



National Federation of
Voluntary Service Providers

Supporting people with intellectual disability (CLG)



ANNUAL REPORT 2024



National Federation of Voluntary Service Providers
Oranmore Business Park
Galway
Registered Charity No: 20045500

Chairperson's Statement

I am delighted to present this Annual Report, which provides a comprehensive overview of the significant work undertaken in 2024 by the National Federation of Voluntary Service Providers, in collaboration with and on behalf of our member organisations.

At the outset, I would like to extend my sincere thanks to Clare Dempsey for her contribution in the role of Chairperson during 2024. Clare's leadership, dedication, and unwavering commitment to the Federation and its membership were deeply appreciated. Her contribution to the Federation has been invaluable, and we wish her every success in her next chapter.

As the landscape continued to evolve in 2024, the work of the Federation reflects a year of deep engagement, strategic advocacy, and collective action in response to the evolving needs of people with intellectual disabilities and autism, and our members. This report provides an overview of the challenges we have faced—particularly around sustainability and unmet need—and shows the strength of a united voice and a shared commitment to rights-based, quality services.

The report highlights how the Federation continues to represent its members in key national forums, including the Health Dialogue Forum, the Disability Strategic Stakeholders Group, and the Oireachtas Disability Group. Our engagement with the HSE and Government Departments was particularly impactful, with direct meetings held with senior officials and elected representatives to highlight the urgent sustainability crisis facing our sector and the growing levels of unmet need.

Our engagement in national forums—from HIQA's Provider Forum to the Health Dialogue Forum—ensured that our sector's concerns were front and centre in discussions about regulation, safeguarding, and service arrangements, and through our Housing Group, we developed a strong position paper that is providing significant input into national policy conversations. The IDEAS 2024 National Conference also created an opportunity to gather and to consider the IDS-TILDA findings and what the data is telling us in terms of how we support people with intellectual disabilities to age well.

The Federation's work in supporting the implementation of the UNCRPD remained central to our mission. The Inclusive Research Network continued to amplify the voices of people with lived experience, and the launch of the Self-Advocacy Network marked a significant step forward in ensuring that those supported by our members are directly involved in shaping policy and practice. The launch of the "Keep My Teeth" oral health initiative and the development of the "Next Steps – Bridge to Community" project are just two examples of how our members are committed to leading innovative, rights-based approaches to service delivery.

The report highlights how the Federation's working Groups, Networks, and Task



Michael Hennessy,
Chairperson of the
National Federation
of Voluntary Service
Providers

Groups were active across a wide range of areas—from HR, Quality and Standards, to Safeguarding and Housing, Recruitment and Retention, Pensions, and Assisted decision-making - so as to address priority areas and provide platforms for members to collaborate, share expertise, and contribute to the development of best practices across the sector. For instance, the Section 39 Pay Task Group continued to represent the issue of pay within Section 39 member organisations during 2024 through its engagement with the WRC. A second pay deal was a welcomed development and representation of our member's requirements in the implementation phase will be continued priority into 2025.

Of particular significance in 2024, the Federation played a key role in the Pre-Budget 2025 campaign and the General Election advocacy work, ensuring that disability issues were central in political discourse. The creation of data-driven submissions and collaborative lobbying efforts helped secure recognition of the sector's challenges and the need for long-term investment.

I would like to extend our sincere thanks to the Chairs of the Subcommittees and Working Groups; Area Federation Committees and the Trustees of the Pension Scheme for their important work. Our Board members generously contribute their time and expertise to ensuring the good governance and strategic direction of the Federation and their leadership and dedication have been instrumental in supporting our members through a complex and demanding year. Whilst we continue to face sustainability challenges, our continued engagement with key stakeholders will remain a central focus of the National Federation's work on behalf of its members.

Finally, my sincere thanks to Alison and the National Federation Secretariat team for their continued commitment to the work undertaken by the organisation, as evidenced by the considerable work set out in this report. The dedication of the small Secretariat team has been central to the achievement of the wide range of outcomes across policy, operational and strategic goals of importance to our members and the people with intellectual disabilities we support. As we look ahead to 2025, we remain focused on building a sustainable, inclusive, and rights-based future for all.

Michael Hennessy

Chairperson,
National Federation of Voluntary Service Providers



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Section 1: About the National Federation of Voluntary Service Providers

1.1. About us

Approximately 70% of disability support services in Ireland are provided on behalf of the State by Section 38 and Section 39-funded organisations. The National Federation of Voluntary Service Providers Supporting People with Intellectual Disability is the national umbrella organisation of not-for-profit agencies providing direct supports and services to people with intellectual disability in Ireland. Across our 53 organisations, our members support approximately 26,000 children and adults with intellectual disabilities or autism and their families, providing services and supports throughout their lifespan. National Federation member organisations have a community presence and connection across large urban centres and small villages throughout Ireland.

The member organisations of the National Federation together account for approximately €1.6 billion of HSE-funded disability services. The National Federation provides a central point of contact for stakeholders including the HSE and Government Departments to engage in consultation, information dissemination, co-production of collaborative projects, and partnership working with our members.

As a representative body of service providers, the National Federation works across a wide range of areas of service including supporting providers and wider stakeholders in relation to innovation, HR matters, quality and standards, policy and legislation; matters involving the sustainability and funding of service provision, engagement with Government Departments, the Oireachtas and national budgetary processes; participation in the Health Dialogue Forum and a wide range of sectoral forums and structures.

Our Mission

The work of the National Federation is guided by our Mission statement:

To provide the leadership and support that will enable voluntary organisations to adapt to a radically changing operating environment, with the ultimate aim of ensuring that people with intellectual disability live a life of their choosing.

Our Vision

The vision of the National Federation is that people are supported to live a life on their terms:

Above all people have a deep rooted desire to belong, to be in relationships, to live within the intimacy and security of their family and friends, to be included in the greater life around them with all its attendant possibilities for hope and fulfilment and to do so, to the greatest extent possible, on their own terms. The implications of this simple truth will determine our actions on behalf of all citizens with intellectual disabilities.

1.2. Our Structure

The work of the National Federation is governed by its **Board**, which consults with and represents the **General Assembly** and its five **Area Federation Committees**. This work is supported through our subcommittee, operational committee and working group structures, which include:

- **Two Standing Subcommittees of the Board:** Finance, Audit and Risk; and Governance and Nominations;
- **Working Groups, Networks and Task Groups:** e.g., Human Resources; Quality and Standards; Housing; Safeguarding; Assisted Decision-Making (Capacity) Act 2015 (ADM); Section 38; Section 39 Pay; Freedom of Information and Data Protection Network; Recruitment and Retention Task Group; Social Care Workers Task Group
- Under the **Policy and Research** function, relevant personnel from member organisations come together as needed to address policy areas arising for consultation, such as the United Nations Convention on the Rights of Persons with Disabilities (UNCRPD), Housing, matters relating to ageing and older persons with intellectual disabilities, etc. We conduct and support research as relevant to support the implementation of the UNCRPD and the vision of the National Federation, and to engage on an evidence-based basis in national consultation processes.

Member Organisations: The National Federation currently has 53 member organisations, all of whom are HSE-funded Section 38 or Section 39 non-profit service providers supporting people with intellectual disabilities and/or autism.

General Assembly: Each member organisation nominates two people who may act as their representatives at the National Federation General Assembly. The General Assembly meets each quarter and at its Annual General Meeting.

Areas Federation Committees: There are 5 Area Federation Committees (which reconfigured in 2024 to map on to the new HSE Regional Health Areas) as follows:

1. **Dublin & North East Area Federation Committee** - Chair Liz Reynolds, St Michael's House;
2. **Dublin & Midlands Area Federation Committee** - Chaired by Deirdre Murphy, KARE in 2024, now chaired by TJ Duggan, Cheeverstown House;
3. **South West Area Federation Committee** - Chair Michael Hegarty, St Joseph's Foundation
4. **Dublin & South East Area Federation Committee** - Chaired by Eimear Mannion, St Aidan's in 2024, and currently by Francis Coughlan, SOS Kilkenny
5. **West, North West & Mid West Area Federation Committee** - Chair Eamon Loughrey, Brothers of Charity Services Western Region

Each Area Federation Committee is made up of representatives from member organisations in the area/region(s) in which they are headquartered and provide services, and each is Chaired by a nominee of a member organisation from these regions.

We are very grateful and express our sincere thanks to the Chairs of the Area Federation Committees, the Board Committees and the Operational Committees for their significant contribution in supporting the member organisations and the work of the Federation.

Organisation Chart



Board of Directors: In accordance with our Constitution, the National Federation of Voluntary Service Providers arranges for the election of its Board of Directors as follows:

Each Area Federation Committee has the power to elect two directors to the Board. In 2024 these were as follows:

- **Dublin & Midlands Area Federation Committee:** Clare Dempsey, St. John of God Services (resigned September 2024); Deirdre Murphy, Kare (elected 11th Sept 2024), Breda O'Neill, St. Margaret's Network (IRL-IASD);
- **Dublin & North East Area Federation Committee:** Liz Reynolds, St. Michael's House, Grainne Sexton, Gheel (elected 6th November 2024);
- **South West Area Federation Committee:** Michael Hegarty, St Joseph's Foundation, Sean Abbott, COPE Foundation (resigned September 2024), Una Nagle, Brothers of Charity Services Southern (elected 6th November 2024);
- **Dublin & South East Area Federation Committee:** Vincent O'Flynn, Carriglea Cairde Services (resigned April 2024), Annette Ryan, Aurora (elected 11th September 2024) Fiona O'Neill, WIDA. Fiona also holds the role of Company Secretary;
- **West, North West & Mid West Area Federation Committee:** Michael Hennessy (Chair), Brothers of Charity Ireland Services and Audrey Pidgeon, Ability West (resigned July 2024), Julie Silke Daly, Ability West (elected 11th September 2024).

The above Directors have the power to nominate up to 5 co-options. The co-options to the Board in 2023 were as follows:

- **Dublin & Midlands Area Federation Committee:** Joe Mason, Walk
- **Dublin & North East Area Federation Committee:** Vacancy
- **Southern Area:** Vacancy; Una Nagle, Brothers of Charity Services (moved from co-opt to elected on 6th November 2024)

National Federation Secretariat: The National Federation is supported by a small team of eight staff members (6.1 WTE) dedicated to its smooth functioning and ongoing success. Despite its small size, the team aims to achieve a broad range of outcomes on behalf of members and to foster a supportive environment of shared learning and collaboration that is beneficial for the people supported by all of our members. The team will be joined in 2025 by Pamela Mansell and Eimear Allen.



Pictured: Megan Leahy, Helena Connors, Brian Donohoe, Jillian Sexton, Alison Harnett. Not pictured here: Maria McMahon, Caroline Looney, Mary Barrett.

1.3. National Federation Board 2024

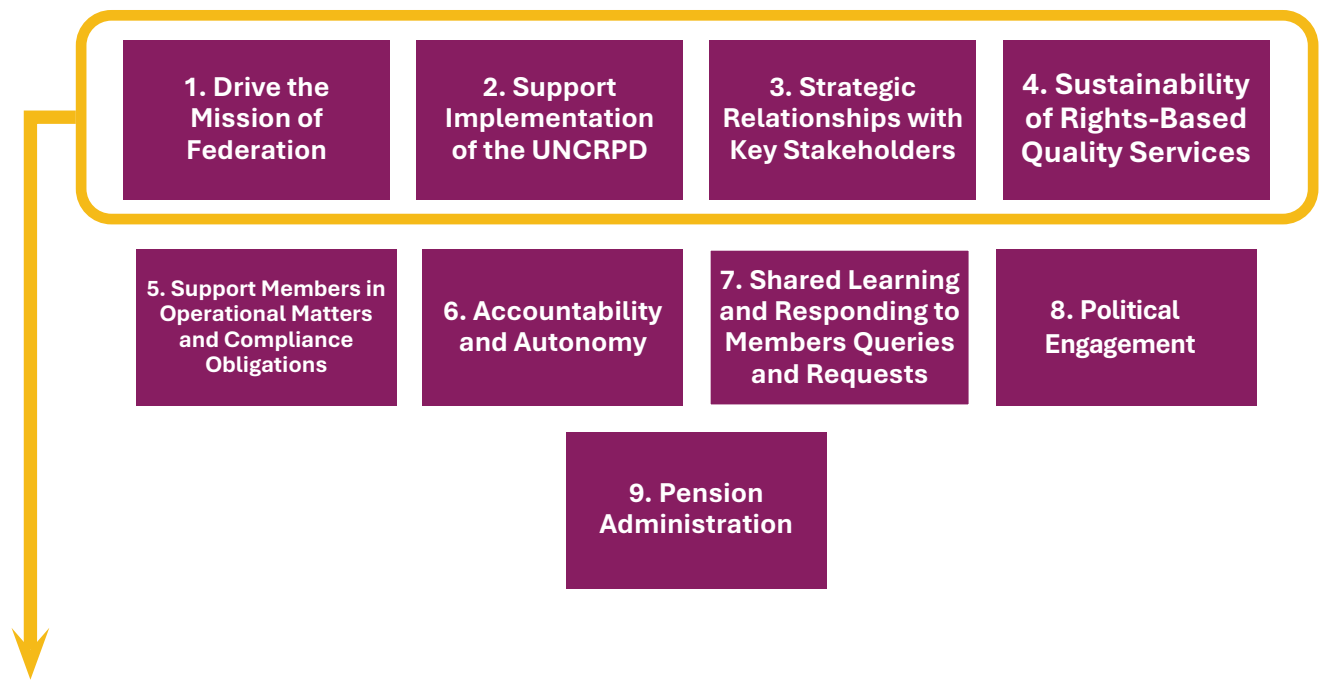
Clare Dempsey served as Chair of the National Federation until September 2024, when Michael Hennessy was appointed. We would like to sincerely thank all of our Board Members in 2024 for the time and dedication they have given to the National Federation. In particular, we would like to acknowledge the work of two former Chairpersons of the National Federation who retired from the Board in 2024, Clare Dempsey and Sean Abbott and the former Chairperson of the Finance, Audit and Risk Subcommittee of the Board, Vincent O'Flynn. Their leadership and support was invaluable to the organisation and their presence will be missed.

Board Members 2024

- **Chairperson** - Clare Dempsey, St. John of God Community Services (September 2023-2024, retired September 2024)
- **Chairperson** – Michael Hennessy, Brothers of Charity Services Ireland (appointed September 2024)
- **Company Secretary** – Fiona O'Neill, Waterford Intellectual Disability Association
- Sean Abbott, Cope Foundation (resigned September 2024)
- Michael Hegarty, St Joseph's Foundation
- Lorraine Macken, Avista (resigned January 2024)
- Joe Mason, WALK
- Una Nagle, Brothers of Charity Services
- Audrey Pidgeon, Ability West (resigned July 2024)
- Vincent O'Flynn, Carriglea Cairde Services (resigned April 2024)
- Breda O'Neill, IRL-IASD - St. Margaret's Centre
- Liz Reynolds, St. Michael's House
- Deirdre Murphy, Kare (elected September 2024)
- Annette Ryan, Aurora (elected September 2024)
- Julie Silke Daly, Ability West (elected September 2024)
- Grainne Sexton, Gheel (elected November 2024)

Section 2: Key Priorities of the National Federation in 2024

The key priorities and actions of the National Federation in 2024 were developed in consultation with the Board of Directors and agreed at the Board’s meeting in January 2024. Our wider membership also fed into the development of these priority areas through the General Assembly and ongoing engagement with members through the various operational groups and networks coordinated by the Federation.



Cross-Cutting Themes Across Member Priorities

While our priority actions are presented individually in this report, they are often interconnected in practice. In 2024, the first four priority areas were particularly foundational. Therefore, while this report outlines actions under distinct priorities, it is important to note that the support for the National Federation’s mission, the UNCRPD, building of strategic relationships, and addressing the sustainability crisis facing members were embedded throughout our work.

All activities, including policy submissions, stakeholder engagement, and operational support, are guided by the National Federation’s core mission and aim to advance collective representation and promote shared objectives across the membership. Central to this, is our commitment to the full implementation of the UNCRPD, which guides the direction of our efforts.

The development of strategic relationships with key internal and external stakeholders is essential across all areas and is not confined to any single priority. Sustainability of rights-based services remained a critical cross-cutting issue throughout 2024, and was therefore consistently raised at all levels and across numerous work areas.

Actions to Support Key Member Priorities in 2024

2.1. Drive the Mission of Federation

The National Federation was established as a company limited by guarantee in the year 2000 and is a registered charity with the stated aim to:

Represent the members of the Federation in respect of issues concerning or touching upon people with an intellectual disability and which relate to the provision of services, funding arrangements, standards for service provision and relationships at local, national, and international levels where concerted action is indicated and appropriate and to promote, support, and respect the aspirations and objectives of the members of the Federation, based on the shared philosophy of the dignity and equality of the person and associated core values, vision and statutory status.

Board of the National Federation

The Board of the National Federation plays a crucial role in ensuring the organisation acts in accordance with its core mission. In 2024, the Board met 9 times. During these meetings, the Board discussed issues that were relevant for members, examined issues raised by Working Groups, reviewed submissions and considered external communications to ensure the work of the Federation aligned with its mission and purpose as outlined in the Constitution. The Board also reviewed matters raised by the Board Subcommittees to ensure the organisation remained well-governed and well-positioned to advance its mission and purpose.

Fostering Cohesion and Tracking Key Issues

A core responsibility of the National Federation is to accurately and effectively represent its members on issues of central importance. Key to this is fostering a cohesive and engaged membership, grounded in the support and promotion of rights for people with intellectual disabilities and rights.

To support this, the National Federation maintains an extensive network of Working Groups, Networks, and Task Groups. These groups meet regularly to address priority areas and provide platforms for members to collaborate, share expertise, and contribute to the development of best practices across the sector. An overview of the specific work of these Groups will be provided in Section 3 of the Annual Report. In 2024, the National Federation hosted four General Assemblies, which brought members together to receive updates on ongoing initiatives, engage in collective discussions, and build valuable peer connections, and two meetings of the membership with key stakeholders (Bernard Gloster, HSE CEO and Department officials from the Department of Children, Equality, Disability, Integration and Youth). Building on the success of 2023, the National Federation's Area Federation Committee Meetings were again held on the same day as the General Assemblies. This strategic alignment supported local networking and relationship-building, and the governance requirements of the National Federation in terms of facilitating Board elections.

These gatherings, whether in focused working groups or broader assemblies, serve a critical purpose: to offer a mechanism for monitoring key sectoral issues, identify opportunities for collective action, and shape how the National Federation's Board and Secretariat can best respond to members' needs.

As mentioned, to further strengthen engagement, the National Federation also invited key external stakeholders to meet with the collective membership. This provided an opportunity for stakeholders to interact directly with the membership and discuss issues of shared importance across the sector. In 2024, the National Federation welcomed:

- Bernard Gloster, *HSE Chief Executive Officer*
- Colm O’Conaill *Assistant Secretary General Disability Division Department of Children, Equality, Disability, Integration and Youth (DCEDIY)*, Margot Loughman *Principal Officer Disability Finance and Reform Unit DCEDIY*, Eithne Fitzgerald, *Disability Advisor DCEDIY*,
- Stephen Mulvany, *HSE CFO*, Gerry Tully *HSE Assistant National Director – Children’s Disability Services*, Ivan McConkey *HSE Assistant National Director - National integrated Staff Records and Pay Programme (NiSRP)*, Mike Corbett *HSE Assistant National Director - Access and Integration*.

During these engagements there was also an opportunity to introduce the invited guests to issues of importance to the membership, including identifying challenges, opportunities and required actions in implementing the UNCRPD in peoples lives, engaging with new HSE Structures and decision making pathways, and the critical sustainability challenges faced by members.



Bernard Gloster HSE CEO, Alison Harnett NFVSP CEO, Sean Abbott NFVSP Board Member



Colm O’Conaill Assistant Secretary General Disability Division, Clare Dempsey NFVSP Chairperson, Eithne Fitzgerald Disability Advisor DCEDIY, Margot Loughman Principle Officer DCEDIY, Alison Harnett NFVSP CEO



Gerry Tully AND Children's Disability Services, Clare Dempsey NfVSP Chairperson, Ivan McConkey AND NiSRP, Alison Harnett NfVSP CEO, Stephen Mulvany HSE CFO, Fiona O'Neill NfVSP Board Member, Michael Hegarty NfVSP Board Member, Sean Abbott, NfVSP Board Member, Mike Corbett HSE AND - Access and Integration



Representation on specific issues affecting Section 39 Organisations and Section 38 Organisations

The National Federation is composed of both Section 38 and Section 39 members which work collectively towards advancing common priorities to serve to all members. In some instances there are challenges that are unique to Section 39 or Section 38 members. To ensure that the distinct needs of organisations are appropriately represented and addressed, we maintain dedicated mechanisms to respond to section-specific concerns.

Section 39 Pay Task Group

The issue of pay within Section 39 member organisations continued to be a key priority for the National Federation during 2024, given the considerable recruitment and retention challenges faced by Section 39 members. Overseen by the 'Section 39 Pay Task Group', chaired by Pat Reen, Prosper Group, the National Federation supported and represented the concerns of members in implementing the Workplace Relations Commission (WRC) Pay Agreement reached on October 17th, 2023 and the process put in place by the HSE / KOSI to allocate the necessary funding to organisations. The National Federation continued to work closely with community and voluntary sector colleagues via The Wheel coalition, which represented Section 39, Section 10 and Section 56 organisations.

The commencement of pay talks in the WRC on a second pay deal was a welcome development. Representatives of 'The Wheel' coalition, including the National Federation, were present at the talks and highlighted the need for a swift conclusion to address growing difficulties in recruitment and retention due to the pay parity gap. Work on this important issue will continue as priority into 2025.

Section 38 Group

The Section 38 Group chaired by TJ Duggan, Cheeverstown, continued to meet over the course of 2024. Building on the work completed in 2023 to advocate for specific exemptions for disability services to the general moratorium on recruitment, members supported one another in identifying issues with the derogation application process and communicating these to senior HSE officials for resolution. In addition, further utilising the opportunity for collaborative action, the Section 38 Group sought joint legal advice on the legality of a moratorium on recruitment in S38 organisations, given that service arrangements place extensive obligations on organisations in terms of level of service and the organisation's Boards of directors hold the risk for their organisations. Prior to Budget 2025, the Group submitted data on RSSMAC challenges to HSE. The work of this Group will continue in 2025.

Submissions on a range of key priorities

A key outcome of the work of the National Federation is its engagement in national consultation processes, in collaboration with and on behalf of its members. During 2024, the National Federation consulted with members to complete a wide range of submissions relating to human rights, housing, safeguarding, recruitment, policy, quality and standards, HSE structure, and organisational sustainability matters. Significant consultation and research was undertaken by the Secretariat team to represent the views of member organisations and relevant data in the submissions outlined below.

National Federation Submissions on behalf of member organisations 2024:

- Approved Housing Bodies Strategic Forum Stakeholder Consultation
- Inclusive Research Network Response to the Green Paper on Disability Reform
- Input to HIQA Corporate Plan 2025-2027
- International Recruitment of Health Personnel
- Letter to Joint Oireachtas Committee on the Voluntary Assisted Dying Bill 2024
- National Federation Feedback to the DCEDIY Draft Implementation Report on the Disability Action Plan
- Opening Statement to the Oireachtas Joint Committee on Disability Matters re. Day Services
- Submission to the Oireachtas Joint Committee on Planning for Inclusive Communities
- Submission identifying key risks to the delivery of frontline disability services
- Submission on draft National Standards for Home Support Services
- Review of the National Standards Authority of Ireland (NSAI) draft Technical Standard on Universal Design Dwellings: Requirements and Recommendations
- Submission on the UNCRPD Implementation Plan
- Submission to Liam Woods re. Health Regions April 2024
- Submission to the Department of Health Public Consultation on Policy Proposals on Adult Safeguarding in the Health and Social Care Sector
- Submission to the draft Autism Innovation Strategy
- Submission to the HSA Strategy 2025-2027
- Submission to the Review of Assessment and Allocation Guidelines
- Submission of data on RSSMAC challenges to HSE
- Sharing of paper on innovation and good practice examples with key stakeholders

Attendance at in-person consultations

Throughout 2024, the National Federation was represented at a number of in-person consultation sessions and events:

- **On April 25th**, Helena Connors represented the National Federation at a consultation on the development of the Education Policy for the National Gallery of Ireland.
- **On May 22nd**, ten representatives from the National Federation participated in a stakeholder engagement day on the *Action Plan for Disability Services 2024-2026* to support the planning for the implementation of the Disability Action Plan.
- **On May 27th**, three representatives from the National Federation's Data Protection Network attended an online workshop hosted by the Department of Health on the New Health Information Bill.
- **On May 13th and June 18th**, the Department of Public Expenditure and Reform (DPER) held two knowledge sharing symposia entitled *Disability Policy in Focus: Knowledge Sharing Symposia for Improved Policymaking and Outcomes*. This event was significant with the goal of strengthening coherence in disability policymaking to ensure more sustainable and effective policy solutions. The event was attended by officials from a number of government departments, including DPER and DCEDIY, as well as representatives from the voluntary sector and civil society organisations. Alison Harnett spoke as a panel member during the symposium's session on Applying Data and Evidence to Policy Making. The interactive events were attended by National Federation Board Members Una Nagle, Breda O'Neill, Fiona O'Neill and TJ Duggan.



- **On June 4th**, members were represented at the National Disability Strategy Consultation.
- **On June 18th and October 8th**, Helena Connors shared the perspective of intellectual disability providers on behalf of the National Federation at Commission on Care for Older People Reference Group meetings.
- **On July 18th**, 11 delegates from across the membership participated on behalf of the National Federation Members at the DCEDIY Pre-Budget Estimates Event.
- **On September 5th**, Alison Harnett represented the National Federation at the HSE Conference on Integrated Healthcare: Advancing Health Service Reform.
- **On October 18th**, over 130 delegates at IDEAS 2024 attended a focus group meeting of the Reference Group of the Commission for the Care of Older People.



Position Papers

In 2024, the National Federation collated data from providers and to drafted three key position papers on issues of critical importance to members:

- Review of Integrated Services Paper
- Briefing on Housing for People with an Intellectual Disability
- Position Paper on Unfunded Services and Supports

2.2. Support Implementation of the UNCRPD

The commitment of National Federation members to supporting people with intellectual disabilities and autism is deeply rooted in the implementation of the United Nations Convention on the Rights of Persons with Disabilities (UNCRPD). Over 2024, we continued our efforts to promote the principles of the UNCRPD, advocating for the rights of individuals with disabilities. Our initiatives spanned a wide range of activities designed to eliminate barriers, enhance accessibility, and promote equal opportunities for people with intellectual disabilities and autism. The National Federation has also taken specific steps to ensure we enable the voices of people with lived experience to inform our work in accordance with the UNCRPD. This section highlights key achievements from 2024 and ongoing projects dedicated to advancing these rights. As mentioned in the introduction to our 2024 priorities, whilst reported on specifically in this section - support of the implementation of the UNCRPD underpins our efforts in all priority areas.

Inclusive Research Network



As part of our ongoing commitment to supporting the views and voices of people with intellectual disability, the National Federation continued to support the work of the Inclusive Research Network (IRN). Secretary of the IRN, Brian Donohoe, provides a report below of the extensive work of the Network that took place during the year.



Brian Donohoe,
IRN Secretary

Support to Make Decisions Project

The Inclusive Research Network had another busy year in 2024. We continued to work on our current project Support to Make Decisions.

In February, we talked about how we would tell potential participants about the study. IRN Secretary Brian Donohoe and IRN steering group member Pauline Skehan made a video explaining the study and how to get involved.

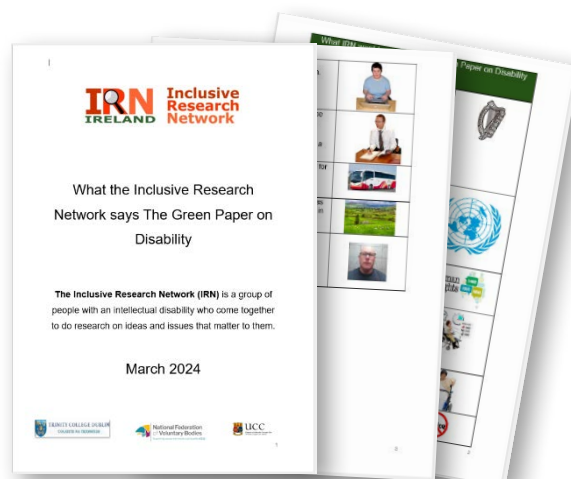


In April we started the first pilot interviews for the *Support to make decisions* Study. These interviews were to see how it felt to ask the questions and to make changes if the questions did not fit.

The first interviews for the *Support to Make Decisions* Project took place in July with IRN secretary Brian Donohoe doing two interviews out of a total of 17 interviews done during 2024.

Green Paper on Disability Reform

In March, the IRN worked on a submission on the Green Paper on Disability Reform that had been prepared by the Department of Social Protection. Our Submission stated that the Green Paper went against the Assisted Decision Making Capacity Act and the UNCRPD. The Green Paper had planned to have 3 tiers of Disabled people Getting Different amounts of Disability allowance. At the time that the IRN made it's submission the Government decided not to go forward with the Green Paper.



Martin Dooher Award

IRN Member Ger Minogue was awarded the Martin Dooher Inclusive Research Network Award. When originally designing this award the IRN Members talked about the qualities Martin brought to the IRN - dedication, confidence, organised, funny and a great advocate. Members said the person receiving the award should have some of these qualities. The IRN Members can nominate another member for the award and then the Group elects a winner.



Martin Dooher, James Delaney, Ger Minogue, Brian Donohoe

Oireachtas Committee on Disability Matters

In June, IRN Secretary Brian Donohoe sent copies of both **Our Homes** and **Doctors & Us** IRN Reports to the Oireachtas Committee on Disability Matters following a request from the Chair Michael Moynihan TD. Brian received a letter of Acknowledgement from Michael Moynihan's Office.



National Federation Pre-Budget 2025 Campaign

The IRN wrote a submission paper for the National Federation Budget campaign to get the voice of people with disabilities included. The title of the paper was **What the Inclusive Research Network Says to the Government on Budget 2025**.

Meeting with Minister Anne Rabbitte

In July 2024, Anne Rabbitte Minister of State with responsibility for Disability visited the office of the National Federation. Brian Donohoe presented her with written copies of both IRN project reports **Our Homes** and **Doctors & Us**.



Brian Donohoe IRN Secretary, Minister Anne Rabbitte

IASSID Conference Chicago

In July 2024 IRN Academic Supporter Nicola Maxwell from UCC gave a presentation to IASSID conference in Chicago on IRN Research Project Support to Make Decisions. Nicola showed the video explaining the study that was made by Brian & Pauline. People attending the conference were very interested in the video.



International Association for
the Scientific Study of Intellectual
and Developmental Disabilities

Representation on external committees

In addition to his work with the IRN, Brian Donohoe was also involved in a number of key strategic groups to represent the National Federation's position that the implementation of the UNCRPD is essential across all areas of work.

Thematic Housing Group 5

In May 2024, Brian Donohoe joined the **National Housing Strategy for Disabled People's Thematic Group 5**. This group was brought together to consider Action 5.3.1 from the Strategy's Implementation Plan to '*Design and deliver training sessions for stakeholders around all roles and responsibilities, creating a shared understanding of the role and responsibilities of each department and stakeholder*'. The work of this group will guide the Housing Agency's development and delivery of training in this area.

NDA Research Ethics Committee

In 2024 Brian Donohoe also was part of the NDA Research Ethics Committee for the Research Project **The Journey from Wardship to Supported Decision Making**. This project was set up to look at how people with Disabilities who have been Wards of Court are discharged from Wardship under the Assisted Decision Making Capacity Act.

Rights-based Innovation Projects in the National Federation

Oral Health – Keep my Teeth Project

Research shows people with disabilities have significantly poorer oral health outcomes than the general population in Ireland, resulting in substantial health inequality. The Irish National Oral Health Policy, *Smile agus Slainte* (2019), prioritises the need for preventive oral care among people with disabilities. The HSE has provided funding to the National Federation in partnership with the Dublin Dental University Hospital to undertake a project aimed at improving oral health for people with intellectual disabilities and autism, called Keep My Teeth (KMT).

KMT was in development throughout 2024. It is designed to be a disability service-led intervention, aligned with cutting edge research to address oral health inequalities and improve the oral health for people with disabilities in Ireland. The project aims to take effective actions that support individuals with intellectual disability and autism in maintaining and improving their oral health, through training, evidence-informed project interventions and support for people using services, frontline staff and family members. In 2024, Helena Connors, continued as the National Federation representative on the HSE National Oral Health Office's Steering Group of the *Supporting Smiles - National Guideline on Oral Healthcare* in order to ensure alignment between the two projects. A public consultation on *Supporting Smiles - National Guideline on Oral Healthcare* will take place in early 2025.

Building on the work undertaken by disability service and dental professionals in recent years, 2024 saw the completion of the co-design process of the development of Mouthcare Plans, which are freely available for use on the www.brushmyteeth.ie website. We congratulate all involved for winning the 2024 June Nunn Award for "Co-Designing Mouthcare Plans – Nothing About Us Without Us". The €500 prize was graciously donated to the Keep My Teeth project by the team.



Katrina Byrne, Dr Caoimhin Mac Giolla Phadraig, Ceara Cleary, Sviatlana Anishchuk, and Louise O' Leary

Addressing Age-Related Complexity in Intellectual Disability (AARC-ID): an economic analysis of available support models

A joint research project led by the Trinity Centre for Ageing and Intellectual Disability and the National Federation, *Addressing Age-Related Complexity in Intellectual Disability (AARC-ID): an economic analysis of available support models* formally began in May 2024. Dr Martin McMahon is the Principal Investigator and Dr Ashleigh Gorman is the Research Fellow. The National Federation are co-funding and working collaboratively on this project, to respond to the need to gather economic evidence on the needs, resources and outcomes associated with supporting people aged over forty with intellectual disability and to gather evidence on which support model offers the best personal outcomes for people as they age.

Coming soon in 2025....

Keep my Teeth- Pilot Phase:

Work on the Keep My Teeth project will continue in 2025 with a pilot phase of implementation of training and intervention, and partnership working with people with lived experience of disability to be leaders in championing good oral healthcare amongst their peers.

Next Steps - Bridge to Community:

Throughout 2024, there was significant engagement between HSE and National Federation to reflect on our joint responsibilities under UNCRPD; resulting in the establishment of a new initiative - Next Steps – Bridge to Community, which builds on the previous community of practice that was in place from 2011 to 2019. The initiative will support and facilitate practical shared-learning and innovation that reflects and responds to current context in terms of policy, legislation and operational context, and will report on levers that need to be actioned to open up pathways to planned rights-based supports. The objectives of the work are to establish and facilitate a community of practice and shared learning across intellectual disability services; and to foster and promote leadership in the full inclusion of people with intellectual disabilities and autism as equal and valued citizens, through the continued progression of rights-based supports. In 2025, the project will commence with the hiring of two new staff members to support the project.



Next Steps, The Journey So Far Report, 2015

Self-Advocacy Network

At the General Assembly meeting held on 4th December 2024, members were invited to provide the contact details of the individual responsible for advocacy within their organisation. These details will be used to create a dedicated mailing list called National Federation Self Advocacy Network. The purpose of which is to ensure that the voice of people supported is represented in discussions with relevant stakeholders. A Self Advocacy Network Group will be established in 2025.

AARC-ID

Work will continue on the quantitative research to research the cost of changing needs of older adults. Qualitative research will commence in 2025 by capturing the perspectives of older people with intellectual disability, their families and health and social care workers.

2.3. Strategic Relationships with Key Stakeholders

Strategic relationship building with key stakeholders has consistently been a core focus of the National Federation's work. In 2024, this focus proved especially impactful. Building on the foundations laid in 2023, particularly following the transfer of functions to the Department of Children, Equality, Disability, Integration and Youth, the National Federation deepened its engagement with key stakeholders, including officials in the Department and in state agencies, such as the HSE, National Disability Authority, Irish Council for Social Housing, and partner umbrella bodies across the community and voluntary sector. These strengthened relationships enabled the Federation to participate in several significant operational and strategic engagements throughout the year.

Meetings with key stakeholders

Meetings with stakeholders have been documented throughout this annual report, reflecting our ongoing efforts in representing members through in-person consultations, meetings with state agencies and regulators, interactions with elected representatives and government officials, and the activities of our operational groups and networks.

For instance, as documented in the section on driving the mission of the Federation, a number of senior officials in the HSE and Department attended NRVSP General Assemblies in 2024:

- **Bernard Gloster**, HSE Chief Executive Officer
- **Colm O'Conaill** Assistant Secretary General Disability Division Department of Children, Equality, Disability, Integration and Youth (DCEDIY), **Margot Loughman** Principal Officer Disability Finance and Reform Unit DCEDIY, **Eithne Fitzgerald**, Disability Advisor DCEDIY,
- **Stephen Mulvany**, HSE CFO, **Gerry Tully** HSE Assistant National Director – Children's Disability Services, **Ivan McConkey** HSE Assistant National Director - National integrated Staff Records and Pay Programme (NiSRP), **Mike Corbett**, Assistant National Director, Access and Integration

These engagements provided members with the opportunity to present some of the key challenges facing the sector, hear directly from the presenters on their vision for disability services moving forward, and engage directly with the speakers through Q&A sessions.

Representation in National Forums

In 2024, the National Federation had regular engagement with DCEDIY officials through the participation in the **Disability Strategic Stakeholders Group** which is attended by key officials in the department and representatives from umbrella bodies and civil society organisations. The National Federation is represented by its CEO Alison Harnett at this group.

The National Federation was also engaged in supporting members in meeting the requirements of the Health Care Act 2007 and HIQA regulations through its representations at the **HIQA Providers Forum** meetings with Jillian Sexton and Carol O'Donnell, Chairperson, Quality & Standards Sub-Committee attending on behalf of members.

In 2024, the National Federation participated in the **Health Dialogue Forum** which was set up following the Catherine Day Report to facilitate coordination between relevant Government Departments, the HSE, HIQA, and the voluntary sector.

As part of this work on the Health Dialogue Forum, the National Federation is also represented on the **Coalition of Voluntary Representative Bodies (CVORB)**. This stakeholders group is comprised of representatives from national representative groups, voluntary service providers, hospitals, hospices, home care, mental health, and charity and community sector. It's purpose is to discuss issues of significance across the voluntary sector and jointly advocate where necessary. The National Federation is represented on this group by Alison Harnett and Michael Hennessy NRVSP Chairperson.

Representation on Sectoral Working Groups

The National Federation is represented on a wide range of sectoral working Groups. In some cases Federation members provide nominees to represent the wider membership, and in other cases, Secretariat staff take up these roles. The wide range of Working Groups and Forums on which the National Federation was represented in 2024 is outlined below. In 2024, the National Federation along with other voluntary sector organisation's assisted in the mapping of these working groups for the HSE:

Governmental Groups

- DCEDIY Disability Consultative Committee
- Department of Health Disability Consultative Committee
- DCEDIY Disability Strategic Stakeholders Group

Children and Young People Services

- CDNT Information Management System Working Group
- CDNT Task Group
- National Child Disability Management Information System Implementation Group
- National Children's Oversight Group

Safeguarding:

- HSE / Disability Umbrella Groups Safeguarding Reference Committee
- National Safeguarding Advisory Committee

HR & Finance

- Health Care Assistant Workstreams – Role & Function / Training & Development
- Integrated Financial Monitoring System and National Integrated Staff Records and Pay Programme
- Out of Hours Working Group

Quality and Standards:

- HIQA Provider's Forum
- HSE's Expert Advisory Group (EAG) on Promoting Healthy Relationships and Sexuality for Disabled People
- HSE Children First Reference Group
- HSE Disability Quality Improvement Forum
- HSE Home sharing Implementation Group
- HSE National Quality Improvement Team for Disabilities
- EAG to Develop a Compatibility Risk Assessment (CRA) for Residential Disability Services
- HSE National Clinical Programme for People with Disability (NCPDP) Disability Advisory Group
 - Children's Subgroup
 - Adults Subgroup
 - Older person's Subgroup
- HSE ADMA Disability Reference Group

National Groups

- HSE Patient Engagement Forum
- Health Dialogue Forum
- Joint Information and Consultation Forum
- National Joint Council
- Oireachtas Disability Group
- Coalition of Voluntary Representative Bodies

Adult Services:

- HSE Under-65's Stakeholder Reference Group
- National Day Services MDT Review Group
- School Leavers National Working Group
- New Directions Implementation Group
- Project Oversight Group for development of IT system for the Children's Disability Network Teams
- Outcome focussed monitoring for Interim Standards for New Directors Steering Group
 - Day Services – Voices Together Subgroup
 - Outcomes-focused Monitoring Subgroup

Housing:

- National Implementation Steering Group for the National Housing Strategy for Disabled People 2022 – 2027
- NSAI Technical Committee 'Universal Design Standards' Consultative Committee

Other:

- HSE National Umbrella Bodies Covid-19 Operations Group
- National Council for Special Education Forum
- NASS Steering Group
- HSE Climate Action and Sustainability Procurement Working Group
- Commission on Care for older People Reference Group
- National Oral Health Office Supporting Smiles Steering Group
- NDA The Journey from Wardship to Supported Decision Making Research Project
 - Research Advisory Group
 - Research Ethics Committee

2.4. Sustainability of rights-based quality services

The sustainability of service providers was a central concern for members throughout 2024 and was raised across engagements and consultations. Members consistently highlighted the strain on resources, staffing, and infrastructure that many organisations are facing, particularly in the context of the impact that these challenges are having on people with intellectual disabilities and autism and their families. These challenges are impeding the capacity to develop new services and maintain existing supports at a time when unmet need continues to grow.

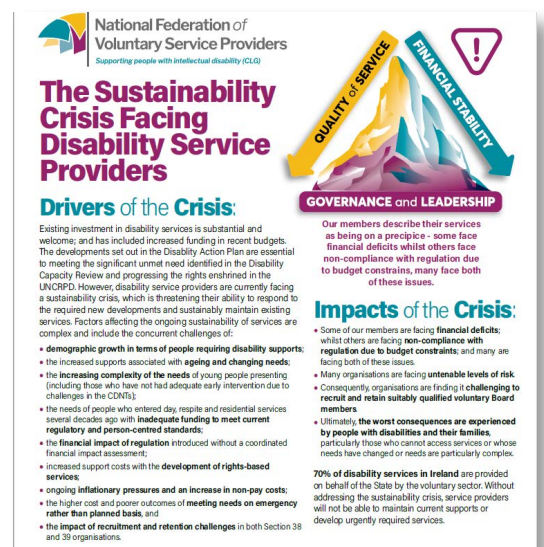
In this section, we set out a number of specific actions that were pursued by the National Federation in 2024 to respond to this sustainability crisis. While these examples reflect targeted efforts, it is important to note that the sustainability of service providers was a core message in most policy discussions, public engagements, and representations to government and other stakeholders.

Data Collection

At the General Assembly in March 2024, the National Federation held a workshop with members to ascertain the key pieces of information that would be vital to evidence the pressing threats to sustainability members had been consistently communicating to the Federation.

The information gathered was featured prominently in the Federation's Pre-Budget 2025 Messages. The Pre-Budget Submission identified the drivers and impacts of the crisis, with members facing a precipice between financial deficits on the one hand, and non-compliance with regulation and impediments to growing necessary supports on the other. The advocacy undertaken to ensure these messages reached key politicians and officials is documented under the section on political engagement.

The National Federation held a workshop of members in September 2024 regarding Election messages, and sustainability was again identified as a key issue, and therefore formed a key part of the National Federation's Election Manifesto and Election canvass cards (further details provided in section 8: Political Engagement).



Specific engagements on sustainability

During 2024, formal communications were made by the National Federation to key HSE and Governmental officials, including the HSE CEO and Assistant Secretary General in DCEDIY outlining the severe and critical challenges facing member organisations.

On 17th October 2024, a joint letter signed by representatives from across the civil and voluntary sectors was sent to An Taoiseach Simon Harris, highlighting issues with the sustainability of the service delivery model and requesting the opportunity to progress the discussion on implementing a sustainable funding model for the sector. This communication was supported by the following organisations in addition to the NFVSP: the Coalition of Túsla Funded Organisations, the Disability Federation of Ireland, the Dublin Homeless Network, Family Resource Centres National Forum, Mental Health Reform, the National Community Care Network, the National Voluntary Drug and Alcohol Sector, Simon Communities of Ireland, and The Wheel.

On 18th December 2024, a meeting was held between National Federation representatives Alison Harnett and Michael Hennessy (Chairperson), with senior officials from the Department (DCEDIY) including Colm O'Conaill Assistant Secretary General to discuss critical sustainability issues facing the sector.

Risk Register

In Autumn 2024, a detailed survey was issued to define and evidence the specific drivers of the sustainability crisis. Using information gathered during online meetings, email submissions, and survey returns, the National Federation produced a risk register of the key risks facing the Sector. This risk register was shared with Assistant National Directors in the HSE, and senior officials in DCEDIY and follow up meetings were held with these stakeholders to discuss the contents of the risk register.

The work documented above supported the provision of supplementary funding in 2024. Work towards ensuring a long-term solution to the sustainability crisis remains an urgent priority in 2025.

2.5. Supporting members in operational matters and compliance obligations

This chapter of the annual report presents an overview of the work carried out by the National Federation's operational groups and networks which function under the oversight of the Board and are primarily comprised of staff members from member organisations. Guided by the overarching priorities set by the Board, these groups play a critical role in delivering outcomes that support the goals and purpose of the National Federation. Throughout 2024, these operational groups have contributed across a wide spectrum of activity. They meet the dual objectives of supporting members in operational matters and compliance obligations and collectively responding to the designated priority areas defined by the Board of the National Federation. This reflects both the breadth of their remit and the dynamic nature of the landscape in which they work. The pages that follow highlight the key initiatives, collaborative efforts, and progress achieved by these groups, showcasing their commitment to providing peer support, facilitating shared learning, and responding to the evolving needs of members and stakeholders.

We would like to sincerely thank all of the Chairpersons and members of these Groups for their time, dedication, and continued commitment.

2.5.a Quality and Standards

The National Federation of Voluntary Service Providers is committed to continuous quality improvement in services, supporting the NFVSP's vision of people with disabilities 'being supported to live a life on one's own terms' and implementation of the UNCRPD. The National Federation's Quality & Standards Group continued to be a very active forum for members with five committee meetings taking place during 2024. The Group bid farewell to Elaine Teague, Director of Adult Services, St. Micheal's House who had served as Chairperson since November 2022 as she moved into her new role with the Disability Federation of Ireland, and welcomed Carol O'Donnell, CEO, Dara, as Chair in September 2024. The Quality & Standards Group oversees a broad programme of work with membership from 28 organisations and provides a forum to drive quality improvement in service provision aimed at enhancing the quality of life of people supported. The following summary highlights some of the key work activities of the Group during 2024:



Carol O'Donnell, Chair of the NFVSP Quality and Standards Group

Health Information & Quality Authority:

The National Federation continued to engage actively with HIQA throughout 2024, in its role as the independent Authority established to drive continuous improvement in Ireland's health and personal social care services, monitor the safety and quality of these services and promote person-centred care for the benefit of the public. Elements of this work included:

- **HIQA Provider Forum:** The Provider Forum was established to enable communication between HIQA and representative organisations of service providers and it facilitates discussion on issues pertaining to the regulatory framework for services for people with disabilities. The Forum meets on a bi-monthly basis and enables the effective sharing of information, relating to the regulation of the sector with providers, by the Chief Inspector e.g. themes arising from inspection, updates to HIQA guidance, policy direction and the registration programme for residential services for children and adults with disabilities. The regular meetings of the Forum provide an opportunity for Federation members to discuss issues impacting on the quality of life and safety of residents in services nationally with the Office of the Chief Inspector.
- **Governance Event:** HIQA hosted a 'Disability Services Provider Engagement Seminar' on 26th March 2024 attended by board directors, CEOs and executive management members of disability services. The event explored the importance and value of the relationship between boards and executive management teams and provided a forum for debate and discussion of the shared challenges facing the sector. The promotion of organisational leadership and strong governance is a key priority for HIQA in enhancing quality service provision.
- **Fire Safety:** Fire Safety continues to be of major concern to National Federation members and in May 2024 members of the Federations Fire Safety Working Group met with personnel from the Dept. of Children, Equality, Disability, Integration and Youth (DCEDIY) to inform their understanding of the challenges facing organisations and the costs arising from meeting regulatory requirements.
- **HIQA Corporate Plan 2025-2027:** In September 2024 a submission was made on behalf of National Federation members to HIQA's Corporate Plan 2025-2027. The submission sought to highlight members priorities for the coming years and the issues which it was felt that HIQA needs to address in achieving these priorities.
- **Draft National Standards for Home Support Services:** During autumn 2024 HIQA facilitated a public consultation on the 'Draft National Standards for Home Support Services' and following consultation with members the National Federation made a submission on the draft standards in December 2024.
- **Regulatory Reform Project Update:** Work continued on the 'Regulatory Reform Project' throughout 2024 with a briefing taking place on 27th June at which the main findings / recommendations arising from the project were presented. Work on this Project will conclude in 2025.
- **10 Year Report Launch:** In November 2024 an event was hosted by HIQA to mark the 10th anniversary of the introduction of regulation within disability residential services. In highlighting their experience over the period 2013-2023, HIQA noted that the report *"...sets out the impact of regulation over that time frame, detailing our key findings and learnings in the key areas of governance and management, a human rights-based approach to care, restrictive practices, safeguarding and protection, and general welfare and development, as well as reflecting on current and future challenges for the sector. sought to outline the learnings, progress achieved and reflect on the current and future challenges facing the disability sector."*

HSE Quality Improvement Team:

Marie Kehoe-O'Sullivan, National Disability Specialist, HSE, joined the Quality & Standards Group at its meeting on March 14th and outlined the HSE Quality Improvement Team workplan for 2024. Given the shared aims of the National Federation and the HSE disability team, there were many areas of work which National Federation representatives supported during the year including the Guiding Principle Working Groups which focused on Monitoring & Documentation of Nutrition, and the Expert Advisory Group (EAG) on Promoting Healthy Relationships and Sexuality for Disabled People and Records Management.

Home Sharing Nominee:

Audrey O'Reilly, TURAS Family & Community Services Team Leader, Brothers of Charity Services Ireland, is the National Federation's representative on the HSE National Home Sharing Working Group. The purpose of the Working Group being to update the 'Home Sharing in Intellectual Disability Services in Ireland' Report published by HSE in 2016. A presentation was made to the Quality & Standards Group on November 28th on the aims of the group and work underway.

PA Working Group:

Carol O'Donnell, Dara, is the NRVSP representative on the Personal Assistance (PA) Working Group which is working on developing a definition of PA services for inclusion into the new Home Support regulations.

Protection of Liberty Safeguards (PoLS):

During 2024, the Department of Health progressed its work on developing a system of Protection of Liberty Safeguards (PoLS), including legislative and procedural safeguards, to ensure that people who do not have decision-making capacity to consent to their care arrangements are not unlawfully deprived of their liberty. As part of this work the Department visited a number of residential centres for people with disabilities with the aim of informing their understanding of the spectrum of arrangements that are currently in place for people with disabilities, those that involve significant restrictions of liberty, and the current procedures and safeguards which are in place. Three site visits took place the Brothers of Charity Services, Southern area, COPE Foundation and St. Margaret's, which were followed by a briefing session with National Federation members on 4th September 2024. Work on the development of the PoLS will continue into 2025.

Front Line Managers Programme, University of Limerick:

A further cycle of the National Front-Line Managers Programme of the National Federation of Voluntary Service Providers commenced in early September 2024. This Certificate in Management Programme is a Level 6 Award on the National Framework of Qualifications (60 ECTS Credits) which upskills newly appointed managers and focuses on ensuring that service provision and supports are co-ordinated around the person supported in a holistic manner which reflects the unique requirements and needs of each person.



2.5.b Safeguarding

The National Federations Safeguarding Group aims to support member organisations in meeting their obligations in respect of the adult safeguarding and children's first policies and programmes of work. The work of this Group is vital in ensuring there is a positive safeguarding culture and practice in place across National Federation member organisations and a clear commitment to addressing all safeguarding related issues and concerns. The Federation Group is chaired by David Tuomey, Principal Social Worker, Western Care Association and 4 meetings of the Group were held in 2024. The National Federation's Safeguarding Group continued its active programme of work during 2024 and key elements of the Group's work plan included the following:



HSE Safeguarding Reference Group:

The National Federation is an active member of the joint HSE and Disability Umbrella Groups Safeguarding Reference Group which aims to foster interagency collaboration and communication between the HSE National Safeguarding Office (NSO) and Service Providers and to provide leadership and direction in safeguarding adults and promoting people's rights. The Safeguarding Reference Group met on a bi-monthly basis during 2024 and the following were key areas of work:

- Safeguarding Tool / Self-Audit Checklist Webinar – February 8th, 2024
- NSO & Disability Services - Cyber Safety Webinar - April 17th, 2024
- Safeguarding ICT Portal – Autumn 2024: The introduction of the new HSE Adult Safeguarding Portal, which will replace the existing notification submission system, formed a major focus of the National Federations programme of work in Q4 2024. Work on the implementation of the Portal will continue into 2025.

Engagement with HSE Chief Social Worker:

Meetings took place with the HSE Chief Social Worker, Amanda Casey, during autumn 2024 to introduce Amanda to the National Federation and its membership. Issues relating to the introduction of the new safeguarding portal; the resourcing of safeguarding within the sector; and policy and legislative developments were discussed.

Department of Health public consultation on Policy Proposals on Adult Safeguarding in the Health and Social Care Sector:

In February 2024 the Department of Health launched a public consultation on 'Policy Proposals on Adult Safeguarding in the Health and Social Care Sector.' Following consultation with its members the National Federation made a comprehensive submission to the Department in March 2024.

Safeguarding Ireland:

Safeguarding Ireland was established to promote the safeguarding of adults who may be vulnerable, and develop a national plan for supporting peoples welfare by facilitating inter-sectoral collaboration; developing public and professional awareness and education; and undertaking research to inform policy, practice and legislation – www.safeguardingireland.ie



During 2024 the National Federation continued to actively support the work of Safeguarding Ireland with the aim of collaborating on safeguarding issues as they relate to people with a disability. To mark National Adult Safeguarding Day which took place on 8th November, member organisations organised various events including a 'movie night' in which videos were co-hosted by people supported and a conference to promote human rights and safeguarding.

Research on Peer-to-Peer abuse: The National Federation also contributed to research being undertaken by HIQA on behalf of Safeguarding Ireland.

Children First:

During 2024 the National Federation continued to work closely with the HSE and the Children First National Office to support the children first related obligations of member organisations. Meetings were held with the HSE Children First Reference Group which focused:

- **Children First Training:** Sharing of children first training and resource materials which have been developed by the National Children First Office;
- **Mandated Persons Train the Trainer Programme:** Laura O'Neill, Stewarts Care, was the National Federation nominee on a Working Group established in 2024 to develop a Mandated Persons Train-the-trainer programme - the group sought to establish Federation members training needs and to ascertain the number of mandated persons requiring training.
- **Children First Public Awareness Week 2024:** A national 'Children First Public Awareness Campaign' took place from October 14th – 20th 2024. The campaign focused on a series of key messages to promote the child welfare. A suite of resources for staff and services were developed by the HSE National Children's First Office and circulated to National Federation members to raise awareness of the key messages.



2.5.c Human Resources

The National Federation's Human Resources Group had a very productive year under the stewardship of Chairperson Brian Leahy, Head of Human Resources, Brothers of Charity Services Ireland. The Group met on a quarterly basis during 2024 with high attendance at meetings drawn from across Federation member organisations. The focus of the work of the Group is to provide a forum for human resources personnel to meet, promote shared learning and support members in meeting organisations HR related obligations. The Group also facilitates continuing professional development (CPD) related training opportunities for HR personnel and to address industrial relations issues arising for members with the Health Sector Trade Unions via the work of the National Joint Council and specific HSE Working Groups.



Brian Leahy, Chair of the NFVSP Human Resources Group



Given the significant recruitment and retention challenges facing organisations this was a key focus of the human resources work throughout 2024. Staff working across National Federation member organisations are highly skilled with many holding health and social care professional qualifications and registered with CORU. The work of the Human Resources Group seeks to ensure that services have the necessary staff in place to support quality service provision and the best possible quality of life outcomes for people supported.

Key highlights from the Human Resources Programme of work during 2024 included:

International Recruitment:

In July 2024, a submission was made to the Department of Health regarding the recruitment of health personnel. The submission sought to outline how important international recruitment is within our sector, challenges regarding international recruitment and outlined the support needs / areas that need to be addressed in order to facilitate international recruitment.

Meeting with Anne Marie Hoey, HSE Chief People Officer:

On April 30th a delegation from the National Federation met with Anne Marie Hoey Chief People Officer HSE, and key staff from the HR directorate to discuss a range of human resources related matters of concern to Federation members. The meeting provided a useful opportunity to meet members of the HSE Senior HR Management Team and progress several work priorities. It is proposed that this will become a regular meeting with the HSE Chief People Officer.

HSE HR Event, October 2nd, 2024:

The hugely successful HSE National HR Summit 2024 took place on October 2nd which focused broadly on the theme of 'change and leadership'. National Federation members participated in the event at which a range of excellent presenters inspired attendees on how to 'lead our people effectively during times of change'.

Meeting with Mary Doran, Assistant National Director, National HR, Disability Workforce & Resourcing Lead, October 3rd, 2024:

Members of the National Federation secretariat met with newly appointed Assistant National Director, Disability Workforce and Resourcing Lead, Mary Doran HSE, in October 2024. The Federation very much welcomed Mary's appointment to this role which focuses on building and delivering a self-sufficient sustainable workforce for disability services. A key focus of Mary's work is to design, deliver and implement a workforce and resourcing strategy for disability services and to build and support sustainable talent pipelines. The National Federation is looking forward to working in partnership with the HSE to progress this work over the coming years.



Mary Doran HSE AND Disability Workforce and Resourcing Lead

Meeting with John Delamere and Anna Killilea from HSE National Employee Relations, 27th November 2024:

In response to a request from HR Group members for more information on engaging with public sector employment terms and conditions and trade unions, John Delamere HSE Assistant National Director - National Employee Relations - (Industrial and Employee Relations) and Anna Killilea Senior IR/HR Executive HSE National Employee Relations were invited to join the HR Meeting on November 27th, 2024.

John Delamere delivered a presentation on Industrial Relations in the Irish Healthcare Sector, which included sections on the role of the National Joint Council and the Joint Information & Consultation Forum, and practical advice on engaging with health sector trade unions. This presentation was then followed by a questions and answer session where members were invited to submit engage directly with Anna and John on topics of particular interest.



John Delamere HSE Assistant National Director - National Employee Relations, Brian Leahy HR Group Chairperson, Anna Killilea Senior IR/HR Executive, Jillian Sexton NFWSP Secretariat

Health Care Assistants:

In 2018, Government published a 'Health Care Assistant (HCA) Review' which examined a number of aspects of the role and recommended that workstreams be developed to consider specific areas related to the role of the HCA. This work was progressed during 2024 with the National Federation invited to nominate representatives to various workstreams; Training and Development: Opportunities to support HCA's in their work, Role and Function: Review of the role / job descriptions of HCAs in different sectors, and Data Collection: Gathering information on the QQI qualification held by existing HCA's. The National Federation will continue to support this work into 2025.

Apprenticeship in Social Work:

During 2024 the HSE and Tusla progressed work on the development of an apprenticeship programme for Social Workers with the aim of addressing the shortage of Social Workers in Ireland. The National Federation liaised with the HSE to establish how best it could support members to engage in this initiative and work will continue into 2025 when it is also proposed to explore options in relation to an apprenticeship programme for Social Care Workers.

National Joint Council

The NJC meets 4-5 times per year and is designed as a 'clearing house' for miscellaneous HR issues that arise within the health sector. Representatives of the HSE, HSE Section 38 Funded Agencies and the health service trade unions attend these meetings. The National Federation is represented on the NJC by Brian Leahy, Head of HR, Brothers of Charity Services Ireland and Olive Leonard, Director of HR, Muiriosa. Feedback is provided on the work of the NJC and the issues under discussion at the quarterly HR Group meetings.

Health & Safety Matters

In May 2024 the National Federation was invited to make a submission to the Health & Safety Authorities Strategic Plan 2025-2027. This provided a welcome opportunity to provide feedback on the primary areas of engagement identified by National Federation members with the HSA and the areas in which members would welcome additional support in meeting their health and safety obligations.

Dignity at Work Policy Training

During 2024, the Federation Secretariat arranged training sessions on the role of the 'Support Contact Person' and 'Nominated Persons' as outlined in the revised Dignity at Work policy. Sessions took place on May 30th and June 4th for relevant personnel, delivered by the Health Management Institute (HMI). Feedback from the event was very positive with 22 staff members from 14 organisations taking part.

On- Call Allowance Business Case:

The transition to community based, and in many cases individualised services, has increased the need for formal 'Out-of-Hours' arrangements within services. Currently, there is no approved pay scale or allowance to cover support provided. Following national discussions between Trade Union officials and employer representatives from the HSE and Section 38 service providers, facilitated by the Workplace Relations Commission, agreement was reached on a proposed rate and a business case was submitted to the Department of Health and subsequently the Dept of Children, Equality, Disability, Integration and Youth in 2024. The business case is currently being reviewed by both Departments and work will continue on this 2025 with the aim of securing a recognised allowance for the social care sector.

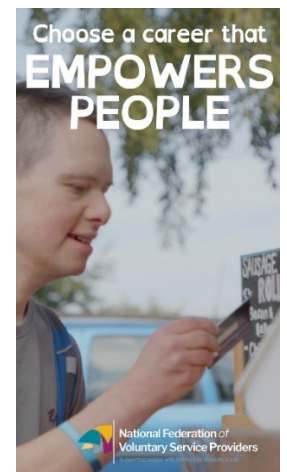
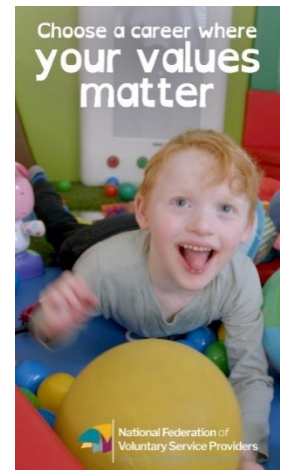
Under the auspices of the Human Resources Group, there are also a number of Task Groups in operation to deal with specific areas of interest for members:

Recruitment & Retention Task Group:

A key priority of the Board of the National Federation during 2024 was to support organisations in addressing the ongoing recruitment and retention challenges facing members. The Recruitment and Retention Task Group, chaired jointly by Lauri Cryan, LauraLynn and Michael Hegarty, St Joseph's Foundation, continued to meet during 2024 to progress the comprehensive programme of work initiated in 2023, in particular the development of materials to support a 'Recruitment Campaign' which was developed with Match Marketing.

Key highlights in the preparation for the recruitment campaign which will be launched in 2025, included the following:

- The development of two key tagline messages: "Choose a career that empowers people" and "Choose a career where your values matter"
- The development of a range of [recruitment campaign materials](#) with 6 videos / images being produced and adapted to suit the requirements of various social media platforms
- The development of a dedicated microsite as a subsection of the National Federation website – www.disabilityjobs.ie - which features an interactive map that prospective job applicants can click on to see what organisations operate in specific geographic regions and what job openings are currently available. This website will be launched in 2025.
- The provision of support to member organisations on how best to utilise the campaign materials. A survey was completed with members to gather information on their existing online presence and use of social media.
- Match Marketing facilitated an online event in Mid-November which aimed to provide members with a clear timeline of actions to be completed in preparation for the recruitment campaign launch.
- Match Marketing provided a follow-on input at the General Assembly meeting on December 4th, 2024, focusing on supporting members to build an online social media presence in advance of the launch of the recruitment campaign which was planned for Spring 2025.



Social Care Workers Task Group:

With the opening of the CORU Social Care Workers register in November 2023 supporting members in this work continued to be a priority during 2024. The Social Care Workers Task Group, chaired by Siobhan Power, HR Manager, St Catherines Association continued to support members. A briefing session was held on May 8th, led by Catherine Byrne, Head of Strategy and Policy, CORU who also responded to members' queries regarding the completion of the 'Employer Opinion of Competence' under Section 91 of the Health and Social Care Professionals Act, 2005.

On 20th November 2024 the Federation partnered with Christina Rafferty, Registration Manager, CORU, on a further webinar event which also included a presentation from personnel in Oberstown who were involved in supporting relevant staff to complete the registration process. 295 people registered for the event. The support provided by CORU to the National Federation has been significant and reflects the number of Social Care Workers employed across member organisations.



Health and Safety Group:

In early September 2024, a meeting was convened with Health and Safety personnel from across National Federation membership to gauge interest in establishing a dedicated group for professionals working in this area. There was considerable interest in this and preparation commenced on putting a structure in place to support this work.

S38 Pensions Working Group

The Section 38 Pension Working Group resumed meetings in the final quarter of 2024 with meetings in September and November. This Group provides a useful forum for pensions personnel to meet to address common issues arising, share information and arrange briefings as needed. Information on pensions training, family law and pension benefits was shared and a presentation took place with IPOptions on November 26th to demonstrate a Pension Management System which has been developed.

2.5.d Housing

The Housing Group is chaired by Michelle Thunder, St John of God Housing Association, and is convened on an ad hoc basis to respond to specific issues or emerging needs in the housing sector. Its flexible structure allows for timely and focused engagement on matters that require specialist input or coordinated action.

Key highlights from the Housing Group's programme of work in 2024 included:

Position Paper:

A key achievement in 2024 was the development and drafting of a comprehensive position paper, which set out the collective perspective of members on challenges relating to the operation of the Capital Assistance Scheme (CAS) funding model and proposed practical recommendations for addressing them. This document which was developed in collaboration with the Irish Council for Social Housing (ICSH) and Inclusion Ireland was utilised in many forums in 2024, including:

- The symposiums hosted by the Department of Public Expenditure and Reform (DPER) on disability policy in June 2024;
- Engagements at a range of political party conferences;
- The National Federation representatives on the Oireachtas Disability Group brought the contents of this paper to briefings in Leinster House for TDs and Senators in preparation for Budget 2025;
- This briefing paper was shared directly with a number of key stakeholders, including Minister for State Alan Dillion in the Department of Housing, Local Government and Heritage, officials in the Department of Housing, officials in the Department of Children, Equality, Disability, Integration and Youth, and officials in the Housing Agency.



Michelle Thunder,
Chair of the NFVSP
Housing Group

Submissions:

- The National Federation Housing Subcommittee made a submission to the Review of the *National Guidelines for the Assessment and Allocation Process for Social Housing Provision for People with a Disability* in March 2024.
- In early 2024, Brothers of Charity Services Ireland and St Joseph's Foundation took part in an Oireachtas Joint Committee on Disability Matters public meeting examining various aspects of communities and the supports required by persons with disabilities to live and participate in their communities. This led to the Joint Committee requesting a written submission from the National Federation of Voluntary Service Providers on this topic. The National Federation Housing Subcommittee led out on this piece of work, supporting members in gathering case studies and facilitating a workshop for members. The Joint Oireachtas Committee on Disability Matters report *Planning for inclusive communities for persons with disabilities* was published in October 2024.
- Members of the Housing Group also provided feedback which resulted in the National Federation's response to the Approved Housing Bodies (AHB) Strategic Forum Stakeholder Consultation in September 2024. The purpose of this consultation was to facilitate the AHB Sector to inform AHB Sector policy development under the Housing for All policy.
- Members of the Housing Group reviewed the final draft of The National Standards Authority of Ireland (NSAI) *Technical Standard on Universal Design (UD) Dwellings : Requirements and Recommendations*.

2.5e Assisted Decision Making

The National Federation's Assisted Decision-Making Group which is chaired by Teresa Mallon, St John of God, provides a forum for shared learning, problem-solving and coordination as members navigate the complexities of implementing this significant legislative reform. Throughout 2024, this Group met 6 times and pursued an ambitious programme of work.



Teresa Mallon, Chair of the NFVSP ADM Group

Key highlights from the Assisted Decision Making Group's programme of work in 2024 included:

First In-person Meeting:

On 2nd October 2024, the first in-person meeting of the National Federation's ADM Group was held in the National Federation's Office. This provided members of the Group with an excellent networking opportunity and the agenda for the meeting included presentations from Jacqueline Grogan, Norma O'Donnell, and Joanne Haffey from the HSE National Human Rights and Equality Office, and Patsy Fitzsimons, Head of Complaints and Investigations, Decision Support Service.



Shared online platform:

A Microsoft teams channel was developed for the ADM Group during 2024 and run as a pilot. This closed online space enabled the hosting of documents shared by the Group and a forum function for direct discussions between members.

Collaboration with other professional bodies and state agencies:

In 2024, a key focus was to strengthen relationships with professional bodies in order to share learning and resources. The ADM Group were delighted to welcome a new member who also sits on the Association of Occupational Therapists of Ireland (AOTI) ADM subgroup. Pre-existing members of the group are also members of the Irish Association of Speech and Language Therapists (IASLT).

The National Federation's ADM Group have several members who also sit on the HSE ADMA Disability Reference Group ensuring issues of key importance are referred for discussion and action. Collaborative working relationships were maintained with the DSS and the HSE National Office for Human Rights and Equality throughout the year.

Mentoring Programme:

Members of the National Federation's ADM Group and the broader membership participated in the HSE Mentoring Programme which was developed to support frontline staff in the practical implementation of the ADM.

Engagement with key stakeholders on financial barriers for people with intellectual disability and Autism:

Following on from a banking roundtable that was held in 2023, a subgroup was developed to examine *Guidance in relation to Finance and the ADM Act*. Teresa Mallon, Helena Connors, and Selina Doyle sit on this Group as National Federation representatives. The first meeting of this Group was held on 31st January 2024. The establishment of this Group was a reflection of the significant work and attention that the National Federation's ADM Group drew to financial challenges facing people supported.

Through the National Federation's ADM Group, financial case studies identifying key barriers for people with intellectual disabilities and autism in accessing their money and opening bank accounts were collected and referred to key stakeholders, including in the HSE National Office for Human Rights and Equality, the Decision Support Service and the Banking Payments Federation of Ireland. Helena Connors and Teresa Mallon also held a meeting with Patricia Richard Clarke from Safeguarding Ireland, James O'Gorman HSE Finance Manager, Jacqueline Grogan and Caoimhe Gleeson HSE Human Rights and Equality Office and Mary Donnelly, UCC to discuss financial rights of people with intellectual disability and autism.

Due to the ongoing challenges, work to support people with intellectual disability and autism to have access to their money will continue as an urgent priority into 2025.

Submissions:

Members of the ADM Group fed into the following consultations to ensure that newly developed documents and guidelines are rights compliant, and appropriately respect the will and preference of people supported:

- Submission on the Revision of the National Payments Strategy
- Response to the draft HSE Second-Hand Smoke Policy
- Submission to the Oireachtas Joint Committee Disability Matters on Planning for Inclusive Communities
- Information on Discharge from Wardship

Information sharing with the wider membership:

Information regarding ADM was shared with the wider membership throughout 2024. Some key pieces of information shared included:

- Information on assisted decision making research projects
- HSE Consent Policy
- Upcoming HSE Webinars
- Conferences, training and resources on the assisted decision making legislation
- HSE requests for data

2.5.f FOI and Data Protection Network

The Data Protection and Freedom of Information Networks merged at the start of 2024 into one network. Aine Forde, Aurora Kilkenny is Chair of this Network with Deborah Gleeson, Muiriosa Foundation acting as Vice Chair. The Network is made up of representatives from member organisations who work in the area of Data Protection and Freedom of Information.

The purpose of this Network is to support organisations in understanding and implementing the requirements of the Data Protection Act 2018, the General Data Protection Regulations (GDPR) and in understanding and implementing the requirements of the FOI Act. The Network acts as a source of information exchange and support in relation to Data Protection and FOI for its Members. The Network also convenes smaller Working Groups to manage specific, time-bound projects as required. It dealt with ad hoc queries and supported DP/FOI officers who often work in isolation. The National Federation is also represented on the Public Sector User Network (PSUN) by Deborah Gleeson, Muiriosa Foundation.

An online workshop was held on 24th January, 2024 with David Hackett and Niall O'Brien from Addleshaw Goddard Law firm. We had 56 people in attendance and the feedback from the workshop was very positive. The workshop covered a range of topics including:

- Controllers, Joint Controllers and Processors
- Data Processing Agreements
- Data Sharing Agreements
- Liability - How can it arise?
- Warranties and Indemnities
- Data Transfers
- Contracts / Execution / Who should sign?
- Security breaches

The presentation from the workshop was circulated to the attendees and this network for their information.

During 2024, the Data Protection & Freedom of Information Network met three times to review and discuss the following topics:

- Data Retention
- Subject Access Requests
- Legal Basis
- New Regulations & Statutes
- Case Law
- Data Protection Commission (DPC) / European Data Protection Board (EDPB) guidance updates
- Ad hoc communications between Data Protection and FOI Network members on specific issues or queries
- Where complex requests are received, it allows for confidential discussions on the processing of the request, including any exemptions that may be applied.

2.5g Day Service Representatives

The first meeting between the National Federation representatives on the HSE Day Service Working Groups took place on 18th January when it was agreed that further meetings were needed to facilitate networking and information sharing between the representatives on the following Groups:

- New Directions National Implementation Group - Trevor Jacob & David O'Byrne;
- School Leavers Working Group - Pat Reen & Julia Kelly;
- National Group for Addressing MDT needs - Marina Moore & TJ Duggan.
- New Directions Interim Standards Monitoring System Steering Group – Eoin Mooney
 - Development of an Outcomes Focus for the Monitoring System Subgroup - Sheila Buckley Byrne and Teresa Mallon;
 - Day Services, Voices Together Subgroup – Helena Connors & Ann Mahon.



Ann Mahon NFVSP Voices Together Representative

This Group was brought together in 2024 to facilitate communication sharing across day services and to ensure cohesive representation across all of the HSE Groups. This Group also serves as a forum for discussion when feedback is requested on specific issues. A key action of this Group in 2024 occurred on 8th May 2024 with a meeting between Aoife O'Toole, New Directions HSE Lead and representatives from the New Directions Groups was an opportunity for the National Federation and HSE to work together with the common goal of supporting people who use day services to have the best outcomes and ensure their rights and needs are met.

Update on the Outcomes-focused Monitoring System for the New Directions Interim Standards

Work on developing an outcomes-focused monitoring system continued throughout 2024. Two subgroups were established under the Interim Standards Steering Group. The National Federation is represented on the Steering Group and both subgroups groups:

- **The Day Services – Voices Together Subgroup** is tasked with ensuring that individuals who attend adult day services are included in the design process. Ann Mahon, a self-advocate from Galway is one of the National Federation representatives on this group.
- **An Outcomes-focused Monitoring Subgroup** is tasked with developing the relevant frameworks and guidance etc., to underpin the monitoring system. There are two National Federation representatives on this group.

A national consultation was completed from June to September 2024. A trial began in 2024 to test and evaluate the monitoring system across a broad range of day service locations and will continue throughout 2025.

2.6. Accountability and autonomy

The National Federation undertook significant work in 2024 to proactively support and advocate for the development and implementation of an accountable autonomy model in the relationship between the State and non-for-profit disability service providers. As covered under the section of this report covering Strategic Relationships with Key Stakeholders, we have documented the breath of groups the National Federation is represented on. Representations on these groups follow the accountable autonomy model. Below we have also detailed some specific aspects of this work undertaken in 2024.

Health Dialogue Forum – Service Arrangement Review

At a national level, the National Federation participates in the Health Dialogue Forum which was set up on foot of the Report of the Independent Review Group established to examine the role of voluntary organisations in publicly funded health and personal social services ('Catherine Day Report'). This Group was established to examine the role of voluntary organisations in publicly funded health and personal social services.

Under the auspices of this Group and using the Partnership Principles launched in 2023, a review of the Service Arrangement between the HSE and voluntary service providers is currently taking place. National Federation members were represented on the oversight group by Alison Harnett and on the Technical and Process Workstream by Clare Dempsey, NRVSP Chairperson. There were regular meetings throughout 2024, and National Federation members were invited to identify specific areas that should be reviewed in 2024. The work on the SA review will continue into 2025 with more extensive changes planned.

HSE Reform Process

Throughout 2024, the HSE undertook significant work in terms of transitioning to the new health regions structure under Sláintecare. The Health Regions will replace the role of Community Health Organisations (CHOs), with their aim being to plan, resource, and deliver health and social care services in each area based on local population needs. This process will bring significant change to how the voluntary sector engages with the HSE at a local and national level, and the National Federation has taken proactive steps to represent its members in this area.

During the General Assembly which Bernard Gloster attended on February 12th, members engaged on how disability will be represented in the new HSE regions and the importance of ensuring there is an integrated approach to service provision and continuity in relation to policy implementation and other functions currently held through the national offices.

A significant number of engagements were also held with Liam Woods, *HSE National Director of Health Regions Implementation* and his team to ensure members autonomy was preserved within the new structures while ensuring accountability was maintained:

- On **16th April**, the National Federation made a submission to Liam Woods with regards to the development of the new Health Regions and Integrated Health Areas, on the topic of how the voluntary providers will be engaged in the local structures that are being set up in each Regional Area.
- On **21st May**, a follow-up meeting was held with the team designing the system behind engaging voluntary providers in their local structures to further explore the feedback provided on.
- On **14th June**, a subsequent meeting with the wider voluntary sector then took place.
- On **21st June**, another meeting was held with Liam Woods regarding the IHA Forum.
- On **6th December**, Alison Harnett and Michael Hennessy met with Liam Woods and team again.

A number of key outcomes were achieved as a result of the engagements above. Firstly, disability will maintain a significant presence at central HSE leadership. Secondly, a unique local disability-specific leadership post will be established within each RHA. Thirdly, the IHA Forum will be maintained until the establishment of regional voluntary forums.

2.7. Shared Learning and responding to members queries and requests

Over 2024, the National Federation Secretariat remained dedicated to fostering a responsive, evidence-informed, and collaborative environment in support of its members. A central focus has been encouraging shared learning and ensuring timely, effective responses to member inquiries and requests. This commitment is evident in the wide range of communication channels we utilise and the variety of meeting formats we offer to engage with and support our membership.

Queries received via phone and email

Supporting our member organisations remains a core function of the National Federation Secretariat. Recognising the importance of accessibility and responsiveness, we have effectively managed a significant volume of enquiries through both phone and email this year. Our team has remained committed to delivering timely and accurate responses, addressing a wide spectrum of requests from members and key stakeholders.

Meetings

To promote shared learning and collaboration, the Secretariat convened a series of meetings throughout the year in a range of formats to meet the diverse needs of our members. In-person meetings offered valuable opportunities for direct engagement and networking, while fully virtual meetings ensured inclusive participation, regardless of members' locations.

Information and Communication Sessions

The sharing of information and facilitation of communications is a key role played by the National Federation. Some examples of meetings of the National Federation in 2024 that brought members together to share information and discussion:

18th January	National Federation Workshop on the development of the new National Disability Strategy
13th March	National Federation Workshop on Planning for Inclusive Communities
2nd May 2024	National Federation Workshop on the HSE Outcome Focused Monitoring for Interim Standards for New Directions Services and Supports for Adults with Disabilities
8th May	CORU Briefing for National Federation Members on the Registration of Social Care Workers
16th May	National Federation meeting to discuss data collection for use in upcoming political engagements
6th June	National Federation meeting to discuss Health Care Assistant and Care Assistant ID Data Collection
25th June	Online Data Sharing Session from the National Ability Supports System (NASS)
27th June	National Federation Workshop event on 'The need for Regulatory Reform'
4th September	Briefing Session with Department of Health on the development of protection of liberty safeguards
10th October	National Federation Workshop - Preparation for Participation in the Commission for Care For Older People Focus Group
18th November	National Federation Webinar on Using Social Media Effectively with Match Marketing
20th November	CORU Briefing Session for Service Managers (Social Care Managers / others) on completing Employer Opinion of Competence Forms
4th December	Workshop with Match Marketing to Support Members in the Upcoming 2025 Recruitment Campaign

Integrating Disability Evidence into Action for Supports and Services (IDEAS 2024) for Older People with an Intellectual Disability

Translating IDS-TILDA Knowledge into Policy and Practice.

Glenroyal Hotel, Maynooth, Co. Kildare

17th-18th October 2024

The Integrating Disability Evidence into Action for Supports and Services (IDEAS 2024) - Translating IDS-TILDA Knowledge into Policy and Practice Conference was designed and delivered in partnership with Trinity Centre for Ageing and Intellectual Disability & the HSE National Clinical Programme for People with Disabilities.

Responding to changing need as people age is a key priority of the Board of the National Federation, reflecting the importance of this topic in the delivery of services and supports. Through the Trinity Centre for Ageing and Intellectual Disability (TCAID), Ireland is in the unique position to be able to directly compare the ageing of people with intellectual disability with the general ageing population. The Intellectual Disability Supplement to the Irish Longitudinal Study on Ageing (IDS-TILDA) researches ageing in Ireland among people with an intellectual disability aged 40 and over. The availability of research and findings across five waves of the IDS-TILDA study and the focus on responding to the changing needs as people age within services led to the development of the first National Federation conference since before the pandemic.

IDEAS 2024 created an opportunity to gather together, consider the IDS-TILDA findings and what the data is telling us in terms of how we support people with intellectual disabilities to age well. It provided space to reflect on how to translate the findings of research into practice across the country. Within the National Federation shared learning is a powerful driver of innovation and responding to changing needs as people age is a challenge that requires an evidence-based proactive response that can build on the strength of good practice.



Mei Lin Yap TCAID's
Ambassador Liaison Officer

Day 1 kicked off with welcome addresses from Dr Harnett, National Federation CEO and Professor McCarron, Director TCAID. The Conference was then opened by Mei Lin Yap, TCAID's Ambassador Liaison Officer outlining the impact of IDS-TILDA Data on Service Delivery. Followed by Prof. Mary McCarron reflecting on the IDS-TILDA Journey so far and Mr. Phillip O'Donnell who took us through his experience as a participant in five waves of IDS-TILDA.

This was followed by a series of presentations and discussion groups focusing on key longitudinal findings from IDS-TILDA on a range of thematic areas and their translation to practice:

- Social inclusion and community participation
- Physical, psychological, cognitive, and behavioural health
- End-of-life care



"We stand at a pivotal moment in our field, where the intersection of ageing and intellectual disabilities presents both challenges and opportunities. Over the past 15 years, Ireland has led the way in understanding the ageing of people with intellectual disabilities. The findings from IDS-TILDA directly influence policy and services across sectors, but our real challenge is ensuring this research drives evidence-informed policy and practices that transforms lives. Our commitment, and today's discussions alongside key partners like the HSE and the National Federation of Voluntary Service Providers will be a crucial step in moving from evidence to action."

Professor Mary McCarron, Director of the Training Centre for Ageing & Intellectual Disability



Day 2 opened with key insights into family caregiving, drawing on data from the IDS-TILDA Carer's Study. Dr. Damien Brennan, Associate Professor and Subject Leader (Sociology), School of Nursing and Midwifery.

This was followed by a Focus Group meeting of the Reference Group of the Commission for the Care of Older People. The Focus Group meeting offered attendees a unique opportunity to have an input into the Commission's consultation process with key stakeholders, the findings of which will inform the Commission's deliberation on future care for older persons in Ireland. Catherine McGuigan, Chief Officer of Age Friendly Ireland, and Chairperson of the Reference Group facilitated the focus group and some commission members including the Chairperson Professor Alan Barrett and Prof Mary McCarron were in attendance. There was great engagement throughout from those present. The Report of the Focus Group is due for publication in the coming months.



Professor Alan Barrett Chairperson Commission on Care for Older People

"The hugely valuable research from IDS-TILDA has demonstrated that people with intellectual disability experience the effects of ageing at an earlier age than the general population and have many associated health and social support needs. It is essential that service providers who support people with intellectual disability, are empowered with evidence to support people to have the best possible outcomes and quality of life as they age, and to develop sustainable models of practice that acknowledge the challenges of the changing needs of older adults with intellectual disabilities. We are delighted to be partnering with Trinity Centre for Ageing and Intellectual Disability, and the HSE to create this important space to share and reflect on research findings and how these can influence and support practice now and into the future."



**National Federation
CEO Alison Harnett.**

Dr Alison Harnett, CEO National Federation of Voluntary Service Providers

2.8. Political Engagement to Support Service Providers and the Rights of People Supported

2024 was an exceptionally busy and impactful year for the National Federation's political advocacy, shaped by two major milestones: the Pre-Budget Campaign and the General Election. We adopted a strategic and evidence-based approach to our lobbying activities, which yielded strong results, particularly in the final stages of the election campaign, where disability issues gained unprecedented attention.

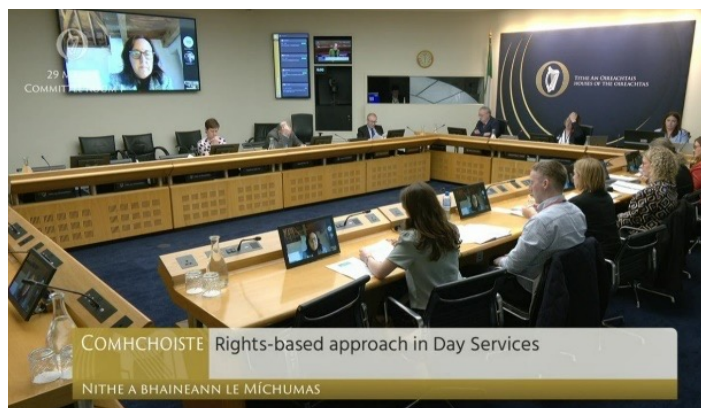
We worked closely with colleagues across the sector through the Oireachtas Disability Group, while also pursuing our own targeted advocacy. This included engagement with key government structures such as the Disability Matters Committee, as well as grassroots initiatives to equip people with disabilities and their families with relevant resources. In addition, traditional and digital media platforms were utilised to amplify the National Federation's messages.

Oireachtas Disability Matters Committee

On 29th May 2024, a substantial discussion regarding rights based approaches in Day Services was held. Representatives from the National Federation attended discussions, providing insights into the importance of providing services in accordance with the UNCRPD and highlighting the key sustainability issues affecting service providers.



Joe Meany, CEO Delta Services presenting at the Joint Oireachtas Disability Matters Committee as part of the National Federation Delegation



National Federation CEO Alison Harnett presenting at the Oireachtas Disability Matters Committee

Cabinet Committee on Children, Education and Disability

A Cabinet Committee on Children, Education and Disability met on 22nd April 2024 under Taoiseach Simon Harris. This committee was formed to oversee Programme for Government commitments in the relevant areas and specifically look at the new National Disability Strategy which will outline the implementation plan for rights under the UNCRPD. The establishment of this cabinet committee reflects the growing recognition of the need for impactful action from within the political system.

Budget 2025 Campaign

Pre-Budget 2025 Messages

To prepare messages for the National Federation’s Pre-Budget 2025 Submission, a workshop was held with members at the March General Assembly. Following this session, a Pre-Budget Messages 2025 Task Group was formed to draft and finalise the Pre-Budget Submission before sign off by the Board. These messages were based on the feedback gathered during the GA workshop, the response provided by people with lived experience through the IRN, and the input provided by members of the National Federation’s operational groups and networks. Our thanks go to Clare Dempsey St John of God, Francis Coughlan SOS Kilkenny, Michael Hegarty St Joseph’s Foundation, and Siobhan Byran Muiriosa Foundation for their participation on this Task Group.



The resulting document focused on two key messages:

- 1. **The level of unmet need for disability services**
- 2. **The sustainability crisis facing disability service providers**

Circulation of the document to key stakeholders

The Pre-Budget 2025 Submission was issued to relevant Ministers, politicians and stakeholders in the civil service and HSE in advance of Budget 2025. Examples of this work have been outlined below:

The Economic Dialogue forum is Ireland’s principle stakeholder forum for public consultation and discussion in preparation for the National Budget and is hosted by the Department of Finance and the Department of Public Expenditure, NDP Delivery & Reform. It brings together representatives from diverse areas such as Government, business, trade unions, and civil society to discuss what should be prioritised in the upcoming Budget. The National Federation was represented at this meeting by Alison Harnett and Claire Dempsey, Chairperson.



Elaine Teague DFI CEO, Alison Harnett NFVSP CEO, Emer Begley DFI Director of Advocacy



An online meeting was held on July 30th with Deputy Mary Lou MacDonald and Deputy Pauline Tully to discuss the priorities for people with disabilities and service providers to people with disabilities in Ireland.

On 26th August the Pre-Budget Submission was shared with Minister O’Gorman - Children, Equality, Disability, Integration and Youth and Taoiseach Simon Harris by Liz Reynolds, Michael Hegarty and Alison Harnett during a roundtable discussion with key stakeholders on disability.



On August 7th, Minister of State with responsibility for Disability Anne Rabbitte attended a meeting with Alison Harnett, Fiona O’Neill, Sean Abbott and National Federation staff at the National Federation offices to discuss the key messages in Budget 2025.



Oireachtas Disability Group

In 2024, the National Federation continued its partnership with six umbrella bodies - Disability Federation of Ireland; Inclusion Ireland; Independent Living Movement Ireland; Mental Health Reform; and National Disability Services Association through the Oireachtas Disability Group (ODG). This Group, which is co-chaired by Alison Harnett, seeks to collaboratively engage with key stakeholders and advocate on behalf of people with disabilities, their families and service providers on matters of key importance relating to disability and supporting an equality agenda in line with the UN Convention on the Rights of Persons with Disabilities (UNCRPD).

A key highlight of the Groups work occurred on 20th June 2024 when the ODG hosted a pre-Budget 2025 Lobbying day in Leinster House. The ODG met with representatives from each political party to brief them on Budget Priorities from the Disability Sector. National Federation members were represented by CEO Alison Harnett and Megan Leahy Administrative Officer. Following the Lobbying Day in Leinster House, Sinn Fein entered a private members motion on 15th October 2024 on disability.



Following Budget 2025, the ODG sent a letter to Taoiseach Simon Harris welcoming Ireland's accession to the optional protocol to the UNCRPD which had been jointly called for since the ratification of the UNCRPD in March 2018. The letter also contained a joint response to Budget 2025 which highlighted that overall funding falls significantly below the requirements to address urgent and pressing needs. The letter called for the full implementation of existing plans and policies and a commitment to a coordinated cross-department strategy to implement UNCRPD rights.



Oireachtas Disability Group Representatives pictured with TDs and policy officers

General Election Campaign 2024

To ensure sufficient time for message development prior to an election being called, at the General Assembly on 25th September 2025, the National Federation held a workshop to develop the General Election Campaign Messages.

Based on the issues identified as important by our members and the people they support, the National Federation developed and distributed 35,000 printed canvass cards and conducted an online workshop for members on how to effectively use these resources. Members facilitated access to the cards for supported individuals, their families, and staff to use. Additionally, a comprehensive pre-election manifesto was created, tailored specifically for policy directors. A slide show presentation was also provided to support members during their meetings with candidates.



Utilising these resources, our members held meetings with candidates running for office. In many cases, people supported and their families also attended the meetings to share their lived experience of what is required over the term of the next Government.



Social media also proved to be integral to the campaign as disability issues garnered significant attention towards the end of the campaign. The National Federation also utilised traditional media with Alison Harnett NFBSP CEO speaking on Morning Ireland regarding key priorities for disability moving forward.



Political Engagement on the Programme for Government

Through the ODG, representatives from the National Federation attended political party conferences to advocate on joint priorities for disability and the importance of including key messages for disability in the next Programme for Government. Representatives from the National Federation attended the party conferences of Sinn Fein, Fine Gael, and the Green Party.



Alison Harnett NFVSP CEO pictured with Minister for Public Expenditure, National Development Plan Delivery and Reform Paschal Donohoe, Taoiseach Simon Harris, Minister for Environment, Climate and Communications and Green Party Leader Eamon Ryan, Sinn Fein Disability Spokesperson Deputy Pauline Tully, Minister for Children, Equality, Disability, Integration and Youth Roderic O'Gorman.



2.9. Pension Scheme Administration



National Federation Pension Scheme

The National Federation's Pension & Life Assurance Scheme is overseen by a set of Trustees, whose role it is to protect the interests of the members of the Pension Scheme and ensure it is operated to the highest standard. In 2024, the Pension Scheme Trustees were:

- James Skehan (Professional Trustee and Interim Chairman)
- John McHugo
- Pauline Brennan
- Francis Coughlan
- Deirdre Herlihy

Overview of size of pension scheme

The National Federation of Voluntary Service Providers Pension & Life Assurance Scheme has grown significantly since its establishment in 1996. As of 31st December, 2024, there were:

- 24 employers participating in the Scheme.
- 9,139 members (comprising 5,812 active members and 3,327 deferred members).
- Approximately €395 million in funds under management, with 98% invested in the Scheme's default investment strategy i.e., EMPOWER Personal Lifestyle Strategy (PLS)
- Monthly contributions amounted to approx. €2.5m.

Scheme engagement with employers and members

A workplan was developed between the Trustees and Irish Life in 2024 which aimed at increasing pension awareness and information for members of the Scheme. This was achieved in a number of ways including:

- The Pensions Tab on www.fedvol.ie was continuously updated and additional new pension material uploaded. Members now have access to a full suite of Pension Scheme information available on the website, including Pension Booklets and forms; FAQs document; Videos; Webinar Recordings; Newsletters; Investment updates; Trustees Annual Report & Financial Statements.
- Annual Pension Benefit Statements were issued to member's home address, which provided members with details in respect of their pension contributions paid; outlined the investment fund(s), and its value, the member is invested in; provided the member with an estimate of the likely benefits that will emerge in respect of the member at their Normal Retirement Date i.e., their 65th birthday.
- Online Member Portal – members no longer have to wait for their annual Pension Benefit Statement to know the value of their pension fund, they can now check their fund value at any time via their Member Portal. Further details on the Member Portal, including 2 videos on (a) how to register for the portal and (b) how to use the online member portal, are available to watch on www.fedvol.ie (click on pensions tab).
- In 2024, 5 online group presentations were held for members of the National Federation's Pension Scheme which took place in April and December 2024.



April's webinar looked at the ***"Importance of Pension Saving"*** which addressed the following topics:

- Why it's important to save for your retirement.
- Pension Contributions and Additional Voluntary Contributions (AVCs).
- The Personal Lifestyle Strategy and understanding all your investment options.
- Outline of how members can review their pension fund online via the Irish Life Member Portal.

December's webinar looked at ***"Essential Guide to Retirement"*** which addressed the following topics members need to consider as part of their countdown to retirement, including:

- Options at retirement (including case studies).
- Things to consider today.
- The retirement process.
- Ongoing support and one-to-one meeting opportunities.

A recording of the above webinars are available for replay on www.fedvol.ie (click on pensions tab).

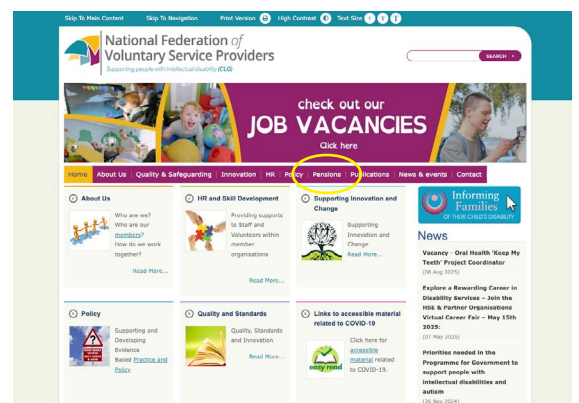
- The Irish Life Engagement Team reached out to all employers of the Scheme to offer on-site presentations. These sessions aim to inform and educate members about their pension fund and therefore it is important that employers continue to facilitate these presentations on an ongoing basis.
- The Advice Team was increased from one to two points of contact assigned to each participating employer of the Scheme. The Advice Team made themselves available to all members for one-to-one meetings regarding their pension fund. The 2 Advice Team point of contacts assigned to each employer and their relevant contact details are available on www.fedvol.ie (click on pensions tab).
- Members received a "nudge" communication via email, or when they were logged into their Member Portal, to not forget to engage with their Advice Team point of contact; reminders of webinars being organised for them on different themes appropriate to them etc.
- Members within 6 years to retirement were issued with a Personalised letter from their Irish Life Advice Team point of contact inviting them to engage with them so members have:
 - A clear understanding and expectation of what their pension fund will be at retirement.
 - An insight on what way they will draw down their pension fund at retirement.
- Retirement Seminars - The Pension Trustees, in association with Irish Life, organised Retirement Planning Seminars to support and provide valuable information to members of the Pension Scheme as they approach retirement. Employers were requested to invite Pension Scheme Members in their organisation who were due to retire over the next 5 years to attend. 3 seminars took place during May and June 2024, one each in Dublin, Tullamore and Mayo, where a total of 68 people attended.

Pension scheme workshop for participating employers

A Pension Scheme Workshop for all participating employers in the Scheme was held in November, 2024, in the Tullamore Court Hotel. The purpose of the Workshop was to educate and upskill all personnel involved in the administration of the pension scheme and ensure they are fully aware of all their responsibilities in relation to the National Federation's Pension & Life Assurance Scheme.

James Skehan, the Scheme's Professional Trustee, covered the following topics:

- An overview of the Pension Scheme.
- Working beyond age 65 and change in scheme rules to facilitate members continuing to contribute to their pension fund.
- Auto-enrolment.
- Budget 2025 and Implications for Pensions.
- State Pensions.



Maria McMahon, Pension Scheme Manager, provided attendees with an online demo of what information is available to all Scheme members on the Federation website www.fedvol.ie (click on pensions tab) and advised employers that they should continue to inform members of the availability of the website, and its content, so members can educate and upskill themselves in relation to their pension fund. Maria also provided a brief overview of the contents to what is included in the Pension Scheme Administration Manual, which will be circulated to employers once legal advice has been finalised re: facilitating members working beyond age 65 and continuing to pay pension contributions.

Irish Life updated the employers in respect of the following:

- Scheme's Administration Procedures i.e., procedures for notifying new entrants and leavers to Irish Life and submitting monthly returns.
- Requirements / Purpose of the Data Renewal Exercise 2025.
- Secure-Share: Secure portal employers can now use when submitting data & monthly returns to Irish Life.
- Overview of both the Engagement Team and Member Advice Team and what work both teams do.

Finally, Irish Life provided employers with an update on the new projection tools available on the Online Member Portal. These new tools provide members with calculations in respect of their cash lump sum if they proceed on drawing down their pension fund via (a) service / salary route or (b) 25% of their fund value. Employers were reminded of the importance of members registering for this online tool and getting up to date information on their pension fund, like the way a member logs on to their bank account online.

Cornmarket provided employers with the following updates:

- Aviva - New Group Life Insurer and benefits of the Group Life Scheme.
- Group Life Performance & Claims Level.
- Late Joiners Procedure.
- Salary Protection Scheme - Outline of current benefit structure and number of current claims.
- Review of Salary Protection Scheme due in March 2025.



Irish Life



Cornmarket

Trustees monitoring of Irish life as both registered administrator and investment manager

In accordance with the Pensions Authority Code of Practice, the Trustees are required to monitor the performance of Irish Life as the Registered Administrator and Investment Manager on a quarterly basis and review on an annual basis. However, in respect of 2024, the Trustees were also required to carry out a Critical Review of Irish Life as both Registered Administrator and Investment Manager. The critical review is an in-depth review of Irish Life's performance conducted against the obligations specified in their contract and in the SLA. The critical review forms the basis for a decision by the Trustees as to whether to retain the current administrator or consider their replacement.

The review was carried out in respect of period 1st January, 2022 (date of Irish Life's appointment) to the end of September 2024 and the evaluation of Irish Life and Irish Life Investment Managers (ILIM) was based on:

- Irish Life contract and SLA.
- The administration quarterly governance reports the Trustees received from Irish Life.
- The investment performance of ILIM Vs the agreed benchmark for each fund, and the performance of their High Growth Fund Vs their competitor's "equivalent" fund.
- The experience of the Trustees and the Pension Scheme Manager in their dealings with Irish Life and ILIM.

The outcome of the above review, concluded in late December 2024, was a decision by the Trustees to retain Irish Life for a further two-year period. However, a full tender process will be required to be undertaken in two years (to be concluded not later than January 2027) in respect of the administration and investment services provided to the Pension Scheme.

Trustees meetings

The Trustees convened 4 regular Trustee meetings; 1 investment review meeting with Irish Life Investment Managers (ILIM) and 1 strategic planning / training day in 2024. The Trustees also participated in other Team Meetings with Irish Life, Cornmarket, Key Function Holders for Risk Management and Internal Audit; the Scheme's External Auditor; legal advisors etc.

Trustees training

Pension Trustees Training took place in December 2024, in line with requirements that Trustees must undergo Refresher Training every 2 years. The Trustees of this Scheme have agreed to undergo training on a yearly basis having regard to the number of new requirements / regulations etc. This decision will be kept under review.

Legal work

The Trustees continued to engage with A&L Goodbody to carry out:

- (a) A review and update to the Scheme's Trust Deed & Rules, including the provision to facilitate members to continue paying pension contributions if they remain on in employment after age 65, with the consent of their employer. The changes will be effective from January 2025.
- (b) Work on establishment of the Scheme as a Designated Activity Company (DAC) in line with EU IORP 11 Directive and the Pensions Authority Code of Practice requirement. This work is still ongoing, but it is expected to be concluded in 2025.

Trustee annual report (tar) & financial statements

As required by Pension Legislation, the Trustees prepared a Trustees Annual Report (TAR) and Financial Statements for year ended 31/12/23 and circulated same to each participating employer and recognised Trade Union in line with the 30th September, 2024, deadline for completion.

A copy of the TAR and Financial Statements for year ended 31/12/23, and previous years, are available on the National Federation's website www.fedvol.ie (click on pensions tab).

Policies review

The Trustees in 2024 continued to:

- Review existing Scheme policies in line with their review timelines; and
- Develop new policies, where required, to ensure IORP 11 and the Code of Practice requirements were adhered to.

Copies of the Scheme's policies are available on www.fedvol.ie (click on pensions tab).

Pension scheme newsletters:

The Trustees produced two newsletters in 2024 covering the following topics:

March 2024: Scheme Webinars (April 2024) & Retirement Planning Seminars; Pension Benefit Statements; Auto-Enrolment; Trustees Workplan for 2024; Review of Trustees' activity undertaken in 2023 and other relevant pension information.

October 2024: Budget 2025 – Implications for Pensions; Do you “Tune Out” when pensions are mentioned?; Essential Guide to Retirement - Online Webinar (28th November or 4th December, 2024); Employer Pension Workshop (19th November, 2024); Trustees' Annual Report & Financial Statements for year ended 31st December, 2023; Outline of how members can make a lump sum AVC payment into their pension fund and claim back tax for 2023 before the Revenue deadline of 31st October, 2024; Women and Pensions – Gender Pay Gap Research

Copies of the above newsletters are available to view on www.fedvol.ie (click on pensions tab).



Group life review

The Group Life Scheme transitioned from Zurich to Aviva on 1st February, 2024. Despite rising costs, the Trustees secured a 0.43% rate for the next four years, ensuring the same level of death-in-service benefits for members. Cornmarket continue to act as the Scheme's broker for the Group Life Scheme. Employers were informed of the above change and policies and contracts were updated to reflect the Group Life Scheme transfer to Aviva.

Key function holders

The Trustees continued to work with the Scheme's appointed 2 external Key Function Holders (KFHs) as follows:

- **Risk Management:** Mr. Frankie Cronin, Grant Thornton, 13-18 City Quay, Dublin 2.
- **Internal Audit:** Mr. Tom Gilligan, Align Advisory Limited, The Charlemont Exchange, Dublin 2.

The following work was carried out by the Trustees and Key Function Holders during 2024:

Risk Management:

- Completed in April 2024 the Scheme's Own Risk Assessment (ORA). The purpose of the ORA was to identify and assess the material risks that threaten the achievement of the Scheme's objectives and providing a true assessment of risks in the Scheme.
- Reviewed and updated the Scheme's Risk Register, following completion of ORA.
- Reviewed the existing Risk Management Policy and updated same to reflect the ORA procedures.
- Reviewed and approved the Risk Appetite Statement Policy.
- Reported on the Key Risk Indicators at the quarterly Trustee meetings.
- Monitored the status of the action plans identified in the ORA at the quarterly Trustees meetings, following the ORA sign off.

Internal Audit:

2 audit tests were carried out in 2024 in conjunction with employers and Irish Life which covered the following areas:

- **New Entrants Process:** This test sought to verify the correct set-up of new joiners in the Scheme by Irish Life, based on the information provided by each employer. This includes verification that members details are accurate; they are invested in the correct funds; member was issued with required documents e.g., member booklet from employer and welcome pack from Irish Life. The test also sought confirmation that employers were aware of the “late joiners” process that is required to be adhered to in respect of a member’s group life cover if they joined the scheme on a later date to the date they joined their organisation.
- **Renewals Test & Pension Benefit Statement:** This test reviewed the processes by which each employer provides their annual data update to Irish Life (“the Pre-Renewal 2024” process). Some work in respect of comparing the records held by Irish Life to establish any variances etc, and reviewing the Pension Benefit Statements to ensure its contents adhere to pension requirements will be completed in Q1 2025.

The Trustees reviewed the outcome of the above tests and implemented relevant recommendations proposed by the Key Function Holder.

Administration & compliance

The National Federation Secretariat via the Pension Scheme Manager continued to provide administrative support to the Pension Scheme Trustees in 2024 and acted as point of contact for all key stakeholders to ensure the smooth and efficient running of the Pension Scheme i.e., Pension Trustees; Participating Employers; Irish Life; Cornmarket; Risk and Internal Audit Key Function Holders; External Auditor and legal advisors etc.

Almost all employers co-operated with the monthly return of pension contributions to both Irish Life and Cornmarket by their required timelines in 2024. All death claims, applications for retirement on grounds of ill health; pension adjustment orders, transfers applications and purchase of annuity forms etc., were all duly processed in a timely fashion.

In this regard, the Trustees would like to thank all employers for their co-operation in assisting the Trustees in discharging their duties and ensuring the Scheme is run efficiently and in compliance with the Scheme Rules.

Section 3: **Support of Key Governance Priorities in 2024**

In support of the Board's governance of the organisation, and in accordance with its Constitution, the National Federation has two standing Subcommittees – the Finance Audit and Risk Subcommittee; and the Governance and Nominations Subcommittee. In 2024, the Board identified a number of specific internal governance and compliance priorities that were progressed through the workplans of the below Subcommittees.

3.1. Governance and Nominations Subcommittee

The National Federation's Governance and Nominations Subcommittee was chaired by Breda O'Neill, St Margarets Network. Clare Dempsey was thanked for her immense contribution during her time as chairperson. This Subcommittee is responsible for ensuring adherence to the regulatory requirements including those set by the Charities Regulator and the Lobbying Commission. The relevant returns were all made in 2024.

This Subcommittee also had an ambitious workplan for 2024 which included considering the need for increased staffing levels in the National Federation Secretariat and developing relevant business cases, reviewing the results of a Board Gap analysis, and managing Board Elections and Succession Planning. In addition, they completed a significant amount of preparatory work for 2025 towards Board Training and the review of the employee handbook.

3.2. Finance, Audit and Risk Subcommittee

In 2024, this Subcommittee was chaired by Vincent O'Flynn, Chief Executive, Carriglea Cairde Services until September 11th 2024. He is thanked for his immense contribution during his time as committee chairperson.

The responsibilities of this Subcommittee include overseeing the development of policies relating to the financial management of the Company and monitoring their implementation; reviewing and recommending approval of the annual overall operating budget for the Company; reviewing management accounts, including the cash flow position of the Company and financial reports; and monitoring the integrity of the annual Financial Statements and recommending these to the Board. Key funding sources for the National Federation include membership fees, grant funding from the HSE and funding from project work and training events. The Finance Audit and Risk Committee scrutinised and endorsed the annual budget, ensured alignment with the organisation's strategic goals and financial health.

In 2024, this Subcommittee also engaged in specific work ensuring the WRC payment was made to NFVSP Staff and progressed the recommendations made during the HSE Internal Audit completed in 2023 which included the implementation of a risk register, risk management policy, and risk appetite statement. This Subcommittee also oversaw the appointment of a new financial contractor to manage the organisations payroll and accounts and monitored the financial aspects of running the IDEAS Conference. The Subcommittee also played a role in accessing the financial implications of hiring additional staff in the National Federation Secretariat to support the significant workload of the organisation.

3.3. Audited Accounts

Audited accounts for Year Ended 31st December 2024 were prepared, independently audited and signed off by the Board of Directors at their meeting held on 10th September 2025. The full set of accounts is published on the National Federation website at www.fedvol.ie. Below are some key extracts from the financial statements.

Balance sheet

As at 31st December 2024

	Note	2024 €	€	2023 €	€
Fixed assets					
Tangible assets	11	208,185		221,723	
			208,185		221,723
Current assets					
Debtors	12	139,562		132,096	
Cash at bank and in hand		616,810		733,484	
		756,372		865,580	
Creditors: amounts falling due within one year	13	(316,255)		(328,660)	
Net current assets			440,117		536,920
Total assets less current liabilities			648,302		758,643
Net assets			648,302		758,643
Capital and reserves					
Restricted funds	20	-		-	
General fund (unrestricted)	20	648,302		758,643	
Members funds		648,302		758,643	

These financial statements were approved by the board of directors on 10th September 2025 and signed on behalf of the board by:

Director



Annette Ryan

Director



Michael Hennessy

Statement of Financial Activities

Financial year ended 31 December 2024

	Note	Restricted Unrestricted€ €		2024 Total €	2023 Total €
Incoming Resources					
Generated funds:					
Voluntary Income					
Seminars/Conferences		22,969	-	22,969	-
Training course		1,450	-	1,450	3,750
Activities Income for generating funds					
Membership Fees		-	168,487	168,487	168,404
NFVB Pension Scheme		100,000	-	100,000	100,000
Other Income		11,613	-	11,613	10,080
Insurance Claim		15,682	-	15,682	-
Investment Income					
Other interest receivable and similar income		-	87	87	-
Charitable Activities:					
HSE Grants		291,704	-	291,704	264,096
Total Income Resources	8	443,418	168,574	611,992	546,330
Resources Expended					
Administrative expenses		(631,332)	(91,001)	(722,333)	(609,756)
Total Resources Expended	9	(631,332)	(91,001)	(722,333)	(609,756)
Surplus/(deficit) for the year		(187,914)	77,573	(110,341)	(63,426)
Net movement in funds for the year		(187,914)	77,573	(110,341)	(63,426)
Transfer between funds		187,914	(187,914)	-	-
Reconciliation of funds					
Balances brought forward at start of year	21	-	758,643	758,643	822,069
Balances carried forward at end of year	21	-	648,302	648,302	758,643

The financial statements were approved by the Directors on 10th September 2025 and signed on its behalf by

Director 
Annette Ryan

Director 
Michael Hennessy

Report on the audit of the financial statements

Opinion

We have audited the financial statements of National Federation of Voluntary Service Providers for the financial year ended 31 December 2024 which comprise the profit and loss account, statement of comprehensive income, balance sheet, statement of changes in equity, statement of cash flows and notes to the financial statements, including a summary of significant accounting policies set out in note 3. The financial reporting framework that has been applied in their preparation is Irish law and FRS 102 The Financial Reporting Standard applicable in the UK and Republic of Ireland.

In our opinion, the financial statements:

- give a true and fair view of the assets, liabilities and financial position of the company as at 31 December 2024 and of its loss for the financial year then ended;
- have been properly prepared in accordance with FRS 102 The Financial Reporting Standard applicable in the UK and Republic of Ireland; and
- have been prepared in accordance with the requirements of the Companies Act 2014.

Basis for opinion

We conducted our audit in accordance with International Standards on Auditing (Ireland) (ISAs (Ireland)) and applicable law. Our responsibilities under those standards are further described in the Auditor's Responsibilities for the Audit of the Financial Statements section of our report. We are independent of the company in accordance with the ethical requirements that are relevant to our audit of the financial statements in Ireland, including the Ethical Standard issued by the Irish Auditing and Accounting Supervisory Authority (IAASA), and the provisions available for small entities, in the circumstances set out in note 24 to the financial statements, and we have fulfilled our other ethical responsibilities in accordance with these requirements. We believe that the audit evidence we have obtained is sufficient and appropriate to provide a basis for our opinion.

Conclusions relating to going concern

In auditing the financial statements, we have concluded that the directors' use of the going concern basis of accounting in the preparation of the financial statements is appropriate.

Based on the work we have performed, we have not identified any material uncertainties relating to events or conditions that, individually or collectively, may cast significant doubt on the Company's ability to continue as a going concern for a period of at least twelve months from the date when the financial statements are authorised for issue.

Our responsibilities and the responsibilities of the directors with respect to going concern are described in the relevant sections of this report.

Other Information

The directors are responsible for the other information. The other information comprises the information included in the annual report, other than the financial statements and our auditor's report thereon. Our opinion on the financial statements does not cover the other information and, except to the extent otherwise explicitly stated in our report, we do not express any form of assurance conclusion thereon.

Our responsibility is to read the other information and, in doing so, consider whether the other information is materially inconsistent with the financial statements or our knowledge obtained in course of the audit, or otherwise appears to be materially misstated. If we identify such material inconsistencies or apparent material misstatements, we are required to determine whether there is a material misstatement in the financial statements or a material misstatement of the other information. If, based on the work we have performed, we conclude that there is a material misstatement of this other information, we are required to report that fact.

We have nothing to report in this regard.

Opinions on other matters prescribed by the Companies Act 2014

In our opinion, based on the work undertaken in the course of the audit, we report that:

- the information given in the directors' report for the financial year for which the financial statements are prepared is consistent with the financial statements;
- the directors' report has been prepared in accordance with applicable legal requirements.

We have obtained all the information and explanations which, to the best of our knowledge and belief, are necessary for the purposes of our audit.

In our opinion the accounting records of the company were sufficient to permit the financial statements to readily and properly audited, and financial statements are in agreement with the accounting records.

Matters on which we are required to report by exception

Based on the knowledge and understanding of the company and its environment obtained in the course of the audit, we have not identified material misstatements in the directors' report.

The Companies Act 2014 requires us to report to you if, in our opinion, the requirements of any of sections 305 to 312 of the Act, which relate to disclosures of directors' remuneration and transactions are not complied with by the Company. We have nothing to report in this regard.

Respective responsibilities

Responsibilities of directors for the financial statements

As explained more fully in the directors' responsibilities statement, the directors are responsible for the preparation of the financial statements in accordance with the applicable financial reporting framework that give a true and fair view, and for such internal control as they determine is necessary to enable the preparation of financial statements that are free from material misstatement, whether due to fraud or error.

In preparing the financial statements, the directors are responsible for assessing the company's ability to continue as a going concern, disclosing, as applicable, matters related to going concern and using the going concern basis of accounting unless the management either intends to liquidate the company or to cease operations, or have no realistic alternative but to do so.

Auditor's responsibilities for the audit of the financial statements

Our objectives are to obtain reasonable assurance about whether the financial statements as a whole are free from material misstatement, whether due to fraud or error, and to issue an auditor's report that includes our opinion. Reasonable assurance is a high level of assurance, but is not a guarantee that an audit conducted in accordance with ISAs (Ireland) will always detect a material misstatement when it exists. Misstatements can arise from fraud or error and are considered material if, individually or in the aggregate, they could reasonably be expected to influence the economic decisions of users taken on the basis of these financial statements.

As part of an audit in accordance with ISAs (Ireland), we exercise professional judgment and maintain professional scepticism throughout the audit. We also:

- Identify and assess the risks of material misstatement of the financial statements, whether due to fraud or error, design and perform audit procedures responsive to those risks, and obtain audit evidence that is sufficient and appropriate to provide a basis for our opinion. The risk of not detecting a material misstatement resulting from fraud is higher than for one resulting from error, as fraud may involve collusion, forgery, intentional omissions, misrepresentations, or the override of internal control.
- Obtain an understanding of internal control relevant to the audit in order to design audit procedures that are appropriate in the circumstances, but not for the purpose of expressing an opinion on the effectiveness of the Company's internal control.
- Evaluate the appropriateness of accounting policies used and the reasonableness of accounting estimates and related disclosures made by the directors.
- Conclude on the appropriateness of the directors' use of the going concern basis of accounting and, based on the audit evidence obtained, whether a material uncertainty exists related to events or conditions that may cast significant doubt on the company's ability to continue as a going concern. If we conclude that a material uncertainty exists, we are required to draw attention in our auditor's report to the related disclosures in the financial statements or, if such disclosures are inadequate, to modify our opinion. Our conclusions are based on the audit evidence obtained up to the date of our auditor's report. However, future events or conditions may cause the company to cease to continue as a going concern.
- Evaluate the overall presentation, structure and content of the financial statements, including the disclosures, and whether the financial statements represent the underlying transactions and events in a manner that achieves fair presentation.

We communicate with those charged with governance regarding, among other matters, the planned scope and timing of the audit and significant audit findings, including any significant deficiencies in internal control that we identify during our audit.

The purpose of our audit work and to whom we owe our responsibilities

Our report is made solely to the company's members, as a body, in accordance with Section 391 of the Companies Act 2014. Our audit work has been undertaken so that we might state to the company's members those matters we are required to state to them in an auditor's report and for no other purpose. To the fullest extent permitted by law, we do not accept or assume responsibility to anyone other than the company and the company's members, as a body, for our audit work, for this report, or for the opinions we have formed.

Richard Grogan

For and on behalf of

Grogans Accountancy Ltd

Chartered Accountants

4/5 High Street

Galway

Section 4: Member Organisations 2024

Ability West, Blackrock House, Salthill, Galway

Ard Aoibhinn Centre, Belvedere Road, Wexford

Autism Spectrum Disorder Initiatives, Block 1, Newtown Business & Enterprise Park, Newtownmountkennedy, Wicklow

Avista clg, St. Vincent's Centre, Navan Road, Dublin 7

Aurora Enriching Lives, Enriching Communities, Unit 11/12 Danville Business Park, Kilkenny

Beam Services, Barrow Haven, Regent Street, Bagnalstown, Co. Carlow

Brothers of Charity Services Ireland Clare, Banner House, Clare Road, Ennis, Co. Clare

Brothers of Charity Services Ireland West Region, Woodlands, Renmore, Galway

Brothers of Charity Services Ireland Mid-West Region, Blackberry Park, Ballykeeffe, Dock Road, Limerick

Brothers of Charity Services Ireland South East, Belmont Park, Waterford

Brothers of Charity Services Ireland Southern, Lota, Glanmire, Co. Cork

Cairdeas Centre, Tullow, Co. Carlow

Camphill Communities of Ireland, Ballytobin, Callan, Co. Kilkenny

Carriglea Cairde Services, Carriglea, Dungarvan, Co. Waterford

Cheeverstown House, Templeogue, Dublin 6W

Children's Sunshine Home / Laura Lynn, Leopardstown Road, Foxrock, Dublin 18

Clann Mór Ltd., Clann Mór House, Commons Road, Navan, Co. Meath

CoAction West Cork, Slip, Bantry, County Cork

Cope Foundation (as named in 2024, now named **Horizons**), Blackpool Retail Park, Blackpool, Cork

Cumas New Ross, Butlersland Industrial Estate, New Ross, Co. Wexford

DARA, Main Street, Celbridge, Co. Kildare

Delta Centre, Strawhall, Carlow

Drumlin House, Cootehill, County Cavan

Gatehouse Services Drogheda, Fair Street, Drogheda, Co. Louth

Gheel Autism Service, Marino Mart, Fairview, Dublin 3

Holy Angels Day Care Centre, Strawhall Industrial Estate, Carlow

KARE, Newbridge Industrial Estate, Newbridge, County Kildare

Kerry Parents & Friends Association, Old Monastery, Port Road, Killarney, Co. Kerry

L'Arche Ireland Secretariat, "An Siol", 42 West Street, Callan, Co. Kilkenny

Moorehaven Centre, O'Brien Street, Tipperary

Muiriosa Foundation, Moore Abbey, Monasterevin, Co. Kildare

Peacehaven, 1-2 Hillside, Greystones, Co. Wicklow

Peamount, Newcastle, County Dublin

Prosper Group, Strand Street, Skerries, Co. Dublin

Praxis Care, Unit 18, Ardee Business Park, Hale Street, Ardee, Co. Louth

Reach Ability, Bellefield, Enniscorthy, Co. Wexford

RehabCare, Park West Business Park, Park West, Dublin 12

SOS Kilkenny Ltd., Seville Lodge, Callan Road, Kilkenny

St. Aidan's Service, Millands, Gorey, Co. Wexford

St. Catherine's Association, Newcastle, Co. Wicklow

St. Christopher's Service, Leamore Park, Battery Road, Longford

St. Cronan's Association, Grange, Roscrea, Co. Tipperary

St. Hilda's Services, Grace Park Road, Athlone, Co. Westmeath

St. John of God Community Services, Provincial Administration, Stillorgan, Co. Dublin

St. Joseph's Foundation, Baker's Road, Charleville, Co. Cork

St. Margaret's Network, (IRL-IASD) Priory Hall, Stillorgan Road, Blackrock, Dublin 4

St. Michael's House, Ballymun Road, Ballymun, Dublin 9

Stewarts Care, Palmerstown, Dublin 20

Sunbeam House Services, Sothorn Cross Business Park, Bray, Co. Wicklow

WALK, 1 Longmile Road, Dublin 12

Waterford Intellectual Disability Association, 2 Belmont Road, Ferrybank, Waterford

Western Care Association, John Moore Road, Castlebar, Co. Mayo

Windmill Therapeutic Training Unit, Larkins Lane, South Main Street, Wexford



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