



CEO REPORT

MARY STRINGER

Welcome to the 19th issue of our Newsletter,

We have just finished celebrating International Week of the Deaf here at Reach Deaf Services. It was a very exciting week for our organisation, as we gathered to host our first-ever ISL classes awards ceremony and the launch our ISL strategy. We also held an ISL Catch up coffee morning.

The importance of this strategy cannot be overstated. It upholds the key components of Reach Deaf Services' Strategic Plan, playing a crucial role in realising our vision. Through this strategy, we are committed to ensuring that Irish Sign Language is fully embraced, communication barriers are minimised, and Deaf individuals are empowered to thrive in all areas of life. By aligning with our broader strategic goals, the ISL strategy strengthens our mission to create an environment where Deaf individuals are supported to engage fully in every aspect of society.

Our ISL classes are a vital part of this vision. They are not just about teaching a language, but about promoting access and fostering communication. By equipping both Deaf and hearing individuals with the skills to communicate in ISL, we are breaking down barriers and ensuring that everyone can participate more equally and inclusively. These classes represent a crucial step towards making ISL a widely understood and respected language.

During the launch we also shared an exciting new project, ISL Craic, which was launched earlier this year in April. This initiative, born out of the creativity and passion of the young people attending the boarding campus, is a testament to the wonderful ideas that come from them and how much we can achieve together.

I would like to thank everyone involved in bringing these initiatives to life and for their ongoing dedication to the work of Reach Deaf Services. Together, we are building a future where ISL is not just a language but a bridge that unites us all, and where our Strategic Plan continues to guide us towards a more inclusive and empowered society.

I hope you enjoy this edition of the newsletter.



PROPERTY & MANAGEMENT REPORT

PAUL RYDER

Retirement: Gerard O'Grady

On Friday 26th April, Gerard O'Grady has retired from Reach Deaf Services. Gerard has been a tremendous employee for the CIDP/Reach Deaf Services since 2006 and he is gifted with a maintenance area, especially in the gardening and carpentry skills. While Gerard's retirement is our loss, but a well-deserved break for him and we hosted a small party in the Deaf Village Ireland.

New Staff: Joey Watson

We are pleased to announce the recent hiring of Joey Watson to the position of Facilities Coordinator in Property and Facilities Department. While the Property and Facilities Manager is responsible for the management of the Reach Deaf Service's physical assets and the provision of services in a multi-campus environment, Joey will be responsible for the supervising the maintenance team, day-to-day maintenance, operation of the buildings and planning of new facilities and maintenance strategies.

3rd Level Student Accommodations

On campus accommodation, Kilmore & Cilldara buildings have reopened to the 3rd level students in September 2023 after a very tight timelines refurbishment in the Summer 2023. The buildings refurbished to suit the student's needs, with modern furnishing and appliances including 27 Singles Rooms, 2 Twin Rooms and 2 Disabled Rooms with shared bathrooms/showers. As today, two buildings have reached a full capacity of 33 students



SUPPORT LIVING SERVICES

LINDA TIERNEY - HEAD OF SERVICES



Support Living Services Manager - Sharon Murphy

We've had a busy time over the last couple of months in the Supported Living Service. Some of our service users have taken holidays all over our lovely Emerald Isle, travelling from Cork to Donegal, and actually got some sun on their travels. Some recently did a pilgrimage to Lourdes with the Dublin Diocese, and you'll be delighted to hear that many candles were lit and prayers said for all their family, friends and the staff at Reach Deaf Services.

Our staff team have been busy over the last couple of months and have been very proactive with getting up to speed on the Assisted Decision Making process and working with our service users to Think Ahead, and plan for their future.

The Practice Team have organised workshops with the HSE to keep us up to date with the changes that are being implemented as the Assisted Decision Making Act (ADMA) is developing. Three of our staff team will be involved in the Year 2 of the HSE ADMA Mentorship Programme to implement ADMA for our service, and will eventually train as Trainers on the ADMA. One of our Practice Leads has completed Year 1 already and has been guiding us through this new territory! We have supported one of our service users to transition to their second home which has been a big undertaking as most moves are,

but the team around her have been a great support throughout the transition and she's getting settled in her new home and enjoying spending time with her new neighbours and really getting involved in her community!

One of our service users has started an ISL coffee meet up once per month in her local cafe. Each month the service user shares signs with members of the local community. Last month the discussion was about the signs for countries.

We continue to work with our service users to support them to access their rights. We had a meet up in June 2024 to celebrate World Elder Abuse Awareness Day and discussed their rights and how to access support if needed. Our Practice Team has already started planning our next meet up to celebrate National Safeguarding Day, and continue to upskill our service users to be aware of their rights and how to access support and to keep them safe.

The management team are in the process of planning Christmas 2024 (I know), and will be planning for 2025 together over the next couple of months.

We will be welcoming back some staff after career breaks and maternity leave and looking forward to building our team and our team skills.

Practice Lead - Mary Shields

Dear Friends and Colleagues, I hope this newsletter finds you well! As many of you know me, I have been working with CIDP, now Reach Deaf Services, for over a decade. It's hard to believe how quickly time flies. I've had the privilege of supporting many individuals in their journey and I've learned so much along the way.

Recently, I took a new role as a Practice Lead In Reach Deaf Services. This transition has been both exciting and daunting, as being more office based is a new experience for me. However, I am truly enjoying this opportunity to expand my horizons and contribute in new ways. In my role, I am focused on coaching and mentoring community support Teams to enable people to live their best life in a meaningful way. I believe that providing the right support and guidance, we can make a difference.

I'm looking forward to working closely with staff and service user at Reach Deaf Services and I am committed to supporting everyone in anyway as I can.

I'm excited to share my journey with you all. If you have any question or would like to connect. Please don't hesitate to reach out!

Bridie's Irish Sign Language Class in Shankill - Bridie Towey

Since I moved to Shankill, I have been wanting to meet more people in my local area and it was suggested that I set up a Irish Sign Language class in my local café.

So with my team, they supported me to design posters and flyers, and we advertised on a Shankill Facebook page to try get people to come along and try a taster class over a cup of tea for an hour. I went to Costa Café in Shankill to ask them if I could host the class; I picked this café as I go here regularly, and the staff know me well and they were very keen to have the classes here on the 1st Saturday of every month from 10.30am-12pm.

We've had different people come every month; the last class I showed all the signs for countries from around the world and while I come to the class with a set curriculum, we often get distracted and start talking about the news, weather or upcoming plans that weekend!

The picture below is from my first class in June 2024 and shows a few people who came along to the class. If you are around on the 1st Saturday of the month, you are welcome to join us!



EDUCATION SERVICES

LINDA TIERNEY - HEAD OF SERVICES



Ruth Kelly & Redmond O'Shea **New Academic Year ahead**

It has been lovely welcoming back boarders from the summer break and hearing what they have been up to. We also met our lovely new boarders and are excited to see them grow during their time with us. To kickstart the new academic year ahead, we had our annual welcome back BBQ in St. Mary's Boarding. Ray and Ann, our chefs, did food and goodies which were delicious. It was great meeting up together, and it was a good way for new boarders to get to know everyone. We had a water fight, the boarders enjoyed targeting the staff!

The boarders came back to lovely surprises given by the management such as personalised water bottles, mini shampoo, conditioner and shower gel and new beddings. The bedrooms are also looking lovely and cosy with the new pieces of furniture such as study tables and lamps. The boarders are delighted!

We have some exciting plans in store for this year. We are rolling out a 6-week Healthy Food made easy programme to boarders, the aim of this programme is to help boarders to learn about eating well and to get confident cooking simple meals. Monica, our facilitator, will run this programme for 6 weeks and there will be ISL interpreter support at each session. Each session will take place on Wednesday afternoon from 3.45-5.15pm, in St Joseph's Boarding. At our first session, the boarders made yummy smoothies. There is a lot of interest from the boarders which is great, as this will equip them with essential life skills.

Some of our boarders have joined classes with Irish Deaf Society (IDS). Some boarders are doing the driving theory classes and one boarder is doing astrology classes which sounds interesting! Partaking in those classes are a great way to meet new people and to grow confidence.

We would like to congratulate our 2024 leavers on their fantastic Leaving Cert results; we know how hard you all worked, and we are so proud of you all.

ISL Craic Feedback

ISL Craic is a new and innovative idea which has been inspirational in learning new signs and acts as a refresher for us to communicate more effectively. The following is feedback from staff demonstrates the benefits and acts as great learning opportunity.

'I have found ISL Craic to be very beneficial, from learning new words in ISL to refreshing my memory on signs that I have already learned. I also find that I refer back to it if I know I am going to be having conversations about different topics to ensure that I am using the correct signs'

'The ISL Craic words of the day have encouraged a very fun innovative way of learning some new signs. Each day I look forward to seeing the sign of the day on Instagram and implementing it within work. The videos are clear, concise and effective, really good job!'

'Initially I found it slow, that is a lot of the words I knew, but as it went on I find it really useful, as I am really learning from it, especially if a sign has changed, I find it a useful tool for learning ISL and enjoy the daily sign.'

'ISL Craic provides me with an opportunity to learn new signs and makes me aware that a sign has changed. '

'For me the Introduction of ISL Craic has been a welcome initiative. In my experience the key advantages are ease of access to signs and the permanent record of each sign. This facilitates my learning and enhances my communication. Well done and thank you to all involved.'

Staff Updates

We said our goodbyes to the following staff Ciara Duignan and Shonagh Bowe. Ciara has been with us since 2018 as a Social Care Leader and has been a great source of support for the team at St. Mary's Boarding. She will be missed. Shonagh has been a fantastic addition to the team and was behind many great events such as the graduation for our leavers. We would like to wish them the best in their new avenues. We would like to congratulate both Oriane O'Dea and Janet McEvoy who have been appointed new roles as Social Care Leader.



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Overnight Trip to Knock - Frankie Berry

Two guests joined in as passengers in my car and we drove to collect May who is Deafblind. This is her 1st Pilgrimage to Knock in many years. Prior to her travelling, Two pilgrims offered to be her PA / guide while in Knock, hence made it easier to plan for her overnight stay in Knock. On the journey down in the car, May got to know the other two passengers, in turns, through tactile touch communication – great conversations took place, her facial expressions said a lot, happy smiling face, with her eyes bright and joyful. May, in her limited vision, was able to enjoy the sunshine and green hills countryside. We didn't find the journey long and we arrived in Knock, in good time when other Rail passengers arrived from Claremorris. They were couriered by Knock House hotel/ St Mary's hostel owned bus. In all there were 15 pilgrims staying between the two places.

Checked in and ready for the walkabout of Knock. May, with her PA was given a guided tour of the much improved Knock. Lovely garden surrounds and mini visual museum of the historical Knock. This brought back memories of her childhood. The one item she eagerly wanted for a very long time, She & her guide went into the 1st shop, across the way from the Hostel, asked the lady for the Seven beaded rosary. Lo & Behold, the owner of the shop knew what she was looking for, was able to find and give her the 'Delour Beads' Meditation beads with Picture medals of Our Lady's Seven sorrows.. This reminded her of her mother who taught and gave her the beads which later got broken and couldn't be repaired. She held this dearly to her heart with such love.

During the 3pm Mass, which was interpreted in Irish Sign Language, throughout in a prayerful manner, May, along with the other pilgrims, received the Sacrament of the sick blessing and received Holy Communion by the celebrant. Many left for home feeling refreshed, renewed spiritually and enjoyed the company of others during the stay.

'Love your neighbour as yourself' in action: Helping out in kindness, looking out for another and sharing the fun was the key ingredients for this enjoyable overnight stay in Knock. Thank you to one and all for making this possible.



Lourdes 2024 - John Patrick

At the heart of Lourdes lies a profound encounter of love between a child and a mother—between Bernadette Soubirous (St. Bernadette) and Mary, the Mother of God. This sacred meeting has forever transformed a small French village, igniting spiritual aspirations and establishing Lourdes as a cherished site of pilgrimage. The story of Our Lady's apparition to Bernadette is timeless, resonating deeply across generations. Lourdes remains a beacon of faith, offering a message of hope that stands as relevant today as it has throughout the ages.

For the 2024 Pilgrimage, our focus is deeply inspired by the heartfelt message given to the Dublin Diocese, reminding us of Our Lady's tender instruction to the Parish priest through St. Bernadette: to build a chapel and bring the people in possession. This message beautifully underscores the profound need to create sacred spaces where hearts can gather and find solace in community and faith. As we lit candles at the conclusion of our journey in Lourdes, the warm glow symbolized not only hope but also the unity and love that bind us all together in our spiritual path.

Our prayers encompassed all, particularly the Deaf community and those who have departed this past year. Experiencing the serene Grotto at night brought peace and reflection, allowing us to savor our time in Lourdes.

For many, Lourdes is a sanctuary of healing and tranquility, where each pilgrim discovers something personal and leaves with a story uniquely their own.

The joy and happiness radiated by Deaf pilgrims at the Accueil and hotel inspired us all. This pilgrimage has been an extraordinary journey for everyone involved. Our remarkable Deaf and hearing helpers, volunteers, carers, and interpreters provided unwavering support, dedicating their time to assist the Deaf community. Their invaluable contributions have made this experience enriching and transformative. This journey has encouraged us to see life's challenges through a renewed lens. We are deeply grateful for the opportunity to embrace and support the Deaf pilgrimage to Lourdes, carrying a piece of its spirit in our hearts always.

Special thanks go to Fr. Paddy Boyle, Fr. Gerard Tyrrell and Fr. Joe Jone, and everyone who supported us along this path.

We extend our heartfelt gratitude to the incredible volunteers, helpers, and interpreters whose dedication and compassion have brought this pilgrimage to life for the Deaf community. Your devotion has touched countless lives, fostering a space of inclusion, understanding, and joy. Your efforts have been instrumental, allowing each pilgrim to fully embrace the spiritual essence of Lourdes. Your generosity of spirit has not only facilitated logistics but has infused the journey with kindness and empathy.

Thank you for your extraordinary contributions and for leaving such a positive, lasting impact on this pilgrimage. Your commitment resonates profoundly with us all, and we are immensely grateful for everything you have done.

With deepest appreciation, as we eagerly anticipate future journeys together, knowing that the light of Lourdes continues to guide and inspire us.




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