

The Laois/Offaly Leader

A monthly newsletter issued by Offaly Centre for Independent Living Ltd/Offaly Personal Assistant Services Ltd

*This newsletter is available online and in large font
April 2013*

The Laois/Offaly Leader Forum has been reformed!



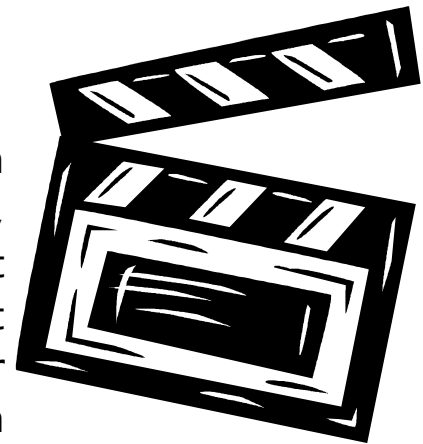
We are delighted to announce that the Laois/Offaly Leader Forum is back in action, following a meeting which took place on Wednesday, 27th March 2013 in the OCIL Ltd/OPAS Ltd offices. Since then, a follow-up meeting has already taken place. Aoife Horan from Personal Employment Pathways came to the first meeting to speak to Leaders about the scheme (please visit our website, www.offalycil.ie for more details on this scheme.)

For those of you who are unfamiliar with the concept, a Leader Forum is simply a safe place for Leaders to meet to discuss issues which affect their everyday lives and to avail of peer support. Although these meetings take place in the OCIL/OPAS Ltd offices, the Leaders are very much in control of the forum and will ultimately decide themselves which direction the forum will take.

Meetings will be attended by Michael Nestor, Sean Rickard and Sarah Fitzgerald. Their role as forum members is to support Leaders and to help them develop their personal and collective potential. They will also help Leaders achieve their goals and encourage them to organise events and activities as identified by Leaders themselves during the formation of OCIL Ltd/OPAS Ltd's Strategic Plan.

If you would like to become involved in the Leader Forum, please contact Sean Rickard or Sarah Fitzgerald at 057 93 22832 or email sarah@ocil.ie. New members are welcome to join. You can become a member of the forum even if you are not currently receiving a Personal Assistant Service.

Documentary to be made on Relationships, Sexuality and Disability:



RTE have commissioned two freelance film directors, Anna Rodgers and Zlata Filipovic, to make a one-hour documentary about relationships, sexuality and disability. At present, the scope of their research is rather broad in order for the women to gain an accurate insight into the subject.

Zlata and Anna are hoping that the documentary will be told from the perspective of people with disabilities themselves, although the role of family members, carers and personal assistants in relationships will be explored if it is relevant. They are particularly interested in people who are about to move out of their family homes for privacy reasons, move in with their partners, get married or have a child. They are also interested in people who want to start dating and exploring any issues/obstacles in relation to this.

Zlata and Anna visited the OCIL Ltd offices on Friday 19th April last to meet with some of our Leaders. It was a very interesting meeting and each individual had their own stories to share, each one offering a very different perspective of disabilities and relationships. We would like to thank the Leaders for meeting with Anna and Zlata and for sharing their experiences with them.

If you are interested in becoming involved in this documentary, please contact Anna Rodgers via email: annadirect@gmail.com.

A note from the Editor:



Welcome to the April edition of your 'Laois/Offaly Leader'! I am thrilled to announce that from now on, the 'The Laois/Offaly Leader' will be issued on a monthly basis, and will be full of interesting stories from our Leaders and Personal Assistants, as well as useful snippets of information for your perusal.

This newsletter is an important communication tool between Leaders and OCIL/OPAS Ltd as an organisation and owing to this, I would like to invite you to contribute to the newsletter. If you are interested in making a 'one-off' or even a regular contribution, please email me at sarah@ocil.ie where your suggestions will be warmly welcomed.

As you can see from our cover story, a small group of Leaders have reactivated the Leader Forum. The purpose of the Leader Forum is to ensure that Leaders have an active role in the implementation of OCIL/OPAS Ltd's Strategic Plan and to address any issues Leaders may be experiencing in accessing services, employment and recreational activities.

In this edition of 'The Laois/Offaly Leader' we will be looking at how the Clearing House committee works, as well as discussing the abolition of the mobility allowance. Also, Emmet Grogan has submitted an article which illustrates how disability does not necessarily equate to inability, and how everybody, regardless of who they might be, has the ability to achieve their true potential.

Don't forget that the newsletter is available on our website, www.offalycil.ie, and in large font on request. Feel free to join us on Facebook for regular updates on activities within the organisation.

Take care,

Sarah Fitzgerald, Researcher/PRO OCIL Ltd.

The Accessible Path to Fame!

By Emmet Grogan

‘Our deepest fear is not that we are inadequate.
Our deepest fear is that we are powerful beyond measure’

— Nelson Mandela

It may surprise you to learn that some of the greatest achievers in the history of modern civilisation had disabilities! I did some research on the subject and was surprised by what I learned.

Stephen Hawking is perhaps one of the most famous people with disabilities in the world. The fact that he has Motor Neuron Disease is secondary to the fact that he is one of the most intelligent people in the world. He is widely recognised for his work, which includes his bestselling book, *A Brief History of Time*. He has also been awarded the Presidential Medal of Freedom, the highest civilian award in the United States, as well as other medals such as the Albert Einstein Medal (1979) and the Copley Medal of the Royal Society (2006)



Christopher Reeves, commonly known for his role as Superman, became completely paralysed after being thrown from a horse. Although he is renowned for his role as the popular superhero, Reeves is also a recognised director, producer and screenwriter. In addition, he has established the Christopher Reeves Foundation, which is dedicated to improving the lives of people with spinal cord injuries through innovative research.



Nearly everybody knows the stories behind these two well-known figures, but did you know that three other historical famous figures also had disabilities?

Alexander Graham Bell, the inventor of the telephone, was actually not trying to invent the telephone at all, but rather a device that would enable deaf people to hear. In doing so, he changed the way people communicated with each other forever. Born in 1847, Alexander Graham Bell had dyslexia.



Holy-BLEEP! It may surprise you to learn that one of the greatest composers of our time, **Wolfgang Amadeus Mozart**, actually had Tourette's Syndrome. Luckily this did not affect his ability to compose some of the most beautiful music the world has ever known.

And finally, did you know that one of the most influential painters of the nineteenth century, **Vincent Van Gogh**, suffered from mental illness? His work includes *Self Portrait With A Gray Hat* (1877), and *Starry Night* (1889)



MDI Self Catering Apartments 'A Home Away From Home'

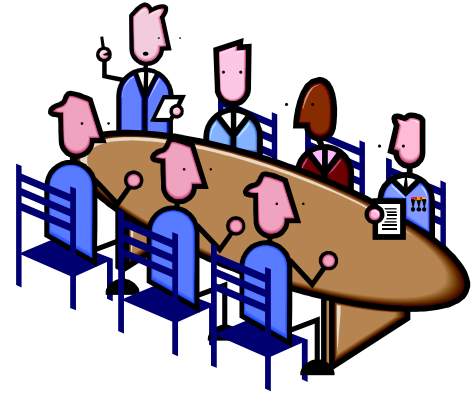
If you are looking for a break, why not visit the Muscular Dystrophy Ireland self-catering apartments? Located outside Dublin's city centre in Chapelizod, this fully wheelchair accessible accommodation has features such as ceiling track hoists, Hi-Lo electric beds, roll-in showers and wide doors. Wifi is also available to all guests. The apartment is available for rent for groups or individual rooms can be rented (please note that the other rooms may be occupied by other guests during your stay). For further information, please phone 01 6236414 or email info@mdi.ie.



What is the Clearing House and how does it operate?

In order for OCIL Ltd and OPAS Ltd to obtain funding to provide Leaders with a Personal Assistant Service, each individual case is heard by a 'Clearing House' committee in order to determine how many hours of P.A. service is needed in order for them to achieve Independent Living.

When a Leader applies for a Personal Assistant Service from OCIL/OPAS Ltd, a potential Leader must firstly have an assessment carried out. This can be carried out by a representative of OCIL /OPAS Ltd, a Public Health Nurse, an Occupational Therapist (O.T.), or representatives from Acquired Brain Injury (ABI), Home Help or the Irish Wheelchair Association (IWA).



After this assessment has been carried out, the hours being sought by a Leader (or potential Leader) are brought before a 'Clearing House' meeting. The purpose of this meeting is to determine how to provide a service that best suits the Leader's needs, who should provide this service (e.g. OCIL/OPAS Ltd, IWA or Home Help) and how many hours (if any) should be granted.

Other representatives include a representative from the Public Health Nurses (PHNs), Occupational Therapists (OT), Acquired Brain Injury (ABI), representatives from Home Help or the IWA. This information should be submitted two weeks before the meeting. The Clearing House Committee meets once a month to discuss new applications for a P.A. service and other applications that are carried over from the previous meeting.

The committee members discuss the applications and decide if any hours are to be given to the new applications, how many hours or whether any hours are to be granted at all. It is also useful for the applicant to get a letter from their GP or a consultant to support their application.

The committee comprises of Lisa Weldon (Irish Wheelchair Association), Deirdre Kavanagh (PHN), Marcella Conefrey (OT), Claire Brennan (HSE), Geraldine McGarrigle (Home Help), Seamus Murphy (HSE, Committee Chairman) and Michael Nestor and Sean Rickard (OCIL/OPAS Ltd).

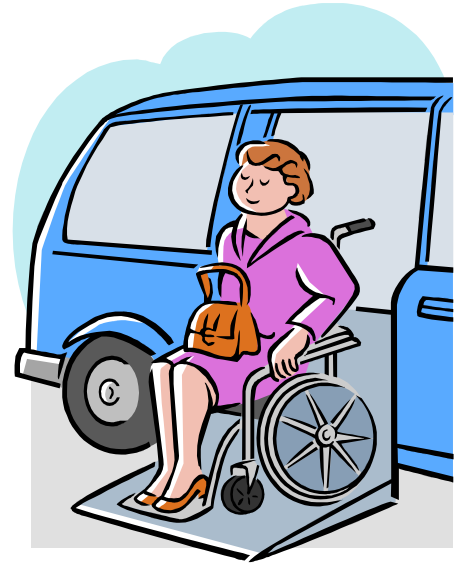
Update on Mobility Allowance:

The Government has decided that it is not possible to allow the mobility allowance schemes to continue in their current format, as the schemes are illegal in the context of the Equal Status Acts and they abolished them by the close of business on 26th February 2013.

The Department of Health has stated that this is not intended to save costs and that the money (€10.6m) remains earmarked to meet the transport needs of relevant applicants.

Minister for Health Dr James O' Reilly and the Minister with responsibility for Disability, Older People and Mental Health, Kathleen Lynch have assured those affected by the abolition of the scheme that replacement schemes will be drafted and implemented in the next four months.

If you have submitted an application for Mobility Allowance prior to this date, it will be processed as usual and you will be given the opportunity to appeal a rejected application. If you are entitled to Mobility Allowance, you will continue to receive payment up until close of business on 26th June 2013.



How will the abolition of the Mobility Grant affect Leaders?

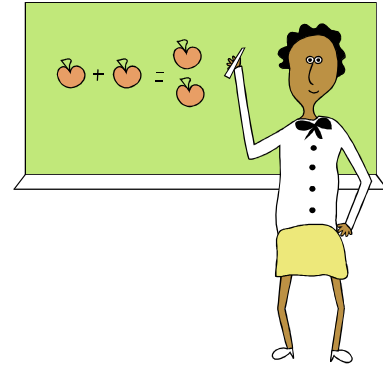
Undoubtedly, the decision to abolish the Mobility Allowance Grant will have an adverse effect on the lives of people with disabilities. Emmet Grogan, a Leader with OCIL Ltd, fears that the abolition of the allowance will especially affect people on a limited income. He expressed particular concern for people who lived in the country, as there is a danger that they will become isolated from their communities.



For more information on the mobility grant, please visit www.hse.ie or www.welfare.ie. Information for this article has also been sourced from the Irish Wheelchair Association website, www.iwa.ie.

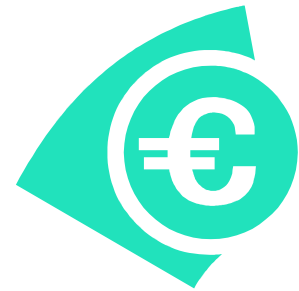
Update from Deirdre Martin, Training Programme Coordinator:

Deirdre is working with the three groups of PAs who are going through their FETAC Level 5 Healthcare Support course which means by the end of the year, forty Personal Assistants will be trained to this high standard of healthcare assistance level. Deirdre would like to congratulate all of her students who received their awards recently.



A message from Rita Dillane:

As all Personal Assistants are aware, OCIL Ltd and OPAS Ltd are now sending all wageslips via email. Rita Dillane, Payroll Administrator, would like to thank all P.As for their cooperation in making the transition as smooth as possible.



Offaly Centre for Independent Living (OCIL) Ltd/Offaly Personal Assistant Services (OPAS) Ltd

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