

National Newsletter

ACCESS ALL AREAS

Under the Disability Act 2005, local authorities are required to prepare an implementation plan relating to access. Each County Council should now have an access officer who should act as a contact point between the local authority and people who want to access services. Whether it's views on the accessibility of a public building or assistance with an alternative form of a document, such as an audio CD, the access officer should be the first port of call.

According to Avril Cummins, the access officer for Kildare County Council, it's not just a luxury provided by individual councils but it is everybody's right, under the Disability Act, to have contact with an access officer. 'Here in Kildare, it's a full time role, but that's not the case in every local authority. However, it is every person's right under this legislation to be able to avail of the services of an access officer, no matter what area you live in.'

The Disability Act 2005 states that every local authority must have an Implementation Plan in place to deliver accessible public spaces, buildings and services by 2015. 'Carrying out access audits is a huge part of our job,' says Avril, 'we have to audit all public areas like buildings, car parks, playgrounds, leisure services and

graveyards. We're gradually getting a feeling of what the big issues are in the county and trying to come up with innovative ways of dealing with them. Footpath access is a huge one. Recently we launched a leaflet (pictured) to try and raise awareness of how disruptive parking on footpaths or in disabled zones can be. This is sent out with all our parking fines and some of the local access groups have them to give out as they see fit.'

Through consultation with local groups, Kildare County Council is tackling the issue of access head on. They made a submission on Part M of the Building Regulations (which deal with access to public buildings) to extensively extend the guideline, and have developed the first guidelines for road and street design. 'From talking to members of the public in Kildare, we know that the current guidelines are insufficient and need to be improved and we're waiting for feedback on our submission which recommended broadening the guidelines significantly.'

To find out who your local access officer is, contact your local authority. A full list including contact details is available on www.enviro.ie/en/localgovernment or by calling 1890 202021.



'Access for All' Leaflet recently developed by Kildare County Council.

New Office for Disability

In January, the Government announced the establishment of two new offices to support Dr Jimmy Devins TD, Minister for Disability and Mental Health and Máire Hctor TD, Minister for Older People.

The ultimate aim is to give people with a disability the opportunity to live a full life and to participate in society. The arrangements to be put in place will be similar to those operating in the case of the Office of the Minister for Children. The overall vision is to put in place structures which will provide for greater cohesion than currently exists in supporting disability structures across the public service.

Alan McGovern (5) with model Glenda Gilson at the launch of TK Maxx GiveGet 2008 Full story on page 11



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FROM THE CHIEF EXECUTIVE'S DESK

Welcome to our spring newsletter and as usual, there is a lot to report.

In our last newsletter we mentioned the Strategic Plan monitoring tool and I am happy to inform you that feedback from the various different services across the country has now been collated and is currently being analysed. It is our intention to include this feedback in our new strategy 2009 – 2011 which is under development. We will compare 2007 feedback with 2006 which will help to highlight national areas of priority and general areas for improvement for the future.

Work on the development of the new strategy consultation questionnaire is well under way and it is our intention to distribute the questionnaire to all stakeholders in May.

We are also looking at the design of the stakeholder consultation sessions format. These sessions will take place after the summer in September and as you can imagine a lot of preparatory work needs to go on behind the scenes.

We are really looking forward to launching our new strategic plan - which will include our shared national priorities - early in the New Year 2009.

I look forward to updating you on our progress in our next issue of our newsletter.

It is with great regret that I record the planned departure of Finbar McCann, who vacates his post as Head of Finance & HR with effect from Friday 30th May 2008. Finbar is leaving the

Sylvie Laffarge, Microsoft EMEA, Siobhan Long, Manager, National Assistive Training Service, Fionnuala O'Donovan, CEO, Enable Ireland and Minister for Enterprise, Trade and Employment, Micheál Martin, T.D., at the November 2007 launch of Enable Ireland's National AT Training Centre in Crumlin.



company to pursue a business opportunity in the commercial sector, in the area of franchise development.

Finbar has been with the organisation since June 2003. The service that he has given to the organisation during the intervening period is greatly appreciated by us all. He has been a source of great support and encouragement in his work with Enable Ireland.

We all wish Finbar every success in his new venture.

Fionnuala O'Donovan
CEO

CHARITIES REGULATION BILL EXPECTED BEFORE THE END OF THE SUMMER

With enactment of the Charities Regulation Bill expected before the summer we are likely to have a Charity Regulator in place by early 2009 at the latest. The Irish Charities Tax Reform Group, of which Enable Ireland is a member, has been looking closely at what this means for the charities sector and will publish a set of guidelines for fundraising as a proactive step in advance of the regulator being appointed. The legislation is broadly welcomed by the sector.

The Charities Regulation Bill 2007 will provide for:

- A definition of "charitable purpose" for the first time in primary legislation.
- The creation of a new Regulatory Authority to secure compliance by

charities with their legal obligations and also to encourage better administration of charities.

- A Register of Charities in which all charities operating in the State must register.
- The submission of annual activity reports by charities to the new Authority.
- Updating the law relating to fundraising, particularly in relation to collections by way of direct debits and similar non-cash methods.
- The creation of a Charity Appeals Tribunal.
- The provision of consultative panels to assist the Authority in its work and to ensure effective consultation with stakeholders.

The Bill, together with the Charities Acts 1961 and 1973, and the Street and House to House Collections Act 1962, will provide for a regulatory framework for charities through a combination of new legislative provisions and retention of existing charities legislation, with updating, where appropriate.

NEW CONTACT DETAILS FOR MAYO CENTRE

Enable Ireland Mayo has a new home! Their contact details are now as follows:
14A N5 Business Park,
Moneen
Castlebar
Co Mayo Phone 094-9060234 or
094-9060235

NATIONAL ASSISTIVE TECHNOLOGY COURSE GRADUATION 2007

The National Assistive Technology Training Service celebrated the graduation of its 7th course in Assistive Technology, accredited by the Dublin Institute of Technology (DIT), on 4 December 2007 at Microsoft Headquarters in Sandymount.

Senator David Norris and Professor Frank McMahon, from DIT, officiated at the ceremony which saw the graduation of our largest cohort of students yet: a total of 42 students received their accreditation.

For further information on Spring 2008 courses contact Shirley Deakin at sdeakin@enableireland.ie. Course dates are listed on page 16.



Senator David Norris with graduates Virginia Towo and Deirdre Madden

ARKLOW SATELLITE SERVICE

South Wicklow has seen a significant growth in population over the past few years and almost one third of Enable Ireland Wicklow service users now live in this part of the county.

Thanks to the support of the Board of Management of the Boys National School in Arklow, the Satellite Service has moved to a refurbished section of the school. These bigger and brighter premises will result in significantly improved service, 5 days a week to families living in the area.

Enable Ireland Wicklow Services have established a 'Procedure Plan Pack' for surgical procedures. You can read a report on this pack on Page 6 of this newsletter.

NATIONAL ASSISTIVE TECHNOLOGY TRAINING CENTRE OPENS

On 28 November 2007 Enable Ireland's National Assistive Technology Training Service, in partnership with Microsoft Ireland, officially opened the first dedicated National Assistive Technology Training Centre in Ireland. Attending the opening was Micheal Martin TD, Minister for Enterprise, Trade and Employment performed the opening.

Dates for the Spring 2008 courses have been announced and can be found in the events section of this newsletter.

Courses on offer include accredited AT training, certified by the Dublin Institute

of Technology, supplier/product specific training, customised AT training to meet local service needs, employer seminars, introductory AT workshops, cost effective PC access and internet accessibility workshops.

AT enhances the independence of people with disabilities by providing adaptations and alternatives to standard technologies such as personal computers, communication devices, mobile phones and a wide range of environmental control technologies.

For further information visit the AT page at www.enableireland.ie/at/index.html



L-R: Micheal Martin, T.D., Minister for Enterprise, Trade and Employment, Seán Loughran, Assistive Technology Technician, Seán Ardagh, T.D., Siobhán Long, Manager, National Assistive Technology Training Service and Chris Pool, Microsoft.

ART AT QUALITY MAILING SERVICES

Having facilitated art workshops for service users of Enable Ireland in Dun Laoghaire since January 2007, I was invited to work with another group in Quality Mailing Services. I enjoyed about 30 sessions working with Maggie, Deirdre, Frances and Martin. More recently Madeleine joined us on our artistic ventures. We met every Thursday at lunchtime, starting each session with a chat and a cup of tea. Time always flew, as we got absorbed in our activities for three enjoyable hours.

We have just completed a large mosaic for the entrance of QMS, which everyone is really proud of. There is evidence of our work in the kitchen where a number of canvases adorn

the walls. We have also created signs for the bins, to help sort rubbish for recycling.

The group has painted and drawn flowers, fruit and vegetables, as well as many abstract pictures. We have worked in clay, with found and natural objects, created portraits, collages and made Christmas cards. The project owed much of its success to the loving and caring atmosphere at Quality Mailing Services, which is inspiring.

Since starting the project in April 2007 all participants have grown in confidence, experienced pride and a sense of achievement.

Natascha Fischell, Arts Co-ordinator



Deirdre Timmons, Frances Goucher, Martin Keegan, Margaret O'Meara, Madeleine Cotter with Art Trainer Natascha Fischell

POSTURAL MANAGEMENT EQUIPMENT

Over 100 service providers and 13 equipments suppliers joined the Eastern Region Postural Management (ERPM) staff at Sandymount for the service's Equipment Evaluation Day last November. The annual event offers for review the posture and mobility products currently available on the Irish market.

The focus was the evaluation of seating systems, cushions, high/low chairs, comfort chairs, car seats, and wheelchair and occupant restraints used during transport. The day was very

productive for all. Service providers got a hands-on feel of new products and the opportunity to quiz suppliers. Feedback provided to the suppliers will be going to manufacturers where it will hopefully have a direct impact on overall product improvements.

The evaluation days have become an eagerly awaited part of the ERPM annual training calendar. This event is also open to service users whose contributions are valued. Keep an eye on the events calendar for details of the 2008 programme.



ERPM ADDS A SPLASH OF COLOUR

ERPM are delighted to announce the introduction of a new range of coloured fabrics for use on seating systems. The first batch of this fabric was kindly donated to Enable Ireland by Trimproof Limited, Trim, Co. Meath. When a new seating system is being prescribed, be sure to ask about the range of colours available to you, as the range will be changing and expanding over the coming months



ERPM HIGHLIGHTS HARNESS SAFETY CAMPAIGN

When a postural support harness is prescribed to help maintain a person's sitting position in their wheelchair, it is of critical importance that the harness be used safely and in accordance with manufacturer's instructions. This issue is being highlighted in a 'Harness Safety Campaign' being promoted by the Australian Scope Organisation. Documents relating to the safe use of postural positioning harnesses are freely available to download at: www.scopevic.org.au/harness.

KERRY AWARDS NIGHT

Kerry Family Support Services held their third annual awards night in January 2008. The night is an opportunity to recognise all the hard work and effort that the children and teens have put into the After School Groups Program throughout the school term.

The celebrity MC for the night was Ross O'Connor of Family Support who would give Ryan Turbidy a run for his job! On the night, certificates were presented to all the children who participated in the programme during the previous year.

The identity of the winner of 'Young Person of the Year' award was a closely guarded secret. Last year's winner Lisa Stackpoole was on hand to pass over the shield as a



Clodagh Mangan collecting her award from Enable Ireland Kerry Family Support Services

new name was soon going to be engraved on it!

The name Clodagh Mangan was called out and the look of surprise and excitement on her face said it all. Clodagh was delighted and a very deserving winner who worked really hard in all the groups she attended. She could give Rachel Allen a few tips in the kitchen with her outstanding performance in cooking group! Clodagh happily posed for photos with the shield after while her family who looked on proudly.

A big Thank You to the Adults Centre for allowing their premises to be used for the event.

A TRAINER WE WON'T LET GET AWAY

Over 100 Enable Ireland therapists have benefited from training provided by physiotherapist Amanda O'Sullivan, particularly in the area of seating assessment and solutions and night positioning. Amanda joined ERPM in 2004 to develop the practice of 24 hour posture management. She is now recognised as one of the leaders in night positioning and postural care. Although Amanda has moved back to Enable Ireland Tallaght, she will continue to work with ERPM as a trainer and facilitator.

WHAT DO YOU THINK?

ERPM is committed to constantly improving the service that we offer you. As part of this commitment, we are looking for feedback from your experiences of using your ERPM-designed and manufactured seating system. ERPM will be conducting a survey by means of a questionnaire over the coming months, and we would welcome as much feedback from as many people as possible.

Contact - 01-2615926