



WEST LIMERICK INDEPENDENT LIVING

In Touch



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21/11/2024

edition 16

**HAPPY
CHRISTMAS**

NEW PASSENGER VEHICLE LAUNCHED

WINTER WELLBEING

MY PERSONAL EXPERIENCE

WORKING AS A PERSONAL ASSISTANT

PLANNED CHANGES IN IRISH HOME SUPPORT SERVICES

**WINNER OF
EMPLOYEE OF THE SEASON**

INTRODUCTION TO THE NACIL

INSIGHTS

INTO EMPLOYEE SURVEY

WELCOMING NEW PA's TO WLIL

BIG CHANGES TO EMPLOYEE OF THE SEASON COMING!!



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Welcome to the 16th edition of our Winter magazine. As we embrace the special Christmas season a time many of us treasure with family, let us take a moment to reflect on those who have lost loved ones this year,

particularly our clients. Our thoughts are with their families during this difficult time.

This season, we bring you a bumper edition of updates! First, I'd like to thank all employees who participated in our recent survey. Your feedback has been invaluable. In response, we are restructuring the Employee of the Season program to ensure all staff, including remote workers, have an equal opportunity to be nominated. This will commence January 2025.

We're also introducing the National Alliance of Centres of Independent Living (NACIL)—a unified disability voice comprising 17 CILs across Ireland.

Additionally, we've included key updates and concerns regarding the planned changes to Irish Home Support Services, keeping you informed of developments that may impact our community.

On a celebratory note, we are thrilled to welcome six new Personal Assistants to the West Limerick Independent Living team. We are excited about the valuable contributions they will bring to our mission of empowering independent living.

We are delighted to announce our Winter Employee of the Season: Liam Coleman. A dedicated PA, Liam has consistently excelled in his role, embodying the core values of independent living. Congratulations, Liam!

I would like to take a moment to express our sincere gratitude to our outstanding employees. Your steadfast dedication and commitment throughout the year have had a profound impact on the lives of those we support. Thank you.

We would like to extend our heartfelt thanks to our clients for their understanding and patience during times of staffing challenges. Your flexibility and support have been invaluable as we navigate these circumstances. In 2025, we look forward to continuing to support you with the highest level of commitment and dedication. Thank you for your continued trust.

I would like to extend my sincere thanks to all our contributors to the newsletter throughout the year, with special appreciation to Gerard and Laura, who collaborate to bring everything together once the articles are complete.

Wishing everyone a warm and joyful Christmas, filled with love, laughter, and the company of good friends and family. May the new year bring you peace, happiness, and prosperity.

Please remember that your opinion is welcome, and we would love to hear from you, it's easy via email margaret@limerickcil.com or phone 069 77320.

Regards Margaret



Refer a Friend

Carmel Murphy referred Angela Long and Trish Cunningham referre Breda Dalton to the WLL PA team receiving their gift voucher.



New Passenger Vehicle Launched: Positive Feedback from Our Community *by Gerard O'Connor*

West Limerick Independent Living is excited to announce the launch of our new passenger vehicle! The feedback so far has been overwhelmingly positive from passengers, drivers, and personal assistants alike.



The new vehicle is well able to handle the rural roads of West Limerick with ease, offering a smoother and more comfortable ride for everyone. One of the key improvements is its enhanced fuel efficiency, which is a significant upgrade from our previous models, making it a more sustainable choice for the community.



Accessibility is a top priority for us, and this new bus is fully equipped to accommodate all passengers, ensuring that everyone can travel safely and comfortably. Our team is thrilled to provide this improved service, with comfort, safety, and efficiency at the forefront of our mission.

At West Limerick Independent Living, the safety and well-being of our passengers is always our highest priority, and we are proud to continue enhancing our services to better serve the community. Thank you to everyone for the positive feedback, and we look forward to many more journeys together!

Shortchanged: Barriers to Financial Autonomy for People with Disabilities in Ireland

The National Advocacy Service for People with Disabilities (NAS) is pleased to share with you its recently launched social policy paper. This report highlights critical issues faced by people with disabilities in exercising their financial autonomy and accessing their finances in Ireland. It finds that people with disabilities face multiple obstacles with basic banking tasks, including the move towards digitalization, which often prevents them from being able to manage their own finances. The findings detailed throughout also reveal that discrimination on the grounds of disability is a recurring concern in current banking practice for many people with disabilities supported by NAS and that many people with disabilities experience financial abuse from third parties.

We hope the launch of this report will raise awareness of and contribute to beginning a conversation on this important issue and refocus the conversation on supporting people to exercise their capacity in line with the Assisted Decision-Making (Capacity) Act (ADMCA) and The United Nations Convention on the Rights of Persons with Disabilities (UNCRPD).

Along with this social policy paper, NAS has also produced an Easy-to-Read leaflet, 'My Money, My Rights, My Options': <https://advocacy.ie/app/uploads/2024/02/NAS-Easy-to-Read-Leaflet-My-Money-My-Rights-My-Options-Final-Web.pdf> aimed at supporting people to understand their financial rights. You can find the report here: https://advocacy.ie/app/uploads/2024/10/NAS-Social-Policy-Paper_final-web.pdf for your review.



Planned Changes in Irish Home Support Services: Key Updates and Concerns *by Gerard O'Connor*

The landscape of Ireland's Home Support Services (HSS) is evolving, with some significant changes on the horizon aimed at improving care across the country. From new guidelines under the Home Support Tender to upcoming regulatory requirements, these changes are shaping the future of home support. Here's an overview of what's planned, along with the key issues and concerns.



New Statutory Regulations: Aiming for Accountability and Quality

The Irish government is also planning to introduce statutory regulations for HSS, mandating licenses from the Health Information and Quality Authority (HIQA) for all providers. This regulation, intended to promote accountability and standardisation, comes with both benefits and challenges:

Mandatory Licensing by HIQA: All home support providers will need a HIQA license to deliver services. Providers will be required to follow standardised protocols to continue operating, bringing a formal level of accountability to HSS across the country.

Stakeholder Involvement in Standards Development: HIQA is currently gathering input from clients, staff, and other stakeholders to shape these national standards. We encourage everyone involved in HSS to take part in this consultation process, as these standards will shape future care.

Home Support Tender: A Framework for Quality and Consistency

The proposed Home Support Tender introduces a structured, standardised framework for delivering HSS across Ireland. This new approach aims to ensure consistent, high-quality care by setting clear guidelines and performance measures.

Prioritising HSE Staff: New clients will now be initially assigned to Health Service Executive (HSE) staff. If HSE staff cannot meet the demand, services will be extended to "Approved Providers" from a vetted list. This prioritisation intends to improve the quality and availability of care.

Client Choice and Comprehensive Care Packages: Clients can choose from a selection of Approved Providers, who are required to offer a full range of services, including weekend support if necessary. These providers are expected to meet high standards, respond quickly to new service requests, and maintain continuity in their care.

Performance Monitoring: To maintain quality, the new system includes strict performance measures through Key Performance Indicators (KPIs). These KPIs will evaluate providers on critical aspects, such as:

- Staff Qualifications and Competency
- Garda Vetting for safety and reliability
- Service Delivery and Complaints Handling
- Capacity to Meet Client Demand

Providers who fail to meet these standards may face penalties, including suspension or removal from the service agreement, underscoring a strong focus on quality and accountability.

Disability Home Support Authorisation Scheme: Concerns and Advocacy

Alongside the broader HSS regulations, the Disability Home Support Authorisation Scheme is raising significant concerns among advocacy groups. The scheme's current design has led to questions about its scope and potential impact on those with specific needs, especially in disability support services.

Scope Limitations: At present, the scheme does not include Personal Assistance (PA) and Enhanced/Complex Care within its scope. This exclusion has prompted concerns among many groups, who argue that it could leave critical services for clients with complex needs underserved. These services are essential for many individuals, and their exclusion could disrupt the continuity and quality of care for those relying on specialised assistance.

Impact on Community Based Services: Many groups worry about the potential impact of the new scheme on existing community-led support organisations. These groups emphasise the importance of preserving a community-driven approach, which has proven effective in delivering personalised and flexible care to people with disabilities.

To address these concerns, advocacy groups are calling for more clarity around the scheme's rollout and assurances that it won't disrupt the valuable services currently provided by community-based organisations. Their goal is to ensure that the transition is smooth, transparent, and inclusive.

Moving Forward: How You Can Stay Informed and Involved

The planned changes in Ireland's HSS system mark a period of transformation, aiming for higher quality and more standardised care. However, these changes also highlight critical areas where input from clients, providers, and advocacy groups is essential to make sure that the system addresses everyone's needs.

As these regulations and frameworks continue to develop, your voice matters. Engaging with HIQA's consultation process and staying informed on the rollout of the Disability Home Support Authorisation Scheme are ways you can help shape the future of HSS in Ireland. Working together, we can help ensure that these changes enhance care standards without compromising the community-driven values and personalised care that clients rely on.

By understanding these upcoming changes and advocating for inclusive policies, we can collectively contribute to a home support system that serves everyone's needs effectively.

Highlights from the HSE Health and Wellbeing Annual Report 2023



HSE Health and Wellbeing reflects on a year of initiatives, collaboration, and innovation.

The HSE Health and Wellbeing Annual Report for 2023 shines a spotlight on the progress we've made in promoting healthier communities across Ireland. This report details our key achievements, showcasing the dedicated efforts of teams, partners, and communities who have contributed to improving health outcomes nationwide.

Embedding Prevention in Healthcare

The cornerstone of our work in 2023, as always, was the emphasis on prevention. The Making Every Contact Count (MECC) programme has continued to expand, ensuring that every interaction between

healthcare professionals and patients is an opportunity to promote healthier lifestyles. Over the past year, many of our healthcare staff have been trained to support patients in adopting behaviours that reduce the risk of chronic diseases such as heart disease, diabetes, and cancer. By equipping healthcare professionals with the tools to encourage behaviour change, we are embedding a culture of prevention that will benefit individuals and the healthcare system.

Tackling Health Inequalities

One of the most significant achievements outlined in the report is our work through the Sláintecare Healthy Communities initiative. This programme specifically targets the root causes of health inequalities, focusing on areas of deprivation where people are at greater risk of developing chronic illnesses due to factors such as smoking, poor diet, alcohol use, and physical inactivity.

By addressing the social determinants of health and delivering services in conjunction with local authorities we are delivering to those who need it most and we are actively working to reduce the gap in health outcomes between different population groups.

Strengthening Partnerships for Better Health

Collaboration is at the heart of many of our successes this year. As detailed in the Annual Report, partnerships with statutory and voluntary organisations, schools, local authorities, and community groups have allowed us to extend our reach and deepen our impact.

By working closely with organisations such as Tusla, Sport Ireland, and the community and voluntary sectors, we've been able to support local initiatives that encourage healthy behaviours, improve access to services, and empower communities to take control of their health. This collaborative approach is vital in tackling health disparities and ensuring that our programmes are tailored to meet the needs of the population.

Innovation Through Digital Health

The 2023 report also showcases how digital health innovations are transforming the way we deliver care. Through making systems like Quit.ie, MyChild.ie, AskAboutAlcohol.ie, MyOptions.ie, Man2Man.ie, Sexualwellbeing.ie and Healthpromotion.ie, we remain committed to providing clear, accurate, and accessible health information through various platforms and media channels, ensuring the public has access to clear, accurate, and engaging health information. These resources have been critical in providing accessible advice and tools that help people manage their health independently.

Winter Wellbeing *by Laura Mulqueen*

As winter sets in, bringing festive celebrations, it also presents unique challenges, particularly for those living with disabilities, their families, and personal assistants. At West Limerick Independent Living, we embrace care, compassion, and connection year-round, but these values hold special importance during the holiday season.

Supporting Each Other's Wellbeing

Winter's shorter days, colder weather, and the hustle of Christmas can impact physical and emotional health. Together, we can nurture wellbeing and community strength through simple actions:

- **Stay Active Indoors:** Try stretches, chair-based exercises, or activities everyone can join.
- **Eat Nutritious Meals:** Balance holiday treats with comforting, wholesome foods like soups or stews.
- **Get Fresh Air:** Even brief outings or time near a sunny window can boost mood and energy.
- **Prioritize Rest:** A consistent sleep routine helps maintain energy and resilience during darker months.

Mindfulness for the Season

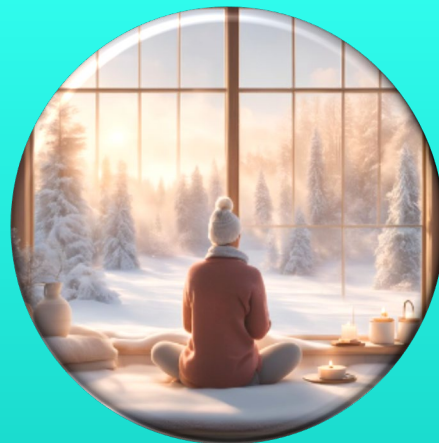
Mindfulness offers calm amidst the holiday rush.

- **Mindful Minutes:** Pause daily to breathe deeply and focus on the present.
- **Create Calm Spaces:** Dedicate a cozy corner to recharge, with soft lighting and soothing elements.
- **Savor the Senses:** Embrace festive sights, scents, and sounds, sharing moments of joy with loved ones.

Gratitude and Connection

Gratitude strengthens bonds and fosters community spirit.

- **Celebrate Small Wins:** Recognize daily achievements and share laughter.
- **Acknowledge Kindness:** Simple thanks—through words or notes—create closeness and appreciation.
- **Share Stories:** Swap winter memories or hopes for the year ahead to deepen connections.



Festive Self-Care for All

The season offers opportunities for warmth and balance:

- **Limit Overload:** Find a healthy rhythm between celebrations and quiet time.
- **Set Boundaries:** Communicate openly to avoid feeling overextended.
- **Engage in Traditions:** Simple acts like baking, decorating, or enjoying music bring joy and unity.

Looking Ahead with Hope

Winter reminds us that community is our strength. Let's support one another, cherish the festive season, and nurture the care and compassion that define West Limerick.



My personal experience working as a Personal Assistant *by Anonymous*

I'm writing this article at the request of Gerard O'Connor, former WLIL manager, for the In Touch magazine to reflect on my experiences with WLIL over the years. My only stipulation was that my name remains anonymous to protect the privacy of my clients—since PAs and staff who know me would also recognize the clients I work with.

So here it goes, after years of working as a personal assistant in the community, I've seen how meaningful this job can be, both for the people we assist and for us as PA's. Every day brings new experiences and personal growth, and it's great to know you've made a difference in someone's life.

Always See the Person, Not Just the Job

Each person we work with is unique, and taking the time to understand their personal needs and preferences really pays off. When we build trust, I notice how much happier and more at ease they feel—and I enjoy the work even more.

Patience and Communication Are Everything

Over the years, I've learned that being a good listener is just as important as anything else we do. It takes patience and clear communication to help people feel understood and respected, especially those who may struggle with speech or other communication challenges.

Embrace Learning and Support

Teamwork has been key to my experience. Working closely with other personal assistants, nurses, therapists, family members has taught me new skills and has helped me provide better support. Never hesitate to ask questions or seek advice; it helps you grow and supports your clients even more.

Adaptability

Situations can change in this role, and being adaptable is essential. Whether it's a shift in a client's disability or health needs, flexibility ensures smoother service and a sense of stability for the client.



Respect Individual Preferences

Every client has unique preferences and needs. Taking the time to listen to and respect these preferences helps build trust and ensures the person feels genuinely supported, creating a partnership. Empower clients to do as much as they can for themselves. Encouraging independence, even in small tasks, can be invaluable for someone's confidence and quality of life.

Maintain Boundaries

While rapport is essential, clear boundaries help sustain a professional relationship. This means respecting privacy, confidentiality, and the balance of support versus over-involvement.

Self-Care is Key

Also, taking care of yourself allows you to care better for others. Regular breaks, debriefing when required, or simply having a day off ensures you're present and at your best for your clients. In this field, work can be physically and emotionally demanding, so we need to pace ourselves. By looking after my own well-being, I find I'm a better, more resilient PA.

Being a personal assistant has brought me so much purpose and joy, and I hope you find the same fulfillment in your journey.

Introduction to NACIL (National Alliance of Centres for Independent Living)

by Margaret O'Connor

The Centres for Independent Living (CIL) Movement was established in Ireland in 1992. Their work focuses on the individual with a disability – offering themselves and other individuals' real choice and control over their lives and their work continues to this day

There are currently 17 individual CILs operating across Ireland in every HSE Region. We all have our own identity and funding but share the same ethos and core mission of Independent Living



**National Alliance
of Centres for
Independent Living**

All CILs are not -for-profit organisations governed by dedicated volunteer directors and trustees.

We provide a very broad range of supports for people with physical and sensory disabilities.

We provide almost half of all Personal Assistance hours (PA) hours provided nationally and support over 70% of all adult PA service users in Ireland

CILs are unique service providers with a core mission to support individuals with physical and sensory disabilities in achieving independent living and full participation in society.

Our ethos aligns with the UN Convention on the Rights of Persons with Disabilities, which promotes, protects and ensures the full and equal enjoyment of all human rights and fundamental freedoms for people with disabilities.

Many of the CILs, who are also members of the Disability Federation of Ireland (DFI) requested DFI to facilitate a process to explore the feasibility of creating a more formal CIL network. It was recognised that while maintaining local independence autonomy and identity remains important, working together can generate collective strength that will bolster the Irish Independent Living Movement.

The individual CILs engaged very positively and recently agreed to establish the National Alliance OF Centres for Independent Living (NACIL).

The objectives of NACIL are:

- Upholding the Ethos of Independent Living
- Representing the collective voice of CILs
- Supporting the national network of CILs
- Advocating for equality and transparency in service provision
- Influencing the development and delivery of high-quality sustainable services

The NACIL planned to host an official launch of the Alliance in the Mansion House Dublin, but this was postponed because of the upcoming election

Meanwhile, the representatives of the NACIL continue to meet regularly to discuss issues within the sector, share information and expertise, etc.

The NACIL has also participated in an information session with Bernard O'Regan, Assistant National Director of the HSE and Head of the National Disability Team, Access and Integration, to discuss significant changes that are proposed by the HSE.

The NACIL members are also meeting shortly with Gerard Tully, Assistant Director of the HSE and Head of Stability and Sustainability. This meeting will give CILs another opportunity to have input in the planning and design of changes being proposed by the HSE in relation to service provision to people with disabilities.

The members of NACIL will continue to work together to achieve their objectives and shared mission of supporting those with physical and sensory disabilities to live best lives and enjoy full participation in all aspects of Irish society.

Pamela Wallace WLIL Director

My name is Pamela Wallace, and I am 44 years old. In 2004 I began getting numbness in my leg and was feeling very tired which was put down to poor circulation and chronic fatigue syndrome. Towards the end of 2004 and January 2005, the symptoms were becoming worse, and I was losing power in my legs and arms. I had a particularly frightening incident on February 1, 2005, where I lost power in both legs, and I decided that I needed to go to hospital, so I drove to the Regional Hospital in Limerick.

The doctors discovered a swelling on my spine at the base of my neck and they decided to transfer me to Cork Regional Hospital on February 2nd. I walked into the ambulance that afternoon and I never walked again. Once I got to Cork I had lost the power to use my arms and legs and I was deteriorating quickly. That night I was having difficulty breathing and had a tracheostomy to have a ventilator breathe for me. I was transferred to the Intensive Care Unit and was on life support for the next few months.

While in intensive care my muscles wasted away, and I was unable to eat or speak while doctors tried to diagnose what was causing my condition. After a couple of months in intensive care they decided to do an angiogram which led to them discovering I had a brain AVM (arteriovenous malformation) which was a tangle of blood vessels in the brain. To treat this, I underwent surgery where they blocked off the damaged vessels and I could begin my recovery. Because of the damage to the nerve cells in my spine from the AVM I was now quadriplegic but as I was treated in Cork I began to speak again, eat food and breathe on my own over the next number of months. After 5 months in Cork Regional Hospital, I was transferred to the National Rehabilitation Hospital in Dun Laoghaire where I spent another 9 months undergoing physiotherapy and occupational therapy.

During this time, I was put in contact with West Limerick Independent Living who provided personal assistants for me on occasions where I was able to return to my parents' house for a weekend. In the Spring of 2006, I was discharged from Dun Laoghaire and my partner Eimhin and I moved into an extension at the back of my parents' house. WLIL have been providing me with Personal Assistants daily since then. I was always a very independent person, so I wanted to move on with my life after losing an important part of my twenties.

In March 2009 Eimhin and I went to New York for the first time to celebrate his 30th birthday. On October 3, 2010, we got engaged in Paris on the night before my 30th birthday. We moved into our own house in Castletroy the week before Christmas in December 2012 and on February 20, 2013, we welcomed our

wonderful son Ethan into the world. We were married in September of that year and had our honeymoon in Boston. I have always loved travelling and have recently returned from Amsterdam with my two boys, and we had a wonderful holiday for our 10th anniversary last year where we took Ethan to New York for his first trip to America.

Without West Limerick Independent Living none of this would have been possible. I cannot feed or dress myself so while Eimhin is at work and Ethan at school I have the girls who help me to get ready for family time later in the day when my parents call, and my son & husband return home for the evening. WLIL have always been most helpful and value my opinion as a person and not just a client and they recently asked me to become a director which was a big honour, and I was delighted to accept.



Home in Time for Christmas

Driving home for Christmas one misty night,

The chill and loneliness haunt my journey.

I travel alone on these deserted roads,

Only timeless festive tunes to keep me company.

As my childhood home is in sight,

The chill and loneliness fade away.

The brightly coloured lights welcome me and

A large, decorated tree illuminates the window.

I step outside to the bitter winter cold,

I open the door and instantly feel the warmth,

Greeted by family for the first time in months.

The air is filled with Christmas spices,

The open fire sparks and warms my soul,

The joyful smiling faces lift my heart,

The hot mugs of tea bring me comfort,

The lively banter and music say welcome home

And

The warm mince pies say it's Christmas time.

by Alison Oldfield

Big Changes coming in Employee of the Season Award: *by Margaret O' Brien*



Recognising and celebrating the dedication and hard work of our staff is essential for fostering a positive and motivated work environment. At West Limerick Independent Living, the Employee of the Season award is designed to honor outstanding staff members who consistently go above and beyond in their roles. Recently, management has been reviewing ways to improve the nomination process, considering valuable suggestions from the recent employee survey.

Proposed Nomination Process: Based on feedback from the employee survey, a practical and effective solution has been proposed: involving Clients and Coordinators in the nomination process. Here's how it will work:

Client Nominations and Coordinator Nominations: Service Coordinators, who are in regular contact with clients at least once a month, will often discuss PAs who go above and beyond their role during these conversations. If a client feels a PA deserves recognition, the Service Coordinator will ask if they would like to nominate the PA. Both the client and the coordinator will then complete the nomination form together, ensuring the PA meets the criteria for the award.

This approach ensures the client is not forced to choose one PA over another but rather allows for the recognition of any PA who deserves acknowledgment. Coordinator and client will nominate an employee for the award. Nominations will also be accepted from the client's family, and if a client wishes to nominate an

employee with input from their Coordinator, that is allowed, provided the nomination meets the established criteria.

Management Review: Once the nominations have been submitted, the coordinators will no longer be involved in the process. The management team will review all the nominations and select the most deserving candidate for the award.

This proposed process offers several key benefits:

Fair Representation: This approach ensures that even lone workers, who might not interact much with colleagues, have a fair chance of being nominated.

Informed Nominations: Coordinators are likely to have a comprehensive understanding of the personal assistants' performance and contributions, leading to more informed nominations.

Streamlined Process: It simplifies the nomination process, making it easier for clients, as they won't need to navigate the nomination process themselves. If they wish, they can put their PA forward for nomination during the monthly call. Each coordinator can only put one personal assistant forward and must submit a completed criteria template.

Prize Money

In addition, there are changes to the prize money for the award. The first-place winner will receive €300, while runners-up will each receive €100. This aims to further motivate and reward outstanding performance among staff. This approach aligns well with our current working environment and addresses the challenges highlighted by employees in the recent survey.

By involving Coordinators in the nomination process and updating the prize structure, we can ensure a fair, informed, and streamlined selection of the award, celebrating those who truly make a difference to the lives of people we serve.



Employee of the Season

Sabrina Doran had the pleasure of presenting Liam Colman with the Employee of the Season award. Liam a dedicated Personal Assistant, has consistently demonstrated his commitment and excellence in the role. Liam has proven to be an invaluable PA, delivering outstanding support and showing strong work ethic that has earned him this well-deserved recognition.



West Limerick
INDEPENDENT LIVING

Tribute to Peter Moore by Gerard O'Connor

It is with sadness that we hear of the passing of Peter Moore, a founding member of the Center for Independent Living (CIL) in Ireland, following a brief illness.

Peter was one of the “seven individuals” who initiated the Independent Living Movement in Ireland, establishing the CIL in 1992. His contributions extended to the Forum of People with Disabilities and Greater Dublin Independent Living (GDIL). He was also a writer, known for his iconic biography of Liam Maguire, “Rebel on Wheels.”



Peter not only lived an independent life but was also dedicated to supporting other disabled individuals through peer mentoring. Peter's activism spanned various organisations, including CIL/ILMI, GDIL, Áiseanna Tacaíochta (ÁT), and the Forum of People with Disabilities. His efforts were always focused on strategic change, he was known for his thoughtful analysis of organisational barriers. The board of West Limerick Independent Living extend their deepest sympathies to Peter's family and friends. Rest in Power, Peter.

HSE launches Winter Campaigns Post date 31 October 2024

The HSE's Winter vaccination programme is underway with the roll out of the free flu and COVID-19 vaccines to recommended groups. The HSE's winter campaigns are underway with the launch of the winter vaccination programme to recommended groups. Both flu and COVID-19 vaccines are recommended for:

- people aged 60 and over,
- healthcare workers,
- anyone who is pregnant or has a long-term health condition.

Visit www.hse.ie for more information. Both vaccines are available from participating GPs and pharmacies and can be given at the same time. Healthcare worker vaccination clinics will also take place in many workplaces across the country.

The 'Top up' advertising campaign 'is running on TV, Video-on-demand, radio, digital display, search and social media promoting the winter vaccines. Digital partnerships and digital display featuring a specific message for anyone who is pregnant is also live.



The HSE is also urging parents of children aged 2-17 to get the free nasal spray flu vaccine for their child. Children are twice as likely as adults to catch the flu. The vaccine is being offered in some schools and is available at participating GPs and pharmacies across the country. A national 'kids' flu' advertising campaign targeting parents of children aged 2-17 is running on Video-on-demand, radio, digital audio, digital display, search, social media and on screens in GP clinics and pharmacies.

As much as we can prepare for winter by getting the vaccinations that are available, inevitably people will get sick. That's why the HSE is also running a national advertising campaign featuring 'Thank You' campaign to remind people to stay at home when they are unwell because viruses can spread easily. The campaign will run on Video-on-demand, radio, digital audio, search and social media. Reminders to encourage people to keep well over winter by eating healthily, exercising, keeping medications up to date etc. will be promoted on social media throughout the winter months.

Messages highlighting where to go to get the right care, from the right place, will also be running across social media platforms over the winter months, to help everyone get the care they need, when they need it.

Employee Satisfaction at West Limerick Independent Living: Insights from the 2024 Survey

by Gerard O'Connor

In October 2024, West Limerick Independent Living (WLIL) conducted an employee satisfaction survey to assess the well-being and engagement of its staff. The survey, completed by 25 employees out of 90 (representing about 30% of the workforce), highlighted the strengths and areas for improvement within the organization, which provides personal assistant services to individuals with disabilities. Below are the key takeaways from the survey results.

Workplace Environment and Job Satisfaction

Overall, WLIL employees reported a positive sense of belonging and job satisfaction, with most feeling they are part of a supportive company culture. The flexible work arrangements were particularly valued, with many employees appreciating the non-traditional work hours that allow them to manage family responsibilities.

Company Culture and Leadership

The survey indicated that WLIL has a strong foundation in company culture, emphasising values like empowerment, inclusion, and respect. Most employees felt that leadership is approachable and motivated by the company's vision. However, there were suggestions to formalize mentorship programs for new hires to improve the onboarding experience, addressing concerns about inconsistency in the induction process.



Precious presented Gift card to Theresa for completing the employee survey, other staff who also completed it failed to attend the presentation.

Communication and Feedback

Open communication was generally well-regarded, though there were some calls for improvement:

Feedback indicated that the response times for the out-of-hours phone service could be improved, with delays sometimes impacting on employee support & staff noted a need for more detailed and prompt communication from management.

Work-Life Balance and Professional Development

A highlight of the survey was the positive feedback on work-life balance, with flexible hours being a standout feature. Employees praised WLIL for accommodating family responsibilities and providing opportunities for job-related training. However, there was interest in expanding professional development opportunities, including first aid training and certification support, to enhance skillsets further.

Areas for Improvement

While satisfaction was generally high, employees identified several areas where WLIL could enhance the workplace:

- **Wage Frequency:** Some staff expressed a preference for weekly pay instead of the current bi-weekly schedule.
- **Travel Compensation:** There was a suggestion to cover mileage from home to the first client visit, aligning with practices in the HSE.
- **Enhanced Recognition:** Expanding the recognition system to ensure inclusivity and consistency in acknowledging employee achievements.

Conclusion

Some staff have expressed a preference for a weekly pay schedule instead of the current bi-weekly system. However, due to the increased complexity of our payroll processes—including additional duties related to revenue reporting, pension contributions, and sick leave—the transition to a weekly payroll is not feasible at this time. The added administrative demands have placed significant strain on our small payroll team. Nevertheless, we are committed to maintaining the current bi-weekly schedule and will make every effort to avoid shifting to a monthly payroll, despite the challenges posed by increasing bureaucratic requirements.

The 2024 employee survey at West Limerick Independent Living paints a picture of a company that is supportive, flexible, and attentive to its employees' needs. While the feedback was largely positive, addressing the communication challenges, enhancing recognition, and refining the induction process could further improve job satisfaction. As WLIL continues to grow, these insights provide a roadmap for fostering a more engaging and fulfilling work environment for all employees.

Thank you to all who participated in the employee survey, your feedback is very welcome and helpful in identifying areas for improvement.

Popular Christmas Traditions Around the World: *by Margaret O'Brien*

Christmas is celebrated in many ways across the globe, with each country and culture adding its own unique touch to the holiday season. From festive meals to joyful decorations, here's a look at some of the most popular Christmas traditions:

1. Christmas Tree Decorations

One of the most well-known traditions, decorating a Christmas tree, is practiced by families worldwide. From the United States to Europe, people adorn their trees with ornaments, lights, and tinsel. In some countries, such as Germany, the tradition dates back centuries. Families gather to hang ornaments, often to share memories and create new ones.

2. Christmas Markets

In many European countries like Germany and Austria, Christmas markets are a highlight of the holiday season. These festive markets feature twinkling lights, handcrafted gifts, seasonal treats, and the warmth of mulled wine.



3. Santa Claus and Gift Giving

The story of Santa Claus is beloved worldwide, and his tradition of gift-giving is central to Christmas celebrations. Known as Father Christmas in some countries, the tradition of leaving milk and cookies for Santa is popular in the United States, while in the UK, children often hang stockings by the fireplace. In countries like Sweden, the holiday is celebrated with a visit from St. Lucia, who brings gifts and treats to children.

4. Festive Feasts

Food plays an important role in Christmas celebrations, with many families gathering around a festive feast. Traditional Christmas meals vary from country to country—roast turkey or ham is a popular choice in the U.S. and UK, while countries like Italy enjoy a feast of fish, pasta, and panettone. In Mexico, the holiday meal might include tamales, and in Australia, a summer barbecue is common.

5. Christmas Carols and Music

Singing Christmas carols is a popular tradition, especially in the weeks leading up to Christmas Day. In many cultures, groups of carol singers go door-to-door, spreading holiday cheer with festive songs. Music is also central to Christmas celebrations in churches, where hymns like "Silent Night" and "O Holy Night" are sung in reverence.

6. Nativity Scenes

In many Christian households, the nativity scene, depicting the birth of Jesus Christ, is an important part of Christmas. These scenes can range from simple displays to elaborate dioramas, often with figurines representing the Holy Family, angels, shepherds, and animals. In countries like Italy and Spain, nativity scenes are a major part of the holiday decor.

7. Midnight Mass

Attending a Midnight Mass on Christmas Eve is a deeply rooted tradition in many Christian cultures. Families gather to celebrate the religious significance of Christmas with candlelit services, prayers, and hymns. In some countries, this is followed by a festive meal, while in others, it marks the start of Christmas Day celebrations.

8. Boxing Day

While Christmas Day itself is the main holiday in many countries, Boxing Day, celebrated the day after Christmas, is a significant tradition in the UK, Canada, and other Commonwealth nations. Traditionally, it was a day for giving gifts to the less fortunate, and today it is often associated with shopping, sports, and family gatherings.

9. Christmas Lights

Decorating homes with Christmas lights is a widespread tradition in countries like the United States and the UK. Many communities host light displays, and families compete to have the most spectacular light show. In places like the Philippines, (star-shaped lanterns) are used to decorate homes and streets.

10. The Advent Calendar

Counting down the days until Christmas is made easier with an Advent calendar. This popular tradition involves opening a small door or window each day in December, revealing a treat or image that leads up to Christmas Eve. The tradition is widely celebrated in countries across Europe, and it's a fun way for children to anticipate the holiday.

Christmas traditions are what make the holiday season special. Whether it's spending time with family, exchanging gifts, or participating in festive customs, these traditions bring people together in the spirit of joy and goodwill.

Festive Christmas Welcoming Drink Ideas

A festive welcoming drink is a wonderful way to set the tone for a Christmas celebration. Whether you're hosting a cozy family dinner or a grand holiday party, a signature drink can add a touch of seasonal cheer. Here are a few ideas for Christmas drinks that will delight your guests.



Mulled Wine

A classic Christmas favorite, mulled wine is perfect for warming up on a cold winter's night. Made by simmering red wine with spices like cinnamon, cloves, and nutmeg, along with orange zest and sugar, this drink fills the house with a comforting aroma. Serve it in heatproof glasses or mugs for a cozy, festive touch.

Ingredients:

- 1 bottle red wine
- 1 orange (sliced)
- 1/4 cup brandy (optional)
- 3 cinnamon sticks
- 4 cloves
- 2 star anise
- 1/4 cup honey or sugar (adjust to taste)

Directions:

1. In a large saucepan, combine all ingredients and heat over low heat for 15-20 minutes, stirring occasionally.
2. Do not allow it to boil. Once warmed and the flavors have melded together, strain the spices and serve.



2. Eggnog (my favorite)

Eggnog is a rich, creamy holiday beverage made with milk, sugar, eggs, and spices, often with a dash of rum or bourbon. It's a beloved Christmas tradition in many countries, offering a sweet, festive start to any celebration.

Ingredients:

- 4 large eggs
- 1/2 cup sugar
- 1 cup milk
- 1 cup heavy cream
- 1/2 cup rum or bourbon (optional)
- 1 tsp vanilla extract
- Ground nutmeg (for garnish)

Directions:

1. In a bowl, beat eggs and sugar until smooth.
2. In a saucepan, combine milk and cream, heat over medium heat until hot but not boiling.
3. Gradually whisk the hot milk mixture into the egg mixture.
4. Return the mixture to the saucepan and cook over low heat until it thickens slightly.
5. Stir in rum or bourbon (optional) and vanilla extract.
6. Pour into glasses and garnish with a sprinkle of nutmeg.



Fire Safety Tips for a Safe Christmas *by Sabrina Doran*

Christmas is a time for joy, but it also brings a higher risk of fires. Here are some tips to stay safe:

1. **Christmas Tree:** Choose an artificial tree with a CE mark or a fresh, green real tree. Water real trees and keep them away from heat sources. Turn off lights when you leave the house or go to bed.
2. **Candles:** Use LED candles if possible. Keep real candles away from flammable items and never leave them unattended.
3. **Cooking:** Be extra cautious in the kitchen. Don't leave stoves unattended and keep flammable items away from heat.
4. **Child Safety:** Keep lighters and matches out of reach. Know where fire safety equipment is located and plan escape routes.
5. **Decorations:** Avoid placing decorations near heat or open flames. Turn off lighted decorations when unattended.
6. **Electrics:** Don't overload sockets or use extra extension leads, as this can cause electrical fires.
7. **Fireplace and Chimney:** Use a fire guard, especially with children, and have chimneys cleaned annually.
8. **Fire Extinguisher and Blanket:** Have these on hand and know how to use them. Replace extinguishers every few years.
9. **Fireworks:** Fireworks are illegal in some areas and can be dangerous. Stick to safe, legal alternatives like sparklers.
10. **Outdoor Lights:** Use lights rated for outdoor use only and avoid using them indoors.
11. **Alarms:** Install and regularly test smoke and carbon monoxide alarms, especially in hallways and stairwells.
12. **Cigarettes:** Smoke outdoors when possible. If smoking indoors, make sure cigarettes are fully extinguished.

Stay Safe: A little planning goes a long way in keeping your holiday season safe and festive. Enjoy peace of mind with these fire safety measures.



Welcoming New Personal Assistants to WLIL

We are thrilled to welcome (L-R) Melissa, Gabriela, Edel, Bernie, Mary, and Liane as the latest additions to the West Limerick Independent Living team as personal assistants. With their enthusiasm and dedication to improving the lives of others, we are confident they will make a meaningful impact, including:

- Strengthening our team's capacity to deliver compassionate, personalised support.
- Enhancing the experience of those we serve with their fresh perspectives and energy.
- Fostering a positive and collaborative work environment.

We look forward to the valuable contributions they will bring to our community. If you know someone who would make an outstanding personal assistant, please invite them to visit our website, www.limerickcil.com, for information on joining our team.



HAPPY CHRISTMAS

FIND THE DIFFERENCE Christmas Puzzles

4 Letter Words
BELL
SNOW

5 Letter Words
ANGEL
COCOA
ELVES
HOLLY

6 Letter Words
LIGHTS
SLEIGH
TINSEL
WINTER
WREATH

7 Letter Words
CHIMNEY
GARLAND
PAGEANT
RUDOLPH
SNOWMAN

8 Letter Words
CAROLING
DECEMBER
EXCHANGE
ORNAMENT
PRESENTS
REINDEER
WRAPPING

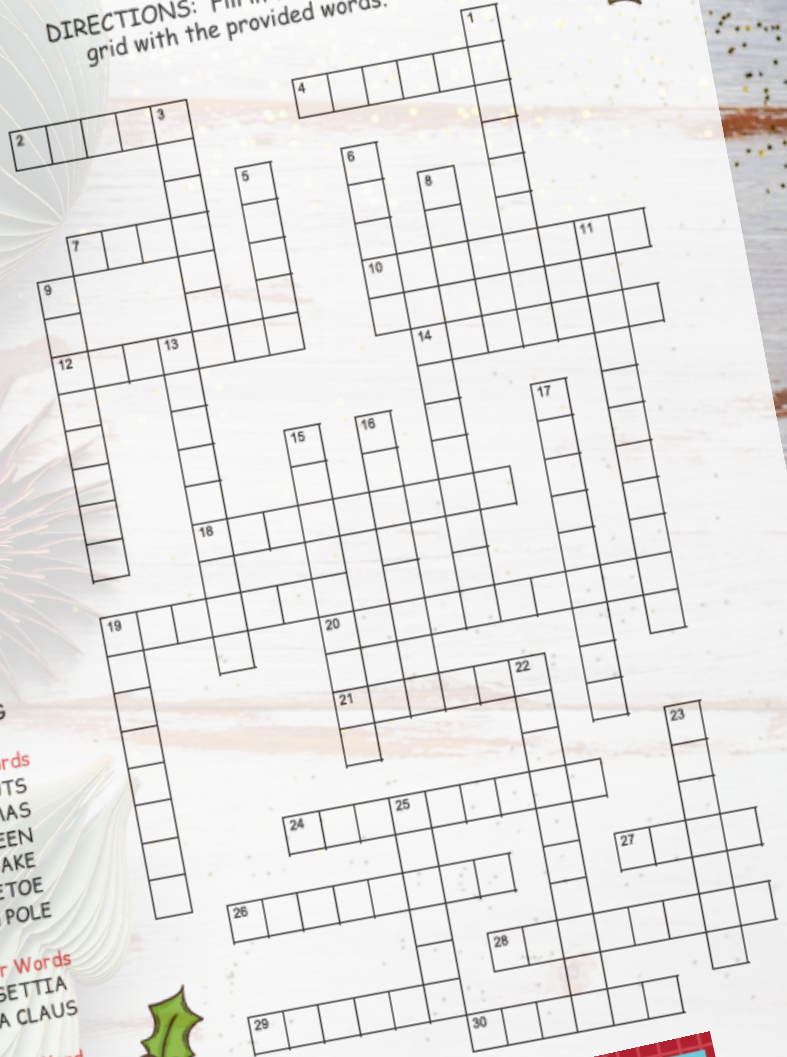
9 Letter Words
CHESTNUTS
CHRISTMAS
EVERGREEN
FRUITCAKE
MISTLETOE
NORTH POLE

10 Letter Words
POINSETTIA
SANTA CLAUS

11 Letter Word
GINGERBREAD

Christmas JOY

DIRECTIONS: Fill in the crossword grid with the provided words.



Find 2 same pictures



Find 2 same pictures



FIND 10 DIFFERENCES





Horoscopes for 2025



Aries (March 21-April 19) For those who are Aries, their outcomes in 2025 might be average or even above average. With Saturn's particular grace, particularly through the month of March, you will be able to achieve favourable outcomes in a number of areas. After this the results may remain comparatively weak. Nonetheless, even after the month of March those with international connections can continue to achieve positive outcomes. The transit of Jupiter will also keep your financial side strong till mid-May. This indicates that people will see you as succeeding in your business this year in general.



Taurus (April 20-May 20) People born under the sign of Taurus, the year 2025 may require more work from you, but it may also yield positive outcomes from your efforts. Saturn appears to be producing positive benefits after making you put in extra effort, particularly until March 2025. It is possible to reap the full rewards of work after March 2025. This implies that although extra effort won't be required, the outcomes will still reflect the effort. Up to May, the Rahu transit is pointing to excellent outcomes for you. There may be some difficulties at work after May.



Gemini (May 21-June 20) The year 2025 might be somewhat better for Gemini individuals. Thus, 2025 might out to be a better year than 2024. By March, Saturn expects to offer some unexpected assistance. After that, by exerting more effort, you can also produce positive outcomes. In other words, even though this year will need a lot of work, the outcomes could be considerably greater and fulfilling. It will be crucial to make an effort to keep positive relationships with your elders and co-workers throughout Rahu's transit. Religion, spirituality, and commitment to God will be essential in addition to hard work. Only then will you be able to retain mental calm, which will have an obvious effect on your personal, professional, and business life.



Cancer (June 21-July 22) Cancer people, the year 2025 can provide you relief from major issues. You can feel relief from previous problems and notice a fresh zeal and energy within yourself, especially after March. It will be evident that you are growing under the guidance of the elders. The problems do not seem to be going away completely yet, but you will be able to rise a sigh of relief as the problems reduce. There is still a chance to make large gains in May. At the same time, expenses may also increase after May. Those who are living overseas or far from their birthplace may still experience positive outcomes after May, but others will need to exercise even more caution and prudence when it comes to family and financial affairs.



Leo (July 23-August 22) Leos, 2025 could be a strong year in some areas and a weak one in others. This indicates that the year may bring about a range of outcomes. Results from Saturn's March transit could be average at best and poor at worst. As a result, challenges or issues may arise in subjects pertaining to business and employment. Situations may also arise for transfer or change in job. On the whole, nevertheless, this year should be productive in terms of the economy. Because in the beginning of the year, Jupiter's aspect will be on wealth position.



Virgo (August 23-September 22) For you Virgos, 2025 may bring average or better than average outcomes. On the other hand, when it comes to the transit of Saturn, things appear to be going really well from the beginning of the year until the month of March. Later, Saturn's transit could occasionally provide average outcomes. Jupiter's transit is producing excellent results through the middle of May, after which it may produce inconsistent results. The advantage of all of this is that Rahu Ketu's influence from your first and seventh houses will stop after May. Businesses will no longer face difficulties as a result. Compatibility will also extend to marital concerns. There will be no barriers standing in the way of marriage.



Libra (September 23-October 22) For those of you who are Libras, 2025 seems to be a very positive year for you overall. Particularly after May, the conditions may be favourable. You can overcome your past issues and make progress in new directions with the help of Saturn's auspicious transit in the month of March. Excellent outcomes are possible, particularly when it comes to work-related issues, etc. Your ability to think clearly and analytically will now enable you to plan more effectively and succeed in business. The planet Jupiter's favourability after mid-May will also aid in removing significant barriers. You'll experience better luck.



Scorpio (October 23-November 21) Scorpios, 2025 could bring you a variety of outcomes. It appears that Saturn's transit from the fourth house after March is controlling its negative aspects; however, in May, Rahu's transit from the same house will occur. As a result, while some significant issues may go, others may resurface. Jupiter's transit appears to be favourably affecting you through the seventh house until mid-May. After that, however, Jupiter's entry into the eighth house will make Jupiter somewhat weaker. The impact on the second house won't cause any significant financial issues, but the sources of revenue can stay rather slow.



Sagittarius (November 22-December 21) People born under the sign of Sagittarius, 2025 could bring both strong and weak outcomes. Although the transit of Jupiter will continue to be weak until May 2025, the transit of Saturn is entirely good for you until March 2025. Jupiter's transit will start to work in your favour after mid-May. Thus, Saturn's transit will wane after March. This is how each of these large transits can have both strong and weak outcomes. Nonetheless, since Rahu's transit will eliminate its negativity from the fourth house starting in May, there will be a wealth of favourable outcomes.



Capricorn (December 22-January 21) People born under the sign of Capricorn, the year 2025 may be highly beneficial for resolving past issues. You may be able to move past issues that you have struggled with for a while. Also, the family's ongoing conflict will soon settle. Change is also possible if you try switching jobs, careers, etc. Additionally, business may go through change. Additionally, launching a new business will be possible. You'll continue to have a very powerful mind. Your capacity for making decisions will grow. From somewhere in between, good news can also be heard. In spite of all of this, after May it would be prudent to continue to be vigilant in areas of family and finances.



Aquarius (January 20-February 18) Those who are Aquarians may experience mixed fortunes in 2025. You might occasionally achieve better than average outcomes. On the one hand, Saturn's influence in the first house is waning after March, which will help you feel more energized and vigorous. You'll have the ability to speed up unfinished tasks. Traveling will also provide advantages for you. However, following May, Rahu's transit in the first house may cause the same issues to arise once again. The nature of the issues, however, might continue to be mild and minor; in other words, they might not entirely disappear but they won't be as bad as they were previously. As such, it makes sense to look after your health and work in accordance with your real energy.



Pisces (February 19-March 20) Pisces, the year 2025 may be a mixed one for you. Rahu's influence will leave your first house after May, which will help you feel less stressed and more at ease. On the other side, starting in March, Saturn will enter your first house, which may make you feel lazy. You might therefore handle your work-related business with a certain amount of carelessness. You can also get good outcomes if you work diligently and avoid being reckless. This year, the transit of Jupiter will also bring you varied outcomes. There's a possibility that your honesty will pay off after the middle of May.

Ireland's Budget and Disability Sector 2025 by

Alison Oldfield

Overall, the announcement of Ireland's Budget for 2025 was fairly positive for people with disabilities and the Disability Sector with increases in funding and payments across the sector. However, the Disability Federation Ireland and disability advocacy groups have called for more to be done for the sector with greater alignment of services, to close the gaps in disability services and to address issues of disability poverty and high unemployment rates of people with disabilities.



Individuals with Disabilities

For people availing of disability allowance, there was a double weekly payment in October and a once-off payment of €400 in November. The weekly payment will increase by €12 in January 2025. Carers for people with disabilities will also avail of increases in carers allowance by 12 euro and proportional increases for qualifying adults from January 2025. A once-off double payment was paid to people availing of Carer's Allowance in October 2024.

Disability Services

Several significant measures were introduced to support individuals with disabilities and €3.2 billion was allocated to specialist disability services which is a 11.6% increase from last year, making it a historic high. Key components include funding to expand residential placements, with €106.6 million for additional residential spaces, particularly for transitioning younger people from nursing homes into community housing. There's also €30.8 million earmarked for respite services, with options such as equine therapy and after-school clubs designed to support individuals who choose to remain at home. The budget has also favoured the home care sector with aims to increase home support services by adding 40,000 Home Support hours and 20,000 Personal Assistance hours, along with initiatives to address pay disparities in the care sector, which may improve service delivery by attracting and retaining staff. This proves to be welcoming news to the home care sector where staff retention and staffing has proven challenging, in recent times, especially since the covid pandemic. Investments were also made in children's services, with continued funding for Children's Disability Network Teams to support faster assessments and therapies for children, which has been strongly advocated for in the sector.

For adult services, €40.3 million will enhance day services and multi-disciplinary therapies, including funding for a neurorehabilitation team and support for the recently launched Autism Innovation Fund. The Disability Federation of Ireland and other disability advocacy groups, however, continue to call for greater alignment of services with the UN Convention on the Rights of Persons with Disabilities, emphasising that additional measures are still needed to fully meet the demand and provide equitable access across regions to address issues in disability services gaps and disability poverty as Ireland remains to have the highest rate of poverty for people with disability in the European Union.



Local Link Limerick Clare is proud to offer vital rural transport services throughout Limerick and Clare. Our services have expanded significantly in recent years, making it easier than ever to travel for work, education, training, or to access essential services in your local town or village. Whether you need to reach nearby destinations or connect to larger towns and cities, Local Link Limerick Clare is here to help.



For more information, visit our website www.localinklc.ie follow us on Facebook, or contact our office in Newcastle West on +353 69 22311. We're always happy to assist with any queries you may have.

Wishing you a very Merry Christmas from all of us at Local Link Limerick Clare!