



## **Bridge to Community Initiative** **Jan 2026 Guiding Principles- Community of Practice**

### **A Rights-Based Approach to an Ordinary Life in Community.**

**Purpose:** The Community of Practice is an organized and intentionally formed group of people, with a common passion & interest in progressing the rights of people with disabilities. The community members are open to contributing to a collaborative learning environment and co-creating innovative & creative pathways towards relational, person-led, and community-integrated models of support that ensure people with disabilities live as equal and valued citizens.

### **Defining what we mean by ‘a rights-based approach’:**

Human rights are the basic rights and freedoms that all people should enjoy. Human rights are about people being treated with fairness, respect, equality and dignity, having a say over their lives and actively participating in society on an equal basis to others. This happens when the rights of people with disabilities are fully realised and when people have choice and control over their own lives. These rights are protected in Irish legislation and underpinned by international human rights treaties, placing responsibility on us all—both organisationally and individually—to uphold them. (UNCRPD) A rights-based approach to support means:

- Respecting the person as the leader and working in partnership with them, their family & their allies.
- Recognising the person as an active decision maker across their whole life journey.
- Co-creating sustainable & flexible supports around the individual’s vision, needs, and aspirations.
- Promoting empowerment, inclusion, and collaboration.
- Being bold and brave- having the courage to learn and adapt—keeping the person’s well-being at the centre of every decision
- Being curious and listening deeply so as to discover what more is possible.

### **The Principles that guide us.**

- **Relationships:** Every person thrives when respected, connected and supported in relationships.
- **Inclusion:** Foster partnerships in community and create ordinary pathways that recognize community as a place of belonging- where we can show up and make a difference in valued ways as citizens.
- **Self-Direction:** *“The right supports, in the right way, at the right time”*. Individuals have the right to make informed choices and shape their own lives, co-creating their supports.



- **Empowerment:** Enable and empower people with disabilities and their families to build capacity and confidence to expect, pursue, and attain valued roles and equal opportunities to live ordinary lives in the community.
- **Understanding:** People thrive when they relate with someone who works actively and faithfully to understand what they want to communicate. We need to listen actively with an open mind, an open heart and an open will.
- **Possibilities:** Commit to being curious and courageous so as to learn more, discover more and strive for potential possibilities, whilst being respectful of our rightful place in the person's life.
- **Respect:** Respecting the person as the leader and working in partnership with them, their family & their allies.
- **Courage:** Being bold and brave- having the courage to learn and adapt—keeping the person's well-being at the centre of every decision with a commitment to ensuring we do no harm.
- **Flexibility:** Ensuring supports are flexible, responsive and adaptable to changing needs whilst creatively making the best use of the resources that we have.

#### **Examples of Rights-Based Supports may include but are not limited to:**

- Personal care, communication, and advocacy (including active listening to needs and preferences).
- Supporting the person to live independently with the appropriate choices and control over where, how and with whom they live, promoting their inclusion in the community.
- Enabling equal access to housing with integrated support services.
- Accessing supports available in community so that they have the widest possible choices and options about how they live their lives and how they spend their time each day.
- Education and personal development
- Learning support and therapeutic interventions.
- Assistive technology Aids, equipment, and environmental adaptations.
- Support grounded in meaningful relationships that fosters safety and self-direction
- Supports that are person-led – that are determined and directed by the person (with family/advocate as requested)
- Sustainable support that can be accessed through a wide range of sources.

*The Guiding Principles of the Community of Practice have been reviewed and agreed by all participants. Feb 2026*