

ANNUAL REPORT 2023-24

DONEGAL CENTRE FOR INDEPENDENT LIVING



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Welcome from our Chief Executive Officer



It has been an honour once again to lead Donegal Centre for Independent Living through a year of both significant development and navigating the continuing challenges within this sector with strength and determination.

Last year we reported on the significant lack of commitment nationally to invest in Independent Living services such as our own, and how we have been working relentlessly with CILs across the country to establish The National Alliance of Centres for Independent Living (NACIL) of which DCIL are active members. This alliance will prove itself as a much-needed support to individual CILs but also serve to ensure our place at the table nationally where key plans and decisions are made around the future of Independent Living services such as Personal Assistance.

I have been personally grateful to the Board of DCIL who have afforded me the time to accept the National Lead role within the alliance when elected by NACIL. I believe it is testimony to the wonderful spirit that exists within our directorship which shows such strong leadership and support.

The Board of DCIL are recognised nationally for the stance taken last year in ensuring that our organisation was respected at the level which it thoroughly deserves. Through negotiations with the HSE we secured increased funding, allowing us offer more comparable rates of pay to our staff, travel allowances, and provide much needed stability and security within the organisation. This work continues, and we hope to introduce new measures by the end of the year to further enhance the pay rates and incentives for our staff working as Personal Assistants who provide vital services throughout Donegal. Our Personal Assistants and Leaders are the heart of DCIL, and we value their work and commitment daily.

I would like to thank our directors who give their time freely and support myself and the team in delivering our organisational objectives throughout the year.

2024 brings DCIL to its final year of our current strategic plan and we have already drafted our next 3-year plan which will be launched shortly. It will provide us with a roadmap regarding our strategic priorities until 2028. I would like to acknowledge the support from Rethink Ireland in facilitating this process for DCIL and obviously the input and commitment from both Directors and Staff in participating in this process.

The Core Staff Team in which I relayed my belief in this time last year, has been enhanced further by the return of our Financial Controller post and the addition of our Project Staff that have been funded through our Rethink Ireland Project. This project has greatly complimented the work and ethos of our organisation and has created a large level of engagement with our Leaders and our local communities. It has also ensured and developed our measuring of impact management which we hope will enhance the organisation for years to come. I would like to offer my continued appreciation to our dedicated and capable team members who continue to excel in their commitment, giving their all each and every day.

In addition to our national representation, DCIL are now represented locally by myself within Donegal County Council – Disability Housing Group, Peace Plus, HSE CHO-1 Consultative Forum, Donegal Local Development Board of Directors, all of which facilitates a greater awareness of DCIL and provides for the contribution and consideration of local disability issues to be addressed.

We continue to grow in confidence and belief in this organisation and look forward to your support and interest in us over the coming years.

Best Wishes

Rosaleen Doherty

Chief Executive Officer

Chairperson Address



Welcome, everyone to our annual AGM. It's a privilege to stand here as the Chairperson of DCIL, an organisation whose work with people with disabilities in Donegal is close to my heart. I am so proud of the work that is done on our behalf and so grateful to be able to contribute in some small way. I am supported by a very hard-working board of directors, and I would like to thank Karen Keating, our newest director, for coming on board. Karen brings invaluable expertise and a fine skillset that we are making use of. Over 50% of our board are Leaders or service users which ensures that our board is always guided by the expertise of people with disabilities and grounded by the philosophy of Independent Living.

I would also like to welcome back our core staff member Jennifer Arenhold, who is instrumental in maintaining the excellent financial control and compliance within our organisation. We are so privileged to have the dedicated and committed core staff in DCIL which ensures that our Leaders and PAs are supported and helped in their daily lives. Our PAs are the backbone of our organisation, and I would like to thank them on behalf of all our leaders for the vital and caring work they do for us each and every day.

We are delighted that DCIL's work in networking with the other 16 CILs in Ireland has resulted in a National Alliance of CILs. NACIL will be officially launched next month in the Mansion House in Dublin. This Alliance will not alone prove instrumental in our recognition by relevant stakeholders but will also allow us to share in experiences and resources moving forward. We strongly believe that together we can ensure that funding of PA services are not diluted down through the wrong channels and that engagement with stakeholders at a national level will prevent this from happening again in Ireland.

Our CEO, Rosaleen Doherty, has been appointed the national lead on this alliance. We are so proud of this recognition of our CEO, who as we all know, has been the driving force behind DCIL for many years. She motivates us all with her boundless energy and enthusiasm for improving the quality of life of our Leaders and PAs. It is so rewarding that the National Alliance sees this and has demonstrated their confidence in DCIL.

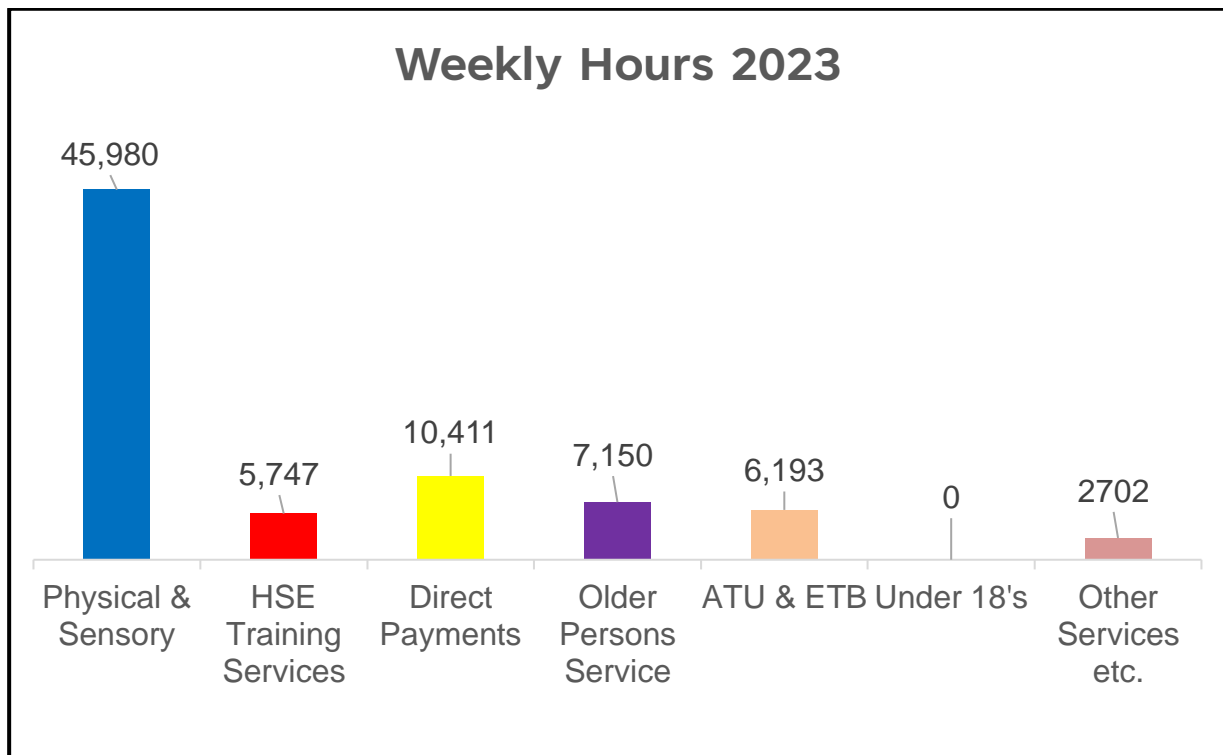
Thank you all for coming today and for your continuous support for DCIL, and all we value.

Kathy Gillespie
Chairperson

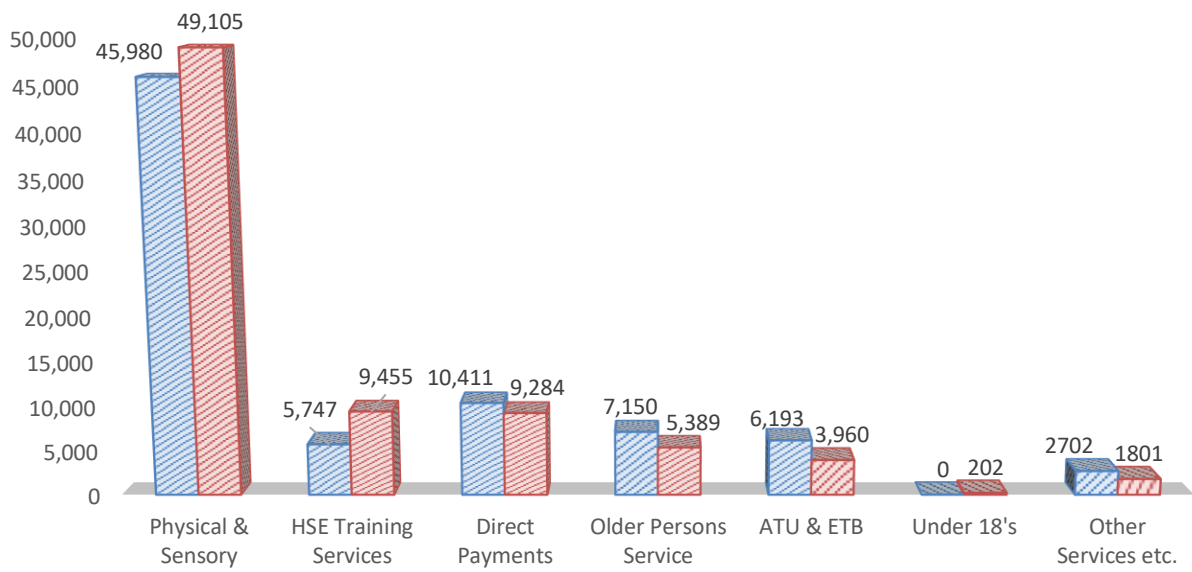
DCIL Services

In 2023, DCIL provided a total of 78,182 PA and Support Hours. The table and charts below illustrate the breakdown of hours across the various services. Overall, PA and Support Services decreased by 1% when compared to 2022.

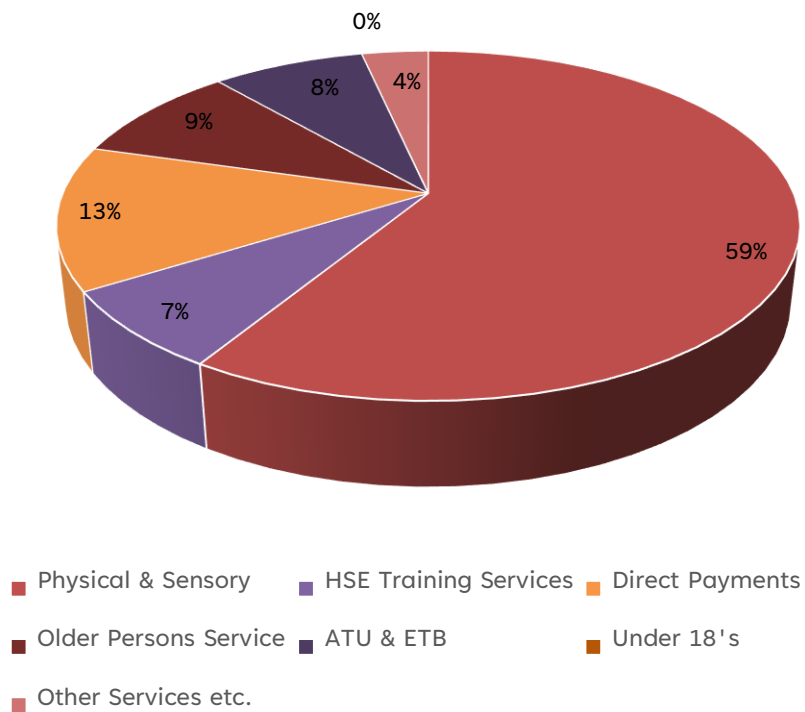
Services	Hours 2023	Hours 2022
Physical & Sensory	45,980	49,105
HSE Training Services	5,747	9,455
Direct Payments	10,411	9,284
Older Persons Service	7,150	5,389
ATU & ETB	6,193	3,960
Under 18's	0	202
Other Services etc.	2702	1801
Totals:	78,183	79,196



WEEKLY HOURS 2023 V 2022



Percentage of Hours 2023



DCIL Personal Assistant Services

Working to the agenda of the Leader, a Personal Assistant (PA) enables the disabled person to make their own decisions and be in control of their own life. A PA undertakes a variety of tasks under the direction of the leader ranging from personal care, educational, workplace, family and social supports to household assistance etc.

DCIL continue to serve people with disabilities who aspire to self-direct their supports, to enable them to live the life they want. DCIL provide a high-quality PA service across Donegal in which it employs 105 staff which includes Personal Assistants and core staff. DCIL Leaders were funded from the following services in 2023.

Funder	Number of Leaders
HSE Physical and Sensory Service	67 Leaders
HSE Older People Services	12 Leaders
HSE Intellectual Disability Services	1 Leader
HSE Disability Services (outside Donegal)	2 Leader
Personalised Budget Project	4 Leaders
Direct Payment Service	3 Leaders

Educational Support Worker Services

DCIL continue to be the leading provider of Educational Support Workers (ESW) to students with disabilities in third level education in Donegal. In 2023 DCIL continued to provide its ESW services to the ATU. In addition, DCIL provided ESW staff to students studying at the Donegal ETB. DCIL also provide exam support staff to the ETB Training Centres.



DCIL are delighted to continue to work with both the ATU and ETB in supporting young people with disabilities to participate fully in student life. It is

encouraging to see the numbers of young third level students with disabilities come through third level education with the confidence of knowing that they will have an ESW to assist them in participating in college life independently and without barriers.

DCIL provided 6,193 ESW hours to the ATU and ETB in 2023. A recruitment campaign took place in late August this year to ensure we had sufficient staffing levels to support the new and existing students for the new academic year in September 2024. Following confirmation on the student numbers, five people were selected from the panel.

DCIL currently have 10 staff members working across the ATU and ETB. Susan Wasson is taking the lead in co-ordinating the ATU and ETB service for DCIL. Susan is supported by Emma Tully an experienced PA and ESW who has been appointed as the Senior ESW at the ATU campus for the current

academic year. We wish both the students and the ESWs the very best in their academic year ahead.

HSE Training Service

DCIL continue to provide PAs to the SOAR (Supported Outreach Advocating Relationships) project and Donegal Community Inclusion Training Services (DCITS). In 2023 DCIL provided 5,747 support hours across these two training programmes.

The SOAR programme is a HSE funded integrated day service delivered by Rehab Group in partnership with DCIL, who provide the Personal Assistant service. The ethos of this programme is community inclusion and maximising people's own autonomy with the goal of progressing participants to their fullest community integration and maximum natural supports. DCIL continue to provide 76 PA hours per week to the project, which is being fulfilled by 7 staff members.

DCITS is a HSE service which has transitioned from a Community Workshop model to a person-centred approach of day service provision for people with disabilities, in line with the New Directions policy. DCITS currently have 15 different Hubs across Donegal. Currently DCIL have 4 staff members working on DCITS services which include Project Workers and Personal Assistants.

DCIL Accessible Transport

The DCIL Accessible Transport vehicle continues to be a very popular service to our Leaders.

DCIL acknowledge the barriers to people's inclusion in everyday activities due to the significant lack of accessible public transport. We therefore continue to bridge the gap in some way with accessible transport services which helps promote independence through the provision of wheelchair accessible vehicles.

In 2023, 411 separate journeys were made with the vans by DCIL members. The vans continue to be used by Leaders attending hospital appointments down the country or going on holidays.

Both vehicles are maintained by our caretaker Kevin Reilly who continues to do a wonderful job. Please contact the office for available dates and times if you are interested in booking the vehicle.

DCIL Staff Update

We extend a warm welcome to all new staff who have recently joined DCIL and bid a fond farewell to those who have moved on from the organisation over the past year. DCIL continue to be a significant employer in Donegal currently employing over 100 people, of which the majority are Personal Assistants.

We acknowledge the dedication and supports our PAs provide to our Leaders. We can see daily the impact having a PA has on the lives of people with disabilities in Donegal. Many of our Leaders in Donegal are living in very isolated areas and without this assistance they would not be able to fully participate in their community.

DCIL continue to invest in their staff. In 2023 we continue to deliver in-person and online training. This is to ensure that our staff have all the necessary training requirements to carry out their duties effectively.

To support our people's wellbeing DCIL have continued its face-to-face Counselling Service that is made available to staff and Leaders. This has proven to be an extremely popular service, and the feedback provided has been very positive.

In terms of core staff updates, we welcome Jennifer Arenhold back to DCIL. Jennifer has taken up the position of Finance & Compliance Manager. The updated organisational chart can be found on the next page.

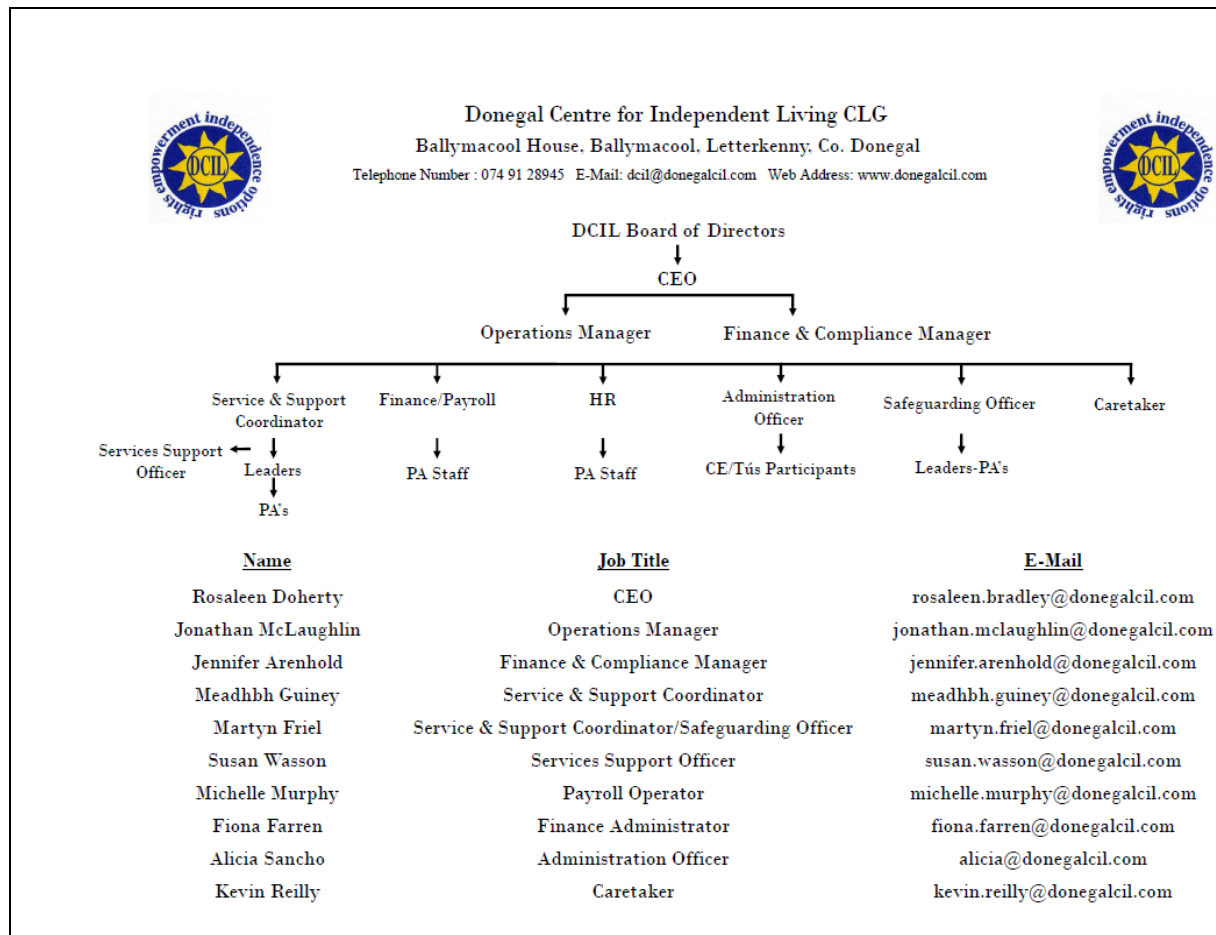
Community Employment & TÚS

DCIL currently have 4 participants working for the organisation via Community Employment and the TÚS programme.

Ellen Burke continues to provide support to the finance department. Mark Doherty continues to assist with IT support and records management. Kristina Lukseviciene continues to work as a cleaner at DCIL. Ada Klochko joined DCIL in September on a Community Employment scheme. She will be working as a Personal Assistant.

The Community Employment and TÚS participants are a great support to the DCIL team, and we would like to thank them for all their efforts over the past year. DCIL would also like to thank Lynda Brophy the CE Scheme Supervisor at the Letterkenny Community Centre for her continued support to DCIL.

DCIL Organisational Chart



DCIL Special Funds

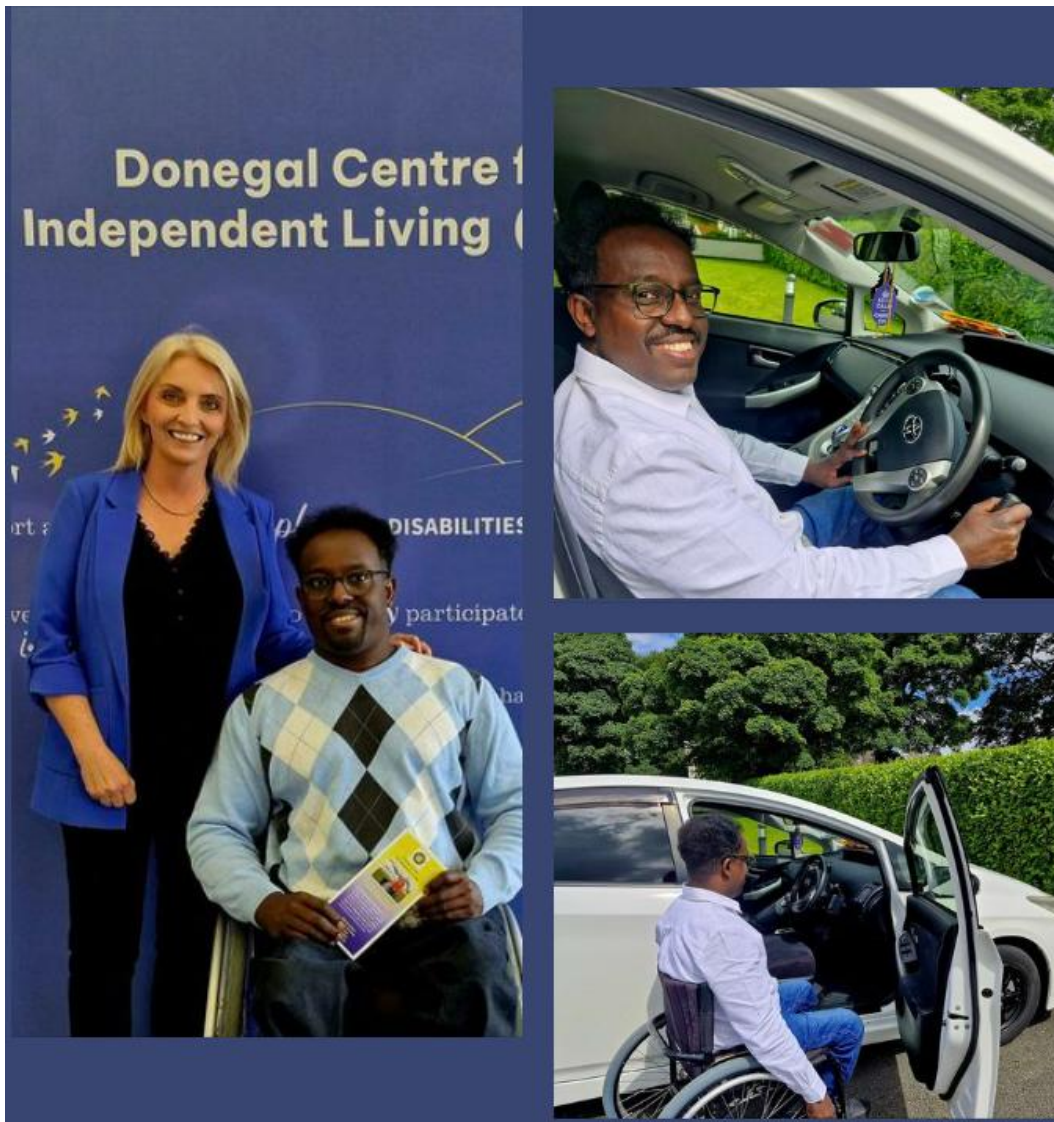
DCIL introduced three separate funds in 2021. This includes the Hardship Fund, the Opportunity Fund and the Independent Living Scholarship Fund. These funds have proven to be very beneficial to the recipients. DCIL are actively seeking donations or fundraising opportunities to allow for the continuation of these important funds.

The Hardship Fund

The purpose of the Hardship Fund is to support Leaders and staff during difficult times. DCIL introduced this fund to help support our people who find themselves in unexpected financial difficulty. Applications are processed through the Service Co-ordinator, who will support the individual in making the application. Written recommendation will be made by the Co-ordinator to the Chief Executive Officer. Applicants of the hardship fund are afforded complete confidentiality.

The Opportunity Fund

The purpose of the Opportunity Fund is to enable our members to achieve greater independence and empowerment through participation in events/activities that enhance their confidence to live independently but would normally be out of reach financially. To date, this fund has been very popular with our members. A recent example of the opportunity fund awardee was Mo Farah. The Opportunity Fund contributed towards the adaptation of his first Irish car, providing him with the opportunity of freedom to travel independently for both work and leisure.



The Independent Living Scholarship

The Independent Living Scholarship has been successful in supporting students with disabilities by means of a financial bursary.

The award is €750.00 per academic year per student, awarded each year over the span of their chosen course to enable the student to achieve greater independence and empowerment through participation in college life and to enhance their confidence to live independently. The 2023/2024 recipients of the full scholarship were Oisín O'Hara and Niamh Curran. A year scholarship was also awarded to student James Quinn.



Overall, DCIL have supported 8 students since the fund was launched. For DCIL to support new students with the Independent Living Scholarship we require additional funding or donations to maintain the scholarship fund.



National Alliance of Centres for Independent Living (NACIL)



**National Alliance
of Centres for
Independent Living**



This year marked the establishment of NACIL, an exciting collaboration of all 17 CILs in Ireland, coming together to better support each other and work collectively in providing national representation and guidance where needed to improve the understanding of Personal Assistant Services and its true potential. The National Lead for NACIL is our own CEO Rosaleen Doherty who holds vast experience in the evolution of PA services in Ireland. The official launch takes place in November in Dublin's Mansion House with guest speaker Shay Given lending his support to the Alliance on the day.

Rethink Ireland Project

This year DCIL was delighted to receive funding from Rethink Ireland. The purpose of this funding was to enhance the confidence of 40 people with disabilities to live more independently and to improve accessibility across Donegal.

To lead this project, DCIL recruited four new staff members. After an extensive recruitment process Marc Anderson, Mo Farrah, Laura Sweeney and John Doherty were selected for the roles. Marc and Mo were appointed Accessibility Officers and Laura and John took up the roles of Leader Mentors.



Our Leader Mentors hosted seven workshops, which were attended by 79 participants. These workshops promoted the ethos of independent living and focused on developing practical living skills. We also offered one-on-one personal development coaching to our Leaders, providing tailored support and guidance.

In addition to these workshops, our Leader Mentors attended external community events such as Male Health Day and Male Mental Health Day. These engagements allowed us to reach beyond our existing network, raising awareness about the services DCIL provides. As a result, new individuals have contacted us, seeking to become involved.



A core element of this initiative was improving accessibility across Donegal. Our Disability Access Officers were tasked with conducting accessibility audits in public buildings and private businesses. To date, 31 audits have been completed, covering schools, colleges, cinemas, co-working spaces, and more. A custom access audit questionnaire was developed to assess accessibility, and feedback was provided to the business owners. In some cases, the audits resulted in immediate changes to improve access. Many business owners have committed to enhancing their premises. The audits highlighted areas of improvement, with 40% of buildings showing particular challenges for those with visual impairments.



Our Access Officers also ran a workshop aimed at encouraging our Leaders to apply for social housing. The session provided practical advice on the application process and outlined the steps involved. DCIL is committed to

supporting our Leaders throughout this journey, offering guidance and assistance to help them successfully navigate the social housing application process.

These initiatives are important for helping people with disabilities in Donegal live more independently and making the community more accessible. With more funding, we'd love to keep building on the work we've started—offering more workshops, coaching, and accessibility audits. We know there's still more to be done, and with ongoing support, we can achieve even greater results.

We would like to thank John, Laura, Marc, and Mo for all the fantastic work they have done.



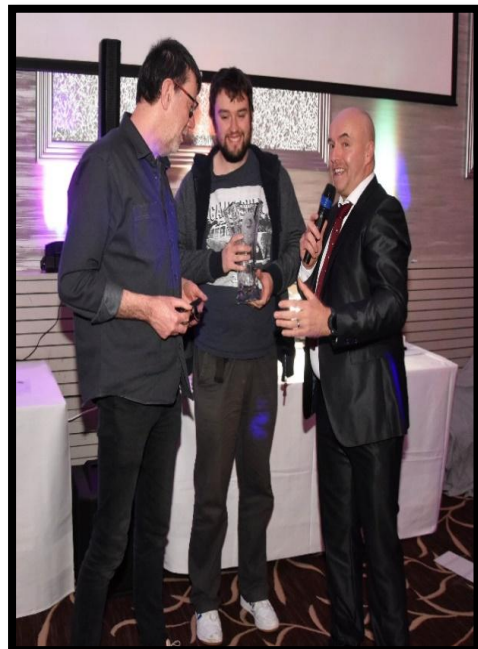
DCIL Activities and Events

DCIL Christmas Party & Annual Awards

The DCIL Christmas Party and Annual Awards is an important event in DCIL's calendar. This event is a brilliant opportunity for our members and staff to come together and socialise, enjoying the annual dinner dance and entertainment. A big part of the night is the awards ceremony. This includes Leader of Year, PA of the Year, and the Special Recognition Awards. The ceremony also acknowledges the long-standing staff members. On the milestone of 5 and 10 years of service the PAs were awarded a DCIL service pin for their dedication.

The 2023 PA of the Year was awarded to Aisling Byrne. The 2023 Leader of the Year went to Emmett Walsh. The Special Recognition Awards went to John Doherty and Philip Gallagher. Laura Sweeney also received an award for being DCIL top fundraiser.





DCIL Summer Garden Party

Despite the weather DCIL had a wonderful afternoon at the Garden Party in August where Staff, Leaders, and their families enjoyed a fun filled day. The event was hosted at our premises in Ballymacool with plenty of activities on offer for the kids including face painting, bouncy castles, and arts and crafts. There was wonderful music on the day provided by Lorriane and Claire. It was another opportunity for our people to come together in a social setting.



AGM 2023

DCIL's Annual General Meeting took place in our premises here at Ballymacool House on 26th October 2023. The meeting allowed for the election of Board Members. It also provided those present with an opportunity to receive a detailed update of the activities and developments of the organisation over the 12 months period. Special Guest speaker on the day was Emer Begley from Disability Federation Ireland (DFI). Emer provided a very informative national update with regards to the disability sector as a whole and the current challenges within.



Cath Waugh who retired from the Board after serving for 22 years was given a warm appreciation and acknowledgement for her tireless commitment to the Independent Living movement. We would like to express our gratitude to all those in attendance and thank the DCIL Board and Staff for their ongoing commitment and dedication throughout the year.



2023 Financial Report

Income and Expenditure for 2023 and 2022

Donegal Centre for Independent Living CLG
(A Company Limited by Guarantee and not having Share Capital)

Detailed Income and Expenditure Account Financial year ended 31/12/23

	2023 €	2022 €
Income		
HSE Income	1,726,577	1,575,725
HSE Special Recognition Pandemic Income	92,400	-
Direct Payments	315,982	237,268
ATU Income	122,486	80,688
Fundraising & Events a/c	5,300	3,181
Transport Income	5,256	2,179
Social Welfare Maternity & Sick Pay Refunds	-	737
Room Hire & Photocopying	1,700	470
Office Rental	14,400	11,247
Other PA Services	26,223	12,598
	<u>2,310,324</u>	<u>1,924,093</u>
Administrative expenses		
Wages and salaries	1,720,295	1,573,687
Employer's PRSI	168,282	149,109
Staff pension costs - defined contribution	16,082	9,876
HSE Employee Special Recognition Pandemic Pyts	92,400	-
Care Agency Payments	1,361	-
Course fees & training costs	7,926	1,600
Rates	230	343
Insurance	35,319	33,132
Light and heat	7,713	9,638
Security and maintenance	3,928	3,044
Protective Clothing	-	266
Printing, postage and stationery	4,314	3,545
Advertising	7,812	1,656
Telephone	4,848	3,446
Computer & Database costs	10,995	9,758
Motor Van Expenses	8,064	4,686
Employee Travel expenses	50,650	27,696
Directors Travel Expenses	708	652
Legal and professional	18,881	204
Consultancy fees	8,089	4,642
Auditors remuneration	4,648	4,325
Bank charges	332	302
Bike to Work Expenses	-	771
General expenses	10,071	9,097
Project Co-ordination Expenses	26,235	41,078
Members Opportunity Fund Expenses	-	5,445
Members Scholarship Fund Expenses	-	5,250
Members Hardship Fund	5,855	-
Subscriptions	1,348	-
Amortisation of Grants	(3,625)	(4,032)
Depreciation of tangible assets	27,420	29,583
	<u>2,240,181</u>	<u>1,928,799</u>
Operating surplus/(deficit) before interest and other income	<u>70,143</u>	<u>(4,706)</u>

DCIL Annual Plan 2023 - 2024

1. DCIL will continue to provide and support high quality Personal Assistants to people with disabilities throughout the county.
2. DCIL will provide appropriate training to Personal Assistants to include all legislative training requirements. PAs can avail of the online training resources where applicable to ensure staff are trained to the highest level.
3. DCIL will ensure our policies and procedures are operational, complying with current legislation and that clinical governance requirements are adhered to.
4. DCIL will continue in the provision of its Education Support Worker (ESW) service.
5. DCIL will continue in the provision of its Accessible Transport Service.
6. DCIL will continue to provide PA staff to programmes with similar core values such as SOAR and DCITS.
7. Further develop our Direct Payment Leader Service and Individualised Budgeting Service. Assist People to experience seamless transition between supports provided by specialist and mainstream services.
8. Increase our public awareness through growing our presence on social media and making improvements to our website.
9. Continue to award the Independent Living Scholarship and the Opportunity Fund and to embark on fundraising campaigns to prolong the lifetime of these funds.
10. DCIL will launch their new strategic plan in 2025.

Summary

In Summary DCIL have had a magnificent year, filled with some great achievements and developments. We have seen a vast range of activities amongst our Leaders in the various workshops and initiatives that have been undertaken through the Rethink Ireland project. We hope that this enthusiasm to become more involved and support each other will be long lasting within DCIL.

We are confident that many measures have been put in place to recognise the great work of our Personal Assistants and to ensure that DCIL remain an employer of choice through our dedication to staffs well-being and the provision of ongoing support from our team.

We look forward to building on the past year's success, continuing our networking and representation with local authorities and relevant stakeholders, whilst also strengthening our CIL through collaborative work with our counterparts nationally to ensure independent living options and services become a reality for people with disabilities in a true and meaningful way.



Donegal Centre for Independent Living
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