

Congratulations
to the NRH

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

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edition 17

ELECTRICITY SUPPLIERS
Supporting Vulnerable
Customers

CONGRATULATIONS TO THE NRH

FAREWELL TO PA ANN MCCARTHY

Introducing new Service Coordinator

THE POWER OF SLEEP

TECHNOLOGICAL ADVANCEMENTS

CHRISTMAS GET-TOGETHER

HONORING DEDICATION

EMPLOYEE OF THE SEASON

ELECTRICITY SUPPLIERS

BENEFITS OF INCLUSIVE PHYSICAL FITNESS

"Employee of the
Season—
Nominate by
June 1st!"

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Welcome to the 17th edition of In-Touch magazine. We hope you can take a moment to relax, enjoy a cup of tea, and catch up on all the latest news and updates from WLIL.

Much has taken place since our last edition. We celebrated a wonderful Christmas season, which included our annual office gathering. It was a delightful evening during which we proudly presented our Years of Service awards. These awards are essential, as they formally acknowledge the extraordinary dedication of our valued staff.

While we warmly welcome new team members, we also say goodbye to some respected colleagues. Ann McCarthy, a Personal Assistant who has given 17 years of dedicated service, has retired. We extend our heartfelt thanks to Ann and wish her every success in her future endeavours.

We also bid farewell to Sabrina, our Service Coordinator of three years. We greatly appreciate Sabrina’s valuable contributions and wish her all the best for the future.

In happier news, we are pleased to welcome Michaela as our new Service Coordinator. Michaela brings significant experience in social care and is eager to meet all her new clients and PAs. We look forward to working closely with her.

We are equally delighted to welcome new Personal Assistants to the team. With our recently implemented new pay rates, we strongly encourage employees to participate in our Refer-a-Friend scheme. Further details can be found inside this edition.

We are thrilled to announce Carmel Murphy as our latest Employee of the Season. Carmel has consistently excelled as a Personal Assistant and is indeed a worthy recipient of this recognition. Congratulations, Carmel—this award is very much deserved. Congratulations also to Janet Walsh and Bridie Dalton, who were highly commendable runners-up.

Following feedback from the employee survey conducted last summer, we’ve updated the selection process for Employee of the Season. Each Service Coordinator will submit one nomination per season. Once nominations are received, a committee composed of Directors, and I will select the winner based on clear criteria. The additional nominated employees will also receive recognition.

We encourage both clients and staff to actively participate by submitting nominations for the next Employee of the Season by 1st May 2025. Finally, your feedback, suggestions, and contributions for our magazine are always welcome. Please reach out by email to margaret@limerickcil.com or call us at 06977320.

**Warm regards,
Margaret**

Employee of the Season

CARMEL MURPHY

SPRING 2025

West Limerick
INDEPENDENT LIVING

We try to live

Congratulations to The National Rehabilitation Hospital: Happy Heart Healthy Eating Gold Award Winner by Gerard O'Connor

The National Rehabilitation Hospital (NRH) in Dublin has once again demonstrated its unwavering commitment to promoting a healthy food environment for staff and visitors. In October 2024, the NRH catering team successfully recertified for Gold level in the Happy Heart Healthy Eating Award, an improvement from their previous Silver award achieved two years ago.

The Irish Heart Foundation launched this unique health



L to R: Aska Pasek, Catering Supervisor; Shane Loughlin, Head Chef

promotion programme in the mid-1990s and has continuously refined it over the past 25+ years with the support of the HSE. Currently, 47 healthcare sites across Ireland hold the Happy Heart Healthy Eating Award, benefiting more than 50,000 healthcare staff nationwide.

Designed to encourage healthier cooking methods and food options, the programme supports catering facilities in healthcare settings without generating significant additional costs.

Benefits of the Happy Heart Healthy Eating Award

- Fosters a culture of health and wellbeing in the workplace
- Provides a sustainable, long-term programme
- Underscores an organisation's commitment to staff welfare

Eligibility and Registration

Catering facilities preparing and serving hot food on site in HSE locations, as well as Section 38 and 39 funded health services, are invited to register free of charge. For more information, please contact:

HealthyEating.ActiveLiving@hse.ie.

Farewell to PA Ann McCarthy by Margaret O'Connor

It is with sadness that we say goodbye to one of our long-standing PAs, Ann McCarthy, who has been with us since 2003. Throughout her time here, Ann has witnessed many changes and has played a part in West Limerick Independent Living's growth into the organization it is today.

I first met Ann in 2007, and she was always a breath of fresh air. She was straightforward, never hesitating to share her opinions—always with honesty and respect.

Ann's main priority was always her clients, ensuring they received the highest standard of support—something she was truly dedicated to. Her hearty, infectious laugh could light up any room.

On behalf of management and both past and present staff, we wish you all the best in this next chapter, Ann. Please don't be a stranger if you're ever passing through Newcastle West!

Thank you for your years of dedication and service!



Michaela Quirke

Hello, my name is Michaela, and I am excited to settle into my role as a Service Coordinator at WLIL. I am looking forward to meeting new people and becoming a part of the incredible work being done here. The strong sense of community at WLIL makes me eager to contribute and engage with everyone.

I have worked in the social care sector since leaving collage, providing support to people to lead fulfilling and independent lives. I am excited to be able to bring my experience and passion to the team, contributing to a positive and supportive environment for both colleagues and clients.

I look forward to getting to know you

Michaela Quirke

The Power of Sleep: How Rest Can Transform Your Health *by Laura Mulqueen*

Sleep isn't just about feeling rested—it affects memory, mood, heart health, and immunity. Your body's internal clock, the circadian rhythm, controls sleep by responding to light and darkness. Melatonin helps you wind down, while cortisol wakes you up.

The Stages of Sleep

Each sleep cycle lasts about 90 minutes and includes:

- Light Sleep – A transition phase where your body relaxes.
- Deep Sleep – Crucial for recovery and memory storage.
- REM Sleep – The dreaming stage, essential for emotional balance and learning.



The Impact of Poor Sleep

Getting less than six hours of sleep increases the risk of heart disease, diabetes, and dementia. A Nature Communications study found that sleeping fewer than six hours regularly raises dementia risk by 30%.

Lack of sleep also affects your mind:

- Memory & Focus – Sleep processes information; poor rest weakens concentration.
- Mood Swings – Increases anxiety, depression, and irritability.
- Higher Stress – Raises cortisol levels, making it harder to cope.
- Severe Cases – Extreme deprivation can cause hallucinations.



The Benefits of Quality Sleep

Good sleep improves:

- Thinking & Decision-Making – Enhances cognitive abilities.
- Immunity – Strengthens the body's defense against infections.

- Mood & Emotional Health – Reduces stress and improves resilience.
- Heart Health – Lowers blood pressure and inflammation.

How to Improve Sleep

1. **Cognitive Behavioral Therapy for Insomnia (CBT-I)** – A proven long-term solution.
2. **Healthy Sleep Habits** – Stick to a routine, limit caffeine/screens, and keep a cool, dark bedroom.
3. **Relaxation Techniques** – Mindfulness, deep breathing, and meditation can help.
4. **Exercise & Nutrition** – Regular activity and foods rich in magnesium and melatonin support sleep.
5. **Natural Light** – Morning sunlight helps regulate sleep cycles.

The Bottom Line

Sleep is a key pillar of health. By making small changes—like better sleep habits, relaxation, and exposure to natural light—you can enjoy more restful sleep and a healthier life.

Welcoming Our New Personal Assistants

West Limerick Independent Living is delighted to welcome three new Personal Assistants who joined our team in the first quarter of 2025—Linda, Williams and Jolanta are the newest team members. These dedicated professionals are enthusiastic about their roles and are already making a difference in the lives of those they support.

They will be working across different areas throughout Limerick, so if you haven't met them yet, you might see them in the coming weeks. We encourage everyone to introduce themselves, offer support, and make them feel part of the West Limerick Independent Living community.

Let's extend a warm welcome to Linda, Jolanta, and Williams the newest team member as they settle into their roles and contribute to our shared mission of independent living and quality support.



Recent Technological Advancements in Health and Social Care *by Alison Oldfield*

Over the years, we have seen the advancement of technology and the integration of technology in various sectors including the health and social care sector. The integration of technology has become a cornerstone for enhancing the accessibility, efficiency, and quality of care services, to improve people's health and lives both on an individual and community level. We explore various aspects of this, below.

Let me share something remarkable: technology isn't just enhancing health and social care—it's transforming the way we live and connect with one another. It's about creating solutions that feel personal, intuitive, and, frankly, life-changing.



1. Telehealth and Telemedicine

Picture a world where distance is no longer a barrier. Remote consultations by video or messaging give patients immediate access to professionals—particularly empowering those in remote areas or with limited mobility.

2. Wearable Health Devices

Smartwatches and fitness trackers go far beyond counting steps. These devices monitor vital signs, detect sleep patterns, and alert both the user and caregivers in real time, enabling proactive health decisions.



3. Artificial Intelligence and Machine Learning

AI doesn't replace human touch; it frees caregivers to do what they do best. By predicting risks and tailoring care plans, AI helps professionals make data-driven decisions, so more time can be spent on empathy and support.

4. Robotics in Care

When robots assist with daily tasks—from bathing to companionship—we reduce isolation and streamline care. Robotic surgical aids, already in use in Ireland, are paving the way for more precise and efficient procedures.

5. Digital Platforms for Care Coordination

Imagine seamless communication among healthcare providers, caregivers, and patients. Unified platforms allow real-time record sharing and truly integrated care, improving outcomes for everyone involved.



6. Assistive Technologies for Independent Living

Smart home systems adjust lighting, temperature, and security automatically, offering independence and safety to the elderly or those with disabilities. Voice assistants and sensor alerts provide vital support right at home.

Conclusion

We stand at a pivotal moment where technology empowers people to live healthier, more connected lives. Moving forward responsibly and ensuring access for all is how we turn these advancements into enduring progress.

Personal Assistant Opportunity

West Limerick Independent Living is seeking dedicated Personal Assistant's to support individuals with disabilities. This role involves providing personalised support to enhance clients' independence and quality of life.

How to Apply: Visit limerickcil.com and navigate to the job section for the application form.

Contact: Phone: 069 77320 Email: info@limerickcil.com



Christmas get together in the Office 13th December 2024 by Margaret O' Connor

We had a lovely get-together in the office before Christmas, enjoying some food, drinks, and relaxed conversation. It was a very informal gathering, but the feedback was so positive that we plan to do the same next year.

Christmas is such a special time, and it was wonderful to come together to reflect on the past year and appreciate all that has happened. It was also a moment to remember clients and colleagues who are no longer with us.



Spending time chatting with our PAs, especially those who have been with us for many years, was a highlight. There was plenty of reminiscing about times gone by, sharing stories and memories.



We were also proud to present nine long-service awards to staff who have been with us for 15–17 years—a true testament to their dedication and commitment.

Observing everyone so engaged and cheerful was truly heartwarming. We also bid farewell to Sabrina, our coordinator, with a presentation led by Laura on behalf of everyone at West Limerick Independent Living. Though not all photos can be shared, we hope you enjoy the selection provided.

Looking ahead, we anticipate hosting a summer BBQ for clients and employees, giving us another chance to come together.



Honoring Dedication: Celebrating Long Service

We were honored to recognize nine dedicated team members who each received long-service awards for their remarkable 15–17 years with our organization. Their unwavering loyalty and invaluable contributions have helped shape a supportive, forward-thinking environment in which both staff and clients thrive. Such milestones exemplify the collective spirit of commitment that propels us to deliver outstanding service and remain at the forefront of personal assistance provisions.



REFER A FRIEND NOW!

Staff will be rewarded with €200 if you successfully refer a friend to West Limerick Independent Living!

Phone 069 77320

REFER A FRIEND

€ 200
Gift Card

Benefits of Inclusive Physical fitness training *by Precious Madubeko*

Inclusive fitness training plays a crucial role in enhancing the overall quality of life for individuals with physical and intellectual disabilities. Here's an overview of its importance:

Improved Physical Health

- **Enhanced Mobility and Strength:** Tailored exercise programs help improve muscle strength, balance, and flexibility, which are essential for performing daily activities and reducing the risk of falls.
- **Cardiovascular Benefits:** Regular physical activity supports cardiovascular health, helping to prevent chronic diseases such as diabetes, heart disease, and obesity.
- **Customised Training:** Inclusive programs are designed with modifications and assistive technologies that accommodate various physical abilities, ensuring that every participant can work out safely and effectively.



Mental and Emotional Well-being

- **Boosted Self-esteem and Confidence:** Successfully participating in fitness activities can significantly improve self-esteem and foster a sense of accomplishment.
- **Reduced Anxiety and Stress:** Exercise releases endorphins, which help reduce stress, improve mood, and contribute to overall mental well-being.
- **Cognitive Benefits:** For individuals with intellectual disabilities, structured physical activities can improve focus, coordination, and cognitive function through repetitive, skill-based tasks.

Social Inclusion and Community Building

- **Enhanced Social Interaction:** Group fitness settings provide opportunities for social engagement, helping to reduce feelings of isolation and promoting a sense of belonging.
- **Breaking Down Barriers:** Inclusive training fosters an environment where differences are respected and celebrated, reducing stigma and encouraging community integration.
- **Supportive Environment:** Working out in an inclusive setting helps build trust among participants and creates a network of support, both in and out of the gym.

Long-term Benefits and Independence

- **Empowerment Through Skill Development:** Inclusive fitness training equips individuals with the physical skills and confidence needed to perform everyday tasks independently.
- **Holistic Health:** Beyond physical improvements, inclusive programs support emotional resilience and social adaptability, contributing to a more holistic approach to health and well-being.
- **Sustainable Lifestyle Changes:** By encouraging regular participation in physical activities, inclusive fitness training helps individuals adopt long-term healthy habits that can reduce dependency on medical interventions.

Creating a Culture of Inclusivity

- **Adapting Environments:** Facilities that promote inclusive fitness training often invest in adaptive equipment and training for staff, ensuring that every member feels welcome and supported.
- **Educational Opportunities:** Inclusive fitness programs can educate the broader community about the abilities of individuals with disabilities, fostering a more accepting and inclusive society.



In summary, inclusive fitness training is not just about physical exercise—it's a comprehensive approach that enhances physical health, supports mental and emotional well-being, fosters social connections, and builds independence. By adapting fitness environments to meet the unique needs of individuals with physical and intellectual disabilities, these programs empower participants to lead fuller, healthier lives.



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Real Talk: Disabled People, By Disabled People

Real Talk: Disabled People, By Disabled People

Real change starts with real conversations. Ever wondered what peer mentoring really means? How activism connects to your daily life? Why getting the right support is still so difficult? Join ILMI for a powerful series of discussions led by disabled people, for disabled people. No jargon, no fluff, just practical, honest conversations about what matters.

These sessions are about more than just talk. They are about learning from each other, sharing experiences, and finding new ways to push for the change we need. Whether you are new to activism or have been fighting for disability rights for years, this space is for you.

Session 1: Peer Power – What’s In It for Me?

Tuesday 4th March 12 noon via Zoom

Peer mentoring can sound abstract, but at its core, it is about disabled people supporting each other. Learn how connecting with peers can offer real, practical benefits in your life.

Session 2: Smashing Barriers – Why Is It So Hard to Get Support?

Tuesday 11th March 12 noon via Zoom

From personal assistance to healthcare and education, disabled people face constant barriers. This session is about identifying those barriers and discussing how we can challenge them together.

Session 3: Activism – A Buzzword or Real Power?

Tuesday 18th March 12 noon via Zoom

Activism is often misunderstood. It is not just protests or politics; it is about disabled people using their collective power to drive real change. This session explores what activism looks like and how it can be part of your life.

Session 4: Keeping the Fire Lit – How Do We Keep Going?

Tuesday 25th March 12 noon via Zoom

Activism can be exhausting. Fighting for our rights takes time and energy. This session focuses on how we can stay motivated, support each other, and keep going without burning out.

Session 5: Your Local DPO – Why It Matters & How to Get Involved

Tuesday 1st April 12 noon via Zoom

Disabled Persons’ Organisations (DPOs) are at the heart of rights-based change. This session will break down what DPOs do, why they matter, and how you can be part of strengthening the collective voice of disabled people.

Register now by emailing info@ilmi.ie. Sign up for all five sessions and attend the ones that matter most to you. These conversations are about disabled people supporting each other, taking action, and making real change happen.

This emerging **Self-Directed Support (SDS) Network** in Ireland represents a crucial step toward more inclusive, person-centered services. By aligning with global best practices—such as individualised budgets, person-centred planning, and equitable access—the new SDS Ireland Sub-Network is positioned to foster genuine empowerment and citizenship for all.

Should you wish to explore this innovative space further, please reach out to lisafenwick@disability-federation.ie or consider registering for the global SDS Network. selfdirectedsupport.org



Sabrina Doran

Wishing Sabrina all the best

We bid a fond farewell to Sabrina, our dedicated Service Coordinator, after three wonderful years with us. Sabrina, we wish you every success as you embark on the next chapter of your career.

Over the years, we have shared many laughs—and even a few tears—but together, we navigated every challenge. Your clients and PAs have always appreciated your professionalism, warmth, and cheerful spirit. On a lighter note, the finance team may notice a slight drop in the electricity bill with the heating no longer set so high, and we might not go through quite as many teabags!

From the Board and all the staff at West Limerick Independent Living, we thank you and wish you all the best in your future endeavours.

Do not be a stranger!

by Margaret O'Connor

The advertisement for the Male Advice Line is a vertical graphic. At the top, a dark blue banner contains a white icon of a speech bubble with an arrow and the text "Male Advice Line". Below this is a yellow banner with the text "ADVICE & SUPPORT FOR MALE VICTIMS OF DOMESTIC ABUSE". The main part of the ad features a photograph of a smiling man in a yellow sweater and brown jacket talking on a mobile phone. Overlaid on the bottom left of the photo is the text "THINGS APPEAR BRIGHTER WHEN YOU OPEN UP" in white and yellow. At the bottom left is the Men's Development Network logo, and at the bottom right is a list of service features: "CONFIDENTIAL", "NATIONAL", and "OPEN 7 DAYS". The bottom of the ad is a dark blue banner with the text "FREEPHONE 1800 816 588" in large white letters.

ELECTRICITY SUPPLIERS

Supporting Vulnerable Customers

The Commission for Regulation of Utilities (CRU) is Ireland's independent energy and water regulator.
<https://www.cru.ie/about-us/what-we-do/>

The CRU recognise Customers in vulnerable situations may have difficulties when dealing with their suppliers or network operator and ensure there are extra protection measures in place for registered vulnerable customers including:

- how suppliers must treat and protect such customers,
- how suppliers must communicate with vulnerable customers and
- further protections around disconnection for non-payment of account.

WHO IS A VULNERABLE CUSTOMER A 'vulnerable customer' means a household customer who is:

- critically dependent on electrically powered equipment, which shall include but is not limited to life protecting devices, assistive technologies to support independent living and medical equipment, or
- particularly vulnerable to disconnection during winter months for reasons of advanced age or physical, sensory, intellectual or mental health. (S.I. 463, 2011)

<https://www.esbnetworks.ie/docs/default-source/publications/vulnerable-customer-policy.pdf>
<https://www.cru.ie/consumer-information/your-rights/vulnerable-customers/>

REGISTERING AS A VULNERABLE CUSTOMER

Please contact your current Electricity Supplier who will notify ESB Networks.

ESB Networks maintain a register of vulnerable customers based on information from all electricity suppliers. This information is kept secure and private. ESB Networks has delivered an energy service to the Irish nation for over 85 years and provides a safe, reliable service to all customers: domestic, commercial and industrial.

	New Connections: 1800 372 757 https://www.esbnetworks.ie/who-we-are/customerservice/vulnerable-customer-policy
	New Connections: 818 405 405 https://www.energia.ie/customer-area/vulnerable-customers
	Customer Support 1800 30 50 90 https://www.electricireland.ie/residential/help/vulnerablecustomers/caring-for-our-vulnerable-customers
	Specialist Service 1800 662 227 Customer Support 1800 710 024 https://yunoenergy.ie/faq (Select Vulnerable Customer Registration)
	Compare gas & electricity suppliers in Ireland https://switcher.ie/gas-electricity/suppliers/