

ANNUAL REPORT 2024-25

# DONEGAL CENTRE FOR INDEPENDENT LIVING



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# Welcome from our Chief Executive Officer



We are delighted to present to you the new Annual Report for 2024 - 2025. This report reflects and represents the magnificent work, growth and progress of our organisation throughout the year and I am honoured once again to have the privilege of introducing our members to it.

We have a lot to be proud of since DCIL's establishment in 1999. We have overcome the many challenges an Independent voluntary organisation such as ours have had to navigate, in light of the many private sector service providers who were highly supported by our funding agencies due to cost efficiency measures. Keeping our heads above water financially during these years, whilst retaining our promise and commitment to people with disabilities throughout Donegal in terms of choice, control and independence was a significant challenge within this sector. The necessity to remain vigilant to impending developments regarding HSE funding structures for services such as ours, continue to exist unfortunately, however we are confident and committed to overcoming as we have in the past.

Through the consistent commitment, support and belief of our Board of Directors we have ensured that our organisation has remained a leading example not just in Donegal but nationally of how CIL's can truly impact positively on the lives of those we are committed to, whilst creating endless opportunities within the community we serve.

Our report this year highlights the many developments and updates on service offerings within the organisation which is a true reflection on the wonderfully competent staffing team that we are fortunate to have within DCIL, and the dedication of which, I am truly indebted.

We have managed to improve greatly on the terms, conditions and supports to our community based staff over the past number of years which we know has been very much welcomed and we remain fully committed to the continuation of this as our Personal Assistants are as we all know and integral part of the organisation and its service offerings.

I am hugely thankful to everyone who has contributed and inputted to this report and hope that our members and community find it to be an accurate reflection of the work undergone and achieved by DCIL in the past year, whilst also providing a valuable insight to our future plans.

It is with much enthusiasm that I look forward to the year ahead where we continue to strive for greater freedom and opportunities both amongst and for the people we serve.

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



Hello everyone, it is a real pleasure to welcome you all to our Annual Report 2024/5 and it has been an honour to continue to lead this organisation as Chairperson over the past year together with my fellow Directors.

To all of you living with a disability, be the shining lights in our community and embody the philosophy of independent living. With the support of DCIL and your PA, be active in the community, and demonstrate that we are equal, active members of society. Go for that job and ask for what you need to make it possible. Your leadership makes a real difference and will inspire others. If that isn't for you, go and do what is for you and let nothing hold you back. It's so important that we show up for ourselves every single day.

The personal assistants are the backbone of our organisation. We are delighted to have improved their terms and conditions over the past year, and we will continue to strive to do so. As a leader, thank you for all you do for us all.

I would also like to pay tribute to our very hardworking and dedicated CEO, Rosaleen Doherty, who is DCIL to all of us. I personally want to thank her for her support. She is a true visionary of what we can help people with disabilities to achieve. We are extremely fortunate to have such a competent financial, administrative and coordination team beside her within DCIL.

The report highlights the magnificent work that our organisation continues to do in our community, and I am extremely proud of our achievements.

Finally, I sincerely thank my fellow voluntary board members for their support over the past couple of years and for their generous commitment of time and

expertise, which benefits everyone in DCIL. I would like to welcome our newest board member, Laura Sweeney and wish director Donna Russell a swift return to better health.

Thank you all for your continued support and we look forward to welcoming new members in the year ahead.

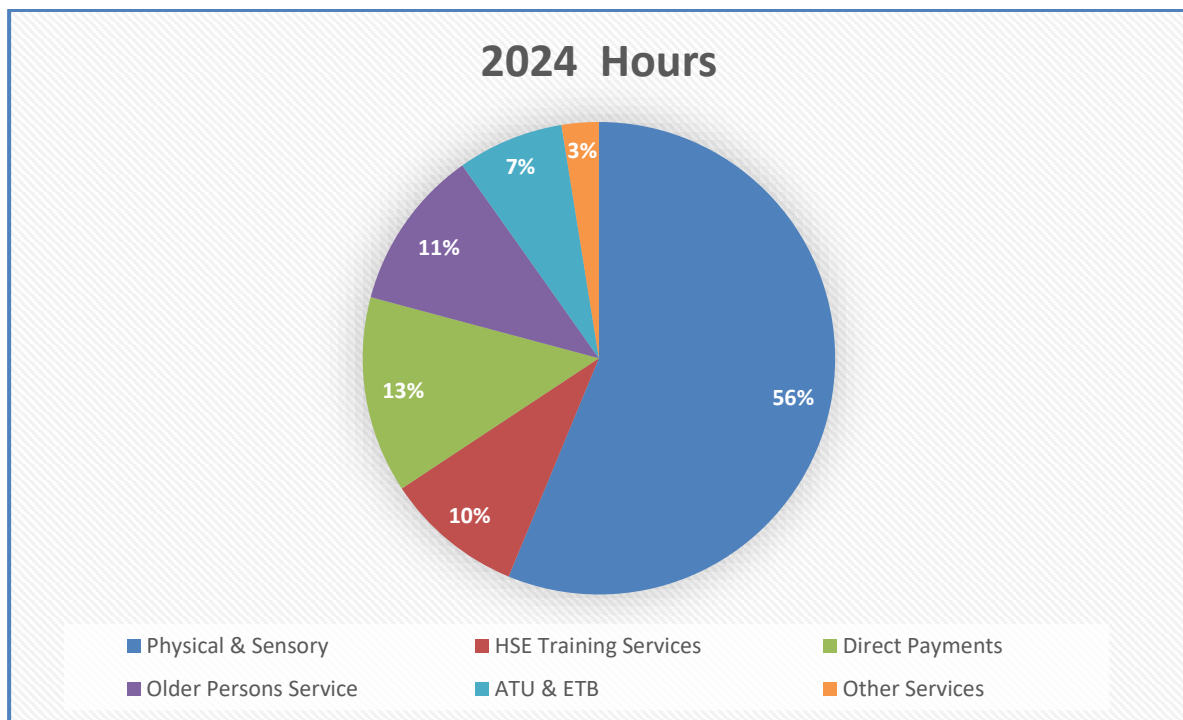
***Kathy Gillespie***

***Chairperson***

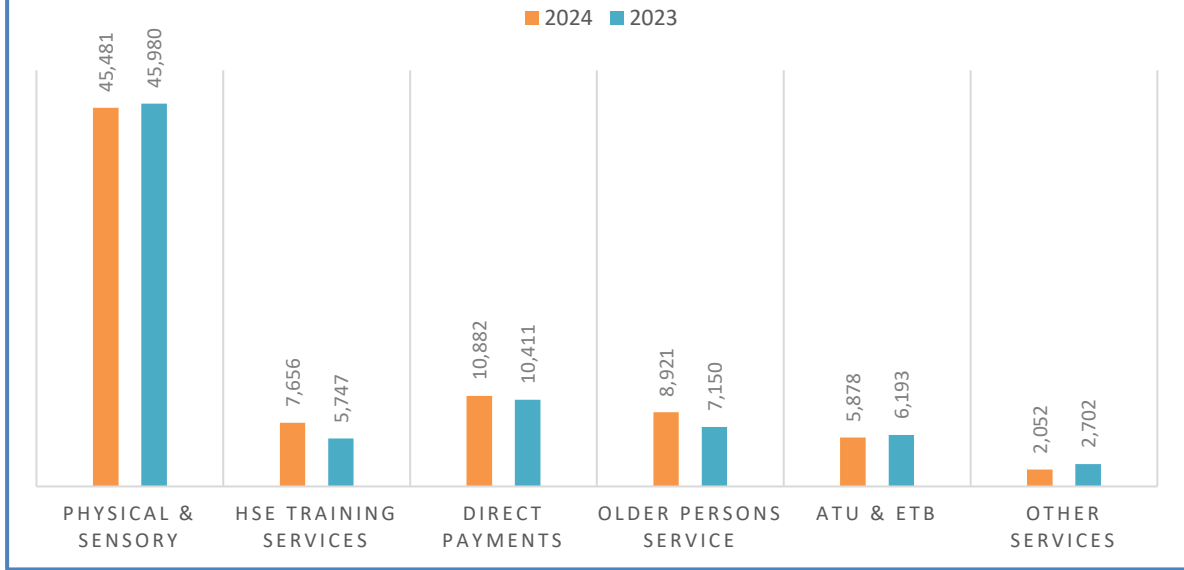
## DCIL Services

In 2024, DCIL provided a total of 80,870 PA and Support Hours. The table and charts below illustrate the breakdown of hours across the various services. Overall, PA and Support Services increased by 3.5% when compared to 2023.

Hours Completed		
Services	2024	2023
Physical & Sensory	45,481	45,980
HSE Training Services	7,656	5,747
Direct Payments	10,882	10,411
Older Persons Service	8,921	7,150
ATU & ETB	5,878	6,193
Other Services	2,052	2,702
<b>Total</b>	<b>80,870</b>	<b>78,183</b>



## HOURS 2024 V 2023



**DCIL Personal Assistant Services**

At the Donegal Centre for Independent Living (DCIL), our core offering continues to be our Personal Assistant (PA) Service, created to empower people with disabilities to live independently and on their own terms.

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 120 staff which includes Personal Assistants and core staff. DCIL Leaders were funded from the following services in 2024.

<b>Funder</b>	<b>Number of Leaders</b>
<b>HSE Physical and Sensory Service</b>	69 Leaders
<b>HSE Older People Services</b>	11 Leaders
<b>HSE Intellectual Disability Services</b>	1 Leader
<b>HSE Disability Services (outside Donegal)</b>	2 Leader
<b>Personalised Budget Project</b>	3 Leaders
<b>Direct Payment Service</b>	6 Leaders

## Educational Support Worker Services



*Pictured: The Independent Living Scholarship awardees Oisín O'Hara and Louise Callaghan*

DCIL is proud to continue its partnership with both the ATU and ETB in empowering young people with disabilities to engage fully in third-level education. It's positive that students with disabilities are progressing through college life, supported by the assurance that an Educational Support Worker (ESW) is available to support them participate independently and without barriers.

In 2024, DCIL delivered a total of 5,878 ESW hours across both the ATU and ETB, ensuring consistent support to students throughout the academic year.

A key achievement this year was DCIL's selection in July 2025 as the successful tenderer for the ATU Donegal ESW contract, securing our role as service provider for the next four years. We are delighted to continue our work with ATU under this renewed agreement and look forward to building on the strong foundation already in place.

DCIL currently has 10 staff members deployed across ATU and ETB campuses. Susan Wasson is leading the coordination of ESW services with strong support from Emma Tully, an experienced PA and ESW, who has been appointed again as the Senior ESW at the ATU campus for this academic year.

As part of DCIL's partnership with Donegal ATU, the Independent Living Scholarship continues to support students with disabilities and promote independent living through a financial bursary. Further details are available in the Special Fund section on page 17.

## HSE Training Service

In 2024, DCIL provided 7,656 hours of support to the SOAR (Supported Outreach Advocating Relationships) project and Donegal Community Inclusion Training Services (DCITS), continuing its strong partnership with both training services.

SOAR is a HSE-funded integrated day service run by the Rehab Group in partnership with DCIL, which supplies Personal Assistants. The programme promotes community inclusion and personal autonomy, aiming to support individuals in achieving full integration and accessing natural supports. DCIL currently delivers 56 PA hours weekly to SOAR, with a team of 7 staff members.

DCITS, also HSE-funded, has moved from a Community Workshop model to a person-centred approach in line with New Directions policy. Operating through 15 hubs across Donegal, DCITS is supported by 4 DCIL staff members, including both Project Workers and Personal Assistants.



*Some DCIL PAs and SOAR students supporting Donegal GAA football team this summer*

## DCIL Accessible Transport

DCIL's accessible transport remains a highly valued service among our Leaders, helping to support independence and inclusion in daily life.

We recognise the ongoing challenges many people face due to the lack of accessible public transport options. In response, DCIL continues to provide a vital link through our dedicated transport service, ensuring access to key appointments, events, and opportunities for travel.

In 2024 alone, our accessible vehicles completed 461 individual journeys. These included hospital appointments across the country, as well as personal trips and holidays giving users greater freedom and flexibility.

To meet increasing demand, a third vehicle was added to our fleet this year. All vehicles are expertly maintained by our caretaker, Kevin Reilly, whose ongoing dedication ensures the service runs smoothly.

If you'd like to book the accessible transport, please contact the DCIL office to check availability.



## DCIL Staff Update



*Former PA Nora O'Donnell, acknowledged for her years of dedicated service to DCIL following her retirement this summer.*

A warm welcome to the new team members who have recently joined DCIL in the past year. We also extend our thanks and best wishes to those who have moved on, your contributions are much appreciated.

DCIL remains a key employer in Donegal, with a workforce of over 120 staff across various roles, including Personal Assistants, Educational Support Workers, and core team members.

We would like to sincerely thank our staff for their ongoing dedication and the vital support they provide to our Leaders. The difference that having a PA makes in the lives of people with disabilities across Donegal is clear, enabling greater independence, choice, and participation in community life.

Over the past year, DCIL was delighted to enhance the terms and conditions for both Personal Assistants (PAs) and Educational Support Workers (ESWs), reflecting our ongoing commitment to supporting and valuing our staff.

DCIL has continued to offer its counselling service to staff and Leaders throughout the past year. This service remains highly valued and well utilised, with positive feedback highlighting its impact. We are pleased to see how beneficial this resource has been in promoting mental health and supporting the wellbeing of our people.

In terms of core staff updates, we are delighted to welcome Laura Mc Laughlin and Fiona Mullen to the DCIL team. Laura has joined us as Administrator, and Fiona has taken on the role of HR Manager.

We look forward to the valuable contributions they will bring to the organisation in their respective roles.

The updated organisational chart is available on the next page.

### **Community Employment**

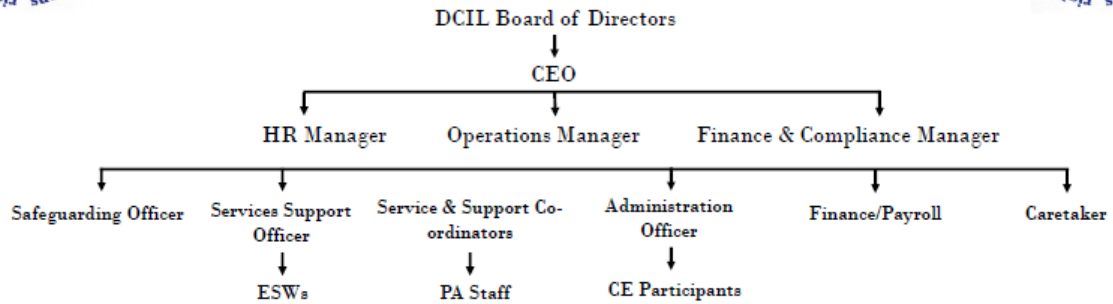
DCIL currently has three participants employed through the Community Employment scheme. Ellen Burke continues to assist the finance department, Kristina Lukseviciene works as a cleaner, and Ada Klochko is working in the community as a Personal Assistant.

The contributions of our Community Employment and TÚS participants have been invaluable to the DCIL team, and we sincerely thank them for their dedication throughout the past year. We also extend our gratitude to Lynda Brophy, the CE Scheme Supervisor at Letterkenny Community Centre, for her ongoing support of DCIL.

# DCIL Organisational Chart



Donegal Centre for Independent Living CLG  
 Ballymacool House, Ballymacool, Letterkenny, Co. Donegal  
 Telephone Number : 074 91 28945 E-Mail: dcil@donegalcil.com Web Address: www.donegalcil.com



<u>Name</u>	<u>Job Title</u>	<u>E-Mail</u>
Rosaleen Doherty	CEO	rosaleen.doherty@donegalcil.com
Jonathan McLaughlin	Operations Manager	jonathan.mclaughlin@donegalcil.com
Jennifer Arenhold	Finance & Compliance Manager	jennifer.arenhold@donegalcil.com
Fiona Mullen	HR Manager	Fiona.mullen@donegalcil.com
Meadhbh Guiney	Service & Support Coordinator	meadhbh.guiney@donegalcil.com
Martyn Friel	Service & Support Coordinator/Safeguarding Officer	martyn.friel@donegalcil.com
Susan Wasson	Services Support Officer	susan.wasson@donegalcil.com
Michelle Murphy	Payroll Operator	michelle.murphy@donegalcil.com
Fiona Farren	Finance Administrator	fiona.farren@donegalcil.com
Laura Mc Laughlin	Administration Officer	Laura.mclaughlin@donegalcil.com
Kevin Reilly	Caretaker	kevin.reilly@donegalcil.com

## **DCIL Special Funds**

In 2021, DCIL introduced three targeted funds aimed at enhancing the lives and independence of our members and staff: the Hardship Fund, the Opportunity Fund, and the Independent Living Scholarship. These initiatives have had a significant and positive impact on recipients, and we are actively seeking donations and fundraising opportunities to ensure their continued availability.

### **The Hardship Fund**

The Hardship Fund was established to support Leaders and staff experiencing unexpected financial difficulties. It provides a confidential means of accessing financial assistance during challenging times. Applications are submitted through the Service Co-ordinator, who offers support throughout the process. A written recommendation is then made to the Chief Executive Officer. Confidentiality is maintained throughout, and the fund continues to be a crucial safety net for our community.

### **The Opportunity Fund**

The Opportunity Fund empowers our members by enabling participation in events and activities that promote independence, confidence, and connection, experiences that might otherwise be financially out of reach. The fund has been positively received and continues to make a meaningful impact in the lives of those who benefit from it.

Earlier this year, our Leader, Paul Dawson, made use of the Opportunity Fund to spend quality time with his family at Centre Parcs. This was a particularly valuable experience, as his family is geographically spread out, and the fund helped make this reunion possible.



*Paul with his family in Centre Parcs*

Looking ahead, recipients Vicky Kilpatrick and Emma Gildea will be using the Opportunity Fund to attend a Boyzlife concert in early 2026. This opportunity will allow them to enjoy a shared social experience as friends.

The Opportunity Fund continues to play a vital role in supporting our members to live fuller, more connected lives.



**MAKING THINGS HAPPEN**

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**DONEGAL CENTRE FOR INDEPENDENT LIVING**

## The Independent Living Scholarship

The Independent Living Scholarship supports students with disabilities through an annual bursary of €750 per academic year, awarded over the duration of their chosen course. The goal is to support students in pursuing third-level education, gaining confidence, and achieving greater independence through participation in college life.

For the academic year 2024/2025, the scholarship was awarded to:

- Odhran McGuinness
- Louise Callaghan
- Oisín O’Hara
- Niamh Curran

### ***2021–2025 Recipient Spotlight: Odhran McGuinness***

Odhran McGuinness was one of the first recipients of the Independent Living Scholarship, awarded to him in 2021. He completed his Honours Degree in Agriculture in May 2025 and is now beginning a master’s in agriculture at University College Dublin (UCD).

Reflecting on the impact of the scholarship, Odhran shared:

*“It was brilliant. It helped so much with college fees and transport costs. If I could say anything to a young person leaving school with a disability and feeling scared or self-conscious about going to college — I was the same. But dive in and surround yourself with good people. They’re not there to judge.”*

Odhran’s journey is a powerful example of how support, determination, and a strong community can help break down barriers and open doors to new opportunities.



Odhran in his chosen 'field'

Since its inception, the fund has supported eight students in total. To continue providing this vital support to new applicants, DCIL requires additional funding and donations to sustain the scholarship programme.



## DCIL Activities and Events

### DCIL Christmas Party & Annual Awards

The DCIL Christmas Party and Annual Awards Night remains a much-anticipated highlight of our year. It continues to be a fantastic opportunity for staff and members to come together in celebration, enjoy a festive evening of dinner, dancing, and entertainment, and recognise the contributions of those within our organisation.



*PA of the Year Jo Wilson  
with Rosaleen*

A key feature of the evening is the awards ceremony, which honours individuals across several categories including Leader of the Year, PA of the Year, and Special Recognition Awards. We also took the opportunity to celebrate the commitment of our long-serving staff. Personal Assistants reaching service milestones of 5 and 10 years were proudly presented with DCIL service pins in appreciation of their dedication.

The PA of the Year 2024 award was presented to Jo Wilson, and Leader of the Year was awarded to Denis O’Leary.

The Special Recognition Award was given to Cath Waugh in appreciation of her years of dedication to the DCIL Board of Directors. The Rethink Ireland team of Marc Anderson, Mo Farah, John Doherty, and Laura Sweeney were also recognised for their contribution to the successful Leader Mentor and Accessibility Programme.



*Marty Friel presenting the Leader of Year award to  
Denis O’Leary with his PAs Patricia and Margaret*



*Cath Waugh with Husband Tony and Marty Friel receiving her Special Recognition Award*



*The Rethink Ireland Team - John, Laura, Marc and Mo*



**DCIL Garden Party**

Despite another year of unpredictable weather, DCIL’s annual Garden Party in September was a fantastic success. Held at our Ballymacool premises, the event brought together staff, Leaders, and their families for an afternoon of fun and celebration. There, were plenty of activities to keep children entertained, including face painting, bouncy castles, arts and crafts, and appearances by special characters. Live music by Lorraine and Claire added to the atmosphere, and we were delighted to welcome David James as a special guest performer. All in all, it was a great chance for everyone to relax, catch up, and enjoy some time together.





**AGM 2024**

DCIL held its Annual General Meeting on 16th October 2024 at Ballymacool House. The event offered members the opportunity to hear a detailed overview of the organisation’s activities and progress over the past year. The meeting also included the election of new Board Members, and attendees heard an update from the Rethink Ireland team, who shared the impact of their work since the programme’s launch.



## The Donegal Volunteer Centre Awards 2025

It was a proud evening for DCIL at the annual Donegal Volunteer Centre Awards in July, with the organisation receiving two prestigious awards.

Hosted by the Donegal Volunteer Centre, a programme delivered by Donegal Local Development CLG, the event celebrated the remarkable contributions of volunteers and community projects across the county.

DCIL was presented with the Volunteer Project Recognition Award, which honours community projects that demonstrate innovation, strong volunteer involvement, and meaningful impact. DCIL received the award for its Leader Mentor and Accessibility Programme delivered in 2024, a project that significantly enhanced inclusion and strengthened community engagement for people with disabilities in Donegal.

In addition, DCIL Board Treasurer Marian O'Donnell received the Volunteer Individual Recognition Award. This well-deserved honour acknowledges her steadfast commitment to volunteering and advocacy on behalf of people with disabilities. Marian's dedication, compassion, and tireless work have had a lasting impact on the community, and this award stands as a testament to her inspiring contributions.



# 2024 Financial Report

## Income and Expenditure for 2024 and 2023

	2024	2023
	€	€
<b>Income</b>	<b>2,086,185</b>	<b>1,726,577</b>
HSE Receipts	298,339	315,982
Direct Payments	116,510	122,486
ATU Receipts	14,539	5,300
Donations and Fundraising	4,260	5,256
Transport Income	1,500	1,700
Rent Received	12,480	14,400
Other PA Services	34,017	26,223
Personalised Budgets	29,348	-
HSE Pandemic Special Recognition	600	92,400
HSE Core Funding	96,000	-
Other Income and Bank Interest	5,066	2,400
HSE WRC payments	23,849	-
Re Think Grant	97,667	-
Amortisation of Government Grants	4,363	3,625
	<u>2,824,723</u>	<u>2,316,349</u>
<b>Expenditure</b>		
Wages, Salaries and Employee Costs	2,240,454	1,787,027
Social Welfare Costs	203,731	168,282
Employee Special Recognition Pandemic Payment	-	92,400
Course Fee and Training Cost	6,707	7,926
Employee Wellbeing	2,760	-
Rates & Service Charges	836	230
Insurance	35,433	35,319
ReThink expenditure	97,667	-
Light and Heat	7,895	7,713
Repairs & Maintenance	3,471	3,928
Printing, Postage and Stationery	7,582	4,314
Advertising	1,022	7,812
Telephone and Broadband	5,653	4,848
Computer Costs	16,348	10,995
Sub Contractor payments	308	1,361
Motor expenses	6,591	8,064
Director expenses	676	708
Legal and Professional	-	18,881
Consultancy Fees	7,686	8,089
Bank charges	351	332
General Expenses	2,472	10,071
Project Coordination Expense	7,419	26,235
Members Opportunity Fund	2,000	-
Members Scholarship Fund	8,250	-
Members Hardship Fund	2,600	5,855
Subscriptions	2,090	1,348
Fundraising, Events & Prize Giving	5,622	-
Auditors Remuneration	4,900	4,648
Depreciation	32,908	27,420
	<u>2,713,432</u>	<u>2,243,806</u>
<b>Net Surplus</b>	<u>111,291</u>	<u>72,543</u>

## **DCIL Annual Plan 2025 - 2026**

1. DCIL will continue to provide and support high-quality Personal Assistants for people with disabilities across County Donegal.
2. DCIL will deliver appropriate training to Personal Assistants, ensuring compliance with all legislative requirements. Online training resources will be made available where suitable to support continuous professional development and maintain high standards of care.
3. DCIL will ensure that all policies and procedures are up to date, operational, and fully compliant with current legislation, including adherence to clinical governance requirements.
4. DCIL will maintain and develop its Education Support Worker (ESW) service, supporting access to education for people with disabilities.
5. DCIL will continue to operate its Accessible Transport Service, enabling greater independence and mobility for service users.
6. DCIL will continue to provide PA support to programmes that share our core values, including initiatives such as SOAR and DCITS.
7. DCIL will further develop its Direct Payment Leader and Individualised Budgeting Services, supporting individuals to transition smoothly between specialist and mainstream supports.
8. DCIL will strengthen public engagement by enhancing its presence on social media and making strategic improvements to its website.
9. DCIL will continue to award the Independent Living Scholarship and the Opportunity Fund, while launching fundraising campaigns to secure the future of these important initiatives.
10. DCIL will continue to work towards the strategic objectives outlined in its current Strategic Plan, ensuring alignment with its mission and values.

## Summary

It is our hope that this Plan has provided for the level of insight into both the past years work of the organisation and an action plan for the year ahead.

On behalf of DCIL, we would like to again thank the various staff and departments who have contributed to the Annual Report which is loaded with some great achievements and developments which has been testament to your commitment within the organisation.

It is our hope to continue with measures that evoke the enthusiasm of all our people to become more involved and support each other to participate more in their communities going forward, as this is when we will inevitably see real change and force, where people with disabilities take accountability and control over their own destiny in life.

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, terms of employment and the provision of ongoing supports from our team.

Our thanks once again, to our dedicated Board of Directors, led by our Chairperson Kathy Gillespie who empower our team here to the best we can be.

We look forward to building on the past year's success, continuing our networking and representation with local authorities and relevant stakeholders to ensure DCIL's rightful place in our community.

# Donegal Centre for Independent Living

Annual Report 2024 - 25

