

# Immersion Project

## From Planning to Action - Towards having a Good Life

22 - 26<sup>th</sup> April 2013 in the Malton Hotel in Killarney

Over recent years, a significant policy shift has taken place in Ireland towards the provision of more individually tailored supports for people with intellectual disabilities. This shift is in keeping with the UN Convention on the Rights of Persons with Disabilities and has found expression in a number of key policy documents, including:

- *Time to Move on from Congregated Settings - A Strategy for Community Inclusion* (Report of the Working Group on Congregated Settings 2011).
- *Value for Money and Policy Review of Disability Services in Ireland* (Final Report 2012)
- *New Directions - Review of HSE Day Services and Implementation Plan 2012-2016* (National Working Group Report 2012).
- *Report of the Reference Group on Multidisciplinary Services for Children with Disabilities aged 5-18 (2009)*, which is the driver for the Progressing Disability Services to Children and Young People Programme.

These policy documents set new parameters for how support services for people with intellectual disabilities are to be provided in the future. Together, they create a policy environment in which supports will increasingly be directed towards individuals achieving lives that are rich and fulfilling; lives that are worthy of them as citizens; lives that are, in short, 'good lives'.

The National Federation of Voluntary Bodies is providing a wide range of supports to service providing organisations to help them engage with the changes that are now in train. Central among these supports is the Immersion Transformation Project, an intensive five-day orientation to individualised ways of working, followed by a year-long supported change programme. Funding for this initiative has been provided by Genio.

Immersion will build on existing progressive service developments and the momentum for change that is already building in the intellectual disability sector. The core aim of Immersion is to promote deep-seated reform in how people with intellectual disabilities are supported in order that they might live lives of their choosing and occupy socially valued roles in their communities. The programme addresses three critical questions: *why* is change needed?; *how* can quality individualised supports be developed?; and *what* specific steps must be taken?

The move towards individualised supports requires a new dialogue between individuals, their families, their communities, those who work in service providing organisations, and those who commission services. Because of this, most of those who participate in Immersion will do so as members of collaborating 'change teams' made up of supported individuals, family members, board members, frontline staff, senior staff, CEOs, community members and HSE department representatives. Others will participate as part of a cross-stakeholder group comprising key actors who have specific roles to play in advancing necessary change.

Immersion is unique in bringing together such a broad range of stakeholders for shared learning and collaborative action. It is also unique in the intensity of the commitment required. Participants must commit to full engagement in a week-long residential programme in which they will become fully immersed in the theory and practice of individualised supports. They must also commit to remain engaged in follow-on actions over the course of a year. The distinctive breadth and intensity of Immersion reflects the scale of the investment that is required in order to effect meaningful attitudinal, cultural and institutional change.

The week-long residential programme will take place from 22<sup>nd</sup> to 26<sup>th</sup> April 2013 at the Malton Hotel, Killarney. It will be led by international experts, whilst being grounded in the experiences of Irish organisations that have developed individualised supports. The international team will comprise John O'Brien, Michael Kendrick, Hope Leet Dittmeier, Pat Fratangelo, Janet Klees, David Pitonyak, and Patti Scott. Important contributions will also be made by representatives of Irish organisations with experience of developing individualised supports.

On the first day, Gerard Quinn, John O'Brien, and Michael Kendrick will facilitate sessions that set the scene in terms of policy and practice. On the second, third and fourth days, participants will be supported to explore the following three themes:

- The Personal Journey to Citizenship (*Hope Leet Dittmeier and David Pitonyak*)
- Supporting Relationships (*Janet Klees and Pat Fratangelo*)
- Exploring the different dimensions of the transformation challenge (*John O'Brien, Michael Kendrick and Patti Scott*)

Taking one theme each day, groups comprising specific change teams and members of the cross-stakeholder group will work through all three themes in rotation.

On the fifth day, participants will be helped by Michael Kendrick, Ed Molloy and John O'Brien to determine key collaborative actions that they will deliver over the course of the ensuing year in accordance with an agreed work plan. It is intended that these collaborative actions will lead to at least three people in each participating organisation being supported to live self-directed lives as part of their communities. It is also intended that the actions will result in necessary service reconfiguration.

Two kinds of ongoing support will be provided for the members of change teams as they undertake the year-long journey of change. Firstly, they will have available to them the guidance and external support of a mentor drawn from the international expert panel and, secondly, they will be 'twinned' with another change team for the purpose of learning exchange and peer support through constructive dialogue.

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*Further details of the Immersion Transformation Project, including profiles of the various speakers, are available in the event programme. Should you require additional information, please contact Maria Walls at [maria.walls@fedvol.ie](mailto:maria.walls@fedvol.ie) or on 091 792316.*