

BBQ

WEST LIMERICK INDEPENDENT LIVING

In Touch

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edition 19

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**Employee of
the Season
deadline is
Nov 1st**





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Welcome to the 19th Edition of InTouch! It is remarkable to note that we have now reached the 19th edition of our In Touch magazine. This Autumn issue is a particularly full one, reflecting the activity across our

organisation, and the valuable feedback we have received through our recent client survey. Your input is greatly appreciated, and we are committed to listening carefully and acting upon your suggestions wherever possible.

At the outset, I wish to acknowledge with sadness the passing of our client, Ms. Rena Crofton, on 13 September. We remember Rena with great fondness and extend our deepest condolences to her husband Pat, her family, and her PAs, Kathleen and Noreen. They remain in our thoughts and prayers at this difficult time. Ar Dheis de go raibh ainm dhilis

Our Summer Barbecue proved to be a most enjoyable occasion, bringing together clients and PAs in a relaxed and informal setting. We were fortunate with the weather and deeply grateful to the Longcourt Hotel staff for their excellent catering and professionalism, which contributed significantly to the success of the day.

I am also pleased to announce the appointment of two new colleagues: Ms. Cristina Larnar, Coordinator, and Ms. Sarah Stack, Administrative Support. At the same time, we extend our best wishes to Patricia, Mary, and Mairead as they move on to the next stages of their journeys. We thank them sincerely for their service and commitment during their time with us.

This edition highlights the importance of staff training and development. Ongoing professional learning is essential, and we are committed to supporting our staff in enhancing their skills to provide the highest quality support to our clients

Finally, it is my privilege to recognise our Employee of the Season for Autumn 2025. The standard of nominations was exceptionally high, Ms. Patsy Keane has been selected as our Employee of the Season. This award is richly deserved and reflects not only her personal commitment but also the high calibre of our PA team overall. On behalf of the organisation, I extend warm congratulations to Patsy on this achievement.

I would like to remind clients nominations for the Employee of the Season, deadline is 1st November 2025. We welcome feedback, suggestions and articles for inclusion and we would love to hear from you; email to margaret@limerickcil.com or call 069 77320. Regards Margaret

Supporting Independent Living in Limerick



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- **Home Support Service**
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West Limerick Independent Living CLG

Your voice shapes our services!



Listening to Your Voice – 2025 Client Survey

At West Limerick Independent Living (WLIL), your voice matters. Every service we provide is built on the principle of independence, dignity, and choice. To ensure we continue meeting those standards, we carried out our annual Client Service User Survey.

This survey gave clients the opportunity to share their views on how services are delivered, how well communication is managed, and where improvements could be made. While only seven clients completed the survey this year—about 6% of our client base—the insights were valuable and have already influenced our plans for the year ahead.

What Clients Told Us

“PAs are friendly, professional, and respectful.”
– Client feedback

- **High Satisfaction:** Clients expressed strong confidence in WLIL services, praising the kindness, professionalism, and reliability of Personal Assistants.
- **Independence & Choice:** Clients confirmed they are in control of their services, reflecting the independent living model.
- **Communication:** While some highlighted the importance of early notice, WLIL policy ensures advance communication in almost every case (≈90% compliance).
- **Continuity:** Clients prefer familiar PAs for cover. WLIL recognises this and works to balance continuity with staffing realities.

- **InTouch Magazine:** Clients enjoy the magazine and want more content on transport, health, energy, and technology.

Quick Facts from the Survey

- 📊 **90%** – schedule changes notified in advance
- 📖 **70%+** – of clients read *InTouch Magazine*
- 🎯 **Target 2026:** Raise survey participation to **25%**

Our Response

- **Continuity:** We will track cover shifts and aim to provide familiar PAs wherever possible.
- **Communication:** We will maintain our near-perfect record of notifying clients in advance of any changes.
- **Engagement:** In 2026 we aim to increase survey participation by offering more ways to respond (postal, online, and phone) and a prize draw.
- **Information:** Each *InTouch* will feature at least two client-requested articles, plus updates linked to the UNCRPD.

Looking Ahead

The survey confirms that WLIL is delivering services that reflect dignity, independence, and respect. At the same time, it highlights where we can do even better—continuity of staff, communication, and more ways for clients to have their say.

“Your voice shapes our services.”

We encourage more clients to take part in next year’s survey. Every response adds value, strengthens transparency, and helps us build services that reflect the full community we serve.

Together, we will continue building a service that supports independent living, not just in principle, but in practice.

The Importance of Research

At WLIL we believe that listening to clients through surveys is only one part of our commitment to continuous improvement. Research plays a vital role in showing us what works well and where changes can make the biggest difference.

By combining client feedback with research evidence, we can make informed decisions that not only strengthen services locally but also contribute to the wider independent living movement in Ireland.

The Power of Boundaries: Protecting Your Wellbeing and Energy - Laura Mulqueen

Independence isn't just about the practical help one receives or gives in daily life—it's also about protecting your emotional balance and physical energy. One of the most powerful tools for doing that is setting healthy boundaries.

Boundaries are the invisible lines we draw around our time, space, and emotions. They're not about shutting people out—they're about making sure relationships are respectful, sustainable, and built on mutual understanding.

For people living with disabilities, boundaries can be the difference between feeling empowered and feeling worn out. But boundaries aren't just important for the person receiving support—they're equally vital for Personal Assistants (PAs) and at-home carers. Healthy boundaries keep everyone's wellbeing in check and make relationships and connections stronger.

The Myth: "I Have No Boundaries"

A common phrase people use is, "I have no boundaries." The truth is, everyone has boundaries—the question is what kind? They might be rigid (hard to adapt), loose (too easily crossed), or flexible (balanced and adaptable).

Most of us lean toward loose or overly flexible boundaries, which can leave us overcommitted, exhausted, and disconnected from our own needs. Finding the right balance means making choices that:

- Align with your values and beliefs.
- Honour your own needs alongside the needs of others.
- Avoid the burnout that comes from pouring from an empty cup.

Healthy, flexible boundaries are not about being selfish—they are about preserving enough energy and focus so you can show up fully for yourself and for others.

Why Boundaries Matter for Everyone

When we don't have clear boundaries, it's easy for exhaustion and frustration to creep in.

By setting boundaries you can:

- Protect health and energy – making sure you don't feel overworked or overwhelmed.
- Avoid misunderstandings – clear expectations mean fewer surprises or conflicts.
- Foster respect – recognising each other's needs, time, and personal space.

Boundaries are not barriers—they are tools for independence and cultivating self-love and respect.



Employee of the Season – last Spring

West Limerick Independent Living is delighted to congratulate Veronica Kubale, Personal Assistant, who was awarded runner-up in the Spring Employee of the Season Awards. Veronica works closely with her Service Coordinator, Michela Quirk, and has proven herself to be an excellent employee, greatly valued for her commitment and professionalism. We are pleased to recognize her contribution and extend our thanks for her continued dedication to supporting independent living in our community.

Your Health, Your Voice: The Health Passport (HSE) App

Accessing healthcare can be challenging for many people, particularly those with disabilities, dementia, mental health issues, or anyone who finds it difficult to communicate their needs. Recognising these barriers, the Health Service Executive (HSE) has developed the Health Passport (HSE) App – a tool designed to ensure that every person's voice is heard in healthcare settings.

What is the Health Passport (HSE) App?

Originally created in 2019 in paper format, the Health Passport was designed to help people with intellectual disabilities communicate their health needs clearly to doctors, nurses, and other healthcare staff. In 2021, this work evolved into an App, and in 2023, the HSE Disabilities Quality Improvement Team (DisQI) worked with disabled people, families, carers, and healthcare professionals to update and improve it.

The App now has a simple, tab-based layout and is easy to use. It stores important information safely on your own device, making it available whenever you need it.

What Information Does it Include?

The App allows you to record and share:

- Critical Information – important details healthcare staff must know.
- Personal Information – about you, your background, and your supports.
- Communication – how best to communicate with you.
- Decision Making – your preferences and supports for making decisions.
- Medical History – medications, allergies, and treatments.
- Food and Drink – dietary needs or restrictions.
- Personal Care – supports you require day-to-day.

There is also an email function, so you can send your Health Passport directly to a hospital, GP, or service before an appointment.

Who is it For?

The Health Passport (HSE) App is designed for anyone who may find it hard to communicate their health needs. This includes:

- People with intellectual or physical disabilities
- People living with dementia or mental health issues
- People from other countries who may not have English as their first language

What Has Been Updated?

The 2023 update has made the App more user-friendly and practical. Some of the new features include:

- Clearer layout with easy-to-navigate tabs
- Medication list input
- Reminder function
- Read/Edit tab for quick updates
- Improved email function

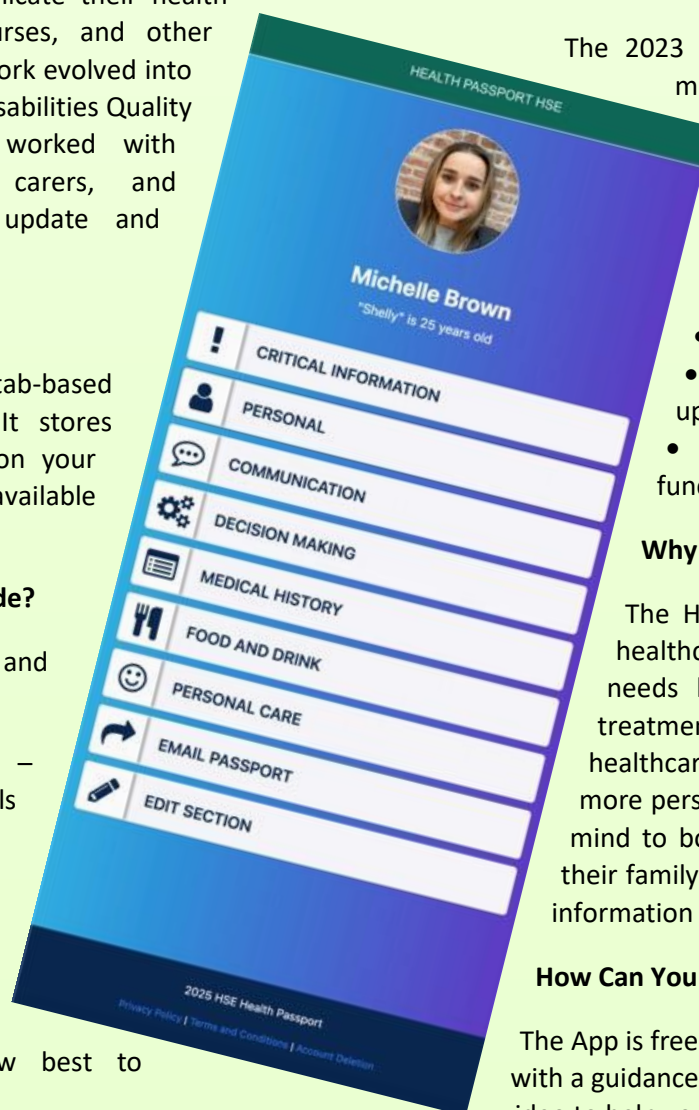
Why is it Important?

The Health Passport ensures that healthcare staff understand your needs before any examination or treatment begins. This helps make healthcare safer, more inclusive, and more person-centred. It gives peace of mind to both the passport holder and their family or carers, knowing that vital information is not lost or overlooked.

How Can You Get Started?

The App is free to download and comes with a guidance document and YouTube video to help you complete it. If you need further support, you can contact the HSE Disabilities Quality Improvement Office at Health.Passport@hse.ie

✓ **Tip:** Filling out your Health Passport in advance means you'll always be ready for hospital visits, GP appointments, or emergencies. Think of it as carrying your health story in your pocket. .



Summer Barbecue at West Limerick Independent Living

This August, West Limerick Independent Living held a summer barbecue at our Newcastle West office. Clients, families, staff, and board members came together to enjoy good food, sunshine, and community spirit. It was a wonderful opportunity to celebrate the friendships and connections that make our organisation what it is...



Brian Hogan, Alana Moloney
Jack Cussen

PAs Caroline Devine
Theresa Kileen Lisa Reisy
and Bridget O Keefe



Board members Pamela,
John, Ben and John



Some of the Office
team



Christna Larnar, Fiona Hoare Laura Mulqueen,
Pamela Hogan, Gugulethu Madubeko.



Brian Hogan and his
parents with bus
driver Dermot
Hannifin



Mattie Roche and Tara O Leary with her
daughter and passengers Alana Moloney
Jack Cussen and Elizabeth Cremin



Large group enjoying the BBQ

Christina Larner Joins WLIL as Service Coordinator

Hi all,

My name is Christina, and I'm excited to introduce myself as the new Service Coordinator here at WLIL. Some of you may remember me from when I previously worked here as a Personal Assistant. It was during that time that I discovered my passion for healthcare, which led me to pursue a degree in Social Care. Since then, I've had the opportunity to work as a Supervisor and a Client Care Manager in other healthcare settings. I find this work incredibly rewarding and am passionate about making a positive impact in our clients' lives. I'm also a very approachable person, so please feel free to drop by the office anytime if you have any questions, concerns, or just want to say hello. I'm looking forward to working with you all!



Farewell to Patricia O'Connell *by Margaret O'Connor*

On 18th July, we said goodbye to Patricia O'Connell PA, Patricia has been a valued member of our team since 2007, providing dedicated support to a visually impaired client. Over the years, she played a vital role in assisting the client and her family. Patricia consistently demonstrated professionalism and a strong commitment to company policies, particularly around child protection. She was always a pleasure to work with—respectful, kind, and cheerful, with a warm smile that made a lasting impression.

It was a proud moment last Christmas when Patricia was honoured with a 15+ Years of Service Award, a recognition that was truly well deserved. We wish Patricia all the very best in her future endeavours. We're sure the family she supported over the years are just as grateful for her kindness and care. Take care, Patricia—and please don't be a stranger!



Farewell to Mairead O Connor *by Margaret O'Connor*



As we say goodbye to Mairead who joined the team as a Personal Assistant in 2022. From the beginning, she proved herself to be an invaluable member of the East. Mairead's dedication, flexibility, and reliability stood out. Mairead's rapport with clients was exceptional; and she built strong trusting relationships and consistently went above and beyond to ensure client's needs were met.

She worked tirelessly as part of the team, contributing not only through her hard work but also through her thoughtful and practical suggestions that helped enhance quality of service to clients.

Mairead's straightforward approach and insightful ideas made a real difference, and her presence will be deeply missed. As she embarks on her new chapter with the HSE, we want to extend our heartfelt thanks and best wishes. Mairead your contribution has been truly appreciated, and we wish you every success in your new role. You will be missed!

Risks of Driving

Buckle Up! The Health and Safety Risks of

Driving in the Community (and How to Stay Sane)

Whether you're going to your client's call or heading to the shops for someone who's run out of tea bags (again), driving in the community is just another part of the job.

But let's be honest.....with potholes, changing weather, and finding parking, driving in the community can feel more like a tricky game than a normal workday. Easy and fun guide to the health and safety risks of driving in the community.

Risk #1: The Traffic Tango

The problem: You leave with plenty of time, only to be stuck behind a tractor, roadworks, or someone who still hasn't discovered third gear.

The safety tip: Plan your route. Give yourself time for delays. Your future self will thank you.



Risk #2: Weather Whiplash

The problem: You leave in sunshine, arrive in a monsoon, and spend the visit trying to dry yourself.

The safety tip: Always check the forecast and keep wet weather items in the car. Like: Umbrella, and maybe even spare socks.

Bonus: You'll look like a community, James Bond when you whip out your emergency poncho.

Risk #3: The Parking Predicament

The problem: You circle the place five times only to park 300 meters away — uphill, in the rain.

The safety tip: Know your area's tricky spots. Never risk blocking a drive or squeezing into dodgy spaces.

Reminder: Parking tickets aren't badges of honor.

Risk #4: Satnav Shenanigans

The problem: Your GPS tells you to turn left into a hedge. Again.

The safety tip: Double-check addresses before setting off and don't rely solely on technology.

Risk #5: The Fatigue Factor: Long drives + a packed schedule = tired brains and slower reaction times.

The safety tip: Take breaks, stay hydrated, and don't push through if you're exhausted. Fatigue is a serious risk.

Pro tip: A 10-minute power break in the car can be more effective than your third coffee (but bring the coffee anyway).

Risk #6: The Car Crisis

The problem: The one day you're running late, the car decides it needs a nap (aka a breakdown).

The safety tip: Regularly check tyres, oil, lights, and fuel. Keep roadside assistance info handy. And never ignore warning lights..... They're not suggestions.

Final Thoughts: Drive Smart, Stay Safe, Stay Sane

Driving in the community is part of the journey, and while it comes with risks, a little planning and a lot of humor go a long way. So, stay sharp, stay safe, and remember: no client ever complained about you being a few minutes late if you arrived safe, dry, and still smiling.

Farewell to Mary Lyons on Her Retirement *by Margaret O' Connor*



We say fond farewell to Mary as she retires from her role as a Personal Assistant. Mary has been with WLIL since 2012, and during that time, she has supported many clients with dedication and care. She was always incredibly adaptable, often stepping in to cover for others when needed. Both her clients and colleagues consistently spoke highly of her professionalism, kindness, and reliability. Throughout her time with West Limerick Independent Living, Mary witnessed many positive changes within the organization, always embracing them with grace and a focus on what was best for the clients. Mary was known for her accommodating nature—always wanting to help when we were short-staffed and doing her very best to support the team. We thank Mary for her years of service and wish her all the very best in her retirement. Her contribution has made a lasting impact, and she will be greatly missed.



Autumn Employee of the Season

Congratulations to Patsy Keane, our Employee of the Season for autumn. Patsy was selected from a strong group of nominees, with Koffigan R. Abouga, Ethna O'Brien, and Margaret Murphy recognised as runners-up. The decision was extremely difficult, as each brought forward outstanding contributions. As an employer, it is refreshing to review the nominations and see so much positive work happening in the community. While challenges occasionally arise with a small number of staff, most of our team are good or excellent – and this award is a reminder of that. The Employee of the Season is a chance to celebrate those efforts and to recognise the dedication, commitment, and positive impact of our staff. Well done to Patsy and to all those nominated – your work makes a real difference.

Celebrating Staff Achievements

West Limerick Independent Living is delighted to acknowledge the recent accomplishments of our colleague, **Katie Daly**, who works as a Personal Assistant. Katie has successfully completed **two modules of the FETAC Level 5 Healthcare Award**, further enhancing her skills and knowledge in providing quality support to our clients.

Also pictured is **Christina Larner**, Service Coordinator with West Limerick Independent Living, who to support and encourage our staff in their professional development. At West Limerick Independent Living, we value continuous learning and are proud of the dedication our team members show in strengthening their skills to deliver excellent services.





Manual Handling Training

Some of our staff recently took part in **Manual Handling Training** with instructor **John Donovan**. This is mandatory training in Ireland under health and safety law, and it helps staff stay safe while supporting clients. As pictured, John is joined by a group of our Personal Assistants who have successfully completed the course. Manual handling training is refreshed every three years, or sooner if needed, to make sure everyone is confident and up to date with best practice. We're proud of our team for keeping their skills sharp and continuing to put safety first, both for themselves and for the people they support.

Building Confidence through Training

Three staff members took part in PMAV (Prevention and Management of Aggression and Violence) Training for Support Workers. Sometimes providing support within the home requires more than just compassion – it calls for the right skills, confidence, and knowledge to ensure every individual feels safe, respected, and supported. That's where PMAV comes in. PMAV is a nationally recognised training programme designed to equip PAs with practical strategies to prevent, de-escalate, and safely manage challenging situations.

The training focuses on understanding behaviours, improving communication, and applying calming techniques before situations escalate. Physical interventions are taught only as a last resort, ensuring safety for both staff and the people they support. By embedding PMAV principles into daily practice, PAs are better prepared to create safe, supportive, and empowering home environments. It strengthens trust between staff and individuals receiving support, helping people feel secure in their own homes while maintaining independence. PMAV isn't just about managing difficult situations – it's about preventing them, building resilience, and ensuring support is always delivered with compassion and professionalism.



Remembering Mr Enda McCormack (RIP) and Our Past Clients and Colleagues

By Margaret O'Connor



“Ar dheis Dé go raibh a n-anamacha dílse.”

We remember with gratitude the late Mr Enda McCormack (RIP), whose generous bequest affirms his belief in our mission and values. In his honour—and in memory of clients and colleagues who are no longer with us—we have created a quiet space to pause, share a cup of tea or lunch, and reflect on those who have gone before.

At our summer barbecue, it was heartening to see the space used as intended—a gentle reminder of the importance of reflection, connection, and carrying forward the spirit of those we have lost. We remain deeply grateful to everyone—clients, staff, and friends of WLIL—who continue to share in our mission and keep these values alive.

Testimonials from PAs during annual reviews

"I absolutely love working with West Limerick Independent Living and often say I'm sorry I didn't make the career change earlier. I get so much satisfaction from the support I provide to clients, and I find them all to be such lovely people. This work is truly rewarding." – Bridie Dalton



"I have been with West Limerick Independent Living since 2010, and over the years I've built wonderful, lasting relationships with my clients. Being a long-term PA has been an incredible experience. The trust and confidence my clients have placed in me is truly priceless." – Catherine O'Flynn



"I have been with West Limerick Independent Living since 2014, and the support I've received over the years has been fantastic—always just a phone call away. The company is incredibly supportive, not only to clients but also to employees, and that kind of support is truly priceless." – Margaret Murphy



Respect, Boundaries and Communication in Our Services

At West Limerick Independent Living, our services play a vital role in supporting people with tasks of daily living. These services are designed to help clients remain independent while receiving the support they need in a respectful and professional way. For the service to work well, both clients and Personal Assistants (PAs) must value each other's role and maintain clear boundaries.



Why Respect Matters

Respect between clients and PAs is not just a courtesy – it is the foundation of a good working relationship. When a PA feels respected, they can focus on providing quality support. When a client feels respected, they can trust that their needs will be met in a professional and caring manner.

Unfortunately, small issues of disrespect can quickly grow into larger problems if not addressed. For example, if a PA spends time cleaning a floor and a client immediately dirties it without acknowledging the effort, it may seem like a small matter. But repeated instances like this can wear down the relationship. Over time, such situations can lead to frustration, silence, and eventually a breakdown of trust between client and PA.

Professional Boundaries

Personal Assistants are professionals. Their role is not simply to “do tasks” but to support clients in a way that balances independence with dignity. For this reason, boundaries are very important. A PA should not feel pressured to accept disrespectful behaviour or inappropriate requests. Likewise, clients should not feel uncertain about what is or is not reasonable. Clear communication helps to avoid misunderstandings and ensures that both sides are comfortable.

The Role of the Service Coordinator



Every PA should remember that they are not alone in their work. The Service Coordinator is there to provide support and guidance. If a PA is uncomfortable, even with a small issue, it is important to pick up the phone and speak to the coordinator. Many difficulties can be solved quickly if they are raised early.

This is not “bothering” the coordinator. It is part of the PA’s role to communicate concerns, and it is part of the coordinator’s role to listen and help. The earlier a small matter is raised, the less likely it is to develop into a bigger problem that affects the whole service.

Clients Have a Role Too

Just as PAs must be professional, clients also have responsibilities. Clients are asked to respect boundaries and to treat their PAs fairly. A PA is there to help, but they are also a person who deserves courtesy and consideration. By working together respectfully, both client and PA can achieve the real purpose of the service – supporting independent living.

Building Positive Relationships

At the heart of the Personal Assistance Service is a relationship built on trust, respect, and clear communication. When PAs speak up about their concerns, and when clients listen and respond respectfully, the relationship becomes stronger. This benefits everyone – the client, the PA, and the organisation.

West Limerick Independent Living is committed to supporting our staff and clients in creating positive, professional relationships. By valuing each other, respecting boundaries, and keeping communication open, we can continue to deliver a service that makes a real difference in people’s lives.

Irish Rail: Assistance guaranteed with 1-hour notice at 15 major stations



Iarnród Éireann has cut advance-notice for assistance to one hour at fifteen of the busiest Intercity stations—part of a wider accessibility programme. The change improves spontaneity for disabled passengers and follows station upgrades and customer-information improvements. Check your station page for lift status and assistance options before you travel. Other stations: At smaller stations, more notice may still be needed, as staff must travel from other locations.

This move brings Irish Rail closer to European accessibility standards and makes rail travel more flexible for passengers with additional needs.

European Accessibility Act - June 2025



A common EU rulebook now requires accessibility for key products and services: e-commerce, banking, ticketing and travel info systems, e-readers and smartphones, ATMs and ticket machines, and more. Member States will enforce compliance and handle complaints; businesses can consult EU guidance to prepare upgrades.

In practice, businesses operating in the EU must now review and adapt digital and physical services to comply by mid-2025.

WAV taxi with ramp Wheelchair-Accessible Vehicle grant scheme



The National Transport Authority reopened applications on 14 July 2025 to expand the number of wheelchair-accessible taxis and hackneys. Grants support new and existing SPSV drivers to purchase or convert vehicles, aiming to boost availability in cities, towns and rural areas.

Expanding Access Through Assistive Technology



This summer, the HSE launched the third phase of its CREATE programme, providing over €1 million in funding for digital and assistive technology projects. The initiative will support new ideas that make daily life more accessible for people with disabilities, older people, and those living with long-term conditions.

Projects funded under CREATE will focus on practical supports such as smart home devices, talking pens, mobility aids, and sensory equipment. The aim is to promote independence, inclusion, and participation in everyday life. By embracing technology, we can continue to improve the quality of life, while ensuring services remain forward-looking and inclusive.

Sarah Stack Joins WLIL as Office Administrator

Hi all,

My name is Sarah, and I would like to introduce myself as the new Office Administrator here at WLIL. I moved back to Ireland from living in America a few months ago and I look forward to getting back into an office setting.

I have years of office administration experience in various sectors, and I look forward to the new challenge of working for WLIL. I am here to help so feel free to reach out to me at the office anytime. I am looking forward to meeting everyone and working with the team here at WLIL.



Technology News

Hilton & Be My Eyes: Accessible Hotel Support

Hilton partnered with Be My Eyes to provide AI-powered virtual assistance and specially trained Customer Care agents for guests who are blind or have low vision in the U.S. and Canada. Services help with navigating rooms, identifying fixtures, using amenities, etc. ([Stories From Hilton](#))

Link: <https://stories.hilton.com/releases/hilton-and-be-my-eyes-launch-industry-first-partnership>



Be My Eyes on Ray-Ban Meta Glasses

Be My Eyes is now available on Ray-Ban Meta AI Glasses (including Ireland) for hands-free visual assistance via volunteer calls and voice commands. ([Be My Eyes](#))

Link: <https://www.bemyeyes.com/news/be-my-eyes-is-rolling-out-on-ray-ban-meta-glasses-starting-today!>



Apple's New Accessibility Features

Apple announced features coming later in 2025: Eye Tracking, Vocal Shortcuts, Live Listen, Braille Access, Accessibility Reader, and more, aimed at improving independence for those with vision, hearing, or mobility needs. ([Apple](#))

Link: <https://www.apple.com/newsroom/2025/05/apple-unveils-powerful-accessibility-features-coming-later-this-year/>



Seeing AI (Microsoft): Wider Access and Functionality

The Seeing AI app, free for blind and low-vision users, continues to be developed with additional languages and improved features to help describe the world around you (text, people, objects) via phone camera. ([Apple](#))

Link: <https://apps.apple.com/us/app/seeing-ai/id999062298>



Google Maps: More Wheelchair-Friendly Routing

Recent updates to Google Maps have added stair-free route options and clearer accessibility labels. These help with planning accessible journeys for those who use wheelchairs or have mobility challenges. (Note: specific articles summarizing these updates are available. Example discussion in rehab & accessibility media.) ([The Verge](#))

Link (general): <https://www.google.com/maps/about/> or search "Google Maps accessibility features"



Meta / Ray-Ban: "Call a Volunteer" & Detailed Descriptions

With Ray-Ban Meta smart glasses, users now can say "Hey Meta, Be My Eyes" to get hands-free assistance via volunteers, with environment descriptions, reading help, etc. The detailed responses and enhanced features help with everyday tasks. ([The Verge](#))

Link: <https://www.bemyeyes.com/news/be-my-eyes-is-rolling-out-on-ray-ban-meta-glasses-starting-today!>



A New National Human Rights Strategy for Disabled People

On **3rd September 2025**, the Government launched the **National Human Rights Strategy for Disabled People 2025–2030**. This is the first major national disability strategy since 2017, and the first since Ireland ratified the **UN Convention on the Rights of Persons with Disabilities (UNCRPD)**.

The Strategy sets out **five key pillars**:

1. Education
2. Employment
3. Independent Living and Participation
4. Wellbeing and Health
5. Transport and Mobility

While West Limerick Independent Living was not directly involved in shaping the document, we welcome its strong focus on **Independent Living**, recognising the right of disabled people to live with **choice, control and freedom** in their own communities.

What makes this Strategy different?

A crucial difference is the role of **Disabled Persons' Organisations (DPOs)**, who were directly involved in co-creating the pillars. This brings the Strategy much closer to the principle of *"Nothing about us, without us."*

Language also matters: this Strategy adopts the term **"Disabled People"**, reflecting a **social-model** approach that looks at how barriers in society – not individual impairments – create disability.

What will this mean in practice?

For people with disabilities, the benefits should be tangible:

- **Education**: stronger commitments to inclusive education, making schools and training opportunities more accessible.
- **Employment**: more focus on supports to enter and stay in work, including mainstream services taking responsibility.
- **Independent Living**: recognition that people should have real choice over where and how they live, with appropriate personal assistance and supports.
- **Wellbeing and Health**: improved access to mainstream health services, with emphasis on equality of treatment.
- **Transport and Mobility**: stronger planning for accessible public transport, making it easier to get to work, education, and social opportunities.

Why does it matter locally?

For our community, the Strategy should mean **better access to mainstream services**, less reliance on segregated "special" supports, and a stronger voice for disabled people in shaping the services they use.

It also signals a change in how the State approaches disability – moving away from charity and medical models towards a **rights-based approach** that places people at the centre.

The Strategy will be supported by **two-year action plans**, with the first due early next year. This means we will be able to track whether commitments are being delivered.

At West Limerick Independent Living, we will continue to follow developments closely. While this is a national policy, its real success will be measured in **everyday life**: whether a disabled person can get the bus to work, access their GP without difficulty, or live independently with the right supports in their own community.

