



CEO REPORT

MARY STRINGER

Welcome to the Final Newsletter of 2025

As we close out 2025, we want to take a moment to reflect on what has been a busy and meaningful year for our organisation. It has been a year of change, growth, and important milestones, and we are grateful to everyone who contributed to making it successful.

In April, we said farewell to our Chairperson, Nessan Vaughan, after three years of dedicated service. We extend our heartfelt thanks to Nessan for his leadership and commitment during his term. At the same time, we welcomed Deirdre O'Keeffe as our new Chairperson. Deirdre brings a wealth of experience from her distinguished career in the Civil Service, and we look forward to her guidance in the years ahead. We were also delighted to welcome four new Board members: Declan Treanor, Caitriona Carton, Catherine Duffy, and Seamus Sheedy, each bringing expertise across disability, legal, commercial, and psychotherapy sectors. Additionally, we bid farewell to Patrick Clavin, who retired after three years of service. We thank both Nessan and Pat for their invaluable contributions to the Board.

On the staff front, we were pleased to welcome Justinah Bello as our new HR Manager. Justinah brings extensive experience and a strong focus on process improvement, which will help strengthen our organisational systems and support our team.

Within our Supported Living Service, we experienced a great loss with the passing of Barry Wickham. Barry was an inspiration to all of us, teaching resilience and leaving a lasting impact on Reach Deaf Services and the wider Deaf Community. His memory will always remain with us. Safeguarding continues to be at the heart of what we do, and this year we marked Adult Safeguarding Day and World Elder Abuse Awareness Day with events that reinforced our commitment to the people we support.

At the Boarding Campus, three young people graduated this year, and we wish them every success as they embark on the next chapter of their lives. We also rolled out the Healthy Food Made Easy Programme once again, helping prepare young people for independent living. Over the summer, we completed a renovation programme at the Boys Boarding Campus, creating a refreshed and welcoming environment for the children and young people.

In line with our ISL Strategy, we hosted Beyond the Surface – Language, Privilege and Culture, a two-day training designed to deepen understanding of the Deaf experience and the importance of ISL. This training was delivered to our management team, with plans to extend it to all staff in the near future. It represents an important step in ensuring that our strategy is meaningfully implemented across the organisation.

Finally, in celebration of the Jubilee Year, which occurs every 25 years, our Chaplaincy team organised a unique joint pilgrimage that brought together Deaf communities from Ireland, Scotland, America, and other parts of Europe. A total of 11 Irish pilgrims, joined by a Scottish couple and 26 Americans, shared a spiritually enriching journey to Rome and other sacred sites in Italy—a truly memorable experience for all involved.

As we look back on these milestones, we want to thank our Board, staff, and the people we support and the Deaf Community for their dedication and support throughout the year. Here's to an exciting 2026!



HR REPORT

JUSTINAH BELLO & KRISTINA HARRIS

As we approach the end of 2025, the HR Department would like to extend our heartfelt appreciation to every member of Reach Deaf Services. This has been a year marked by dedication, resilience, and meaningful impact we've made together. Your commitment to supporting the Deaf community and upholding our values has been truly inspiring, and we are grateful for you all each day.

Highlights From This Year

HR Department has remained steadfast on the recruitment front with many new and existing vacancies being processed across our Central Office, Community & Boarding Services.

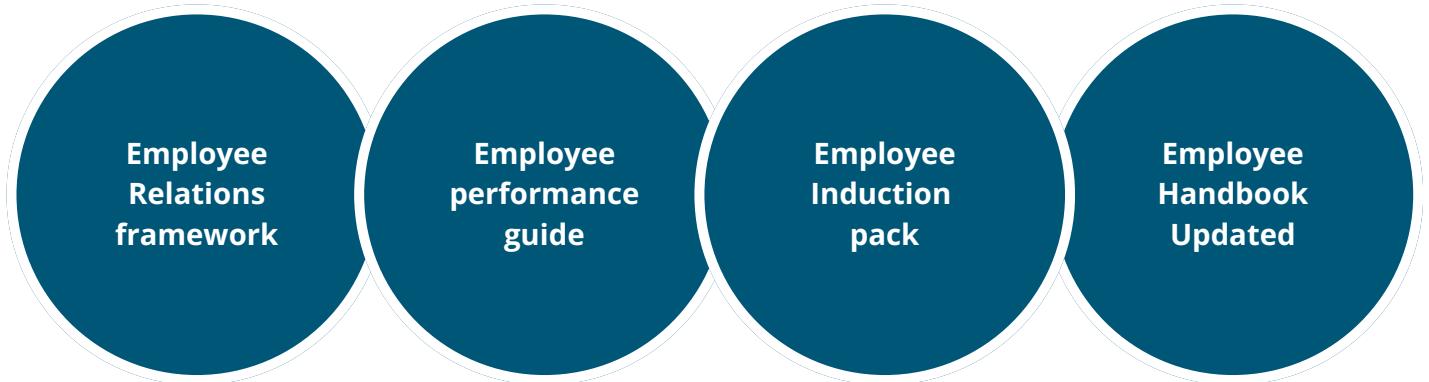
Some of the vacancies processed this year included Support and Social Care Workers, Accounts Assistant, Community Support Manager, HR Manager amongst others.

As we approach the end of the year, only a small handful of vacancies remain open, with the majority either closed or progressing through the onboarding stage. Recently, we successfully recruited for the Community Support Manager role in the Community Service, with the new appointee scheduled to commence in early January 2026. We have also completed the onboarding process for new Transport Escorts and Social Care Worker for the Boarding campus.

In total, 16 positions have been filled this year.

Once again, we would like to take this opportunity to welcome all our new joiners to the team! The HR Department remains committed to improving and implementing a robust policy and procedures framework. This year, significant progress has been made across several key areas, including the development of an enhanced Employee Relations framework for management teams, employee performance guide developed for all staff, improvement to the Employee Induction pack and processes, ensuring that all new recruits are equipped with the right tools for success, alongside, a revised Performance Development Plan, Performance Improvement plan, Probationary process are being finalised. The Employee Handbook was also updated in the year. All these processes are scheduled to go live in January 2026.

Some policies and process are currently under review to further support best practice and provide clarity in their related areas. These includes Chaplaincy Code of Conduct policy and staff complaints policy.



- Employee Relations framework

- Employee performance guide

- Employee Induction pack

- Employee Handbook Updated

We have also been actively preparing for the full rollout of the new One Touch system from January 2026. This system will support the management of staff training and training records, as well as the creation and maintenance of all employee HR files. Once implemented, it will significantly streamline training scheduling and compliance management while providing managers with improved oversight of training requirements and other related information.

Reach Deaf Services is also seeking to appoint a dedicated Project Manager to oversee this rollout and ensure a smooth transition to the new system for the wider management teams.

As we enter the new year, HR remains committed to:

- Strengthening staff wellbeing and engagement
- Enhancing training, development and compliance programmes
- Supporting managers with improved HR tools and guidance
- Ensuring clear, accessible HR communication for all staff
- Building a workplace culture grounded in respect, inclusion, and continuous improvement.

We recognise the unique demands of working within a Deaf services environment, balancing communication needs, cultural awareness, safeguarding, advocacy, and frontline care. Your dedication and compassion make a real difference in the lives of those we support every day.

On this note, we would like to say a big thank you to all staff for your continued commitment throughout 2025, this has made a significant difference across our services. As we reflect on the past year, we are truly grateful for the teamwork, passion, and unwavering commitment shown by each of you. Your contributions have strengthened our organisation and helped shape our success.

From all of us in HR, we wish you and your families a Merry Christmas and a prosperous New Year. We look forward to welcoming 2026 with you all! With a can-do spirit, we hope for a positive and inspiring year ahead.



EDUCATION SERVICES

LINDA TIERNEY - HEAD OF SERVICES



Charlene Gannon (Acting Care Manager, St. Joseph's Boarding)

In 2025, our core aim was to fully meet the diverse needs of every child and young person utilizing our service. Achieving this ambition required extensive planning between the senior management team, boarding managers, and property and facilities manager, and carefully planned renovations. The project was successfully executed by our dedicated property and facilities team, whose tireless efforts transformed the existing spaces into the modern, comfortable, and specialized boarding environment we now proudly offer.

The key enhancements include several purpose-built areas designed to cater to various therapeutic, recreational, and personal needs:

Specialized Therapeutic and Relaxation Zones

- **Sensory Regulation Room:** A dedicated, calming environment has been established to support sensory integration and emotional regulation. This peaceful retreat, featuring comfortable bean bag chairs, an interactive bubble tube, adjustable sensory lighting, and complete blackout blinds, offers a safe space for children and young people to decompress or simply enjoy quiet time alone.
- **Cinema and Gaming Room:** We introduced a full cinema experience with dark, atmospheric walls, dramatic red curtains, and a large comfortable sofa. An overhead projector displays films across an entire wall, creating an immersive viewing environment. This versatile space also serves as a popular place to have gaming sessions.
- **Dedicated Art Room:** Recognizing the importance of creative expression, a specific art room has been allocated and equipped. This ensures that every individual has a dedicated space and the

resources necessary to engage in artistic activities and meet their creative needs.

Facility Upgrades and Enhanced Comfort

- **Upgraded Bathrooms:** The ground floor washroom facilities were fully modernized for improved accessibility and comfort. Individual stalls were removed in favor of a single, spacious, large-format bathroom complete with contemporary new flooring.
- **Staff Break Room:** To support our invaluable staff and promote a healthy work environment, a dedicated break room was introduced. This comfortable space allows our team members to take necessary decompression time away from their duties.
- **Improvements:** All communal living areas and individual bedrooms received fresh paintwork, revitalizing the entire facility. The former family room was upgraded into a multifunctional space that provides flexibility for various uses. It can now comfortably accommodate private family visits or serve as a quieter intimate television lounge for the young people. The senior house-sitting room was also designed with a multi-functional space in mind, where a semiprivate reading nook was introduced providing a space that can be part of the communal space without having to be involved with activities in the communal space.

Building Efficiency and Exteriors Enhancements

- **Exterior Modernization:** The building's exterior saw significant upgrades aimed at improving energy efficiency and natural light intake. The installation of new PVC windows and doors has allowed more ambient light into the main entrance area while simultaneously improving heat retention throughout the entire facility, ensuring a warmer and more welcoming environment for all.

Social Care Worker - Ros & Caoimhe

Pumpkin Farm Trip

For Halloween, our junior boarders visited Guy Farm which had a wonderful Halloween display and a pumpkin patch. The boarders enjoyed going through the maze, seeing the wonderful hay bale sculptures and picking out their personal pumpkin to bring home. The visit ended perfectly with all of us enjoying some hot chocolate with marshmallows to warm up.

Boarders Brave the Nightmare Realm

Changing it up from last year's trip to Farmaphobia, our boarders ventured into the Nightmare Realm—an indoor attraction that was slightly cleaner, but no less terrifying. From the moment they stepped inside, students were met with jump scares, spooky scenes, and unsettling characters lurking around every corner.

Despite the screams and surprises, the boarders spent the entire day laughing, bonding, and embracing the fright-filled adventure. For many, it became a standout moment of the term and a fantastic way to share a memorable experience with friends. Sometimes, getting scared together really is the best kind of fun.

Living Well Together - A New Code of Conduct for Our Boarding Community

This term, our boarding community introduced Living Well Together, a new code of conduct designed to create a warmer, more supportive, and more homely environment for all boarders. The initiative encourages kindness, respect, and shared responsibility—values at the heart of life in St. Joseph's and St. Mary's.

To celebrate and explore these ideas, an art competition was held in September based on H.E.A.R.T, an acrostic poster theme capturing the feelings and values of boarding life.

A special congratulations goes to Dominka, a second-year student who placed first and received a brand-new drawing tablet to continue developing her artistic talents.

All boarders who participated had the chance to display their work in the DVI during ISL Week, adding a creative and colourful touch to the celebrations. The competition not only showcased impressive artistic ability but also highlighted the spirit of community that Living Well Together aims to inspire.



Introducing New Staff

Hi, my name is Yahye Said, I'm delighted to be joining Reach Deaf Service as a permanent Social Care Worker. I previously worked as an agency staff member and during that time I quickly realized how special this environment is.

The supportive management team, the welcoming staff, and positive atmosphere made me feel part of the community from the very beginning.

I chose to take a permanent position because I truly value the commitment this service shows to the children and young adults we support. I'm excited to continue contributing to their personal development, wellbeing, and everyday life, and I look forward to growing with the team.

Staff leaving Boarding Campus

Hi, my name is Nicholas O Halloran, I started working in St. Mary's on night duty in February 2022. I spent my weeks staying awake every night, which was tiring but also enjoyable. After this I moved to working days in St. Mary's for two years before moving to St. Joseph's, where I worked until November 2025. I will start a new job as a Social Care Leader in the community in December.

I loved working between both campuses. The boarders, staff, and everyone else were amazing, and I have gained valuable experience from all the staff in both locations. Most of all, I will miss all the boarders. I will miss making them laugh and being involved in their lives, as I have known some of them since they were in 6th class, and now it is hard to believe they are in 4th year, I have watched them grow and become the young adults they are today.

However, I know and trust the magnificent staff throughout both campuses, that the boarders are in very capable hands now I have left. I hope to come and visit regularly for a cuppa and a chat!

Thank you, Nicola –Celebrating 30 years of Dedication

This term, we said a tearful goodbye to Nicola. Her departure came as a shock, and while we all miss her, the St. Joe's campus feels especially different without her warmth, humour, and steady presence that shaped daily life for the past 30 years.

Nicola supported generations of boarders, guiding them from their early days as young children right through to their Leaving Cert year. Her care, kindness, and genuine connection with students made her a truly special part of our community. In her final days, even past boarders returned to visit—a testament to how deeply she touched the lives of so many

We are incredibly happy for Nicola as she begins this exciting new chapter of her life. Her impact and spirit will always be a cherished part of our boarding family.






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