



### **CUTS TO SPECIAL NEEDS ASSISTANTS - INDEPENDENT APPEALS ESSENTIAL**

**APRIL 2010  
ISSUE 45**

Inclusion Ireland has received many enquiries from parents and schools about cuts to Special Needs Assistants (SNAs) since Christmas. The National Council for Special Education (NCSE) published a long awaited review on 1<sup>st</sup> April, which shows 358 SNAs have been taken out of the system. The reason given for many of these cuts is 'diminishing care needs'. However, parents have contacted Inclusion Ireland stating the needs of their children have not diminished and cuts are not justified. These cuts are happening in the middle of school term, a procedure that many school principals say has never happened before. This is a very unsettling and disturbing experience for children. Inclusion Ireland has called on the Government to provide an independent appeals system for parents who are unhappy with cuts to education resources for their children with special education needs. Currently, if a parent is unhappy with a decision the only appeals process is an internal appeals procedure through the NCSE. Inclusion Ireland has met with Irish Autism Action, Down Syndrome Ireland and the National Parents and Siblings Alliance on collaborative action around recent reductions in education resources. As part of such action, all four organisations wrote to former Education Minister Batt O'Keeffe, requesting a meeting on cuts to resources for children with special education needs. Minister O'Keeffe's private secretary replied that it was more "appropriate" for the NCSE to respond directly. Following a Ministerial reshuffle, Minister O'Keeffe has been replaced by Tánaiste Mary Coughlan TD, in a reshaped Department of Education and Skills. Inclusion Ireland will now request a Ministerial meeting on the implications of the SNA report. Inclusion Ireland is asking parents to contact them with experiences of recent cuts, or reduction of resources. If you are a parent of a child in primary or secondary school and have had recent issues in this area, please forward details of those issues to [info@inclusionireland.ie](mailto:info@inclusionireland.ie) or contact Siobhán on 01-8559891. The SNA Review can be accessed at [www.ncse.ie](http://www.ncse.ie).

### **IHRC REPORT CALLS FOR INSPECTION OF SERVICES**

The Irish Human Rights Commission (IHRC) published a report in March expressing concerns over care standards and basic access to therapies at the John Paul Centre in Ballybane, Galway. The Report was initiated five years ago by a group of parents who were worried their children were developing challenging behaviour due to a lack of access to therapeutic interventions. The way in which funding is provided to disability services was a major focus of the report. It says a person-centred approach, which focuses on the specific needs of individuals, should be introduced. It urges the department and the HSE to ensure more detailed service-level agreements are drawn up and that these agreements are made public. It also calls on the Government to ratify the UN Convention on Rights of Persons with Disabilities and to provide a statutory right to an assessment of needs. It also reports that communication between parents and management was not satisfactory. The report also calls for more frequent reviews of care for people with disabilities in residential services. 8,000 adults and 400 children are today living in disability services that are not inspected, despite being state funded. The full report can be accessed at [www.ihrc.ie](http://www.ihrc.ie).

## HSE'S PROTECTED DISCLOSURES OF INFORMATION

From time to time staff working in services contact Inclusion Ireland about their concerns over health and welfare of clients. The HSE has put in place a new process to deal with such concerns. If you are a HSE employee or work in a service funded by the HSE, you can make a protected disclosure of information if you have a concern about: the health or welfare of a client or the public; that your employer is not meeting legal obligations; or there is a misuse or waste of public funds. Section 103 of the Health Act 2007, which came into operation on 1<sup>st</sup> March 2009, provides for the making of protected disclosures by health service employees. If an employee reports a workplace concern in good faith and on reasonable grounds in accordance with the procedures outlined in the legislation it will be treated as a "protected disclosure". This means that if an employee feels that they have been subjected to detrimental treatment in relation to any aspect of their employment as a result of reporting their concern they may seek redress. The HSE has appointed an "Authorised Person" to whom protected disclosures may be made. For further information call 01 662 6984 or search for "protected disclosures of information" at [www.hse.ie](http://www.hse.ie).

## TAKING CONTROL - MULLINGAR ROADSHOW

The 'Taking Control' group campaigns for individualised funding for people with a disability who wish it. It has undertaken roadshows explaining the aims of the group in Limerick, Galway, Waterford, Wexford, Dublin, Laois and Cork. Taking Control is made up of representatives from a number of organisations, including Inclusion Ireland. A Mullingar roadshow will be held in the Annebrook Hotel, on Wednesday 5<sup>th</sup> May at 7.30pm. Please contact Inclusion Ireland for more information.

## PARENTS SPEAKERS PANEL

Inclusion Ireland are looking for new Parent Speakers to be included on the Parent Speakers Panel. Since 2009 Inclusion Ireland has been running a very successful pilot in Dundalk involving Dundalk IT and the SNAP parents group. Parents have delivered talks to students on nursing, childcare and social care courses. The talks are the parent's story from the birth of their child, (or before), to the present day, and the challenges they have faced along the way. The students find the real life stories extremely useful and it gives them invaluable tips and tools for when they are working with people with disabilities and their parents in the future. Some of the students said that "real life stories and being able to ask questions was particularly helpful"; "it was interesting to hear points from a parent's perspective – it is not something that can be taught"; and "it wasn't just theory, it was an actual parent's story". Following the successful project in Dundalk, Inclusion Ireland is looking for parents around Ireland who would be interested in taking part. Inclusion Ireland will organise training and support for all parents and would look to link them in with local training providers and colleges in order to deliver the talks. Please contact Sarah Lennon on 01 855 989 91 or [sarah@inclusionireland.ie](mailto:sarah@inclusionireland.ie) to discuss further, or to put your name down!

Inclusion Ireland congratulates the National Federation of Voluntary Bodies' project '*Informing Families of their Child's Disability*', which has been chosen as one of the winning projects in the Taoiseach's Public Service Excellence Awards 2010. Inclusion Ireland Board Member Katherine O'Leary is Chairperson of the Project's Steering Committee.

## CAMPAIGN FOR MODERN CAPACITY LEGISLATION AND RATIFICATION OF THE UN CONVENTION ON THE RIGHTS OF PERSONS WITH DISABILITIES

The third anniversary of Ireland signing the United Nations Convention on the Rights of Persons with Disabilities (UNCPRD) took place on 30<sup>th</sup> March 2010. Despite promises it would be ratified “as soon as possible”, the Convention has yet to be ratified. The Government contends that until capacity legislation is passed, which would take the place of current capacity legislation (Lunacy Act of 1871), the



Convention cannot be ratified. This issue relates to one of the central areas of the Convention, Article 12 Equal Recognition and Capacity on an equal basis with others. Ireland’s outdated capacity legislation affects people with an intellectual disability in every area of their lives. Inclusion Ireland held a press conference with Amnesty International Ireland and the School of Nursing at Trinity College on March 30<sup>th</sup>, to call on the Government to urgently introduce modern capacity legislation and to ratify the UN Convention as soon as possible. As part of this campaign a petition calling for modern capacity legislation has been posted on Inclusion Ireland’s website. This petition will remain online until a capacity Bill is brought

before the Oireachtas. The Government previously said a Bill would be brought forward before the finish of this Dáil session. The current Dáil session ended Thursday 1<sup>st</sup> April, and after the Easter break, the final summer session begins. Inclusion Ireland urges all members and supporters to sign this petition and encourage as many people as possible to do likewise. Hard copies of this petition can be forwarded on request.



Pictured top, right to left are: Inclusion Ireland CEO Deirdre Carroll; Prof. Gerard Quinn of NUI Galway; Noleen Hartigan of Amnesty; and Dr. Fintan Sheerin from Trinity College. Above is Jean Wright speaking at the press conference; Right are attendees at the press conference, including Deputies David Stanton and Kathleen Lynch;



### PEOPLE WITH AN INTELLECTUAL DISABILITY IN PSYCHIATRIC INSTITUTIONS

RTÉ’s *Primetime* programme discussed the current appalling state of many psychiatric institutions in early February. Inclusion Ireland CEO Deirdre Carroll spoke on the programme about people with an intellectual disability being inappropriately placed in psychiatric institutions. Over 300 people with an intellectual disability currently live in psychiatric institutions, despite it being Government policy for over 25 years for this practice to stop. While the Government insists people with an intellectual disability are being moved into community residential facilities, Inclusion Ireland does not believe this is happening fast enough. On the issue of psychiatric institutions, Disability Minister John Moloney announced plans in early March to close a total of 14 Victorian-era psychiatric hospitals and transfer a total of 1,200 patients to more modern community-based facilities within the next three years. €50 million has been pledged for this plan, but this is dependent on the sale of lands from existing psychiatric hospitals.

## CONTACT US:

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## MAJOR INTERNATIONAL RESPITE CONFERENCE IN GALWAY

The 7<sup>th</sup> International Short Breaks Conference will take place in NUI Galway from 9<sup>th</sup> to 11<sup>th</sup> June 2010. The conference will discuss respite in the context of an inclusive experience that is a right for the person with a disability and families. The theme of the 2010 conference will be "Short Breaks: A path to Inclusion. Whose Rights, Whose Needs, What Choices?".

Keynote speakers at this three day conference include Professor Roy McConkey, with other speakers from around the world and Ireland, discussing respite in their region. Workshops will also be held on topics including community inclusion, caring for carers, respite as a right, and innovative services. For further information go to [www.isba2010.com](http://www.isba2010.com).

## WORLD CONGRESS OF INCLUSION INTERNATIONAL



The World Congress of Inclusion International takes place from 16<sup>th</sup> to 19<sup>th</sup> June 2010 in Berlin, Germany. The focus of this event will be how we can bring about real change in the light of the new UN Convention on the Rights of Persons with Disabilities. Details of the conference are available at [www.inclusion2010.de](http://www.inclusion2010.de).

## INCLUSION IRELAND AGM & ANNUAL CONFERENCE 2010

**Where:** The Malton Hotel, Killarney, Co. Kerry

**When:** Friday & Saturday 23<sup>rd</sup> & 24<sup>th</sup> April 2010

**Theme:** "Different Times, Different Thinking - addressing the challenges of an economic downturn for people with an intellectual disability and their families"

### Features:

- Debate with a Panel of TDs, who speak for their Party on disability issues, including Disability Minister John Moloney TD. This debate will be chaired by Eamon Keane from *Lunchtime* on Newstalk;
- Keynote address from Tom Collins, Dean of Teaching and Learning, NUI Maynooth, on the theme 'Different Times, Different Thinking – how services for people with a disability will emerge from the recession';
- Workshops on alternative funding, alternative respite, a different approach to speech and language therapy and wills and trust funds;
- Parents initiatives - presentations from parents who found alternative ways of succeeding;
- Presentation of the Media, Advocacy and John Ryan Awards;

**For more information contact the Inclusion Ireland office on 01- 8559891 or visit [www.inclusionireland.ie](http://www.inclusionireland.ie).**