

Issue 2 Spring 2009

CheshireVoice

Communicating Changes



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Welcome to... Cheshire Voice

What happened to the Irish economy? Where did all the money go to? It has been like filling the bath with water and then coming back to find it empty again because you did not put the plug in properly.

Cheshire Ireland, like all of us individually, is and will be affected, by the country's need to reduce spending. In mid-October, Cheshire, like all other non-profit agencies providing services to people with disabilities learned it was going to have its 2009 funding reduced by 1%. At the end of February, the HSE informed us that our funding would be reduced by a further 1%. This equates to a loss of approximately €500,000 nationally in 2009. We have also been advised that there may be a further reduction in funding announced during March.

The HSE and Cheshire are committed to making the savings without impacting on people using the services. Cheshire service managers, regional managers with their colleagues in Central Office are trying to work out how to make these savings with the least possible impact on services. However, we will need the help and suggestions of people using our services and staff to make the savings that are required. If you have any ideas, please let us know.

Even in times when the funding available has decreased, our Vision and Mission remain unchanged. Our commitment to providing, improving, individualised/person centered, caring services remains and must remain as strong as 12 months ago. We may need to be more creative to achieve our objectives and not do everything we had hoped or planned.

We in Cheshire need to work together; we need to work with HSE personnel, with people in other voluntary agencies and community groups more closely, to ensure that we continue to assist people with disabilities to have the best possible lives.

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Your Choice – Our Vision



Name: Aoife O'Toole
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As an organisation supporting people with physical disabilities, Cheshire Ireland's vision is to support people, one at a time, to live a life of their own choosing.

A vision is something that guides all of us in our work. If your role is a care staff member, a driver, a nurse, a chef, an activities officer, a lifestyle facilitator, a cleaner, a manager or any other role, then your job too is about supporting people to live a life of their choosing.

What we know for sure is that choice, and supporting people around choice, can be very complex. After all, if we all knew what we wanted in life, how easy some things would be!

This edition shares some stories from people living in Cheshire services who have been supported by staff in various roles e.g. link workers, lifestyle facilitator's to live a life that they choose. Following some of the stories, there is a short article on Choice that helps us look at the concept of Choice in different ways and some signposts for where you can find more information on Choice.

Memories of Leonard Cheshire

We are trying to create a memory bank of personal memories of Leonard Cheshire. Did you ever meet him, what was he like, what did you chat about? Were you inspired by him? Do you have a story to tell about your encounter – would you like to share it? If you want to record your memories for the future generations of Cheshire Ireland, please contact **Yvonne Conlon**, Editor, (01 2974121) and we can arrange a chat or a meeting to discuss.



A New Beginning



Name: Johnny Murtagh
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Meet Johnny Murtagh and Hannah O’Leary two people with very different experiences of using Cheshire Services, supported by staff assisting them to make choices in their lives.

Johnny Murtagh was a young man when he entered the Barrett Cheshire House over 40 years ago. He recalls ‘the chill wind of the door slamming’ behind him; as the old house became his prison and so began his fight for freedom, for his own home. A determined man, Johnny became the spokesperson for many; he joined the Disability Federation of Ireland, and the Board of Dublin City Council to campaign for accessible footpaths and transport. Because he lived in a large group home, the HSE said he did not need a P.A. to assist him, there were plenty of staff. If however, Johnny lived independently he would have the services of a P.A. In reality the staff were more than busy with the day to day work of running the house which meant Johnny could not get out as much as he wanted. Johnny’s Support Worker was charged with where possible, getting Johnny from A to B spruced up and ready for action. But still, Johnny longed for the ‘quiet space’ in his head, he tells me that, ‘I didn’t have my own life in the Barrett, there were too many people, too many residents, no individuality’.

With the introduction of the Lifestyle Project, Johnny began thinking about the possibility of

moving into his own home. When I went to visit him in his temporary new home in Greystones, Co. Wicklow, I asked was he worried about moving and with a twinkle in his razor sharp blue eyes he told me.

‘No – not for one minute, I have my own life now’.

The move of course has not come without its difficulties, but the Lifestyle Co-ordinators and the team at the Barrett have all been very supportive of Johnny, they have given him the courage to move and they are still there for him. Yesterday, Johnny went to the supermarket for the first time, responsible for all his own supplies. I asked him what he bought;

‘My favourite, steak, onion and potatoes - to cook how and when I like!’

Johnny will be moving to his own new home in central Dublin at the beginning of March. He is moving into an established community of friends and family in a locality he is familiar with. This is a key factor when living in any community as Hannah O’Leary tells us later. We will be bringing you an update on Johnny’s progress in the next issue. Johnny, does however, want to thank all those who have assisted him over the years in the Barrett and especially John, Martin, Clare, Terry, Jenny, Iris and all his many friends who will have to meet him in the pub for a pint to find out how he’s getting on!

Not everyone supported by Cheshire lives in a group home. Some people are supported to live in their own homes. They tap into the service we provide on a daily basis, such as Hannah O’Leary from West Cork, a mother of four and a grandmother who comments that:-

‘The Cheshire staff who come and help me out in my home are good company and enable me to live as independently as I can. They are my hands and legs but not my head. I make my own decisions about my daily life. I like my own company, enjoy listening to the local radio in the morning. It’s great to be able to live at home. This is where I feel most at ease and it is my neighbourhood. I know the road and the shops and who lives where. My carers and family support me and for them my disability is not an issue. I am Hannah, mother, woman, and friend. My M.S. is a part of who I am, but only a part. I live my life and make the most of it.’

Valerie Sugrue, who has been Hannah’s Link Worker for the past number of years, enjoys working with her to achieve her goals and ambitions, socialising and getting out and about, even if it is to place the odd bet! There is a good bond between the two women, warmth that spills over with laughter and smiles.

Roger Green, famous for Waterford Cheshire’s Weekly Trumpet Newsbyte, has worked as a Link Worker and comments that ‘It’s about working with an individual to plan for and achieve the things most important in his/her life. In other words, providing a quality opportunity for people to live as they choose. Is that not what we should really be about?’



Hannah O’Leary and Valerie Sugrue

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Lifestyle Facilitators/ Linkworkers

As you will see, some staff in Cheshire are employed as Lifestyle Facilitators. Their role is to work with people to help them explore and experience new things in their lives. This could be finding a job, getting information about community services, experiencing new leisure activities, creating valuable social roles or moving to their own place as in Johnny’s case.

Some staff have attended training about being a Link Worker with a person who uses Cheshire Services, such as Roger Green in Waterford. A Link Worker is a staff member who has been chosen by the person living in the Cheshire service, to link with the person’s family, friends and community to support people to achieve some of the important things in their life.

Whatever your role may be, the important thing to remember is that the person receiving the service leads and directs us about what is important to them in their life. Our role as Cheshire Ireland staff is to support people to live a life of their choosing by listening, learning and linking with family, friends, advocates, the community and ourselves to make things happen for people.

www.cheshire.ie



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Cheshire Ireland is committed to providing the very best of service in all areas, including a website that is as accessible as possible. The Cheshire Ireland website is a fully accessible AA+ website which allows people who prefer to use larger text adjust the size of the font by clicking on the LARGE A which appears on the top right corner of the Home Page. By clicking into 'Accessibility' on the tool bar across the top of the Home Page, you can find more information on searching Cheshire's Website, the use of larger text size and the use of high contrast styles.

Browsealoud is a newly added feature to the site. It is a text-to-speech enabling service designed to increase website accessibility for people with failing sight, literacy issues and those who have English as a second language. It highlights each word as it is spoken to aid comprehension, improve reading, and show users where they are on the page.

Browsealoud is now being used on over 2,500 websites in the UK and Ireland. Website accessibility is becoming increasingly important as more and more people are seeking information on-line. Many organisations subscribe to this service to ensure they are adhering to the recommendations of the Disability Act 2005 in Ireland. Organisations already subscribing to the service include: www.anpost.ie, www.citizensinformation.ie, www.taoiseach.ie, www.hse.ie, all local County Council web sites, and most Government Departments.

Click into the Browsealoud icon on the Home Page where you will find easy to follow instructions on how to download this feature onto your local p.c.

Contact info@cheshire.ie if there are any issues which restrict your access to Cheshire's site.

The Cheshire website contains a wide range of information on Cheshire Ireland, and answers a lot of frequently asked questions such as:

- What does Cheshire Ireland do? Home Page
- What is our Mission Statement and Values? About Us
- Who is Leonard Cheshire?..... About Us
- What type of services does Cheshire Ireland provide? Types of Services
- Where is Cheshire located? Location of Services
- Who are the Trustees of Cheshire? Board of Trustees/Staff

Advocacy

Details of the Citizen Advocacy Initiative which was launched in 2007, can be found under the heading Advocacy on the site. This is an exciting new project for Cheshire Ireland and is supported by the Citizens Information Board (CIB).

The Citizen Information Board (CIB) is the national support agency responsible for supporting the provision of information, advice, and advocacy on social services. On this page there is a link directly to the Citizens Information Board website.

Advocacy comes from the Latin ad voce – meaning towards a voice. Put simply, advocacy is about speaking up, about getting one’s needs, opinions, and hopes taken seriously and acted upon.

Further information on advocacy and rights work in Cheshire Ireland can be accessed by contacting: Charlotte Knight, Citizen Advocacy Co-ordinator on **01- 2974100** or email **charlotte.knight@cheshire.ie**

Service Quality

Also implemented in 6 Cheshire centres in 2007, was the service quality system called “Shared Values & Basic Assurances”. This is a quality system that puts the person at the centre of what Cheshire does and helps to measure how well this is done. Documents relating to the quality system can be downloaded from the website under Service Quality.

Contact Aoife O’Toole, Service Quality Manager, on **01-2974100** or email **aoife.otoole@cheshire.ie** for further information on Service Quality in Cheshire Ireland.

Staff Information

An extensive range of Policies, Procedures & Guidelines can be downloaded from the Staff Information page under such headings as Service Quality, Health & Safety and Clinical Procedures etc.

Also under the Staff Information page, details of the Employee Assistance Programme launched recently in conjunction with the VHI can be accessed. Information on the new Cheshire Ireland Performance Management System can be accessed here also.



Links Page

Link directly onto the following sites:

CAMP, The Cheshire Adventure Motivation Project web site.

The Disability Federation of Ireland (DFI) web site. The DFI is the federation which supports organisations to enable people with disabilities.

The National Disability Federation of Ireland (NDA) website. The NSA are the lead state agency on disability issues providing independent expert advice to Government on policy and practice.

The Access Directory website. This directory list information and advise on whether you are buying a new wheelchair, converting a vehicle, having a stairlift fitted to your home etc.

Also there are links to other Not for Profit Agencies such as,

The Irish Wheelchair Association,
The Multiple Sclerosis Society of Ireland,

The NCBI – Working for People with Sight Loss,
Enable Ireland, Headway etc.

If you would like to comment on the web site, please email Genevieve.mcnally@cheshire.ie or call 01-2974100.

Cheshire - Greystones

Name: Donal Gilbert
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Nestled between the little Sugar Loaf and the sea in a quiet cul de sac is Bellevue Demesne, a small social housing development comprising of eighteen houses. The estate is jointly run between Sophia Housing and Cheshire Ireland.

Nine of the houses were purchased by Cheshire Ireland from Wicklow County Council, through the Capital Assistance Grant allocated by the Department of the Environment.

Prior to people being allocated houses, assessments were carried out in conjunction with the HSE and Wicklow County Council. The eight houses were then allocated to individuals based on their needs for service and accessible housing requirements.

Currently there are nine people occupying seven of the houses, there are two couples and five other people from all parts of Wicklow and South County Dublin. One of the houses is presently being used as a “transition house” for a gentleman moving out from the Barrett and into his own home in the near future. This will allow him to experience firsthand what living in his own home really entails.

All the individuals have now settled into their homes and are getting on with their lives. There is an artist, a gentleman setting up his own PR Company, a musician who will soon join a local drama group and a young man getting back into further education. In the very near future Sophia Housing will bring



From left: Donal Gilbert (Manager) & Team from Greystones, Denise Farrell, Eamonn Farrell, Marina Brennan and Alan Hurst.

families and new faces into our community. We are looking forward to meeting our new neighbours and hopefully enjoying a few sunny days outside with a community BBQ and a few ice-creams for the children!

PRSI and Tax Facts



Name: Eugene Callan
Title: National Payroll & Pension Administrator
Emails: eugene.callan@cheshire.ie

Reduced Employee PRSI

If you are receiving any of the following benefits you are eligible to pay a reduced level of PRSI, if your taxable earnings are more than €1,000 in any fortnight.

- A widow's or widower's pension (from Ireland).
- A widow or widower's pension acquired under the social security legislation of another country covered by EC regulations.
- Deserted Wife's Benefit or Allowance.
- One-Parent Family Payment.
- Medical card holders and everyone aged 70 or over are also exempt.

If you are receiving one of these benefits or you have a current medical card, just send

evidence of the payment or a photocopy of your medical card to Eugene Callan in Payroll, in Central Office.

Note however, that it is an employee's responsibility to ensure that they are on the correct class of PRSI. For example if you are on a reduced PRSI class and your medical card expires or you stop receiving any of the above benefits, you must inform payroll in order to be in the correct PRSI class.

In 2008 if you earned more than €1,000 in some fortnights but earned less than €26,000 in the full year you may be eligible for a refund. Refund forms are available from the Department of Social & Family Affairs.

Tax (PAYE) Allowable Expenses

If you are a member of a trade union you are eligible to claim a tax credit for it. If you are required to provide and/or launder a workplace uniform (kitchen staff for example) you are eligible to claim an expense allowance for this. If your spouse works at home caring for a dependent relative e.g. a child or parent and earns less than €5,080 in the year you are eligible for a tax credit.

Details of these and other allowable expenses and credits such as medical expenses, bereavement (spouse) credits etc. are available on <http://www.revenue.ie/en/tax/it/leaflets/it1.html> #section12 or on leaflet number IT1. To avail of any of these credits and expense allowances simply contact Revenue on **1890-333425**.

Safety First – Road Transport



Name: Paddy O'Brien

Title: Risk Management/Health & Safety Co-Ordinator

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The risk involved in driving on our roads is evident from the numbers of people who are killed and injured every year. In Cheshire many journeys are undertaken daily involving Cheshire vehicles and also staff using their own car on Cheshire business. It is our aim that all these journeys are undertaken in a manner that ensures the safety of the people who use Cheshire services, who generally have no control over their safety while undertaking journeys, for our staff and other road users.

To assist with our aim a new Transport Handbook has been published. This handbook will give guidance to drivers and others involved in our transport activities. It will outline organisational responsibilities, driver's duties and responsibilities, explain hazards and risk, describe safety measures to be taken and will also include a number of forms which will be used in the management of our transport activities. The handbook will be available from early March, it will be distributed through local management, and all drivers will receive a copy of the handbook and there will also be a copy available in the centres and services.

Your Voice – We Listened!

In response to requests from our Service Users, The Cheshire Voice is also available on compact disc. Each edition is recorded by the National Council for the Blind of Ireland using their state of the art studio here in Dublin. You can request a copy from your Centre Manager, we hope you enjoy.

The NCBI have been instrumental in making sure The Cheshire Voice is fully accessible to all. It is always our intention to strive for the best in what we do so if you have any comments or queries please do not hesitate to contact Yvonne Conlon-Cahill on **01 2974121** or email **yvonne.conlon@cheshire.ie**.

So who are You and what do you Do?



Name: Eugene Callan
Title: National Payroll & Pension Administrator
Emails: eugene.callan@cheshire.ie

Eugene started as an office assistant in the Cara way back in similar hard economic times to now when people on the lowest rate of tax were paying 35% rising to 65% on the highest rate. In real terms this meant some people were paying 65p tax in every £1. Working his way up to Office Manager, Eugene has seen Ireland's financial world come full circle; he well remembers the long hard hours working away trying to make the figures work, dreading the call from the bank manager asking if there were enough funds coming into the account to cover the cheque!

On moving to Central Office, Eugene became part of the Finance Team, and took on more responsibilities. The centralisation of all the payroll and accounting systems now makes Cheshire more accountable to those outside bodies particularly Revenue and the HSE and this greatly helps senior management. On a fortnightly basis Eugene is responsible for over €1 million in salaries; Cheshire has an annual salary value of over €30 million per year to over 750 members of staff.

In another life Eugene would likely be living in China or Singapore, probably working out engineering operating systems to run giant factories, but China's loss has been Cheshire's gain.

Eugene got his first computer from St Mary's Rugby Club back in 1984, through a fundraising drive by volunteers, and he has not looked back since. That was a time when most offices were paper based where a calculator, typewriter and telephone were the technology of the day. Computers have given him independence and a lifestyle that at one stage seemed impossible. He now enjoys an active social life including foreign travel, an appreciation of fine wines and is a regular theatre goer.

His general philosophy is make the most of what life presents; take a mental photograph on happy days and think of them on days where life is tough, thinking "there'll be other happier days again".

Information Regarding Pension Levy

The Cheshire Foundation in Ireland Pension Scheme is a private occupational defined contribution pension scheme and therefore is not impacted by the Public Service Pensions levy currently being introduced by the Government. Therefore, The Cheshire Foundation in Ireland will continue to contribute 7% of salary for all pension scheme members. Members are only obliged to contribute 5% of salary with any additional contribution above this being classed as an Additional Voluntary Contribution (AVC). We are not aware of any plans by the Government to extend this levy to the private sector.

Mini Marathon



Are you running in the Flora Ladies Mini Marathon 1st June 2009?

Support Your Cheshire Centre! Get a team together of colleagues, friends and family and we will send you out a Sponsorship goodie pack, which will include:-

A Cheshire Ireland T-Shirt, Cheshire Sponsorship Card, Race Certificate etc.

We will also have a secure central meeting point close to the race starting point and refreshments will be available after the race.

What You Need To Do:-

1. Complete and return the official Flora Mini-Marathon entry form available in the Evening Herald.
2. Contact Yvonne Conlon-Cahill in Central Office (**01 2974121**) or email **yvonne.conlon@cheshire.ie** for your sponsorship pack as soon as possible.

Extreme caution must be taken if consideration is being given to pushing a person in a wheelchair around the mini marathon course. There is a significant risk of injury to back, knees and legs, particularly where no specific training for this has been undertaken. This could be best achieved if a few people agree to share the pushing.

All monies raised in your centre stays in your centre!

Did You Know?

The Citizens Information Board which has a particular responsibility to identify and access entitlements for people with disabilities has published the 12th edition of 'Entitlements for people with disabilities'. It is available, free of charge, from local CIB and Comhairle offices. It gives a very comprehensive list of all allowances for people with disabilities and how and where to apply for them.

For more information logon at **www.citizensinformation.ie** or Lo-Call **1890 777121**.

Did You Know?

The Cheshire Voice On-Line

As well as being able to get your copy of The Cheshire Voice on audio you can log on to **www.cheshire.ie** scroll down to What's New and click onto the latest copy of The Cheshire Voice. Enjoy!

