



**ANNUAL**  
REPORT  
**2021**  
Nothing about  
us without us

# Our Vision

Our vision is an Ireland where disabled persons have freedom, choice and control over all aspects of their lives and can fully participate in an inclusive society as equals.

## Mission

We are working collectively to create an Independent Living Movement in Ireland which is led by disabled people and promotes a rights-based social model of disability, challenging the unacceptable charity / medical model of disability. We are working towards the removal of societal barriers that prevent active equal participation of disabled people, challenging the denial of people's rights and the promotion of the philosophy of independent living.

## Core Values

Our core values are underpinned by the philosophy of Independent Living and all activities are aimed towards promoting: Independence, Options, Rights, Empowerment.



## Our Principles

We promote the active participation of disabled people in all aspects of the work of ILMI: locally, regionally, nationally and internationally.

We are a cross-impairment DPO (disabled persons organisation) formed to ensure that the voice of disabled people will be heard in campaigns, research and policy development.

We recognise and promote equality within our members, in terms of gender, sexuality, ethnicity, age, marital status, socio-economic status and impairment.

We will actively promote an understanding of disability as an interaction between a person's impairment and the societal and environmental barriers that disable people's participation in society – and actively lobby to remove these barriers to participation and challenge the unacceptable medical / charity model of disability.

We are committed that ILMI continue to develop new innovative models to achieve equality of outcome, recognising that people have a variety of abilities, needs and wants.



The following is a service activity report for the organisation for the year 2021

## Chairperson's Review

**I am coming to this year's review as we arrive at the significant 30th anniversary milestone of ILMI's foundation in 1992 as the Centre for Independent Living. The challenges passed to us by our founders continue today. There is no end to the work of ILMI arguing and persuading our expectations as disabled people to be embodied into the new fabric of rights to guarantee our inclusion as equal citizens of a modern and accommodating Ireland. The landscape of service provision is growing ever bigger and stronger as a money-hungry industry that ultimately must be challenged for its ongoing relevance and termination if scarce resources are to be re-allocated to independent living, supported families and to accessible communities. This is ILMI's challenge going forward.**

ILMI members can be satisfied that our work in the year now being reviewed was prosecuted to successful conclusions by committed staff under the direction of our CEO, Damien Walshe, and the guidance of ILMI's board of directors - my colleagues who have supported me in enriching ILMI's work with their own individual wealth of experience while managing the oversight role of good governance for our growing recognition as Ireland's leading DPO.

ILMI staff during the year continued to exploit the potential in digital technology for connectivity, employment and homeworking for disabled people.

The ILMI working day continued its reach into late evenings in order to facilitate member participation in a huge menu of subjects and topics feeding into and creating new interest groups, building on the legacy of our movement and discovering the leadership seeds in disabled people who will follow on from our founders, three of whom died relatively recently: James Brosnan in late 2021 and Dr John Roche, Hubert McCormack and David Egan in the early parts of 2022.

**Des Kenny, ILMI Chair**

# Chief Executive's Review

Message from ILMI CEO Damien Walshe

**Over the course of 2021 ILMI as a collective has achieved a huge amount. Year on year, ILMI as a cross-impairment DPO continues to grow and grow and that is testament to the principles of community development which drive our work: Collectivity; Participation, Community Empowerment; Social Justice and Sustainable Development; Human Rights, Equality and Anti-discrimination. Putting those principles into action have meant that we continue to have disabled people actively involved in all aspects of and leading our work over the course of 2021 and beyond.**

As an organisation we have much to be proud of. Our INTERREG-funded ONSIDE project, led by Peter Kearns, has reached its half way stage at the end of 2021. ILMI ONSIDE staff will have supported the involvement of just over 500 disabled people across Donegal, Sligo, Leitrim, Cavan, Monaghan and Louth. Disabled people on ONSIDE are involved in social inclusion and digital skills training and supported into mainstream training, education and social inclusion spaces in their locality as well as being supported into other ILMI peer, policy and social spaces. ONSIDE staff are leading the exciting development of local DPOs supported by ILMI in Donegal, Leitrim and Louth and over the course of 2022, Cavan and Monaghan. ONSIDE also created the first ever Youth Camp for young disabled people, which was held over two weeks in the summer. Our ONSIDE staff are continuing to break new ground delivering social-model disability equality training to NUIM, ETBs and to community groups.

Funding secured towards the end of 2020 allowed us to run a number of new, innovative projects this year. At the start of January, our innovative online activism programme Strategies for Change began. Coordinated by Fiona Weldon this programme worked with 15 emerging disabled activists over the course of 2021, finishing on Tuesday 14th December. It has been a huge success and the participants involved will take on key roles to drive the work of ILMI in the future. We are looking forward to recognising their achievements early in 2022 but also beginning Strategies for Change 2 in 2022.

In April we started our Creating Raised Expectations and Aspirations Towards Employment (CREATE) project. Funded by Pobal funding, CREATE works with disabled people to develop their confidence and skills that supports them to start or progress on their employment pathway.

Led by Patrick Flanagan, CREATE coordinator, with support from CREATE life coach Eileen Daly, ILMI developed online group Coaching, employment skills workshops and peer mentoring to support disabled people to explore employment and training options and this will continue in 2022.

The ONSIDE process of supporting local DPOs will be central to the Department of Rural and Community Development Virtual Online Inclusive Communities for Empowerment (VOICE) project. VOICE will begin in January 2022 and will work with disabled people in counties Cork, Kerry, Tipperary, Carlow, Kilkenny, Waterford and Wexford. It is a welcome development that will allow us to build a stronger movement.

We continued to offer online spaces for training, consultation and peer spaces. The ILMI Women's Group continued over 2021 as did our innovative Youth Space. Both of these peer groups informed consultations within ILMI, including our CRPD consultation process. The document **Observations State Report** is one that we can be especially proud of in its scope and detail.

Our consultations led to **Submissions on the Review of the Mental Health Act**, the **Student Grant Scheme**, the **Disability Capacity Review** and a **Review of the Equality Legislation**. We also published our IHREC funded project with South Dublin County Council **Making Inclusion a Reality**, and our joint Housing campaign document with Inclusion Ireland - **Our Housing Rights**.

Our experiences from 2020 in managing online spaces meant that in 2021 we could expand and evolve our approaches to build a sense of community within the Movement.

We were lucky to have guest speakers for social events such as Adam Pearson, Richard Butchins, Neven Maguire, Phil Friend and the powerhouse that is Judy Heumann. On March 8th as part of International Women's Day, ILMI held our first online IWD event with Nina Tame, Izzy Keane, Mary Collins and Sarah Fitzgerald. Later that month we were joined by Jo Watson and Dr James Davies from A Disorder for Everyone (AD4E) to critically challenge the medicalisation of emotional distress and pain, which is very part of our social-model analysis of disability. In May we held our first "Everything You Wanted to Know about Disability but were afraid to ask" where Peter Kearns acted as MC to interview Maggie Cameron and a panel of Des Kenny, Selina Bonnie and Amy Hassett to explore the role of DPOs and the social model of disability. This was a huge event open to non-disabled people with over 500 people attending this webinar. One of the most energising events we created in 2021 was CEOL21, an online music festival featuring James McCrory, Louis Younge and band, Hubert McCormack, Robbie Sinnott, Davey Cashin and the Kilkennys, Emilie Conway, Glen Hansard, Tolú Makay, Mundy and John Kelly. All of these events are recorded and available on our ever-expanding **ILMI Youtube Channel** which we will continue to add to in 2022 with more exciting online events and presentations.

ILMI is proud to participate in the Assisted Human Reproduction coalition, the Irish Network Against Racism, Community Platform, Add the 10th Alliance, European Anti-Poverty Network (EAPN) Ireland, Community Work Ireland, the Coalition Against Hate Crime and the National Women's Council.

I want to use this opportunity to recognise to thank everyone who has participated and contributed to the work of the organisation at every level in 2021. I especially want to acknowledge the huge amount of work that the board has put in over the course over this year.

On a personal level, I want to recognise the support and guidance that Des Kenny gives as chairperson of ILMI.

We are extremely fortunate to have such skilled, creative and committed staff members that bring so much to the organisation. I want to acknowledge the work of the staff team: Orla Beirne, Fiona Brennan, Susan O'Brien, Nina Byrne, Dr James Casey, James Cawley, Angela Coleman, Patrick Flanagan, Shelly Gaynor, Edel McGinley, Peter Kearns, Claire Kenny, Clive Lowry, Mark McCollum, Fiona Weldon and Audrey Wilson. As CEO I want to thank them all for their dedication, expertise and passion they bring to their roles and their work as a team. I want to thank Niamh Cummins from Mohill Community College and Linda McCourt NUI Maynooth who joined ILMI on placement as part of their education in 2021 and will continue to do so into 2022.

I want to remember James Brosnan, a proud and active member of ILMI, who sadly passed away in November.

And finally, but most importantly, I want to acknowledge the huge contribution made by disabled people who have been involved in the work of ILMI in so many different ways. Despite the challenges we have collectively faced, ILMI has become a stronger DPO that has connected disabled people across Ireland. We have embraced technology as a means to bring people together, to grow together, to discuss and analyse and campaign for inclusion as a vibrant, grassroots-led Movement.

**Damien Walshe, ILMI CEO**

# Strategic Objectives for ILMI 2019 to 2021

Governance, Accountability & Transparency

Promotion of Equality & Accessing Human Rights

Leadership & Representation

Political Campaigning & Strategic Policy Development

## Governance, Accountability & Transparency

**What we aim to do: We will maintain the highest standards of Governance, accountability and transparency to our members and funders and will develop a funding strategy to secure the sustainability of the organisation.**

The ILMI board of management met nine times over the course of 2021 and the following people served as board members over the course of 2021.

**DES KENNY - Chairperson**

**SELINA BONNIE - Vice Chairperson**

**GORDON RYAN - Treasurer**

**JACQUI BROWN - Secretary from November 2021**

**SARAH FITZGERALD**  
Secretary Jan-Sep, stepped down from board at AGM

**AUDREY BRODIGAN**  
Stepped down from board at AGM

**JOHN ROCHE**

**SELINA BONNIE**

**SINEAD MURTAGH**

**SEÒNAID Ó MURCHADHA**

**BRIAN DALTON**

**ANN MARIE FLANAGAN**

## AGM 2021

In October we held our AGM online. Based on feedback from our AGM in 2020, this year we held a virtual hustings for members to hear from board candidates. Again using an online election the Election Buddy system, members voted to return Gordon Ryan and Sinead Murtagh. At the AGM Sarah Fitzgerald and Audrey Brodigan, who had been both co-opted onto the board in 2018 opted to step down from the board. Their contributions to the growth and development of ILMI were recognised by members at the AGM.

In order that ILMI is transparent with all its work, we send a biweekly eBulletin to an email mailing list of 400 contacts, which includes all ILMI members. These are also uploaded onto our **ILMI website eBulletin section**.

ILMI uses social media to increase our profile and ensure transparency in our work. By the end of 2020 we had 4,250 total Likes on our Facebook page. We have 1,558 followers on Twitter at the end of 2020, an increase of 439.

# Staff

The following people were employed by ILMI in 2021

**Orla Beirne ONSIDE Community Navigator**

**Fiona Brennan ONSIDE Community Navigator (until September 2021)**

**Susan O Brien Development Worker**

**Nina Byrne Communications Officer**

**Dr James Casey ONSIDE health and housing officer**

**James Cawley Policy Officer**

**Angela Coleman ONSIDE administrator**

**Patrick Flanagan CREATE coordinator**

**Shelly Gaynor Peer Mentoring Worker**

**Edel McGinley ONSIDE Community Navigator**

**Peter Kearns ONSIDE Project coordinator**

**Claire Kenny Policy Assistant**

**Clive Lowry ONSIDE Community Navigator**

**Mark McCollum ONSIDE Community Navigator**

**Fiona Weldon Strategies for Change Coordinator**

**Audrey Wilson ONSIDE Community Navigator**

**Damien Walshe CEO**

Staff meet biweekly to ensure collective coordination of its work. The CEO provides direct support and supervision to all staff on a structured basis every six weeks to ensure accountability of projects within the strategic objectives.



# Leadership & Representation

**What we aim to do: Independent Living Movement Ireland's work will continue to be led and represented by disabled people at all levels. ILMI will create structures to generate evidence-based policies and expertise based on lived experience.**

Building on our success of last year, ILMI continued to deliver all of our work online. Based on the energy and expertise of staff and members, we continued to create dynamic, online spaces, which were a mixture of policy and campaign spaces, peer support, development and education and Movement building. Specific spaces include the ILMI women's group, ILMI peer space for people using Personal Assistance and our youth collective, including the two week Youth Camp coordinated by our ONSIDE team.

We also ran a series of workshops based on identified needs of our members on a range of topics such as arts spaces, health and nutrition, mindfulness, photography, creative writing, fitness, yoga, drama and film making.

ILMI ran a series of extremely well attended social nights over the course of 2021 to create informal spaces for disabled people to connect on a range of topics, featuring interviews with Adam Pearson, Richard Butchins, Neven Maguire, Phil Friend and Judy Heumann.

In 2021, ILMI held its first ever International Women's Day event, with Nina Tame, Izzy Keane, Mary Collins and Sarah Fitzgerald. We also hosted A Disorder for Everyone (AD4E) with Jo Watson and Dr James Davies in March and our biggest ever online event in May "Everything You Wanted to Know About Disability but were afraid to ask". We also created an online concert CEOL21, featuring a stellar line up of disabled and non-disabled musicians. All of our events were recorded and our available on the ILMI website - **ILMI Video Resources**

## Strategies for Change

With funding from Rethink Ireland under the Innovate Together grant, Fiona Weldon developed a programme for emerging disabled activists over the course of 26 inputs relating to the social model of disability, disability rights, human rights, values and the development of social movements.

Over the course of 2021, fifteen emerging disabled activists completed the course and will take on key roles within ILMI for years to come. Strategies for Change will reflect on the evaluations completed by participants and develop a new programme for 2022.

## Representation by ILMI over 2021

Members of the Assisted Human Reproduction(AHR) Coalition, European Anti-Poverty Network (EAPN) Ireland, Community Work Ireland (CWI), National Women's Council, Irish Network Against Racism, Community Platform, Coalition Against Hate Crime and the Add the 10th Alliance.

ILMI is also represented on the Oireachtas Disability Group (ODG), Taxi Advisory Committee the IHREC Disability Advisory Committee (DAC), the Housing Agency subgroup on disability and housing and presented to the Department of Justice discussion on hate crime legislation. ILMI actively participates in the CWI subgroups on Community work responses to Covid19 and Mental Health Network, NWC subgroup on disability and women and the NWC community workers subgroup.

We also joined the Disability Housing Committee with Department of Housing and the NDIS subgroup on Assistive Technology and a series of NDA subgroups over the course of 2021.

ILMI has also had meetings with Ministers O Gorman and Minister Rabbite from the Department of Children, Equality, Disability, Integration and Youth and politicians on a cross-party basis. ILMI is a member of the Disability Participation and Consultation Network.

ILMI is an active member of the Disabled Persons Organisations (DPOs) Coalition which worked over the course of 2020 and 2021 to develop a report with observations on the State report to the UNCRPD.



# Promotion of Equality & Accessing Human Rights

**What we aim to do: Independent Living Movement Ireland's work will be grounded in equality and a rights-based approach, working towards an inclusive Irish Society.**

## ONSIDE

The Outreach and Navigation for Social Inclusion and Digital Engagement project (ONSIDE) is a dynamic and exciting creative venture that is co-ordinated by ILMI in the Republic of Ireland and by our partners in Northern Ireland, Disability Action Northern Ireland; Supporting Communities and the Northern Ireland Housing Executive.

Over the course of 2021, ONSIDE continued as a model of best practice in building online social inclusion for disabled people. By end of 2021, ILMI had over 600 disabled people complete their 8 week social inclusion and digital skills training, which includes inputs from Local ETBs, FRCs and MABS services. ONSIDE staff and participants continued to pilot new and innovative ways to promote the inclusion of disabled people with the work of developing DPOs in Leitrim and Donegal, with the launch of Louth DPO on 3rd December another highlight for ILMI. We were delighted to have Senator Erin McGreehan formally launch the event, with Phil Friend talking about the importance of DPOs in ensuring the voices of disabled people are heard locally and nationally.

ILMI worked with ONSIDE graduates to develop video testimonies which will be used in 2022 to promote the work of ONSIDE into the future.

CREATE (Creating Raised Expectations and Aspirations Towards Employment) is a Pobal funded initiative which began in March 2021. The project works with disabled people to develop their confidence and skills that supports them to start or progress on their employment pathway.

Our direct engagement with our members has identified the need for a DPO to create an employment supports programme led by a social model of disability, which would focus on raising expectations of disabled people through peer supports. CREATE aims to run at least four programmes which will offer 1-to-1 and Group Coaching, Skills Workshops, and Peer Mentoring over the next 18 months. 10 disabled people, or Candidates, will participate in each programme where they will be supported to create and achieve their own personal goals. CREATE Candidates will all have different interests, experiences and ambitions, and each programme will be designed with this in mind. It is hoped this way CREATE will be accessible to as many disabled people as possible, who can all start or progress their own journeys as successfully as possible.



## Making Inclusion a Reality

ILMI's was successful under the IHREC Human Rights and Equality fund 2020 "Making Inclusion a Reality" which is in partnership with South Dublin County Council. Values Lab were contracted to support disabled activists from South Dublin to work to identify how they could influence the South Dublin Housing Disability Steering Group (HDSG) and also worked with the HDSG members to develop a human rights and equality approach to ensure the inclusion of disabled people. This work concluded in 2021 with the report launched on the 3rd December providing a detailed model of best practice on how disabled people could influence change on HDSGs.

# Political Campaigning & Strategic Policy Development

**What we will do: ILMI will empower members to be active agents of social change by participating in collective strategic campaigns to promote independent living and ensure effective policy development and implementation.**

## UNCRPD

Over the course of March, we held eleven consultation spaces, with involvement of over 200 hundred disabled people as part of developing our report on the initial State report to the UNCRPD. This was one of our largest consultation processes based on the lived experience of disabled people.

## ILMI Housing Campaign

ILMI created a Housing Network to build the capacity of disabled activists to take on representative roles on HDSGs. A ten week programme was delivered which looked at policy, representation, conflict management and networking. Participants who take on ILMI roles will be supported by a peer network in 2022 and the training will be rolled out again in 2022.

ILMI worked with Inclusion Ireland to develop a joint publication "Our Housing Rights" based on consultations with disabled people in July. This was launched in October to influence the development of a new housing strategy for disabled people, which was launched in January 2022.

## PASNOW Campaign

ILMI continued to work with members and local elected representatives to pass motions support the right to Personal Assistance over the course of 2021. Working on the basis that all local authorities would have passed a PASNOW motion in early 2022, we began planning a large event for 2022 to move to the next stage of PAS campaign. ILMI began working with disabled people to record video testimonies to document the importance of PAS to use in run into this event.

## ILMI Submissions and Position Papers

In order to respond to specific policy submissions and representation roles, ILMI created focussed working groups to inform the HSE working group on young disabled people inappropriately placed in nursing homes, ILMI members' experiences in relation to personalised budgets, a position paper on Assistive Technology (AT) and a review of the Equality Legislation. ILMI also developed submissions based on the review of the Mental Health Act, the Student Grant Scheme, the Disability Capacity Review and the Dying with Dignity Bill.



**Tackling  
the housing  
crisis disabled  
people face**



**Nothing about us without us**

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