



## CEO REPORT

MARY STRINGER

Welcome to the 22th issue of our Newsletter,

We are delighted to welcome our new Chairperson, Deirdre O’Keeffe, to the team. We look forward to working with her as we continue to grow and strengthen our organisation. She brings a wealth of experience, having spent most of her career in the Civil Service, serving in senior management roles across the Departments of Transport, Justice, Education, Marine, and Finance. In addition, she has worked as a Statistician with the Central Statistics Office and held the position of Director/Secretary at Fáilte Ireland.

We are also keen to strengthen our Board by welcoming members from the Deaf Community, particularly those with experience in the sectors mentioned above. This is something we have been actively working towards for some time. Representation from the Deaf Community is vital to ensure our work is guided by lived experience and informed perspectives.

The last three months have been a busy and productive period for us. One of the key milestones was the approval of our new two-year business plan. As we work towards the end of our current strategy, we are beginning to look ahead—planning for the next two years and laying the groundwork for our future strategic direction.

We continue to engage with networks across the sector to stay informed about key developments and to explore opportunities for partnership and collaboration with other organisations.

We hope you enjoy this edition of our newsletter!

# HUMAN RESOURCE GENERALIST

## KRISTINA HARRIS

Reach Deaf Services has maintained a robust recruitment drive across the second quarter of 2025.

In June 2025, our Supported Living Services reached capacity for Community Support Workers. However, Recruitment is ongoing for a number of Community Social Care Leads. The Supported Living Services also extended some current Acting Up positions that are in place such as Acting up Community Support Managers & Practice Lead.

In Early March 2025 Interviews were held for back-filling one of our Operations Administrator roles which was successfully offered and commenced in Mid-April 2025.

In our Boarding Campus, Recruitment and interviews are ongoing internally for one Social Care Worker vacancy and there is one remaining vacancy for Transport Escort.

In early June 2025, Reach Deaf Services advertised a new vacancy for a Part-Time Accounts Assistant. This vacancy is ongoing in application processing and will be live until late June 2025.

In early May 2025, Interviews were held for the Reach Deaf Services, HR Manager vacancy. After a successful interview and role offer, this position is due to commence in Mid-July 2025. We wish a warm welcome to all who have joined or are soon to join our services.

Our services have maintained steady schedules across all mandatory staff training fields such as, Adult Safeguarding & Child Protection, Manual & People Moving and Handling, Medication Management, Risk Management along with Tool talks in Service User Finance safeguarding and Trust in Care policy Training for applicable roles. Our HR department will also be engaged in upcoming information seminars such as the Work and Access scheme with the Department of Social Protection and Deaf village Ireland and with The Wheel: Inclusive Design to Delight Untapped Talent in June 2025.

Some staff who are involved in our payroll function commenced an IPASS certificate in Payroll Techniques in February 2025 which is ongoing.

The Implementation of Reach Deaf Services' new Care/Payroll system, One Touch Health is in full swing and nearing the final finishing touches. All staff are now utilizing this application for recording their working times and managing absence records. The system is being further prepared for Handover reporting/incident reporting amongst other operational processes. Consultations are ongoing between our Internal One Touch Health Focus team and One Touch Healths Support team to ensure full benefit of the systems abilities are utilized and internal training is also ongoing for all staff who are involved in the functioning of the One Touch Health system.

# SUPPORT LIVING SERVICES

## LINDA TIERNEY - HEAD OF SERVICES



### Support Living Services Manager - Sharon Murphy

#### Summer Vibes Are In the Air!

As the sunshine finally makes a welcome appearance, we're all soaking up the lovely weather and gearing up for a busy summer ahead! With holiday planning and summer shopping high on the to-do list, the excitement is certainly building.

Many have already kicked off their summer adventures, with trips to Lanzarote, Rome, and the Irish countryside setting the tone for the season. And there's plenty more to come! On the horizon are getaways to Spain and Lourdes, along with a dreamy Mediterranean cruise in the works. Our staff team are also enjoying the opportunity to travel abroad and catch some sunshine as part of their working days—supporting people to experience meaningful holidays and create lasting memories.

Wherever you're headed—or even if you're staying local—summer is shaping up to be full of fun, relaxation, and well-earned adventure. Stay safe, soak up the sun, and enjoy every minute

#### Looking Ahead: Staff Training Plans for 2025

While summer brings travel and time to recharge, we're also looking ahead to staff training plans for Summer and Autumn 2025. Continued professional development remains a key priority, and we'll be rolling out a series of core refresher sessions, new skill-based workshops, and leadership development opportunities in the months ahead.

Whether you're new to the team or looking to build on your experience, there'll be something for everyone—helping us maintain the highest standards of support and care. Stay tuned for the full training calendar coming soon!

#### World Elder Abuse Awareness Day – A Shared Commitment

As June comes to a close, we also look forward to marking World Elder Abuse Awareness Day. This important occasion is a reminder of our collective responsibility to safeguard the people we support and protect the wellbeing of our staff team. We remain firmly committed to creating a culture of respect, dignity, and safety for all.



# EDUCATION SERVICES

## LINDA TIERNEY - HEAD OF SERVICES



### Social Care Worker - Ros Whelan

#### End of Term

Wow, What a quick term! Hard to believe we are facing into another Summer break. The staff have worked hard and it seems like the boarders had a great term regardless of exams and study, making the most of the long evenings and the amazing weather after the Easter break. We are hosting a sleepover for new boarders to get an experience of boarding and meeting the staff in June in preparation for their new School year with us beginning late August. We are also happy to welcome new staff on board and sad to see staff leave us. Congrats to the Junior boarders who were runners up in the Leinster final and then selected to play in the National finals in the Aviva on the 11th of June, with a great turnout of boarders and staff to cheer them on.

#### Sip & Sign

Every week, we're excited to host a relaxed and engaging staff meet-up where we come together to learn and promote Irish Sign Language. It's a fantastic opportunity for everyone to pick up new skills, increase awareness, and foster an inclusive environment. With a cup of tea in hand, we dive into different topics, practice together and share tips on integrating ISL into our daily work.

#### Saved by the Sign

Here in boarding we were delighted to take part in the IMAP (Inclusive Minds After-school Programme) provided by Saved by the Sign. This programme entailed 4 sessions for senior and junior boarders in which they took part in non-formal education about social inclusion through playing games, team building activities, and having meaningful conversations. We would like to thank Lydia, Romel, Cha'nel and Jaima for all their work in keeping the boarders engaged and for creating such a wonderful and valuable programme. The boarders thoroughly enjoyed this.

### Family Barbeque

The Family Barbeque was a great success; it was wonderful to see the whole community together. A Paw Patrol officer made an appearance and even a celebrity (Stitch) came to say hello, the bouncy castles were endless fun and the food was fantastic, hats off to our fabulous chefs in boarding. The magician was a huge hit as was his assistant Sir Poop-a-lot who takes his tips in carrots (he's a very fluffy bunny).



## Graduation Day

Our annual Graduation Day party was held in May. This year 3 boarders are leaving, a couple of them having been boarding with us for a few years. The top table was reserved for those graduating, everyone looked smart and grown-up. A three-course meal was prepared and served by our two chefs, who did a great job; non-alcoholic Prosecco was served. The Care manager and Team Leader gave speeches about those who were leaving. Afterwards, we played water fights outside on the field – everyone had a great time, it was definitely a day to remember.

Shane Hamilton was a boarder in St. Joseph's Boarding Campus for Deaf Boy's. He was a student at the Holy Family School where he had recently completed his Leaving Cert exams.

Shane was popular amongst his peers in boarding, he has great communication skills, being competent in ISL and spoken English. At his recent School Graduation, he spoke eloquently about all his classmates, the fun times and great memories they had over the years. He gave high praise to his teachers and thanked them for their commitment, support, and dedication to their education. He won the Student of the Year Award. Well done, Shane.

Shane was a member of the team who won the Young Social Innovators of the Year 2023 Gold Award. Along with the other two boarders leaving us, Ciara Callanan and Chloe Grennan, their theme was Deaf Awareness, a language for all which saw them develop a 10-week curriculum including video resources to teach ISL as a language. Shane was an excellent student whose goal is to study Law and Business studies. He will be missed by all the boarders and Social Care Staff.

We wish him and all his class every success in their Leaving Cert results. Follow your dreams. As mentioned, we will be saying farewell to three of our boarders this summer. All Three were very popular. Chloe and Ciara are close friends who experienced a lot together in St Mary's boarding, they were great role models to their peers, and we hope this continues into the future.

This is always a poignant time—filled with a mix of excitement for the future and the sadness of parting ways with close friends and a place that has become a second home.

We know that each of them leaves us carrying hopes, dreams, and a strong sense of ambition. They are stepping into a new chapter of their lives, and while challenges undoubtedly lie ahead, we are confident they are ready to face them with courage and determination.

We are incredibly proud of all they have achieved during their time here. We hope that their experience in boarding has helped instill in them the confidence to pursue their passions and shape their own paths. The future is wide open—there are no limits to what they can accomplish.

Though they may be moving on, we know the memories, friendships, and lessons from their time in boarding will stay with them for a lifetime. They will always be part of our community, and we look forward to seeing all that they go on to achieve.





# CHAPLAIN FOR NCDP

## FR PADDY BOYLE



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### Frankie Berry

#### Active Church Ministry

Being baptized Catholic does indeed signify a special relationship with God, often referred to as becoming a child of God. This sacrament opens the door to a deeper, personal connection with Jesus Christ.

There are many fulfilling ways to live out your Catholic calling. Actively participating in church ministry is one, of many ways, to serve and grow in faith. Central to this is a profound respect for the Word of God, found in the Scriptures, and for the Eucharist, which Catholics believe is the true body and blood of Christ.



It is truly an honour to accept a role in lay ministry, and saying "yes" to becoming a Minister of the Word (Lector) or a Eucharistic Minister (Extraordinary Minister of Holy Communion) is a significant commitment. This preparation helped them to carry out their duties with greater confidence, with reverence and have an understanding the importance of what they are doing for the community and for the Church. It's a true blessing to be commissioned Fergus Dunne as a Lay Minister of the Word and Geraldine Neylon, Jennifer Stringer and Sandra Kennedy as Minister of the Eucharist. Fr Paddy and Frankie, along with the rest of the community wish them all the best as they carry out these sacred duties, and pray that their service brings them immense joy and spiritual growth.

#### Sacrament of Confirmation.

Eight Deaf Candidates from Holy Family School received the Sacrament of Confirmation from Fr Paddy Boyle, Chaplain to Deaf People, in Emmaus Chapel. The Archbishop gave permission to Parish priests/ chaplains to do the Confirmation ceremony because the numbers of schools had grown in the dioceses and the priests are there to support the Archbishop with this work.

Their class teacher along with the SNA provided a lovely liturgy and the Candidates were involved in the signing songs during the service. Their parents/guardians must be feeling proud to see how well they are doing in entering a new phase in life. May the holy spirit be their guide and helper throughout their young lives in the days and months ahead.

## **Sacrament of the Eucharist.**

Eight Deaf Children received their 1st Confession in Emmaus Chapel. With Fr Paddy Boyle as their confessor, in early May as preparation for their 1st Holy Communion. They have been learning about Jesus who loved each child and he wanted them to be his friend. They learnt how to be a friend to each other and grow in friendship with Jesus in their lifetime. They received their 1st Holy Communion on 13th June 2025 in Emmaus Chapel. The family were there supporting them and liturgy was organised by their class teacher with her SNA. Everyone involved participated in the signing songs and prayers.

We wish them well and may they continue to pray at home with their families and in places of prayer.

## **Summary of Jubilee Year Pilgrimage with Irish & American Deaf Groups**

In celebration of the Jubilee Year, which occurs every 25 years, a unique joint pilgrimage brought together Deaf communities from Ireland, Scotland, America, and other parts of Europe for a spiritually rich journey to Rome and other sacred sites in Italy. A total of 11 Irish pilgrims, joined by a Scottish couple and 26 Americans, traveled together. They were accompanied throughout the trip by travel agent Chris Dube, a local guide, and a coach driver.

Upon arrival in Rome, the group learned of the passing of Pope Francis just days earlier. The original plans were respectfully altered to accommodate the nine-day mourning period observed across the Vatican. Despite the unexpected turn of events, the pilgrims found themselves part of a historical moment. On their first evening, they gathered in silence in St Peter's Square, illuminated at night, to pray and reflect in solidarity. Fr Patrick Mullan, a hearing chaplain from Washington, D.C., led a powerful Rosary in American Sign Language (ASL), which was mirrored in Irish Sign Language (ISL) by the group.

The following day, after waiting in long queues, they entered St Peter's Basilica and joined thousands in silent prayer during a special Italian Mass, with bishops and cardinals concelebrating. The sacred atmosphere left a deep impression on the group. They later visited the Maria Maggiore Basilica just outside the Vatican Walls. Here, they followed in the footsteps of the late Pope Francis, who used to pray privately before his foreign journeys. His simple white marble tomb inscribed "Franciscus" was a focal point for quiet contemplation. A private Mass was celebrated in a side chapel of the Basilica, with full ASL and ISL interpretation, offering a moment of spiritual intimacy.

The group's main purpose for traveling was to attend a three-day Vatican conference focused on "Evangelization – Sharing the Good News", organized by the Dicastery for Laity, Family, and Life. Participants had the opportunity to receive the Sacrament of Reconciliation from Deaf and hearing priests fluent in sign language—an incredibly meaningful and inclusive experience.



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On the second day of the conference, sign language interpreters faced difficulties due to the variety of languages being used and a lack of clear scheduling. Through collaboration and networking, they managed to overcome these challenges, ensuring full participation for the Deaf attendees. Presentations were delivered by Deaf and Deafblind speakers who shared how they live their faith through vocations such as marriage, single life, priesthood, and religious commitment. These personal testimonies offered inspiration and insight into how vocation is lived in different ways. The day concluded with a Mass celebrated by Bishop Piero Fisichella. He then led the Deaf pilgrims in a short but moving procession through the Holy Door of St Peter's Basilica, a traditional act during Jubilee Years that grants a special indulgence. They were blessed with the Jubilee Cross surrounded by stunning religious art, enhancing the spiritual depth of the moment.

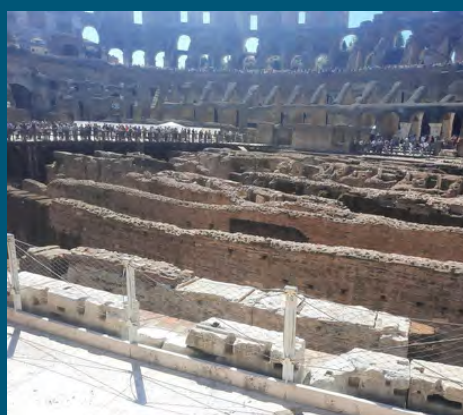
The pilgrims also learned about the special Jubilee indulgences available by making pilgrimages, praying, and attending the Holy Doors of four major basilicas: St Peter's, St Paul Outside the Walls, St John Lateran, and Maria Maggiore. In an extraordinary move, Pope Francis had added a fifth Holy Door—this one located in a nearby prison he frequently visited, reflecting his commitment to inclusion and mercy.

From Rome, the group journeyed north to Assisi, birthplace of St Francis. There they explored his early life, marked by privilege and a dramatic decision to renounce wealth and embrace a life of poverty. In Assisi, they also visited the Church of St Clare and were moved to discover that their visit coincided with the birthday of Blessed Carlo Acutis, a young computer prodigy who used his skills to spread devotion to the Eucharist before dying at 15. They viewed his remains in a glass coffin and learned about his upcoming canonization—originally set for April 2025 but postponed to September. Another young role model, Bl Pier Giorgio Frassati, who died at 24, is also set for canonization in 2025, making both figures especially relevant for young Catholics today.

Their final destination was Orvieto, south of Assisi, known for the Eucharistic Miracle of Bolsena, where a blood-stained corporal (altar cloth) is displayed in a side chapel. The group admired the artistic depictions and took time to reflect on the powerful miracle, which strengthened belief in the Real Presence in the Eucharist.

Throughout the trip, Fr Patrick Mullan celebrated private Masses in ASL at various chapels and convents. Irish pilgrims were supported with ISL interpretation, and American Sign Language interpreters provided voiceovers when needed. Free time allowed for self-guided exploration and social bonding. By the end of the pilgrimage, the Deaf groups had developed deeper connections, formed new friendships, and shared a renewed sense of faith. The journey offered unforgettable experiences rooted in prayer, community, culture, and history—leaving lasting spiritual memories in the hearts of all who participated.





  
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