

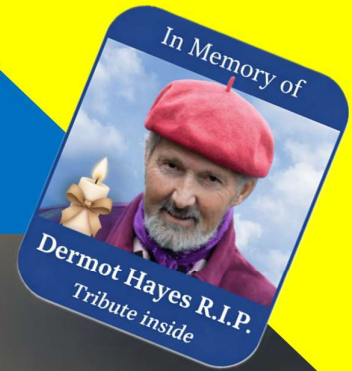
WEST LIMERICK INDEPENDENT LIVING

In Touch

Sheehan's Rd, Newcastle West Co. Limerick, Irl
EirCode: V42 EE38 ✉ info@limerickcil.com
☎ 069 77320 🌐 www.limerickcil.com

01/04/2026

Edition 21



New
**Service
Coordinator**
*Cassie
Costello*

*Looking after
yourself
while
Supporting
others*

**Employee of
the Season
Nominations
by June 1st**

Much
MORE
INSIDE



COIS SIONNA DESMOND CREDIT UNION

Cois Sionna Desmond Credit Union was delighted to host our annual gathering of the clubs and societies we sponsor at Fitzgeralds Woodlands House Hotel & Spa !

There was a fantastic turnout from members of the various clubs and societies, where CEO Declan Benson spoke about Cois Sionna Desmond Credit Union's ongoing commitment to supporting the local community.



We're proud to stand behind local schools, clubs and organisations, helping them thrive at the heart of our community. We believe in supporting the groups that bring people together, fostering teamwork, growth, and community spirit.

By backing local initiatives, we continue our commitment to building a stronger, more connected community for everyone.

Cois Sionna Desmond Credit Union Limited is regulated by the Central Bank of Ireland.



Welcome to the 21st Edition of *In-Touch Magazine*. Take a moment to relax, enjoy a cup of tea, and catch up on the latest news from WLIL. A lot has happened since our last edition, with many interesting contributions

from staff throughout.

As we look back on our Christmas gathering, it was a wonderful event and a great opportunity to bring everyone together. The evening included our Years of Service awards, recognising the dedication of our staff, and it was great to meet and reconnect with so many people. Our gatherings are open to everyone—clients and Personal Assistants alike—and we look forward to seeing even more faces at future events.

As we welcome new faces to the WLIL family, we also say farewell to valued colleagues. Shirley Wrenne concludes 19 years of dedicated service, and Marie Carrig retires after 15 years with us. We thank them both for their contribution and wish them every happiness in the years ahead. We also say goodbye to Veronika Kubale and Steve Heath, who made a strong impact on their clients and the wider team. They will be greatly missed, and we wish them every success in the future.

We are delighted to welcome Cassie to our Coordinator team. Cassie introduces herself in this edition, and we are confident her experience will bring fresh energy to WLIL. We also warmly welcome our newest Personal Assistants: Helen, Michelle, Sara, Megan, Kelly, and Martina, and we look forward to the positive impact they will make.

With our recently introduced competitive pay rates, we are seeing increased interest and a growing number of applications. We continue to welcome motivated, enthusiastic people with the right attitude and understanding of the Personal Assistant role. Staff are also encouraged to take part in our Refer-a-Friend scheme—full details can be found inside this edition.

We were deeply saddened by the passing of Dermot Hayes, a true pioneer in the disability sector whose work helped shape independent living across Ireland. We have paid tribute to his dedication and lasting impact.

Ar dheis Dé go raibh a anam dílis.

We are thrilled to announce Laura Richardson as our Employee of the Season. Laura has demonstrated exceptional skill and dedication as a Personal Assistant, making her a very deserving recipient. Congratulations also to Bridget O'Connell, Lisa O'Connor, and Bridget Kennedy as highly commendable runners-up.

We encourage both clients and staff to submit nominations for the next Employee of the Season by 1st June 2026. Finally, your feedback, suggestions, and contributions are always welcome—please contact margaret@limerickcil.com or 069 77320.

Warm regards,
Margaret

Supporting Independent Living in Limerick



- **Personal Assistant Service**
- **Home Support Service**
- **Accessible Transport Service**

Professional, person-centred care enabling people with disabilities to live independently in their own homes and communities.

☎ **069 77320** | **www.limerickcil.com/Jobs.html**
West Limerick Independent Living CLG

The Passing of a Pioneer: Dermot Hayes and the Generation That Changed Independent Living - by G O'Connor

The death of Dermot Hayes marks the passing of one of Ireland's most committed and influential disability rights advocates — a man whose life's work helped shape the independent living movement not just in County Clare, but across the country.

For over three decades, Dermot Hayes stood at the forefront of advocacy, organisation, and community action. As a co-founder of Disabled People of Clare in 1992, he played a central role in building a rights-based approach to disability services at a time when such thinking was far from mainstream. He was also a driving force behind the Clare Leader Forum, providing a strong and consistent platform for advocacy, representation, and engagement with decision-makers.

His influence extended well beyond disability services. Dermot was deeply involved in trade union activity from a young age, and throughout his life he remained active across a wide range of causes — including community development, intercultural initiatives, Traveller support, and international solidarity campaigns. In the area of health advocacy, he served as Chair of the Clare branch of the Irish Kidney Association and was instrumental in campaigning for improved renal services, including the establishment of dialysis facilities in Ennis.

Dermot was not simply an advocate in name — he was a builder of structures, a connector of people, and a persistent voice for those too often unheard. As a person with a disability himself, his work was grounded in lived experience, giving weight and authenticity to his calls for equality, autonomy, and respect. His memoir, *The Road That Rises*, published in 2023, captured not only his personal journey but also the evolution of activism and community effort over decades.

In recognition of his lifetime of work, Dermot received several honours, including a Lifetime Achievement Award from the Clare Leader Forum. These acknowledgements reflected not just longevity, but sustained impact — the kind that changes systems, attitudes, and expectations.

However, his passing represents more than the loss of one individual. It signals the gradual loss of a generation — those who fought, often from the margins, to establish the principles of independent living in Ireland. They challenged systems, demanded better, and laid the groundwork for the services and supports that exist today.

The question now is clear: who will take up that mantle?

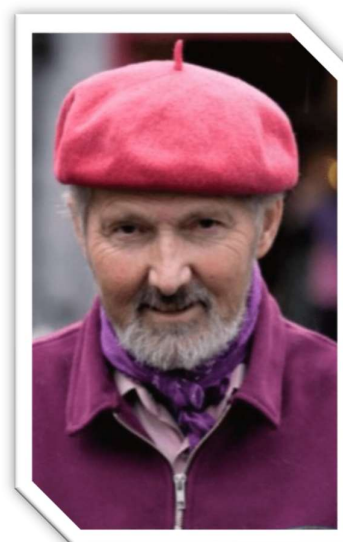
There remains a critical need for strong, informed, and determined advocacy — particularly from people with disabilities themselves. Independent living was never intended to be something delivered quietly in the background. It is a movement that depends on voices, on challenge, and on individuals willing to stand up and shape their own futures.

In its early days, West Limerick Independent Living benefited directly from Dermot Hayes' experience and leadership. He visited the Limerick area as a guest speaker, sharing practical knowledge and insight into independent living with the local community at a time when the organisation was still finding its footing. His contribution provided guidance, direction, and encouragement, and helped inform the development of services in West Limerick during those formative years.

Dermot Hayes leaves behind a legacy that is both substantial and unfinished. The structures he helped build remain — but the responsibility to continue that work now rests with others. If his life demonstrated anything, it is that change does not happen by accident. It happens because people decide to make it happen.

He is survived by his wife Marian and daughters, to whom he was deeply devoted, and whose support was central to his life and work.

May he rest in peace.



The Fight Isn't Over — And the Reality Is Getting Harder - by G O'Connor

There is a growing narrative that disability services in Ireland are improving — increased government funding, new structures, and reform plans aimed at delivering better outcomes.

On paper, it looks like progress. In reality, it is far more complicated. Across the country, organisations, service providers, and people with disabilities themselves are operating in an environment that is becoming increasingly difficult to sustain. The core issue is not simply funding — it is what that funding is actually worth.

Inflation continues to erode resources at every level. While government spending has increased, the real value of that funding is being steadily reduced by rising costs. Wages are under pressure, as staff require higher pay just to maintain a basic standard of living. That, in turn, drives up the cost of delivering services. Organisations are caught in the middle — expected to do more, deliver more, and improve services, while the purchasing power of their funding is quietly declining. This is not a short-term issue. It is a continuous cycle.



As costs rise, services become more expensive to deliver. As services become more expensive, funding struggles to keep pace. And as that gap widens, the pressure shifts directly onto organisations and, ultimately, onto the people who rely on those services. Alongside this, there is a persistent and very real staffing crisis. Across Section 39 organisations and the wider disability sector, recruitment and retention remain major challenges. Organisations are actively trying to recruit, often using every available avenue — social media, local advertising, word of mouth — yet positions remain difficult to fill. Even when candidates are identified, processes can be slow, and there is no guarantee that individuals will take up or remain in roles.

The result is a system where demand for services continues to grow, expectations continue to rise, but the capacity to deliver is constrained. Government and service providers alike are, in many cases, trying to expand services — but their hands are tied. Without sufficient staff, without sustainable funding that reflects real-world costs, and without a stable workforce, growth becomes difficult, and in some cases, impossible. For people with disabilities, this translates into very real impacts — delays, reduced availability of services, and ongoing uncertainty.

This is the environment we are operating in. And yet, despite all of this, there remains an assumption that progress will continue naturally — that systems will improve simply because they are being funded. That assumption is flawed. Progress in disability services has never been driven by funding alone. It has been driven by advocacy — by individuals and communities who have pushed for change, challenged limitations, and refused to accept inadequate provision. That generation — the one that built the foundations of independent living in Ireland — is now passing.

The question that follows is unavoidable: who takes their place?

Because if the current challenges tell us anything, it is that the need for strong advocacy has not diminished — it has increased. Inflation is eroding progress. Staffing shortages are limiting delivery. Organisations are under pressure. And people with disabilities are still, in many cases, fighting for the level of support they require.

None of that resolves itself. Independent living was never meant to exist in the background. It depends on people, people like Dermot Hayes — informed, determined, and willing to stand up, to speak out, and to shape the direction of services. The reality is clear.

The challenges are growing. The system is under strain. And the responsibility to respond cannot rest with the past. It must be taken up now.

Cassandra Costello - New Service Coordinator with WLIL

Hi, my name is Cassandra, known to many as Cassie or Cass, I have recently joined West Limerick Independent Living as a Coordinator on February 16th. Working locality-based in the East, I bring a wealth of experience and a genuine passion for supporting others.

Having returned from Vancouver, Canada at the end of August, I spent the past four years working abroad with young people experiencing homelessness and addiction. This time allowed me to develop both professionally and personally, deepening my understanding of the challenges individuals can face and the importance of compassionate, consistent support.

I am a dedicated Social Care Work graduate with over five years of hands-on experience in the sector; I have developed a strong ability to manage multiple responsibilities while maintaining a high standard of care. My work to date has equipped me with valuable knowledge, resilience, and a person-centered approach that I now bring to my role as a coordinator in West Limerick Independent Living.

I am very much looking forward to meeting both clients and colleagues and working collaboratively to ensure the best possible support for everyone. I am excited to be part of the team and to contribute positively to the community.



What's Happening That Affects You

This section brings together important updates that may affect people with disabilities in everyday life. The aim is to explain things clearly and to point you towards where you can get more information or support if you want it.

The Cost of Disability and the €400 Emergency Winter Payment

Many people with disabilities face higher everyday costs than other people. These can include heating, electricity for medical or mobility equipment, transport, specialist food, and extra household costs. This is often referred to as the "cost of disability."

In recent years, some once-off payments were made to help with these costs, particularly during winter when energy bills are highest. In Budget 2026, a once-off winter payment for disabled people was not included. Disability organisations, including the Disability Federation of Ireland (DFI) and the Irish Wheelchair Association (IWA), are now calling on the Government to introduce a €400 Emergency Winter Payment to help disabled people stay warm and safe.

At the moment, this €400 payment is not yet in place. It is something that disability organisations are actively campaigning for.

What does this mean for you?

There is currently no application process, because the payment has not yet been approved.

If the payment is introduced, it is expected that it would be paid automatically to people already receiving certain disability-related social welfare payments (like previous once-off payments).

Where can you get updates?

1. Disability Federation of Ireland: www.disability-federation.ie
2. Irish Wheelchair Association: www.iwa.ie
3. Citizens Information: www.citizensinformation.ie or phone 0818 07 4000

If you are struggling with heating or energy costs right now, Citizens Information can also advise on existing supports such as fuel allowances or exceptional needs payments.

Thinking About Work? Understanding Disability Payments - Many people with disabilities would like to explore work, training, or part-time employment, but worry about how this might affect their social welfare payment. This fear is very common and completely understandable.

The good news is that there are supports and safeguards in place, and working does not always mean losing your payment.

Depending on your situation, you may be able to:

- Work part-time while keeping some or all of your payment
- Avail of income disregards (where a certain amount of earnings is ignored)
- Transition gradually from welfare into work

Every person's situation is different, so it is important to get advice before making any decisions.

Who can help you?

1. Citizens Information: www.citizensinformation.ie
2. INOU (Irish National Organisation of the Unemployed): www.inou.ie
3. Local Citizens Information Centre (in-person support)

Getting advice does not affect your payment and does not commit you to anything. It is simply about understanding your options.

Assistive Technology: Tools That Can Make Everyday Life Easier

Assistive Technology (often called AT) refers to tools and technology that help people live more independently. This can range from simple everyday items to more advanced digital supports.

Examples include:

- Smart speakers or voice assistants to control lights, heating, or make calls
- Communication aids or apps
- Smart plugs or switches
- Mobility and access support
- Many people are not aware of what is available or how to access it.

Where can you learn more?

- Enable Ireland: www.enableireland.ie
- Assistive Technology Information: www.at4all.ie
- Disability Federation of Ireland: www.disability-federation.ie

You do not need to be 'good with technology' to benefit. Many tools are designed to be simple and practical.

Housing and Accessibility:

Finding Information and Support

Accessible and suitable housing remains a major issue for many people with disabilities. This can include problems with stairs, bathrooms, doorways, or the lack of appropriate housing options.

While housing decisions are often slow, there are supports available.

If you are unsure where to start, Citizens Information can help point you in the right direction.

These include:

- Housing Adaptation Grants
- Local authority housing supports
- Advice on accessible housing options
- Where to get help:
- Your local authority housing section
- Citizens Information: www.citizensinformation.ie
- Local disability organisations

Your Rights and Independent Living

Ireland has signed up to international agreements that recognise the rights of people with disabilities. These include the right to live independently, make your own choices, and participate fully in the community.

While progress can be slow, disability organisations continue to push for better supports, services, and policies.

If you would like to learn more about disability rights in plain language:

Disability Federation of Ireland: www.disability-federation.ie - Citizens Information: www.citizensinformation.ie

AllWays Able Ltd - Inclusive Fitness & Music for People with Disabilities

AllWays Able Ltd is an inclusive online and community-based fitness/wellbeing and music programme designed specifically for people with disabilities. Founded by Danny and Shoba, AllWays Able provides welcoming, adaptable sessions that support physical wellbeing, confidence and community connection.

What We Offer:

Fitness/Music membership - online music sessions (Thursdays 5:30pm via Zoom)
this includes two Adapted Pre-Recorded Fitness Sessions each month (members only)

On-Site Adapted Group Fitness Classes (45–60 minutes at your location)

1-1 Personalised Online Fitness & Nutrition Support

Free trial sessions are available so individuals and services can experience the programme before committing.

For more information or to book a free trial, please visit: allwaysableltd.com

Please see attached our flyer/poster for more details and follow us on instagram or facebook @allwaysableltd



Make Way Day

Make Way Day is DFI's campaign for National Access Awareness. Until this year it has been held on the last Friday in September. In response to requests from members to reconsider the date, DFI have started the year by changing Make Way Day to the last Friday of May, which this year falls on the 29th. So, this year Make Way Day takes place on **29th May**.

For a few years now, members have commented that September has increasingly become a very busy time of year. Organisations are busy with their own pre-budget campaigns, and in some cases, it is also the time when members hold their own fundraising or awareness campaigns as well. The month of May was recommended to us as the most preferable, and so this year, we notified our members, partners and stakeholders of the change.



All 31 local authorities and local community groups continue to support the Make Way Day. Our colleague Pierce Richardson is leading the campaign this year. If you need any information about how to get involved, or if your organisation needs stickers, or other resources, please contact Pierce at Piercerichardson@disability-federation.ie



Why Talking It Out Beats Falling Out: A look at simple Mediation—By Precious Madubeko

Let's face it—conflict is part of life. Whether it's a disagreement over who ate the last biscuit, a misunderstanding about care routines, or differing expectations between staff and management, tensions can pop up anywhere. The good news? Not every disagreement needs to turn into a full-blown dispute—or worse, a legal battle. That's where *mediation* comes in.



So, What Is Mediation (and Why Should I Care)?



Mediation is simply a structured conversation, guided by a neutral person (the mediator), who helps people listen to each other and find a solution that works for everyone. No wigs, no courtrooms, no dramatic “Objection!” moments—just real people working things out together. The goal isn't to decide who's right or wrong, but to move forward in a way that feels fair and respectful.

Why Mediation Matters

For service users, families, and staff in disability support services, relationships are everything. Mediation helps to:

- **Preserve relationships** (because you still have to see each other tomorrow!)
- **Reduce stress** (much easier than a drawn-out dispute)
- **Save time and money** (no need for legal processes)
- **Empower everyone involved** (your voice matters)



Common Conflict Scenarios (Sound Familiar?)

1. **Family Members** - Maybe there's a disagreement about care decisions, routines, or communication. Emotions can run high because—well, it's family. Mediation provides a calm space to talk things through without things getting personal.
2. **Service Users and Personal Assistants (PAs)** - Perhaps expectations aren't clear, or there's been a misunderstanding about roles or boundaries. Mediation helps both sides express what they need and agree on practical steps forward.
3. **PAs and Management** - Workplace tensions can arise around schedules, responsibilities, or communication styles. Mediation offers a chance to reset, clarify expectations, and rebuild a positive working relationship.

What Actually Happens in Mediation?

Here's a quick peek behind the curtain:

1. **Introduction** – The mediator explains the process and sets some ground rules (like listening without interrupting—harder than it sounds!).
2. **Sharing Perspectives** – Each person gets a chance to speak and be heard.
3. **Exploring the Issues** – What's really going on? Often, it's more than just the “last biscuit.”
4. **Finding Solutions** – Together, you come up with ideas that work for everyone.
5. **Agreement** – If a solution is reached, it can be written down so everyone is clear on next steps.



Practical Tips for Managing Conflict Early and a Final Thought

You don't always need a mediator—sometimes small steps can prevent big problems: **Talk early** – Don't let issues simmer. **Listen actively** – Try to understand, not just respond. **Stay calm** – Easier said than done, but it helps! **Be clear and respectful** – Say what you mean, kindly. **Focus on solutions** – Not just the problem. **Take a break if needed** – A pause can prevent escalation. Conflict doesn't have to be a bad thing—it can lead to better understanding and stronger relationships when handled well. Mediation is simply a tool to help people get there, without the stress and cost of litigation. So next time things get a bit tense, remember: a good conversation today can save a lot of trouble tomorrow. And maybe—even save that last biscuit from becoming evidence in a “case”!

Respect, Boundaries and Communication in Our Services

At West Limerick Independent Living, everything we do is about supporting people to live independently, comfortably, and with dignity. For this to work well, it's important that both clients and Personal Assistants (PAs) feel respected and understood. Respect is at the heart of a positive working relationship. When both sides feel valued, the service runs more smoothly and everyone feels more comfortable. Sometimes, small things can build up over time. What might seem like a minor issue can, if left unspoken, lead to frustration. That's why it's always best to address things early in a calm and respectful way.



PAs are there to support independence in a professional and respectful way. Having clear boundaries helps everyone understand what is expected and keeps things running smoothly. Open communication makes a big difference — it helps avoid misunderstandings and ensures everyone feels at ease.

If something doesn't feel quite right, support is always there. The Service Coordinator is available to listen and help resolve any concerns, no matter how small they may seem. Raising things early is always encouraged — it helps keep the service positive and prevents issues from growing. The best outcomes come when clients and PAs work together with mutual respect and understanding. A PA is there to support, but they are also a person who deserves courtesy and consideration. When both sides communicate openly and treat each other well, it creates a stronger and more positive relationship.

At the end of the day, everyone is working towards the same goal — supporting independent living in a way that works for each individual. By keeping communication open, respecting boundaries, and working together, we can continue to provide a service that makes a real difference.

Travel More Independently – Support Available

Getting out and about is a big part of independent living — but using public transport can feel like a challenge for some people. The Bus Éireann Independent Travel Support Team in Limerick is offering **practical, one-to-one training** to help adults with additional needs build the confidence to use city bus services independently. This is not an escort service. The focus is on helping you **learn a route properly**, so you can travel it on your own with confidence.

Support includes:

- One-to-one travel training
- Step-by-step guidance on using bus services
- Building confidence and independence over time



The aim is simple: **to give you the skills to travel independently**, not just for one journey, but going forward. The team can also visit groups or services to provide short talks or information sessions.

If this is something that could benefit you or someone you support, you can contact:

Jennifer Bennett

Independent Travel Support Team (Limerick)

☎ 087 170 8747 or email ✉ Jennifer.Bennett@buseireann.ie

🌸 Test Your Knowledge: Irish Folklore & Old Wives' Tales 🌸

Before we dive into the magical world of Irish springtime myths and beliefs, see how much you know! Circle or tick your answers and then read on to discover the fascinating stories behind each one.

1. Who was the Irish goddess of healing, poetry, and spring?

- A) Ériu 🌿
- B) Brigid ✨
- C) Danu 💧
- D) Morrigan 🔥

2. True or False:

Hearing the first cuckoo of the year brought bad luck. 🐦

3. What was believed to happen if you planted seeds in spring?

- A) You would have a magical harvest 🌾
- B) It was just practical gardening 🌱
- C) It invited fairies into your home 🧚
- D) It predicted the weather ☀️

4. Fairies in Irish folklore are known as:

- A) Aos Sí 🧝
- B) Banshees 👻
- C) Leprechauns 🍀
- D) Pookas 🐾

5. Which flower was thought to bring luck if seen first in spring?

- A) Rose 🌹
- B) Dandelion 🌼
- C) Snowdrop ❄️
- D) Shamrock 🍀



Answers:

1. B) Brigid ✨

2. False – hearing the first cuckoo was lucky! 🐦

3. A) You would have a magical harvest 🌾

4. A) Aos Sí 🧝

5. C) Snowdrop ❄️

How did you do? Don't worry if you didn't get them all! Now let's explore the rich springtime traditions, old wives' tales, and fairy stories of Ireland.

The Spirit of Spring in Irish Mythology

The Irish often personified the seasons in tales. Spring was associated with fertility, new beginnings, and abundance. One famous figure is Brigid, goddess of spring, poetry, and healing. Her festival, Imbolc (celebrated in early February), marked the first signs of spring and was a time for blessings and preparation for the planting season.

Rivers and wells were considered magical in spring, thought to carry cleansing and healing powers, and many local rituals involved walking near water or offering small tokens.

Old Wives' Tales & Folk Beliefs

First flowers of spring: Seeing the first snowdrop or primrose was considered lucky, signalling a good harvest or fortune in the year ahead.

Birdsong: Hearing the first lark or cuckoo of the season was believed to bring good luck and predict the weather. **Spring cleaning:** This wasn't just about tidying—it was thought to sweep out bad luck and invite health and prosperity into the home.

Looking After Yourself While Supporting Others

Providing care in someone's home is one of the most rewarding roles you can have. You are not only supporting people with their daily needs, you are helping them stay independent, comfortable, and connected to their own space. But while you're looking after others, it's just as important to look after your own safety.

**BE SAFE.
DRIVE SMART.**

🚗 Travel Safety: Every Journey Matters: A big part of your day is spent travelling between clients. While it might feel routine, driving comes with real risks—especially in bad weather or when you're tired.

Keep yourself safe by: Sticking to speed limits - Staying focused - no distractions - Taking breaks if you feel fatigued

Smart habit: Park your car facing the exit so you can leave quickly and safely if needed.



👤 Manual Handling: Protect Your Body: Helping clients move safely is essential—but it should never come at the cost of your own health.

To reduce the risk of injury: Use the equipment provided - Follow your training at all times - Never rush a transfer

Remember: If something feels unsafe, stop and reassess. Your safety matters too.

💡 A Safe Environment: Small Things Make a Big Difference: Simple things in the home can have a big impact on safety.

Look out for: Slippery floors or loose rugs - Poor lighting inside or outside - Cluttered walkways

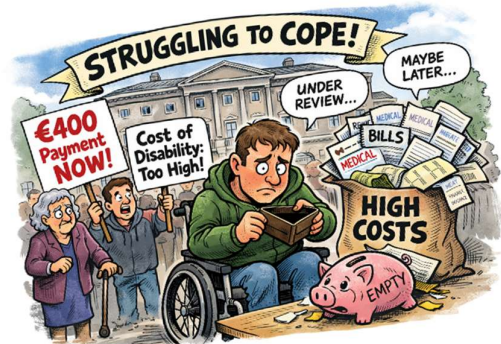
🔥 Fire & Emergencies: Be Prepared, Not Panicked: Knowing what to do in an emergency can make all the difference.

Take a moment to: Familiarize yourself with exits - Know where key items are located - Stay calm and act within your training

Growing Pressure Over Cost of Disability Payment

There has been a strong public response in recent weeks to the rising **cost of living for people with disabilities**, with hundreds gathering in Dublin to call for urgent financial support. Campaigners are seeking the introduction of a **€400 "Cost of Disability" payment**, describing it as a necessary measure to address the additional, unavoidable expenses faced by many people with disabilities. These can include higher energy costs, transport needs, medical expenses, and essential supports required for daily living.

While there had been expectations of additional supports in recent government measures, many feel that what has been provided does not go far enough. Advocacy groups have argued that people with disabilities are being left at a financial disadvantage, with some estimates suggesting significantly higher living costs compared to the general population.



The Government has acknowledged the issue and has indicated that a **Cost of Disability payment is under consideration**, but at present, there is no immediate commitment to introduce the €400 payment being called for. This has led to frustration among campaigners, who point out that the financial pressures are being experienced now, not at some future point.

The demonstrations highlight a growing demand for **timely, practical support**, rather than long-term policy discussions. For many, this issue is not just about income, but about maintaining independence, dignity, and the ability to participate fully in everyday life.

Retirements Shirley Foley and Marie Carrig

We extend our sincere best wishes to our two long-term Personal Assistants, Shirley Wrenne and Marie Carrig, on their retirement from West Limerick Independent Living. Shirley has been with us since 2007, and Marie since 2011. Throughout their years of dedicated service, both have been exceptional PAs, always offering kindness, compassion, and unwavering support. They were highly valued and respected by both clients and colleagues alike.



Shirley and Marie consistently went above and beyond, often making themselves available at short notice to support clients. They truly embodied the mission of WLIL, ensuring that people with disabilities can achieve independent living and full participation in society. Over the years, they have witnessed many changes within WLIL, and we hope these have been positive, as our ongoing goal remains to provide high-quality services for all our clients and employees. We wish Shirley and Marie every happiness in this new chapter of their lives. May it be filled with good health, joy, and well-deserved relaxation. Please don't be strangers.

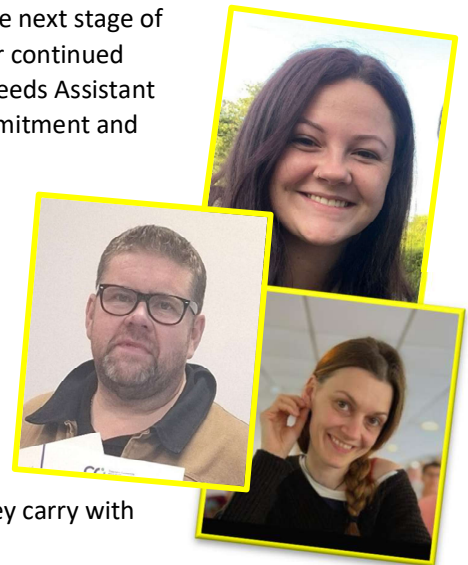


Moving On – With Our Best Wishes

We say goodbye to three valued Personal Assistants who are moving on to the next stage of their careers. While they will be greatly missed, we fully support them in their continued growth and progression. Katie Condon has taken up a new role as a Special Needs Assistant (SNA). We congratulate Katie on this achievement and thank her for the commitment and care she showed during her time with WLIL.

Veronika Kubale joined the organisation in 2024 and quickly made a positive impact on services in the East. Both clients and colleagues spoke highly of her. Unfortunately, the long travel distance made it difficult for her to continue in the role, and she will be greatly missed.

Stephen Heath began with WLIL in 2023 and quickly established strong, positive relationships with his clients. He brought great energy and enthusiasm to his role and will be especially missed by those he supported on the bus and within the community, where many enjoyable moments were shared. As Katie, Veronika, and Stephen move forward in their careers, all of us at WLIL wish them every success for the future. We hope they carry with them positive memories of their time with the organisation.





How Disability Services Support Everyone *by G OConnor*

There is only so much money in the economy at any one time. Governments have to make decisions about how that money is used, and spending needs to be balanced carefully. If too much money is created without real activity behind it, it can lead to inflation—something many people are already feeling. That's why it's important to look at what public spending actually does in real, everyday terms.

Take a simple example.

A person with a disability receives support from a Personal Assistant for a few hours each day. That support allows them to get up, get organised, attend appointments, and take part in daily life. The Personal Assistant is employed and paid for that work. They, in turn, pay tax, spend money locally, and support their own household. That money continues to move through the local economy.

But it doesn't stop there.

For many people with disabilities, having the right support in place also means they can work or continue working. They may have jobs, run businesses, volunteer, or contribute in other meaningful ways. They are also consumers—buying goods, using services, and supporting local businesses like everyone else. Without that initial support, many of these opportunities would not exist. At the same time, providing support at home helps avoid more costly interventions, such as long hospital stays or full-time residential care. In that sense, it is not just about spending—it is about using resources wisely.

So when you look at the full picture:

- A service creates a job
- That job generates income and tax
- The person receiving support can participate more fully in society
- Local businesses benefit
- Pressure on other services is reduced

It becomes clear that this is not simply a cost. It is part of how the system works. There is also a wider point. None of us knows what the future holds. At some stage in life, anyone may need support—whether due to illness, injury, or age. Having strong services in place is something that benefits everyone, not just a few. For organisations like West Limerick Independent Living, this is what drives the work every day—ensuring that people have the support they need to live independently, while also contributing to their communities in their own way. In this context, disability services are not just necessary—they are practical, responsible, and beneficial for society as a whole.



Congratulations to our recipients of our Years of Service Awards at our annual Christmas gathering 2025. It is a great achievement and a testament to your dedication, commitment, and contribution over the years

Employee of the Season – Spring 2026 Our Employee of the Season award recognises the outstanding work of staff across West Limerick Independent Living each quarter. Nominations come directly from service users and their families across our four service areas. Coordinators select the strongest nomination from their area, with final decisions made by the management team and Board. Each nomination is assessed against our core values, with a clear focus on person-centred support and real impact. The overall winner receives a €300 gift voucher, with three runners-up each awarded €100. The award continues to receive very positive feedback and highlights the everyday commitment, professionalism, and genuine care shown by our staff. It is a way of recognising those who truly reflect what Independent Living stands for.



West Limerick Independent Living wishes to
Congratulate the
Employee of the Season and
the **Runners-Up**

 Runner-Up: Bridget O'Connell	 Runner-Up: Lisa O'Connor	 Runner-Up: Bridget Kennedy	 Successful PA of Employee of the Season: Laura Richardson
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Congratulations to each of you and well-deserved!



ILMI Personal Assistance Peer Group

A peer-led space for disabled people to talk about Personal Assistance.

Open to disabled people who have a PA service and those who want to learn more.

- Share experiences.
- Talk through challenges.
- Learn what works from other disabled people.
- Monthly online meetings (Zoom)
- Informal, peer-to-peer discussion
- Disabled-led and supportive

Nothing About Us, Without Us.

Time and Date: First introductory session

Tuesday the 31st of March at 11am via Zoom

To Register contact Shelly ILMI's Peer Mentor
by email shellygaynor@ilmi.ie
or text or call 087 101 9593