Irish Wheelchair Association



A Strategy of Impact and Ambition 2026 - 2030



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OUR FOUNDER'S LEGACY

Dr. Oliver Murphy

Founder, Irish Wheelchair Association

My friends and fellow athletes and I, set up IWA when we came back from the 1960 Paralympic Games with little or nothing but big dreams. As wheelchair users, those Games in Rome, opened our eyes to the idea that Ireland could do better in terms of being more accessible and inclusive for people with disabilities. We know that Ireland has come so far, but we still have a great distance to travel before we have true equality for everyone to enjoy this beautiful country and beyond.

Whilst IWA as an organisation looks very different today, it is continuing our legacy to support people to be able to dream big too; it is possible, look how far we've come. The values of the organisation are rooted in its origins and purpose. All you need is the right people doing the right thing at the right time. IWA is harnessing that collective power, but they can't do it without your support.

The role of IWA's members and the wider disability community has never been more important. Please continue to get involved where you can, whether it's providing feedback, volunteering, fundraising or lending your voice to a campaign; this all adds towards empowerment and amplifying the voice of those of us with the lived experience of disability.

It is critical that as a community we continue to be visible and our voice continues to be heard.

Dr. Oliver Murphy



Dr. Oliver Murphy





Irish Paralympic Team, Rome, 1960.

FOREWORDS

Irish Wheelchair Association has always been driven by a clear ambition: to advance the rights, independence and inclusion of people with physical disabilities across Ireland. Our Strategic Plan 2026–2030 builds on that proud history, setting out our priorities for the years ahead and reaffirming our commitment to creating lasting and meaningful change.

At its heart, this strategy is about people, supporting individuals with physical disabilities to live independent lives, participate fully in society and have real choice and control over their futures.

Central to our work are Advocacy, delivering essential services, programmes and supports in communities across Ireland. Significant progress has been made over that time, but we know that too many barriers remain. This strategy is our response: grounded in lived experience, informed by evidence and focused on ambitious, meaningful change.

Over the next five years, IWA will continue to advocate for a society in which the rights of people with disabilities are fully realised. We will challenge inequality, work to influence policy and systemic change, and ensure that the voices and experiences of people with physical disabilities remain central to the decisions that affect their lives.

On behalf of the Board, I would like to thank our members and the wider disability community, staff, volunteers, partners and supporters who contributed to the development of this strategy. Your insight, experience and commitment have helped shape its direction and will be central to its success.

The Board is fully committed to providing strong oversight and leadership throughout the life of this plan, ensuring accountability and progress as we work towards our ambitions.

This strategy reaffirms IWA's determination to challenge barriers, influence change and help build a more inclusive Ireland – one where people with physical disabilities can live the life they choose.

Thank you,



Dermot Murphy
Chairperson to the Board
Irish Wheelchair Association



Dermot Murphy

2026 marks an important year for all involved with IWA. What began in 1960, with eight Paralympians placing ten shillings each into a hat to form an organisation that could address the significant gaps in support and services for people with disabilities in Ireland, has grown into one of Ireland's most prominent disability organisations.

As we enter our 66th year, we remain firmly connected to those roots while continuing to evolve with the needs and ambitions of the people we support. Our Strategic Plan 2026–2030 provides an ambitious roadmap for IWA, our members, staff and volunteers, and for the contribution we want to make to the lives of people with physical disabilities across Ireland.

People are at the heart of everything we do. This is a strategy focused on impact, with ambitious goals across Independence, Empowerment, Accessibility, Mobility and Sport. Through our advocacy, services, programmes and supports, we will work to deliver on these ambitions while strengthening the people, systems and financial and organisational resilience that underpin our work.

We will continue to build on the positive culture within IWA and remain a powerful voice for people with disabilities across government and policy. We will also continue to create opportunities to ensure the voice of lived experience is truly heard.

With a presence spanning more than 65 locations and 19 IWA-Sport clubs, we are deeply embedded in communities across Ireland. Over the next five years, we will build on that reach, strengthening our impact from grassroots through to national level.

Our strategic actions have been shaped through consultation with people with lived experience. They also come at an important time for disability rights in Ireland, alongside the UN Convention on the Rights of Persons with Disabilities (UNCRPD) and the Government's Human Rights Strategy for Disabled People 2025–2030.



Ann Marie O'Grady

We will continue to advocate for progress and hold Government accountable for delivering on its commitments.

Together, we are stronger. Together, we can help ensure disability rights are not simply promised but realised.

Thank you,



Ann Marie O'Grady
Chief Executive Officer
Irish Wheelchair Association

SHAPED BY LIVED EXPERIENCE



This strategy has been shaped by the voices, experiences and ambitions of our members, staff, volunteers, partners and the wider disability community.

Throughout the development process, we created opportunities for people to contribute in ways that suited them, recognising that meaningful engagement means listening in different ways and removing barriers to participation.

We listened carefully to what people told us, the themes and insights that emerged have been used to inform the strategic ambitions, priorities and actions set out in this document.

How We Listened



One-to-one Conversation

Individual conversations gave people space to share their experiences, perspectives and ideas in a safe and accessible way.



Surveys

Surveys gave members, staff and the wider disability community an opportunity to share their views, priorities and experiences.



In Person

Workshops, focus groups, roadshows and events created opportunities to listen and engage with people across the country.



Online

Virtual sessions, webinars and online discussions made it easier for people to participate wherever they were.



Stakeholder Engagement

Engagement with disability organisations, partners, government representatives and community groups gave us the opportunity to hear different perspectives and priorities.

VISION, MISSION AND VALUES

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.

Our Mission

Irish Wheelchair Association works with, and on behalf of, people with physical disabilities to drive positive change in Ireland through the influencing of public policy, the provision of quality services, programmes and supports and enabling accessibility to all aspects of society.

Our Values

Courage: IWA fearlessly says what needs to be said and does what needs to be done. We are not afraid to fail and try again. We are resolute in championing the rights of people with disabilities.

Equality: Aligned with the UN Convention on the Rights of persons with Disabilities (UNCRPD), IWA believes in a fair and inclusive society. We work actively to ensure that every person with a disability in Ireland can achieve their right to an independent life, with equal access to opportunities, services and supports within their communities.

Integrity: IWA is proud of what we do and how we do it. We always behave ethically in ways that are authentic and trustworthy.

Excellence: IWA's commitment to excellence underpins our quality services, adherence to best principles governance, partnerships and relationships in all areas of our work.

Fun: IWA believes in creating a culture and environment of fun and enjoyment in all that we do. IWA is a community to which people want to belong.

Openness: IWA is open to new ideas, new ways of working and to building new and existing partnerships to achieve our vision. We are committed to working in a truly transparent way.

Visionary: Building on our legacy, IWA strives towards new ways of doing things to meet the current and future needs of people with disabilities. We are deliberately ambitious as a leader in our sector, driving positive change by listening and being creative in supporting and empowering disabled people to live the life they choose.



THE IRELAND WE WANT TO CREATE

Together, we can build an Ireland where everyone can live the life they choose.

Our work is reflected in the areas of Independence, Empowerment, Accessibility, Mobility and Sport which come together to reflect one strategic ambition of impact.

They are supported by three key strategic enablers of Our People, Financial & Organisational Resilience, and Business & Digital Transformation.




ADVOCACY
Independence
Accessibility & Mobility
IMPACT
Sport
Empowerment



ADVOCACY

Independence

Removing barriers and creating accessible communities.

Empowerment

Building confidence, skills and opportunities to lead and thrive.

Accessibility & Mobility

Supporting people to live independently and make their own decisions.

Sport

Promoting inclusion, participation and excellence in sport.



IMPACT

Influence change to remove barriers for people with disabilities and help build a more inclusive Ireland.



ADVOCACY



"The act of supporting, promoting, empowering and championing a cause to effect long-term, meaningful change.

This includes supporting individuals to self-advocate."

ADVOCACY

Advocacy is an overarching strategic ambition across our organisation. We will build on our strong track record and continue to strengthen our voice on human rights issues for people with disabilities, while championing equality, inclusion and lasting change.

Description

Leading voice on Human Rights issues for people with disabilities.

Strategic Impact

We will lobby and advocate on areas of strategic importance as identified by our membership and the disability community.

STRATEGIC ACTIONS

Membership Organisation

Protect and build on our identity and strength as a membership organisation.

Amplify the voices of people with disabilities

Raise awareness of key issues affecting people with disabilities and celebrate achievements.

Mobilise, Empower and Build IWA's Community

Empower people with the tools and opportunities to take action.



Influence Policy

Influence policy and decision-making at local, national and EU level to ensure the voices of people with disabilities are heard and actioned.

Partnerships

Work with others so that together we have a stronger voice to achieve more.

Research

Research key issues and build evidence-based data to inform decisions and drive change.

"IWA has given me more than support, it has given me confidence. Through the support I've received I've become independent and empowered to make my own choices."

— **Martin Murphy**, Co. Louth
Husband to Lisa, Dad to Conor and Alex, the household chef and part-time farmer.





INDEPENDENCE, EMPOWERMENT, ACCESSIBILITY & MOBILITY AND SPORT

INDEPENDENCE, EMPOWERMENT, ACCESSIBILITY & MOBILITY AND SPORT

We listened to people with lived experience about what matters to them and the change they want to see. What we heard has directly shaped our strategic actions of Independence, Empowerment, Accessibility & Mobility and Sport continuing to be at the heart of our work. Together, these reflect our commitment to providing personalised services, programmes and supports that empower people with disabilities to live with independence, make their own choices and participate fully in everyday life.

Description

IWA provides personalised services, programmes and supports that empower individuals to live with independence, make their own choices and fully participate in every aspect of life today, tomorrow and into the future.

Strategic Impact

We will enhance and improve our quality services, programmes and supports, within the scope of our organisational mission.

STRATEGIC ACTIONS

Person

Engage with our members to inform and influence how our services, programmes and supports are developed and delivered, ensuring choice, voice and meaningful participation across the organisation.

Pathways

Create awareness of existing pathways and develop further pathways for existing and future members.

Partnerships

Collaborate with families, communities and society as a whole to expand the offerings available through IWA or other providers.



Community

Build on the sense of belonging and social inclusion to participate fully in society with confidence and equality.

Quality

Regularly evaluate the quality of what we do through internal and external quality audit & assurance including direct engagement with those who avail of our services, programmes and supports.

Innovation

Identify opportunities for innovation within existing services and identify gaps where IWA could bring its expertise and lead the sector.



OUR PEOPLE



"Working at IWA is about so much more than doing a job. Every day, I have the opportunity to make a real difference alongside people who share the same values and commitment to empowering people with disabilities to live the life they choose."

— **Kathleen Matthews**
IWA Personal Assistant, Galway

OUR PEOPLE

Our people are central to everything that we do. By supporting our people to grow and thrive, we can continue to build a strong organisation for the future.

Description

Attract, develop and retain a full team of highly skilled individuals connected and committed to IWA's Vision, Mission and Values, underpinned by mutual respect.

Strategic Impact

We will have engaged, skilled diverse teams and volunteers delivering on our services, programmes and supports, contractual obligations and strategic ambitions.

STRATEGIC ACTIONS

Employer of Choice

Build a unique, meaningful and attractive place to work to become employer of choice.

Volunteer Organisation of Choice

Offer volunteers the opportunity to participate in a meaningful and impactful way to make a difference.

Donor/Supporter Organisation of Choice

Build trusted, long-term relationships with donors through meaningful engagement, clear impact and a shared ownership of IWA's mission - positioning them as valued partners in driving change and growing voluntary income.



Growth & Learning

Support the growth and development of our people to thrive and be the best they can be.

Diverse and Inclusive

Embrace a diverse and inclusive culture, where difference is valued, making us stronger together.

The way we work together

Collaborate and challenge each other with courage, compassion, openness and empathy from a place of integrity and trust.

"Every decision we make behind the scenes is about creating a stronger IWA for the future. By building a resilient organisation today, we can continue to deliver the services, support and advocacy our members rely on for years to come."

— **Christopher Hoey**
Chief Operations Officer, IWA





FINANCIAL & ORGANISATIONAL RESILIENCE

FINANCIAL & ORGANISATIONAL RESILIENCE

A strong and resilient organisation is essential to delivering on our ambitions for the future. We will build on our foundations to ensure IWA remains financially secure, sustainable and well positioned to respond to changing needs and opportunities.

Description

We aim to be a robust and financially secure organisation, that is future proofed and committed to doing things the right way.

Strategic Impact

We will have diversity of funding streams to effectively and sustainably support our range of services, programmes and supports, and organisational, governance, compliance and strategic requirements.



STRATEGIC ACTIONS

Sustainable relationships

Maintain and develop long-term sustainable and strategic relationships with funders, donors and suppliers.

Sustainable funding

Ensure existing and future services, programmes and activities are funded to full economic cost, reflecting our value, and develop multi-annual funding arrangements to support long-term planning and financial resilience.

Diversifying and growing income sources

Explore and develop sustainable opportunities to grow and diversify income across our activities.

Governance, integrity, transparency and accountability

Ensure strong governance and high compliance standards to meet our current and future obligations.

Infrastructure

Explore opportunities to build on and evolve our property and transport infrastructure.

Climate Action

Deliver on our public service obligations under the Government's Climate Action Plan.

Strategic Review

Review key areas of IWA to ensure the organisation continues to evolve and maintain the highest standards.



BUSINESS & DIGITAL TRANSFORMATION



This isn't just about new systems, it's about creating better experiences for everyone. When we make it easier for people to access information, services and support, it gives them a better-connected service and we're giving our teams more time to focus on what matters most: people."

— **Mildred Carroll**
IWA National Director,
Community Supports

BUSINESS & DIGITAL TRANSFORMATION

Embracing change is key to building a better future. We will continue to evolve how we work, making the most of technology and new ways of working to create a simpler, more responsive and effective organisation.

Description

Continuously improve ways of working and provide simple, reliable tools that help our teams work better together and serve our community more effectively.

Strategic Impact

We will have continuous improvement across IWA in process efficiency, automation, user experience and data accuracy, while adapting to advances in emerging technologies such as artificial intelligence.

STRATEGIC ACTIONS

User Experience

Understand the needs and requirements for processes and technology to deliver the best possible experience.

Continuous Improvement

Continuously improve the work of IWA and the benefits people gain from our services.

Embracing Change

Support people to understand and embrace change, especially new ways of working, through active involvement and clear communication.

Technology

Use modern tools to improve how we operate and stay ready to adapt as new technologies emerge and evolve.


Personal Assistant
Services

OUR STRATEGY IN ACTION

Guiding Principles

Our guiding principles will shape how we deliver this strategy and make decisions along the way. They will keep us focused on our mission, our ambitions and the people at the heart of our work.

Our guiding principles:



How We Will Deliver our Strategy

This strategy will guide our work over the next five years. Each year, we will develop an implementation plan setting out the actions we will take to deliver our strategic ambitions. These plans will allow us to respond to changing needs and circumstances while remaining focused on our overall direction.

Our strategy will also guide decision-making across IWA, helping to ensure that what we do, how we prioritise and where we invest remain aligned with our strategic goals, values and the lived experience of people with disabilities.

Measuring Impact and Learning

We will use data, insights and key performance indicators to understand and measure our progress and the impact of our work. What we learn will help us improve, adapt and shape our future priorities.

Not everything that matters can be measured in numbers and statistics. As a person-centred organisation, the experiences and voices of people with disabilities will remain central to how we understand our impact. Therefore, member and staff feedback will continue to be central to what we do. Ensuring that the voice of those with lived experience is embedded in our work and across all parts of society is the bedrock of our ethos.

Reviewing and Renewing

We will regularly review our progress, learn from what is working and identify where change is needed. This will help us remain responsive to new challenges and opportunities throughout the life of the strategy and beyond.

Governance, Risk & Accountability

IWA's Board, Board Sub-Committees and Senior Management Team will oversee the delivery of the strategy and monitor progress throughout its term. Regular reporting will support strong governance, accountability and effective risk management, while key milestones and progress will be shared through our annual reporting.

> *"The Board is fully committed to providing strong oversight and leadership throughout the life of this plan, ensuring accountability and progress as we work towards our ambitions."*



TOGETHER, WE CAN CREATE LASTING CHANGE

Creating a more accessible, inclusive and equal Ireland cannot be achieved by IWA alone.

It's a team sport and it will take all of us.

Whether you are a member, employee, family member, volunteer, supporter, donor, partner, policymaker or employer, you have a role to play.

JOIN US

Become a member

Partner with us

Support our work

Donate

Campaign with us

Share your voice

SCAN ME

"This strategy gives me hope because it shows that our voices have been heard. But a strategy on its own won't create change, people will.

Every conversation, every campaign, every partnership and every person who chooses to work alongside us brings us one step closer to an Ireland where people with disabilities can truly live the life they choose.

I'm proud of our community who have helped shape this strategy. Now, I'm asking you to help bring it to life."

— **Iqura Naseem**,
IWA Board Member and
Ability Programme Graduate



GLOSSARY

LETTER	GLOSSARY	DESCRIPTION/DEFINITION
A	Ambition	The drive to set and achieve purposeful goals that create impact.
	Advocacy	The act of supporting, promoting, empowering and championing a cause to effect long-term, meaningful change. This includes supporting individuals to self-advocate.
	Accessibility & Mobility	Access to every part of life. Achieving equality of access to the built environment, transport and the same opportunities to participate in all aspects of society, including education, employment and public services.
C	Community	All those connected to and engaged in IWA's work, including members, families, staff, volunteers, board members and partners.
	Climate Action	Taking steps to reduce pollution, protect our environment and help slow climate change.
	Continuous Improvement	A structured approach to improving services and processes through ongoing, incremental change.
D	Disability*	Disability is an evolving concept resulting from the interaction between persons with impairments and attitudinal and environmental barriers that hinder full and effective participation in society on an equal basis with others. * United Nations, Convention on the Rights of Persons with Disabilities (UNCRPD), Preamble, paragraph (e), 2006.
E	Empowerment	Participating fully in society with confidence and equality. Enabling people with disabilities to take control of their lives, make decisions, access opportunities and participate fully in society with confidence and equality.
	Employer of Choice	A unique, meaningful and attractive place to work.
G	Governance	The systems and processes concerned with ensuring the overall direction, effectiveness, supervision and accountability of an organisation.
	Guiding Principles	Strategy guiding principles are a set of core guidelines that provide practical, actionable directions for how IWA should operate and make decisions to achieve its strategic vision, mission and ambitions.

H	Human Rights	Human rights are universal moral and legal principles that recognise every person's inherent dignity, equality and basic standards for a life free from fear and discrimination, which are captured in the United Nations Convention on the Rights of Persons with Disabilities (UNCRPD).
I	Independence	The ability of a person to make their own choices and have control over their daily life.
	Impact	The meaningful difference made in people's lives as a result of IWA's work.
	Innovation	Finding new or better ways of doing things.
P	Partnerships	Collaborative relationships with individuals, organisations and communities, that align resources, expertise and effort to deliver shared outcomes and impact.
	Pathways	The route for an individual to access services, programmes or support.
Q	Quality	Delivery of services, programmes and supports that meet people's needs, that are consistently reliable and effective.
R	Research	A structured approach to gathering and analysing information to improve understanding and inform decisions, practice, planning, and policy.
S	Sustainability	Operating in a way that supports the organisation's ongoing health, so it can continue delivering its mission into the future, ensuring the financial, operational and organisational resilience needed to continue our work long term.
	Social Inclusion	Social inclusion means ensuring people with disabilities can participate fully in society by having equal opportunities, and the respect of their rights.
V	Values	IWA values are the qualities and principles by which our work is guided. These are embedded in our actions, behaviours and decision making.
	Volunteer Organisation of Choice	An organisation that attracts, supports and values volunteers by providing meaningful opportunities, a positive experience, and the ability to contribute to real impact.





Irish Wheelchair Association™

People are at the heart of everything that we do

Our Values:

Courage

Equality

Integrity

Excellence

Fun

Openness

Visionary

Irish Wheelchair Association™

Irish Wheelchair Association
Áras Chúchulainn, Blackheath Drive,
Clontarf, Dublin 3. D03 AW62.

Tel: 01 818 6400 | **Email:** info@iwa.ie

RCN 20007997. CHY No 5393

www.iwa.ie