

1962 - 2022 - EMPOWERING PEOPLE FOR 60 YEARS



enabling people with disabilities



# 2022

## ANNUAL REPORT

# GENERAL INFORMATION

## Solicitors

Kieran Murphy & Co.,  
9 The Crescent, Galway, H91 W6T7

## Bank

Bank of Ireland,  
22 Mainguard Street, Galway, H91 TX21  
Bank of Ireland,  
Eyre Square, Galway, H91 D6X9  
AIB Bank Lynch's Castle, Galway, H91 W400

## Auditors

FCC Chartered Accountants & Registered  
Auditors, 3rd Floor, Lismoyle House,  
Merchants Road, Galway, H91 KPYO

## Ability West:

- Is a registered charity under the Charities Regulatory Authority, Registration No. 20011161
- Has a Quality Management System, ISO 9001:2015 accredited, National Standards Authority of Ireland
- Is accredited to Excellence Through People, 1000: 2017, National Standards Authority of Ireland
- Is an equal opportunities employer

## Registered Office

Ability West, Blackrock House,  
Salthill, Galway, H91 R254

Ability West is a Company Limited by  
Guarantee, registered No. 41317 and is  
registered with the Revenue Commissioners  
as a Charity under Registration No. CHY6306.  
Ability West is approved for the Scheme of  
Tax Relief for Donations to Eligible Charities  
and other Approved Bodies under Section  
848A Taxes Consolidation 1997 under Tax No.  
2237226Q.

# Our MISSION

We empower people with disabilities to live self-directed lives in an equal and inclusive society. Each person is supported and valued within an environment which promotes their overall autonomy, health and wellbeing, and enables them to reach their potential.

# Our CORE VALUES

- Independence
- Partnership
- Openness
- Integrity
- Accountability and Transparency
- Participation in Community Life
- Person Centredness
- Rights Based Approach

# Our VISION

Ability West is dedicated to enabling people we support to realise their goals and ambitions.

## We will deliver on this vision by:

- Placing the fundamental rights of the people we support at the centre of our activities and promoting those rights
- Empowering each person we support to live self-directed lives and to play a meaningful role in all aspects of community life
- Listening and then developing a variety of options that can be used flexibly to meet their identified needs
- Developing the skills and dedication of our staff in a supportive and motivating environment
- Working in active partnership with the people we support, families, staff, our voluntary supporters and the broader community
- Campaigning at local, regional and national level to resource and realise our vision to achieve these aims.



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# CHAIRPERSON'S REVIEW



**Kevin Newell, Chairperson**

2022 was the milestone year for Ability West as it celebrated its 60th year in existence. From humble beginnings in 1962, Ability West was formed by a group of parents and friends wanting to support children with intellectual disability in a quest for health & well-being services and societal inclusion for all. Six decades later, Ability West supports over 600 children and adults across Galway City and County with an extensive range of tailored services and supports in 13 locations and 62 centres.

In the year of our 60th Anniversary, Ability West marked the occasion with a number of celebrations across our services and in our communities, starting with our community celebration day in May 2022. We had a double celebration of the 40th Anniversary of Críost Linn Day Services in Clifden, and further celebrations throughout the year included a variety show planned and

performed by those we support, an anniversary mass and remembrance event in November and a tree planting ceremony in December 2022. I want to thank our wonderful staff, families, people we support over the past 60 years who contributed to making Ability West the Community it is today.

As a board member of Ability West since June 2017 and Chairperson I am committed to continuing developing our vision and mission to ensure the delivery of our objectives. Our key objective in 2022 was to ensure that following the Covid-19 pandemic, we continued to offer a positive and safe experience for our staff and the people we support. The board of directors undertook an external evaluation in late 2021 and a follow up planning session was held with an independent facilitator in June 2022. The board of Directors reviewed compliance with the Charities Governance Code during the year and a compliance report outlining how the organisation complies with the 6 principles and 49 standards within the Code was completed and submitted to the Charities Regulator.

I would like to take this opportunity to reflect on the continued challenges faced by the organisation in 2022 as we continued to transition back to full service provision

following the pandemic. The impact of continued challenges in recruitment and retention was experienced in service delivery and the quality of services provided. There was a decline in our performance against HIQA standards in Q3 and Q4 in 2022, the underlying themes of which included serious rates of staff attrition in frontline and management teams, the changing needs of people we support and resulting demands on how we provide services, as well as the changing landscape of the disability sector post the covid era. As a section 39 organisation the issue of pay parity is becoming more and more apparent and the board of directors are committed to lobbying on behalf of our staff who deserve the same pay and conditions as their peers in the sector.

Ability West has prepared its financial statements in accordance with generally accepted accounting practice and the Companies Act 2014. The full audited accounts for 2022 are available on our website: [www.abilitywest.ie](http://www.abilitywest.ie). Please refer to the Directors' Report later in this report which provides details about our structure, governance and management.

The Board of Directors' visiting committee continue to be paused in 2022 due to the pandemic restrictions, however I am happy to report that the committee

recommended its scheduled visits in 2023.

I would like to take this opportunity to thank Ms. Mary O'Mahony who resigned as Director in May 2022. Mary has given almost 22 years of service as a director, initially from June 1999 to May 2018, and from July 2019 to present. Mary has also served on the Finance Sub-Committee and as a Pensions Trustee during her time with Ability West, and she will remain on as a Pensions Trustee. Her dedication and commitment to this organisation and the people we support is greatly appreciated, and on behalf of the board I would like thank her and wish her well for the future.

Cormac Flynn also resigned in September 2022. Their volunteerism and dedication to Ability West is really appreciated.

I would like to sincerely thank my fellow Directors for their support and commitment throughout the year, as well as the executive management team for their leadership to the organisation. Additionally, on behalf of the board, I want to acknowledge the difficult year it has been for the organisation especially the frontline staff, and thank them for their dedication and continued high quality service to the people we support.

**Kevin Newell**  
**Chairperson**



# CHIEF EXECUTIVE'S REVIEW OF 2022



**Audrey Pidgeon, Chief Executive**

I am pleased to present to you the Ability West Annual Report for 2022. In this year we marked the milestone of 60 years of service provision by Ability West across Galway City and County. It was an opportunity to reflect on the growth of our services from a temporary school building with 12 children in Galway City 60 years ago to current day services:

- Supporting over 630 children and adults
- Employ over 600 staff across the City and County
- 120 Volunteers
- Patron of 4 schools – St. Joseph's, St. Olivers, St. Teresa's, Tigh Nan Dooley
- 29 Residential Services, including respite services
- 24 Day Services
- Rehabilitative Training
- Community Support
- Multi-Disciplinary Therapy services
- Home Sharing Network Galway

Following the challenges of recent years posed by

the pandemic, it made the celebrations even more enjoyable to be able to meet again with our teams and stakeholders across Ability West services and communities. We marked the occasion of our anniversary over a number of events throughout the year, including participation in the Galway City St. Patricks Day Parade, at the 2022 Best Buddies Ball, a day of celebration across all Ability west services and communities in May, reunion of graduates from St. Joseph's Training Centre, a variety show demonstrating the talents of people we support, a celebratory mass and memorial service held in the Galway Cathedral, and our final event of the year was a tree planting ceremony in our headquarters in Blackrock House, attended by former CEO's Tom Hogan and Breda Crehan-Roche.

2022 was the year when we hoped that we would fully emerge from the COVID-19 pandemic. We started the year with a significant number of outbreaks across our services, which continued throughout the year. It was clear that we needed to 'return to normal' whilst also responding to COVID-19 activity across our services, and the knock-on effects of this. In doing this, Ability West were faced with challenges particularly with staff retention and recruitment and the impact of this on the delivery of our services and capacity to uphold our quality standards with depleted staffing resources and structures. Faced with challenging times, a solution focused approach was taken to assess the current and

future needs of Ability West, of the people we support, the environment within which we provide services, and a plan developed with how Ability West would respond to the growing demands on our services and what actions were required to do this.

Ability West were particularly challenged to retain staff in 2022. This emerged as a challenge in 2021, when annual attrition rates jumped to 11.38% (from 8.64% in 2020) and the trend continued to further increase in 2022. The total rate of staff attrition for the year was 12.66%, or 99 staff of an average 634 headcount. The majority of staff who left were vacating roles in frontline service delivery and management positions at frontline, middle and senior management levels and this impacted greatly on the delivery of Ability West services and the pressures on the teams and staff who remained. Analysis of exit interviews and other staff feedback has strongly indicated that pay parity has been a significant influence on this trend. A large number of staff who left Ability West have taken up employment in the same role in other organisations for higher salary and benefits, e.g. through the HSE and Section 38 funded organisations. It was also a great source of frustration that Ability West staff did not receive the COVID-19 pandemic bonus payment in 2022, when counterparts in other organisations had, and this also contributed to staff dissatisfaction. Furthermore, Ability West have been seriously challenged with the recruitment of staff to fill vacancies at all levels. This has

been experienced through lower number of job applicants, the availability of suitably skilled staff to meet the service demands and needs, and having to compete for staff with other agencies who are in a position to offer better rates of pay.

The quality and standards of services provided by Ability West were seriously impacted by the staffing challenges, combined with changing needs in services, as well as resourcing challenges of a budgetary and capital nature particularly in the latter half of 2022. Ability West identified these issues in 2022 through our own Provider Led Audits in HIQA registered centres and undertook an organisational approach to addressing these issues. This proved very difficult to implement with the absence of many significant positions in our frontline and management teams. These issues have also been confirmed by a number of HIQA inspections across Ability West services, and significant work has been undertaken in 2023 to address these.

There was no new funding received by Ability West in 2022 to respond to emergency scenarios, and the financial pressures of inflation were also felt on the cost of utilities and transport for our frontline services. In my role as CEO I have highlighted these issues to our funders, the HSE, and to our local and national political representatives. Ability West continue to be actively engaged with national umbrella bodies such as the National Federation of Voluntary Service Providers, Disability Federation of Ireland and others. Lobbying efforts and ongoing work through national groups, as well as direct collaboration with the HSE and HIQA has

continued into 2023 and I continue to focus my efforts on overcoming these challenges faced by the organisation.

## Developments & Growth

We have also had many achievements to celebrate in 2022 across our various teams and services

- A new residential service opened its doors in April 2022 in Galway City, providing residential services to four young adults
- Work was completed on two sensory gardens, one in Holly Services children's respite centre in Galway City and a second in St. Dymphna's day services in Portumna. Funding for these gardens was obtained in 2021 under the Strengthening Disability Services grant.
- A new post was created, Day Services Development Officer, with funding from the HSE to lead on the implementation of New Directions Standards in Ability West services
- We launched the Best Buddies Best Buddies Citizen programme. This provides the opportunity for adults of all ages to engage in the befriending programme, which is a much-anticipated extension to our existing college-age Best Buddies programme.
- During the year new vehicles were added to our fleet. New 9 seater minibuses were provided for The Birches and Raceview while minibuses were replaced in Ti Geal and Oldfield. A new Mercedes 19 seat Sprinter was purchased for one of our City Routes. The purchase of same was possible due to the receipt of specific funding from the HSE.

## Themes and forward planning

On reflection of the year, 2022 has been a year of significant change for Ability West. The environment in which we operate has guided the direction in which Ability West needs to evolve.

- Ireland's labour market was particularly tight in 2022 and continues at present, with national employment rates at an all-time high. This places great demands on employers to compete on the market. In particular the matter of pay parity is proving a significant impediment on our efforts to retain staff and recruit to fill vacancies in comparison with other Section 38 providers and HSE services, which indirectly impacts the delivery of services and satisfaction of our key stakeholders.
- The national housing crisis also impacts on the availability and cost of suitable premises to deliver new services.
- While we welcome new legislation and regulatory bodies, e.g. Assisted Decision Making legislation, Approve Housing Body Regulatory Body, national targets to improve energy efficiency, etc. this requires additional staffing expertise and resources in order to meet these requirements at an organisational level.
- Enhanced life expectancy means that as a service provider we need to ensure that we can support people who live longer lives, and be in a position to respond to the changing needs that come this this. We also have a significant number of ageing carers in the community who require



supports from services such as Ability West to care for their family member with an intellectual disability.

- The nature and complexity of support needs for many people with intellectual disability and comorbidities in younger populations is increasing. The support needs of people we support are changing significantly across the lifespan which places significant pressures on our already under-resourced Multi-Disciplinary Therapy teams.

In order to meet these challenges, the following work has commenced to future-proof the delivery of Ability West services:

- Independent Organisational Review - an independent review of Ability West teams and management structures was completed in 2022 to assess the changes of the disability sector, how these relate to Ability West presently, and to recommend actions to undertake to respond to the current challenges and to be prepared for the continued changes in our services and sector. The outcome of this report led to an immediate action to restructure the Senior Management Team to ensure capacity to support existing structures and to respond to changing needs across the organisation. This report has been shared with the HSE and will continue to inform ongoing discussions with them as Ability West continue to plan for the future. This is further detailed on page 13.
- Living My Life - The HSE funded pilot, Living My Life, has commenced with the recruitment of a Project Manager and Social Worker

and the establishment of a Steering Committee. This pilot project recognises the many individuals who feel 'forgotten about' when it comes to residential services, as the limited funding available for new residential services typically is allocated to emergency referrals or to families who are already in crisis. This interagency project with Brothers of Charity Services Ireland West Region aims to demonstrate that when we can support people to move to their own home in a planned manner, using person centred approaches, supporting skills development to enhance a person's independence skills, and upholding their right to housing under the UNCRPD, that the outcomes will prove to be a better quality of experience for the person who has moved and is likely to provide a most cost-effective model to the State.

- Toward a More Integrated & Responsive System of Disability Care – Ability West are engaging in a HSE-led cross agency forum to respond to the significant and changing needs faced by disability service providers in the West with a view to establishing change targets and strategies.

I would like to take this opportunity to thank our Chairperson, Kevin Newell, and the Board members for their continued support and guidance. I would like to acknowledge the children and adults supported by Ability West, their parents, carers, and families for their ongoing co-operation and understanding during these challenging times. Thanks to the Assistant Directors of Client Services, Finance and Human Resources, Department Heads, Managers,

Unit Directors, all staff, participants on the Community Employment Scheme, Galway Rural Development's RSS, and TÚS schemes, and all volunteers for their huge contributions to our services in 2022. Your commitment and dedication is, as always, very much acknowledged and appreciated.

I would also like to thank the HSE, in particular Breda Crehan-Roche, Chief Officer, Community Healthcare West; John Fitzmaurice, Head of Disability Services, General Managers, Aoife O'Donohue, and Mary O'Donnell and Head of Finance, Liam Fogarty, and their respective teams who provide ongoing support and assistance to Ability West. Thanks also to the many statutory, non statutory and voluntary service providers, and umbrella groups, that we work with for their ongoing co-operations and assistance.

Sadly, a number of people in Ability West passed away in 2022; staff member Alison Bradshaw (Cois na Coille), and people we support Mary Crehan (Blackrock ADS & Seacrest), Michael Donnelly (Mountbellew ADS), Carmel Furey (Blackrock ADS & Clochatuisce), Noreen Halloran (Snipe & Ellen View), Aidan Hussey (The Glebe & Abbeytrinity), Padraic Kelly (Blackrock ADS & Clochatuisce), Veronica Kilkelly (The Glebe), Mary B. King (Criost Linn & Clochan), and Patrick (Gerard) Lynskey (Blackrock ADS). They are all dearly missed. Many of our staff, people we support, board members and volunteers also experienced bereavements throughout the year and we extend our deepest sympathies to them. May they all rest in peace.

**Audrey Pidgeon**  
**Chief Executive**

# DIRECTORS' REPORT

Ability West is a company limited by guarantee and not having a share capital; and is also a registered charity.

Ability West has a Constitution which outlines how Directors are elected and co-opted to the Board. All Directors have a maximum term of office of nine years, i.e. three consecutive terms of three years. The right mix of skills and experience is considered for the composition of the Board to ensure its effectiveness as a Board and that it is representative of stakeholders' interests.

**During 2022 the Board of Directors met 12 times, attendance was recorded as follows:**

| NAME             | Jan | Feb | Mar | Apr | May | Jun                 | Jul | Aug | Sep                 | Oct | Nov | Dec | TOTAL |
|------------------|-----|-----|-----|-----|-----|---------------------|-----|-----|---------------------|-----|-----|-----|-------|
| Kevin Newell     | ✓   | ✓   | ✓   | ✓   | X   | ✓                   | ✓   | ✓   | ✓                   | ✓   | ✓   | ✓   | 11    |
| Nikki De Taranto | ✓   | ✓   | ✓   | ✓   | ✓   | X                   | ✓   | ✓   | ✓                   | ✓   | ✓   | ✓   | 11    |
| Breda Dolan      | ✓   | ✓   | ✓   | ✓   | X   | ✓                   | ✓   | ✓   | ✓                   | ✓   | X   | X   | 9     |
| Mick Finnerty    | ✓   | ✓   | ✓   | ✓   | ✓   | ✓                   | X   | ✓   | ✓                   | ✓   | ✓   | ✓   | 12    |
| Cormac Flynn     | ✓   | ✓   | X   | X   | X   | X                   | X   | X   | Resigned 26/09/2022 |     |     |     | 2     |
| Sean McGrath     | ✓   | ✓   | ✓   | ✓   | ✓   | ✓                   | ✓   | ✓   | ✓                   | X   | ✓   | ✓   | 11    |
| James McNabb     | ✓   | ✓   | ✓   | ✓   | ✓   | X                   | ✓   | ✓   | ✓                   | ✓   | ✓   | ✓   | 11    |
| Mary O'Mahony    | ✓   | ✓   | ✓   | ✓   | ✓   | Resigned 30/05/2022 |     |     |                     |     |     | 5   |       |
| Dermot O'Neill   | ✓   | ✓   | ✓   | ✓   | ✓   | ✓                   | ✓   | ✓   | X                   | ✓   | ✓   | ✓   | 11    |



## BOARD OF DIRECTORS 2022

**Mr. Kevin Newell,**  
Chairperson and Co-opted Director

**Ms. Nicola de Taranto,**  
Elected Director (resigned 2023)

**Ms. Breda Dolan,**  
Co-opted Director

**Mr. Michael (Mick) Finnerty,**  
Co-opted Director

**Mr. Cormac Flynn,**  
Co-opted Director (resigned September 2022)

**Mr. Sean McGrath,**  
Co-opted Director (resigned 03 February 2023)

**Mr. James McNabb,**  
Elected Director (elected in June 2021)

**Mr. Kevin Flaherty (Ó Flatharta),**  
Co-opted Director (retired December 2021)

**Mrs. Mary O'Mahony,**  
Co-opted Director (resigned May 2022)

**Mr. Dermot O'Neill,**  
Company Secretary, and Co-opted Director

The Chief Executive is not a member of the Board, and both the Chief Executive and the Recording Secretary are recorded as 'in attendance' at Board meetings.

Each Board meeting agenda has standing items which inter alia include: Declaration of Conflict of Interest/Loyalty, Minutes, Matters Arising, Chairperson's Business, Chief Executive's Report, Financial Update, Appointments/Remuneration, Any Other Business and Evaluation. Other items are added to the agenda depending on business requirements at any given time.

The Board of Directors ensures that the vision, mission and core values of the organisation are upheld and realised through our strategic plan and service plans. The Board is collectively responsible for the operations of the organisation and devolves responsibility for the conduct of business to the Chief Executive, who in turn delegates through the line management structure. The Chief Executive accounts for her stewardship of the organisation at each Board meeting.

Within the Board's broad governance role are a number of specific roles

that are exercised, including: approval of the strategic plan, preparation of annual financial statements, and reporting to members at the AGM. The reserved functions of the Board are: the recruitment and appointment of the Chief Executive, approval of the annual budget, policy approval, acquisition and disposal of company assets, and overall corporate governance.

The Board of Directors is supported by a committee structure which deals effectively with specific aspects of the company. These are as follows:

|                          | Name  | Board of Directors Meetings 2022 | Finance Committee Meetings 2022 | Audit & Risk Committee Meetings 2022 | Nominations Committee Meetings 2022 | Quality Safety Board Committee | Visiting Committee                        |
|--------------------------|---|----------------------------------|---------------------------------|--------------------------------------|-------------------------------------|--------------------------------|---|
| <b>Board Members</b>     | <b>Kevin Newell</b>                                       | 11/12                            |                                 |                                      | 1/1                                 | 2/2                            | Visits were suspended due to the pandemic |
|                          | <b>Nikki De Taranto</b>                                   | 11/12                            |                                 |                                      |                                     | 2/2                            |   |
|                          | <b>Breada Dolan</b>                                       | 9/12                             | 3/4                             |                                      |                                     | 2/2                            |   |
|                          | <b>Mick Finnerty</b>                                      | 12/12                            |                                 |                                      |                                     | 2/2                            |   |
|                          | <b>Cormac Flynn</b><br><small>Resigned 26/09/22</small>   | 2/8                              |                                 | 0/1                                  | 1/1                                 | 0/1                            |   |
|                          | <b>Sean McGrath</b>                                       | 11/12                            |                                 |                                      |                                     | 1/2                            |   |
|                          | <b>James McNabb</b>                                       | 11/12                            |                                 |                                      |                                     | 2/2                            |   |
|                          | <b>Mary O'Mahoney</b><br><small>Resigned 30/05/22</small> | 5/5                              |                                 |                                      |                                     | 1/1                            |   |
|                          | <b>Dermot O'Neill</b>                                     | 11/12                            | 3/4                             |                                      | 1/1                                 | 2/2                            |   |
| <b>Committee Members</b> | <b>Jack King</b>  |                                  |                                 | 2/2                                  |                                     |                                |   |
|                          | <b>Kevin Flavin</b>                                       |                                  |                                 | 1/2                                  |                                     |                                |   |
|                          | <b>Gerry Walsh</b>  |                                  |                                 | 2/2                                  |                                     |                                |   |
|                          | <b>Páraic Lawless</b>                                     |                                  | 1/4                             |                                      |                                     |                                |   |

## EXECUTIVE MANAGEMENT

The landscape of disability service provision has changed significantly over the last 10-15 years, which has placed increasing pressures on the sector and disability service providers. Over this time, the Ability West work force has increased by over 200 employees; there has been a similar growth in the number of people we support. In addition to this growth, the needs of people we support has diversified and intensified and since 2013 we have also increased the organisational functions to incorporate compliance requirements, most notably HIQA standards.

The existing structure of teams and management has remained largely unchanged during this period of growth, and so in 2022 an independent review was commissioned by Ability West of its management structure. The purpose of this review was to provide an objective recommendation as to how best Ability West can adequately respond to the existing demands on services as well as ensuring the organisation continues to be fit

for purpose as it continues to grow for years to come.

The report has made a number of recommendations that are being addressed by the executive and Board of Directors and in discussions with our funders. One of the recommendations that was promptly implemented was to enhance capacity at executive and operational level to support the teams and delivery at frontline level through a restructure of the Senior Management Team. Effective from January 2023, the former Client Services Directorate has been replaced with two distinct directorates, i.e. Operational Supports and Services and Clinical Supports and Services. Following these new appointments the Senior Management Team structure has changed between 2022 and 2023.

The executive management in Ability West comprises of the Chief Executive and the Senior Management Team, the members are as follows:

| SMT 2022  | SMT 2023  |
|---|---|
| Audrey Pidgeon, CEO   | Audrey Pidgeon, CEO   |
| John McHugo, Director of Finance                                  | John McHugo, Director of Finance  |
| Cathal Esler, Director of Human Resources (resigned October 2022) | Cristina Mendes, Director of Human Resources (commenced January 2023)               |
| Pat Tyrrell, Director of Client Services (resigned April 2022)    | Mary Callanan, Director of Operational Supports & Services (commenced January 2023) |
|   | Bryan Gallagher, Director of Clinical Supports & Services (commenced December 2022) |

Recording Secretary, Carol A. Browne resigned May 2022  
 Interim Recording Secretary Paulette Cully May-October 2022  
 Recording Secretary, Nicola Lawless, commenced October 2022

### Senior Management Team Members 2022



Audrey Pidgeon (CEO)



John McHugo  
Director of  
Finance



Cathal Esler  
Director of Human  
Resources  
(Resigned In 2022)



Pat Tyrrell  
Director of Client  
Services  
(Resigned in 2022)

The Board of Directors meets with the Senior Management Team biannually to discuss various aspects of operations and service delivery along with reviewing the Corporate Risk Register and progress on the Strategic Plan 2019-2023.

## STRUCTURE, GOVERNANCE AND MANAGEMENT

### *Constitution*

There have been no changes to the principle objectives since the last Directors' Report. Ability West are an approved housing body and there are plans to amend the Constitution to bring it into compliance with the new Housing Regulations (Housing (Regulation of Approved Housing Bodies) Act 2019) by the end of 2023.

### *Appointment of Directors*

The first Family Forum each year will nominate two unrelated family representatives to the Board, taking into consideration skill mix of the Board and the expertise required. Both individuals will meet the criteria of 'family member' as defined in the Constitution.

A 'family member' means the parent, grandparent, legal guardian, sibling, spouse of a sibling, child of a sibling, aunt, uncle, spouse of an aunt or uncle, or child of an aunt or uncle of a service user. The nominees are formally elected at the AGM in accordance the Constitution. Other Directors are co-opted having regard to the optimum skill-mix and expertise of the Board. It was decided by the board to extend the term for the current family forum representatives until the family forum in 2023 due to the disruption of the pandemic on meetings and the election process.

The Board and Nominations Committee are in the process of implementing a recruitment strategy to attract directors to increase its membership to an optimal size and populate the board with the desired skill mix including legal, housing, human resources, and compliance.

### *Recruitment, Induction and Training of Directors*

The Board of Directors, supported by the Nominations Committee, has been actively renewing its membership over the past few years, taking into account a balance of the abilities needed to tackle the wide-ranging responsibilities of the Board. Cognisant of this, the existing Board Members' skill mix comprises of expertise in technology, construction, engineering, finance, education (intellectual disability), management and marketing. Given the voluntary nature of the role, Ability West has recruited new Directors through Volunteer Galway and Boardmatch.

Comprehensive induction training is provided for new Directors upon commencement of their term in office. This training inter alia includes: briefing on the Constitution and company structure, the Strategic Plan, Corporate and Clinical Governance, Charities Governance Code, Guidance for Charity Trustees (Charities Regulator), Code of Conduct for Board Members, Conflict of Interest/Loyalty Policy.

The Code of Conduct is reviewed, approved and signed off annually by the Board of Directors. Additional training (in-house/courses/webinars) is also provided to Directors and a number of Directors completed training which included Board Roles and Responsibilities.



## **Organisational Structure and Decision Making**

Ability West is governed by the Board of Directors who are elected in accordance with the company's Constitution. The Directors are non-executive members of the company, who receive no remuneration for their services, and they represent diverse skills, expertise and backgrounds. The Board of Directors meets 11 times per year and collectively has non-executive responsibility for how the organisation operates today and what it achieves over the long-term.

The Board of Directors delegates the day to day management of Ability West to the Chief Executive, who is in turn supported by a tiered management system that identifies clear lines of accountability and responsibility at each level.

The Board recognises the value of high standards of corporate governance and to this end is supported by various Board Committees. These committees are responsible for overseeing particular aspects of the work of the company and report directly to the Board.

Ability West has a vibrant volunteer programme which augments the programmes delivered in our services. Volunteers undergo a comprehensive screening and training process. There is an update on volunteers later in this report.

## **Risk Management**

The Directors have assessed the major risks to which the company is exposed, in particular those related to its operations and finances, and are satisfied that systems and procedures are in place. Management of risk is viewed by the Board as a corporate governance priority and the company has a robust Integrated Risk Management Policy and Procedure in place which is reviewed every three years, or more frequently if required. This policy was most recently revised and approved by the Board of Directors in November 2020 and will be reviewed in 2023. The Directors review the Corporate Risk Register on a regular basis. A number of risks were added to the Corporate Risk Register in 2022 (i.e. insufficient staffing, non-compliance with policies, procedures, legislation and regulations, staff training and development and Insufficient Multi-Disciplinary Therapy services to people we support).

These risks will be monitored very closely in 2023 particularly in areas of staffing, governance and management and reputational risk.

The company's internal control systems are supported by policies, procedures, protocols and guidelines covering all aspects of the work of the organisation.

## **Governance, Standards and Compliance**

The Board of Directors reviewed its compliance with the Charities Governance Code at meetings held in September and December 2022. The Charities Regulator's Compliance Record Form was completed and our compliance notified to the Charities Regulator.

Ability West is committed to complying with the Guidelines for Charitable Organisations Fundraising from the Public which was issued by the Charities Regulator in 2017. A number of robust policies and procedures are in place to support fundraising and these are reviewed every three years, or more frequently if required.

Ability West is registered on the Register of Lobbying which is maintained by the Standards in Public Office Commission and we complied with the submission of lobbying returns during 2022.

A Central Register of Beneficial Ownership was established in 2019 as a further measure to assist combatting money-laundering and terrorist financing. Ability West filed our beneficial ownership information on the Central Register, which is maintained by the Registrar of Companies, and we continue to update this register as relevant.

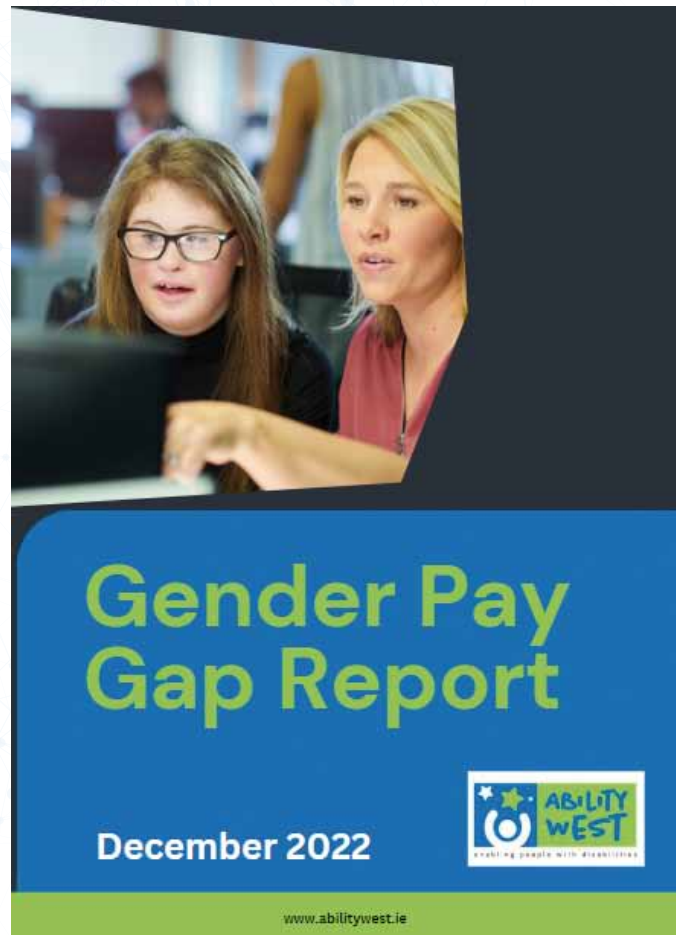
Ability West is registered as an Approved Housing Body (AHB). Following the commencement of The Housing (Regulation of Approved Housing Bodies) Act 2019, its full implementation in 2022 and the establishment of an Approved Housing Bodies Regulatory Authority (AHBRA), Ability West is now required to comply with the legislations and its associated regulations by the end of 2023. The standards outline the key outcomes that AHBs are required to achieve in relation to membership, roles and responsibilities, procedures for decision making, control and oversight, conflicts of interest, code of conduct, effective governing, accountability, honesty, integrity and risk management. A significant amount of work is ongoing to align Ability West with the standards.

During 2022 the Board of Directors completed the Health Service Executive's (HSE) Annual Compliance Statement for Section 39 funded agencies in respect of 2021. This statement was signed by the Chairperson and a Board Member and submitted to the HSE in

advance of the end of May deadline. The Annual Compliance Statement for 2022 was submitted at the end of May 2023.

The Annual Financial Monitoring Report for 2021 was completed and signed by the Chief Executive and the Director of Finance and submitted to the HSE in May 2022. The 2022 report was submitted to the HSE in May 2023.

The annual budget is approved by the Board of Directors. Management accounts, including comparisons with the annual budget programme, are reported to the Board on a regular basis by the Chairperson of the Finance Committee. The approval of staff appointments/remuneration is a standing item on Board Meeting agendas.





Our strategic plan provides a roadmap for services, supports and the organisational development of Ability West. It outlines the destination that we wish the organisation to arrive at in 2023. The plan will ensure that Ability West is best placed to achieve our vision and mission in the most effective, efficient, fair, equitable and person-centred manner.

The Covid-19 pandemic has impacted on the progress on the strategic plan. Below outlines progress on achieving the objectives of these goals as follows:

### **Organisation's Culture**

An audit of the culture of Ability West services has been undertaken and completed in 2023. Eileen Costello-Conneely, Quality & Compliance Manager, led on a series of focus groups with stakeholders across our services and compiled a culture review report. Themes and priorities from this review report will be addressed through ongoing work at Senior Management and Board level and preparation for our next Strategic Plan.

### **Change Management**

- Ability West is progressing on actions to enhance person centred and best practices across our services. In late 2022 the Senior Management Team structure was amended to create capacity, i.e. within the Directorate of Clinical Supports and Services, to further develop the model of supports and person centred approaches taken by the organisation to provide supports and services to people who access our services.
- Ability West is demonstrating itself as a learning organisation, through current service improvement initiatives based on the learning and experiences of people we support during recent challenges.



## Effective Teams

- Significant work has been undertaken of a strategic framework for the development of a talent pipeline, which aims to support existing staff to progress and develop their careers within Ability West
- Renewed training and workshop schedules have been developed and implemented to enhance supports and to empower our staff in frontline services to provide best practice supports.

## Meaningful Outcomes

- Work is ongoing to utilise the grant received under Strengthening Disability Services fund to undertake a significant review of and to update our Person Centred policy and procedures across our services.

## Community Inclusion

- With the easing of COVID-19 restrictions Ability West services have re-engaged with our local communities, to enrich and enhance the delivery of our services.
- A community celebration day was held in May 2022 to mark the occasion of the organisation's 60th anniversary with the communities who have been critical to the development of our services from the outset.
- The Best Buddies volunteering programme was extended in 2022 to a Best Buddies Citizen programme, which will offer befriending opportunities for members of our communities with people we support and adults of all ages.
- Extensive work continues through lobbying for change at local, regional and national level on behalf of Ability West and the people and families we support.

## Secure Sustainable Resources

- The post of Community Development Officer commenced in 2022, following review of the organisational approach to community engagement and fundraising.

- Ability West continues to foster relationships with funding bodies and umbrella groups to identify where funding streams become available.
- Ability West have sought funds to continue to build and develop our services to meet the needs of people we support.

## Continuous Quality Improvement, Monitoring and Evaluation

- Ability West is currently updating our corporate and operational policies and procedures to respond to the changing environment of legislation and policy under which we operate. In particular, 2023 will see the full implementation of the Assisted Decision Making (Capacity) Act, as well as the Housing Legislation (The Housing (Regulation of Approved Housing Bodies) Act 2019), both of which will have a significant impact on how we function as a service provider.
- Ability West is actively engaged in service improvement initiatives to increase our performance against quality standards in our HIQA registered services. We are working with the HSE and HIQA on these plans.

## Communication

- Ability West continue to work on improving communication methods and practices with all stakeholders.
- Invest in technology – screens delivered to all services to ensure that we could all meet remotely during the 60th anniversary celebrations.
- A number of organisation-wide briefings were held in 2022
- Visits to services recommenced in 2022 following the lifting of public health restrictions on visits during the pandemic.
- Continued to use our social media and online platforms to communicate with all stakeholders. Live at 11 show, Yammer are internal platforms used to communicate with staff and people we support.

# QUALITY AND COMPLIANCE UPDATE 2022

By Eileen Costello-Conneely,  
Quality and Compliance Manager

Ability West operates under a wide range of legislation, regulations and standards throughout areas of corporate governance, management, services and supports. Some of these areas include company legislation, charities legislation, employment legislation, health and safety legislation, codes of practice, Statutory Instruments (SI) 366 and 367, national standards for residential and respite services, the HSE interim standards for day services, and national policies and procedures such as Children First and Safeguarding Vulnerable Persons at Risk of Abuse.

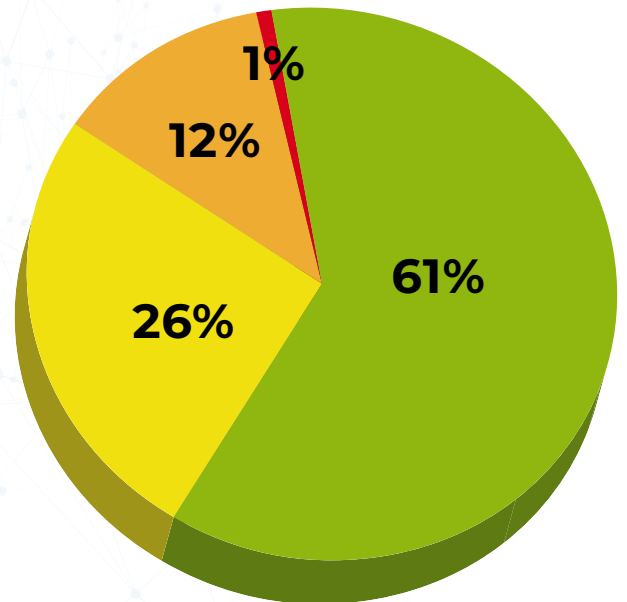
Ability West has a Quality Management System in place, encompassing all services and supports, which provides a framework for overall integrated quality management. This is accredited by the National Standards Authority of Ireland (NSAI) to the international standard ISO 9001:2015, and we have been successful in re-registration to this standard in 2022. We have also been successful in maintaining certification to the HR standard 'Excellence Through People 1000:2017', which is accredited by the NSAI. The organisation has established risk management processes, aligned to the standard ISO 31000:2018 which is a framework for integrated risk management.

## Health Information and Quality Authority (HIQA)

Ability West complies with the HIQA National Standards for Residential Services for Children and Adults with Disabilities, along with the applicable legislation. The standards and legislation are applicable to our residential and respite services and as at the end of 2022, of which we have 29 designated centres.

27 inspections were undertaken by HIQA during 2022 and inspection reports can be accessed on HIQA's website or by contacting the individual designated centre. As details below overall inspections results display compliance levels (compliant & substantially compliant) were at 87% and non-compliance levels were at 13% at the end of 2022.

2022 HIQA Inspections – Overall Compliance Levels



- Compliant
- Substantially Compliant
- Non-Compliant Moderate
- Non-Compliant Major

While compliance in some regulations was consistent and strong in 2022, e.g. Protection, Health Care, General Welfare, Complaints, themes emerged particularly in the latter half of 2022 of deteriorating compliance levels. This was evident in regulations such as Governance and Management, Staffing, Person in Charge and Risk Management.

The Quality & Safety Executive Committee undertook a review of the compliance trends from Provider Led Audits and HIQA inspections and implemented an improvement plan 2022 in an attempt to increase compliance levels across all HIQA -registered services. However, the organisational challenges around recruitment and retention of staff, and the increasing demands and changing needs of services proved to impede the success of this action plan in 2022.

This trend has continued into 2023, and an organisational focus has been undertaken on restoring quality standards in our HIQA registered services. The CEO and Senior Management Team of Ability West are working closely with HIQA and the HSE to identify the underlying contributing factors to these challenges and collaborating with both

agencies to implement service improvement initiatives.

### Day Services – New Directions

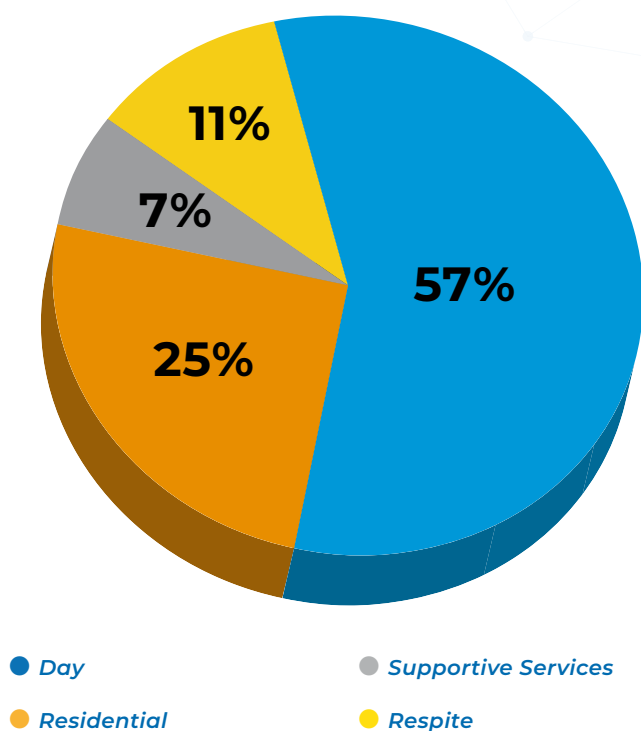
Ability West implement HSE 'Interim Standards for New Directions, Services and Supports for Adults with Disabilities' across our adult day services. Ability West received funding from the HSE in 2022 to appoint a Day Services Development Officer, whose role is to support and oversee the implementation of the New Directions Standards across day services, and to be the liaison between Ability West and the HSE Day Services Co-Ordinator in HSE Community Healthcare West Disability Services.

### Feedback and Complaints

Ability West welcomes feedback and complaints, and information in this regard is available in all services. A copy of the complaints, compliments and feedback policy and procedure is available on request to Ability West's offices – 091 540900 or [info@abilitywest.ie](mailto:info@abilitywest.ie).

Feedback recorded for 2022 totaled 28. The majority of the feedback received were compliments on the quality of services and supports to service users, most of which came from family members. A breakdown of the feedback in terms of where it was addressed to is provided below.

2022 Feedback



Complaints - 53 complaints were received in 2022. At the start of 2023, 72% of complaints for this period have been resolved, with 28% remaining open and actively being addressed.

### Health and Safety

Ability West has in place a Corporate Safety Statement and each location has a Centre Specific Safety Statement. The organisation complies with the Safety, Health and Welfare at Work Act 2005 and associated regulations.

Ability West has a Quality Management Information System (QMIS) and one of the functions of this is a management tool used to record incidents, this is a key element of managing health and safety. The total number of incidents recorded on QMIS for 2022 was 3,900, There was a significant decrease in records for the second 6-month period of 2022, which equates mainly to reduction in Covid 19 cases during this period. The three highest categories of incidents reported in 2022 were as follows:

1. Behaviours that Challenge
2. Infection Control (incorporating COVID-19 activity across services and teams)
3. Slips, trips and falls

This reflects the challenges faced in services regarding the changing needs of people we support, and managing pandemic-related outbreaks and staff absences.

### Freedom of Information and Data Protection

Ability West complies with Freedom of Information and Data Protection legislation, with processes in place in this regard. The organisation has a Freedom of Information Publication Scheme in place which can be accessed through our website. Data Protection policies and procedures are also in place. Activity for 2022 FOI and Data Protection are as follows;

| FOI and Data Protection Statistics  | 2022 TOTAL |
|---|------------|
| No. of Request FOI  | 11         |
| No. of Internal Reviews   | 0          |
| No of reviews completed for Ombudsman                                     | 1          |
| No. of Subject Access Requests  | 1          |
| No. of Subject Access Requests – Under Administration Access by HR        | 0          |
| No. of Data Breaches – Data Protection Reported to Data Commission Office | 2          |

# ADVOCACY COUNCIL UPDATE 2022

**By Stephen Joyce, John Howard & Shane Scanlon**

The role of the Advocacy Council is to support and assist service users to utilise their voice and making their rights a reality. The council assists people we support in taking ownership of their own lives, giving them autonomy and a sense of ownership and control. It helps them to understand their rights, explore their choices and express their thoughts and concerns. The council aims to support people we support to have their wishes genuinely considered.

Every day service and residential houses are represented by a Champion, supported by staff as necessary. The council is available to each centre/house to offer support and guidance with any advocacy matters that may arise. The council then liaises with, and utilise all relevant departments and connections available to us in a bid to achieve the desired outcome, while all the time ensuring that the service user is at the forefront of any discussions and decisions.

Despite the lingering effects of the Covid-19 pandemic, 2022 saw the Advocacy Council continued to reach out to everyone who avails of the services within Ability West.

Members of the Council embarked on visiting all the centres throughout the county consulting with their members on all matters to do with Advocacy, Human Rights and promoting the benefits of the Assisted Decision Making (Capacity) Act 2015.

There are six Advocacy Council meetings annually, four Advocacy Champion meetings annually and two Advocacy Council meetings with the Senior Management Team annually. The Chairperson of the Advocacy Council in 2022 was Stephen Joyce. The two facilitators for the Advocacy Council are John Howard and Shane Scanlon.

Advocacy Champions connected to Day Services and Residential homes engaged in specifically designed training to help them understand the implications of the Assisted Decision Making (Capacity) Act.

Stephen Joyce and his co-host Joseph Faulkner continue to develop and integrate advocacy issues into their radio show "Live @ 11" which is broadcast across the organization, weekly via zoom.

Important partnerships are being developed and solidified with organisations and advocacy

groups across Galway city and county with the aim of promoting and advocating on behalf of the disability sector and Ability West.

Early in 2022 it was evident that the pandemic had left a devastating and lasting mark on many people's lives, taking many loved ones from us all. Through collaboration with Galway City Council Parks Department and Galway City Local Community Development Committee, a beautiful, tranquil remembrance area was developed in Terryland Forest Park (Sandyvale) containing a bench and two wheelchair accessible picnic tables. A stone inscribed "In memory of those who have touched our lives and remain forever in our hearts" marks the spot for the community as a whole to remember loved ones lost.

The Advocacy Council looks forward to building links and developing on the good work done to positively affect the lives of all those we represent.

## **Message from Stephen Joyce, Chairperson of the Advocacy Council**

Hi ya, my name is Stephen Joyce I am the chairperson of the Advocacy Council for Ability West. 2022 was a busy year since covid went away we visit the centre of the city and county with John and Shane it was really good to get out and seeing everyone we went to Clifden, Tuam Mountbellew and the city centre too it was mighty. Looking forward to 2023 it will be another busy year meeting up with my council and champions and hopefully we meet up face to face instead of zoom. Live at 11 show was a busy year for 2022, we had guest from the past staff member from Ability West to see how they getting on and also having Marc Roberts Eurovision star, and 2023 will be busy year for live at 11 Thank you from Stephen Joyce



**Four champions with their certs for participating in an Assisted Decision Making (Capacity) Act course.**

**LtoR :David O'Sullivan, Kawthar Yahya, Matthew Brennan and Joanne Lawless.**

# VOLUNTEER UPDATE 2022

By Linda Keane, Volunteer Manager



*Best Buddies Launch*

*LtoR backrow: Kevin Newell, Audrey Pideon, Minister Anne Rabbitte, Dermot O'Neill*

*Frontrow: Volunteering Manager, Linda Keane*

Volunteers are the wonderful people who enhance the lives of so many people in our services.

Engaging with people in our services has been a challenge over the past two years as the plan was to keep everyone safe, but it was also important to ensure that people had an opportunity for meeting others and social activities.

## Best Buddies

### *Best Buddies Friendship Walk*

2022 was the return of many things and last but not least was the return of the Best Buddies Friendship Walk at University of Galway. The aim is to raise awareness that everyone should be able to make friends – friends who will share their time, interests and whole lot of fun. There are always so many happy faces at this event!



*Friendship Walk 2022*

### *Best Buddies Ball*

After a three year wait, the first Best Buddies Ball took place in the Menlo Park Hotel Friday, 6th May 2022. It was a fabulous night when a wonderful group of friends were reunited after a long time apart. Our Guest of Honour was Minister for Disability Anne Rabbitte who experienced first-hand what Best Buddies brings to the lives of people with a disability but also to the volunteers, some who travelled from different counties to be with us on the night. Ollie Turner was in his usual brilliant form as MC and the band "Cruz" kept everyone on the dance floor until the wee hours.



*Paul Boyle, Connacht Rugby with his buddy Paul Cannon at the best buddies Ball 2022*

### *Citizens Programme*

We were very proud in October 2022 to launch the Best Buddies Citizens Programme. Ability West were the only organisation in Ireland delivering the Best Buddies Citizens programme in 2022.

Experience showed that the Best Buddies College Programme brought about so many heartwarming friendships and we waited so long to extend the programme but it didn't happen because of Covid.

The Best Buddies Citizens Programmes has been a very effective initiative which promotes social inclusion, community participation, builds greater networks within communities and enhances the life of a person with an intellectual disability through fun social activities and positive interactions with others outside their family circle and the services they attend.

The Best Buddies Programme is an initiative which has enabled Ability West to create life changing friendships with people in the wider community who might not otherwise have engaged with its Volunteer Programme. People are generally drawn to the name "Best Buddies" because it sounds fun. It sounds easy and doable for those who might not have ever met a person with an intellectual disability. "Best Buddies" actually sells the idea of befriending and has served Ability West over the years.



*Paul Boyle, Connacht Rugby speaking at the best buddies launch event.*

We were delighted to welcome Minister of State with Responsibility for Disabilities with the Department of Children, Equality, Disability, Integration and Youth Anne Rabbitte, to officially launch the Best Buddies Citizens

Programme in the Clayton Hotel. Speakers included Paul Boyle from Connacht Rugby and his buddy, Paul Cannon. We are very fortunate to have such wonderful ambassadors for our programme!



*St Patrick's Day Parade 2022*



*Galway city St Patricks Day parade*

### **St. Patrick's Day Parade**

As part of Ability West's 60th Anniversary Celebrations, a group of people from Ability West marched in the St. Patrick's Day Parade in Galway City. They were supported by a team of Best Buddies students. We displayed our adapted bikes which were cycled through the city by Sarah and John with passengers on board! We even had St. Patrick marching up the streets with us. This was a most enjoyable for all our participants and we are looking forward to making it an annual event.

### **Fitness Camp**

There was great delight that the Fitness Camp in August returned as an in person activity. We were especially pleased that Goals Gym in Terryland accommodated our group of fitness enthusiasts in such a welcoming manner. Barry Foley and his team of volunteers supported those who wished to stay fit during the summer holidays. This is a wonderful activity when day services are closed for the holidays and there are many smiles at the end of each session, despite the intense workouts!

### **Cairdeas Disco in Lackagh**

2022 marked the return of our Cairdeas Disco in Lackagh, Turloughmore. It was wonderful to not only see many of the “regulars” return, but to welcome so many new people. It is open to all and gives an important social outlet to those who want to throw on their dancing shoes. Ability West is very fortunate to have a team of volunteers who support this event on the last Friday of each month. A number of volunteers have been involved for the past 16 years but we also have new recruits who are a great asset to this team of dedicated volunteers.



*Cairdeas Disco*

### **Corporate Volunteers Enhance our Gardens**

We were very fortunate when PriceWaterhouseCooper (“PwC”) and Medtronic sent two teams of volunteers to help us give two gardens at our group homes a wonderful facelift.

A team of volunteers from PwC arrived Seacrest Group Home on Friday July 1st and did a fabulous job in making the garden a more appealing place to enjoy a few hours in the sunshine – when it comes!

On Saturday, 27th August a team of volunteers from Medtronic arrived to Ard na Greine Group Home to transform its outdoor living area to an inviting space for everyone to enjoy a relaxing time out.

Both groups of volunteers left happy faces on those living in both group homes. We all love to spend time in a colourful garden, especially on a day fine. The time and effort given by both teams of volunteers was very much appreciated.



*Staff from Price Water House Coopers (PwC) volunteering their time to uplift the gardens at some of our facilities.*



*Staff from Medtronic volunteering their time to uplift the gardens at some of our facilities*

# HOUSING PILOT UPDATE

By Olive Keane

Following engagement with Galway based parent representative group, Proactive Carers Group, Ability West and Brothers of Charity Services Ireland West Region (Galway) have worked together to seek support to implement planned access to residential services for people with intellectual disability. The working group submitted a budget proposal in 2021 through the office of Anne Rabbitte, Minister of State with Responsibility for Disabilities with the Department of Children, Equality, Disability, Integration and Youth ahead of planning for Budget 2022 requesting a resource to offer 32 residential placements to adults with intellectual disability over a 5-year period. We were thrilled to have pilot funding approved, and this was identified as a Priority Action in 2022 in the HSE National Service Plan following the publication of the Disability Capacity Review to 2032 in which the gap between service demand and service provision was clearly documented.

We were very fortunate to have the support of Minister Anne Rabbitte T.D., Minister for Disabilities, and John Fitzmaurice, Head of Disability Services in Community Healthcare West in our proposal for this project. The new Housing Strategy for Disabled People was launched at the beginning of 2022 by Minister Darragh O'Brien, Minister Anne Rabbitte and Minister Peter Burke, which will further enhance the efforts of this pilot.

Work commenced on the development of this project with the appointment of Project Manager and Social Worker in 2022. Work has continued into 2023, with the establishment of a Steering Committee, ongoing recruitment to a dedicated Multi-Disciplinary Team to this project, and identifying candidates for the project. A feasibility study will run alongside development of the plan over the next five years and it is anticipated that this will demonstrate the successful housing of 32 person supported and ensure further funding to expand the project to secure sustained funding for planned access to residential services.

# ABILITY WEST AS AN APPROVED HOUSING BODY

By Peter Burke

Ability West is an Approved Housing Body (AHB) registered with the Approved Housing Bodies Regulatory Authority (AHBRA) which was established in 2021. The Housing (Regulation of Approved Housing Bodies) Act 2019 ("the Act") provides for the regulation of Approved Housing Bodies. The AHBRA standards for AHB's were published in February 2022. Ability West are working towards becoming compliant with the relevant standards set out in the regulations by the end of 2023 as required by AHBRA. AHBRA's function include establishing and maintaining a register of AHB's, prepare and publish AHB approved standards, monitor and access compliance by AHB's with the approved standards, carry out investigations and protect tenants and AHB's.

The Standards establish a set of outcomes that AHBs are required to achieve. AHBs are subject to a range of legal, regulatory, funding and statutory obligations and must comply with existing requirements. It is the primary responsibility of AHBs to identify these obligations and provide assurances that they have effective procedures for monitoring and reporting on compliance. Ability West's Ancillary Services Department is working closely with other departments within the Organisation to ensure that we meet our obligations in a timely manner to provide suitable housing for all our tenants.





# POSITIVE BEHAVIOUR SUPPORT TEAM

## Enhancing compassionate and effective approaches for people with behaviour support needs

Aoife Ryan and Dave O'Regan of the Positive Behaviour Support Team and Dr Kristen Maglieri of the Psychology Department had the opportunity to showcase the work of Ability West 'in person' at two national and international Behaviour Analysis conferences during 2022. Aoife, Dave, and Kristen have been training in an emerging area in Behaviour Analysis called Practical Functional Assessment and Skills-Based Treatment. This intervention package focuses on teaching meaningful life skills such as communication, coping skills, and cooperation in a safe and compassionate manner with the aim of improving independence and quality of life while also reducing behaviours that challenge.

In 2022, they presented their experience of bringing this new approach to the staff and people supported by Ability West at The Division of Behaviour Analysis conference in Galway in April and at The Association for Behaviour Analysis International conference in Dublin in September. Kristen and Aoife stated, 'It was amazing to share our experience of implementing this process in our organisation with our colleagues and to connect with other experienced professionals in this area'. The trio is looking forward to expanding this important work across the service in the coming months and years.



*Positive Behaviour Support Team at Ability West.  
LtoR: Dave O'Regan, Aoife Ryan and Kristen Maglieri*

# HOMESHARING

## By Angharad Langford

Angharad Langford is the Homesharing Coordinator for Ability West. Here is an overview of what Homesharing is all about:

Home Sharing is a family based respite and full-time living service. The model is inclusive, community based and is an interagency service developed between Ability West and Brothers of Charity Service Ireland West Region known as 'Home Share Galway'. As with many other disability services, Home Sharing was not immune from the challenges brought about from the Covid Pandemic, and the number of Home Sharing placements supported were reduced. Thankfully we are nearly back at pre-Covid placement levels, and the Home Sharing team are committed to ongoing recruitment, training and assessment for new Home Sharing families. There are currently 45 Home Sharing families supporting 70 Home Sharing placements.

Maureen Mahon, our longest running Home sharing family, recently retired from Home Sharing. Maureen has been sharing her home and her heart with children and adults for almost 40 years and developed "substantial" and "unique" relationships that developed and lasted for many years. The Ability West Home Sharing team would like to express our sincere and heartfelt gratitude for Maureen's commitment to the Home Sharing service.

The Ability West Home Sharing team are also grateful to the many other families in our communities who continue to offer their care, commitment and homes to people with an intellectual disability. The team's main aim is to continue to develop and expand the opportunities for Home Sharing placements throughout Galway City and County.



*Maureen Mahon, recently retired from Home Sharing. We want to thank Maureen sincerely from all at Ability West for your commitment and kindness over the last 40 years.*

# ST. JOSEPH'S TRAINING CENTRE UPDATE

**By Matthew Ellis, Manager,  
St. Joseph's Training Services**

This was an extremely busy year for the Training Centre, dominated by preparations for re-registration with QQI. QQI provide all of the certificates that trainees work towards in the Training Centre, and require all our policies, procedures, paperwork and activities to meet a very high level of expectation. Staff worked tirelessly with Eileen Costello-Conneely, Quality and Compliance Manager, to prepare a huge amount of paperwork to be submitted to QQI, and for an audit in early 2023.

We also enjoyed two successful QQI certification windows this year, with 30 trainees submitting 41 folders in April 2022 and 25 trainees submitting 49 folders in December 2022. This high level of achievement is due to the ongoing hard work of both trainees and staff.

It was fantastic to see the return of a number of Work Placements in 2022, with the number of businesses working with us nearly back to normal after Covid-19. These include shops, restaurants, hotels, offices etc. across Galway City and we remain hugely grateful to all of these businesses for the fantastic opportunities they afford trainees.

For our summer trips this year trainees decided on a choice of two – with some trainees going to the wax museum in Dublin, and others electing to spend a day at the fun fair, arcades and shops in Galway. Both were fantastic, fun-filled days which were enjoyed by everyone.

In July this year we celebrated the graduation of 5 final year trainees: James Diviney; Kenan Rigney; Nicole Small; Uday Dufani and Roisin Lavelle. We had a wonderful day with the trainees, their families and guests and wish all great success in their futures.

In September we welcomed 6 new trainees into the Training Centre, who have all settled in extremely well. Sorcha Langan, Ahmed Qayyum and Daniela Pacesaite joined us from St Joseph's Special School. Mihailo Kovacevic joined us from Colaiste Iognaid. Kieran Lyons joined us from Merlin College, and Grady Milandu joined from Colaiste Baile Clair.

We were delighted to celebrate Ability West's 60th Anniversary with our friends in Beechwood and Greenview. We had a Yard Fest in our outdoor space, with lovely food, music, games and great entertainment. There was also a Training Centre reunion this year, where it was fantastic to meet up with current and past staff, trainees and

families. Some of our trainees also had a fantastic time at the Best Buddies Ball, and have really enjoyed building on these important friendships – huge thanks to Linda Keane for all she does for Best Buddies.

As we look forward to 2023 we will be completing the re-registration process with QQI, so that we can continue providing nationally accredited certification for many more years and look forward to more certificates, more fun and more opportunities to spend time with our friends.



*Frankie-Joe Flaherty White and Maura Fleming, Job Coach, at our Yard fest to celebrate Ability West's 60th Anniversary*



*Maria Moran in the Wax Museum, Dublin*



*Ciáran Quinn receiving his QQI Certificates from Eileen Costello-Conneely, Quality and Compliance Manager*

# SHARING STORIES FROM OUR SERVICES IN 2022

## My Summer Trip to Bundoran Waterworld



*Waterworld*

This July I went on a Summer Trip with my two support staff to Donegal. I really enjoy swimming, and swim weekly at day service in The Salthill Hub New Directions. I missed swimming during covid since I was unable to go to Leisureland, and I was delighted to get back into the pool with staff once all the restrictions were lifted. I love exploring the many pools, going down slides, and chilling in the warm waters of the Jacuzzi. After looking at different places around Ireland researching pictures and videos I decided with my support staff this year to go up to Bundoran Waterworld for my summer trip. I researched the trip with staff and created a new social story, and made a plan of where I was going to stop for breaks along the way and places I might like to eat.

The weather was fantastic on the day and I made sure to go down all the slides more than once!

I loved the wave pool! And I worked up some appetite with all my swimming. After the Waterworld I went and got food and relaxed in the sunny beer garden with my chicken burger and chips.

We stopped in Williamstown on the way home for some ice cream and got home late in the evening.

## My Trip to Portugal By John Maloney

My name is John Maloney and I live in Glen Haven. In September 2022, I was very lucky to be able to go to Portugal to see 'Patrick Feeney and friend's fun in the sun'. I went with my friends in Glen Haven.

We flew from Knock to Faro. Faro is the name of the airport in Portugal. Then we got a bus to our hotel. Our hotel was very big and we even had a balcony in the room. We had a great trip we relaxed by the pool, went for lovely food in different restaurants and danced all night. We even got to do a train ride around Vilamoura and also got an open top tour bus and seen Albufeira.

Patrick Feeney is a very good singer and we got to take a photo with him and Sandy Kelly. We made lots of new friends on our trip and danced with them by the pool and at the concerts. I had a great time and I am really looking forward to going back again sometime



*My Trip to Portugal by John Maloney*

## My work experience by Sean Coyne

I started my work experience in the Simon charity shop in 2022. I go to my work experience every Tuesday afternoon. When I first started my work experience I was introduced to all of the staff and the manager asked me to sort out the clothes on the hangers. Since I first started my work experience, I have learned a lot about working as part of a team. In my work experience, I organize and hang up clothes, sort through boxes and help to move furniture going out for delivery. I really enjoy going to work experience (and not just because I get to try on all of the hats). I am looking forward to continuing my work experience in 2023.



*Sean Coyne enjoying his work experience at Simon charity shop.*

## My trip to Westport by Ellen Jennings

In July of 2022 I travelled to Westport in Mayo. The weather was beautiful, there was no rain and it was very warm. In Westport I went shopping, had lunch and Ice-cream, but the highlight of the day was visiting the spa and beauty salon. I had head and neck massage. They had super relaxing music playing. It was so relaxing, I loved it and I would like to go there again.



*Sean Coyne, Ellen Jennings, Kawthar Yahya & Beth Bohan, enjoying their trip to Westport.*

## My health and fitness journey in 2022 by Beth Bohan

In 2022 I have completed my Operation Transformation programme. This was provided by Galway sports Partnership. I used my fit bit to count the steps each day and submitted total at the end of each week. I also won the raffle prize, which was a gift voucher for Elvery's sport's shop.

My sister and my family and people at the hub supported me throughout the process.

I love health and fitness; I go to Planet gym every week.

I also go swimming and love to do yoga.

I love beauty and wellness. I love to visit spa and hairdressers.



*Beth Bohan completed Operation Transformation programme provided by the Galway Sports Partnership. Well done Beth.*

## Year 2022 in Greenview

The start of 2022, was a very strange time, for everyone as we were all, getting used to living with Covid and its uncertainty. However, we in Greenview, took this on as a challenge and undertook this year, as a year to celebrate some normality and try new thing. In the last year Greenview has under-taken a lot of activities and initiatives. It was great for Greenview, to welcome back, our outside instructors, for dancing, drumming and Drama.

### *Some of Greenview highlights from the years:*

Celebrated a special birthday of our very own Padraig Mac Donagh, attended the country western show, Nuns Island, Meeting up with some country music singers, selling our Art work, in the local doctor surgery, Preparing homemade Gifts for Xmas, Drumming Activity with Drumadore, Being independent, doing my personal shopping and using my independent skills in my local community.

I hope you like our annual report. There is many more activities and highlights, we would like to show but we would be still here, at the end of 2023. We are a very active, day service and work hard but have fun doing it.



*Drumadore at Greenview*



*60th Anniversary celebrations for Greenview*



*Padraig Mac Donagh celebrating a special birthday at Greenview*

## Meitheal: Poem by Colum McNabb

Colum McNabb continues to produce insightful and thought-provoking creative writing and poetry; this was clearly demonstrated in the piece Colum wrote to herald the homecoming of Damien Brown on his arrival back in Galway (October 2022) after sailing from New York, as Colum rightly hailed it;

'A Monumental Feat'

### A Monumental Feat

112 days at sea  
99 days alone,  
The world stops for no man  
Neither does the sea.

Some journeys test our mental stamina,  
Some journeys test our soul.

112 days at sea  
99 days done.  
The coast welcomed you home  
The voyage now complete

Some journeys test our commitment  
Some journeys make us whole

A monumental feat.

Colum McNabb

## Brooklodge

Brooklodge issue a newsletter on a quarterly basis designed by the people we support at Brooklodge. They have an organic market garden as a place of work for the people we support.

Gardening and outdoor work is a huge part of the service. Today the garden has three poly tunnels, one glasshouse and a potting shed.

In 2022 Brooklodge opened The Friday Feeling Café. It opens up every Friday selling tea, coffee, hot chocolate, homemade scones, brownies, gluten-free options, soup and brown bread.

In addition to all that, they offer art & craft, cement work, martial arts, music/drama, advocacy training, Asdan animal care course, photography, computer classes, Active Healthy Me programme, Lámh class and Lámh Choir.



*Brooklodge Friday Feeling Cafe*

## SNIFE Services

Galway Hospice Coffee Morning was held in September 2022 in the memory of our dear Noreen Halloran who passed away suddenly. We had a stall at the Galway Christmas Market selling handmade crafts made by the people in our service. We held a big party to celebrate with friends and family for the 60th anniversary of Ability West.



*SNIFE Services selling Christmas gifts at the Galway Christmas Market. It was a great success. Well done everyone.*



*Lámh Choir at the Galway Shopping Centre singing Christmas Carols.*

## St Dympna's Portumna

Enda Brien was presented with his silver Gaisce award and Matthew McDonagh was presented with his bronze Gaisce award in December 2022

Mike Denver joined the 60th Anniversary celebrations.

Minister Anne Rabbitte presented a cheque for €20,000 towards the development of a Sensory Garden for St. Dymphnas Day Service.



*Minister Anne Rabbitte presenting a cheque for €20,000 towards the development of a Sensory Garden for St. Dymphnas Day Service.*



*Enda Brien being presented with his silver Gaisce award December 2022*



*St Dympna's Portumna celebrating the 60th Anniversary with special guest, Mike Denver.*

*LtoR: Mike Denver, Gerry Blake, Geraldine Lyons, and her sister Noelene.*

*Geraldine Lyons being one of the first people to attend St. Dymphnas Ability West in Portumna.*



*Stephen's Graduation*



## Cedar Court

### The Tuesday Walking Group By Leanne Connaughton and Aoife Boyle (Advocacy Champions Cedar Court)

Since October 2021 we have formed a friendship and have been meeting up with the 'Tuesday Walking Group', a group of walkers from Dunmore and the surrounding area. We met up on some Tuesdays during 2022 and we had walks in Glass Avenue in Tuam, Claremorris, Land of the Giants, Slí Na Sláinte in Milltown, Ballyglunin and Cloonfad forest.

We asked the Tuesday Walking Group what our walks together mean to them: -

"Each time we, the Tuesday Walking Group from Dunmore meet with our friends from Ability West, it's an occasion of celebration. Our group appreciates the kindness and friendliness of the young students of St. Joseph's Training Centre under the stewardship of Mary Garvey and her colleagues. When we walk in Cloonfad forest we enjoy the freedom and the beauty of the forest, make all sorts of discoveries as we journey towards Bid Burke's Cross and the fairy trail. On a damp

windy morning we played catch ball before we walked the Milltown River Loop. Our young students excelled in Ballyglunin for Libby, Leanne and Aoife took the lead as usual in motivating us to keep walking. They could probably walk to the moon and back without stopping. Luke, Ayo, Mikey, Orin and Gary always make sure that we Tuesday Walkers always have a stop and are always aware that we have to have time for lunch. We have gained so much from the two very different age group mix, especially the social aspect of our walks: the talks, the food, poetry, quiz, "Knock, Knock" and of course the realisation of the abilities of the students as exemplified by the incisive poem composed by the group and recited by James, relating to our first walk with us and it now adorns the walls of Resource Café Cloonfad. We have taken encouragement from our friends to live life to the full. You have opened up a new vision of life for us. It has brought about the realisation of the importance of inclusion in our society which in turn awakens us all to the wonder in our lives. For that we sincerely thank Mary and Noreen for making this happen."



Cedar Court walks with the Tuesday Walking Group

## Permanent employment for Libby By Mary Margaret Garvey

Libby O'Brien is one of the trainees in St. Joseph's Training Services, Tuam. Libby was delighted, following a work experience placement to be offered a permanent position of 21 hours per week in Corrib Oil in Tuam.

Libby has been attending St. Joseph's Training Services, in Cedar Court in Tuam since September 2020. During her time here Libby has achieved a Major Level 2 Certificate in General Learning in modules such as Personal Decision Making, Data Handling, Reading, Listening and Speaking, Personal Safety, Personal Care, Using Technology, Food Choice and Health and Health Related Exercise. During her time here she has also completed Level 3 Modules in Culinary Skills and Hairdressing in the local GRETB. The overall training has been a great base and an aid in her achieving permanent employment.

Libby is from Belclare, outside Tuam, and is a very independent young woman. Part of her goal in the Training Centre was to secure permanent employment. Libby participated in a Preparation for Work Module in Cedar Court and then completed a work experience placement in Corrib Oil. Tommie, the manager in Corrib Oil was very impressed with her work. Through liaison with Corrib Oil and Employability, Libby then went on to secure a permanent position in Corrib Oil in June 2022. Since starting work, she has gained so much confidence and is a true member of the staff team in Corrib Oil. She completed a probationary period, trained in health and safety and clocks in and out the same as everyone else. She is part of the staff Whatsapp group, and joins the staff on nights out e.g went to the Christmas Party in the Bridge Bar in Tuam recently. Work has opened up a new world for Libby. She now has more money to spend on the things that she likes and she has made so many new friends.

Libby is working her way from having the responsibility of keeping the delicatessen clean to dealing with customers. She is living a life that any other person of her age would hope to live. If she needs support from time to time, we are always here in the background, as are her family and Tommie and the fantastic staff in Corrib Oil. Libby will be graduating from Cedar Court in July. Well Done Libby!!!!



*Libby O'Brien working in the Delicatessen in Corrib Oil, pictured with her manager Tommie Ronan*



*Libby O'Brien on work experience at Corrib Oil*

## My work experience in Elvery's sports shop by Eilish Griffin.

During the year 2022 I continued to go for my work experience in Elvery's sports shop in Headford road. In work experience I hang up the clothes, fix hangers and stock the shelves. I have met a lot of people through my work experience. I help customers find the items they are looking for. My favourite part of my work experience is unboxing the new stock. It is very important to be on time for work and listen to the managers. When I first started I was nervous but now I am confident.



*Eilish Griffin on work experience at Elverys Sports shop.*

## Tayto Park fun by Oliver Flanagan

Me and my friends went to Tayto Park in Co. Meath, just one hour drive from Dublin. I tried the Viking ride and it was so wet. I almost got drenched. I went on a really fast rollercoaster called the Cu Chulainn and it was a very exciting ride, so much fun!

We walked around the park looking for somewhere to eat, I got a burger & chips and a coke. My belly was full by then! I think the 3D cinema was entertaining. After a long day, we all took off our passes and went home.



*Oliver Flanagan enjoying Tayto Park*

## My trip to Turoe Pet Farm by Cuan O'Brien

In summer 2022, I went to Turoe Pet Farm with my friends in the hub, I fed the animals with animal food, I saw rabbits, lamas, sheep, chickens, geese, pigs, cows, goats, lamb and ducks. I used to go to that farm with my family when I was young. So I decided I would like to visit it again. I also saw horses, donkeys and bulls. I got the bus to the Turoe pet farm. We went to Supermac's on the way back. I had a diet coke, burger and chips. I had a great day.



*Visit to Turoe Pet Farm*

# FUNDRAISING UPDATE 2022

**By Michael Flanagan, Community Development Officer**

During 2022 the people of Galway raised almost €58,000 in support of Ability West through Fundraising Events, Personal, and Corporate & Community Donations. Fundraised monies were utilised towards our capital programme, this includes the purchase of buildings, specialised buses/minibuses and equipment. Fundraised monies are vital to the delivery of our high quality services. I would like to thank the many volunteers who gave countless hours of their time to organise and support events in aid of Ability West. The generosity and commitment of our board members, staff, volunteers and supporters is very much appreciated. Your support is vital for us to continue providing high quality services and supports to people with an intellectual disability in Galway who avail of our services.

## ***Project Empower***

On June 13th 2022, Galway men Damian Browne and Fergus Farrell departed New York City with the challenge of a lifetime of breaking a 120 year old world record for an unsupported row on board 'Cushlamachree' across the 3,000 miles of the Atlantic to Galway and to help raise awareness and funds for four charities that they had a connection to.

Ability West were delighted to have been chosen as one of the four benefiting charities from this inspiring challenge that raised almost €80,000 in total, thanks to all of the team at Project Empower who did so much work in the years leading up to this challenge.



*Project Empower Launch event.*

## ***Monivea fair***

The Monivea Fair has always been a fundraising event run by a voluntary committee to meet the maintenance and development costs of the Fr. Sammon Centre in the heart of Monivea Village. 2022 saw the return of the fair after 3 long years and we were delighted to have been selected as their charity partner to receive half of the proceeds from the day with a large crowd attending the fun filled day. An amazing €8,000 was presented to Ability West from the event, a big thank you to the Monivea fair committee for organising such a successful event.



*Monivea Fair*

*If you would like to help in any way in participating in or organising a fundraising event or would like to make a donation please contact Community Development Officer, Michael Flanagan. You can look up our 'Ability West' pages on your preferred social media platforms or visit [www.abilitywest.ie/fundraise](http://www.abilitywest.ie/fundraise)*

# AUDITED ACCOUNTS

The Company's Auditors, FCC Chartered Accountants and Registered Auditors, reported, without qualification, that the 2022 financial statements gave a true and fair view of the company's affairs and of its results for the year and were properly prepared in accordance with generally accepted accounting practice and the Companies Act 2014.

The audited accounts were approved at a meeting of the Board of Directors held on 29th May 2023 and were signed on behalf of the Board of Directors by Dermot O'Neill and Jack King.

A full copy of the audited accounts 2022 is available on our website: [www.abilitywest.ie](http://www.abilitywest.ie)



# ACKNOWLEDGEMENTS

Ability West would like to take this opportunity to sincerely thank the various individuals and organisations whose co-operation and support have been particularly invaluable to us in 2022.

- The Department of Health; Health Protection and Surveillance Centre; Health Service Executive and local HSE Staff, in particular Disability Services and Public Health; the Health Service Executive Corporate Employee Relations Services; Departments of Education and Skills, Social Protection and Rural and Community Development.
- Galway Rural Development (GRD) - A number of our services availed of the GRD, Rural Social Scheme and TÚS Schemes in 2022 and Clár funding received. We are very grateful for the tremendous work the scheme participants do in our services.
- Galway and Roscommon Education and Training Board (GRET B) – Reach Grany Grant.

In addition, we are extremely grateful to community groups, businesses and individuals from Galway City and County and beyond for their ongoing assistance and support in 2022, there are too many to name individually but we know who you are.

Our thanks to colleagues in statutory, non-statutory, voluntary service providers, and umbrella groups who have supported us throughout the year.

Special thanks to all our staff whose commitment and dedication to the people we support, as always, has been second to none. Many thanks to our Board Members and all volunteers who continued to support us in a variety of ways. We very much appreciate your volunteerism throughout the year.

We would like to thank all retired staff members for their dedication and commitment throughout their working lives and send them our very best wishes for a continuing happy retirement.

We would like to express our sympathy to those families and friends of people we support and staff who passed away during 2022.

We would like to thank the many hundreds of volunteers around Galway city and county who offer their services in a variety of ways such as fundraising, helping at sporting, leisure and recreation occasions and much more. We really appreciate each and every one of you.

Finally, we would like to thank the children and adults we support, their parents, carers, and family members for their support and understanding during the year. It has been another challenging year for the organisation and those we support, and we hope that things will become easier in 2022, with the easing of restrictions and a return to some new normality. We will work alongside you to achieve service delivery in a safe manner as we move through 2023.



# 2022 AT A GLANCE



LtoR: Mayor Clodagh Higgins, Kevin Newell, Audrey Pidgeon



LtoR: Dermot O'Neill, Audrey Pidgeon, Tom Hogan, John McHugo, Bryan Gallagher.





*Celebrating the Kilkerrin Clonburne ladies football champions.*



*Christmas Jumper competition with Galway Bay FM's Molly in the Morning*



*Solerno Choir fundraised for Ability West on the prom at Christmas.*



*Monivea Fair*



*Beechwood*



*LtoR: Mick Finnerty and Mary O'Mahony*





*Brooklodge Crafts*



*Mihailo Kovacevic on Work Placement in Cope, preparing meals to be delivered.*

*Tristan Voiry and Gabriele Simonkeviciute enjoying the train ride to Dublin*





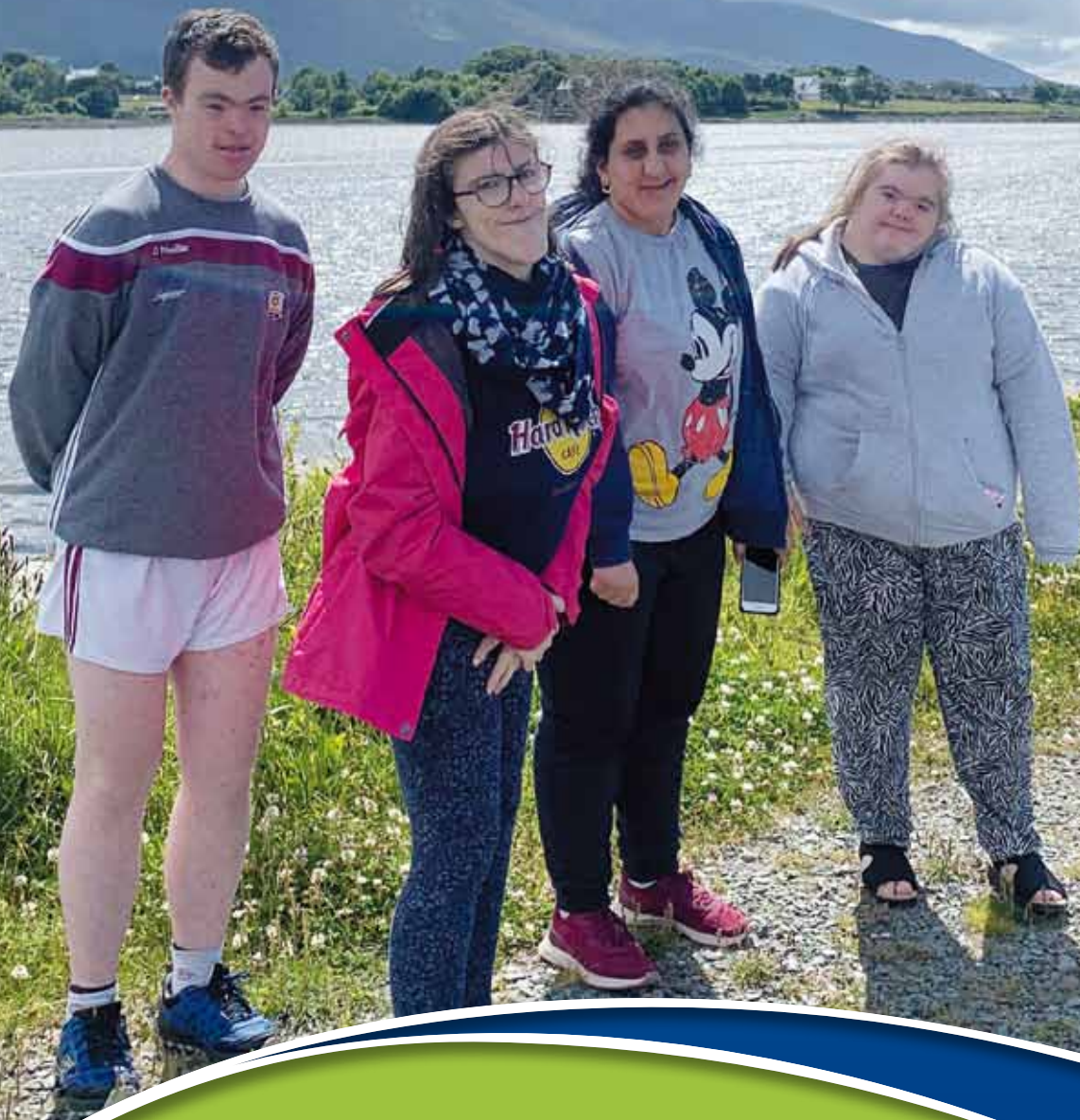


enabling people with disabilities

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# 2022 ANNUAL REPORT



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