



Irish Wheelchair Association



a strategy for the future ▶

STRATEGIC PLAN 2008-2011

Table of Contents

Introduction	5
About the Irish Wheelchair Association	8
Developing the Strategy	9
The Six Strategic Objectives	10
Strategic Objective 1 – enhancing services	11
Assisted Living Service, Resource and Outreach Centres, Holiday Services, Youth Services, Transport, Sport	
Strategic Objective 2 – supporting independent living	19
Access, Housing, Parking, Employment, Volunteer Services	
Strategic Objective 3 – advocacy	26
Strategic Objective 4 – working with others on behalf of members	29
Strategic Objective 5 – raising the profile of iwa	32
Strategic Objective 6 – supporting strategy implementation	35
Human Resources, Finance, Corporate Services	
Implementation, Monitoring & Evaluation	39
Conclusion	39
Appendices	
I – The Environmental, Legislative and Policy Context	40
II – The Consultation Process	41
III – Acknowledgements	43
IV – Glossary of Terms	43



Introduction

Your Life – Your Way

STRATEGIC PLAN 2008-2011

It is with great pleasure that we present to you the strategic plan for the Irish Wheelchair Association (IWA) to cover the years 2008-2011. This plan has been developed following the most extensive consultation process ever carried out by the Association. We have endeavoured to seek the views of our members, our staff, volunteers and the agencies we work with nationally to ensure that what is presented here is an accurate reflection of a shared vision for the future of the Association and a clear statement of our priorities up to, and including, the year 2011.

In preparing this plan we have been able to build on the many successes since IWA's 2004 strategy, "Actions, Not Words". The strides that have been made since then have been enormous and are due in no small measure to the clear strategic approach that this plan heralded. We hope that this new plan, 'Your Life – Your Way', will help us to achieve similar success in the years ahead.

Reflecting on the developments in the range and scope of services, the growth in membership and the volume of services being delivered, it is appropriate that we acknowledge the support of our members, their families, volunteers, staff and the various Government agencies which provide funding to support us in our work. Without their continued support and, indeed, the development of even stronger partnerships and links, we would be unable to continue to respond adequately to the needs of our members.

It is, however, sobering to consider that, despite the level of development achieved in recent years, we face a constant struggle to deal with increasing waiting lists for services. We also rely heavily on our own fundraising resources to maintain these services. People with disabilities in Ireland continue to face problems of isolation, both socially and economically, in the same way that they did almost 50 years ago when the Association was founded. This reality, though shocking, is verified by the huge response to the information-seeking questionnaire which was widely circulated prior to the development of this strategy.

The greatest challenge for us, therefore, in setting out our ambitions in this strategy, is to tackle those areas where positive changes can bring about real improvements in the quality of life of people with disabilities. Specifically, we need to support people in having real independence in how they choose to live their lives. The person-centred approach, which is central to the way we operate, is critical to every aspect of this plan.

The plan is set against a background where the governance requirements imposed on the Association by funding agencies continue to demand the highest possible standards in our operations. The imminent enactment of the charities legislation, governing fundraising activities by charities in Ireland, is likely to impose further compliance pressures on the Association. We are fortunate that in recent years we have invested heavily in strengthening our operations and improving policies, procedures and operating systems to satisfy fully our obligations in this regard.



We will continue to strive for the highest possible standards in all aspects of our work.

In developing any strategic plan, one must balance the need to be ambitious with the need to be realistic about what can be achieved. Ireland has enjoyed wonderful economic prosperity in recent years and IWA has benefited financially from that prosperity. Support from the HSE has been significant but we must acknowledge that the current level of support may not necessarily be guaranteed in the future. In framing this plan, we must be cognisant of this reality.

The plan is presented clearly with objectives under each of the principal themes on which members expressed their views. It would naturally be impossible to reflect every single opinion we have received. We have however tried very hard to reflect in this plan the themes on which the majority of members expressed views. Actions set out under each objective are clear and again reflect the principal areas where members sought action from the Association. Underlying all the objectives and actions are key principles which govern how the Association operates. These principles are quality, a person-centred approach, compliance with national standards, fairness and equality of access, alongside a determination to reach best practice guidelines in all that we do.

Throughout the document, we have adopted a 'plain English' approach to the writing style. You will also find many direct quotes from members stating their views and sharing their experiences.

Many of the objectives set out in the following pages will be achieved over the lifetime of this strategy, while many others will extend into our next plan. However, with the support of our members, their families and friends,

Government agencies, our volunteers and staff, we believe that we will achieve much of what is set out in the following pages.

To all of those people who chose to take the time to complete a questionnaire, to attend an open session, to sit privately and discuss the strategy, and who contributed their views and opinions so freely, we wish to extend a sincere thank-you. We hope we have reflected adequately your opinions and we look forward to working with you to ensure the full implementation of this plan.

Eileen O'Mahony
PRESIDENT

Gerry McMahon
CHAIRMAN, BOARD OF DIRECTORS

Kathleen Mc Loughlin
CHIEF EXECUTIVE OFFICER

Direct quotes from members in response to the Strategy Questionnaire.

"We want freedom to go where we like and not just sit in a corner. In 2008, we want action for our rights as human beings."

"The organisation provides a wide range of services for people with disabilities. It is very focused on a person-centred approach which is paramount for members to express what they believe is important for them."

"...Consolidate the good work of recent years while prioritising areas for development such as out-of-hours services."

IWA should "continue to allow people to choose what they do and how they spend their time."



About the Irish Wheelchair Association

HISTORY

Established in 1960 by a small group of eight people with disabilities, the Association has gone on to become a leading voice for people with disabilities in Ireland, as well as being one of the largest service providers nationally. Throughout its development the Association has remained faithful to the principles which were central to its foundation: the right of people with disability to lead independent lives, free from discrimination, and able to participate in the social and economic activity of their communities. Now with a membership of over 20,000 people, the Association continues in its mission to represent the views of, and advocate for improvements in the lives of, people with disabilities.

SERVICES

The Association is one of the largest providers of services to people with disabilities in Ireland. In 2007 alone, the Association provided approximately one million hours of Personal Assistant services and 500,000 hours of services in our Resource and Outreach Centres. In addition, we provided daily transport services throughout Ireland, driving lessons, motoring advice and assessment services, parking cards, sporting opportunities, youth activities, education and training opportunities, peer counselling and information and advice services nationally.

STRUCTURE

Governed by a voluntary Board of 16 Directors, elected by the membership, the Association is a company limited by guarantee, under the name of I.W.A. Limited, since January 2002. The Board is responsible for setting the policy direction for the Association, while ensuring that all requirements of company law are fully discharged.

The Chief Executive Officer is responsible for the implementation of all Board decisions and the management of all aspects of the Association's operations.

STAFF

IWA employs over 2,000 people, organised into four regional divisions, each headed up by a Director. In addition, the four national service areas of Sport, Finance, Human Resources and Corporate Services are each also headed by a Director.

VOLUNTEERS

Since its foundation, the Association has benefited hugely from the support of an enormous band of loyal volunteers who have given freely of their time and talents to support the Association and people with disabilities in their communities. Organised in a network of branches, or associated with individual services or centres, their support has been pivotal in achieving improvements in the quality of life for our members. We are as reliant today on this support as we were when the Association was founded. Despite the challenges which face IWA and other similar organisations in attracting volunteers, we are fortunate to retain a vibrant network of supporters throughout Ireland. A special initiative to encourage more volunteers is planned for Autumn 2008.

LOCATIONS

The Association currently operates from 62 locations nationally including three holiday centres in Roscommon, Kilkenny and Dublin. A number of independent living facilities are also in place. Plans are underway for further locations.

Developing the Strategy

The IWA strategy was developed using a six step process as follows:

Step 1 – The Design of the Strategy Review and Development Process

An overall strategy development process was devised and presented to the IWA Board of Directors and Senior Management Team. This process was approved and signed off in October 2007.

Step 2 – Review of the 2004 IWA Strategy and Environment Analysis

The 2004 Strategic Plan of IWA covered the period up to 2008. Since the launch of this strategy, IWA has grown substantially, in terms of income and staff employed. In addition, new legislation has been enacted which directly impacts on IWA and its members, e.g. the Disability Act 2005. Over the same period, there has been much change to the environment in which IWA operates. The population of Ireland has substantially increased, as shown in the national census of 2006, and the HSE has replaced the Health Boards following the enactment of the Health Act 2004. A brief overview of the environmental context is set out in Appendix 1 of this strategy.

Step 3 – Consultation

IWA has undertaken a consultation process with members, staff, families, carers, branches, volunteers and interested individuals, groups and organisations. This process involved 80 open meetings, a national survey, focus group meetings around specific themes, and engagement with many external organisations and agencies e.g. Local Authorities, HSE, FÁS, etc. In excess of 3,000 individuals engaged in the consultation process, ensuring the priorities identified accurately reflected the views of the membership.

Step 4 – The Analysis Phase

Having completed steps 2 and 3, an analytical process was undertaken to determine what the members, staff and other interested individuals and groups viewed as being the priorities for IWA to pursue over the coming three years. These priorities were grouped into themed areas and reflected the weighting attached to the many issues raised during the consultation.

Step 5 – Strategic Objective and Strategic Action

The core work was the identification of IWA's strategic objectives for the next three years, based upon the information obtained from the reviews, consultation and analysis. These strategic objectives are underpinned by a number of strategic actions which will guide the implementation of the strategy.

Step 6 – Adopting the Strategy

The final step was the preparation of the strategy document by the IWA Senior Management Team and presentation to the IWA Board of Directors for adoption.

Process Quality Assurance and Reporting

This six step strategy development process was subject to ongoing quality assurance from an external management consultancy, while the progress at each step was reported to the IWA Board of Directors at each monthly meeting.



The Six Strategic Objectives for the next three years:

1 Enhancing services

2 Supporting independent living

3 Advocacy

4 Working with others on behalf of members

5 Raising our profile

6 Supporting strategy implementation



strategic objective 1
enhancing services

Direct quotes from members in response to the Strategy Questionnaire.

"The Personal Assistance Service has enhanced my quality of life considerably."

"I believe that assisting people in their own homes is a great service to those who have need of support so that they can live in their own communities."

"It is one of the few places, apart from home, where as much as possible will be done to make one feel sure of the help, encouragement and inspiration needed."

"IWA provides vital transport for members. Without this I would not be able to get out and about."

"The Day Centre staff, the activities and the trips are all super."

"IWA should have more services and activities available for young people."

Strategic Objective 1 enhancing services



STRATEGIC ACTIONS – 1.1 ASSISTED LIVING SERVICE

Background

The Assisted Living Service (ALS) provides a range of assistance packages tailored to meet individual needs and circumstances. The service gives people with disabilities access to personal assistants to support them in carrying out tasks which they might otherwise find difficult.

Services can be provided in the individual's home or in the community, facilitating access to a range of activities including education and employment. The service is designed to enable the person with a disability to exercise maximum control over how their service is organised, reflecting the person-centred approach of IWA.

Actions

Action 1

To implement the findings of the external review of the ALS carried out in 2007 and adopted by the Board of IWA in September 2007.

Action 2

To maintain the current level of ALS and seek increased funding for additional hours and staff in order to allow the service to cater for those on waiting lists and those who have an inadequate number of hours.

Action 3

To develop a model of ALS for groups currently not in a position to avail of this service e.g. people aged 65 years and older.

Action 4

To continually improve the standards, availability and quality of ALS nationally.

Action 5

Work with members to explore alternative models of ALS including direct payment options.

Benefits to You



An expanded ALS that has been enhanced by improvements in training, co-ordination, management, development and responsiveness.



ALS service levels maintained and improved and a reduction in waiting lists.



The developed model will provide potential for people with disabilities to continue to live independently in their own communities.



The availability of a professional, high quality ALS, which supports people with disabilities in continuing to participate fully within their communities.



New models of ALS evaluated with members to increase the choice of services available to individuals.



Strategic Objective 1 enhancing services



STRATEGIC ACTIONS – 1.2 RESOURCE & OUTREACH CENTRES

Background

IWA operates Resource and Outreach Centres (ROCs) in 57 locations throughout the country. These centres support people with disabilities in their day-to-day lives by offering locally-based recreational and educational programmes. All programmes are designed to facilitate personal development and interaction within the local community.

The range of programmes offered by ROCs includes: arts and crafts; cookery; music and drama; sports; day trips; and holidays at IWA holiday centres and other locations. Other services offered include access to community physiotherapy services, and educational programmes such as computer skills, FETAC certificate courses and supported employment programmes. The activities of the centres are based firmly around the principles of person-centred planning.

Actions

Action 1

To strengthen and further develop high quality, person-centred Resource and Outreach Centre programmes, with consistent national standards in place.

Action 2

To increase the availability of ROC facilities during evenings and at weekends for the benefit of members, volunteers and local communities.

Action 3

To seek improvements in core staff numbers for ROCs including the mainstreaming of the Community Employment Scheme.

Action 4

To establish a national standard of accommodation for ROCs and to improve existing ROCs in line with these standards.

Action 5

To provide new ROC services, independently or in partnership with others organisations, on a phased basis, in areas where a need has been identified.

Benefits to You



Local availability of high quality services guided by members' wishes.



Creating opportunities for new activities and strengthening links with local communities.



Greater consistency in the range of centre activities available. Potential to open centres in new locations.



Greater comfort levels for service users within ROCs.



Locally based ROC services available to a greater number of members.

Strategic Objective 1 enhancing services



STRATEGIC ACTIONS – 1.3 HOLIDAY SERVICES

Background

IWA provides accessible and supported holidays and breaks for people with disabilities, and their families/ carers, at three locations around the country: Cuisle in Roscommon, the Carmel Fallon Centre in Clontarf, and Claddagh Court in Kilkenny. All centres offer optional care or nursing support, by arrangement.

Cuisle is a fully accessible holiday centre located in the landscaped grounds of Donamon Castle, nine miles outside Roscommon Town. The centre offers 35 twin-bedded ensuite rooms with TVs, as well as conference facilities, therapy rooms, and a large dining area. A range of activities and special programmes is available including accessible fishing and 'Mind, Body and Spirit' weekends.

The Carmel Fallon Centre provides spacious, ensuite accommodation, with access to the facilities of IWA's Clontarf sports and leisure complex. Claddagh Court provides similar, high quality accommodation in Kilkenny City.

In addition to providing IWA holiday accommodation, IWA offers information and supports to members who wish to access other holiday destinations in Ireland and abroad.

Actions

Action 1

To enable members to holiday where they choose.

Action 2

To review IWA policy on holidays through a national working group.

Action 3

To produce a guide to accessible holiday locations and accommodation in Ireland.

Action 4

To continue to provide high quality holiday services and activities in our existing IWA facilities in order to maximise the holiday opportunities for members.

Action 5

To continue to invest in and improve accommodation in IWA premises in Cuisle, Kilkenny and Clontarf.

Benefits to You



Freedom of choice for members.



An updated policy on holidays which reflects members' wishes.



Reliable, accurate holiday information available.



Availability of high quality holiday services within existing facilities.



Enhanced range of accommodation and facilities available.



Strategic Objective 1 enhancing services



STRATEGIC ACTIONS – 1.4 YOUTH SERVICES

Background

The IWA Youth Service, SPIRIT, seeks to give young people with physical disabilities an opportunity to develop youth activities of their choice in their own area, with the support of IWA staff, resources, facilities and volunteers. It does this by establishing age-appropriate personal development programmes for young people and by facilitating the integration of young people with limited mobility with their peers in society.

SPIRIT works with other groups in the youth work sector including Foróige, the national youth organisation. SPIRIT also has representatives on National Youth Council of Ireland working groups addressing issues relevant to young people today.

Actions

Action 1

To review existing SPIRIT activities to identify best practice and replicate it throughout the country.

Action 2

To develop a business plan to strengthen and further develop youth services nationwide.

Action 3

To develop strategic alliances with national and local youth organisations.

Action 4

To endeavour to extend the availability of IWA facilities and transport for young members in the evenings and at weekends.

Action 5

To recruit new volunteers to assist in the future development of youth activities nationwide based upon identified best practice.

Benefits to You



Sharing of best practice nationally.



Implementation of a plan to maximise the opportunities identified during the review process.



Increased integration opportunities for young members.



Expanded opportunities for socialising and other activities for young members.



Greater number of volunteers available to assist in the organisation and hosting of activities for young members.

Strategic Objective 1 enhancing services



STRATEGIC ACTIONS – 1.5 TRANSPORT

Background

IWA transport is vital to the lives of many people with disabilities due to the limited availability of public transport in many parts of the country. The IWA transport fleet enables people to access IWA services and other activities, supporting the social inclusion of people with disabilities who might otherwise remain isolated. IWA also works with rural transport initiatives.

The growth of the organisation has seen a parallel growth of the IWA transport fleet. IWA continues to develop this fleet as part of the organisation's commitment to meeting the requirements of people with disabilities. The Association ensures that all adapted vehicles operate to the highest safety standards.

IWA's Motoring Assessment, Advice and Tuition Service (MAATS) offers a wide range of motoring services including assessment, driving tuition, information and advice for drivers and passengers.

Actions

Action 1

To provide a quality transport service for members and service users.

Action 2

To fully utilise the IWA transport fleet for evening and weekend activities for the benefit of all members.

Action 3

To further develop the transport service and expand the current fleet.

Action 4

To continue to achieve the highest standards in transporting people with physical disabilities.

Action 5

To develop the Motoring Assessment, Advice and Tuition Service in order to provide a quality service for people with disabilities.

Benefits to You



Members can avail of a high quality IWA transport service.



Greater flexibility in the use of IWA fleet for the use of members.



Increased number of vehicles available to IWA members.



IWA Transport service delivered to the highest possible standards.



Quality MAATS service available for IWA members.



Strategic Objective 1 enhancing services



STRATEGIC ACTIONS – 1.6 SPORT

Background

Early in 2008 Irish Wheelchair Association - Sport (IWA - Sport) launched its second Strategic Plan. The importance of sport in people's lives, especially those with physical disabilities, can never be overstated. IWA - Sport has continued to grow and develop in recent years, responding to the many changes in Irish sport.

Additional staff employed, and funding received, have helped IWA respond to the many challenges encountered by people with disabilities who are involved in sport and recreation.

By delivering on the strategic actions outlined below, the progress made in previous years will be consolidated and the challenges to be faced in the coming years can be successfully met.

Actions

Action 1

To promote the widest possible participation in sport and recreation by members of all ages.

Action 2

To enable members to progress in their chosen fields by offering different levels of competitive sport.

Action 3

To support athletes and coaches to reach their potential in high performance sport, with particular emphasis on Paralympic athletes.

Action 4

To support external individuals and organisations who wish to work with people with physical disabilities in the areas of sport and recreation.

Action 5

To provide easily accessible information and technical services to our members and partner organisations.

Action 6

To support and develop volunteer programmes to attract new volunteers, retain the existing volunteer base and provide training.

Benefits to You



Opportunities for participation available nationally.



Recognition for progress made.



Supports available to enable athletes to develop to elite standards.



Promotes the work of IWA - Sport and improves integration in schools, mainstream sporting groups and communities.



Consultancy and technical services available.



Additional support available to all sportspeople.



strategic objective 2
supporting independent living

Direct quotes from members in response to the Strategy Questionnaire.

“...Ensure that access laws are enforced, not just according to the letter of the law, but also according to the spirit of the law.”

“...Ensure that businesses take people on ability and not simply to fill quotas.”

“...Getting around is about more than adapted cars, accessible taxis or buses, it's about being able to get into or out of buildings, being able to use the toilets or just going along the footpath without having to deal with cars parked on it or uneven surfaces.”

“IWA must get our views and needs for housing heard with the local councils.”

Strategic Objective 2

supporting independent living



STRATEGIC ACTIONS – 2.1 ACCESS

Background

IWA has always been involved in highlighting access issues and has consistently lobbied for improved practices in relation to access to the built environment. The early IWA campaign for the introduction of access standards as part of the Building Regulations was finally successful in 1991, with the introduction of Part M of the Building Regulations. IWA continues to lobby for improvements in Part M of the Building Regulations and related practices. IWA also continues to provide information and advice on access in the built environment. This work can be divided into three key areas: (1) representation, i.e. on local and national consultative groups; (2) access auditing; and (3) the provision of information and advice on request. An IWA national working group, which includes members, is working to ensure a continuing focus on this crucial area.

Actions

Action 1

To develop access training to enable staff, members, volunteers and other identified individuals to respond to local issues.

Action 2

To develop and publicise IWA access standards, which are based upon best national and international practice, and cover all aspects of the built environment e.g. buildings and facilities, hotels, shops, footpaths, road crossings, etc.

Action 3

To promote the IWA access standards nationally.

Action 4

To develop an appropriate method of assessing how well the built environment complies with IWA access standards.

Action 5

To communicate the new IWA standards to members, staff, volunteers, families and other interested individuals/organisations.



Benefits to You

Access queries can be dealt with at a local level. Access advice service available both locally and nationally.



IWA access standards available for use by staff and members.



IWA access standards to influence public policy and the review of Part M.



IWA will have the capacity to undertake access audits.



IWA access standards available in hard copy and on website.



Strategic Objective 2

supporting independent living



STRATEGIC ACTIONS – 2.2 HOUSING

Background

IWA regards the availability of accommodation of a suitable design and type, in a fitting location, and with the required personal supports, as a basic right. The availability of such accommodation directly supports people with disabilities in participating in, and contributing to, the life of the community in which they live.

Lobbying, at local and at national level, for improved housing design, greater choice of housing type, improved adaptation grants, and increased availability of personal assistance supports, has always been a priority for IWA. In addition to lobbying, IWA directly provides housing services at a number of locations across the country. IWA also supports individual members in pursuing their desired housing options.

Actions

Action 1

To increase the knowledge of individuals, groups and organisations on housing issues by developing training material and courses which will help empower individuals to make more informed housing choices.

Action 2

To develop partnerships and collaborative working arrangements on housing issues with external organisations, particularly local authorities.

Action 3

To advocate on behalf of IWA members on all matters relating to their housing requirements.

Action 4

To develop IWA standards for all types of housing, based upon our experience as a provider of accommodation and supported living e.g. independent living units, sheltered accommodation, group homes, residential accommodation, etc. These standards should reflect legislative standards, national standards, and international best practice.

Action 5

To develop a range of information on all housing matters of interest to IWA members and to communicate this information to members in easily accessible forms e.g. leaflets, booklets, website, etc.

Benefits to You

Dedicated housing training programme and material developed.

Increased awareness of housing issues identified by IWA members. Greater sharing of expertise between organisations in sector.

Advocacy facility in place for IWA members.

Defined IWA standards in place.

Information available for IWA members and others e.g. builders.

Strategic Objective 2

supporting independent living



STRATEGIC ACTIONS – 2.3 PARKING

Background

Since 1997, IWA has been authorised by the Minister of Transport to issue EU Disabled Persons Parking Permits on behalf of the Government.

The parking permit scheme plays an important role in enabling people with disabilities to maintain their independence. A person with a disability requires access to a disabled parking space, because of its size (accessible parking bays are larger than standard parking spaces) and its proximity to facilities. Without this vital access to places of work, shops, banks, social events, etc., people with disabilities can find it difficult to participate in mainstream life.

Actions

Action 1

To maintain and lobby for improvements in the Disabled Persons Parking Permit Scheme.

Action 2

To lobby the Department of Transport to carry out a review of the current scheme of issuing permits as committed to in its Sectoral Plan.

Action 3

To raise awareness amongst enforcers of the parking permit scheme.

Action 4

To increase general public awareness about the issue of misusing accessible parking spaces and parking permits.

Action 5

To liaise with local authorities to increase the number of accessible parking spaces throughout Ireland.

Benefits to You



Increased social and economic participation of people with physical disabilities facilitated by an efficient parking permit scheme.



Improved policy developed and implemented.



Better enforcement and reduced abuse of the scheme.



Greater public awareness and support for parking issues.



More accessible parking spaces.



Strategic Objective 2

supporting independent living



STRATEGIC ACTIONS – 2.4 EMPLOYMENT

Background

People with disabilities want to contribute to the economic growth and development of the country. Despite sustained economic and jobs growth over the last decade in Ireland, people with disabilities still find it extremely difficult to secure employment. Significant disincentives continue to exist for people entering the employment market. These may include the loss of medical cards, free travel and rent allowance. In turn, this leads to additional costs for drugs, aids and appliances.

Actions

Action 1

To actively promote equal opportunities for employment of people with disabilities, including carrying out research to support proposals developed.

Action 2

To work in partnership with employers and all relevant Government departments to highlight the benefits of improving opportunities for the employment of people with disabilities.

Action 3

To lobby appropriate Government departments, FÁS and relevant agencies for equal employment opportunities for people with disabilities.

Action 4

To recognise the skills and abilities of people with disabilities by providing increased employment opportunities within IWA.

Action 5

To introduce a work experience programme within IWA to improve the job prospects of people with disabilities.

Action 6

To continue to seek improvements to the Employment Support Subsidy scheme to make the scheme more attractive to participants and prospective employers.

Benefits to You



Evidence provided to support specific initiatives.



Increase in the employment opportunities available for people with disabilities.



Heightened awareness of this issue with policy-makers at Government level.



Direct provision of employment opportunities.



Pre-employment work familiarisation.



Increased number of job opportunities.

Strategic Objective 2

supporting independent living



STRATEGIC ACTIONS – 2.5 VOLUNTEER SERVICES

Background

IWA is rooted in a tradition of volunteerism. From modest beginnings in 1960, IWA has developed into one of the largest national service providers and representative groups for people with limited mobility. Many of our core services were pioneered by volunteers and branches. IWA recognises the impact volunteers have on the individual lives of people with disabilities. Additionally, the organisation acknowledges the role of volunteers in supporting service delivery, creating community links and advocating on disability issues at a local and national level. It is through our branches that vital support is given to members at evenings and weekends. Branches also provide holiday breaks and social events for members, while assisting core services through fundraising and hands-on assistance. It is within this context that IWA is committed to the ongoing development of the role of volunteers in the Association.

Actions

Action 1

To encourage and support branches, volunteers and IWA services in implementing the Volunteer Policy & Procedures adopted by the Association in 2007.

Action 2

To standardise volunteer recruitment, work practices, training and support structures within IWA services and branches.

Action 3

To undertake a national volunteer recruitment and development drive, and to continue to make Association facilities and premises available to branches and volunteers.

Action 4

To provide information and support for branches and volunteers which will assist them in complying with Government policy, health and safety legislation, and charities legislation.

Action 5

To appoint a National Volunteer Co-ordinator whose role will be to support and develop current branches, establish new branches and recruit additional volunteers to support the delivery of current core services.

Benefits to You



Policy and procedures implemented nationally.



Standardised practice.



Additional volunteers available to support IWA objectives.



Closer links between branches, volunteers and staff.



Improved communications and strengthened volunteer network.





strategic objective 3
advocacy

Direct quotes from members in response to the Strategy Questionnaire.

“...Promoting full participation and integration of IWA members in their local communities and establishing IWA members as equal citizens and contributors to Irish society.”

“We must let the Government know the issues if they are to be sorted.”

“We must always remember why IWA started – the main role should be fighting for our rights.”



Strategic Objective 3 advocacy



STRATEGIC ACTIONS

Background

Advocacy has always been central to the IWA ethos. From the beginning of the Association, people who shared the same interests and issues came together to advocate for change. Pooling resources, knowledge and experience in order to lobby decision-makers was crucial to changing how disability and people with disability were viewed in Ireland. The IWA Advocacy team continues this work in advocating and lobbying for further change, as well as encouraging members to self-advocate.

Advocating on disability issues is an ongoing process as human rights, dignity and equality continue to dominate the disability agenda. Research has shown that people with disabilities experience high levels of social exclusion, unemployment, discrimination, poverty and educational disadvantage.

The Advocacy team also monitors the implementation of disability legislation and actively responds to Government policy proposals through written submissions.

Actions

Action 1

To further develop existing lobbying structures in order to effectively represent the issues of concern to members.

Action 2

To develop pilot projects to support self-advocacy.

Action 3

To publicise the key concerns of members highlighted during the strategy consultation and development process.

Action 4

To positively profile the issues in an informed and professional manner, ensuring that the views and concerns of members are known and understood by the general public.

Action 5

To develop stronger links with the media.

Benefits to You



A strong voice on the issues that are crucial to members.



Individuals will have increased capacity to self-advocate.



Generate a positive image of disability.



Greater public awareness of collective and individual issues.



Raise our profile as a representative organisation for people with physical disabilities.



strategic objective 4
working with others on behalf of members

Direct quotes from members in response to the Strategy Questionnaire.

“When I ring my local council, I never get the same person twice and I have to go through everything again from the beginning. This is so frustrating and makes me not want to ring at all.”

“I need more PA hours but have been told that there is no money. How can the IWA help with this?”

“When I want to get a bus to Dublin, I have to ring the day before to arrange it. Is this the same for everyone?”

“I want to work and earn a living but there aren't any opportunities. How can IWA help me get a job?”

Strategic Objective 4

working with others on behalf of members



STRATEGIC ACTIONS

Background

IWA works in partnership with many external organisations on behalf of members. These include local authorities, other disability organisations, and the HSE. The HSE is our main funding agency, and the extent of our services is directly related to the amount of HSE funding available each year. FÁS provides funding through the Community Employment scheme, underpinning the delivery of services through IWA's network of Resource and Outreach Centres. It is crucial for IWA to work in collaboration with these agencies, and other external organisations, on behalf of members.

Actions

Action 1

To develop a plan for increased regular contacts with the HSE at national level in order to enhance the relationship between the two organisations.

Action 2

To lobby all external bodies for adequate revenue and capital funding for increased staffing numbers and suitable accessible buildings.

Action 3

To work in partnership at a local level with HSE professionals to provide services that address members' needs in a cost effective manner.

Action 4

To advocate for the mainstreaming of Community Employment posts and for adequate funding for core staff.

Action 5

To establish a programme of contacts with international disability groups and organisations.

Action 6

To collaborate with other organisations in the disability sector to ensure that the interests of our members remain at the forefront of all developments.

Benefits to You



A partnership approach with the HSE to planning new and existing services.



Greater availability of IWA services and activities.



Local linkages with HSE staff ensure responsive supports for IWA members.



CE and core staffing issues addressed, with greater availability of services for members.



Services developed based on evolving international best practices.



Coordinated approach to disability issues from all bodies.





strategic objective 5
raising the profile of iwa

Direct quotes from members in response to the Strategy Questionnaire.

“We need to get to a point where IWA is considered expert when dealing with accessible housing and access in general.”

“Develop local and national forums for members to discuss ideas, problems and issues that arise”



Strategic Objective 5

raising the profile of IWA



STRATEGIC ACTIONS

Background

IWA has a strong reputation as a service provider and representative organisation for people with disabilities. In the course of our work, we interact with Government departments, funding agencies, other disability organisations, businesses and the general public. Staff and members in centres throughout the country also interact with local communities on a daily basis.

IWA engages in national communications initiatives such as producing our quarterly magazine, *Spokeout*, our Annual Report, and a range of information leaflets. Awareness of our work helps us to compete for funding and attract media and public support for our fundraising campaigns. It also enables us to highlight issues on behalf of our members.

Actions

Action 1

To increase the public profile of IWA in order to ensure that members, staff, other organisations, Government departments and the general public are aware of the work done by the Association.

Action 2

To review and improve external communications and information provision, ensuring that IWA communicates effectively with members, staff and the general public. IWA will continue to use the IWA website, *Spokeout* and other appropriate media to provide information.

Action 3

To develop a corporate fundraising programme and improve current fundraising methods in order to generate increased funds and enhance the profile of IWA.

Action 4

To promote IWA's profile by undertaking:

- National campaigns on specific issues identified by members during the consultation process e.g. access, housing, transport, parking, etc.
- Publicity to celebrate IWA's 50th anniversary in 2010
- The provision of new signage incorporating the new IWA logo for all ROCs and buses
- Participation in appropriate national and international seminars and conferences.

Benefits to You



Greater awareness of the work of IWA.



Improved communications and ease of access to information.



Greater resources available for the benefit of members.



IWA will become more easily recognised by the general public, making it easier for us to raise awareness of disability issues.



strategic objective 6
supporting strategy implementation

Strategic Objective 6

supporting strategy implementation



STRATEGIC ACTIONS – 6.1 HUMAN RESOURCES

Background

In order to ensure that IWA members receive the highest quality services from the Association, it is vital that we have a skilled and highly motivated workforce. Appropriate HR strategies are in place to support a safe, non-discriminatory working environment, where staff are properly recognised and rewarded.

Actions

Action 1

To recruit and retain high quality staff to meet current and future needs. In doing so, to use methods that promote equality of opportunity and enhance the perception of the Association as an employer of choice within the sector.

Action 2

To continue to generate and expand appropriate employee development programmes to support staff in responding to members' needs.

Action 3

To maintain a conflict-free and positive employer/employee relations climate that ensures that the Association is able to meet its objectives while allowing for change to be readily accommodated.

Action 4

To maintain and develop further the employee benefits and current support systems including pay and benefits, employee assistance programme and health and safety standards.

Action 5

To continue the development of the performance management systems, ensuring that they are used as a mechanism to motivate staff and to provide development opportunities.

Benefits to You

High quality services delivered by appropriately qualified and motivated staff.

A high-performing workforce that continuously seeks to improve services and adopt a person-centered approach.

Continuity of services guaranteed and change incorporated without difficulty.

Staff who feel valued and supported by the Association in their work and in their personal wellbeing.

Appropriate systems in place to ensure optimum performance by all staff and identification of development and learning opportunities.

Strategic Objective 6

supporting strategy implementation



STRATEGIC ACTIONS – 6.2 FINANCE

Background

The function of IWA's Finance Department is to protect the assets of the Association, ensure regulatory requirements are met, and provide high quality financial information to users such as suppliers, regulatory authorities and revenue authorities. Finance plays a central role in supporting service delivery by providing managers with comprehensive financial information and data, costing developments and measuring performance financially.

Actions

Action 1

To review and update our information technology (IT) systems for the delivery of quality and timely financial information.

Action 2

To deliver required financial information directly to managers at their desktops within specified financial reporting timescales.

Action 3

To provide financial information in a user-friendly manner.

Action 4

To develop the Finance team in a manner capable of ensuring that consistent, quality delivery of financial information is guaranteed.

Action 5

To develop an asset register to ensure that the assets of the Association are comprehensively protected – in terms of replacement cost, title and standards.

Benefits to You



Optimise the use of technology to deliver financial information to regulatory authorities and decision-makers.



Managers at all levels of the Association will be trained and given access to improved financial information. Improved accounting to members and third-parties (HSE, FÁS, etc).



Finance will be an integral part of the interactions of Service Directors and Managers with the HSE and other agencies.



Finance team adequate to ensure that cover is always available for key tasks (e.g payroll).



A single-source database for all aspects of the significant assets of the company – such as buildings, IT equipment, significant fixtures, fittings and equipment.



Strategic Objective 6

supporting strategy implementation



STRATEGIC ACTIONS – 6.3 CORPORATE SERVICES

Background

The Corporate Services Department provides many of the support systems that ensure quality, safety and efficiency in all of the Association's activities. IWA has rapidly expanded the scale of its operations in recent years and it is vital that we continue to develop the infrastructure necessary to support the delivery of our services.

Actions

Action 1

To manage and develop the Association's property portfolio, to maximise the Association's assets, and to ensure the highest possible standards of accommodation provision for members and staff.

Action 2

To expand and develop the Information and Communication Technology (ICT) infrastructure within the organisation to the highest quality business standards in order to support the expansion and development of services to members.

Action 3

To review administrative capacity to ensure the highest possible standards are achieved within a value for money framework.

Action 4

To ensure effective health and safety management systems are in place to protect members, staff and others.

Action 5

To develop new purchasing systems and procedures within the Association with a view to improving value for money and maximising cost savings in all areas.

Action 6

To introduce an internationally recognised quality assurance system to underpin all activities within the Association.

Action 7

To expand and develop the range of training opportunities available to staff, volunteers and members. Expand delivery of external training.

Benefits to You



Improved facilities for members, volunteers and staff.



Efficient and effective IT support to all IWA departments, centres and members.



Streamlined operation ensuring administrative efficiency and effectiveness.



Safe operating procedures, reduced insurance premiums, less sickness-related absence, improved staff retention and morale.



Improved cost savings, better value for money, and improvements in the supply and quality of goods and services required.



Improved standards and quality control, as well as improved organisation profile.



Highly skilled staff, volunteers and members within the Association. Recognition of IWA as leader in disability awareness and other training.

Implementation, Monitoring and the Evaluation of the “Your Life – Your Way” IWA Strategy 2008 to 2011 Implementation

The success of any organisation in implementing a new strategy is largely determined by the ability of the organisation to incorporate the strategic actions in its day-to-day work. In this regard, IWA will implement the strategy by integrating the strategic actions with the work plans of each member of the Senior Management Team (SMT), and, in turn, into the work programmes for Area/Regional Managers and IWA staff within each of the four IWA regions. The SMT members will also be supported in the implementation process by the national working groups.

MONITORING

To ensure the strategic actions are implemented as part of the day-to-day work of IWA staff, monitoring arrangements should be integrated in existing management arrangements of IWA. This includes monitoring through:

- Individual appraisal
- Business plans for specific tasks
- Monthly reports of progress towards strategic implementation by each member of the SMT to the CEO, and of other IWA staff to the relevant Regional Director
- An annual review of the progress towards strategic implementation.

EVALUATION

As part of the strategic implementation process, business plans will be developed for each strategic objective. Quantifiable targets will be apportioned to each strategic action under various sub-headings, with target dates and named Senior Management Team members. These measures will facilitate the evaluation of how well the organisation is meeting the quantifiable targets and will be incorporated into quarterly, bi-annual or annual reports.

Conclusion

The new IWA strategy for the period 2008 – 2011, “Your Life – Your Way”, draws together the views and aspirations of members, staff, their families, local branches, volunteers, local HSE partners and other interested individuals/groups.

The strategy lists 89 strategic actions under six strategic objectives. The strategy actions listed are designed to build upon the developments of recent years, as well as new initiatives identified by members of the Association. It also gives IWA a very clear direction for the future which is faithful to the ethos upon which the Association was founded in 1960.

In conclusion, “Your Life – Your Way” is a concise and deliberate statement of intent which sets out our objectives for the next three years. Achieving these strategic objectives will bring clear and tangible benefits for IWA members and the wider community of people with disabilities in Ireland.



The Environmental, Legislative and Policy Context

Recent legislation has impacted on the way IWA operates. The most notable being:

- The Disability Act, 2005, which was designed to “advance and underpin the participation of people with disabilities in society by supporting the provision of disability specific services and improving access to mainstream public services”. The full impact of this legislation has yet to be evaluated.
- The Health Act, 2004, which resulted in the replacement of the Health Board structure with the single, national Health Service Executive (HSE). This has had a significant impact on how our funding is agreed and monitored.

Other significant national legislation includes:

Safety, Health and Welfare Act, 2005

The Equality Act, 2004

Equal Status Act, 2000

Employment Equality Act, 1998 – 2004

Freedom of Information Act, 1997, and Freedom of Information (Amendment) Act, 2003

Data Protection Act, 1988

International Requirements

The United Nations Convention on the Rights of People with Disabilities

Barcelona Declaration, 1995 – a long standing policy statement which has been adopted by the majority of local authorities.

Public Service Strategies/Policies/Partnership Agreements

National Youth Council of Ireland Strategic Plan, 2008 - 2012

“Delivering Homes, Sustaining Communities” – Department of the Environment Policy Document, 2007

Towards 2016, Ten Year Framework Social Partnership Agreement, 2006 – 2015

The National Census, 2006

National Standards for Disability Services, National Disability Authority, 2004

National Children’s Strategy, 2000-2010

National Anti-Poverty Strategy, 2003

Quality & Fairness – A Health System for You, Department of Health & Children, 2001

Children First – National Guidelines for the Protection and Welfare of Children, 1999

The Consultation Process

The process of developing this strategic plan began formally with a joint Board of Directors/Senior Management Team meeting on the 19th October, 2007. As a member-based organisation, it was decided from the very outset that the key to developing an inclusive and representative strategic plan was to engage our members as early as possible in the process. It was also clear that there were many other stakeholders including Government and statutory agencies, IWA staff, and other interested individuals/groups that it would be necessary to consult. Bearing this in mind, and reporting on a monthly basis to the Board of Directors, we embarked upon a formal consultation process which included:

- 80 open meetings held throughout the country for staff, members, families, local branches, volunteers, local HSE partners and other interested individuals/groups.
- A national survey – members and interested individuals were invited to complete a questionnaire either online or in hard copy. Questionnaires were made available in the December 2007 edition of *Spokeout* magazine, in all IWA Resource and Outreach Centres, and in IWA headquarters, Clontarf, Dublin 3.
- An advertisement was placed in the Irish Independent and Irish Times on 24th January 2008, inviting all interested individuals and/or groups to either complete a questionnaire or to submit their views and opinions directly to the strategy team.
- Individual meetings were conducted with senior figures from the statutory sector.
- A meeting with representatives of the 34 local authorities took place in Dublin on Tuesday 26th February 2008.
- A series of focus group meetings, on themed areas, took place in late February/early March 2008 throughout Ireland.
- Meetings of experts in the disability sector took place in early March 2008.
- Attendees at the IWA - Sport's Annual General Meeting were consulted on the Strategy Development Process to ensure that the IWA - Sport's Strategy and IWA Strategy were congruent and complementary.
- The National Consultative Committee met in early March 2008 with a briefing and discussion on the strategic development process.



The following table gives an overview of the approximate numbers who participated in the consultation.

Consultation Type	Number
Number of attendees at 80 open meetings (approximate)	2,100
Number of questionnaires returned	733
Number of attendees at local authority meeting	50
Number of attendees at focus (working) group meetings (approximate)	110
Number of attendees at the IWA - Sport's Annual General Meeting	60
Number of attendees at the National Consultative Committee	75
Total submission/contacts during consultation	3,128

From the returns received, the analysis established that:

- 87.72% felt that an up to date strategy for the IWA was necessary
- 86% felt that a review of the 2004 IWA strategy was important
- 92.73% felt that consultation with IWA members was important
- 94% felt that consultation with IWA staff was important
- 88.26% felt that consultation with other organisations was important . The main organisations identified were local authorities, county councils, disability organisations, the Health Service Executive, Government departments, the Sports Council and youth organisations.
- 77.63% of respondents felt that IWA responded "very well" or "well" to members' needs. This response is a vote of confidence in the IWA from the respondents to the questionnaire due to the high satisfaction rating recorded.

The analysis identified the issues of importance to the members of IWA and these issues are directly reflected in the strategic objectives and strategic actions identified in this strategy.

Acknowledgements

The Board of Directors wishes to acknowledge the contribution of all our members to the development of this strategy.

The Board also wishes to thank:

- Our volunteers who support us consistently in the work we do.
- Our funding agencies who provide much needed resources.
- All our staff for their dedication and commitment to working with members and their full participation in this process.
- Our CEO, our Senior Management team, and our Area and Regional Managers who facilitated many of the open sessions. And special thanks to Chris Hoey, Regional Director, who, with the support of Daragh Kennedy and Mary Finn, did so much of the hard work associated with bringing this process to fruition.

Glossary of Terms

Advocacy ~ Programmes that facilitate:

- Representation of personal concerns.
- Collective action in raising awareness of disability issues that affect a number of people.

Assisted Living Service (ALS) ~ Personal assistant and support services that enable people with disabilities to live independently in their homes and communities. There are two service packages available through the ALS:

- **Self-Directed or Leader-Managed Service** ~ A service package where the person with a disability (Leader) recruits and trains their personal assistant to provide their service. The Leader manages the service delivery on a daily basis.
- **Supported Package** ~ A service package where the Assisted Living Service Co-ordinator assists the service user in the daily management of some, or all, aspects of their personal assistant service.

Branch ~ A locally based group of individuals including members, volunteers, SPIRIT Youth Service members, and IWA - Sport's members.

CE Participants ~ Community Employment is an employment and training programme which enables long-term unemployed people to re-enter the active workforce by breaking their experience of unemployment through a return-to-work routine. The programme assists them in enhancing and developing technical and personal skills that can be used in the workplace.



Employment Support Subsidy Scheme ~ This scheme provides financial support to employers, outside the public sector, to encourage them to employ people with disabilities for a minimum of 20 hours per week. This is managed by FÁS.

FÁS ~ Foras Áiseanna Saothair is the Irish National Training and Employment Authority that enhances the skills and competencies of individuals and enterprises in order for Ireland to further develop as a competitive, inclusive, knowledge-based economy. It strives to do this through the provision of tailored training and employment programmes.

FETAC ~ Further Education and Training Awards Council is the national awarding body that gives people the opportunity to gain recognition for learning in education or training centres, in the work place and community.

Foróige ~ A national youth organisation that aims to enable young people to become actively involved in their own development and the development of society.

HSE ~ Health Service Executive is responsible for providing health and personal social services for everyone living in the Republic of Ireland.

IT ~ Information Technology is a term that encompasses all forms of technology used to create, store, exchange and use information in its various forms i.e. computers, telephones, fax machines, etc.

ICT ~ Information Communication Technology is an umbrella term that includes any communication device or application.

MAATS ~ IWA's Motoring Assessment, Advice and Tuition Service provides a range of services to enable people with disabilities to improve their mobility i.e. driving tuition, driving assessments, vehicle purchase advice, rights and entitlements information, vehicle adaptations, insurance advice, etc.

Members ~ IWA has two categories of membership:

- Persons with limited mobility who subscribe to the rules and bye-laws of IWA and agree to be listed on IWA's database.
- Supporters, families and volunteers who are actively involved in the work of IWA and subscribe to the rules and bye-laws of IWA and agree to be listed on IWA's database.

Personal Assistants ~ The IWA Personal Assistant works within the ALS and carries out tasks that the person with a disability might find difficult or impossible to do in their daily lives. Assistance is tailored to the wishes and needs of the person with a disability.

ROCs ~ Resource and Outreach Centres offer recreational and personal development/training programmes that are designed to facilitate an improved quality of life and greater interaction by individuals in their local community.

SPIRIT ~ The official name of the IWA Youth Service which is an acronym for Social, Participation, Inclusion, Rights, Independence and Tenacity.



Irish Wheelchair Association

Áras Chúchulainn, Blackheath Drive
Clontarf, Dublin 3

Tel 01 818 6400

Fax 01 833 3873

Email info@iwa.ie

www.iwa.ie

www.cuisle.com

Registered Charity No CHY 5393 I.W.A. Limited Company Registration No 352483



I.W.A. Limited, trading as
Irish Wheelchair Association, is a company limited
by guarantee and not having a share capital.