

Autumn 2008

Spinal News



Ireland's National Spinal Injuries Magazine

Ciara's Story

p6



Assistive Technology p12



The Eagle has landed p26



'Rose of OT' p15

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Editorial

I would like to start by congratulating the National Rehabilitation Hospital on recently securing accreditation in Rehabilitation by CARF in the following programmes: Inpatient Rehabilitation Programmes CIIRP-Hospital (Adults) and In-patient Rehabilitation Programmes CIIRP-Hospital (Children and Adolescents).

For those not familiar, CARF is a private, not-for-profit organisation that promotes quality in rehabilitation services by establishing standards of quality for organisations to use as guidelines in developing and offering their programmes or services to consumers.

From Spinal Injuries Ireland's perspective the CARF accreditation process was a very useful exercise, as it gave us the opportunity to develop and clarify our role in the provision of services for patients and their families.

We also have reasons to celebrate here in Spinal Injuries Ireland. Two of our work colleagues recently received the results of their exams. Joan Carthy received her diploma in counselling and Siobhan O'Driscoll received her Masters in Rehabilitation Studies. The staff here in Spinal Injuries Ireland would also like to congratulate Aoife Kelly, Occupational Therapist, who was recently crowned The Rose of Tralee for 2008.

We were truly saddened to hear of the sudden death of one of our members, Joey Hogan. Joey actively took part in all our venture activities and only recently was brave enough to try scuba diving. He will be sadly missed by all his friends in Spinal Injuries Ireland and the National Rehabilitation Hospital.

Colm Whooley

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The views expressed in "Spinal News" are not necessarily those of Spinal Injuries Ireland.

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SII services provided for patients and their family



Drop In Resource Centre

Situated in the grounds of the National Rehabilitation Hospital, Spinal Injuries Ireland's Drop in Resource Centre and Support Office is open from 9.00am to 5.00pm five days a week. Patients and their family can call in to discuss their concerns with a member of the support team. Evening appointments are by request.



Joan Carthy, Support Co-ordinator

Family Counselling Service

Spinal cord injury is recognised internationally as one of the most devastating and debilitating injuries a person can sustain. To address this Spinal Injuries Ireland has contracted a qualified counsellor who has a background in Spinal Injury Nursing. For details contact: Spinal Injuries Ireland support office at 01 2355317.

Vocational Programme

The Vocational Programme is a case managed service specifically designed to address the vocational and educational needs of persons with Spinal Cord Injury. The programme will support clients in reviewing their vocational and educational needs with the aim of facilitating a return to work, education or voluntary work.

Siobhan O'Driscoll is SII's representative on the vocational team. This team will in turn liaise with a wider network of vocational and other services in the client's local community.



Carmel Cuniffe, Advocacy Officer

Advocacy Officer

The role of the Advocacy Officer is to provide support and information to people with a spinal cord injury and their families when they return home. Spinal Injuries Ireland's outreach team endeavours to follow up with patients approximately five weeks after discharge from the NRH.

Carmel will help link people into existing services in the community and will deal with other issues such as personal, education and employment opportunities, transport, personal assistants and entitlements.

If you feel Carmel can be of assistance please contact her at:
carmel@spinalinjuries.ie

Visit to Mater Hospital

Our Advocacy Officer visits the Mater Hospital on request to meet with family members should they wish to talk to someone from SII. Family Information packs are also made available to the families.

Venture/Social Programme

The SII venture and social activities programme include sports such as kayaking, scuba diving, fishing and self defence but also includes trips on the Luas, shopping trips and trips to the cinema and sporting venues. All equipment is supplied and appropriate staff are also available.

Handbook

Spinal Injuries Ireland is delighted to have completed their handbook designed to assist all those living with a spinal cord injury to deal with the new realities they are faced with.

The handbook is available free of charge to members of SII. (post & packaging €7.50 if you would like it posted to you.) Alternatively, call to the SII office for a copy of the handbook



Quarterly Magazine, 'Spinal News'

'Spinal News' is a quarterly magazine produced in house by Spinal Injuries Ireland. You can download the latest issue of the magazine as a pdf file from our website.

Spinal Injury Ireland's Website

www.spinalinjuries.ie is updated regularly to complement the magazine and is a very useful source of information.

Information Leaflets Available

- Family Support
- Back to Work
- Buying a Car
- Medical Items
- Housing Grants
- Useful Addresses
- Education
- Retraining
- Personal Assistants
- Social Welfare
- Payments
- Legal Advice
- Venture Sports

Family Regional Support Groups

To support families in the community a number of family networks have been set up in some health board regions.

Most people felt that they just needed someone to talk to and in many cases would like to be there for new patients and new families so that they can pass on their knowledge and support.

Upcoming Meetings:-

The Workhouse, Carrickmacross, Co Monaghan.

Tuesday, November 18th
7 pm - 9 pm



TLC Centre, Santry, Co. Dublin

Tuesday, November 25th
7 pm - 9 pm



Contact Carmel on 01 2355317 for more information on upcoming network meetings.

We need to recruit correspondents

What is a Correspondent?

A Correspondent is someone who will send us little snippets of local disability news about people, places and events in their neighbourhood. Would you like to try it or know someone who would?

We need to build up a good strong team of Correspondents, so if you are interested, please ring or drop us a line or send an e-mail to the address below. If you want to suggest someone who you think might be interested or who might like to be asked, please do, and we'll do the asking.



Write to:

'Spinal News',
Spinal Injuries Ireland, NRH, Rochestown
Avenue, Freepost,
Dun Laoghaire, Co. Dublin.
Tel: 01 2355317
Email: info@spinalinjuries.ie

Spinal Injuries Ireland

Contact Details

You can write to us free of charge at:
Spinal Injuries Ireland,
National Rehabilitation Hospital,
Rochestown Avenue,
FREEPOST
Dun Laoghaire,
Co. Dublin.

Phone: (01) 2355317
email: info@spinalinjuries.ie
Website: www.spinalinjuries.ie

Vocational Programme



The Vocational Programme is a case managed service specifically designed to address the vocational and educational needs of persons with Spinal Cord Injury.

For the duration of the project on-going support will be provided by the Medical Social Worker and Occupational Therapist involved. These staff will also be the client's link between the Rehabilitation and the Vocational teams.

Where appropriate a workplace assessment will be undertaken by the Vocational Occupational Therapist. Issues such as accessibility and equipment can be addressed and recommendations made.

If clients are referred to a training centre a member of the Vocational Rehabilitation Team can accompany them and assist in promoting links at a local level. A client can be referred to the Vocational Planning and Exploration Module at the Hospital's Rehabilitative Training Unit to learn skills in searching and applying for appropriate types of work.

Who is eligible?

Any person can be referred to the Vocational Programme through the rehabilitation team if they:-

- have sustained a spinal cord injury
- are a current patient of the NRH
- are aged between 16 and 65 years of age
- have a wish to pursue vocational and/or educational options whether paid employment, supported or sheltered, voluntary work, third level education or educational activities which may enhance vocational options

Vocational Rehabilitation Team?

The Vocational Team includes the client, representatives from the HSE and FÁS as well as the Medical Social Worker and Vocational Occupational Therapist from the National Rehabilitation Hospital and Spinal Injuries Ireland outreach staff.

For further details contact Siobhan on 01 2355317.

Kick Start Programme

Siobhan O'Driscoll who has previously worked on Spinal Injuries Outreach program is now working solely on the development of the Vocational and Kick Start programmes.

The idea of the Kick Start activity course is to tap into the proven benefits of venture activities as a way to encourage and motivate individuals who have sustained a spinal cord injury.

The ultimate goal of the programme is to target individuals with a spinal cord injury who are at home and not taking part in either employment, re-training or local community activities.

It would be hoped to identify some potential clients for this course through the new Vocational Rehabilitation Program in the NRH.

This is not about turning people into adventurers but rather to use it as a catalyst to motivate and encourage people to look beyond their present personal expectations. (See page 22).

For further details contact Siobhan on 01 2355317.



Siobhan O'Driscoll

Ciara's Story

By Fiona McGoran

“When you go out into the real world,
reality hits you hard”



Ciara and Philip pictured with their two children Abbie and Ryan

When Ciara Baker fell down a lift shaft at the age of 15, the brave young school girl did not let her accident stand in the way of regaining control of her life. During the 18 months that she spent in the National Rehabilitation Hospital in Dun Laoighre, Ciara studied for her Intermediate Certificate and passed with flying colours.

The accident took place on a night out with friends during the summer holidays. “I had just finished second year in school and had told my parents that I was going to a community disco with some friends. We sneaked into town instead and started exploring an old derelict building. I stepped back to hide from my friends so that I could jump out and scare them. However,

it was dark and I didn’t realise that I was stepping back into a lift shaft. After I landed, I realised that I couldn’t feel my legs but I just thought they were broken. My friends managed to pull me out and carry me to a nearby bench. We were all petrified of the trouble we were going to get into with our parents, so my friends phoned an ambulance and as soon as it arrived my friends ran home.”

Ciara had a curfew which she always abided by so her parents were frantic with worry when she failed to return home on time. There was no phone in her house so a police man was sent around to the family home to break the news to her parents that she had been taken to the Mater Hospital.

“While I had experienced no pain at the

time of the accident, after a few hours the pain began to set in. I was brought to theatre for an operation during which the doctors inserted steel rods in my back. I was on a lot of morphine and I remember feeling the injections in my legs. I caught a bad infection a few days later and from then on I could feel nothing. I think the permanent damage was a result of both the fall and the subsequent infection. The doctors told me that being pulled from the lift shaft by my friends would not have caused any further complications to my injury.”

Ciara remained in The Mater Hospital for a week and was then transferred to an intensive care unit at the National Rehabilitation Hospital. After a few days she moved to a general ward, Our Lady’s Ward.

"I lay on the flat of my back for a few months and it was during this period that I slowly began to realise that I was a paraplegic. I was surrounded by people with similar and worse injuries so I was taking notice of what was happening around me. Then the doctors confirmed my worst fears and the reality hit me. When I was allowed home for weekends, I would just lie in bed for days refusing to go outside. Some weekends I wouldn't even want to go home. When you're in the Rehab everyone is in the same boat and there is a certain comfort that comes with that. When you go out into the real world, reality hits you hard. It took me about three years before I could go out without caring that I was in a wheelchair."

Ciara remained in the Rehabilitation Hospital from July 1992 to September 1993 during which she completed her third year schooling and received her intermediate certificate, a remarkable achievement.

"I went back to school in September 2004 and entered fifth year which was a very daunting experience. I was paranoid about people taking about me and staring. The school was very understanding and had organised my classrooms so they were all on the same floor. However, there were some rooms that were difficult to access, such as the computer room. Thankfully, I had great

friends who were more than happy to give me piggy back when necessary."

According to Ciara, the teenage years were a very difficult time. "Like any teenager, I wanted to look good but I was self conscious. I refused to wear skirts and found it difficult getting around clothes shops. Access is difficult now so you can only imagine what it was like in the mid 1990s. Things were tough."

When Ciara finished school her mother encouraged her to enrol in a secretarial course. "My parents, my little brother and my friends were all instrumental in keeping my spirits up. They wouldn't let me laze about and become self indulgent for one second. So, I completed a course which also included work experience at Beaumont Hospital. That was 12 years ago and I'm still working there as a secretary in the social work department."

In 1998, Ciara was out with a group of friends and she met a young man called Philip Baker. They dated for four years and then married in 2002. "We had our wedding at the registry office and then 45 people joined us for a meal. A party followed in the function room at the Great Southern Hotel at Dublin airport."

The happy couple jetted off to Florida on their honeymoon where Ciara was

overwhelmed with the ease of access for wheelchair users. They visited Disney Land where the new bride enjoyed heart racing fun on all of the rides. "Staff members were more than happy to help me on and off all of the rides. Everybody is catered for and it was a hassle free experience."

As a newly married couple, Ciara and Philip were keen to start a family. Ciara had been informed at the Rehabilitation Hospital that she would experience no problems conceiving and carrying a child to full term. However, like any woman eager to conceive, she was anxious about what lay ahead. Fortunately, there were no complications and Ciara gave birth to her son, Ryan, in April 2005.

"Ryan arrived two weeks early and I had a natural delivery. He is a wonderful little 3 year old boy and very well behaved."

Two years later, Ciara fell pregnant again and nine months later, on the morning of the 25th of February, she began to feel some painful contractions.

"Philip had left the house to take Ryan to his crèche and then travel on to work. I rang him from our home in Balbriggan to tell him to turn the car around and come straight home. By the time he arrived back in the house, I was well and truly in labour. It was too late to make a dash for the hospital so Ryan sat in front of the TV downstairs while I lay on our bed trying to keep calm. Philip rang the paramedics and put them on the loudspeaker so that he could follow their instructions. Within a short while, he delivered our daughter Abbie."

Some 15 minutes after Abbie arrived into the world, the ambulance arrived to whisk Ciara and her baby off to hospital. Shortly after they arrived, Ciara haemorrhaged and was brought to theatre. Thankfully, she recovered. However, the couple received some shocking news later that day when they were told that Abbie has Down's Syndrome.

"It's been tough but our employer has been really helpful. Philip also works for Beaumont Hospital and they have switched our hours around so I work two days a week and Philip works three days a week. This means that one of us is always at home with Abbie. Ryan has also been great. He dotes on his little sister and is very helpful."

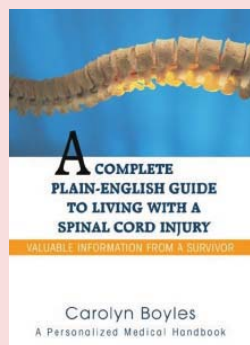
Ciara, Philip and Ryan managed to slip away for a well earned break in early September 2008. "My mum took care of Abbie and we really enjoyed spending some quality time with Ryan. It was a great holiday and one that was really needed as I returned to work from maternity leave the Monday after I got home."

According to Ciara, the one issue that impacts wheelchair users in Ireland is access. "Ireland is getting better but there are numerous old buildings that are not accessible for people in wheelchairs. We need space to get around and access needs to be focused on and improved."



Ciara, Ryan and Abbie

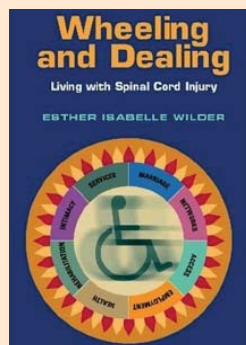
A Complete Plain-English Guide to Living with SCI



An invaluable resource for anyone touched by spinal cord injury—newly injured patients, longtime survivors, friends and loved ones, and medical professionals. A survivor's perspective on the physical and emotional journey from the time of injury, through the entire recovery process, and on to living a full and happy life. But most importantly, she shows you that a spinal cord injury is not a life-ending event, but rather a new beginning.

Available from:
Amazon.co.uk
Price: £16.15

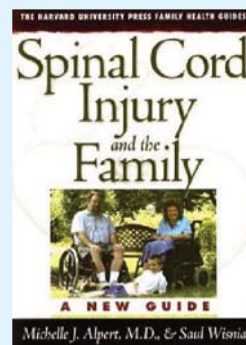
Wheeling and Dealing: Living with SCI



Topics include: physical health, from loss of function to problems like pressure sores, and bladder control; the stages of psychological adjustment and rehabilitation; Everything from welfare services to embryonic stem cell research; dating, marriage, and parenting; friendship networks and social supports; concerns about transportation and accessibility; and the economic consequences of spinal cord injury.

Available from:
Amazon.co.uk
Price: £22.75

Spinal Cord Injury and the Family



“Spinal Cord Injury and the Family” is for individuals and their families who must climb back from injury: for the young quad couple, both quadriplegic, who wish to conceive and raise a child; for the paraplegic dad who wants to teach his daughter to drive; for the couple wondering how they can regain the sexual spark in their relationship. The authors answer the “what now?” questions from daily routines to larger issues of SCI.

Available from:
Amazon.co.uk
Price: £10.95

Product Review

SWISS-TRAC



SWISS-TRAC is a small, efficient wheelchair power unit, which can be quickly attached to/from the wheelchair. It pulls the wheelchair user over “sticks and stones” or over curbs without any problems. SWISS-TRAC can be driven not only on pavements and in pedestrian areas, but also through fields, meadows and woodlands. A day out at the zoo, a visit to a large exhibition or a shopping centre suddenly becomes a pleasure. Just clip on and drive! SWISS-TRAC is compact, robust and easily handled.

Technical data

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- Velocity max. 6 km/h
- Maintenance free batteries, 40 Ah/24 volt
- Max. incline performance 20%
- Max. load 130 Kg (Driver with wheelchair and luggage)
- Weight of machine 65 kg

Supplier:
Ahead, Disability Equipment & Consultancy LLP
2 Tansy Close, Abbeymead, Gloucester, GL4 5WL
Tel & Fax: 01452 540 783
E-mail: Ahead.AL@googlemail.com

ReWalk



ReWalk is a wearable, motorized quasi robotic suit. Partially concealable under clothing, ReWalk provides user-initiated mobility – leveraging advanced motion sensors, sophisticated robotic control algorithms, on-board computers, real-time software, actuation motors, tailored rechargeable batteries and composite materials.

ReWalk works with users – not just for them. Users walk with the assistance of crutches, controlling suit movement through subtle changes in center of gravity and upper-body movements. In addition to simplifying suit control, this user participation in mobility brings tangible health and emotional benefits. ReWalk is not just a vertical wheelchair – ReWalk restores the element of control over mobility so lacking for wheelchair users.

As any sedentary wheelchair user can attest, life in a wheelchair carries a hefty healthcare price tag. Serious problems with the urinary, respiratory, cardiovascular and digestive systems are common, as well as osteoporosis, pressure sores and other afflictions.

By maintaining users upright on a daily basis, and exercising even paralysed limbs in the course of movement, ReWalk alleviates many of the health-related problems associated with long-term wheelchair use. In addition to relieving suffering, this has a real impact on healthcare costs – cutting yearly expenses almost in half, and enabling both insurers and individuals to redirect funds to other avenues.

Adoption of ReWalk by wheelchair users results in significant cost saving at both institutions and private homes. ReWalk makes standing devices, stair lifts, bed lifts, and other mobility assistance apparatus redundant. Similarly, ReWalk users don't require expensive powered wheelchair – or the oversize vehicles and devices required to handle them. With ReWalk, users require

only minimal additional mobility assistance – saving tens of thousands of dollars yearly.

By replacing or supplementing expensive mechanized gait trainers, for example, ReWalk allows institutions to redirect significant budget resources for other therapeutic activities.

Functionality:

- All day usage
- Mobility – walking, sit-to-stand, stand-

to-sit, climb stairs, ascending/descending slopes, driving

- Training replacing other training equipment at home and at rehabilitation center

Prerequisites:

- Ability to use hand and shoulders (walking with crutches)
- Healthy cardiovascular system and bone density

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Workers with disabilities already being hit by flagging economy

Incentive schemes encouraging businesses to hire more workers with disabilities must be improved in the face of Ireland's economic slowdown, the Government has been warned.

As the Department of Enterprise, Trade and Employment concludes a major review of the FAS managed Wage Subsidy Scheme and the Supported Employment Scheme, concern was expressed that workers with disabilities could be hit hard amid the threat of a devastating international recession.

"The economic downturn has already created an incredibly competitive jobs market," said Sheila Comiskey, Coordinator with Jobmatters supported employment.

"The Wage Subsidy Scheme can be difficult to avail of because of the qualifying criteria. So we want to make it more user-friendly and more-client friendly, particularly in this time of economic troubles."

The Wage Subsidy Scheme provides financial incentives to employers, outside the public sector, to employ disabled people who work more than 20 hours per week.

The Supported Employment Programme is an initiative to assist jobseekers with a disability to find employment in the open labour market. It provides a jobs-coach to assist with the integration process and meet the labour requirements of employers.

Greg Barry, Chairperson of the Irish Association of Supported Employment, was part of a working group that met outgoing Minister Micheal Martin as part of the review process.

Said Mr. Barry: "We advised the Minister that both schemes are very useful, and some tweaking and improvement will see a big take-up of people availing of them."

Mr. Barry is hopeful that expectations on employees to work 18 hours a week under the Supported Employment Programme will be reduced to eight hours. "There is a gap between people who can avail of the scheme and work 18 hours per week, and those who can't. For those who can't, there is nowhere to go."

He also believes that the Wage Subsidy Scheme would prove popular if there was a greater financial incentive for employees.

"Take someone earning minimum wage. When they go onto Back to Work Allowance as part of the Wage Subsidy scheme, their benefit will be reduced over three years. Even after year one, they will be financially worse off. After year three when benefits are withdrawn, they are just on a minimum wage payment," said Mr. Barry.

A spokesperson for the Department of Enterprise, Trade and Employment, said the review findings will soon be published. "The Wage Subsidy Scheme, which commenced in September 2005, is being reviewed as it approaches the end of the initial pilot phase of the operation of the scheme," said the spokesperson. "It is also considered timely to examine the effectiveness of the FAS Supported Employment Programme in the context of the current operational standards."

"It is hoped that these reviews will significantly inform beneficial change in the interest of higher employment levels of people with disabilities in the future. Copies of these reviews will be made available to relevant interest groups in due course," she added.

Voters angry over poll access shame

Voters with disabilities made a number of complaints about lack of access to polling centres during the referendum on the Lisbon Treaty.

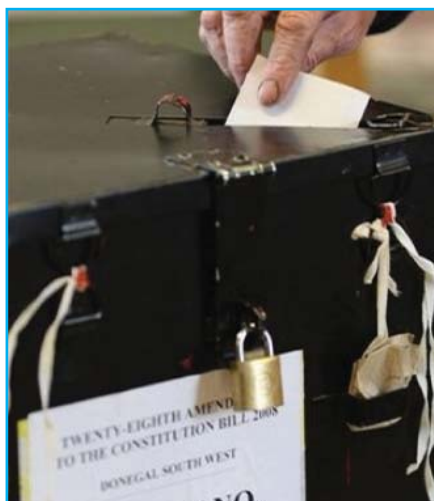
Around 30 wheelchair users had to be taken to a specially designated polling station several hours after being turned away from the polling station near their Cheshire Ireland accommodation facility at Knox Hall in Monkstown in Co. Dublin because its existing wheelchair ramp had been taken away.

There were similar problems with wheelchair access to polling stations in other parts of the country, which prompted People with Disabilities in Ireland (PwDI) to call for the problem to be solved before next year's European elections.

Fine Gael Councillor Mary Mitchell O'Connor said it was disgraceful that the Cheshire Home residents had almost missed out on their democratic right to vote. PwDI said it was not acceptable that people with disabilities would have to wait until 2015 before public buildings were required to have wheelchair access.

Other wheelchair users, including a man in Co Wicklow, told RTE's Liveline radio programme he had not been able to enter the polling station but that a Garda had assisted him and taken his completed ballot paper inside the station.

Spinal Injuries Ireland suggest that members contact their county council about having their local polling station made wheelchair accessible.



European research agendas

There has recently been a launch of a new consultation survey with disabled people's organisations in European Countries.

'European Research Agendas for Disability Equality' (EuRADE) is a research project funded by the EU Framework 7 'Science in Society' programme and is a collaboration between the European Disability Forum (EDF), the University of Leeds (UK) and the University of Maastricht (Netherlands). The purpose of the project is to build the capacity of European disabled people's organisations to participate in future research projects. It also encourages disabled people's organisations to play a part in shaping the European research agenda.

Print version available from: <http://www.leeds.ac.uk/disability-studies/projects/eurade/EuRADE%20-%20ENprint.pdf>.

Carer discrimination ruling welcomed

An Irish organisation campaigning for rights for the disabled has welcomed a European Court of Justice ruling in favour of a woman who claims she had to resign from her job because she has a disabled son.

Inclusion Ireland welcomed the landmark judgment made in Luxembourg recently in favour of Englishwoman Sharon Coleman, who said she suffered “discrimination by association”, breaching EU rules.

The court declared that an EU directive banning employment discrimination on grounds of disability is not limited to disabled people themselves, but covers their carers as well.

Ms. Coleman took legal action after claiming she was forced to leave her job because she was not allowed as much flexibility in her work as parents of other children were.

Deirdre Carroll, chief executive officer of Inclusion Ireland, said she has encountered people in similar positions to Ms. Coleman in Ireland and yesterday’s judgment was good news for such individuals. “We have research which shows women who have children with severe disabilities are disadvantaged in



staying in a job or returning to work.

“I have seen people in Ireland who would wish to job-share or work reduced hours because they have to care for a disabled child and employers would not accommodate them so they have had to give up work completely.”

Ms Coleman was working for law firm Attridge Law when she gave birth to a disabled son in 2002. As primary carer, she wanted flexible working arrangements, but accepted voluntary redundancy in March 2005 and began a claim for constructive dismissal five months later.

The judges said the EU directive was designed to combat all forms of discrimination and applied not to a particular category of person but “to nature of the discrimination”. “Where an employer treats an employee who is not himself disabled less favourably than another employee in a comparable situation, and it is established that the less favourable treatment of that employee is based on the disability of this child... such treatment is contrary to the prohibition of direct discrimination,” the European Court of Justice said.

European law will need ‘substantial changes’

Campaigners have criticised proposed new European anti-discrimination laws that they say are “unclear” and miss out areas of vital importance to disabled people.

The draft directive from the European Commission (EC) would provide protection from discrimination on the grounds of disability, age, sexual orientation, religion and belief in areas outside the workplace, which is already protected under EU law.

It would offer protection in social security, healthcare, education, and goods and services that are commercially available to the public, including housing

The EC’s commissioner for employment, social affairs and equal opportunities, Vladimir Spidla, said: “The right to equal treatment is fundamental, but millions of people in the European Union continue to face discrimination in their everyday lives.

“At present, there is an inequality in community legislation itself because people are protected from discrimination outside the workplace only on grounds of gender and race or ethnic origin.”

The new directive will outlaw direct and indirect discrimination, as will as

harassment and victimisation.

European Disability Forum president Yannis Vardakastanis welcomed the “wide scope” of the proposal.

But he said the draft directive was “unclear, too short and introduces significant restrictions of the right to equality for disabled people in several areas, such as education and insurance”.

He said it would create “legal uncertainties” and “room for interpretation”, while some provisions would contravene the UN Convention on the Rights of Persons with Disabilities.

And he criticised the lack of specific provisions in areas such as access to information, transport and accessible election procedures, as well as the lack of a “meaningful consultation”.

Mr. Vardakastanis said the draft directive would need “substantial changes” if it was to protect disabled Europeans from discrimination.

The new proposal came as an EU survey revealed that 45 per cent of Europeans believe that disability discrimination is widespread, although more than two-thirds believe it is less widespread than five years ago.



FIRST EVER ASSISTIVE TECHNOLOGY LIBRARY

Ireland's 20,000 users to benefit from loan library

Ireland's first every Electronic Assistive Technology (EAT) web based library bank www.try-it.ie, was launched in Dublin on Thursday, 15 May 2008 by a partnership of organisations who work with people with disabilities. Assistive technology enables people with disabilities to have greater control over their lives. There are major deficiencies in access, assessment and provision of assistive technology and this initiative allows centralised access to people with disabilities and their carers to the greatest array of EAT available.

The partnership comprising the National Rehabilitation Hospital (NRH), Enable Ireland's National Assistive Technology Training Service, the NCBI, the Assistive Communications Technology Officers Network (ACTON) and the Irish Motor Neurone Disease Association (IMNDA), who together represent in excess of 20,000 service users, has been awarded funding by POBAL (Enhancing Disability Services Programme) to establish and run the web-based library of electronic assistive technology (EAT) and to provide a forum for education, training and networking in this area. The launch was arranged in conjunction with the Communication Matters Roadshow who will hold a range of workshops in Croke Park on the day.

Research shows that 75% of assistive technology is abandoned due to the lack of training and the website aims to address this issue by working with training providers, carers and users alike to, not only provide access to AT, but access to education, training and networking to maximise the benefits of AT to users. As the website goes live members will be able to borrow electronic aids, to allow themselves and their users assess and try out a range of assistive technology before recommending purchase.



Back row Karl O'Keeffe (EI) SL, Rebecca Beck, (Project Manager NRH), Brian Miller (HSE)
Front row Tracy Hutchin (IMNDA), Glenna Gallagher (Locum Project Manager), Nuala Tierney (Retired OT Manager NRH) Siobhan Long (EI) Paula Bradley (Project Lead NRH)

AT user, Michael Gogarty, who is visually impaired, knows better than most the impact that the right AT can have. "I was born with a progressive condition when there was no such thing as AT. I now use among other devices magnification software and closed circuit televisions which enable me to lead an independent life along with other techniques and adaptations I have learned."

Henry Murdoch, said, "I'm delighted to launch try-it.ie, Ireland's first centralised Electronic Assistive Technology library. I'm particularly pleased at a consortium approach, which recognises the need for organisations representing diverse and disparate sectors of the disability community, to work in a cohesive and integrated manner to optimise the service received by their clients. EAT is a rapidly developing area and holds huge for empowering, providing independence, and increasing quality of life for people with disabilities."

Glenna Gallagher, representing the consortium said, "Research carried out amongst users, carers and trainers shows

that there is an overwhelming need for a service like try-it.ie. Professionals who work with people with disabilities throughout Ireland will be able to borrow and trial new EAT devices, receive feedback from other users and AT assessors leading them to make informed decisions about what best suits their particular circumstances prior to making significant financial or time commitments. They will also be able to avail of assessments by potentially more informed and highly trained professionals as a result of the education, training and support dimension.

"This is the first time that these five organisations have come together and I believe that our diversity of background, knowledge and users promises to enhance an exciting collaboration where the needs of a wide variety of individuals with disabilities are recognized and addressed."

This website is modelled mainly on a successful library operated by Assistive Technology Partners (Denver Colorado).

On www.try-it.ie the equipment available for loan includes:

- Communication Aids, e.g. voice amplification systems, speech enhancers, and text-to-speech devices.
- Computer Access, e.g. alternative mice, keyboards, voice activation software, etc.
- Leisure e.g. art/music/photography
- Memory Aids, e.g. task prompters, visual assistants, voice cues.
- Switches, e.g. tactile pads, grip switches, joy sticks, etc.
- Visual impairment, e.g. magnifiers, CCTV systems, screen readers, Braille-to-speech devices, etc.



Glenna Gallagher and Michael Gogarty

Eflow Toll Plaza - Exempt Vehicles for Disabled Drivers



eFlow Customer Services reply to Spinal Injuries Ireland's query re exempt vehicles for disabled drivers

If you drive a vehicle modified for disabled use and it is registered by the Vehicle Registration Unit as such then you will be classed by our system as exempt from paying tolls on the M50 and you will not need to register for an eFlow account. As our system does not go live until August 30 we can not confirm the status of individual vehicles as yet, but the general rule of thumb is (confirmed by the NRA) that if your vehicle is physically adapted and exempt from road tax, you will be exempt from paying tolls.

If you are unsure of the status of your vehicle registration you should contact the vehicle registration unit (VRU) in Shannon. The VRU LoCall number is 1890 411 412 (calls charged at local rate anywhere in the country). You can also address your queries to the VRU by post or fax: Vehicle Registration Unit, Department of the Environment, Heritage and Local Government, Shannon, Co. Clare.

Fax: (061) 363480

For the other toll plazas nationwide, you will still be required to stop at the barrier and show your disabled driver's ID card to be classed as exempt from paying the toll. For more information on eFlow log onto www.eflow.ie.

Wheelchair user banned from airline because she is disabled

A wheelchair-user has been banned from using an airline because she is disabled.

Kim Swift, 50, was left stunned when Monarch Airlines told her she was not allowed on board unless she flies with a carer.

Despite using the firm regularly and already paying for the flight, she was informed she must pay £250 for an extra ticket.

Monarch claims it is only following new rules from the Equality and Human Rights Commission.

But Mrs Swift blasted: "It's discrimination. Monarch has decided all wheelchair users need a carer. The way I've been treated is appalling. I've been in touch with the Commission and they tell me I'm good to fly alone."

Unemployed Mrs Swift, of Ruislip, Middlesex, was hit with the bombshell when she called to arrange a specific seat for a flight from Luton to Faro in Portugal. She had never had a problem on Monarch on three previous times.

She said: "I'm now worried that I'm going to miss out on visiting my friends on holiday."

Monarch said the new legislation states wheelchair-users must be accompanied on flights when they are "unable to fasten their seatbelt, leave their seat and reach an emergency exit unaided".

It said: "The level of assistance Mrs Swift is requesting would indicate she is unable to fulfil the above criteria. In light of this she was advised that she would be required to travel with a carer."

NDA want retention of dedicated independent agency to deal with disability issues

Following a meeting of the board of the National Disability Authority at which the Government proposals regarding the rationalisation of non-commercial agencies in the justice equality sector were discussed, the NDA is of the view that progress on Government commitments on disability would, at this time, be best served through the continued support of a dedicated independent agency focused on disability issues.

"There are significant challenges in addressing the needs of people with disabilities who are among the more vulnerable persons in our society," says Angela Kerins, Chairperson of the National Disability Authority.

"The National Disability Strategy is at a critical stage of implementation and impacts across a wide range of government departments and public services. The issues and problems being tackled under this

strategy are long-standing and there is much ground to be made up to ensure that people with disabilities have the same opportunities as everybody else and this is especially relevant in the current difficult economic climate, when people with disabilities are even more vulnerable.

It is vital, therefore, that a dedicated, independent agency is working to drive through the National Disability Strategy which is so critical in improving the lives of adults and children with disabilities. Much remains to be done to ensure its successful implementation," she said.

"The NDA plays an important role to date in driving the implementation of the Disability Strategy and in monitoring progress," Angela Kerins added. "At this time the retention of a dedicated independent agency, focused on the issues that impact on the daily lives of people with disabilities, their families and carers and advising the



Angela Kerins

Government on its policies, is the most effective way of delivering the Strategy.

The NDA would always want to collaborate with Government to ensure that the Disability Agenda remains a priority and that all measures to achieve efficiency and value for money are taken. We welcome the consultative process that the Department of Justice, Equality and Law Reform has engaged in on the proposed amalgamation of non commercial state bodies.

The NDA will be making a full report of its views to the Department of Justice, Equality and Law Reform and will help to inform deliberations on this matter in any way we can," said Ms Kerins.

Well Done Team NRH - 3 Years CARF Accreditation

This being the time for Olympic Golds and Major Golf successes, the NRH has also achieved the highest possible level of accreditation.

Congratulations to everyone at NRH. It is with great pleasure that we can announce that the hospital has been accredited by CARF for a period of Three Years for the following programmes:-

- Inpatient Rehabilitation Programmes CIIRP – Hospital (Adults)
- Inpatient Rehabilitation Programmes CIIRP – Hospital (Children and Adolescents)

This accreditation will extend to June 2011. The CARF correspondence noted that “this achievement is an indication of the organisation’s dedication and commitment to improve the quality of the lives of the person served.”

The survey report also includes a number of ‘recommendations’, areas that need some improvement. The NRH must produce a written quality improvement plan by early November showing how we will address these recommendations.

The 3 year accreditation is the highest level we could have achieved. This is a marvellous accomplishment for the



NRH and could not have happened without the dedication, teamwork and cooperation from all at NRH.



Martin and Cael

It is impossible to put into words what it means having baby Cael in my life. When my little boy looks me in the eye and smiles all the years struggling with quadriplegia disappears.

Only for the NRH and especially Pauline Shields this little miracle would not have happened. Cael, Lily and myself would also like to thank Spinal Injuries Ireland’s Outreach Service (Siobhan) for their continuing support.

*with thanks
Martin Sinnott*



Carmel, Aileen, Louisa and Frances

Farewell to Frances

Frances Hughes Byrne has worked in the National Rehabilitation Hospital for the last 18 years. She will be sadly missed and always remembered for her kindness, willingness and total dedication to her work. She was always very pleasant and had excellent communication skills with both patients and staff.

We will all miss that cheerful smile and we wish her every success in her future endeavours.

So all the best Frances - keep in touch.

From all the gang in the NRH



Grace Lauren

Congratulations to NRH Occupational Therapist Eleanor Little and her husband Gary on the birth of their little girl, Grace Lauren, who was born on the 16th September 2008.



Daniel and Aska

We would all like to wish Aska and Daniel the best of luck for their upcoming marriage which will take place in Poland on 11th October 2008.

The NRH 'Rose of OT'

Aoife Kelly 2008 Rose of Tralee

The Patients and Staff at NRH gathered together in the Day Room on a Summer(ish) afternoon in August to wish Aoife Kelly, Occupational Therapist at NRH, the best of luck for the upcoming Rose of Tralee Contest. Aoife arrived at the party already wearing, with great pride, the Crown of the "Rose of OT". This augured well for the big night in the Dome, when the Rose of Tralee is finally chosen following a week of making the best possible impression on the judges.

Eilish Macklin and Anne Marie Langan spoke on the day of Aoife's send-off and conveyed our very best wishes on behalf of everyone at NRH. Then, led by Maeve Harkness, all the Patients and staff in the Day Room gave a rousing rendition which began with the words "The pale moon was rising above the clear mountains.....". All who were there that day could understand perfectly why Aoife had been announced as the bookies' favourite to win. And on the night of the Contest, everyone at NRH was bursting with pride and absolutely delighted, but not at all surprised, when Aoife won that crown.

On Aoife's first day back to work, she took the waiting crowd by surprise as she strolled from the NRH car park to the cheers of friends, colleagues and patients who'd expected to see her emerging from a limousine or a perhaps a Porsche. Aoife turned down a police escort because she said she'd be "mortified".

The children from the Paediatric Service created beautiful rose decorations that adorned the Day Room for Aoife's arrival.

Henry Murdoch, Chairman of the hospital, said on the day that Aoife has brought honour on herself, her family and on the hospital and wished her every success during her reign; he also spoke fondly of the friendly rivalry between Aoife's home place of Portroe and Killaloe where Henry has spent a lot of time over the years.



Aoife Kelly, 2008 Rose of Tralee

Dr. Aine Carroll, Chairperson of NRH Medical Board, proudly announced that she had once been a 'Maid of Mourne' and said she was stunned by Aoife's beauty as she watched her on TV being interviewed by Ray Darcy. Alison McCann from OT said "Rosemania is the new term that I've come up with". She said "The atmosphere your win has brought to the hospital has been absolutely astounding with our male colleagues wrestling each other to be your new escort."

Aoife told the huge crowd in the Day Room "I can't believe all this is happening for me, I'm not used to this level of attention all for me," She went on to name some of the countries she will visit in the year ahead including New Zealand, Australia, Dubai, America and Canada. Aoife and her fiancé Leon de Klerk are planning their wedding next October.

The Catering staff provided a fabulous feast suitably fit for a newly crowned Rose and for all the patients and staff who came to welcome her back to work. As she was signing photographs for a queue of people in the Day Room, Aoife told patients "I'll see you later in my uniform".

Aoife, Congratulations and very best wishes from everyone at NRH – you will always be our "Rose of OT"

By Rosemarie Nolan



The Appliance of Science

Environmental Control Systems – Appliances

How you use your Environmental Control System ECS is down to personal choice and circumstance. Your system could be simplistic and used merely to control your entertainment system or it could be a comprehensive home management system that facilitates independent living

As discussed in the previous 3 issues of Spinal News, an ECS requires a suitable input device and a specialised control unit. To complete the system requires your selection of appliances/ peripherals or output devices. In other words the very things you hope to manage.

How do I use my ECS?

Everyday appliances with their own remote controls:

It is simple to control things such as TVs. The control unit is programmed to transmit signals as if it were the original remote.

Infra Red (IR) or Radio Frequency (RF) Sockets:

On/off appliances such as lamps or heaters can be plugged into a specialised power socket. This socket receives a signal from a control unit when both are programmed to send and receive the same signal.



Power Socket

Specialised equipment:

Some devices are manufactured for home automation and have IR, RF and, more recently, Bluetooth receivers. These devices include door controllers and telephones. These may be retrofitted or could require specialised wiring and some house alterations.

What devices can be used in an ECS

Entertainment:

Hi-fi, TV, DVD, cable TV are all easily controlled. It is also possible to access some game consoles.

Communication:

Specialised telephones can be operated using IR, this requires in built loudspeakers



or blue tooth headsets. Phone books of telephone numbers can be stored on the phone and or control unit for easy dialling. Some control units can be connected to specific mobile phone handsets (consult ECS supplier).

Specialised intercom systems can be used for front door access, and or carer contact. These can also be integrated with the telephone.

A variety of emergency alarms and call bells are available. It is possible to link these to call centres. Alarms can be triggered by the user or by sensors that detect falls, flood, fire, or gas. They can also include house security systems.

Physical environmental control:

Door controllers can be installed in internal and external doors. External doors are often custom made to include multipoint locking that is also controlled by the ECS. One may also consider additional opening options such as an infra red sensor or wall mounted push button or strike pad

Electronic window operators, curtain rails and blinds are less common but useful for natural light and climate control.

The ESC can also regulate room temperature by operating fans and heaters.



Other appliances:

Some control units can be integrated with personal computers. Remote control toys are a favourite with boys of all ages. Some public and private elevators can be IR controlled. Page turners are pricey specialised appliances that can be integrated into an ECS and are essential for conventional book reading. The Click-to-phone is a specialised stand alone switch controlled mobile phone and even makes text messaging possible. The only limitation is your imagination - it is even possible to control your armchair!

Conclusion

Please see the previous three ECS articles and don't be afraid to consult suppliers and users alike to help you design your own environmental control system.

I would like to say a special 'thanks' to all who have offered to participate in my ongoing research project entitled "A Generic Electronic Assistive Technology (EAT) Package for Persons with high Quadriplegia"

Thanks also to all who contributed to the "How I Do It" section. Further contributions are always welcome.

**Michele Verdonck, OT and HRB
Research Fellow**

Useful Websites:

<http://www.QEDonline.co.uk>
<http://www.pri-liberator.com>
<http://davecarthy.com>
<http://www.odel.co.uk>
<http://www.gewa.se/english>



“Technology and computers have become very much a lifeline”

“How I do It”

Technology and Spinal Injury Patients:

As we all know technology in general and most especially computers have improved life for many people. However in my case – someone who had very little experience of computers until my spinal injury in 2005 – technology and computers have become very much a lifeline.

I first experienced environmental controls in the NRH as part of my rehabilitation. Having a C4/C5 spinal injury I am a quadriplegic with very limited movement so environmental controls were going to be very important. At the NRH, I was given some guidance on the various types of controls and what was available.

Having investigated them as much as I could – I decided that the Keo System

for TV, phone, opening the door, etc, in conjunction with Dragon Naturally Speaking for using the computer were the options I decided on – I would recommend people to investigate all the various options as there are different types available.

The Keo is a system that is attached to my wheelchair (though can also be attached to the bed if needed), with this, I am able to control the TV, answer the phone, open the door and also use it with the computer. This gives me a level of independence and privacy that I would never be able to have without it. I can now spend a couple of hours on my own, and should I need help I can use the phone or go out the door to a neighbour's if necessary.

On the computer I use Dragon Naturally Speaking which is a voice activated software which recognises

what I say and either types what I say (most of the time!) or moves up and down accordingly if I am doing something like reading the paper on the computer. The two main daily newspapers (Irish Independent and Irish Times) are now free to read online and this keeps me up to date with what is going on in the world.

I was lucky enough that I was able to purchase environmental controls due to fundraising by neighbours and friends, however, I believe everyone who would benefit from these controls should have access to them as a minimum when leaving the NRH to go home as it makes a huge difference to life for someone with a spinal cord injury.

Regards
Marty Coyne

Quinta Velha - Portimao, Portugal



A wonderfully restored old Algarvean farm

A wonderfully restored old Algarvean farm, now consisting of 4 semi-detached units. All units open out on to large terraces, both front and back of the property, the front having a swimming pool and BBQ area, and are furnished and equipped to a high standard.

Quinta Velha is located in a quiet rural setting just north of the fishing port of Portimão with its many picturesque fishing villages and rocky beaches in the surrounding areas, only 10 to 15 minutes drive away - no more than 10km. Faro airport is now an easy drive of some 30 to 45 minutes, along the new motorway.

Villa Girasol

Villa Girasol has been designed to be wheelchair accessible and consists of 2 bedrooms, 1 fully accessible bathroom with 'wheel-in' shower, open plan lounge, dining and kitchen area opening out on to terraces either side of the property. A very comfortable and well designed property.

- Fully equipped open plan kitchen with fridge freezer, microwave, full oven and hob, dishwasher.
- Shower/commode chair and other equipment can usually be arranged where necessary
- Freeview Satellite TV/DVD
- Private entrances with easy access from front and back terraces.
- Wireless Internet (WiFi) access.
- All linen including towels and duvets are provided.

Villa Girasol- Sleeps 4 + 1



To start the ball rolling, just send an email stating the number of people, type of accommodation and car hire needed, preferred dates and any other supporting information, etc. to:-

info@player.pt
Tel.: (+351)289393636

Fawnmore Apartments, Kinsale, Co. Cork



Fawnmore Apartments are brand new, exclusive, self catering rental apartments designed for those with mobility issues.



The complex consists of 41 apartments with quality accessible accommodation.

- One or two bed-roomed accommodation
- Full wheelchair accessibility
- Sizeable assisted bathrooms
- Spacious living area, tastefully furnished
- Safe and level walk ways
- Emergency Call System
- Fully furnished (Dishwasher, Washer/Drier, Microwave, etc). Satellite TV
- Catering service available from our "Asgard" Restaurant
- Ideal for self catering holidays

Contact:

**Fawnmore Rentals,
Kinsale,
Co. Cork.**

Tel: +353 (0) 21 4777328

Fax: +353 (0) 21 4777242

Email: info@fawnmore.ie

Blagdon Farm, Devon, England



All cottages are exceptionally well equipped with teletext television, cooker, fridge/freezer, microwave, washing machine, tumble dryer and a comprehensive range of kitchen equipment. All have double patio doors opening onto their own private south-facing timber-decked patio which overlooks the lake and woods beyond. All have an adjacent level parking space, are fully double-glazed, with gas-fired central heating and a coal-effect fire, so are ideal for a warm and cosy stay anytime of year. Distance to nearest Town: 5 miles. Ashwater Village has a Post Office and Inn (wheelchair friendly), with the ancient market town of Holsworthy being 5 miles distant with a Somerfield store, doctors and information centre.

Award Winning Blagdon Farm, Devon was designed from the outset to be disabled friendly especially where accessibility is a priority and has succeeded having been awarded an accessibility grading on all cottages of M3(A) with one cottage M3(I) - the highest achievable.

Accessible Room Facts:

- Double rooms available
- Twin rooms available
- Bedroom doorway width: 87cm
- Bed raisers available
- Bed rails available
- Lights can be switched off from bed
- Lower hanging clothes rail
- Bathroom doorway width: 85cm
- Toilets with left and right transfer
- Toilet grab rails on both sides
- Shower has grab rails
- Shower has a drop down chair



Contact:

**Blagdon Farm Country Holidays
Nr West Cornwall border
Beaworthy, Devon, EX21 5DF
ENGLAND**

Tel: +44 (0) 1409 211509

**[http://www.accessatlast.com/
disabled-holiday/accommodation-info/273/](http://www.accessatlast.com/disabled-holiday/accommodation-info/273/)**



This article has been kindly supplied to Spinal Injuries Ireland by Tomas O'Callaghan of Southern Mobility Assessment & Tuition Specialists - www.southernmobility.ie

Driving is a means to access necessary services, social interaction with friends, family and community, driving, for someone with a disability also represents independence, integrity, confidence. Loss of driving privilege can result in isolation, distress, lowering in self esteem and contributing to other social and health disadvantages. Combined, these factors can lead to further strain being placed on health services, and a decrease in economic contributions.

This article outlines the assistive technology currently available that allows people with disabilities to drive. In addition, it provides information on driver training, safety advice, and the process of vehicle adaptation. Finally, an overview of primary controls, secondary controls, and wheelchair loading is provided.

Thanks to advances in technology, people with disabilities can maintain a regular, if not, improved quality of life. An example of this is the technological breakthrough that allows certain vehicles to be driven from the wheelchair. There is a limited choice of vehicles to choose from when driving from the wheelchair but owing to the advances in technology, manufacturing vehicle designs and increased awareness, more vehicles are being constructed or modified to accommodate this method of Hi-tech driving. When you have chosen your preferred adaptation company, enquire about any additions to the above list.

Such vehicles currently available include the Renault Kango, the Daihatsu Materia and the Volkswagon Caddy. The next size available is the Chrysler Voyager, The Kia Carnival, the Renault Solus and the next size the Volkswagon Transporter, and the Mercedes Sprinter.

For those who wish to feel the wind in their hair, the Conquest is the world's first

series-manufactured high performance motorcycle that can be driven from a wheelchair. The vehicle provides a level of performance and independence previously unattainable.

It is designed for people with disabilities from the waist down. Drivers can roll their wheelchairs onto the vehicle via an automated access ramp. All of the controls are hand operated. For more information visit www.martinconquest.com.

Fact

- The same does not mean identical. It is important to realise that two people with the same diagnosis may require different driving techniques and different adaptations to enable them to drive. Although the physical manifestations of their disabilities may be very similar, their needs in relation to driving techniques and adaptations may be very different. Have a comprehensive assessment and as your vehicle is been adapted further , second and third ergonomic checks and fittings may be required to enable the most accurate conclusion.

Costs

- Due to the individuality of each person and disability the cost of adapting a vehicle can be from hundreds of euros to thousands of euros. The recommendations are to seek professional experienced advice, have a comprehensive assessment, and use a professional adaptation company that facilitates your requirements.

Training

- For anyone beginning or returning to driving it is recommended you choose a Road Safety Authority approved driving instructor (RSA ADI). It is also recommended you choose a driving

instructor who has specialist training for people with disabilities.

- However if you prefer to use an instructor who you are comfortable with, feel free to contact Southern Mobility Assessment & Tuition Specialists who can advise on a specialist training safety checklist, inform of any unexpected difficulties that may arise, and provide any additional necessary support.

Additional information and advice

- Additional mirrors can be placed inside or on the vehicle to suit a person who has restricted neck or trunk mobility. A panoramic mirror(s), sometimes including exterior mounted blind spot mirrors, to enable safe observation at various types of junctions, lane changing and when reversing. Go to www.blindspotmirrors.co.uk to view different types and video demonstrations. Caution should be exercised with the purchase and fitting of mirrors that reduce blind spot(s) and not eliminate blind spot(s).
- Wide angled cameras fitted can assist with reversing, parking, and the safe opening of automated doors to prevent collision with other road users (most people do not expect doors to open without someone standing next to the door).



- Drive from the wheelchair vehicles that have rear door entry/exit can become immobilized in the most minor of rear end collisions. Therefore as part of your driver training it is advisable to learn the advanced driving skills to reduce the possibility of rear end collisions.
- For anyone with high spinal injuries or poor upper balance special attention should be taken to road cambers, road elevations and adverse road surfaces that may cause difficulty while also coordinating the use of the controls. These road surfaces do not have the same effect while as a passenger.
- When choosing your preferred vehicle, certain models have an above average height. Therefore the availability of multi storey car parks and certain parking areas may not be accessible due to height restrictions. It is important to have written down the exact height of your vehicle and have it displayed in the vehicle to remind yourself or any other drivers that may not be familiar with higher vehicles, should you wish to access a height restricted area and unsure if your vehicle will fit.
- The original or modified driver's seat can be supplied and easily fitted should the person driving from the wheelchair prefer to have an alternative driver use the vehicle.
- If your vehicle has specialist controls, it is advisable to teach a friend/carer/relative the specialist use of the controls should the vehicle require transporting and the road side assistance personnel require guidance in the event of your absence.



- To view various hi-tech vehicles we recommend you visit www.southernmobility.ie where there is a comprehensive list of links to adaptation companies offering photos and video footage of vehicles and various adaptations. www.motabilityireland.com is an Irish company offering advice and photos inc. video guides and information on their website to this specialist area of hi-tech vehicles and driving.

Primary Controls

The Primary Controls include the accelerator, brake, clutch, gears, handbrake and steering.

- **Steering Wheel Spinners;** these provide maximum control of steering, of various sizes and designs, to suit a person's grip, strength and mobility. Also including



quick release for additional drivers who do not use them.

- **Tailored Made Power Steering;** extra light power steering for anyone who experiences difficulty turning the wheel, and can be accompanied with a Mini Steering Wheel for anyone with reduced mobility. Please note that light power steering is not available for all models.
- **Hand Controls;** can be mechanical, electrical; push/pull (forward/back); radial (up/down); floor mounted push/pull, and joystick operated, all suitably positioned to operate accelerator and brake.
Joystick; two way joystick for acceleration/brake and/or two way joystick for steering left/right.
- **Four Way Joystick;** for acceleration, braking and steering.
- **Handbrake/Park Brake;** electric handbrakes; handbrake extension and handbrake relocation. Also available are handbrake button release levers.
- **Gear Selectors;** press button electronic gear select. Or gear lever extension, and gear selector relocation.
- **Pedal(s) Guard;** whereby a lower limb prosthesis, limb paralysis or involuntary movement may cause contact with the foot pedals thereby causing danger a pedal guard should be fitted. These can be quick release to facilitate additional drivers of the vehicle.

Secondary Controls

The Secondary Controls include indicators, wipers, lights, horn, temperature controls, fan, heated rear window, etc. Secondary controls can be infrared, floor, door, headrest or ergonomically positioned to suit ones mobility needs.

- **Infrared/Bluetooth;** secondary controls can be operated from the steering wheel spinner, or positioned in a more suitable position for the user.
- **Headrest Switches;** operated by light touching with the back of the head.

- **Toggle Switches;** attached to the hand controls for secondary control functions.
- **Switch Extensions;** original secondary controls such as wipers, lights, indicators etc. can be extended out, or cross extended to be operated from the opposite side of the original fitting. Some original secondary controls can also be relocated depending on make and model.
- **Air Switches;** light to touch air switches for secondary controls can be located on arm rests, or positioned to suit a driver's requirements.
- **Touch Screen Control Pads;** positioned to suit the drivers mobility needs the touch pad operates electric windows, air conditioning, gear selection, etc.

Wheelchair Loading

For stowage of wheelchair a three door car provides more space for drivers transferring and lifting the wheelchair into the car.

- **Wheelchair Roof box;** this is an electrical lift that lifts folds and locks away a manual wheelchair on the roof of the vehicle. All is achieved from the driver's seat. The wheelchair is enclosed protecting it from the weather elements.
- **Electric Lifts;** for loading of wheelchair or scooters into boots of vehicles. For rear-side sliding doors an electrical easy loader is available to lift, return and store a manual wheelchair behind the driver's seat. The sliding door can also be electrically opened/closed.



In conclusion, driving is a skill which promotes independence, self esteem, and a high quality of life in the individual. Thanks to the advances in technology, it is now possible for most people with a disability to drive. Although there is a limited selection of vehicles which allows vehicles to be driven from the wheelchair, most other vehicles can be driven by people with disabilities following adaptations to the primary and secondary controls. The process of driving with a disability requires careful consideration on a variety of issues. The individual should source a reputable driving instructor and adaptation company to ensure that his/her specific requirements are being met.

Further information contact
www.southernmobility.ie

Dublin Bus - Wheelchair accessible routes



Dublin Bus has, since last year, honoured a commitment given to agencies representing people with disability, to only purchase low floor wheelchair accessible buses.

The following bus routes are now operated using wheelchair accessible vehicles.

Route Destination details:-

- | | | | | | |
|-----|--|-----|--|-----|---|
| 1 | Parnell Square East to Ringsend (E.S.B. Power Station Poolbeg) | 32x | McAllister's Garage - Seabury - Malahide to Belfield | 67 | Pearse Street to Celbridge |
| 2 | Parnell Square East to Sandymount (St. John's Church) / Belfield | 33 | Lower Abbey Street to Balbriggan | 67a | Pearse Street to Maynooth |
| 3 | Larkhill to Sandymount (St. John's Church) / Belfield | 33a | Swords to Balbriggan | 68 | City Centre (Aston Quay) to Newcastle (Ballynakelly, Co Dublin) |
| 4 | Blackrock to Ballymun | 33x | Skerries to St. Stephen's Green | 69 | City Centre (Aston Quay) to Rathcoole |
| 4a | From Stradbroke to Harristown | 37 | Hawkins Street to Carpenterstown | 69x | Rathcoole (Terminus Route 69) to Aston Quay |
| 5 | O'Connell Street to Sandyford Industrial Estate | 38 | Hawkins Street to Damastown | 70 | Hawkins Street to Dunboyne |
| 7 | O'Connell Street to Loughlinstown Park / Cherrywood | 38a | Hawkins Street to Damastown | 70a | Hawkins Street to Dunboyne |
| 8 | City Centre (Parnell Square) to Dalkey (Ulverton Road) | 39 | Hawkins Street to Ongar | 74 | City Centre (Pearse Street) to Stocking Avenue |
| 10 | Phoenix Park to Donnybrook (Belfield) | 39a | Hawkins Street to Ongar | 74a | City Centre (Pearse Street) to Stocking Avenue |
| 10a | Phoenix Park to Stillorgan Shopping Centre | 39c | Hawkins Street to Ongar | 79 | Aston Quay to Ballyfermot (Spiddal Park) |
| 11 | Wadelai Park to Kilmacud Road | 42 | Lower Abbey Street to Portmarnock / Malahide | 79a | Aston Quay to Park West |
| 11a | Wadelai Park to Mather Road North | 43 | City Centre (Lower Abbey Street) to Swords Business Park | 79x | Neilstown Road - Bachelors Walk |
| 11b | Wadelai Park to Belfield (via Bird Avenue) | 44b | To / From Glencullen | 83 | Harristown to Kimmage |
| 18 | Sandymount to Palmerstown Cemetery/Old Lucan Road | 45 | Eden Quay to Bray | 84 | Eden Quay to Newcastle (Co. Wicklow) |
| 19 | Jamestown Road to Bulfin Road | 45a | Dun Laoghaire (DART Station) to Ballywaltrim | 84x | City Centre (Eden Quay) to Kilcoole |
| 19a | Jamestown Road to Limekiln Avenue | 46a | Parnell Square West / Mountjoy Square to Dun Laoghaire | 90 | Heuston Station to International Financial Services Centre |
| 20b | Eden Quay to Beaumont (Ardlea Rd) | 49 | Eden Quay to The Square, Tallaght | 92 | Heuston Station - St. Stephen's Green |
| 26 | Pearse Street to Palmerstown (Cherry Orchard) | 49a | Eden Quay to Belgard Road | 102 | From Dublin Airport to Sutton Station |
| 27b | City Centre (Eden Quay) to Harristown | 50 | Ringsend / Grand Canal Dock to Citywest | 103 | Clontarf DART Station to Omni Shopping Centre |
| 32 | Eden Quay to Portmarnock | 51b | Aston Quay to Grange Castle Business Park | 104 | Clontarf DART Station to Cappagh Hospital |
| 32a | Eden Quay to Malahide | 51c | Aston Quay to Grange Castle Business Park | 111 | Dun Laoghaire to Loughlinstown Park |
| 32b | Eden Quay to Portmarnock | 53 | City Centre (Eden Quay) to East Wall (Alexandra Gates) | 123 | Kilnamanagh Road to Griffith Avenue (Marino) |
| | | 54a | City Centre (Eden Quay) to The Square | 127 | Leeson St. Bridge to Donaghmede (Grange Rd. Roundabout) |
| | | 56a | City Centre (Ringsend Road) to The Square | 128 | From Clongriffin to Rathmines |
| | | 59 | Dún Laoghaire (Crofton Road) to Killiney (Mackintosh Park) | 129 | Leeson St. Bridge to Baldoyle |
| | | 63 | Mountjoy Square to Kilternan | 130 | City Centre (Lwr. Abbey St.) to Castle Avenue |
| | | 65 | Eden Quay to Blessington/Ballymore | 140 | Finglas (St. Margaret's Road) to Leeson Street (Wilton Terrace) |
| | | 65b | Eden Quay to Citywest | 142 | Portmarnock to Rathmines (Palmerston Park) |
| | | 66 | Pearse Street to Maynooth | 145 | Mountjoy Square to Kilmacanogue |
| | | 66a | City Centre (Pearse Street) to River Forest | 150 | Fleet Street to Rossmore |
| | | 66b | City Centre (Pearse Street) to Leixlip (Castletown) | 151 | Docklands Station to Adamstown |
| | | 66d | Waterloo Road to Leixlip (Easton Raod) | 161 | Rockbrook to Nutgrove Shopping Centre |
| | | | | 201 | Citywest (Kingswood Avenue) to Bohernabreena |
| | | | | 202 | Citywest (Kingswood Avenue) to Kilnamanagh |
| | | | | 210 | From Tallaght (The Square) to Liffey Valley Centre |
| | | | | 220 | Ladys Well Road to Ballymun Roundabout |
| | | | | 746 | Dún Laoghaire to Dublin Airport |
| | | | | 747 | City Centre to Airport |
| | | | | 748 | Heuston Station to Dublin Airport |

All Nitelink services will now be operated by low floor buses.

Wheel gone kid

Over the past 8 years, my electric wheelchair has travelled the world, been on many a stage, and accompanied me through the ups and downs of my life. It's well used and well loved but now spends more time in the repair shop than on the road.

Last week, it broke down yet again - an experience that was inconvenient and stressful but most of all, humiliating. There I was, wheeling amongst the shoppers and tourists of London's Oxford Street on a busy Saturday afternoon, going about my own business, until without warning, my chair began to have what I can only describe as a "wheelchair spasm". It stopped and started, then started and stopped. Even more frighteningly, when I took my hand off the joystick, the chair continued to jerk forward. It was possessed. Forget the repairman - I needed an exorcist.

I've used an electric wheelchair for over 17 years and having clocked up a fair few miles, I think I'm quite proficient with the old joystick. But when your chair jolts and jerks every few centimetres or simply stops dead in the middle of the road for no good reason, all that experience counts for nothing; I looked like an amateur. From the look on people's faces, their smirks and condescending stares, it was obvious that they thought I was a crap driver.

To make matters worse, I was subjected to those 'hilarious', oh-so-original comments that people make whenever they see a wheelchair user approach. I heard "Have you got your L plates?", "Brummm brummm, Speedy!" and the classic "Don't

run me over!" as I jumped along the street like a wheelchair-using 'Buckaroo'.

I had to admit that my chair was coming to the end of its road. Despite pressure on the joystick, it refused to go forward, and the jerking suddenly stopped to be replaced by stillness. So I sat in the middle of the pavement and calmly dialled the 4th emergency service. Not the RAC or the AA, but my PA, who set off to rescue me.

While waiting, I tried to give the appearance that I was exactly where I wanted to be. I'm obviously not that good an actor as a couple of passers by stopped to ask if I needed any help. Instead of mentioning the breakdown, I pretended that I was happily window shopping - a little unconvincing perhaps, since the closest display was full of men's ski wear and accessories.

I quickly became bored with looking at saloppettes, goggles and skis and decided on a radical approach to chair repair - I turned the power off and then on again. As the red light flashed hopefully into life, I tried going forward, but nothing happened. I tried going sideways but still nothing happened. Then I tried something else, and unbelievably, the chair began to move, quickly and smoothly... and backwards.

I gratefully accepted what little it offered and began to wheel backwards into the crowd, thrilled to be able to leave the ski wear window display and make my own way to the car. With my stiff body and neck, turning around to see where I was going wasn't an option, so a shout of "coming through, wheelie in reverse!" became the



only way to protect innocent bystanders as they attempted to flee from my reckless path.

But far from the humiliation I'd initially felt when my chair bucked, spasmed and reversed, I was now enjoying myself. Not knowing what was in my path was quite exhilarating and wheeling against the tide of shoppers seemed incredibly natural. I called my PA and told her I'd meet her at the car - I was going backwards shopping!

The glassware and china departments were a challenge until the shop staff helpfully directed me safely down the aisles, and I became tangled in coat hangers and dragged a patchwork of clothes behind me. The lifts emptied when I wanted to use them and queuing up to pay backwards left the other shoppers uncertain whether they were coming or going. The security guards held the doors open for me and out I wheeled, backwards along the street, and finally, arrived at the safety of my car.

I definitely need a new electric wheelchair. As my options are to either raise money to buy one or to join the NHS queue, I think I'm going to be wheeling backwards for a very long time. It's a good job it was so much fun.

By Liz Carr

Southern Mobility Solutions Ltd. Assessment and Tuition Specialists

Located in Cork, Southern Mobility Assessment And Tuition Specialists is registered in Ireland, and is a professional indemnity insured company. We provide a qualified, professional, specialist service in the area of Transport & Mobility including:

- **Driving Assessments:** (On-road driving ability assessments to ascertain any cognitive/perceptual driving deficits & in- car off road assessments to ascertain necessary adaptations for those with physical disabilities or mobility difficulties).
- **Passenger Assessments:** (assessments and advice for passengers with disabilities on a choice of vehicles, adaptations, access & egress solutions, wheelchair stowage etc).
- **Driving Tuition:** Driving tuition for people with various disabilities using an automatic/semiautomatic adapted vehicle. Driving tuition for anyone who wishes to drive an automatic car. Driving tuition for anyone who wishes to drive a manual car.

- **Advice & Information:** on an extensive range of driving issues.

While fostering excellence in the field of services provided, improving the availability and standard of tuition for older people and people with disabilities, we continue to create mobility, integrity, confidence, independence and equality while also providing :

- Demonstrations, Information, Training and a Consultancy service for health care professionals/ companies/ groups/ associations etc.
- Driver Rehabilitation courses.
- Older Drivers refresher courses, advice and assessments.
- Instructor Training.

Southern Mobility Solutions Ltd.,
Tel: 021 4398 527 Mobile: 087 9304 335.
E-Mail info@southernmobility.ie
Web: www.southernmobility.ie

Kick Start



Former Miss World Rosanna Davison launches Spinal Injuries Ireland's Kick Start Program. The underlying principle behind the Kick Start Program is to support and motivate individuals who have sustained a spinal cord injury through the challenge of venture activities by encouraging independence and restoring confidence.

Jeet Kune Do Self Defence in Belgium:

This is an opportunity to learn the unique martial art of Jeet Kune Do, founded by Bruce Lee, with world recognised instructors in Antwerp, Belgium.



Kayaking in Wales:

Experience the freedom of kayaking in the scenic lakes of north Wales and enjoy the opportunity to challenge yourself and savour the Welsh hospitality.



Scuba Diving in Cork.

Take the opportunity to learn to scuba dive in the beautiful coves and bays of Bantry in West Cork. Enjoy the freedom of diving and qualify as a PADI Scuba Diver.



Skiing in Switzerland:

Now is your chance to experience the thrill of skiing in the breathtaking Swiss Alps. Travel by cable car up to the amazing revolving restaurant.



For more details and application form contact
Spinal Injuries Ireland
on 01 2355317



Rights of disabled travelling by air

Under new European legislation, from the 26th July 2008, managing bodies of European Airports will have legal responsibility for the provision of assistance offered to disabled persons and persons with reduced mobility when travelling through the airport. Dublin Airport Authority has appointed OCS (One Complete Solution Ltd) to carry out and provide these assistance services.

Definition of a Person with Reduced Mobility

A Person with reduced mobility (PRM) is understood to mean any person whose mobility is reduced due to physical incapacity (sensory or locomotory), an intellectual deficiency, age, illness, or any other cause of disability when using transport and whose situation needs special attention and the adaptation to a person's needs of the service made available to all passengers.

Requirements under the legislation

Passengers should notify their airline / handling agent / tour operator / travel agent, etc. at time of booking that they require assistance or no later than 48 hours in advance of their flight. The airline / handling agent / tour operator / travel agent, etc. should then pass this information to the service provider (OCS) no later than 36 hours in advance of the passenger's flight. Whereby a passenger does not notify the airline / handling agent / tour operator / travel agent, etc. 48 hours in advance or where the assistance provider does not receive this information 36 hours in advance from the airline / handling agent / tour operator / travel agent, etc., DAA requires its supplier to make all reasonable efforts to provide assistance.

Services that must be provided by DAA

- Enable passenger to communicate their arrival at the airport and their request for assistance at the designated points inside and outside terminal buildings
- Move from designated point to the check-in counter
- Check-in and register baggage
- Proceed from check-in counter to the aircraft, with completion of emigration, customs and security procedures
- Board the aircraft, with the provision of lifts, wheelchairs or other assistance needed as appropriate
- Proceed from the aircraft to the baggage hall and retrieve baggage, with completion of immigration and customs procedures

- Proceed from the baggage hall to the designated point of departure
- Reach connecting flights when in transit, with assistance on the airside and landside
- Move to the toilet facilities if required

Quality Standards / Service Levels

Consultation with the airlines, handling agents and persons with reduced mobility representative organisations took place in order to develop specific Quality Standards that will now apply at Dublin Airport.

Manual handling of passengers on or off aircraft is prohibited by DAA; where an airbridge is not being utilised; boarding or deplaning of passengers from aircraft will be performed using ambulift or similar hydraulic lift device by the assistance provider; Where an aircraft is not capable of being serviced by ambulift or similar, DAA will seek to employ other appropriate handling aids.

Passengers seeking assistance will, at all times, be allowed to request any particular type of assistance whereby the physical characteristics of the aircraft, operational flexibility and equipment capabilities allow this.

Passengers will have the use of their own mobility equipment, as appropriate, to the aircraft door; This equipment should be available at the gate room / aircraft side as soon as possible upon arrival.

DAA will designate points of arrival / departure at Dublin Airport where passengers can advise that they have arrived and require assistance. These will be located in the following areas:

- Short-term car park and one long-term car park where local conditions necessitate
- Departures Hall
- Public Transport
- Set-down areas



There will also be two reception areas for passengers, one located on the departures floor and one located centrally airside. These areas will be utilised as waiting areas for disabled passengers and PRMs. They will be manned by OCS and provide seating for passengers.

DAA will train all relevant frontline DAA staff in relation to disability awareness and equality awareness in accordance with the legislation and refresher training will be provided as appropriate.

The following are pre-defined assistance times that OCS must adhere to:

Pre-booked departing passengers (notify airline at least 48 hours in advance):

- 80% should wait no longer than 10 mins for assistance
- 90% should wait no longer than 20 mins for assistance
- 100% should wait no longer than 30 mins for assistance

Non pre-booked departing passengers:

- 80% should wait no longer than 25 mins for assistance
- 90% should wait no longer than 35 mins for assistance
- 100% should wait no longer than 45 mins for assistance

Pre-booked arriving passengers:

Assistance should be available at the gate room / aircraft side for:

- 80% within 5 mins of "on chocks"
- 90% within 10 mins
- 100% within 20 mins

Non pre-booked arriving passengers:

Assistance should be available at the gate room / aircraft side for:

- 80% within 15 mins of "on chocks"
- 90% within 25 mins
- 100% within 35 mins

'The Eagle has landed'



June and Paddy



June, John and Sandra



Catriona and Tom

Hey all...

We Jumped! We freefell, and we landed safely from 10,000ft! I may not have landed too gracefully, but hey, I didn't break any bones which is kind of important. ;) I swear, I'll never forget the experience, it was amazing! Crazy... but amazing!

Roger 'The Big Guy' Killeen was my tandem master and I don't think it would have been possible if it wasn't for him. I'm 6ft 2 and weigh about 15 stone, and this guy is actually bigger than me. I don't think anyone else would have had the strength to handle it. Fair play to him, and all the lads in the club, my brothers and friends. Everyone worked as a team and made it happen. It was funny looking down on the landing spot and seeing all the lads running towards us trying to get into position to catch my legs. They looked very worried tho when we came in faster than expected and some of them were shouting "Who's got the legs?" "I thought you had the legs!?" haha It was a

little worrying too, but I was on too much of a buzz to care at that point! I cannot wait to see the footage back, I'd say it looks like comedy capers!

Ah, what a day tho... I'd advise anyone to do it, young or old. Its a once in a lifetime experience that everyone should have.

The freefalling part was bizarre I thought. We fell through a grey rain cloud and for a moment it was cold and damp and I couldn't see anything. Then coming out of it you can see the whole way across the country, and everything looks beautiful. And the speed we're falling, the fields and towns below are getting bigger and bigger by the second. That was a rush! But as soon as the Parachute opens, you're suddenly floating in slow-motion and everything is eerily quiet and peaceful. That was indescribable and completely breath-taking! My favorite part of the experience. You're just left there, suspended 5,000 feet above your home town and you soon realise from

that height, that all your problems on the ground are small ones. It's really humbling, and I can now understand why the regular skydivers in the Parachute Club seem that little bit more free spirited and at peace with themselves. Ahh.... what a day!! Every now and again I have a quiet giggle to myself thinking back. I don't think the effects will wear off too soon either.

I just want to thank everyone for their amazing support! Loads of people sponsored me both online at www.mycharity.ie/event/para_shoot_jump/ and in person, so thank you all very very much!!!

I've almost raised a thousand euros so I'll be handing that over to Spinal Injuries Ireland. The online page will remain open until the 5th October, so if you haven't had a chance to donate, feel free at any time. Muchos grazias!!

It was a great success and I'm really happy I done it now!

Paddy Slattery

Calendar of Events



27th Oct - Dublin City Marathon

Christmas Cards



Price: €8 per pack (Each pack contains 12 cards)

Spinal Injuries Ireland's Christmas cards will be available from the middle of October at €8 per pack (p&p is additional at cost).

To place an order simply call us on 01 2355317 or email: info@spinalinjuries.ie.

If you would like to take part in any of these fundraising events contact Philip Quinlan on 01 2355317 or email philip@spinalinjuries.ie

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Replacing your Wheelchair?

In order to replace your current wheelchair you will need to contact your Community Occupational Therapist. Community Occupational Therapists (OT'S) assess and provide wheelchairs in the community (under the HSE).

To be eligible for a wheelchair you will need a medical card or long term disability card. Each county has a community OT department and you can refer yourself in or ask your doctor or public health nurse to refer you in.

When being assessed for a new wheelchair it is important that you are actively involved in this process and you get the opportunity to trial more than one chair. Make sure you get the most out of your wheelchair assessment by asking the following questions;

Do I need a fixed frame or folding wheelchair?

Many users choose a fixed frame manual wheelchair. There are less moving parts, therefore less maintenance. Fixed frame chairs are usually stronger and lighter than folding framed chairs. However they are not suitable for everyone. Look for advice from your therapist.



What wheelchair features do I feel I require and need to think about?

Probably the most important feature is whether the chair has a fixed or folding frame as above. However, other features you might want to consider are:-

1. Footboard / footplates style and position
2. Back height and angle
3. Seat angle
4. Armrest style (if being used)
5. Brake type
6. Castor size
7. Tyre and rear-wheel set-up
8. Balance of chair depending on rear-wheel set-up
9. Weight of chair
10. Anti tip bars



Will I want to transport my wheelchair by myself in the car?

If you can drive, you will want to be able to get your wheelchair in/out of the car independently. The overall shape of your wheelchair and the method you use to lift it into the car should be considered when selecting a chair. Where possible before selecting a chair try getting the chair in/out of your car (during the assessment).

Who will service my chair?

Most wheelchair services have a contract with a repair service. Ensure you find out from your wheelchair service how to



contact the repairer e.g. directly or via the wheelchair service.

What about a cushion?

It is essential that you use a cushion on your wheelchair to be comfortable but also to help with pressure relief. Some cushions have better pressure relieving qualities than others. The choice depends on your need. Also, some cushions are better than others at positioning your body on the seat. Ask for advice from your therapist.



Other considerations

You may require a more specialised wheelchair e.g. powered depending on your function. There are different factors to be considered when selecting a powered wheelchair such as type of controls and storage for charging. For transportation purposes, a wheelchair accessible vehicle is usually the better option. Discuss this with your therapist.

This article was kindly supplied to Spinal Injuries Ireland by Elva Breen, Galway Community Occupational Therapist.

Patient Advocacy & Liaison Service

Hello, my name is Pauline Sheehan. My role as Patient & Liaison Officer is to listen to any comments or concerns you may have during your stay at the National Rehabilitation Hospital.



Pauline Sheehan

I will

- Endeavour to provide information you may need about the services available and hospital policies
- Offer help and support, in resolving any difficulties you may be experiencing
- Liaise between staff and patient should any concerns arise

Contact details:

- Call to my office which is past the sports hall/gym, Unit 2, Room 016
- Leave a note with your name and ward in the post box at reception
- Telephone:- (01) 2355451



Betty Hillary



Oonagh Crean

Liaison Nursing

If you have a nursing or medical problem relating to your spinal cord injury please contact Betty Hillary or Oonagh Crean, Liaison Nursing, National Rehabilitation Hospital, Rochestown Avenue, Dun Laoghaire, Co. Dublin.

Betty Hillary
Tel: 01 2355315
Email: betty.hillary@nrh.ie

Oonagh Crean
Tel: 01 2355462



NDA Research Promotion Scheme 2009-2011

The NDA's Research Promotion Scheme (RPS) is a funding mechanism that aims to promote quality and innovation in research. The RPS scheme welcomes proposals aligned to the NDA's strategic priorities from research institutions, service providers, organisations of persons with disabilities and disability advocacy groups. The focus of research topics for this year is:

"Promoting Independent and Community Living for People with Disabilities"

The NDA would like to receive proposals to undertake research under this theme, to be carried out and completed within a three year period. Funding up to a maximum of E75,000 is available per research proposal. Only projects of long-term value and national impact can be considered for an award of over E25,000.

In particular the NDA would welcome research proposals that involve:

- Monitoring and tracking success factors in transitions to independent living.

- Research proposals evaluating the co-ordination of different services (e.g. health, transport, employment, housing, day services, car supports) for people with disabilities.
- Evaluations of good practice models.
- Research on independent living models for people with high support needs.

Applicants for funding and required forms can be found on www.nda.ie

'Disabled off buses'

Lothian Buses has hit back at a campaign to allow prams on buses by claiming half of mothers refuse to leave to make room for a wheelchair.

Hundreds of parents, as well as councillors and MSPs, have called for the company to end its controversial ban. They say parents with prams and buggies should be allowed to use the wheelchair space if vacant, on condition they leave or fold their pram if it is required.

But Lothian Buses says a survey of bus drivers has found that 20 per cent of users refuse to fold their buggies when asked. This rises to 50 per cent when the pram cannot be folded, and the only option is getting off the bus.

The response comes as pressure is mounting on the company to find a compromise. More than 750 parents have signed a petition, while eight MSPs have signed a motion in the Scottish Parliament.

Neil Renilson, chief executive of Lothian Buses, said a significant number of parents refused to accept that disabled passengers should have priority. This has led to the need to enforce a complete ban on unfoldable prams and buggies.

He wrote: "On a typical weekday, the number of occasions when wheelchair users board a Lothian Buses vehicle ranges from between 285 to 340.

"Typically, circa 20 per cent of requests by drivers to adults with pushchairs to vacate

the wheelchair space to allow a wheelchair user to board result in a refusal to do so. The level of refusals can vary depending on the time of day and the route involved, but, as a result, every day a substantial number of wheelchair users find that they cannot board the bus they wish.

However, a Lothian Buses spokesman was not able to confirm where they got their figures from. Many campaigners said the figures did not match their own experiences.

Nicki Lewis, 26, a mother-of-two from Musselburgh, said: "These figures seem to have been plucked from nowhere. Surely, all the driver has to do, when someone with a pram or buggy boards, is tell them that if the space is needed they will need to fold or vacate."

Correspondents

As a para I recall a doctor saying to me. 'You can drink water, tea or juice', 'but you have to drink a lot.' So I chose tea.

Irish tea, you might even say institution tea. That is a drop of tea with lots and lots of milk and sugar.

It worked for years and years. Whether I was in the USA or Europe. I drank tea the same way, even if my hosts thought milk worse than tobacco. Morning noon and night it was my daily ritual, to keep my systems functioning.

Then a few years ago a problem arose with my stomach or to be precise, bowels.

As it persisted, I began to change my diet. I stopped taking everything until gradually it emerged that I was becoming intolerant to milk with tea.

I was really addicted and did not want to give up my tasty brew. But try as I might, the problem would not go away. So I gave up milk in my tea. It was awfully bitter. Then I searched around for alternatives.

Water is great, the true elixir, your kidneys practically don't have to work to synthesize water for you body. But let's face it it's perhaps a little boring.

Then I went on holidays to France and found verveine, a sort of tea made from a minty leaf.



Only starting, I began to check out the wide range of interesting teas now available. Green tea is superb and rich with antioxidants. Elderflower is interesting. Home made mint tea is really refreshing. All the different teas have their own world of tastes and effects.

Some teas are really sought after and Asian countries keep them for their internal market. English tea companies now produce a wide range of teas, some brands are better than others.

Occasionally I allow myself a coffee or tea with milk but more often I willingly stay away from those dark liquids that can have you climbing the walls or down in depression.

Chai is now my tea of pleasure. It's a tea with some pepper and maybe cloves.

Alternating between chai and green tea suits me at the moment. Giving up tea was liberating and the freedom of trying new teas beckons.

From our Tea Correspondent:

Praise for the Railways

A short while ago my wife and I went to Belfast for a few days to celebrate a birthday and wedding anniversary. Irish Rail were very helpful with a ramp being provided at Wicklow Station on our departure. We were met at the carriage door at Connolly Station and helped to the Enterprise to Belfast.

When we arrived at Belfast Central for our return journey we were told that there was a security alert and our train would be delayed. This would mean that we would miss the last train to Wicklow and would be stranded in Dublin. We pointed this out to the station staff and they made a couple of phone calls and told us to speak to a named person at the Information Desk when we did eventually arrive in Dublin.

The train eventually left and stopped at

Portadown. There passengers were bussed to Newry. There were two of us in wheelchairs and we were transferred by a specially adapted taxi to safely accommodate wheelchairs.

When we eventually arrived at Connolly we were met by a young lady who escorted us to another waiting taxi. This taxi took us all of the way to Wicklow and the driver took us to our car and helped us to transfer.

The staff of Irish Railways were absolutely wonderful and went out of their way to make sure that we were comfortable.

We often hear criticism of our public services and it is nice to be able to praise them, without reservation.

Oh and the charge to my wife and I for these taxi journeys? ZERO Euros and ZERO cents.



*Best wishes
John Robb*

Sweet Cures – Waterfall D-Mannose

I recently heard about D-Mannose from another person who has a spinal cord injury, and having been plagued by urinary tract infections for many years I thought I've nothing to lose, I may as well give it a try. I was very sceptical but I followed the instructions and found within three days the UTI symptoms were clearing up.

I got the powder form and drank it with warm water every couple of hours. D-Mannose is a natural product made from sweet forest timbers. Unlike antibiotics you can take this product on a regular basis without any side effects, which for me is a real plus as I'm allergic to penicillin, so I



didn't feel nauseous taking it. When I get a UTI I get an increase in spasm and sweating particularly at night, all of this stopped much to my delight.

After three weeks I am still taking it but to a lesser degree and have had no signs of the dreaded UTI returning, happy days.

I would recommend this product from my own personal experience, but would advise anyone who is interested in trying it to seek further information from their GP.

*Kind regards
N. Daly*

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Ralph McMahon, B.C.L., has worked for over 15 years on behalf of Spinal Injuries Ireland and for people who have sustained severe injuries.

If you or a person close to you has sustained a spinal injury it is very important to take sound legal advice.

At Ralph McMahon Solicitors, we will listen to you, provide you with the support and advice you require and, in time, undertake your legal representation.

Ralph McMahon Solicitors are endorsed by Spinal Injuries Ireland to act on behalf of its members. We also represent the organisation itself.

If you have any concerns of a legal nature which you would like to discuss, or require our assistance, please call Ralph McMahon and he will arrange to meet with you.

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