



Department of Social and Family Affairs

Minister Says New Advocacy Services Will Empower People With Disabilities To Assert Their Rights

Brennan Announces Funding Of Almost €2m For 13 Projects Countrywide To Deliver Advocacy Services

The Minister for Social Affairs, Séamus Brennan T.D. today launched new advocacy guidelines that he said will empower people with disabilities by championing their rights and supporting them to assert their views and claim their entitlements.

The advocacy guidelines are published by Comhairle, the statutory body operating under the Department of Social Affairs, with responsibility for the provision of information, advice and advocacy services.

Minister Brennan also announced the introduction of a programme of funding of almost €2 million by Comhairle for 13 projects within the voluntary and community sector. The projects will each receive funding of €140,000 to develop and provide advocacy services to people with disabilities at locations around the country.

(Details of projects, funding and locations are attached).

The Minister said both of the initiatives - the guidelines and the funding support - are in preparation for the services contained in the Comhairle (Amendment) Bill 2004 which he will be introducing in this year's Dail session. The Bill will be a key element for the Government's legislative programme for improving services for people with disabilities.

The Minister said that the Comhairle Bill, the Disability Bill 2004, and accompanying Outline Sectoral Plans, and the Education for Persons with Disabilities Bill 2003, clearly conveys the Government's determination to have an effective combination of legislation, policies, institutions and services in place to support and reinforce equal access for people with disabilities.

Minister Brennan said: "A proper, professional advocacy service is central to championing the rights of those with disabilities, particularly people who may feel at a disadvantage when claiming their entitlements. In essence advocacy is the means



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of empowering people with disabilities by supporting them to assert their views and rights to entitlements, ensuring their independence and, where necessary, representing and negotiating on their behalf. The programme of funding I am announcing today will provide trained advocates to assist often vulnerable people with a disability in addressing their individual needs and options.”

The Minister said the programme of funding of over €1.8 million he was announcing will provide trained advocates to assist vulnerable people with a disability in addressing their individual needs and options. The 13 new projects funded this year, will each employ an advocate to work with a range of people with disabilities. The advocates will represent, for example, people with different types of dementia, people who wish to move into independent living, people in long term residential services and young people with learning disabilities completing education or training. They will also assist people with mental health difficulties leaving hospital so that they can be supported in making the transition back into their communities.

Minister Brennan said this is the start of a programme that can be extended in the coming years. The fact that 66 applications were received in this first year is a sign of the interest among service providers, disability representative groups and people with disabilities themselves in the development of advocacy services.

The aim over the next few years will be to ensure that these services are of the highest quality, are effective and are underpinned with strong values and principles and that the person with a disability remains at the centre of the service.

Ends

NOTE FOR NEWS EDITORS



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The following are the projects selected for support and the level of funding provided.

Project	Total Budget Over 2 years	Comhairle Grant Over 2 years
STEER Ireland Ltd	€156,831.00	€140,000
Schizophrenia Ireland	€140,491.45	€140,000
Sligo Interagency Disability Group	€141,036.00	€140,000
MS Ireland	€140,329.00	€140,000
People with Disabilities Ireland - Westmeath Network	€250,000 Awaiting revised budget	€140,000 max.
Bray Partnership Limited	€140,000.00	€140,000
Roscommon County Citizens Information Service	€198,262.00	€140,000
Alzheimer's Society	€146,080.00	€140,000
namhi	€160,000.00	€140,000
Cheshire Community Services	€154,317.00	€140,000
Carlow Centre for Independent Living	€157,237.00	€140,000
County Monaghan Partnership	€156,500.00	€140,000
National Representative Council	€217,645.00	€140,000

In all cases where the total budget exceeds the Comhairle grant the organisation involved will cover any shortfall.

BACKGROUND NOTE ON THE PROJECTS

Alzheimer Society of Ireland.



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The Alzheimer Society works on behalf of people with different types of dementia and their carers. It is the major dementia specific service provider in Ireland with over 250 volunteers, 500 staff and 2,600 members, and provides service to approx 2,500 people with dementia as well as their carers.

Bray Partnership (+ Bray Disability Cluster Group)

Bray Partnership is a local development company, which seeks to progress social and economic activities for a range of disadvantaged groups including people with disabilities. Their partner, the Bray Disability Cluster group was involved in preparing the plan for this project.

Cheshire Community Services + Ballyfermot Citizens Information Service (CIS)

Cheshire Community Services (CCS) is part of the Cheshire Foundation, which has a tradition of serving people with significant physical disabilities. Its partner in this proposal is Ballyfermot CIS which already has an established advocacy service supported by an Advocacy Resource officer.

Carlow Centre for Independent Living (+ CILs in SE Region)

Centres for Independent Living (CILs) exist to support individuals with disabilities in leading self-determined lives and participating in society. They are run by people with disabilities for people with disabilities.

Multiple Sclerosis Society of Ireland (MS) North East Regional Team (Monaghan)

The MS Society of Ireland is a voluntary and representative organisation. It offers support, advice and in some cases direct assistance to people with MS.

Namhi + (Moore Abbey & St. Joseph's Intellectual Disability Services, Portrane.

Namhi is a national voluntary organisation, which promotes the rights of people with intellectual disabilities. It aims to work with vulnerable people in its two partner organisations.

National Representative Council (NRC) & (National Learning Network (NLN))

The National Representative Council is the representative advocacy forum for people using NLN services in over 50 centres around Ireland. NLN is the training, education and employment access division of the Rehab group.

Roscommon County Citizens Information Service + partners, (8 local disability groups)

Citizens Information Service (Roscommon) provides a variety of services to a range of client groups including outreach and liaises with other community and voluntary groups in the county.

Sligo Interagency Disability Group + partners (HSE- NW Learning Disability Service & other Sligo disability groups) The Sligo Interagency Disability Group is a partnership between a number of disability service providers in Sligo.

S.T.E.E.R. Ireland

STEER is a community-based mental health service user initiative that is a partnership between service users and carers/ family members. It is a cross border



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agency, with offices in Derry and Letterkenny. It is involved in a number of projects with the Department of Health and Children and the HSE North West.

County Monaghan Partnership + Co. Monaghan Disability Network

Co. Monaghan Partnership is involved in a number of schemes under the Local Development Social Inclusion Programme to empower disadvantaged people to participate in their communities.

People with Disabilities Ireland Westmeath Network (& HSE Midland area and Parents & Friends)

PwDI is a national representative organisation of people with disabilities, funded by the Government. It works on behalf of people with disabilities and lobbies for their rights. County members elect local network committees.

Schizophrenia Ireland (SI) + partner Irish Advocacy Network (IAN)

SI provides a range of information, support and professional services in seven locations around the country for people with serious mental health difficulties and their families and carers. IAN is wholly run by people who are or have been mental health-service users and it has pioneered the development of peer advocacy in psychiatric hospitals supported by the Department of Health and Children.