



# Annual Review 2016







# About Us

## Mission Statement

The Center for Independent (CIL) is a national user-led organisation, based in Dublin, working to ensure that the voice and expertise of people with physical and sensory disabilities is listened to and engaged with at every level.

Our mission is to:

'work in partnership with others, while remaining committed to all people with disabilities being recognised as equal citizens and achieving equal membership of society to allow us to make informed decisions about our own lives, design and develop our own services, and achieve equality of experience through consensus, respect and value for all'.

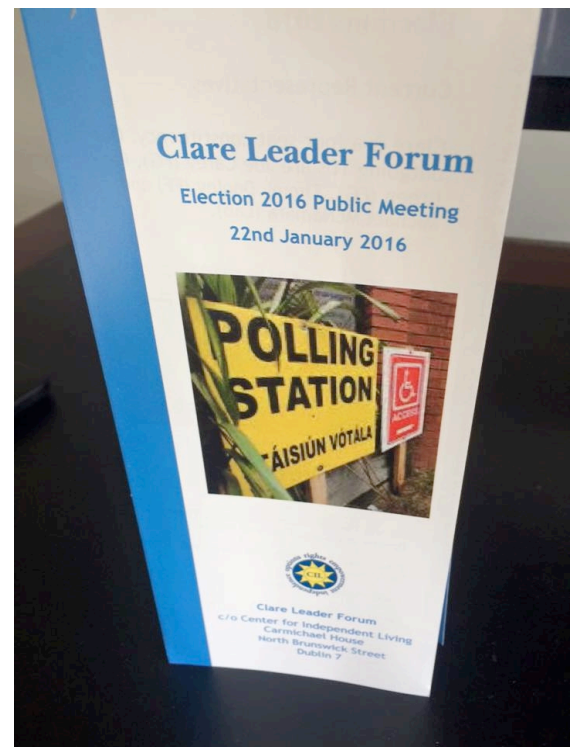


## Activities and Services

CIL remains committed to ensuring self-reliance and equality for all people with disabilities. All activities are grounded in the principles of equality and human rights and led by people with disabilities themselves.

Specific services include:

- Empowering people with disabilities by providing the opportunity to develop the skills required to become Leaders in the local community and assert a voice in the decision-making process impacting upon them.
- Monitoring and analysing trends in policy through consultation and peer-led action research programmes to ensure the voice and expertise of people with disabilities is capitalised on at all levels of policy development.
- Working in partnership with other organisations to ensure the training and resource needs of all people with disabilities are met, particularly on their key rights and equality matters.







“ Partnership working has played a vital role in ensuring the efficient delivery of services this year. It proved to be a difficult year that highlighted the importance of solidarity within the movement. ”

## Chief Executive's Review

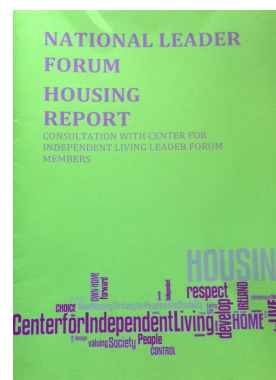
Firstly a big thank you to all our members, staff, directors and other stakeholders for all the hard work, support and commitment that they gave throughout 2016. It proved to be a busy, eventful and very emotional year.

During the year we lost three of our treasured colleagues: Martin Naughton, Tom King and Florence Dougall. Each made a huge contribution to the independent living movement both locally, nationally, and indeed internationally. This annual review is dedicated to all they achieved.

We should rightly take pride in our achievements over the past year. CIL is about empowering people to have control, options and independence. We continue to work with our Leader Forums to take this message to the state and its agencies whilst also promoting Independent Living and educating Irish society about the social model of disability.

We published two vital consultation reports this year – one on Personal Assistance Services and the other on Housing. Each highlights that here is no doubting that our members continue to have significant barriers placed before them preventing their participation in the community on an equal basis as their non-disabled peers. Whilst, in the spirit of active citizenship, we are solution focused and strive in a positive way to make change happen the pace of this change remains frustratingly slow. Shamefully another year has passed without the Irish state ratifying the United Nations Convention on the Rights of People with Disabilities (UNCRPD). Central to the Convention is the obligation on the state to consult with people with disabilities and involve them in the monitoring process.

The ratification of the Convention by North Korea in December brought the number of ratified countries up to 172. Yet still, a decade on, we wait for Ireland. This is a terrible affront to our members and to all people with disabilities.



It is incredible to think that 100 years on from the Proclamation of 1916, which guaranteed 'equal rights and equal opportunities' for all its citizens, citizens with disabilities in Ireland are less well off and have fewer rights than those people with disabilities in the United Kingdom.

As an organisation CIL is uniquely positioned to continue to strive for ratification of the Convention and all the protection it will provide to our members. The 'Nothing About Us Without Us' ethos upon which we are based has never been more important and although we may have suffered terrible loss this year we will press ahead, in the memory of all those who fought for the protection of our rights, to ensure the voice of all people with disabilities will be heard long into the future.

*Gary Lee*



## Achievements and Performance 2016

Working through the principles of community development we continued to empower individuals with disabilities through the **Leader Forum** initiative.

Throughout this year the Leader Forum continued to grow and expand. The groups bring Leaders together, where they can share peer support, identify needs, share experiences and support Leaders to strengthen the grassroots lobbying power of the Independent Living Movement to advocate for social justice and equality for all people with disabilities.

Groups have come together in:  
Galway, Sligo, Cork, Donegal, Offaly,  
Limerick, Clare, Laois and Dublin.

In addition to the local groups, representatives of each group have travelled to visit other groups to share the learning and experience in each county. Members also come together on a national basis around key themes, quality services and social justice issues, which they wish to advocate for.

All groups at each level continue to operate on the principles of community development. This empowers Leaders, by providing opportunities to develop the skills needed to effect change in the communities and to assert a voice in the decision-making processes impacting people with disabilities.

Each group identified their priority interest areas and an action plan for the group. The group members are supported to deliver on these action plans.

Each group has been supported to develop their own promotional materials including pamphlets, newsletters and online support forums. Groups have also linked with local radio and newspapers in each county to publicise their activities.

Members also come together on a national basis around key themes, quality services and social justice issues, which they wish to advocate for throughout the year as the National Leader Forum.



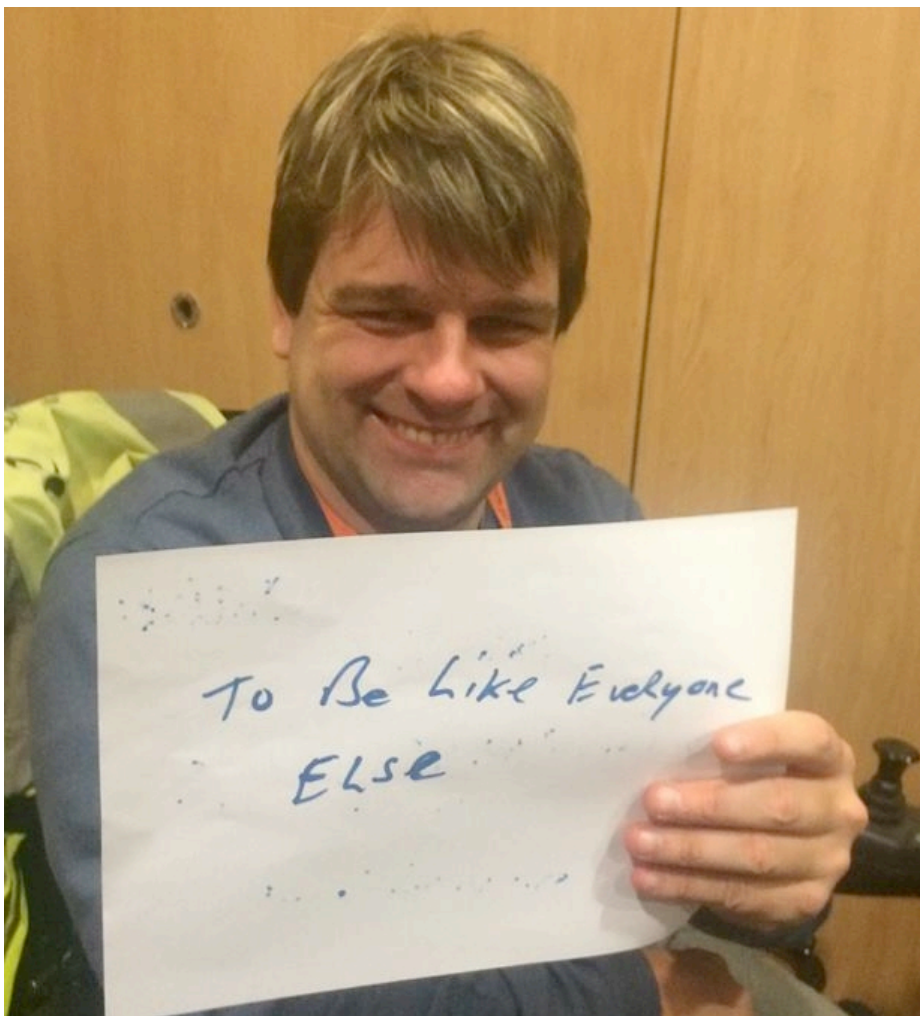


As part of our [Education and Training](#) work we continued to educate people on their rights and entitlements and most importantly to provide them with an opportunity to engage with decision makers.

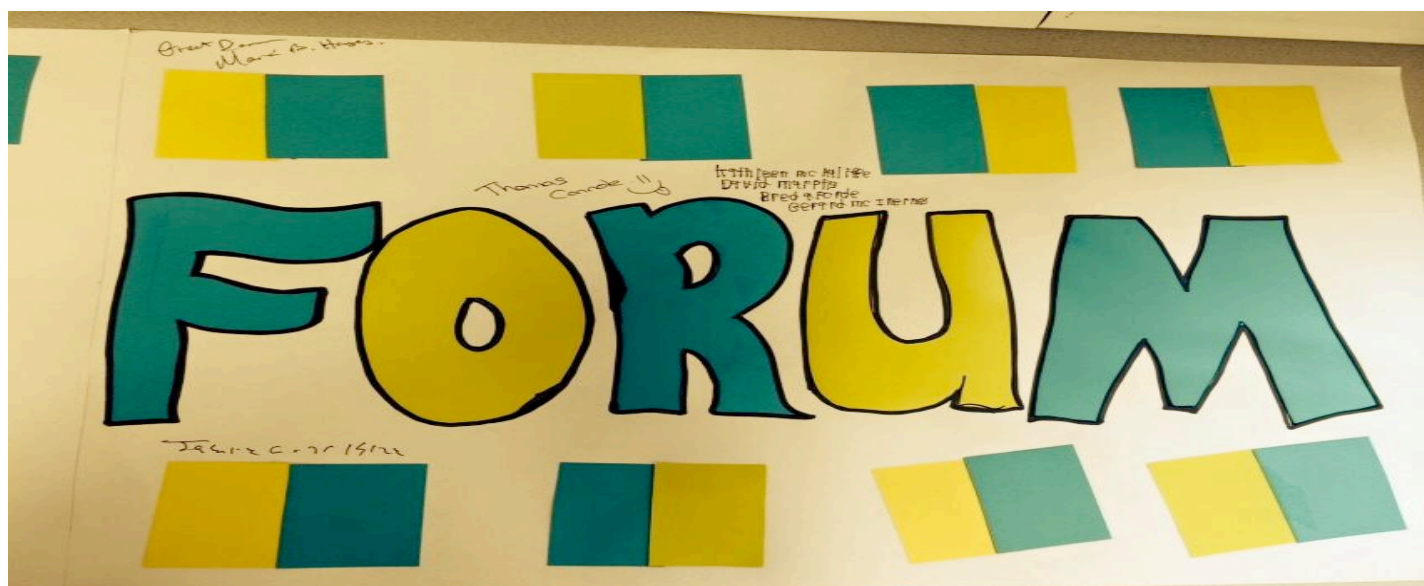
Through the Leader Forums a number of [public engagement sessions](#) were held with election candidates prior to Election 2016. These were held at regional level in: Clare, Donegal, Laois and Offaly and provided people with disabilities with an opportunity to clearly express their views and experience on equality matters that impact upon them at both local and national level.

Specific issues raised as requiring action included: ratification of the UNCRPD, lack of accessible transport nationwide (particularly in rural areas), lack of accessible housing, an inadequate health service, lack of real employment opportunities and dismayingly the increased isolation of people with disabilities through lack of personal assistance service hours.

Follow-up meetings were held with newly elected candidates in all areas with the under-representation of people with disabilities in positions of responsibility and authority a growing concern. The Leader Forums are continuing to communicate with statutory, local government, committees and working groups to ensure a greater understanding of the impact of decision making on people's lives.







## Leadership

We recognise that education and training is vital to promotion of the Independent Living philosophy. Empowered Leaders at local level have harnessed the experience of long-term disability advocates and worked with the Leader Forums to advance both the participation and expectations of the next generation of Leaders.

We are acutely aware that CIL does not have the resources to provide the vast range of training and education initiatives required by our Leaders, therefore an ethos of inter-agency cooperation has been developed through the Leader Forum project.

Local Development Companies have proven invaluable in rolling out training programmes in 2016 including: Leadership training, social media training, basic computer skills classes, and empowerment programmes.

As a result of participation in such training programmes a network of experienced disability Leaders is being developed to act as a source of support and knowledge to younger Leaders, who are in the first stages of moving toward Independent Living. This Leadership programme will be supported throughout 2017 to focus on securing the support of the next generation of Leaders who will drive the next phase of the Independent Living movement in Ireland.

## Social Media

Over the past twelve months we have seen an ongoing increase in access to our resources based on the implementation of our social media strategy. Facebook and Twitter contact is active, updated regularly and receiving increased traffic. Social Media reach has increased for Facebook and by over 60% for Twitter. News, events, articles of relevance are broadcasted daily and positive feedback is received on a regular basis from the Leaders.

Leaders contribute regularly to our online community which breaks down the barriers of location helping promote a feeling of togetherness and being "Up to date" on all the issues that matter to them.

As a result of our media and social media training new Facebook pages have been set up for several of our Leader Forum groups around the country. Members have been supported to take control of these on behalf of all people with disabilities in their region and they have proven invaluable when promoting particular Leader Forum training and events.

## Promoting the IL Philosophy

Throughout 2016 we have continued to increase the public knowledge and perception of Independent Living. In partnership with the 'Disable Inequality' campaign we worked to challenge the traditional stereotypes of powerlessness and objectification of people with disabilities.

People throughout the Leader Forums worked to make their own personal troubles into public issues to affirm the validity and importance of their own identity and reject the traditional victimisation tendencies of society. We gave power to our voice as a collective and strength to the movement by making disability a universal issue that people could relate to.

Following on from this campaign a National CIL meeting was convened toward the end of 2016 to examine how we can build upon our role as a Disabled Persons Organisation (DPO), to work more closely with all sectors of civil society, to ensure the continued exclusion of people with disabilities from society is both understood and challenged.

This need for a roadmap for change, to ensure we can give real power to our voice and an ability to represent ourselves, was highlighted by the Clare Leader Forum, at their end of year seminar, which stressed the lack of recognition and protection for the human rights of people with disabilities.

# Partnerships

Recognising our national role, CIL has continued to be represented on both the [DSG](#) and the [NDSIG](#). As a vital component in the monitoring of Ireland's National Disability Strategy, these group aim to provide the mechanism for enabling people with disabilities live a fully inclusive life.

CIL Leader Forums are in a prime position to feed directly into these groups and throughout 2016 CIL increased its representation on the DSG.

Based upon our belief that people with disabilities are experts in their own lives, and need to be present and engaged with at all levels of the process of development and change, we continued to consult with local Leader Forums on various themes. Over the past twelve months a feedback process to members on outcomes of the aforementioned groups has been developed and further work will be carried out next year to gather feedback to further inform the work of the organisation and empower Leaders to participate.

2016 has also seen CIL play a valuable role in Working Group 3 of the [HSE Transforming Lives](#) (Value for Money) group. CIL Leader Forum representatives were appointed to this group in 2016, with Leader Forum groups actively involved in the Group's plan to recommend how people with disabilities and their families can be involved in the design and delivery of disability services.

As a nominating body for the [Seanad Administrative Panel](#) CIL was also directly involved in the call for nominations in the 2016 Seanad Elections, which ultimately saw both Martin Conway and John Dolan elected.

This [inter-agency approach](#) to working continued through our work on a Collaboration Manifesto for Election 2016. The Manifesto called on the Government – if committed to the human rights and equality of persons with a disability – to implement a number of key reforms in the provision of disability services and supports.

On International Day of Persons with a Disability Gary Lee, CEO Chief Executive, and Dermot Hayes, Leader Forum representative, presented Minister Finian McGrath with the [Leader Forum Consultation Report on Personal Assistance Services](#).

This was followed by CIL Chairperson, Michael McCabe, presenting Minister for Housing, Simon Coveney, Minister for Public Expenditure and Reform, Paschal Donohoe and Christy Burke an independent Dublin City Councillor and former Lord Mayor of Dublin with a copy of the [Leader Forum Consultation Report on Housing](#).

During the twelve months ahead, as we come to the end of our five-year strategic plan, we will be looking toward strengthening the partnership role of CIL to ensure it emerges as a strong human-rights based representative organisation that can allow Independent Living can become a reality for all people with disabilities..







## Objectives and Challenges 2017

### UNCRPD

Ten years since Ireland signed the United Convention on the Rights of People with Disabilities (UNCRPD) we are still awaiting ratification. Since signing people with disabilities in Ireland have seen unprecedented cuts to supports that enable us to live independently: mobility allowance, motorised transport grant, benefit allowance, medical cards, home help and many other supports continue to be eroded. In 2012 the Government even tried to effectively scrap personal assistance services, only reversing the decision when people with disabilities took to the streets.

With increasing pressure on services, many people are inappropriately placed in nursing homes and institutions, with an estimated 3,000 people placed in institutions despite eleven years of a Government policy to free them.

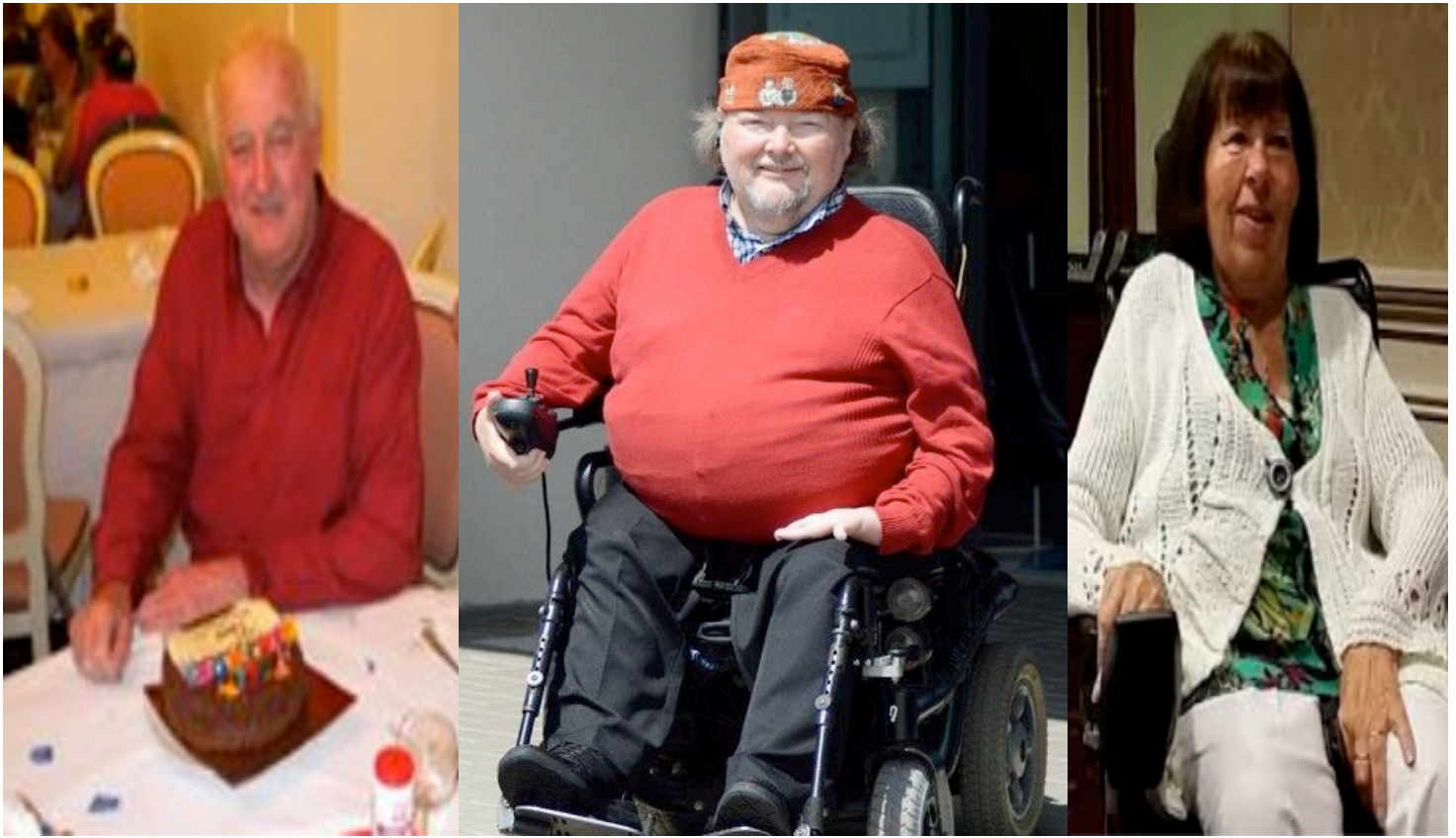
The continued failure by the government to ratify the Convention is a dreadful affront to people with disabilities in Ireland and clearly shows that people with disabilities are not viewed as equal citizens in Ireland.

Had the State ratified the UNCRPD its eroding of supports would mean that it would have breached its international obligations, and in particular article 19 of the convention which provides for Independent Living.

The Disability (Miscellaneous Provisions) Bill, which seeks to remove the remaining legislative barriers is likely to be before Government in early 2017, and CIL will continue to exert pressure on Government to ensure the UNCRPD is ratified and the human rights of people with disabilities are recognised.

Once ratified the partnership approach adopted under the UNCRPD will require high-level input from Disabled People's Organisations (DPO). CIL will seek to ensure that the process for both input and representation is clear so that the overall partnership under the Convention is effective for both people with disabilities and government.

Articles 4.3 and 33 will ensure the active involvement of people with disabilities, through their representative bodies, upholding the 'Nothing About Us Without Us' philosophy that forms the foundation of CIL. Throughout 2017 CIL will continue to ensure people with disabilities have a power to their voice and an ability to represent ourselves like never before.



## A Special Thank You

2016 was an extremely difficult year for CIL as we said goodbye to three of our friends and colleagues.

In May we lost the inspirational [Florence Dougall](#). A lifelong advocate for Independent Living Florence became one of the first people in Ireland to secure a Personal Assistance Service, which enabled her to move into her own apartment in the 1990s.

With her newfound freedom Florence lived life to the full, working with the Central Remedial Clinic for almost forty years. She was also an active member of Muscular Dystrophy Ireland and played a major part within the organisation since the 1980s.

Florence was a tireless advocate for Independent Living and an inspiration for many young Leaders. She was a real lady and a person that will be sadly missed by all within the movement.

In October we were rocked to the core by the loss of our Leader, and father of CIL, Martin Naughton. The deep impact that Martin had on all those he knew was immediately evident upon his passing with the deep public expression of sadness.

Described by the President of Ireland, Michael D Higgins, as an "indefatigable advocate for human rights" the respect Martin gained throughout all sectors of society was undeniable.

Born in Galway in 1954 Martin experienced institutionalisation during his early years. It was an experience he would use to change the lives of people with disabilities forever – working tirelessly to bring real independence into people's lives. He was a lifelong campaigner and political activist who had a vision and determination we have never seen before.

Martin was a valuable ally to many in their campaign for social justice. Most importantly he was a true friend.

In November we experienced the sad passing of Thomas King. Tom served as a Director with CIL since 2008, where he was a much loved and respected member of the CIL family.

Having been diagnosed with cystic fibrosis Tom was told he wouldn't live past his forties. Instead, up to his passing at the age of 64, he was still a fearless advocate for disability rights.

Born in Clare Tom was an active campaigner at local level. He was Chairperson of the Disabled People of Clare prior to his appointment as Vice-Chair of CIL.

Tom was a key part of our Strategic Planning Team and as we move toward the next phase in our development his experience and expertise will be greatly missed.



# Administration Details and Key Personnel

## Administration Details

Charity name: The Center for Independent Living

Registered charity number: 10969

Company registration number: 186468

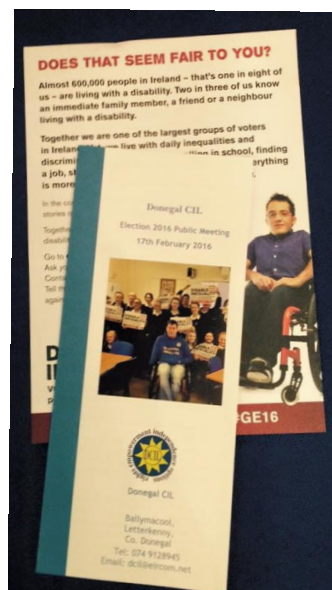
Registered Office: Carmichael House, North Brunswick Street, Dublin 7

## Staff Team

- Gary Lee  
*Chief Executive*
- Naoise Cunningham  
*National Leader Forum Coordinator*
- Nina Byrne  
*Communications Officer*
- Joe Higgins  
*Finance Administrator*
- Susan O'Brien  
*Development Officer*

## Board of Directors

- Michael McCabe - Chairperson
- Thomas King - Vice Chair
- Adrienne Millar Conroy
- Paul Fagan
- Aaron Abbey



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