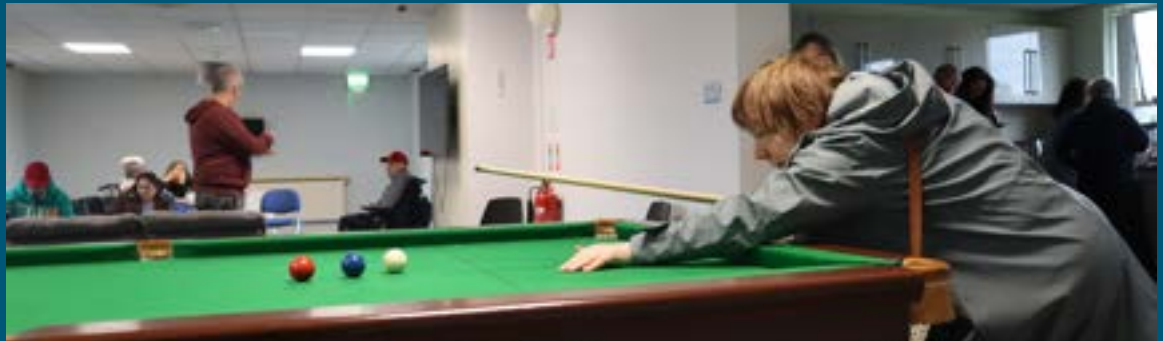
The Irish Deaf Society ran two successful conferences on employment and career guidance. I attended with our HR manager and two other managers from the Supported Living Service and the Boarding Campus. The conferences gave us some great insight into the barriers faced by

Deaf people in employment and has given us some ideas for succession planning and investing in staff from the Deaf Community.

I was invited to speak with Centre for Deaf Studies students in May as part of their learning to give an outline of Reach Deaf Services. We wish the students the best of luck in their studies and look forward to seeing them in the Deaf Community over the coming years.

We still continue to engage with other organisations to allow us to keep up to date with developments in the sector.

In June, Darren Byrne resigned his post of Data Protection Officer. Darren worked with the organisation since 2018. Beginning as an Irish Sign Language Interpreter and progressing into the role of DPO. Darren contributed significantly to the organisation in both of his roles. We wish Darren the best of luck in the future.



SUPPORT LIVING SERVICES

LINDA TIERNEY - HEAD OF SERVICES



Reach Deaf Services attends the wheel's annual charity summit Gemma Devine

Donna O'Halloran, Gemma Flynn and I attended the Wheel's Annual 'Charity Summit' Conference on Wednesday, the 29th of May 2024 at Croke Park. It was a coming together of charities, community groups and social enterprises. The day focused on important topics of our sector through presentations and Q&As.

The topics focused on were drivers for social change, the role of the sector in making that change, and what lessons we can take from our successes to support present and future challenges. It was motivating to be in a room full of like-minded people passionate about driving social change for society.

At the beginning, there was an opening talk from Vincent Keenan, Chairperson of the Wheel and Joe O'Brien (Minister of State with Responsibility for Community Development and Charities). There were talks from different leaders within the sector.

We attended talks on the following topics;

1. Integration: Delivering Real Life Integration Benefits Both Local and New Communities Across Ireland (facilitated by the Sanctuary Runners' Experience and Learnings).
2. Policy: Towards a Model Regulatory Environment: A Civil Society Vision for the Next Government.
3. Literacy: Co-Creating a Literacy-Friendly Community and Voluntary Sector.
4. Accessing Justice: How Pro Bono Legal Services Can Help

Donna mentioned that the Literacy talk was very interesting. It made her reflect how Plain English can be used more in Reach Deaf Services.

For the last talk of the day, Emily Bourke from the Wheel summed up the key insights from all of the group discussions. Also, a special recorded message of Taoiseach Simon Harris was broadcasted on the screen. He emphasized the importance of the community and voluntary sector and thanked everyone for their continued support in making Ireland a better place.

For me, I think the most interesting part of the day was the Policy talk. Anna Quigley from the Citywide Drugs Crisis Campaign contributed to the discussion and stated increased funding was needed for voluntary and community organisations.



Alice Drury joined remotely from the Human Rights Law Centre in Melbourne, Australia. She mentioned Australia and Ireland have a similar structure in terms of civil society and the voluntary sector. Which means, there are similar problems. She identified areas for common needs in participation:

- Increase understanding of the benefits of the sector.
- Groups of lived experience (for example people who have experienced homelessness, or people with disabilities) should take part in the early stages of the decision making process.
- More inclusive approach.
- More emphasis and methods for co-drafting (experts in different areas be included).

Methods for cooperation on a national level:

- Formal bodies.
- Permanent or ad hoc working groups.
- Special parliamentary committees.
- Online platforms for public consultation.

New ways for public participation:

- Overview of the key safeguards of participation at the EU level.
- Key benefits and types of online platforms.

74% of organisations have missed out on public consultation as they knew about it too late.

Overall, the conference was interesting and we all were able to reflect on information that is useful for the work of Reach Deaf Services.

Crisis Prevention and Intervention Training for Reach Deaf Services Donna O'Halloran & Kim Goos

We attended a three-day training course in December 2023 to become certified CPI trainers with the Crisis Prevention Institute as part of Reach Deaf Services initiative to upskill their workforce and build intrinsic leadership in our organisation. We were coached on how to teach responding to crisis situations in an appropriate way and how one's behaviour can influence other's behaviour.



This training was very interesting, and we learnt a lot and have seen the benefit of using it in our workplace.

Since becoming certified trainers, we have provided two-day training to two different staff teams. Based on feedback from the staff, the training was beneficial to them, and they feel they can use what was learnt in their workplace. This training also gave staff the opportunity to reflect on past situations and learn how to deal with such in the future should it occur again.

We aim to have all support staff trained in CPI to best support service users and others during a crisis.

EDUCATION SERVICES

LINDA TIERNEY - HEAD OF SERVICES



NIAL & ASHLING

Since the publication of the last Newsletter, St. Mary's and St. Joseph's Boarding Campus have had some amazing highlights and significant events in the final few months prior to breaking up for the summer holidays. These events included Debs, Graduation, Eastern European Easter and the End of the Year BBQ. Where Staff, Boarders, Families and Friends joined in the celebrations which was a huge success. We had our future new admissions who are coming to the school in September for an overnight in June to see how they feel about staying with us and meeting the team.

Independent House

Ruth Kelly Social Care Worker:

We have an Independent House where our final year boarders stay at, to promote independence and life skills. There is also a reduced level of staff supervision. This year, eight of our boarders stayed at the Independent House, with five St. Mary's boarders staying the first half of the year and three St. Joseph's boarders staying the last few months of the academic year. This was a great opportunity to put the life skills they had learnt over the years into practice before they left us. All the boarders should be proud of themselves as they did really well; they managed to balance their studies, cleaning, cooking and a bunch of socialising. Not an easy task!

Boarding Graduation

Ruth Kelly Social Care Worker:

We had our annual graduation party in May, we had 10 boarders who left us this year. Many of them have been boarding with us for a long time, for one boarder it has been 11 years since she started boarding. It was an emotional evening! We had a top table for the leavers, and they all dressed up and looked so smart and grown up at the party. We served non-alcoholic prosecco and there was hot food. The staff gave speeches about the leavers' times

at Boarding and there was a video showcasing different memories over the years. There was laughter and tears from both staff and boarders. The party was a perfect way to wrap up the leavers' boarding experience. We would like to thank the following staff members Justin, Nick, Seeta, Caoimhe and Janet for organising the party and the yearbook. A lot of work and effort went into this, specially creating the yearbook which made a lovely keepsake for the leavers of their time at Boarding.

End of Year BBQ

Redmond O'Shea Social Care Worker

The annual End of Year BBQ took place on 23rd May. It was held on the grounds of St. Joseph's Campus. The aim is to bring families, boarders and friends together to engage in and celebrate the past year. It was a great social and fun event which was enjoyed by all. There were various fun activities for all to enjoy. These included a Magic show, Penalty shoot-outs, Face painting, Bouncy castles, and Inflatable games. Our esteemed chef Ray and his team provided us with delicious BBQ food and refreshments which were enjoyed by all. We would like to thank the organizing committee and all the staff who worked hard to make this day a great and memorable occasion.



Jordanstown School

Niall Ivory Care Manager

Towards the end of June, we hosted a School from Northern Ireland. Jordanstown School and Centre of excellence for children who are Deaf and or visually impaired. 36 students and teachers stayed in St. Mary's campus for 2 nights when the weather was behaving itself. They reported having a wonderful time visiting all the tourist spots Dublin has to offer including Butler's chocolate factory and Kilmainham Gaol. One or two mentioned it was their first time in Dublin but not their last. A special thanks needs to be made to the team in St Mary's and especially Maintenance and cleaners for preparing for such a large group. A lot of beds needed to be moved around and made up.

Debs

Redmond O'Shea Social Care Worker

In April, some of our boarders and their partners attended the Debutants Ball in the Red Cow Hotel. The day started off for them preparing and looking very smart and dapper and Mary's boarders looking very chic for the occasion. There was a get-together for them and their families in St. Josephs. Following this, they gathered in DVI with their families and friends for photos before they set off to enjoy their evening which was a great success.

First Holy Communion

Redmond O'Shea Social Care Worker

Two of our boarders celebrated making their First Holy Communion on Friday 14th May in the DVI. Congratulations to Gabriel and Totis. We hope you and your families had a wonderful day.

Staff updates

Niall Ivory and Ashling Donegan Care Managers

Congratulations to Louise Sheeran on her new appointment as Office Manager for Reach Deaf Services. Louise was originally based in St. Mary's and St. Joseph's Boarding. We wish her every success. Lousie's daily presence & supportive approach is greatly missed around the place! And we would like to say farewell to Nicole Stephens, she was with us for a short time in St. Mary's but made a great impact, good luck with your studies in Scotland!

Eastern European Easter

Emelia Andrioaia, Social Care Worker

We celebrated Eastern European Easter on the 1st of May in Boarding. The boarders learned about the different traditions and customs in different Eastern European countries. They took part in tasting traditional Easter cake common to Eastern Europe, as well as trying traditional Moldovan cookies. We decorated boiled eggs with beautiful ornate egg wraps and took part in colouring traditional 'pysanky' designs. Our staff member Emilia proudly showed off traditional Romanian clothing. Lastly, everyone took part in the tradition of cracking boiled eggs with friends and seeing who had the strongest egg.



CHAPLAIN FOR NCDP

FR PADDY BOYLE



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Tribute to Kay Daly 2024

Frankie Berry

When I reflected on what she had achieved over the years, she was a woman who was a role model in more ways than one. Home maker / Carer / Giver / Caring a good friend and loving towards her siblings & their families. Friends and many others who knew her through interaction /support.

Under the umbrella of SVP, they would organize a team of experienced helpers in medical field and hearing volunteers who willingly gave of their free time in caring for others to be in a countryside environment for the full week in Kerdiffstown, Co Kildare. It was Kay who introduced me to showing me the ropes in caring for the holiday makers as I replaced Sr Bernadette Fennessy DC in the mid 1990's, to accompany Deaf holiday makers from St Joseph's house, Brewery Rd. Many enjoyed their week's stay where they were treated as guests, sit in the garden sunshine, participate in simple social activities, enjoy nightly music entertainment, dancing, and free bars.

She was a great support towards the National Chaplaincy for Deaf People. She drew strength from receiving the Eucharist at Mass. She became Minister of Word and signed well with her lovely signs. She went on various group trips Lourdes, Knock, Rome, Fatima (some more than once)

Kay helped me with the annual Christmas Raffle for Deaf people in need at Christmas time for many years She was wonderful with new ideas for the fund-raising annual event. She took all of this in her stride and it was never too much or hard work for her. Thank you Kay you taught me much over the years.

Kay, thank you for all you have given to us, your talents shared, and for your friendship, your love you have gave to many of us. You are greatly missed and will always remember you in our hearts. May God welcome you into heavenly home. Kay, may you rest in peace forever.



Sr Maeliosa Byrne

Denise Flack

Sr Maeliosa started her career in St Mary's School for Deaf Girls in Cabra, as a lay teacher. Some of her pupils still like to remember the beautiful, stylish clothes she wore. She entered the convent and from 1962 continued her lifelong involvement with the Deaf Community as a Dominican nun, continuing to teach in St Mary's.

In 1970 she agreed to leave Dublin for three weeks to come to St Francis de Sales School for Deaf Children in Belfast. She had no idea that she would end up staying in Belfast for almost 54 years!

For 32 years, Sr Maeliosa was a dedicated teaching principal of St Francis de Sales School, teaching many young deaf children. All those children have stayed in Sr Maeliosa's heart over the years. And likewise she continues to have a special place in the heart of many of her former pupils.

As well as her work as school principal, Sr Maeliosa was involved for all her time in Belfast with the chaplaincy service, initially in collaboration with Fr Sean Cahill, and then with Fr Paul Strain. Highlights of her time working with Fr Paul included visits to Knock, Lourdes and Ballintubber among other places. Her ministry and presence were greatly appreciated by those attending St Joseph's Centre in Belfast.

Since I joined the chaplaincy service in 2007, I have had first hand experience of Sr Maeliosa's commitment to and love for the Deaf Community. I have also been very lucky to have her support and friendship. Together we travelled to our regular masses in Derry and Armagh. She joined in the planning and leading of retreats. And of course she was there on our pilgrimages to Poland, Italy, Malta, Prague and Fatima. All, in addition to, her ongoing commitment to the weekly mass and special liturgical celebrations for the Deaf Community in Belfast.



Last August, she throughly enjoyed our Deaf Community Pilgrimage to Athlone. We were all shocked when a few days later, she suffered a sudden illness. It was clear how much the Deaf Community appreciated Sr Maeliosa, as many prayers were said and messages about her progress were sent.

Thankfully, she made an amazing recovery and in November was able to leave hospital. She enjoyed a few months in Nazareth House Care Village in Belfast, before moving to Santa Sabina in Dublin.

A few days before leaving Belfast, we had a beautiful mass and evening of appreciation and thanksgiving in Nazareth Care Village. Sr Maeliosa was delighted to see former colleagues, many past pupils and other members of the Deaf Community as well as priests she had worked with over the years.

Belfast's loss is Dublin's gain and I know that she will share her gifts of gentleness, wisdom and concern for others, as well her sense of fun,with her new community in Santa Sabina. And of course, some of us now have an extra excuse to visit Dublin.



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