



CEO REPORT

MARY STRINGER

Welcome to the autumn edition of our newsletter.

I hope you all enjoyed the summer and had the opportunity to make the most of the wonderful weather. Here at Reach Deaf Services, it has been a busy and productive few months. Throughout the summer, our Supported Living Service team supported people to enjoy holidays both at home and abroad. Some travelled to destinations across Ireland, while others ventured further afield to places such as Benidorm and the annual Dublin Diocese pilgrimage to Lourdes. Our Properties Team also had a busy summer preparing the Boarding Campus and third-level student accommodation for the start of the new academic year. In September, we were delighted to welcome children and young people back to the Boarding Campus and wish them every success in the year ahead.

The new school year also marked an important transition for the Holy Family School for the Deaf. Following the retirement of Principal, Eimear O'Rourke, we warmly welcome Sarah Clarke as the new Principal. We extend our sincere thanks to Eimear for her dedication and contribution to Deaf education over many years and wish her a long and happy retirement. We also wish Sarah every success in her new role. The partnership between the Holy Family School for the Deaf and our Boarding Campus is an important one, and we look forward to continuing this strong relationship in the years ahead.

At Board level, we recently said goodbye to John Cleere, who has served Reach Deaf Services for the past ten years. John spent three years as an external member of our Finance, Audit and Risk Committee before joining the Board and serving as Chair of the Committee for a further six years. His knowledge, commitment, and support have been invaluable to the organisation, and we are deeply grateful for his significant contribution.

September also saw us celebrate ISL Awareness Week, an important event in our calendar each year. Our ISL Team organised a range of activities, including our monthly ISL Catch-Ups, the annual awards ceremony recognising staff who successfully completed ISL Levels 1 and 2, and the official launch of Beyond the Surface. This innovative training programme has been developed specifically for all staff, Deaf and hearing, to deepen understanding of Irish Sign Language, Deaf Culture, and the experiences of Deaf people. Topics include language deprivation, Deaf culture, and the importance of ISL as a primary language within Reach. I would like to thank the ISL Team for their dedication throughout the year and particularly for the tremendous work involved in delivering such a successful ISL Awareness Week.

We also marked the retirement of Frankie Berry, a valued member of our Chaplaincy Team, after an incredible 40 years of service. Frankie has made an enormous contribution, not only to Reach Deaf Services but to the wider Deaf Community. Her compassion, commitment, and willingness to go above and beyond for others have touched countless lives. While she will be greatly missed, we wish her every happiness and fulfilment in her retirement.

Finally, I would like to take this opportunity to thank all our staff, Board members, and supporters for their continued dedication to Reach Deaf Services. Your commitment enables us to provide high-quality services and supports to the Deaf Community every day. We look forward to the months ahead and to continuing our work together.



ISL TEAM REPORT

TRACEY DALY

The ISL Team has had a busy few months preparing for the new term and continuing the work of the ISL Strategy. We have introduced Level 3 ISL classes for the first time, alongside our ongoing teaching and interpreting work. ISL Craic and our regular ISL Catch Ups continue to create opportunities for staff to learn, practice and connect through ISL.

At our September ISL Catch Up, we marked the World Federation of the Deaf's 75th anniversary and the International Day of Sign Languages. Inspired by the WFD's artwork, everyone was invited to add a hand to a shared piece centred on an eye commissioned from Deaf artist Johnny Corcoran. The finished artwork reflects the many people who make up our community.

We also celebrated staff who completed Levels 1 and 2 ISL, followed by a special "This Is Your Life" surprise for Frankie Berry, our chaplain, to mark her 40 years of service. It was a beautiful evening of community, stories and appreciation for a very special person, and a joy to see Frankie surrounded by people who wanted to celebrate her.

Another major milestone was the first delivery of Beyond the Surface by our own in-house ISL Team. The two-day training explored language deprivation, incidental learning, the power of voice and hearing privilege. In preparation, the team took part in a Reflective Practice Series with Deaf professionals, who shared their experiences and helped examine our own understanding and practice. That time to challenge, reflect and learn together helped the team build confidence and a strong foundation for the training. The two days went really well and we look forward to building on this learning.

Finally, we wish Genevieve McGirr every happiness as she begins her one year career break. Genevieve has brought so much to the team and will be missed whilst away. We look forward to welcoming Kevin Mulqueen, who is joining the ISL Team while Genevieve is on career break.



EDUCATION SERVICES

LINDA TIERNEY - HEAD OF SERVICES



Boarding Campus Swap Off to a Great Start!

As many of you know, we have seen one of the most significant changes in boarding in many years. Following the summer holidays, our boarders have successfully switched campuses, with the boys moving to St Mary's Boarding and the girls relocating to the St Joseph's Campus.

This move was made in response to the changing needs of our boarding community. With the number of boys boarding now more than double the number of girls, the facilities at St Mary's are better suited to accommodate the larger group and provide additional space for them to thrive.

Over the summer, our Facilities Team worked incredibly hard to prepare both campuses for the transition. Their efforts included painting, upgrading the boys' canteen, and completing a range of other important improvements to ensure both sites were ready for the new term. We would also like to recognise the dedication of our boarding staff, who invested a great deal of time and energy in planning and preparing for the move. Their commitment helped make the transition as smooth as possible.

Most importantly, the boarders themselves have adapted remarkably well to their new surroundings. It has been wonderful to see how quickly they have settled in and embraced the changes. The feedback so far has been very positive, and the students appear happy and comfortable with the new arrangements. Even with a slightly longer walk to school for the boys, they have taken it all in their stride and continue to approach each day with enthusiasm. We look forward to seeing the benefits of these new arrangements throughout the year and thank everyone who played a part in making this exciting transition such a success.

Activities Update

The much anticipated Chinese was enjoyed by all at the Welcome back to boarding catch up, followed by lots of chats and fun. We have two spooky Halloween trips planned in October. One to Farmaphobia and one to Pumpkins after Dark as well as our spooktacular Halloween party. Bring your best costume and you might win a prize.

Celebrating ISL Week in Boarding

Last week boarding has been busy celebrating Irish Sign Language (ISL) Week with a range of fun activities and opportunities to bring our community together.

We kicked off the week with a blue-themed party, where students from both campuses came together to enjoy blue foods, games and plenty of fun. The event was a great way to start the celebrations and gave everyone the chance to socialise and mix from both campuses.

On Tuesday evening, students and staff went to the DVI to celebrate and recognise the International Week of the Deaf. The event included presentations acknowledging staff members who had successfully completed their ISL courses, highlighting the importance of continued learning and communication within our community. There were also plenty of blue-themed treats, including cakes that left many people with bright blue smiles by the end of the evening! A raffle added to the excitement, with several lucky winners taking home prizes. For many of our students, the highlight of the evening was the opportunity to chat, meet new people and spend time with members of the wider Deaf community.

On Wednesday, students enjoyed their usual Wave Youth Club with special guest Teresa Lynch, who joined the group to speak about "ISL: At the Heart of My Identity." It was a lovely opportunity for the young people to explore the importance of ISL, identity and what sign language means to them. Afterwards, youth club continued with the usual games and activities, giving everyone a chance to relax, have fun and enjoy the evening together.

On Thursday, we slowed things down a little as we didn't want to tire everyone out after such a busy week. Students enjoyed a relaxed movie night, tuning into LumoTV and choosing from a selection of mini-series and stories told through BSL. While the programmes were in BSL rather than ISL, many of our young people are multilingual when they arrive in boarding and enjoy engaging with different sign languages. Staff were on hand, along with subtitles, to help clarify anything that was unfamiliar. It was a lovely, relaxed way to wind down together.

Preparing for Halloween!

Our night staff are always happy to help create a variety of amazing decorations. Their creativity and passion really shine through in their work

They had some help from two very creative boarders, who got stuck in and helped bring some spooky ideas to life. They enjoyed it so much that a few of our spooky creations even made their way home with them! Some might say we are a little early for Halloween, but with Farmaphobia just around the corner, it seems to be all the young people can think about!



SUPPORT LIVING SERVICES

LINDA TIERNEY - HEAD OF SERVICES



Support Living Services Manager - Sharon Murphy

As autumn begins, there is so much to celebrate across our Supported Living Service. The past few months have brought memorable holidays, meaningful experiences and plenty of opportunities for people to enjoy life in their own way. Thank you to the people we support, families and staff who continue to make these experiences possible.

Holiday Highlights: Making Memories Near and Far

The holiday plans we shared in our summer newsletter are now turning into wonderful stories and memories. Earlier in the year, people were looking forward to destinations including Rome, Medjugorje, Benidorm, Knock, Lourdes and trips across Ireland. It is fantastic to see those plans becoming a reality.

A special moment in Rome

One of the standout moments of the year so far was a recent trip to Rome, where one person had the extraordinary opportunity to meet the Pope. It was a truly special experience and one that will undoubtedly be remembered for years to come. The trip is a wonderful example of how holidays can create meaningful opportunities, new experiences and memories that are unique to each person.

Sunshine in Benidorm and Lanzarote

The adventures are continuing with a few people currently in Benidorm and other having enjoyed holidays in Ireland, Spain and Italy. They had a brilliant time, enjoying the sunshine, exploring their surroundings and making the most of a well-earned break.

More Adventures Still to Come

And the suitcase is not being put away just yet. There are more holidays and trips planned for the remainder of 2026, with people continuing to choose experiences that reflect their own interests, preferences and goals. Whether the destination is abroad, around Ireland, a pilgrimage, a city break or a relaxing getaway, it is exciting to see so many plans taking shape.

Life in the Community

Alongside holidays, everyday community life continues to be an important part of the service. People are spending time with family and friends, enjoying local activities and outings, building independence and making choices about how they want to spend their time. These everyday moments are every bit as important as the big adventures and continue to support connection, confidence and a sense of belonging.

Learning, Reflection and Person-Centred Support

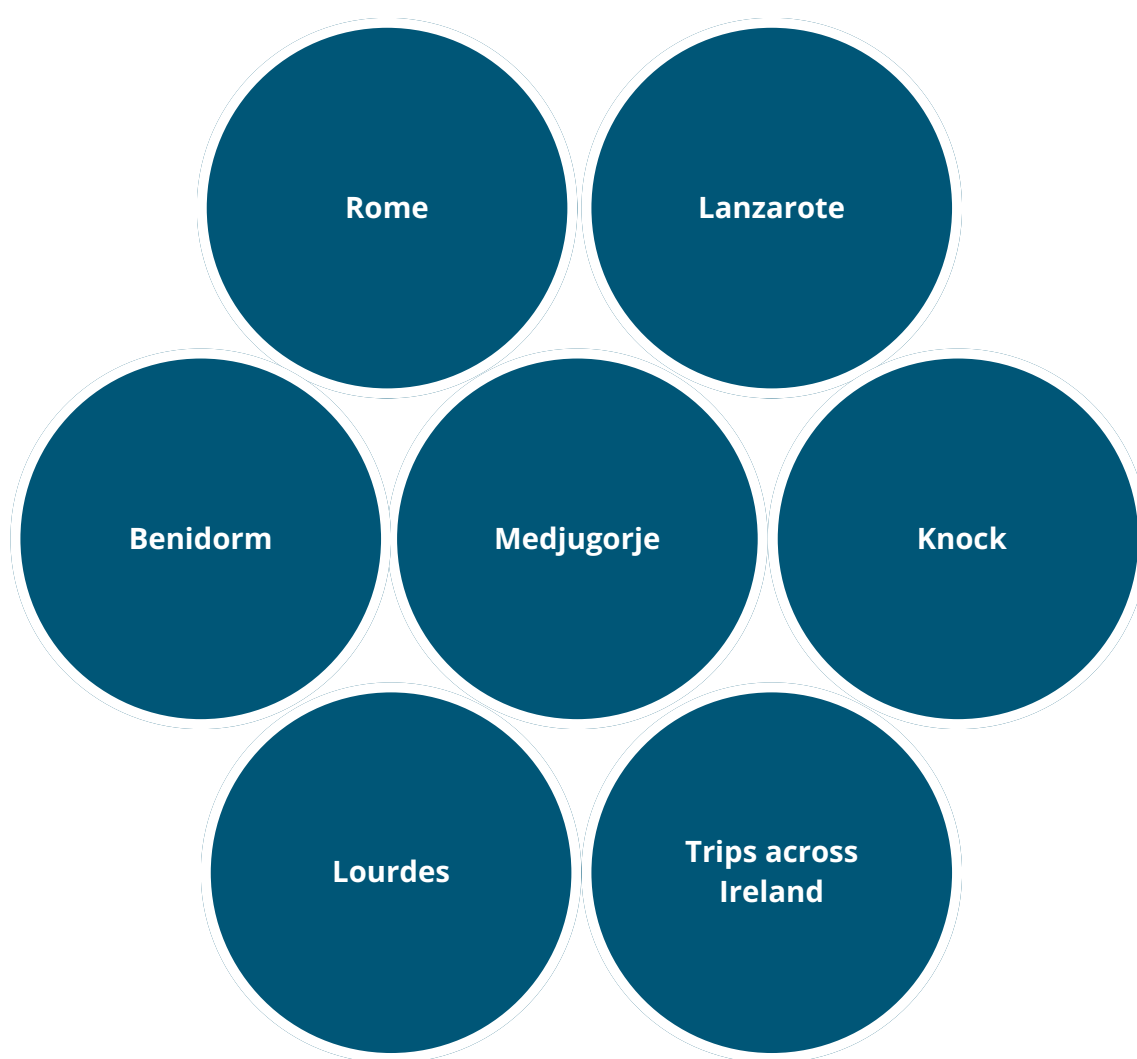
Our summer update highlighted the team's continued learning and reflection, including engagement with Trinity College Dublin's Centre for Deaf Studies at Deaf Village Ireland. That focus on communication-accessible, person-centred support remains central to our work. We continue to learn from the people we support and from one another, ensuring that individual choice, dignity and meaningful communication remain at the heart of the service.

A Big Thank You to Our Staff Team

Behind every holiday, outing, appointment and everyday achievement is a great deal of planning, flexibility and teamwork. Thank you to all staff who support people before, during and after their trips, from organising travel and packing to supporting communication, health needs and individual routines. Your commitment helps people enjoy new experiences safely and in the way that suits them best.

Looking Ahead to the Rest of 2026

There is still plenty to look forward to before the year is out. With more holidays planned, community activities continuing and the festive season getting closer, we are excited to see what the final months of 2026 will bring. We look forward to sharing more stories, achievements and special moments in our next newsletter.



CHAPLAIN FOR NCDP

FR PADDY BOYLE



Dublin & Outreach

Frankie Berry

Ulster:

Denise Flack

Knock 2026(29th – 31st August)

Pilgrimage to Knock with a group of Deaf people continued to be one of ongoing filled with graces, renewed with care and love for life, for others and self.

Travellers came from Dublin and Cork by rail to Claremorris and small coach waiting, as arranged, to collect the passengers for Knockhouse hotel. Knock. There were 25 plus day trippers.

Day pilgrims came too from Galway, parts of Leitrim and Northern Ireland. As per se, there's beautiful mosaic, picture is hung up in the basicila to remind the pilgrims of what had happened in 1879. Many took part in the tour of the historical story of the apparition the 'Silence vision' of Our Lady, Joseph her spouse, and John the evangelist, (the teacher) lasting two hours to a group of locals on the hills of knock, in 1879, on a rainy night. Many watched in awe and others recited the rosary, that was common use of prayer said by the Irish People.

With a day of prayer and finishing with Mass for all in the basicila, many returned to the hotel

Lourdes 2026 (3rd – 8th Sept)

There were 18 guests staying in the Solitude Hotel with 3 pilgrims staying in the Acceuil. The key element to this pilgrimage is having Deaf Volunteers, some as 1st timers, the blue shirts (under 18) from Holy Family School, others on their 2nd/ 3rd 5th year, and a number who have been going for 25 years with the larger group from the Dublin Diocese Pilgrimage to Lourdes. few of these volunteers received their Bronze (3 years) 5 years (silver) and long standing service) (Gold). This was truly a remarkable achievement for all the good they did in volunteering over the years.

School teacher, Helen Newman and colleague, Kevin Dudley accompanied 3 youths as first timers in Lourdes as helpers. They shared their with the wider group, Sign Language, proud to share their experiences of what it means to be Deaf and how hearing people can contribute in a positive light. For me I was enlightened to see more than a handful of Volunteers using ISL throughout the week, interacting with Deaf peers and pilgrims. This in itself certainly helps to make us Deaf feel much more at ease in their company.

Jason Maguire was appointed as co-ordinator between the Acceuil and Myself with a group staying in the Hotel. It was necessary to have a sense of working alongside to ensure both parties could participate in the different activities during the week. Each day there was a service or a Mass to enable us all to pray, ask for mercy and forgiveness and share God's love with each other. Volunteers wheeled the pilgrims from the Acceuil and also from the hotel to be at the service in one of many chapels, St Bernadette Church, daily

CHAPLAIN FOR NCDP

FR PADDY BOYLE



Here's Jason's thought of his experience as co-ordinator:

'It was an incredible privilege to be an ISL co-ordinator in Lourdes from 3rd – 8th September. A truly powerful and unforgettable experience that challenged me, inspired me. My thanks to the people who had shared their trust in me and willingness to work with me.'

As always, It's always a pleasure to be part of the pilgrimage which enabled one and all to feel blessed and to experience the graces given to one and all while in Knock and also in Lourdes.

Volunteer Perspective - My Lourdes 2026 experience

Throughout the week I really enjoyed working with all the pilgrims and the other helpers. It was a tough and tiring week but with the support of the amazing team and everyone's positive attitude, the week flew by! As they say time flies by when you're having fun. I would really encourage any young Deaf people to volunteer in Lourdes as you really learn a lot and come away feeling proud. You get to be a part of a team and do some important work to help the pilgrims leaving them feeling valued

Volunteer Perspective - My Lourdes 2026 experience

Going in as a first year volunteer I was pretty nervous and had no idea what to expect. It took me a day or two to settle in but once I did, I had a phenomenal experience. The week was challenging at times but I never felt unsupported and that's due to the incredible work of the helpers and coordinators. I would recommend this extremely rewarding experience to everyone and anyone. The bond created with each other and the pilgrims really made the trip for me. Over the week I learned a lot about myself and caring for others. I'm really excited to return again next year



Reach Deaf Services
Deaf Village Ireland
Ratoath Road
Cabra
Dublin 7



Reach Deaf Services

Tel : 01-830 0522

Email: info@reachdeafservices.ie



CHY: 1394
RCN: 20002138

Editor: Alan Smyth
Email: alan@reachdeafservices.ie