

National Newsletter

ENABLE IRELAND TALKS ACCESS!

This year's Action Week on Disability, 'Access All Areas' aimed to raise awareness of access issues for people with disabilities. This was supported by activities such as exclusive screenings of the movie 'Inside I'm Dancing' for transition year students, a special puppet show produced by the adult service users in Crumlin, an event to raise awareness of access of water sports in Clare and a swimming pool event in Wicklow, to name but a few. To support this, the Access All Areas survey was featured on the Enable Ireland website and the results generated huge interest in the media and throughout Enable Ireland. The results featured in the Irish Times, Irish Independent, Irish Examiner, Daily Mail, Sunday World, 2FM and a large number of local and regional radio stations and newspapers.

The results of the survey show that infrastructure, for example footpaths, is the single biggest barrier in the lives of most people with disabilities. The highest proportion (28%) of contributors voted this their biggest access barrier out of the five options. This was followed, in order, by employment (21%), transport (19%), social and leisure activities (18%) and education (14%).

Issues with accessing public buildings were widespread, with over half (57%) of participants not finding this easy. Doing things spontaneously, like going out for a

L-R: Jennifer O'Reilly, Seamus O'Sullivan and George Dineen, Tralee Adult Services during Action Week 2008.



meal or having friends over, is quite difficult for over a third (36%) of participants and very difficult for just over a quarter (26%).

Adults with a disability had struggled with employment; with over two thirds (70%) saying the process of finding work had not been very accessible. While just under a quarter (23%) had found it quite accessible, only seven percent had found it highly accessible. For those unable to work, financial assistance from the Government can be the difference between living and surviving.

Just under half (48%) said they had found education to be quite accessible. But a third (34%) found it had not been very accessible.

Five percent had found it completely inaccessible. Issues were raised surrounding access to social activities both inside and out of school for disabled children, particularly in cases where facilities are limited. Respondents identified the need for more awareness and familiarisation of disability issues among education providers, and for more support in third level education.

Just over two thirds (68%) of respondents had difficulty accessing community events, social and leisure activities in their local areas. Only a quarter (26%) of participants were able to take part in such events quite often, with only 6% accessing community, social and leisure activities locally regularly.

The survey ran online via the Enable Ireland website (www.enableireland.ie) for 11 weeks from 17 June to 3 September 2008. A total of 132 people took part; 93 adults, 18 parents, 17 carers and 4 children. The majority of these were from the Leinster (68) and Munster (41) areas, a small proportion were from Connaught (7) and Ulster (6). The survey was anonymous.

Enable Ireland Sandymount service user Paddy Cunneen (centre) with twin Ben (left) and big brother Max (right) launch Action Week on Disability 2008 at Cabinteely Park's Play for All area in August.



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FROM THE CHIEF EXECUTIVE'S DESK

Fionnuala O'Donovan CEO



There are many uncertainties in the current economic environment and our commitment to our service users will continue as we work in partnership with the HSE on their behalf. We also look to the wider community who continue to support us in so many practical ways. Now, more than ever, we rely on their continued support, in particular the valuable funds raised through support of our fundraising events and donations to our retail shops.

Action Week 2008 which took place in September has been a huge success. As you can see from our cover story, and round-up on pages eight and nine, the results of the Access All Areas survey sparked considerable interest inside and outside the organisation. Staff from all parts of the organisation joined parents, adult service users and volunteers to take part in a wide variety of events and activities during the week. By continuing to highlight access issues, we hope to increase awareness and encourage change.

Work towards the 2009 – 2011 Strategic Plan continues. The focus groups are now

complete and have provided us with in-depth feedback and emerging themes and priorities for the new plan. I would like to take this opportunity to thank all the staff, parents and service users who gave generously of their time to contribute their thoughts and ideas to this process which will shape the new strategic plan. In this newsletter, you also have an opportunity to suggest a title for the new plan.

I welcome Mr. Hilary Devlin who has joined Enable Ireland as our new Director of Finance/IT. This personnel change has presented an opportunity to restructure corporate headquarter functions and create a new department entitled HR and Corporate Affairs. It will include the HR, Training and Quality, and Communications functions and Ms. Theresa Compagno will be the new Director of the department. It will open on 5 January 2009. Ms. Mary Courtney has also been appointed the new Regional Director of Services South/West. I'd like to thank Theresa and Mary for their commitment and contributions in their previous roles and wish all three Directors well for the future.

Wishing all our service users, staff and friends a very happy Christmas and New Year.

Fionnuala O'Donovan
CEO

WHAT'S IN A NAME?

We want staff and service users to submit an appropriate name for the 2009 – 2011 Strategic Plan. It should:

- summarise and grasp the mission of Enable Ireland
- be compelling and inspirational to our staff and stakeholders
- encompass what we hope to achieve as an organisation on behalf of our service users

To get your creative juices flowing, here are some examples from other organisations –
 An Garda Siochana- **A Time For Change**
 Barnardos - **Valuing Childhood – Cherishing Children**
 Irish Wheelchair Association - **Your Life Your Way**
 National Council for Blind Ireland - **Putting People First**

There will be a €50 book token for the best suggestion we receive. Please submit your suggestions by 15th December by e-mail to communications@enableireland.ie or by mail to 31A Rosemount Park Drive, Rosemount Business Park, Ballycoolin, Dublin 11. Good luck!

BUDGET 2009

Budget 2009 took place on 14th October 2008.

On 30th October the Minister for Social and Family Affairs, Mary Hanafin, T.D., announced that the Government had “reflected carefully on the concerns expressed by families and by representative groups since changes to the Disability Allowance scheme were announced in the budget”. On the recommendation of the Minister, the Government agreed that the existing arrangements, whereby Disability Allowance is paid to 16 and 17 year olds will continue, pending the completion of a full review of the Disability Allowance scheme. Here's a short summary of changes to some social welfare benefits:

	Present	New	Increase
Carers Allowance			
Under 66	214.00	220.50	6.50
Aged 66 and over	232.00	239.00	7.00
Carers Benefit / Constant Attendance Allowance	214.70	221.20	6.50
Disability Allowance	197.80	204.30	6.50
Blind Pension	197.80	204.30	6.50
Invalidity Pension			
Under 65	203.30	209.80	6.50

BUILDING BLOCKS

KERRY AND KILDARE CHILDREN'S SERVICES ON THE MOVE

Two exciting new building projects have been announced for Kerry and Kildare Children's Services.

In June, the planned purchase of a new premises at Oakview Village, Tralee was announced for Kerry Children's Services. This premises will be the hub from which Enable Ireland will provide children's services in the future. The building will include a pre-school, therapy room, multi-sensory room, physiotherapy gym and a small hydrotherapy pool.

The development will cost €4million. The focus of all Enable Ireland fundraising in Kerry

will be on raising the funds for this project.

The new premises will replace the existing building at 5 Haigs Terrace, which is no longer suitable to meet the needs of children with disabilities and their families in the Kerry area.

In Kildare, a sod turning ceremony took place at the new Enable Ireland site at Jigginstown, Naas on 9th September to initiate the construction of the new Enable Ireland Children's Service Centre for Kildare.

The project, which will cost €4.5million, will be built on a site kindly donated and

supported by Naas Town Council. It will contain a hydrotherapy pool, gross motor function rooms, life skills room, treatment rooms, observation room, and toy equipment room. The new building will receive significant funding and support from the Health Service Executive.

On the day the sod was turned, Enable Ireland Chairman Donal Cashman said, "This terrific resource will be a tribute to the hard work and determination of the service users and their families, the staff of Enable Ireland Kildare Services, the Kildare Parents Group and all in Kildare who support Enable Ireland fundraising."

Back Row: L-R Cllr Willie Callaghan, Deputy Mayor Naas Town Council and Enable Ireland Kildare Fundraising Co-ordinator and Donal Cashman Chairman of Enable Ireland Front Row: L - R Kate Kelly, Scot Conway, Sive Lalor, Caoimhe Lalor, Adam Smith.



R.E.S.P.E.C.T.

In June, Enable Ireland Dublin service users showcased their screenwriting and acting skills at the premiere in Dun Laoghaire's Royal Marine Hotel of the film entitled 'R.E.S.P.E.C.T.'. The short film tackles some of the negative attitudes and behaviours that people with disabilities can face throughout their lives

The film is set in the 1970's and depicts a fictional St. Jude's Centre for people with disabilities, in the town of Mullinaferret. It portrays how disabled peoples' rights were disputed and how they decided to take action to address the negative experiences they faced on a day to day basis.

The service users at St. Jude's find themselves treated with a definite lack of respect by Sam, the centre manager, a classic arch villain. His attitudes and actions towards the service users frustrate and anger them. Will they just accept it or will they stand up for their rights? How will

Sam react to their protests? Is it possible for them to assert themselves and improve their situation?

With humour, strong scenes of protest and confrontation, and great writing and acting by the participants, this film highlights the journey that has been made in the last thirty years in terms of society's views, and the improvements brought about through the actions of disabled people themselves.

Keith Hayes, Disability Co-ordinator with Enable Ireland Adult Services, says "Sam is not supposed to be a typical person, he's far from it actually – he embodies all the group's negative experiences in one person which makes him a pretty nasty guy. Doing this project was a unique opportunity for us all to vent that negativity and

also, hopefully, to educate people who may not realise they're being negative towards people with disabilities."

The film was directed and shot by Dominic Green of Weekday Productions with assistance from service users.

Jason Byrne starring in 'R.E.S.P.E.C.T.'



IN THEIR OWN WORDS...

ORLAITH MANGAN

My name is Orlaith, I am thirteen years old. I live in Killarney, County Kerry, Ireland. I live with my Mam and Dad and my two brothers, Ruairi and Cathal. I like to swing in my own special swing. I like the trampoline the best. I go to Girl Guides every Friday.

My favourite thing is reading, I read at home and at school.

I am in sixth class in Saint Oliver's National School. My teacher is Mister Lynch, he is lovely. I have a resource teacher, her name is Miss Chute she is lovely too. The principal of the school is Mister D'Arcy, I love him because he chats to me.

Elizabeth works with me, she helps me with my Dynavox and with lots of things at school.

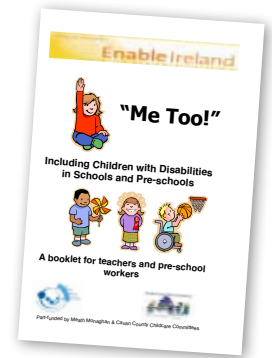
I am going to secondary school next September. I am excited about it. I have a Dynavox. I talk with my Dynavox. I write with my Dynavox and do my homework on it. I use it for telling people all about me and my family. I like to use my Dynavox to chat. My favourite thing is chatting to people. I talk to Mam and Dad about school. I tell my news to my teacher and Elizabeth most days.

I read books on line and I need my Dynavox for that. It is fun to tell jokes from the jokes page! The most important thing I use my Dynavox for is for telling people when I need something. When I go to secondary school people will not know about a Dynavox, I will have to show them how I work it. This will be hard in the beginning but it will get easier after the people there learn about it too.

Orlaith



Orlaith started secondary school in September



'ME TOO'

Enable Ireland North East Services have produced a booklet for teachers and pre-school workers aimed at promoting inclusion and understanding of children with disabilities in schools and pre-schools. This publication was previously launched in Cavan and is now available throughout the North East. Part funded by the Monaghan and Cavan childcare committees, 'Me Too', aims to share the skills and knowledge that can help when working with children with additional needs. This book can be purchased from Enable Ireland North East Services at a cost of €5. Contact Enable Ireland North East Services on 046-9029845

SCIENCE EXPERT AT CORK SCHOOL

In June 2008 Edward O'Connell became the first student attending the School of the Divine Child in Cork to successfully sit the Junior Certificate Science paper. There was much excitement in the school on the morning of the results when Edward's overall result showed that he scored straight A's in his chosen subjects of English, Science and Maths.

Edward, his classmates and Science teacher Mr. Canty, travelled to Bishopstown Community School every Wednesday for two years to use the science laboratory facilities there. Edward's English teacher was Mrs O'Sullivan and Ms O'Hanlon taught him Maths.

Edward enjoys science and is seriously considering taking up leaving certificate biology. He told his proud teachers on the morning of the results "I like most subjects, but I particularly enjoy studying Maths."



Edward O'Connell proudly displays his Junior Certificate results