



2025

**IMPACT
STATEMENT**





At Irish Wheelchair Association, our impact is driven by a dedicated team of more than 2,500 employees, most working on the front line, supported by a community of passionate volunteers and voluntary Board members.

Across our network of community centres, sports clubs, charity shops, and local branches nationwide, we work together to create meaningful, lasting change for people with disabilities, ensuring a more inclusive society for all.

**Together, We are Stronger
Together, We are One IWA**

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Assisted Living Services

delivered in homes across
26 counties
in Ireland



Community Centre Services

provided **87,080 days** of
community services through
our **65 locations**,
48 Community Centres
and **17 Outreach Centres**



Daily Transport Services

supporting our centres
through a fleet of
142 accessible buses

Our Work at a Glance

In 2025, Irish Wheelchair Association continued to deliver essential services and life-changing supports to people with physical disabilities across Ireland.

We are proud to share the impact of our work through the following key achievements.



1,879
Driving Lessons
for people with disabilities



Approved Housing Body
managing **51 wheelchair liveable, affordable homes**



supported
19
IWA-Sport Clubs

2025

A Year in Review



Ann Marie O'Grady, CEO

2025 was a year that truly reflected our value of courage, as members and staff came together as ONE IWA to drive meaningful impact through advocating for people's rights. At a time of much political change and continued pressure across the disability sector, our members and staff ensured that the voices of people with disabilities were not only heard but were impossible to ignore. This collective effort helped raise political awareness of the realities of living with a disability and further strengthened IWA's position as a trusted and credible voice in disability policy.

As a member-led organisation, our members' voices inform our work. In 2025, our members asked us to campaign on barriers to accessible housing, access, and public transport. We are delighted to report that our key asks in both our access campaign and transport campaign were included in the Government's National Human Rights Strategy for Disabled People 2025 to 2030, which was launched in September. In our Access: It's No Joke campaign, members shared their experiences of everyday access barriers that impact their independence. Our ask was for each county council to employ full-time, fully resourced access officers, preferably a person with lived experience of disability. IWA's Getting Nowhere Report published a full review of Ireland's approach to accessible public transport, highlighting that there are 12 government policies guiding public transport infrastructure projects in Ireland and that none have any national or legally binding standards for disability access. This is putting people with disabilities at risk when using public transport. We will continue to campaign on both issues, holding the Government accountable for their promises.

Crucially, our advocacy delivered tangible impact across long-standing issues of pay parity for IWA employees and Section 39 organisations, as well as inadequate funding for disability services, which were repeatedly raised as parliamentary questions and debated in Dáil Éireann. These issues moved firmly into the political mainstream, reinforcing the message that fair pay and sustainable funding are essential to retaining staff, reducing service gaps and ensuring continuity of supports for our members.

Important milestones also celebrated during the year were member-led programmes such as the Fitness Inclusion Project, which saw the inaugural Fitness Inclusion Games take place in the home of Irish Sport at Sport Ireland's Sports Campus in Dublin. These Games were the culmination of all the hard work our members had put in and gave them an opportunity to compete, showcase and celebrate their progress with their families and loved ones.

2025 was a year of remarkable growth for our female members in IWA-Sport, not only in performance, but in confidence, community, and leadership. Their success reflects the strength of their ambition and the power of creating spaces where women and girls can thrive. One of the success stories last year was Emerald Rollers, Ireland's all-female Wheelchair Basketball Squad, who competed in the Great British Wheelchair Basketball League's 3rd Division and

were crowned Champions in April and promoted to Division 2. A fantastic achievement in just their second season since forming, and we can't wait to see what's in store for their future.

None of this would be possible without our extraordinary employees and volunteers. Their dedication, professionalism and belief in IWA's mission drive the organisation forward every day. This commitment was recognised through our continued ranking among Ireland's best employers, as the Association moved up from fourth place in 2024 to second place in 2025. This reflects our focus on creating a supportive and values-led workplace. The Board and Senior Management Team remain committed to supporting our staff and ensuring that our values are lived at every level of the organisation.

My sincere thanks to the many individuals, businesses and community groups who help us to strive to be better each year. We also thank our members and people who use our services for working together with us, sharing their lived experiences, so that together we can effect change.

Thank you.
Ann Marie O'Grady
Chief Executive Officer
Irish Wheelchair Association



Advocacy is at the heart of everything we do.

Through sustained lobbying and campaigning on the issues that matter most to our members. Together we continued to drive meaningful change in 2025, delivering real progress towards our mission of an inclusive Ireland.

Advocacy

Advocacy continues to amplify the voice of people with the lived experience, working with and on behalf of people with disabilities, campaigning on key issues to raise awareness and drive policy changes.

Our annual Pre-Budget Campaign was swiftly followed up with a protest on the Cost of Living, which highlighted the removal of disability support payments in Budget 2025. Campaigns such as Access: It's No Joke innovatively raised awareness of societal barriers and the lack of accessibility across our communities in Ireland. This campaign called for county councils to employ full-time, fully resourced access officers, preferably a person with lived experience of disability. This campaign was hugely successful, and this action has been included in the National Human Rights Strategy for Disabled People. IWA will continue to hold Government accountable for their promises.

Self-Advocacy Training continues to be a key part of our work empowering members to advocate for their own rights and needs. Throughout the year, 36 people took part in this training. This work is also reflected in the wider community through IWA's Disability Awareness in Schools Programme (DAISY), which delivered 60 sessions to Transition Year classes across 40 secondary schools, reaching approximately 2,400 students. A further 14 sessions were delivered in seven primary schools, engaging an additional 300 students.

Key Submissions made to: The National Human Rights Strategy for Disabled People. Head of Advocacy, Joan Carthy was appointed to the strategy's implementation committee, ensuring ongoing representation of IWA members' perspectives.

Transport advocacy remained a key priority, with IWA members continuing to represent the organisation on the National Transport Authority Taxi Advisory Committee, Transport User Group, and transport provider disability user groups. IWA's National Rehabilitation Hospital (NRH) Liaison Officer continued to support individuals with newly acquired disabilities. In partnership with the NRH, IWA also successfully organised and hosted the 12th Annual NRH Sports Championships, promoting participation, rehabilitation, and community connection.



Housing

Disability Activist, Jack Kavanagh chairs the “Universally Designed Homes: Housing for All’ conference in December, a partnership project between Irish Wheelchair Association, the National Disability Authority, Irish Council for Social Housing and Age Friendly Ireland.

The housing and access team works as a key part of our wider Advocacy team to help drive positive change in removing the barriers people with disabilities encounter in accessing housing and their local public amenities. As well as campaigning on issues publicly, they also support members at a local community level.

In 2025, our advocacy for inclusive housing policy and Universal Design culminated in a partnership with the National Disability Authority, Irish Council for Social Housing and Age Friendly Ireland to host the national conference, ‘Universally Designed Homes: Housing for All’.

IWA’s **Think Ahead, Think Housing** campaign continues to be a key part of our strategy to empower our members to plan for their future housing needs and apply for social housing through their local authority.

Irish Wheelchair Association is an approved housing body supporting 51 wheelchair liveable, affordable homes and tenancy support to people with disabilities and limited mobility in Dublin, Kilkenny, Carlow, Tipperary, Mayo, Roscommon and Galway.

IWA in Partnership

IWA's partnership with the National Rehabilitation Hospital (NRH) in Dún Laoghaire provides a critical pathway for people with newly acquired disabilities. As part of Mark's role at the NRH he is involved directly with onsite weekly physical activity and disability sport sessions with adult and paediatric patients from all units of the hospital, including those with spinal cord injury, acquired brain injury and limb absence.

15-year-old Sophie Lanigan became a junior member of IWA-Sport (on referral from the NRH) in 2023.

Sophie's mum, Laura Hughes, said: "After losing all four limbs, we never imagined Sophie doing any kind of sports again until we met Mark in the NRH during junior multi-sports sessions, and he showed Sophie that there are so many different sports, no matter what your ability."

"Multi-sports played a massive part in Sophie's recovery during her stay in the NRH. It was great to watch kids with all kinds of disabilities being included in all types of sports."


Laura added, "We honestly didn't think Sophie would ever attempt sports again. It's thanks to Mark for his encouragement and guidance, that she now has the confidence to try anything."

Partnerships are central to the impact we achieve at Irish Wheelchair Association. Mark Barry from our Advocacy team is based in the National Rehabilitation Hospital, providing a vital link for patients, connecting them to IWA-Sport and our wider services.



Pictured here with Mark Barry is Sophie Lanigan, who has since gone on to join an IWA-Sport club.





76-year-old Mossie Forde, one of IWA's longest serving members, lives life to the fullest today with support from IWA's personal assistant service, which is based on what Mossie wants to do!

Assisted Living Services

Our Assisted Living Service (ALS) provides essential supports to assist individuals to live independently and to participate fully in their communities and society. The service is delivered in homes and communities across 26 counties, supporting individuals in a person-centred approach. These supports include personal care, shopping, education, employment, social activities, holidays and much more. Our goal is to maximise an individual's independence, providing them with as much choice and control over their service as they choose.

In 2025, IWA continued to advocate to protect the Personal Assistant (PA) model of service and philosophy on a sector-wide basis, benefiting not only IWA but all people who rely on these services. We actively engaged with the Department of Children, Equality and Disability, HSE and other stakeholders to ensure that the introduction of the planned Home Care Authorisation Scheme did not unintentionally move Ireland backwards when it comes to the provision of PA services that support people to thrive.

The service is delivered in homes and communities across 26 counties, supporting individuals in a person-centred approach

Unstoppable laughter and joy at AbleFest 2025! A cheeky puppet, a surprise photo op, and lots of belly laughs – this is what community fun looks like.



Community Supports

IWA operates community support services through a network of 65 full-time, part-time and outreach Community Centres around Ireland. These vital services and supports are person-centred, providing a range of education, social, recreation and personal development opportunities, as well as support to members in community settings.

Our community centres are thriving hubs providing rehabilitative training, school-leaver services, and a range of activities for young adults within their community.

In 2025, we provided 88,080 days of community and School Leaver services.

These services and supports are person-centred, providing a range of education, social, recreation and personal development opportunities

Holidays and Respite

Our much-valued respite service provides accessible supported holidays and short breaks through dedicated holiday centres in Galway, Kilkenny, and Dublin. Holiday and respite services promote independence and strengthen inclusion for people with disabilities within their communities. They also have a profoundly positive impact on the mental wellbeing of individuals and their families.

Our partnership approach in the community means that our members can enjoy high-quality HSE-funded holidays with the necessary personal support delivered by our employees. In 2025, we provided 754 holiday breaks to members, equating to 2,819 bed nights. These figures are increasing year on year, but we stay true to our origins of giving a person-centred approach so that everyone has their own unique experience. For many members, this is often the highlight of their year.

In 2025, we provided 754 holiday breaks to members, equating to 2,819 bed nights.



Members from IWA Donegal enjoy the beach on their trip away with members even getting the opportunity to try some adapted surfing.

On the Move

Bus Network and Motoring Service

Our accessible buses are vital to many of our members who do not drive or don't have access to an accessible vehicle. Linked with our community centres, they act as a transport service for members attending IWA activities and programmes. They also provide essential transport for a wide range of social outings, appointments and sports activities. Often, many of our members would be confined to their homes if they didn't have access to our bus network, enabling them to gain access to their local community or access our holiday service.

Our Motoring Advice, Assessment and Tuition Service (MAATS) plays a critical role in providing motorists with disabilities the opportunity to gain back their independence and freedom by learning or returning to driving. This service provides people with the opportunity to overcome the challenges of conventional vehicle design without the expense of having their own vehicle.

Irish Wheelchair Association is an approved agency of the Department of Transport, responsible for administering and issuing Disabled Drivers' Parking Permits.

In 2025, we provided 1,879 lessons to students nationwide and assessed 323 clients in our driving centres with 29 students passing their driving test in our driving centres.

Our MAATS team also support RSA driving testers with training workshops on a wide range of vehicle adaptations. Driving is such a vital part of many people's independence; this service supports people with disabilities to retain or regain their independence behind the wheel.





IWA-Sport is the National Governing Body for sport for people with physical disabilities in Ireland. We provide a pathway for athletes to enjoy all that sport has to offer, including competitive opportunities at local, national and international levels.

Our 19 clubs offer a range of sports, including Wheelchair Basketball, Wheelchair Rugby, Para Powerlifting and Para Athletics. Junior clubs offer multi-sports which include soccer, boccia, swimming and table tennis in addition to the above sports, giving children from as young as 5 up to 15 years old the opportunity to learn and grow in a fun environment. We are also honoured and excited to welcome the sport of Boccia into our offering with a formal agreement between Sport Ireland and Paralympics Ireland in late 2025. This means that IWA-Sport is now the NGB for Boccia in Ireland, and we look forward to the growth of the sport within our membership and beyond.

Our home programme of events and competitions delivered six senior Wheelchair Basketball competitions, along with the Junior Wheelchair Basketball Blitz programme, Irish Wheelchair Rugby League, Para Athletics Grand Prix competitions and Para Powerlifting National Championships series.

IWA-Sport

Key achievements in Wheelchair Basketball saw Rebel Wheelers win the National Cup, League and Paddy Byrne Cup. Clonaslee won the League Shield, Killester won the Greene Walsh Cup, and North East Thunder won the Larkin Cup. Laois Lions won the Irish Wheelchair Rugby League and there were many individual winners in Para Athletics and Para Powerlifting. Well done to the clubs and athletes on their achievements.

IWA-Sport has approximately 3,000 members across a network of 19 clubs.

At performance level, our IWA-Sport National teams were supported by Sport Ireland Special Projects funding, Paralympics Ireland High Performance funding and sponsorship from new sponsors CEF to compete at major competitions, including World Para Powerlifting Championships, Wheelchair Rugby European C Championships and Wheelchair Basketball European C Championships. Congratulations to all athletes who represented Ireland.

Supported by a dedicated network of volunteers, our goal is to encourage and support participation in sports for children and adults.

Other key strands to our sport programme include education across Safeguarding, Anti-doping workshops, officials training and other upskilling opportunities for coaches. Members also have the opportunity to take on our popular Dr Oliver Murphy Leadership Training, which offers a wealth of personal development skills. Women

in Sport continues to be a key focus for the organisation in recognition of the additional barriers that females face when entering or remaining in sport.

We would like to thank the many partner agencies that helped us deliver these programmes, including Sport Ireland and the Sport Ireland Dormant Accounts Capital and Disability Programmes fund, which are vital to our programme. Huge thanks to the Local Sports Partnerships, Athletics Ireland, Weightlifting Ireland, Basketball Ireland and many more.

Jack O'Connor

When not training for Para Athletics or in school, Jack works on the family farm. He shares how he's adapted to farm life with a physical disability.

"Para Athletics has changed my life. It's helped me grow in confidence, gain independence, and stay focused on my goals. It's given me the tools to face challenges head-on and the mindset to keep pushing no matter what. More than that, it's connected me with an incredible community of athletes and coaches who inspire and support each other."

"Outside of Para Athletics, I live a busy life on the farm. I've got my tractor licence and even built my own hand controls so I can drive it myself. I lift myself into the tractor and take on the work like anyone else - it's physical, it's tough, and I love it. Farming keeps me grounded and strong, both physically and mentally."



A Fundraising Year in Review

In 2025, thanks to the dedication of our members, colleagues, Community Centres, partners and supporters across the country, IWA raised vital funds that delivered meaningful impact in communities nationwide. From marathon runners to abseilers, bucket collectors to monthly draw participants, every act of generosity strengthened our services and created lasting change for the people we support.

Our partnership with FREENOW raised more than €350,000 through its 'Round Up to Donate' feature, demonstrating the power of everyday giving. The partnership was further strengthened by colleagues and members who helped shape FREENOW's accessibility initiatives through focus groups and driver training videos. Longstanding partner, Chadwicks, donated €40,000 in supplies to support our Community Centres and IWA housing, alongside €20,000 raised through in-store fundraising activities.

Individual supporters generously donated more than €90,000, while our Annual Fundraising Day continued to benefit from nationwide support, including six incredible Kilkenny schools, which collected more than €6,000 on the day. We also received an extraordinary

donation from The Tom Cunningham Charitable Trust, which funded five new driving school cars and additional supports that will have a lasting impact. State Street Foundation provided €47,000 towards our DAISY Young Ambassador Project, which employs young people with disabilities to deliver fun and engaging disability awareness workshops in schools.

Gifts in Wills contributed approximately €200,000 in 2025, ensuring future generations can continue to access vital services. Our first sports sponsorship partnership with CEF and The Janet Nash Foundation invested €50,000 in IWA-Sport, helping to expand opportunities for athletes with disabilities. Unique and innovative events - including money raised by attendees at the Irish Discworld Convention and a 24 hour DJ marathon led by UL student, Gregory, added further support.

We are deeply grateful to every donor, fundraiser, member, volunteer and partner who chose to support IWA this year. Your energy, passion and dedication are transforming the lives of the people we work with. Thank you.





We are also extremely grateful to:

- Aldi
- Alstrom Transport UK
- The Bewley Foundation
- Brownlee Charitable Trust
- County Councils across Ireland
- Clontarf Rugby Club
- Crean Contract Flooring
- Dennison Trailers
- Dundalk Institute of Technology
- GLAS Civil Engineering
- Irish Ferries
- Local Enchantment Programme
- Medisan - The Benevolent Fund
- Musgrave Charitable Trust
- NetApp
- Raheny Orthodontics
- Sceptre Foundation
- State Street Foundation
- TK Maxx and Homesense Foundation
- UCD

Communications

Communications continued to amplify and raise awareness of the lived experience of IWA's members, ensuring their voices were central in engaging on political and media campaigns.

National media coverage increased by 45% compared to the previous year, including significant television exposure that extended the reach and impact of IWA's advocacy and brought members' experiences to a broader audience. Media relationships were further strengthened at both local and national levels, supporting proactive campaigns. Public trust in the IWA brand also reached the 75% target, rising from 68% at the launch of the Strategic Plan in 2022.

IWA's online community remains central to its communications strategy. A sustained focus on high quality content and meaningful two-way engagement resulted in an 11% increase in followers and, importantly, a 61.3% increase in engagement.

A key driver of this growth was the launch of the Access: It's No Joke Campaign on the 1st of April. This campaign highlighted that it may be April Fools' Day, but for thousands of wheelchair users across Ireland, the daily struggle for access is anything but a joke. One member video went viral, reaching over one million views, significantly expanding the campaign's reach and helping it cross into traditional media, including television and radio. The campaign also contributed to meaningful policy impact, with IWA's call for a full-time access officer in every local authority included in the National Human Rights Strategy for Disabled People 2025–2030.

Overall, the Communications Team continues to play a vital role in supporting organisational performance by strengthening visibility, credibility, and engagement with key audiences.



SPOKE OUT



IWA's Spoke Out magazine continued to grow from strength to strength throughout 2025 and is focused on delivering high quality content that our members are interested in. It is emailed to members on a monthly basis. Check out www.iwa.ie/spokeout for more or to add yourself to our mailing list.





Our Values:

Courage

Equality

Integrity

Excellence

Fun

Openness

Visionary



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