





Unbeatable

Throughout the difficulties of the Covid-19 pandemic, Irish Wheelchair Association staff and volunteers were determined to keep going to make sure that people in our services were well looked after. Across every county, Irish Wheelchair Association was unwavering in our efforts to keep everyone safe and connected. Our valued members in turn, lifted our spirits with their warmth and resilience. Thank you to all our workers and members for pulling together in 2020 – you are simply unbeatable.





Our Vision

Irish Wheelchair Association has a vision of an Ireland where people with disabilities enjoy equal rights, choices and opportunities in how they live their lives, and where our country is a model worldwide for a truly inclusive society.

Contents

Our Vision	iv	Holidays and Respite.....	26
Contents	1	Sport	27
President and Chairman’s Message	2-3	Raising the bar.....	28-29
CEO’s Year in Review.....	4-5	Ability Programme.....	30-31
Our Services	6-7	You make our work possible	32-33
Our Work at a Glance.....	8	Fundraising - Unstoppable Orla.....	34-35
Assisted Living Services	9	New website launched.....	36
Going for gold	10-11	Volunteers.....	37
Community Supports	12-13	Mags wins at the Volunteer Ireland Awards ...	38-39
A place to grow in Athlone	14-15	Advocacy.....	40-41
Transport	16-17	Statement of Financial Activities	42
Taking the wheel	18-19	Balance Sheet	43
Housing and Access	20-21	Income and Expenditure	44
A place in the country.....	22-23	Thank you.....	45-46
Launching our new Access Guidelines.....	24-25		

Front Cover: Our members in Kilkenny enjoy a socially distant get together during lockdown

A Message from our President and Chairperson

Irish Wheelchair Association has always been a leader in supporting people with disabilities, overcoming the challenges and finding the right solutions, which enable our members to live the lives they choose and to be at the heart of their communities.

In our 60-year history, 2020 has been the most difficult year yet, one that challenged each one of us in many different ways. For our service users and members, fear of the unknown, being isolated at home and the feeling of vulnerability are just some of the very real hardships faced every day. For our staff and volunteers, operating in an environment of such uncertainty and risk was extremely difficult and at times almost overwhelming. It is important to acknowledge all the upset, hardship and fear this pandemic has caused.

Yet, the year has also allowed an opportunity for Irish Wheelchair Association to shine and to do what we

have done and always will do best. Everyone in the organisation is known for their resilience. In reacting to the circumstances, our history of resilience allowed us to examine what we do, quickly adapting how we do it, so we could continue providing support to our service users and members in a safe and practical way.

Our community services moved into outreach mode, keeping lines of communication open with all of those with whom we work and support. Our assisted living service, despite the challenges presented by sourcing and wearing of personal protective equipment, continued as it is a vital and necessary support to people all around Ireland.

Whether through in person call outs to do shopping, deliver prescriptions, online sports activities, calls just to check in, conversations over the phone or online, our staff and volunteers continued focusing on helping

where we could. Feedback and gratitude from our service users and members for the work and support of Irish Wheelchair Association personnel has been immense. We would like to add our sincere and heartfelt thanks and appreciation to all staff and volunteers for all the effort and sacrifices you have made.

What the past year has reminded us of is the importance and value of the work that Irish Wheelchair Association does. People are at the heart of everything we do. 2020 is a true embodiment of that statement, reflecting on how important our service users, volunteers, members and staff are to each other and the community at large.

What the past year has also done is shine a light, for audiences who may not have known or appreciated it, the work Irish Wheelchair Association has done for sixty years and continues to do every day.

There is a brighter future ahead. We will get through this. We look forward to the days when we can meet again in person and look each other in the eye, acknowledging that working with and for each other was a key part of getting through the challenges of the pandemic. Thank you to each and every one of you.



Martin Kelly
Chairperson



Breda O'Dwyer
President

CEO's Year in Review

Sixty years ago, Irish Wheelchair Association was founded by a small group of visionary para athletes who believed that Ireland could and should do more for people with physical disabilities. Little did they know that in its sixtieth year, the organisation would face one of its greatest challenges, the global Covid-19 pandemic.

The Covid-19 crisis was unprecedented. We have not seen a time like this throughout our history. But what we have witnessed over six decades is the strength of our members and our incredible ability as a community to rise to the challenge.

Within hours of the first lockdown, our community centres had to close, but our services did not stop. Our frontline workers transformed our community centres into an outreach service, to ensure that nobody was left alone or isolated. From urban towns to isolated rural roads, our bus drivers and community workers made sure that people in our services got anything needed



Rosemary Keogh, CEO, Irish Wheelchair Association

from shopping and prescriptions, to a friendly chat. We followed this by swiftly bringing our trainings and group activities online, so that people could stay connected. To play our role in tackling the virus, we joined forces with the HSE by using our bus fleet to

deliver Covid tests to residential settings and nursing homes, so that people who could not get to test centres could be tested.

Our assisted living service continued to provide quiet, critical support to enable people with physical disabilities to live independently at home throughout the crisis. These frontline workers provided home support in full use of personal protective equipment. They did this throughout the uncertainty of the virus, often making personal sacrifices in their own lives and family interactions to ensure people we support were safe. Staff volunteers formed an emergency team to support anyone who was infected by Covid or had to isolate.

This was the hardest of years and we were devastated to lose some of our beloved members to Covid. We continue keep these people close to our hearts, as we do their families. They will always be part of Irish Wheelchair Association. We are committed to keeping our members safe and well to the best of our ability during this highly concerning time.

People are at the heart of everything Irish Wheelchair Association does, and never was this more so than

in 2020. We were grateful this year to have been supported in our efforts by so many companies, schools and communities who rallied around their local service to offer donations of gifts to people in our services and to fundraise.

This crisis will come to an end and I believe that we will recover and move forward. Our founder Oliver Murphy reminded me that in our 60-year history, and through whatever storms we have weathered, Irish Wheelchair Association keeps going. It's what we do.

We stand on the shoulders of the giants like Oliver who went before us. In our work we are ever inspired by our many members and supporters across Ireland, who continue to bring life and spirit into their communities through these challenging times.

A handwritten signature in black ink, appearing to read 'Rosemary Keogh', written over a horizontal line.

Rosemary Keogh
Irish Wheelchair Association, CEO





Our Services

Throughout 2020 we provided 1.3 million hours of assisted living services to adults and children with physical disabilities.

Pictured left: Shauna and Stephen get ready for a trip in one of our buses

Our Work At A Glance

Irish Wheelchair Association faced the Covid crisis with determination that nobody would be left without a service. In 2020 we:



Provided **86,723 days of service** to **2,512 people** through our **58 community centres**



Supported **81 young people** in their journey to **employment**



Managed **51** wheelchair accessible, **affordable homes**



Provided **1.3 million hours** of **Assisted Living Service** to **2,081** adults and children



Supported **24 sports clubs** across **31 activity programs** through **IWA-Sport**



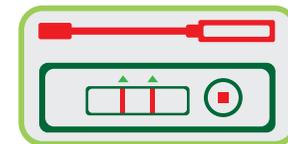
Reached people cocooning at home countrywide with our **116 accessible buses**



Gave **827 driving lessons** to **180 people** and **343 driving assessments**



Consulted over **1,500 people** for a **national survey on access**



Delivered **Covid-19 testing kits** to **nursing homes** and **residential settings** for the **HSE**

Assisted Living

Irish Wheelchair Association's assisted living service provides skilled home support workers, called personal assistants, to support people with physical disabilities living independently at home. The service helps people to carry out day-to-day tasks such as household chores, personal care and getting ready in the morning or socialising.

We provide a HSE-funded assisted living service, a service for older people and a private service called IWA at Home. Support ranges from a few hours a week to 24-hour assistance.

In 2020, despite the Covid pandemic, our frontline assisted living workers continued to support people in their homes with full use of personal protective equipment. An emergency response team was set up to support people who had Covid-19 or had to isolate. In these instances, our personal assistants worked with care and compassion to be there for people and families at a tremendously worrying time.

We sincerely appreciate the dedication of our frontline assisted living workers who continued to care for people, as if members of their own family, during the pandemic. We keep in our thoughts everyone in our service who was affected by or suffered loss during this devastating pandemic.

“ The service helps people to carry out day-to-day tasks such as household chores, personal care and getting ready in the morning or socialising.

Going for Gold

Gabriel stays at the top of his game with our assisted living service.

Gabriel Shelly from Kilkenny is one of Ireland's top Paralympians having competed in five Paralympic Games winning a gold medal at the Sydney Games in 2000.

This determination means he enjoys working hard and being on the go. Gabriel has Cerebral Palsy and in 2010 he realised things would have to change. "I am a very independent person but in 2010 I got injured and I wasn't able to do as much as before," he says.

Gabriel began using Irish Wheelchair Association's assisted living service for the support he needs and has found it helpful and reassuring. His personal assistant comes to him daily to help him get ready in the mornings and evenings, preparing food and helping with housework.



“I like to cook for myself or to prepare the food for my PA to cook. I also like to do the ironing,” he says. Gabriel enjoys going to the gym; he loves the bike, lifting weights and using the pool. He is looking forward to life restarting after Covid.

“We try to provide as much independence as we can but also let Gabriel know he’s not alone,” says Mary Condon, a personal assistant who works with Gabriel. The assisted living service gives Gabriel peace of mind if he needs extra help with something during the day or night. “He is happy knowing there is someone calling.”

Like everyone, Gabriel has been especially cautious over the past year. “I wasn’t sure about everything when it all began. I didn’t even go home to my mother at Christmas,” he says. Gabriel hasn’t seen his mother since January 2020, as she is in her eighties.

Mary and the team brought Gabriel Christmas dinner and they have worked hard over the past year to keep Irish Wheelchair Association members connected through these isolating times. “There were times Covid kept me awake at night wondering would I bring it

home to my family,” says Mary. “I found it hard at the start but then I realised all I can do is look after myself as best I can.”

“I think Irish Wheelchair Association is fantastic and very helpful and they are always there if you need something,” says Gabriel.

“The reason I have the confidence to do what I do is because I have always had to work hard for everything in my life,” he says. With that in mind Gabriel is looking forward to getting the train to Dublin and watching a rugby match in the Aviva Stadium as soon as he can.

“ The reason I have the confidence to do what I do is because I have always had to work hard for everything in my life.

Pictured opposite: Mary Condon and Gabriel Shelly

Community Supports

In any typical year, Irish Wheelchair Association's 58 community centres would be a hive of activity with people coming to take part in a range of trainings and social activities. When Covid hit in March 2020, our centres had to close, but our community services did not.

Within hours our teams across the country transformed the support we provided, bringing our services safely to people's homes through outreach. We were determined to make sure that nobody was left isolated, alone or without a friendly face to turn to and that family carers had extra support coming to them.

We called and made socially distanced visits to people who needed us, helping with tasks such as shopping or collecting medication and delivered activity packs to keep people who were cocooning occupied. We helped people set up Zoom and Skype at home, so they could stay connected with their families and with their dearest friends in Irish Wheelchair Association.

When restrictions allowed we were able to bring small groups of three into our centres so that friends could see each other. In cases where more complex needs existed, we were able to provide one-to-one support, so that families had some daytime respite from caring roles and the person in our service had important recreational time.

We delivered our training online to groups, such as young school leavers with disabilities, and we continued to connect with people to keep spirits up. The support we received from local communities and companies that rallied around to donate gifts for people with disabilities in their towns was greatly appreciated.

We expanded our school leavers service, which works with young people with physical and intellectual disabilities to build their confidence and life skills.

Pictured right: Alan, Leon and Stephen from our school leavers service





A place to grow in Athlone

Our garden blooms through lockdown for Karin and members

Karin Soedring has been coming to Irish Wheelchair Association's community centre in Athlone since she started using a wheelchair. She really enjoys the company and seeing her friends. Karin's face lights up when she talks about it. "We have such fun. The laughs we have. I don't think I have ever left this place in twelve years that I haven't had a good laugh."

Pictured left: Karin Soedring tends to the garden in Athlone

Before Covid-19, Karin's group came to the centre on Wednesdays and Thursdays. They would meet with friends, socialise and take part in various activities. "We did different courses like gardening, computers, arts, crafts," says Karin. "I learned an awful lot every time."

She really enjoyed the horticulture courses and she always signed up to whatever training was available. "I have forgotten a lot. But I did learn the names of all the flowers and shrubs. I have a diploma now to say I am a gardener."

“ I don't think I have ever left this place in twelve years that I haven't had a good laugh.

About six years ago the Athlone community centre created a small garden on the grounds of Irish Wheelchair Association's facilities. They planted shrubs, flowers, herbs and created spaces to relax and come together. The garden is a bright, peaceful space that tricks visitors into

forgetting they are surrounded by houses, roads and urban development.

Before Covid-19 the garden was used regularly for parties and celebrations at the Irish Wheelchair Association centre. Since the pandemic it has become even more important as a safe space to gather and meet outside in the fresh air.

Any garden needs regular work and attention but when lockdown came during 2020 Karin was worried that the garden at Irish Wheelchair Association's community centre would waste away without anyone to care for it. But as soon as COVID restrictions lifted, a group of volunteers spent a day working on the garden and posted pictures of their work on our Facebook page.

"When I saw those pictures that morning I cried," says Karin, "because I had put so much work into that garden. For years together we had sewed potatoes, beans, onions, we had worked with our hands in the soil. We had planted things there. I was part of it and my first thoughts when I knew we weren't coming back for a while was that the garden was going to go - but no. I was so happy that morning."

Transport

Our fleet of 116 wheelchair accessible buses and bus drivers were central to us being able to provide outreach services in 2020. They were on the road daily, travelling to some of the most isolated areas of the country delivering vital support to people with physical disabilities.

The maintenance of our bus fleet and replacing old buses is a constant challenge. The HSE provided funding for 13 buses last year, and we gratefully received a new bus from The Lord's Taverners Ireland for our sports division.

Irish Wheelchair Association is committed to stemming the spread of Covid-19. To play our part, we joined forces with the HSE to bring Covid tests to vulnerable adults in residential settings and older people in nursing homes through our fleet of buses. Our buses and drivers collect the tests, transport them to the residential unit and return them to an agreed location after testing, where samples can

be sent to identified laboratories. HSE requirements around infection control and use of personal protective equipment are applied throughout.

Our bus drivers were at the heart of this new service and showed immense dedication to combating Covid through their willingness to support this new testing service.

Irish Wheelchair Association also provides a driving school and assessments for people with disabilities who wish to learn how to drive or are intent on returning to driving. Our school teaches people to drive adapted vehicles to promote their independence. Sadly, our driving school service was interrupted due to Covid. We provided 827 lessons to 180 people and 343 assessments.

We also provide training to taxi drivers on behalf of the National Transport Authority and are a Department of Transport approved agency for issuing disabled drivers' parking permits.

Pictured right: John Tynan from Athlone



www.iwa.ie

 Irish
Wheelchair
Association.

 Irish
Wheelchair
Association



Taking the wheel

Seamus learns to drive in Athlone.

“As soon as I turned 17 I did my theory test,” says Seamus Kilmartin, who learned to drive with support from Irish Wheelchair Association. As a wheelchair user living twenty-five minutes from the nearest town, Seamus always knew he would need a car to get around.

As a child Seamus was a member of the youth club in the Irish Wheelchair Association community centre in Athlone. “I knew Barry Reid (his driving instructor) from coming here when I was younger, so as soon as I was driving age, he knew straight away to get in touch with me.”

Pictured left: Seamus Kilmartin from Athlone

“ I loved it straight away, the independence of it. It was like a whole new world to me.

Barry began to take Seamus out for lessons once a week in an adapted car. “It was nerve wracking at first obviously but soon as you get used to it, it’s grand. It’s something you pick up on.”

Learning to drive as a wheelchair user has extra challenges because often a learner doesn’t have access to an adapted car for extra practice. Seamus was with his instructor for a year overall. The fact that Seamus didn’t have an adapted car at home meant the process took a lot of time and commitment.

Seamus’s family bought an adapted car just before he sat his driving test. He passed his test the first time around when he was 19 years old. “I loved it straight away, the independence of it. It was like a whole new world to me.” For the first time Seamus could visit

friends, travel to college and go into town without relying on family support. A car can give a great source of independence and Sean got to experience this in full after he passed his test.

Seamus bought himself a new VW Polo a year ago and it sits shining in the car park.

Seamus’s life revolves around the car. “I’m in the car most days” he says. “Another good thing about the car is that I can visit my little brothers. The youngest is still a toddler, so it’s good that I can see him every day.”

Seamus jokes about the drawbacks of having his own car: “the downside is that I’m getting phone calls everyday, ‘go in and get the shopping’. I’m like a taxi service.”

Seamus truly eats, sleeps and breathes cars; he studied digital marketing in college and is now working for a car company promoting their online sales.

Housing and Access

In 2020 Irish Wheelchair Association provided 51 wheelchair accessible and affordable homes to people with limited mobility in Dublin, Kilkenny, Carlow, Tipperary, Mayo, Roscommon and Galway. In early 2020, An Fraoch, our housing development in Belmullet, Co Mayo, won the Chartered Institute of Housing Excellence in Health and Wellbeing Housing award. We also helped people with disabilities to pursue housing through other housing bodies and local authorities, with which we collaborate.

We continued to lobby the Government to provide more and better accessible housing. We are a member of the National Housing Strategy for People with Disabilities implementation and monitoring group and the Housing Agency sub group. We are represented on 13 local authority housing and disability steering groups focused on housing for people with disabilities.

Access to buildings, public spaces and amenities is one of the single biggest issues for people with physical

disabilities. To mark our 60th anniversary on 10th November 2020, we launched the 4th edition of our Best Practice Access Guidelines, which set the standard for accessible design in Ireland.

The importance of this comprehensive guide was best explained by a quote from one of our members, who said: "It isn't the wheelchair that makes me disabled, it's the building and places."

We consulted over 1,500 people in its preparation and found that 77% of people with physical disabilities have poor or no access to public spaces and amenities because of issues with pavements, parking, pedestrian crossings and more. And 66% of people reported difficulty accessing public buildings, which include healthcare, retail and leisure facilities.

The guide will be an essential source of information for official bodies, developers and architects on designing accessible buildings to the highest standards.

“ In early 2020, An Fraoch, our housing development in Belmullet, Co Mayo, won the Chartered Institute of Housing Excellence in Health and Wellbeing Housing award.



A place in the country

Teresa recalls getting the keys to her Mayo home.

“Moving-in day was very new and exciting,” say Teresa Gaughan, recalling getting the keys to her first home in An Fraoch, Irish Wheelchair Association’s accessible housing in Co. Mayo.

“The month before I moved in, I was shopping with my Mam saying we have to get this and that. Cutlery, tables, chairs...I was really excited about it. My Mam had to tell me to slow down.”

An Fraoch’s pristine, whitewashed houses sit in Logmore outside Belmullet town. The development consists of seven two-bedroom A3 rated homes. They employ universal design principles with wheelchair accessibility at their core and features including open spacing, adaptable kitchen tops, remote-controlled doors, and custom-fitted wardrobes.

Teresa had lived at home before moving in, so it was a big decision to fly the nest, even though her new nest was tailormade for her.

“I was born with Spina Bidifa,” says Teresa. “Up until about six years ago, I was only using a wheelchair occasionally. Then I fell off a chair and hurt my back. It could happen to anyone. I was badly bruised on the inside.” After the fall, Teresa felt attached to the certainty of having her parents around.

“The opportunity for the house came up and I’ll admit I was undecided. In my head I was thinking yes I will, no I won’t. Eventually I sat down with my Mam and she made me see that not everything is going to stay the same. They’re getting on, the rest of the family are doing their own thing and when it comes to the stage

when Mam and Dad aren't there anymore, who can I fall back on? Our conversation made me see that."

It was the calm after the storm of moving in that was the hardest for Teresa. She was initially homesick, torn between that longing for what was home, the familiar sounds and presence of their parents, and the desire to create a new life and new memories. "I wanted to be with Mam and Dad, but I wanted my own place."

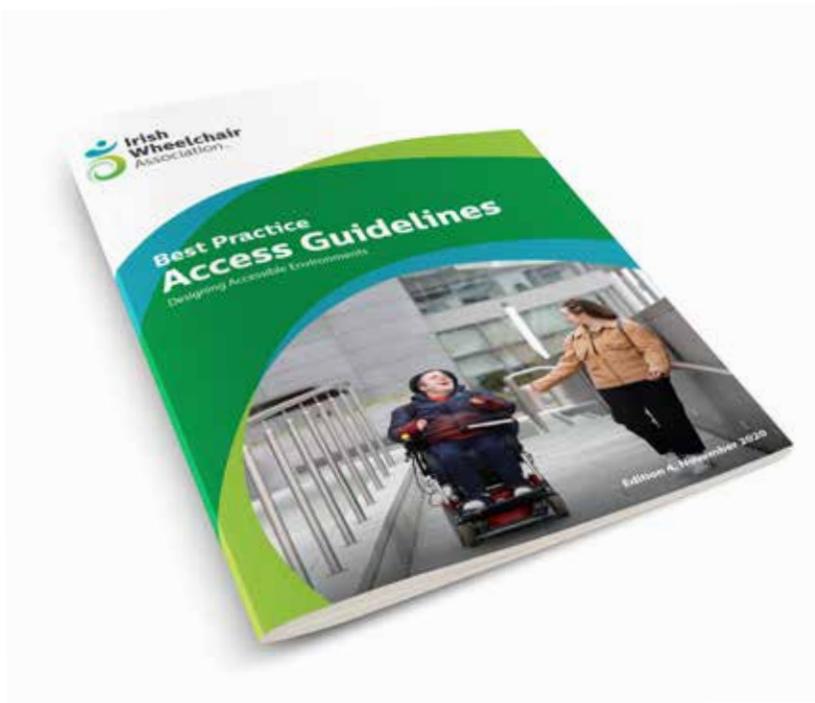
Now fully settled in, Teresa hasn't looked back. She loves the learning curve that moving out brought. "It's helped me. The bills are your responsibility. Food, rent, whatever. It's up to you to budget and to allocate your wages or social support, so you have enough at the end of the week.

"I can have friends over, a glass of wine. Even if it's just sitting and watching the television, I'm not disturbing anyone. My home gives me freedom."

Pictured right: Teresa Gaughan at home in Co. Mayo



Launching our new Access Guidelines



In November 2020 we published the 4th edition of Irish Wheelchair Association's '**Best Practice Access Guidelines: Designing Accessible Environments**', which was launched at a virtual conference to mark our 60th anniversary.

The guidelines set the standard for accessibility in Ireland across construction, housing, public amenities, retail, tourism, hospitality and sport.

We hosted a webinar with a wide variety of speakers including Professor Gerard Quinn, UN Rapporteur on the Rights of Persons with Disabilities, Fionnuala Rogerson, Principal, Fionnuala Rogerson Architects, and Michael and Leona Tuck, Access Advocates, @thestruggleiswheel.

One of the highlights was an interview with Dr Oliver Murphy, a founding member of Irish Wheelchair Association, which was a fitting way for us to reflect on our legacy of championing access issues.

“ We continue to engage with local authorities, Government and planning institutions to ensure that amenities and services nationwide are designed and built for everyone in Ireland.

The new guidelines were inspired by the experiences of Irish Wheelchair Association members, who continue to experience poor accessibility within their local communities that impose limitations on their daily lives. We surveyed almost 1,000 people to prepare the guidelines.

The research found that:

- **77%** of people with physical disabilities have poor or no access to public spaces and amenities because of issues with pavements, parking, pedestrian crossings and more.
- **66%** of people reported difficulty accessing public buildings, which include healthcare, retail and leisure facilities.
- **68%** of people experience inadequate toilets, lifts, emergency exits and parking machines in public spaces.
- **63%** said that they often faced poor or no accessible public parking at public buildings.
- **73%** said they often faced steps to the main entrance of public buildings.

Our research clearly illustrates that people with physical disabilities are commonly locked out of public spaces and buildings. With current building regulations taking an extremely narrow view of accessibility, simple day-to-day activities are made needlessly complicated.

Irish Wheelchair Association was founded sixty years ago by eight people who were wheelchair users. To this day one of the single biggest issues has always been access to buildings and infrastructure.

We continue to engage with local authorities, Government and planning institutions to ensure that amenities and services nationwide are designed and built for everyone in Ireland.

Holidays and Respite Services

Irish Wheelchair Association provides accessible and supported holidays and short breaks in hotels in Ballinasloe, Kilkenny and Dublin.

Due to the Covid pandemic, this service was curtailed or closed for most of 2020 under HSE restrictions, but work to grow the service continued. In collaboration with the HSE, guests of our holiday service can stay in the Hoben Hotel in Kilkenny or the Shearwater Hotel in Ballinasloe with personal support offered by skilled Irish Wheelchair Association staff around the clock.

To respond to the pause in services, we started offering respite services to people in their homes, which provided much-needed support to families during lockdown. Our respite service, is a real lifeline and important for people's physical and mental health, particularly for people experiencing loneliness or isolation during Covid.



Pictured right: Carmel Fallon Holiday Centre, Clontarf

Sport



IWA-Sport is a National Governing Body of sport in Ireland for people with physical disabilities. We encourage sporting participation for children and adults across all ages and activity levels. We also support high performance athletes nationally and internationally.

Our primary governance sports include wheelchair rugby, wheelchair basketball and para powerlifting, however we support and run programmes across a wide range of sports including para athletics, para swimming, para archery, para table tennis and boccia. Our multi-sports clubs engage in a wide range of activities, from kayaking to rock climbing and everything in between, where staying active is the primary focus. We also have an accessible gym and run children's camps from our sports centre in Clontarf.

In 2020, our programme of events and competitions were severely disrupted as a result of the Covid-19 pandemic. From March onwards, all organised sport including local club activities, national championships

and international competitions were cancelled and our sports centre and gym in Clontarf had to close its doors for a large part of the year.

In order to help our members stay fit and active, we quickly launched an online programme called Staying Active to provide activities virtually through all stages of lockdown. This included general wellbeing, accessible fitness classes, even our coach education program went virtual. This has been incredibly popular with members and has enabled us to reach an even wider group of people with our sports and programmes.

Members and athletes have been able to take part in online fitness, yoga and weight classes to stay active. We even had an Operation Transformation group, which focused on all-round health and activity. This new form of engagement enabled us to reach a whole new audience who are interested in staying active, fit and healthy outside of our traditional sports.

Raising the bar

Paralifter, Nicola, tells us how she kept fit during an uncertain year.

For all of us, 2020 was a difficult and unexpected year. With the closing of gyms, sports halls, and pitches, trying to keep fit was a struggle.

Nicola Dore (32) is an Irish Para Powerlifter from Limerick. She recently represented Ireland at the Para Powerlifting World Cup, performing well in the 61kg category and finishing just outside the medals in 4th.

For a tournament like this, you need to be focused and training well in the lead up. Covid-19 presented some challenges, but Nicola rose above that with some help from IWA-Sport.

“The first 6 weeks were tough because I was delving into the unknown. Not knowing what lay ahead or when I would ever get back to training properly again. My determination never faltered though because I

thrive on being challenged and this was probably the biggest curveball thrown my way in my career to date. I was determined not to be broken and so no matter what the hurdle or setback I kept going.

“Combined with my brilliant coach, Roy Guerin, was help from Shannon Pollock who was great in assisting me in the final weeks before Manchester on the nutrition front. Both are coaches with IWA Sport. They saw I was capable of more so set about getting me strong physically. Training and nutrition go hand in hand, so Shannon helped me tidy that up and get the most out of fuelling my body correctly. She also linked me with TJ, a fantastic physio who helped massively in correcting issues with my mobility, so by the time Manchester came around I was in good shape physically and mentally through the amazing support and efforts of Roy Shannon and TJ.”

“ I’m all about promoting and encouraging women in sport.

“Another factor was the Women In Sport 20x20 movement that just drove me on too because I’m all about promoting and encouraging women in sport and they also supported me massively throughout 2020. To top it off, I was inspired by how IWA-Sport kept its members around the country fit and active through all the virtual classes all year. Amazing stuff.”

Nicola left us with these wise words: “We don’t develop courage by being happy every day. We develop it by surviving difficult times and challenging adversity.”

Pictured right: Nicola Dore, Paralifter



Ability Programme

Carmel creates the career she wants with the help of our Ability Programme

Carmel Creaven (28) is a fitness instructor and personal trainer specialising in clients with disabilities.

Aged 24, Carmel was training for a career in the defence forces when she suffered a spinal cord injury during a rugby match. It took months of rehabilitation for Carmel to regain her mobility and start rebuilding her life.

“After my accident, having a disability was new to me so I couldn’t return to the army. I didn’t know where to go or what to do,” Carmel recalls. “I was used to routine and being active and being outdoors and playing sports all the time. So all that was gone. Now it was just physio and hydrotherapy appointments once a week, so it was very hard.”

“ Employers need to look past the disability. Bring a person in for an interview, get to know them. People have potential, they just need a chance.



Pictured above: Carmel Creaven from Co. Galway

Carmel came across Irish Wheelchair Association's Ability Programme online. The Ability Programme supports young people with disabilities to build employment skills and confidence to find careers of choice.

Carmel met with a job coach from Ability and they started looking at courses. Carmel struggled to find a sports and fitness course that would enroll a student with a disability, but she persevered and qualified from Galway Technical Institute in Sports Nutrition and Physical Training.

"I didn't think I'd be able to go back to anything sports related. I thought I wouldn't be able or everything would be held against me. But only for the Ability programme, look where I am today. Otherwise I wouldn't have had the help and I would still be at home, still in the same routine and depressed and down. I needed to keep my mind going instead of thinking of everything that happened," she says.

"Through the programme I did work experience in my local gym and they asked me would I stay on and work for them." Carmel is now based in that gym training individuals and groups with disabilities.

"What attracts people to come to me is that I've been through it."

"I struggled with my confidence after the accident. I struggled to go into town and I was reluctant to go places. The difference now is that I wouldn't think twice about that and I have confidence."

Carmel wishes more employers would open their minds on disability. "Employers need to look past the disability. Bring a person in for an interview, get to know them. People just need a chance, they have potential, so give them a chance."

You make our work possible

2020 was a year we will never forget. Our local fundraising events couldn't take place due to Covid, but that didn't stop you supporting us. There was cycling, running and rolling. Singing, baking and company donations. Treats for our members from local businesses and even personal protective equipment for our frontline workers.

We thank our many supporters from the bottom of our hearts. Your generosity helped keep people connected and lifted spirits as we weathered the Covid crisis together.

Pictured right: Our outreach workers visited people throughout the pandemic to check in on them and have a friendly chat







Fundraising

Unstoppable Orla cycles 21km in 21 days for her 21st birthday

My name is Orla Platten and I live in Quin, Co Clare. Before the Covid pandemic, I went to the Irish Wheelchair Association group on a Friday evening. I loved meeting everyone. We sometimes went bowling. Then everything stopped and I had to stay at home. I was really sad. I missed everyone.

My Mam bought me a trike and we got a waist strap and foot pedals to help keep my feet in place. At first I was very nervous on the trike. I couldn't get on it by myself, so my Dad lifted me on and off each day. I found it hard to pedal and my hips and my legs were a bit sore.

Pictured left: Orla Platten, Co. Clare, passing the finishing line

But I practised every day and then I saw some people were doing different things to raise money for charities, so I decided that I would cycle 21kms, doing one kilometer a day, by my 21st birthday on 22nd May to raise money for the Irish Wheelchair Association. My target was €1,000.

I cycled 1km from my house to the cross and back every day and my Dad or my Mam came with me. Each day I got stronger and stronger and I got a bit faster too.

My Mam set up a Go Fund Me page and after the first six hours I got over €1,000, then after 2 days, I reached €5,000. I was so thrilled. Every day people were donating money to my fundraiser and every day I was getting more confident on my trike.

My auntie Gay contacted TV3 and they came down and interviewed me about the fundraiser. They posted the interview on their Facebook page and then I got more and more donations and lovely comments too.

My last cycle was on 21st May. Mam and Dad walked with me as far as the cross. When I got up to Ryan's house there was a Garda car and I was shocked. They put on their sirens and drove in front

“ I decided that I would cycle 21kms, doing one kilometer a day, to raise money for Irish Wheelchair Association.

of me all the way back to my house. When I got to the top of the hill I saw balloons and banners and people were waving flags.

Everyone stayed two meters apart and they all lined the road and clapped all the way until I crossed the finish line. The Mayor of Clare and the Mayor of Ennis both attended too. I was so excited, shocked and delighted. In total I raised €13,200 for Irish Wheelchair Association. I think it's a great organisation.

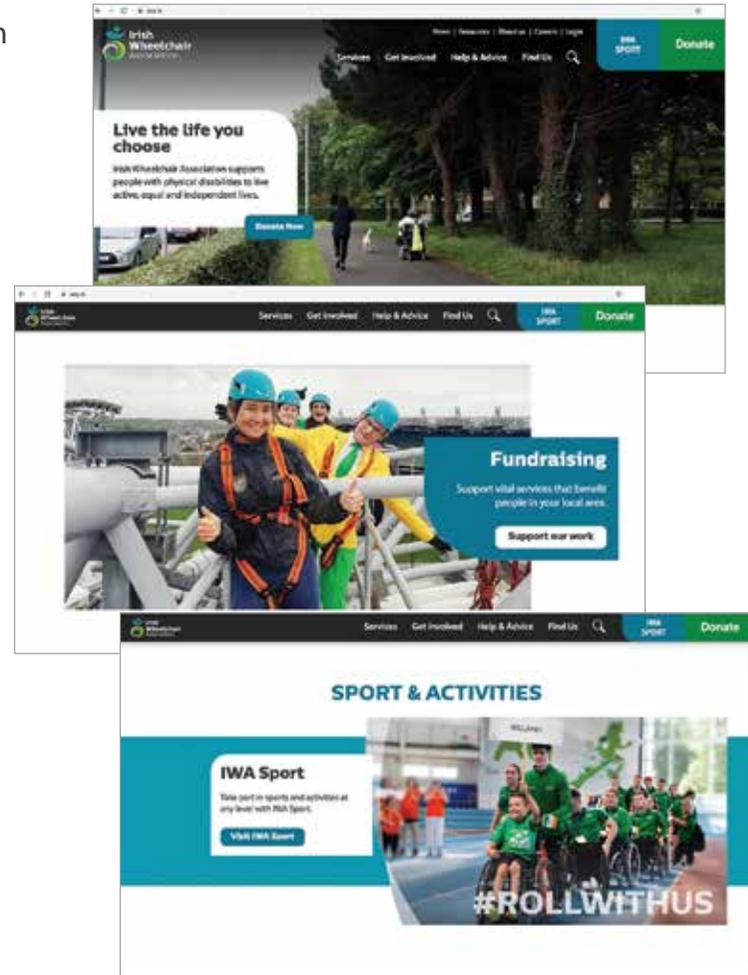
Our New Website Launched in November

It is now easier than ever to find the information you need from Irish Wheelchair Association online through our new website.

The website was redesigned during 2020 to better meet the needs of our members and service users, with full information about our services and how to get in touch. It will also help people interested in supporting our work to find out more about what we do.

Some of the new features on the site include:

- A **Help and Advice** section, so you can search for answers to queries online.
- A website that's easily useable on your mobile phone.
- An interactive **Find Us** page so you can search for your nearest services.
- For the first time, our IWA-Sport website has combined with our central website to enable service users and sports members to find out about services and clubs.
- High-quality imagery, videos and articles across the site to best reflect our amazing members and frontline workers.



Volunteers

Our 850 volunteers provide invaluable support across our services and include drivers, shop assistants, tutors, sports coaches, fundraisers and more. We hugely appreciate the contribution of volunteers who were involved in frontline services and fundraising by volunteers, which enabled us to purchase personal protective equipment to protect our workers and people in our services.

“ Our 850 volunteers provide invaluable support across our services.

Pictured right: IWA staff member Anita Pullen and Geraldine Murphy walking the dog in St. Anne's Park, Clontarf



Mags wins at the Volunteer Ireland Awards

In December Irish Wheelchair Association volunteer Margaret Hurley was presented with a national award at the '2020 Volunteer Ireland Awards'. Margaret was a winner in the Health and Wellbeing category. We were delighted to see her dedication recognised in this way.

Margaret, known to her friends as 'Mags', has been volunteering with Irish Wheelchair Association in Ennis for over 15 years. She is currently the branch treasurer of our local volunteer group, but is also known to step in as a driver of our wheelchair accessible minibus.

Pictured left: Volunteer Margaret Hurley from Clare



As branch treasurer Mags tackles issues, big and small. Recently branch fundraising supported the Ennis centre to purchase three new wheelchair accessible buses.

Before Covid Mags was involved in countless events, outings, parties and get togethers for Ennis members. Despite the considerable time commitment Mags gives to the local volunteer branch, she also has another volunteer role with our charity shop in Ennis town.

The shop opens six days a week and Mags is there on average five days a week, always flexible to cover shifts or help at short notice. Shop supervisor, Tina Nagle, says that Mags makes herself available to her “twenty-four-seven” and that she would be lost without her.

Even the Covid-19 crisis has not stopped Mags’ passion for her volunteer roles. When the lockdown was announced Mags organised for the Irish Wheelchair Association branch to purchase flowers growing in pots and delivered them herself to our members to keep their spirits up during their time in isolation.

“ Mags’ kindness and energy shines through; connecting volunteers, staff and Irish Wheelchair Association members together.

When restrictions eased she drove the Irish Wheelchair Association minibus to facilitate small clusters of socially-isolated members meeting up for a lunch and a chat.

According to people who work with her, Mags’ kindness and energy shines through; connecting volunteers, staff and Irish Wheelchair Association members together. We are grateful and proud of her support.

Advocacy

Irish Wheelchair Association's advocacy work is a strong voice for equality and inclusion for people with disabilities. We challenge the Government to protect the rights of people with disabilities and raise awareness on the need for better access, housing, personal assistance and transport for wheelchair users and people with limited mobility.

In January 2020, we worked with other disability organisations to run joint hustling events in our centres nationwide, as part of the our pre-election campaign, which enabled our members to have their say with their local politicians. The outcome of these events meant the issues that we as an organisation lobby for were brought to life, resulting in a good representation in the Programme For Government.

Throughout 2020 we have been lobbying with fellow disability organisations as part of the National Disability Services Association and the Oireachtas Disability Group, where our voices are stronger together. Much of our work through these groups

“ Much of our work highlights the ongoing lack of funding for disability service providers.

highlights the ongoing lack of funding for disability service providers and the discrepancies in the funding allocation between organisations that are fully State funded, Section 38, and partially funded Section 39 organisations, such as Irish Wheelchair Association, which have been historically underfunded.

The Government planned to implement a 1% efficiency cut across section 39 organisations which was untenable. Due to our lobbying this decision was reversed.

In July, to coincide with Independence Day on July 4th, we ran a campaign called #NotMyIndependenceDay to call on the new Government to ensure that the rights of people with disabilities are front and centre across departments and in particular under the remit of the new Department for Children, Equality, Disability, Integration and Youth. This gathered over 6,000 signatures of support.

In 2020 we created a new advocacy plan to guide the coming years. This plan will build the capacity of our members to advocate for themselves and for the disability community.

We have a position on many government departments such as the Taxi Advisory Committee, Department of Transport Access Consultative Forum, Department of Social Protection Consultative Committee and the newly established Disability Participation and Consultation Network. We use these platforms to represent the rights of our members across public services and society.

Pictured right: Irish Wheelchair Association member Laura Doyle attending her driving lesson at our accessible driving school in Clontarf.



STATEMENT OF FINANCIAL ACTIVITIES

For the year ended 31 December 2020 (Incorporating the Income and Expenditure Account)

	NOTES	Restricted Operating Funds €	Unrestricted Operating Funds €	Designated Operating Funds €	Total Operating Funds €	Restricted Fixed Assets Funds €	Total 2020 €	Total 2020 €
Income from:								
Donations and legacies	3	-	328,000	-	328,000	-	328,000	505,072
Charitable activities	4	53,538,693	4,415,844	-	57,954,537	993,951	58,948,488	58,339,581
Other trading activities	5	-	896,701	300,886	1,197,587	157,670	1,355,257	2,491,800
Investments	6	-	469	-	469	-	469	204
Total		53,538,693	5,641,014	300,886	59,480,593	1,151,621	60,632,214	61,336,657
Expenditure on:								
Raising funds	7	-	1,412,612	3,256	1,415,868	-	1,415,868	1,651,127
Charitable activities	8	52,873,307	4,276,582	164,723	57,314,612	2,199,411	59,514,023	60,332,997
Total		52,873,307	5,689,194	167,979	58,730,480	2,199,411	60,929,891	61,984,124
Net (expenditure)/income		665,386	(48,180)	132,907	750,113	(1,047,790)	(297,677)	(647,467)
Transfer between funds		(119,688)	24,378	(102,682)	(197,992)	197,992	-	-
Net movement in funds		545,698	(23,802)	30,225	552,121	(849,798)	(297,677)	(647,467)
Total funds at 1 January		414,064	4,058,778	1,446,247	5,919,089	15,565,956	21,485,045	22,132,512
Total funds at 31 December	21	959,762	4,034,976	1,476,472	6,471,210	14,716,158	21,187,368	21,485,045

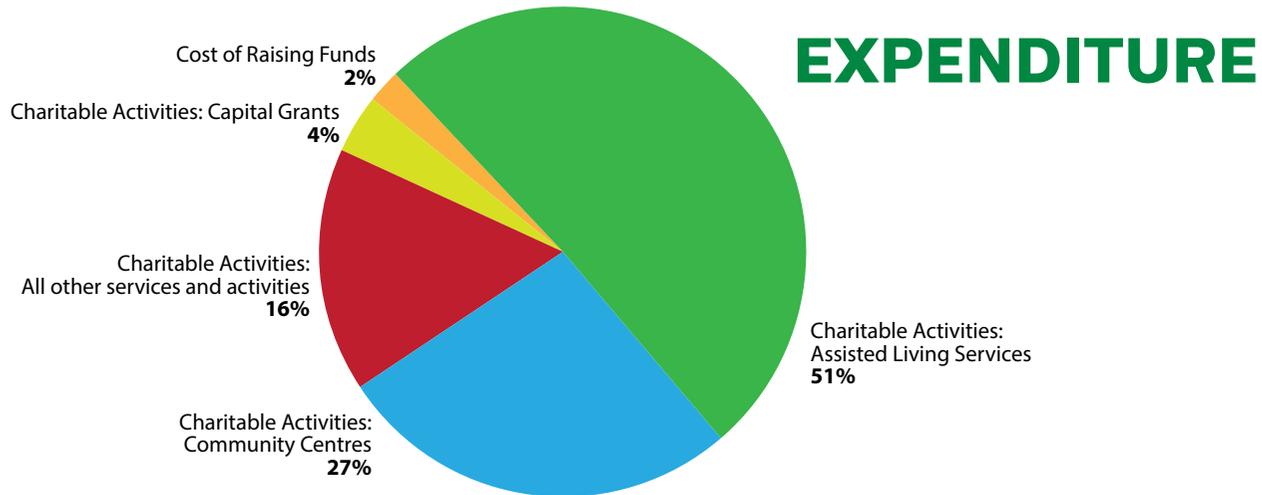
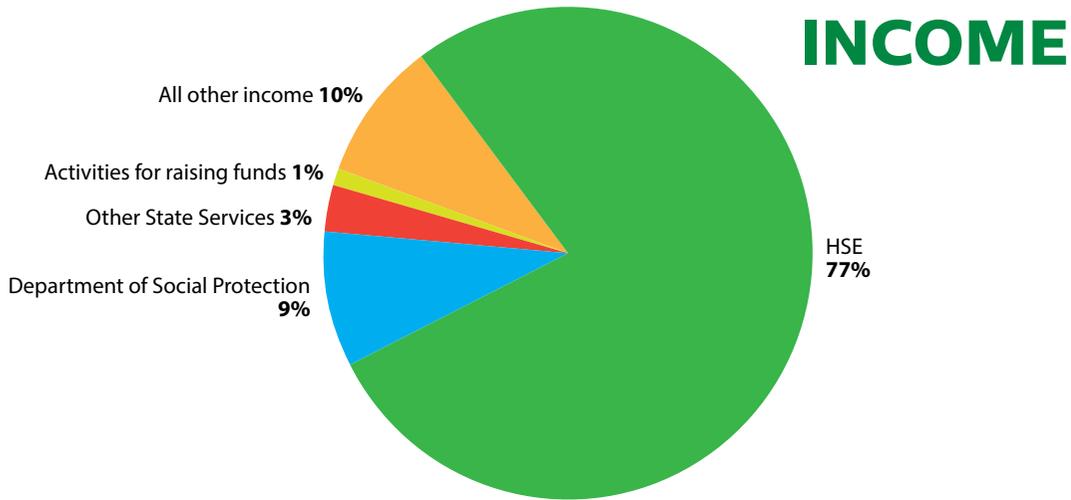
There were no other recognised gains or losses in the current or prior year other than those included in the Statement of Financial Activities. All income and expenditure derive from continuing activities. All income is derived from activities undertaken in the Republic of Ireland.

BALANCE SHEET

At 31 December 2020

	Notes	31 December 2020 €	31 December 2020 €
FIXED ASSETS			
Tangible assets	13	15,506,488	17,231,721
Financial assets	20	<u>3</u>	<u>3</u>
		15,506,491	17,231,724
CURRENT ASSETS			
Stocks	14	-	61,868
Debtors	15	4,536,604	4,773,547
Cash and cash equivalents	16	<u>10,588,843</u>	<u>7,852,527</u>
		15,125,447	12,687,942
CREDITORS			
Amounts falling due within one year	17	<u>(9,444,570)</u>	<u>(8,434,621)</u>
NET CURRENT ASSETS		<u>5,680,877</u>	<u>4,253,321</u>
TOTAL NET ASSETS		<u>21,187,368</u>	<u>21,485,045</u>
FUNDS			
Restricted funds	21	959,762	414,064
Unrestricted funds	21	4,034,976	4,058,778
Designated funds	21	1,476,472	1,446,247
Restricted fixed asset funds	21	<u>14,716,158</u>	<u>15,565,956</u>
TOTAL FUNDS		<u>21,187,368</u>	<u>21,485,045</u>

INCOME AND EXPENDITURE



Stay connected with Irish Wheelchair Association by visiting our website or social media channels



www.iwa.ie



facebook.com/irishwheelchairassociation



instagram.com/irish_wheelchair_association



linkedin.com/company/irish-wheelchair-association/



twitter.com/irishwheelchair



Thank you

A sincere and heartfelt thank you to all our staff, volunteers and members for pulling together in 2020.







Irish Wheelchair Association
Blackheath Drive, Clontarf, Dublin 3. D03 AW62.
Tel: 01 818 6400. Email: info@iwa.ie

www.iwa.ie
  