DARA

living a full life

ANNUAL REPORT | 2025

DARA
DARA

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Introduction

Welcome to the annual report for Dara. This report aims to provide an overview of our activities, achievements, and financial performance over the past year.

Vision, Mission & Values

Vision

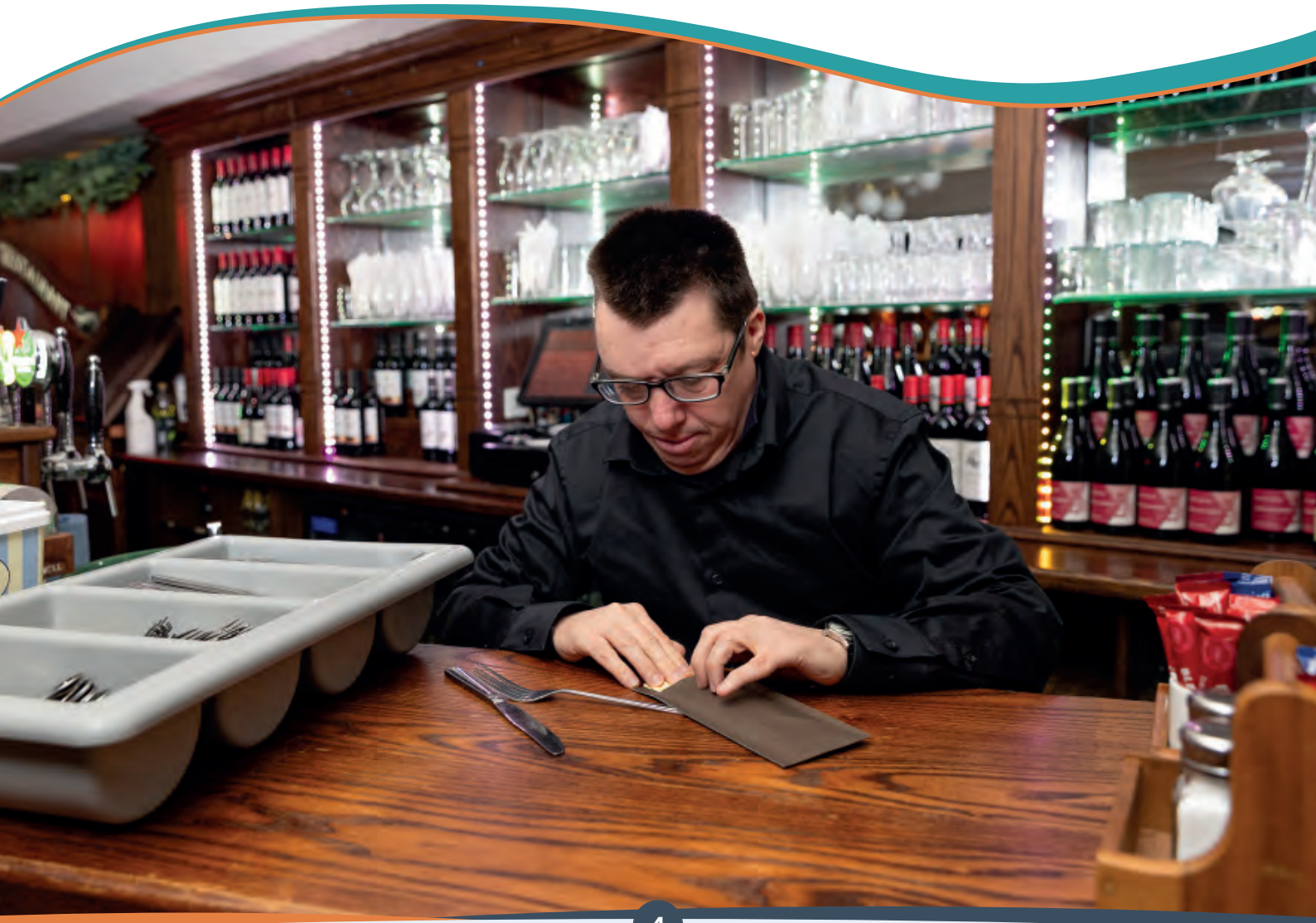
People of all abilities live a good life their way, through their voice and their choices

Mission

Working together, focusing on each person's abilities, talents and choices to be a part of their community

Values

Respect, Equality, Choice, Collaboration, Inclusion



Meet Our Board Members

Brian Gallagher - Chair
Brian joined the Board in 2021 and has extensive experience in the disability sector having held senior management positions throughout his career and he also has CEO experience. Brian is the Chair of Dara Board and is a member of the Dara Finance, Audit and Remuneration Subcommittee and the Governance Subcommittee.

Lynda McElherron - Vice Chair of the Board / Company Secretary
Lynda joined the Board in 2020 and has an extensive background and experience in lecturing, training and business. She is the Chair of Policy Committee and the Company Secretary.

Hugh Fitzgibbon
Hugh joined the board in 2023 and he is a solicitor in a large law firm in Dublin. Hugh has extensive experience working and volunteering in the non-profit sector and previously worked in disability services in the United States.

Carole Davis
Carole joined the Dara Board in 2024. She has enjoyed a dynamic career path holding senior finance leadership roles with some of Ireland's most successful PLCs and high-growth SMEs. Carole holds membership with the Institute of Chartered Accountants Ireland and is a trained Board trustee. With a keen understanding of governance and financial stewardship, she has also lent her expertise to various not-for-profit boards and audit committees, leveraging her skills to drive positive change and social impact. Carole is a member of the Finance Audit & Remuneration Subcommittee.

Mary Lavin
Mary has a daughter with an intellectual disability and has been a parent representative Board member for Dara Possibilities and the respite services since 2018.

Catherine Slattery

Catherine joined the Board in 2021. Catherine is a health and social care senior executive within the voluntary sector with extensive experience in disability and social housing at operational and strategic levels. Throughout her career she has championed the rights and active citizenship of people with disabilities to empower them to live the life of their choice.

Adrian Watson

Adrian joined the Board in 2022. He is a Chartered Certified Accountant with extensive experience as a tax manager and partner and Chief Financial Officer in the financial sector. Adrian is a qualified financial adviser and a chartered tax adviser. Adrian is the Chair of the Finance, Audit and Remuneration committee in Dara.

Susan Monk

Susan is a parent of three adult children. She is a recent recruit to the Dara Board and a parent representative. She enjoys gardening, cookery and reading. She is a volunteer with Kilester Special Olympics Basketball group and Raheny Tidy Village group.

John Gorman

Based in Clane, Co. Kildare John Gorman is the Founder and Managing Director of Sunflower HR. Sunflower HR support the SME sector in Ireland with their HR and people development needs. John's professional experience included senior level HR responsibilities across Ireland and the UK as the HR Director of Green Isle Foods and Head of HR for 2 Sisters Food Group - Frozen Division. John has an MSc in Training and Performance Management, a Diploma in Training and Development, a Professional Certificate in Executive Coaching and a Certificate in Employment Law. John is a Fellow and Past President of Learning & Development Ireland (L&DI) and an active member of BNI.

Paul Pearson

Paul joined the board in 2023. He currently works as a senior manager in the acute healthcare sector. Paul has a background in regulation and quality management systems, including inspection and auditing. He is experienced in the regulation of the health and social care sector in Ireland. Paul is Chair of the Quality, Safety and Risk Committee.

Meet Our Senior Leadership Team

This team has responsibility for the overall management of the organisation.

Carol O'Donnell - Chief Executive Officer

Carol O'Donnell joined the organisation in 2020 as Chief Executive Officer. She brings extensive management and leadership experience to Dara. Originally Carol trained as a nurse and then completed further studies in Occupational Therapy and she is a registered OT. Carol is a member of the Coru OT registration board. She has completed further studies in Social Role Valorisation, Governance, Human Rights and Safeguarding. She is passionate about human rights and access to an ordinary life in community based services for adults with an intellectual disability and autism.

Mary McMahon – Director of Operations and HR

Mary McMahon Director of Operations and Human Resources is a long standing member of the Dara Senior Management team. Mary is a registered Mental Health Nurse and she holds a Higher Diploma in Learning Disabilities from University College Dublin, a Certificate in Education and Training, and a Master's in Human Resource Management from Maynooth University. She has also completed a Certificate and Diploma in Employment Law at the National College of Ireland and is a trained Mediator.

Carol O'Rourke - Director of Finance

Carol O'Rourke, FCCA, qualified as a member of the Association of Chartered Certified Accountants in 2005, and subsequently was granted a Fellowship. Throughout her career to date, Carol has gained considerable experience at a senior level (including project management) across financial services, multinationals, industry and practice. Previous employers include Bank of Ireland, Yahoo! and Grant Thornton. Carol is Director of Finance and has been with Dara since she made the move to the not-for-profit/charity sector in 2017, and sits on the Audit & Finance Committee. Carol is also a Board Trustee and Chair of the Audit & Finance Committee for a large Section 39 organisation also in the disability sector.

Joan Brady – Quality, Risk and Compliance Manager

Joan Brady is the Quality, Risk and Compliance Manager, drawing on her background in Social Care and a postgraduate qualification in Quality & Safety in Health & Social Care.She works closely with the people we support, staff and managers to help ensure our services remain safe, person-centred and focused on quality. This year she has led the management team to learn, develop and strengthen our practices, always with the aim of achieving the best possible outcomes for the people we support. At DARA, quality, safety and continuous improvement are everyone's responsibility.

A Message from the Chairperson

As Chair of the Dara Board, I am pleased to introduce our Annual Report for 2025 and reflect on a year of significant progress, achievements and continued commitment to the people we support.

I would like to thank the Board for their commitment and oversight during 2025 ensuring that Dara continued to provide person centred and safe services with a strong focus on governance and delivery of strategic priorities. Despite a challenging geopolitical environment, Dara continued to grow and evolve throughout the year.

We successfully expanded our services and supports, ensuring that more people could access opportunities, experiences and community connections they need to live meaningful lives. Central to this progress has been our unwavering commitment to promoting the rights, choices and voices of the people we support so that they remain at the heart of everything we do.

I am particularly proud of the work of the Board's Inclusive Sub-Committee, which has continued to strengthen the participation and meaningful engagement of the people we support across our governance structures. Their contribution reflects our shared belief that inclusion must be embedded in both decision-making and service delivery.

None of our achievements would have been possible without the leadership of the Chief Executive and the Senior Management team alongside the dedication, professionalism and compassion of our staff. Their commitment to delivering high-quality supports every day, often in the face of increasing challenges and complexity, is a testament to the values that define Dara.

As we reflect on 2025, we can also take pride in the significant progress achieved under our Strategic Plan 2023-2026. The success of this plan has been evident in the expansion of services, the strengthening of governance and inclusion, and our continued focus on delivering person-centered supports that uphold the rights and choices of the people we support. As this strategic period draws to a close, we are already looking ahead to the development of our next Strategic Plan 2027 -2031.

Building on the strong foundations established over the past three years, we will continue to focus on innovation, quality, inclusion and sustainable growth, ensuring Dara remains responsive to the needs and aspirations of the people and communities we serve.

On behalf of the Board, I wish to thank our staff, volunteers, families, supporters and partners for their ongoing commitment. Together, we have achieved much in 2025, and we look forward with confidence to building a more inclusive society and future for us all.

Kind regards,

Brian Gallagher
Chairperson
Dara

A Message from the CEO

Dear all,

2025 was a year of growth, achievement and opportunity for DARA and the people we support. Throughout the year, we continued our commitment to supporting people with intellectual disabilities to live full and meaningful lives through choice, independence and active participation in their communities.

A significant highlight of 2025 was the leadership and contribution of the DARA Inclusive Sub-Committee. This pioneering initiative has strengthened DARA's commitment to listening to and acting on the voices of people with lived experience. Through their active participation in Board meetings, policy development, training and decision-making, members of the committee responding to change to ensure that the perspectives of the people we support are at the heart of our organisation and future direction.

We continued to expand services across North Kildare and North Dublin, welcoming new people into our residential services, DARA Possibilities and the WorkAbility Inclusive Pathways to Employment Programme. The opening of a new accessible bungalow and a a new home in North Dublin and improvements to existing homes further supported independence, inclusion and community participation.

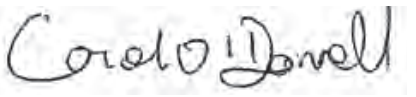
Our respite service continued to provide valuable support to individuals and families, while DARA Possibilities and WorkAbility created new opportunities for learning, employment, social connection and personal development.

Quality, safety and strong governance remained central priorities, with positive inspection outcomes and continued service improvement. Despite ongoing challenges across the disability sector, DARA finished 2025 in a strong position.

I would like to sincerely thank our dedicated staff team for their professionalism, compassion and commitment. The high quality of the supports our staff teams provide make a real positive impact every day. I would also like to express my appreciation to the Board of Directors for their leadership and guidance through-out the year, ensuring DARA remains focused on its values and strategic goals.

As we reflect on the achievements of our 2023-2026 Strategic Plan, we are grateful to the people we support, their families, our staff, volunteers, Board members, community partners and the HSE for their continued support. Looking ahead, we remain committed to working in partnership with the people we support and their families to build inclusive communities where everyone's voice is heard, choices are respected and people can live a full and meaningful life their way.

Kind regards,



Carol O'Donnell
CEO
Dara

Strong Foundations

Our Structure and Governance

Dara is a company limited by guarantee, not having a share capital and is a registered charity funded by the HSE. Dara is committed to working in partnership with the HSE. We are regulated by HIQA in relation to the operation of our services and are obliged to be compliant with their regulations. Our buildings must be compliant to building regulations and Approved Housing Bodies Regulatory Authority is the housing regulator. Additionally we are also regulated by the Health and Safety Authority, and they monitor our management of accidents and incidents within the workplace.

CONSTITUTION

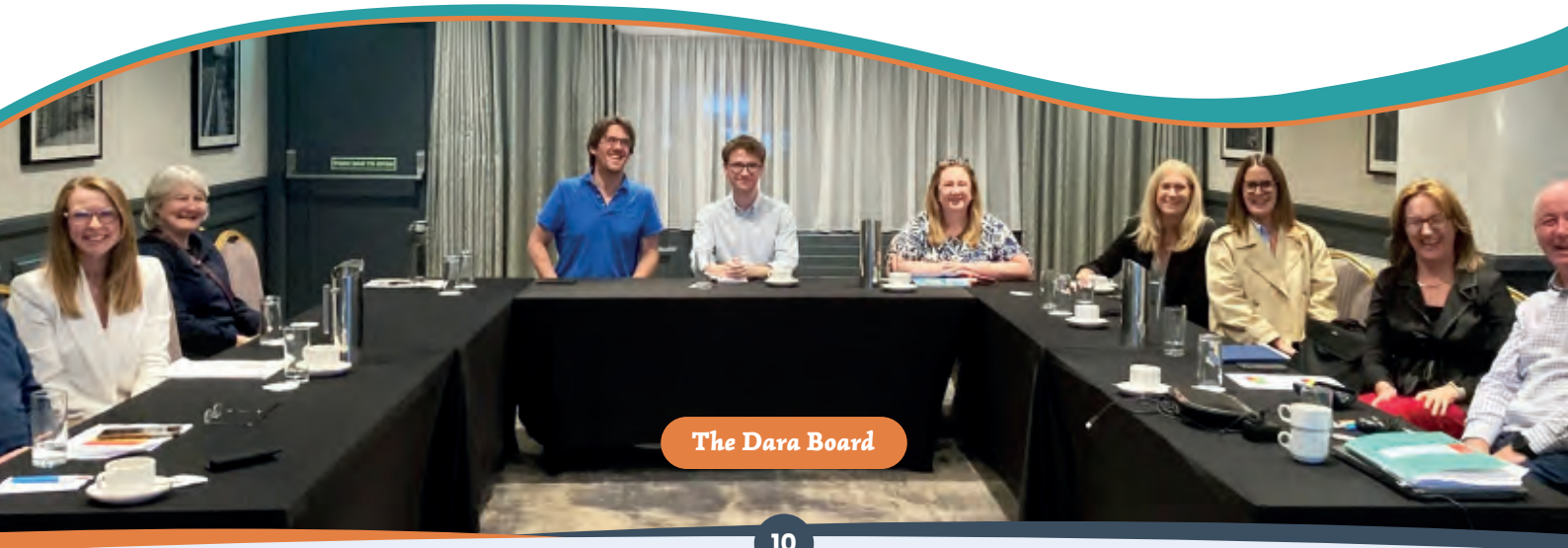
Dara is constituted under a Memorandum of Association and is a registered charity number CHY 14185 & CRA 20045531. The company constitution was amended and updated in accordance with the requirements of the Companies Act 2014 on May 14th 2019. The Directors are elected and co-opted under the terms of the Company Constitution. There were no new directors and no resignations of directors in 2025.

A Voluntary Board of Directors is in place for the oversight and governance of Dara which is the responsibility of the Directors. They delegate operational responsibility to the Chief Executive Officer and monitor the implementation of the Dara strategic plan. The Board is responsible for ensuring that the organisation operates an appropriate system of financial control and complies with relevant laws and regulations.

ORGANISATIONAL STRUCTURE AND DECISION MAKING

Dara Residential Services (t/a Dara) is a registered Charity and company limited by guarantee. Dara Residential Services (t/a Dara) has a voluntary Board of Directors numbering ten members, including two representatives from the families of service users. The Board met as per the table on the following page. The AGM was held on April 29th, 2025.

There were five board meetings in 2025 with the disruption of the December board meeting due to severe adverse weather conditions and power outages due to storm Bram. Due to the Storm Bram a quorum could not be reached. However, an informal meeting went ahead with all decisions deferred to the following meeting for review by the Board. Below is a list of the directors who served throughout the financial year with the record of meetings attended. The Board Training was delivered by the Inclusive Subcommittee in September 2025.



The Dara Board

Below is the record of attendance of the Board members for 2025:

Board Member	Feb.	Apr.	May	Jul.	Nov.	Dec. (informal meeting)
Brian Gallagher (Chair)	●	●	●	●	●	●
Lynda McElherron (Vice Chair)	●	●	●	●	●	●
Mary Lavin	●	●	X	●	X	■
Hugh Fitzgibbon	●	●	X	●	●	●
Paul Pearson	●	●	●	●	●	■
John Gorman	●	●	●	●	●	■
Catherine Slattery	●	X	X	●	●	■
Adrian Watson	●	●	●	●	●	■
Susan Monk	●	●	●	X	X	●
Carole Davis	●	X	●	X	X	■

● = Attended X = Did Not Attend ■ = Apologies

The Board has five Subcommittees which met between 3-6 times during 2025:

Meeting	Committee	No. of Meetings	Members
1	Finance Audit & Remuneration Committee	6	Adrian Watson (Chair), Carole Davis, Brian Gallagher (Board Chair)
2	Policy Subcommittee	3	Lynda McElherron (Chair), Susan Monk
3	Quality Safety & Risk Subcommittee	5	Paul Pearson (Chair), Catherine Slattery
4	Governance & Nominations Subcommittee	6	Brian Gallagher (Board Chair), John Gorman (Chair), Hugh Fitzgibbon
5	Inclusive Subcommittee	10	Chair John Gorman Co-Chairperson with a person with lived experience supported by Dara. Co secretary with lived experience. In attendance CEO, Quality risk and compliance manager, Support coordinator, board supporter and five members with lived experience.

Dara Strategic Planning Workshop with Leadership Team

35
years in operation

30
adults supported residential and supported living

20
residential properties

27
adults with individualised day supports

69
number of people supported in respite living

1,258
overnights

125
employees

Directors Report - Principal Activities & Review of Operations

Principal Activities

During the financial year ended 31 December 2025, Dara continued to provide a comprehensive range of services and supports to individuals with intellectual disabilities. Core services included residential care, individualised day supports, supported living, respite, employment social care, and healthcare.

Operating as a company limited by guarantee with no share capital, Dara is committed to delivering high-quality, person-centred services and supports in partnership with the Health Service Executive (H.S.E.), supporting people to live a full life their way, through their voice and choice integrated in the community.

At the end of 2025, there were 125 staff in Dara.

Regulatory Compliance, Service Quality and Governance

The Health Information and Quality Authority (HIQA) play a central role in regulating residential services for individuals with intellectual disabilities. Dara is fully committed to working collaboratively with HIQA to uphold the regulations and ensure best practice standards are in place throughout the services and supports provided.

Dara residential services have twelve Designated Centres including respite which comprises of twenty properties.

HSE Compatibility & Choice Assessment - Dara hosted a focus group to support the ongoing work of with the HSE Quality Improvement department on developing a Compatibility and Choice Assessment for Disability Residential Services.

DURING 2025 THERE WERE:

- **4** applications to vary conditions of registration of centres were approved in relation to the change of properties in the centre and one new property was added to a centre
- **1** announced inspection
- **1** re-registration inspection
- **2** registration inspections

ONE NEW CENTRE WAS REGISTERED IN CELBRIDGE IN 2025

All inspections were fully complaint or substantially compliant with the regulations in 2025. Dara residential services continue to maintain a high standard in all HIQA inspections while working on action plans to address any substantial noncompliance issues identified in a timely manner.

Achievements and Developments

Strategic Plan 2023-2026

1

STRATEGIC GOAL 1

Service delivery

We are focused on great outcomes and access to the good thing in life

91% of objectives achieved

2

STRATEGIC GOAL 2

Involvement

Every action is in partnership

78% of objectives achieved

3

STRATEGIC GOAL 3

One organisation

One vision, mission, values set our direction

100% of objectives achieved

4

STRATEGIC GOAL 4

Organisation capacity

We have a strong foundation to build our future

90% of objectives achieved

We will begin the consultation process to develop a new Strategic Plan for Dara in 2026.

The development of the leadership skills of people supported by Dara with lived experience in the Inclusive subcommittee was a highlight in 2025. One person with lived experience from the Committee completed induction to become a Dara Board Director in 2026.

The partnerships that have emerged with local groups, committees, universities, and businesses have been an important area of focus during 2025 and will continue to be expanded.

In 2025, the second year of the 'Dara Workability Inclusive Pathways to Employment Programme' accepted referrals from the local community to complete training, work experience and gain meaningful employment. Partnerships for employment with the hospitality and education sectors were expanded.

New systems were introduced to support good governance, efficiencies, and reporting in the areas of risk and incident reporting, and these are working well. The ongoing commitment to strengthen and develop management systems and training for the management teams continued in 2025.

Principal Risks and Uncertainties

Dara operates a proactive risk management framework with regular oversight by the Board of Directors and Senior Management team. The Directors have assessed and reviewed the major risks to which Dara is exposed and are satisfied that systems are in place to mitigate exposure to the major risks. In 2025 the Board directors discussed and developed risk appetite statements which outline the Dara risk appetite and tolerance in different areas in the organisation.

THE KEY RISKS FACING DARA INCLUDE THE FOLLOWING:

Recruitment and Retention of Staff

The recruitment and retention of suitable staff with the required skills and training required to support people is key to the sustainability of the organisation.

Cybersecurity Threats

Dara makes ongoing strategic and tactical efforts to address the evolving nature of cyber threats and the challenges posed, including the revision of internal practices and controls in this area. Dara urgently requires additional funding from the H.S.E. to update and strengthen its security systems to manage the risk of Cyberattacks.

Severe Weather Conditions

During 2025 due to climate change there were several storms with red warnings issued across the country. Dara is mindful of planning for adverse weather events and have contingency plans in place during these events.

Insurance and State Claims

The cost of Insurance increased significantly in 2025. Exclusion from the extension by the State Claims Agency of the Clinical and General Indemnity Schemes to Section 39-member organisations has led to increased insurance premiums. Dara requires access to the National Incident Management Reporting system which would enhance and streamline risk reporting for the organisation.

Access to Psychiatry and Mental Health and Intellectual Disability Teams and Community Multidisciplinary Teams

The lack of services and limited access to Psychiatry services and Mental Health and Intellectual Disability teams (Psychology, SLT, OT, Behaviour support) and community multidisciplinary teams for adults supported in Dara is an ongoing issue.

Increased Cost of Living and Inflation

This posed a significant challenge to the organisation in 2025.

How We Make a Difference, Every Day - Our Amazing Teams

Dara Residential, and Supported Living

Dara Community (residential services) supported thirty people in the community in Celbridge and North Dublin and two people living in their family home in Co. Kildare. Two people supported live in homes in community with drop in supports which are not registered with HIQA.

Service Provision and Capacity - two new homes purchased via Capital Assistance Scheme grants opened in 2025 one of these being an accessible bungalow. These homes were both registered with HIQA and provide sustainable tenancies for the people who live there. Renovations were completed on bathrooms and bedroom facilities and ramps were installed in several properties to meet the changing needs of people supported.

Dara Respite

Dara's Respite service provided 1258 respite nights to 69 individuals and their families during 2025 in an ordinary house in community. This group respite model enables people to enjoy time away from the family home with their friends and peers and choose what they want to do and where they would like to go.

Dara Possibilities

Dara Possibilities provided self-directed support for twenty-seven people in 2025 in line with the H.S.E. New Directions policy. Four people supported received support from their own homes. New Directions is the HSE approach for day supports which proposes that 'day services' should take the form of individualised outcome-focused supports to allow adults using those services to live a life of their choosing in accordance with their own wishes, needs and aspirations. A new Support Coordinator role funded by the HSE enabled expansion of the service in 2025.

Five people who have residential suppports receive indivdualised New Directions day support funding for supports from their own home.

- Aine Flynn Director of Decision Support Service met with families in Dara to discuss the Assisted Decision Making (Capacity) Act 2015.
- 6-week Relationships, Understanding and Awareness around identity, friendships and sexuality training for people supported.
- Active Healthy Me is an exciting health, wellbeing and physical activity programme was delivered in the Hub in 2025 with great enthusiasm and active participation.
- Way finding centre ambassador training.
- Monthly Mini Markets and Christmas market - Dara Hub.
- Youth Adult Team training for staff positive behaviour support, Mental Health/Psychology, Goal setting.
- Community inclusion training for staff members.
- Bridge to community training with National Federation of Voluntary Bodies.
- Alternative Repsite breaks for people supported.
- An external review by Bob Rhodes into the individualised supports provided. This involved the people we support, their families, staff and senior management.

active healthy me

Workability

Inclusive Pathways to Employment

9
part-time roles secured

10
people engaged in job searching

10
people completed work experience

11
people completed non-accredited training

10
people reported improved Job Readiness Skills such as CV writing, interviewing and job searching techniques

11
people reported improved soft skills like confidence building & interpersonal skills development

7
people attended networking events

8
employers employed a person with a disability as a direct result of our programme

14
employers provided work experience/placements

11
participants joined the programme in 2025

102
employers were directly approached in 2025

20
stakeholders were engaged with in 2025

There were seventeen participants engaging in the Workability - Pathways to Inclusive Employment in 2025. Eight people secured paid employment by the end of the year. One person exited the programme. Six participants continued and gained employment in 2026 and one person went on to further education.

The overall employment rate for the seventeen people who were actively on the Dara Workability programme during 2025 reached 88% compared to a national average of 17%.

Healthcare Review

Loraine Murphy
Healthcare Coordinator

The role of the Health Care coordinator has been significant in 2025 in supporting staff teams and managers with complex medical and surgical issues, medication training and health promotion.

HEALTH PROMOTION AND EDUCATION EVENTS FOR STAFF AND PEOPLE SUPPORTED

- Asthma Society of Ireland training - A clinical nurse specialist facilitated training for our staff teams on Asthma awareness and how to support to people with Asthma.
- First Aid training for those we support in the Workabilikty program.
- Garda visit to the Hub to talk about safety in community.
- The healthcare coordinator arranged for several speakers to come in to deliver some information to all the men in Dara for Men's Health week. Talks on mens health checks and healthy eating were covered by the local pharmacist. Minding your mental health and the importance of being active and exercising outdoors in nature were covered by a councillor and a staff member.
- Maynooth University - visit to Dara from Prof Fintan Sheerin and colleagues from the UK & Sweden. They met with members of SMT and the Healthcare coordinator.
- Nursing Programme and Nurse Preceptorship with Maynooth University Nursing Students - We have established strong links with, supporting nursing students through clinical placement and preceptorship opportunities. Dara Respite house provides students with a valuable opportunity to develop their knowledge and clinical skills in a person-centred environment, while gaining practical experience in supporting people with diverse needs.
- Working closely with our local pharmacy and pharmacist to support the safe and effective management of medication for the people we support. This includes facilitating Medication Use Reviews (MURs) - reviewing prescribed regular and PRN medication, identifying any potential concerns, and promoting the safe and appropriate use of medicines. We also collaborated with the pharmacist to facilitate on-site vaccinations for both the people we support and our staff team as part of preventative healthcare.
- Maintain ongoing links with primary care to ensure that the people we support have timely and appropriate access to healthcare. This involves liaising with GPs, practice nurses, occupational therapists, physio-therapists and other primary healthcare professionals, accessing, coordinating and following up with primary care professionals and ensuring that relevant health information is communicated effectively between services. Advocating for the healthcare needs of the people we support and working collaboratively with primary care to promote access to services and the best possible care.

- Safe administration of medication training (SAMS) was facilitated as follows: Full Two-Day SAMS and Refresher SAMS for new and existing staff members.

During 2025, Dara also engaged with the HSE/Healthy Ireland-funded HEADSUP Kildare Wellbeing Programme in Celbridge.

The Healthcare Coordinator was involved in identifying opportunities for people supported by Dara to participate in the community-based wellbeing workshops and considering the supports required to facilitate attendance, a number of persons supported from Dara particiapated in this programme.

Dementia Ireland provided specialist dementia education for a Dara staff team covering dementia awareness, person-centred support, emotional and behavioural presentation, supportive environments, meaningful activity and the particular needs of people with Down syndrome and dementia.

Dara also developed linksin the area of palliative care. During November 2025, arrangements were explored for an experienced social worker from WALK with a background in palliative care to provide an educational session for Dara staff, supporting staff understanding and confidence in caring for people with progressive and life-limiting healthcare needs.

Men's Health Week

Human Resources Review

In 2025 key HR priorities included enhanced recruitment and education partnerships, supporting CORU registration, staff training and development, employee wellbeing, the piloting of a time and attendance software system, development of Dara's intern programme and investment in internal instructors.

Recruitment

- 13 staff as part of our service expansion. At the end of 2025 there were 125 staff in Dara.
- Staff turnover reduced in 2025.
- A recruitment working group was established to explore recruitment opportunities to enhance recruitment of staff.
- Recruitment fair in the Mill Shopping Centre in June 2025 and Linkedin Office in July 2025.
- Targeted recruitment approaches via our social media platforms and engagement with colleges and local organisations.
- Dara's paid intern programme was enhanced to target college students, individuals considering a career in health or social care, and those who had relevant education or personal experience but required practical experience within a disability service.

CORU

Significant organisational support was provided to staff in preparation for the introduction of statutory registration of Social Care Workers with CORU as part of a two-year transitional Grand-parenting Route (Section 91). Dara undertook a significant programme of support to assist eligible employees with this process. Forty six employees were assisted to apply for CORU registration through the Grandparenting Route.

Maynooth University School of Nursing Partnership

During 2025, Dara developed a partnership with Maynooth University's newly established School of Nursing, led by Professor Fintan Sheerin. As part of Maynooth University's application for approval of its new BSc General Nursing programme, Following successful NMBI approval of the Maynooth programme, Dara progressed its partnership with the University practice placements for Maynooth nursing students.

Workplace Wellbeing Programme 2025

Dara introduced a dedicated Workplace Wellbeing Support Project in 2025, linked to National Workplace Wellbeing Day on 30 April. The initiative was developed in response to staff feedback and aimed to promote employees' wellbeing, while recognising the particular challenges associated with lone working, remote working and providing support to others.

In-house Trainers

During 2025, Dara invested in developing staff members as instructors in key mandatory training areas.

- **Cardiac First Response Instructor Development:** Two Managers undertook CFR Instructor course.
- **Fire Safety Instructor Development:** Two Managers were supported to undertake Fire Safety

Instructor training. Additional Train-the-Trainer development was also arranged to support DARA's ability to deliver appropriate fire safety training internally.

- **People/Patient Moving and Handling Instructor Development:** Two Managers were supported to undertake People/Patient Moving and Handling Instructor training.

Staff Forum and Employee Engagement

The DARA Staff Forum continued to provide an important mechanism for employee participation and communication. Two meetings were held in 2025 with summary minutes subsequently circulated to staff. The Forum provided employees with an opportunity to raise issues, contribute ideas and participate in discussions relating to the organisation and their working environment.

Digital HR and Workforce Management - Bizimply Pilot

The introduction of a HR and time attendance system commenced in 2025. The aim of this system was to introduce a more efficient approach to workforce management, with particular focus on staff rostering, time and attendance, timecards and leave administration.

External Engagement and Sector Developments

As members of The National Federation's Human Resources Group Dara attended their quarterly meetings including their presentation on AI and Human Resources in October 2025 this supported the development of the Dara policy of AI referencing the Government's Guidelines for Responsible Use of AI in the Public Service.

Safeguarding Development

During 2025, Daras Designated Officers attended a Practice Development Day and various Adult Safeguarding Webinars. This supported continued development of safeguarding knowledge within Dara, particularly in relation to delivering good safeguarding practice in the areas of recognising coercive control and safeguarding within institutional settings. Empowerment, enhancing persons supported to self guard, capacity and decision-making was enhanced through staff education and the implementation of policies on Consent and Decision-Making, Advocacy, and Will and Preference.

Staff Quotes

"Dara gave me the opportunity to grow and be part of each individual life. This is a privilege; watching how much each one can achieve and overcome hurdles that seemed impossible, makes my heart full. Each service user inspires me differently."

PATRICIA BRADY

"I came to support others, but I never realised just how much they would enrich my own life. The flexibility of Dara is also great and has enabled me to further my studies."

KEVIN CAHILL

"Every day is different. The fantastic people and diverse personalities make it a rewarding place to be. Each challenge is a chance to learn something new and make a meaningful impact for the people we support."

ADELINE McADOO

Finance and Administration Review

Finance Report - Financial Summary

FINANCIAL POSITION AND FUNDING

Carol O'Rourke
Director of Finance

The organisation faced significant financial pressure in 2025 due to staffing challenges, inflationary costs, regulatory requirements, insurance costs and increased service demands. These issues were highlighted to the HSE in ongoing discussions. In December 2025 Dara received the funding to pay all staff 5.5% of the overall 9.25% Workplace Relations Commission pay award from the HSE.

The introduction of an Easy read summary of the financial reports for board meetings in 2025 was successful in making the finance information more accessible to all directors. The finance team commenced the work to introduce a time and attendance digital system for all staff in 2025.

Total Income	**€6,486,191**
Income	€5,797,823
Grants And Minor Capital	€40,866
Donations And Fundraising	Nil
Total Expenditure	**€6,512,056**
Pay Related Costs	€4,945,159
Non Pay Costs (Incl. Depreciation)	€1,566,897
Net Assets	**€1,279,105**
Reserves	**€1,279,105**

People Supported - Impact Stories

Gillian Moore

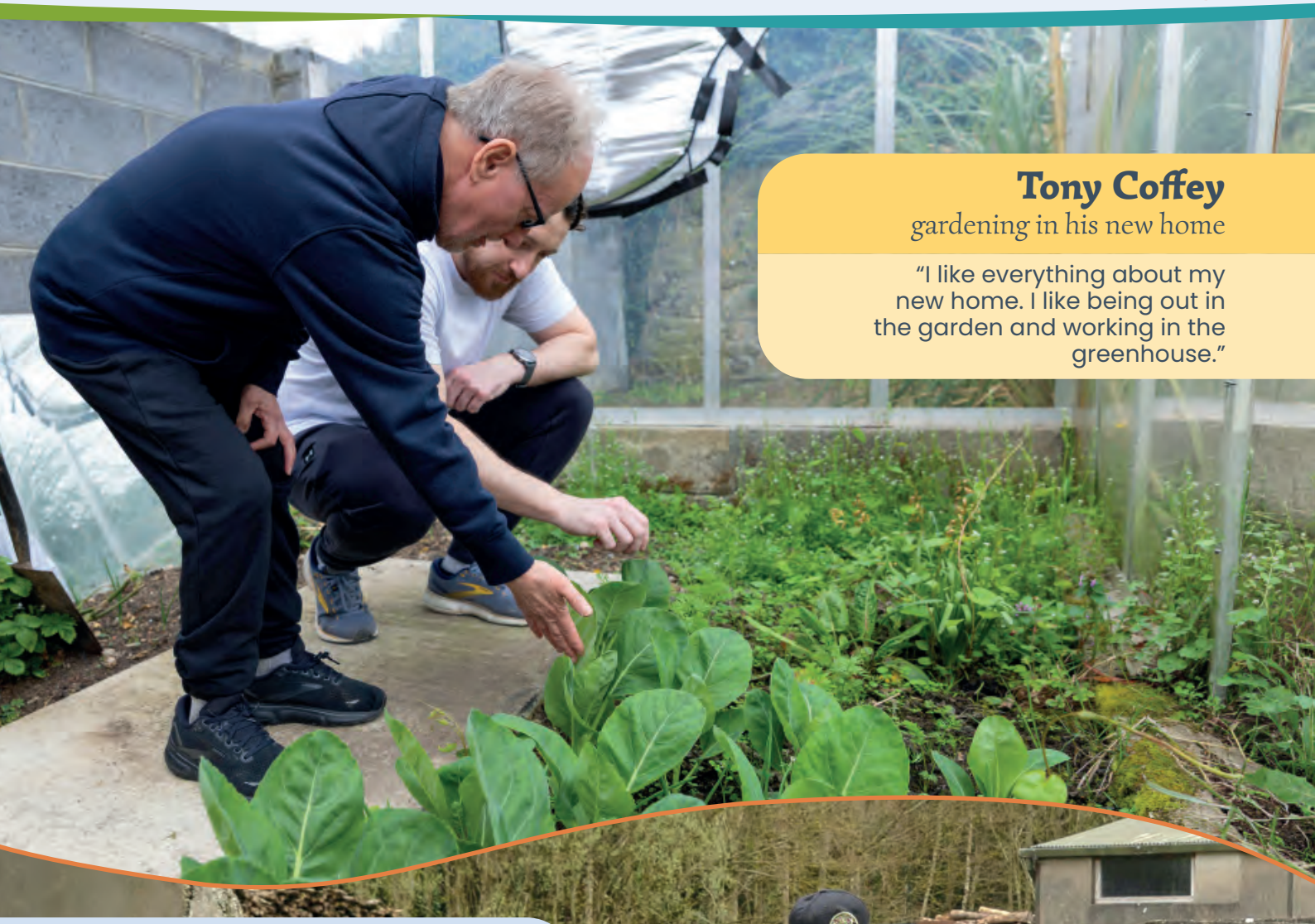
at work in Maynooth Bookshop

"I like the different jobs I do in Maynooth Bookshop like pricing and organising the books. I really like the people in the job they have become good friends of mine."

Cathal Calally

in his dream job in Applegreen warehouse

"I like working hard and being busy. I am very hard working. I don't give up. I concentrate on my work and don't mess when I am in work. I want to be come more independent."



Tony Coffey
gardening in his new home

"I like everything about my new home. I like being out in the garden and working in the greenhouse."

Philip McCarthy
enjoying Social farming in Carbury

"Attending social farming each week is very important to Philip as it provides opportunities to build friendships, develop new skills, and enjoy meaningful activities in a supportive environment.

Philip has developed a strong relationship with Ciaran and he is actively building on his relationship with fellow farm attendee Padraig. Philip enjoys getting involved in all of the manual tasks such as chopping logs and general farm upkeep. He also tends to the chickens, collects the eggs and has a big soft spot for Charlie and Ted (Ciaran's dogs) each week is very important to Philip as it provides opportunities to build friendships, develop new skills, and enjoy meaningful activities in a supportive environment.

David
in the Hub showing his photography

"DARA Possibilities has had a good impact on me. I'm encouraged to try new things, and the staff are very supportive and understanding."

Sharon
in her forever home

"My home is my forever happy home. It is my special place."

Advocacy

The Dara advocacy group are an important group who represent the voice of people supported in Dara. They met 7 times in 2025 and were very active on the work listed below in 2025.

- Visit to Dail Eireann
- HSE Compatibility Focus Group Feedback
- Presentations and discussions on UNCRPD - Article 27 - Work and employment
- Assisted Decision Making training pack - Inclusion Ireland
- Keep my Teeth project from the National Federation discussed
- Naoise O'Cearuil TD attended the advocacy meeting in September to discuss Budget 2026 and the National Human Rights Strategy for Disabled People 2025-2030. Naoise spoke in the Dail on 18th Sept about his visit to Dara.
- National Human Rights Strategy for Disabled People 2025-2030 Reviewed by the group and barriers and solutions discussed.
- Two people supported presented at company induction.

Dara Advocacy Group Dáil Visit

Inclusive Subcommittee

PURPOSE

We talk about things that are important to us in Dara. We develop our skills to work on other Subcommittees of the Board. We make sure our voice is heard in decision making in Dara.

PRINCIPLES OF THE COMMITTEE

1 Active members
2 Everyone takes part
3 Louder voice
4 Communicating clearly
5 Taking control
6 Holding Dara to account - asking questions
7 Supporting each other

This is a journey and we will work together and learn from mistakes.

Inclusive Subcommittee
Back: Sarah Jane Lavin, Carol O'Donnell, Joan Brady, Carole Davis, Sharon Reilly

Front: Evonne Gilligan, Derek Murphy, Dairine O'Rourke

WORK OF THE COMMITTEE IN 2025

- Learned about Wardship and confidentiality
- Defined and appointed roles of Co-Chair/Co-Secretary
- One Member of the committee with lived experience e. Rotating Co-Chair Agreed
- Review and Easy read summary of Dara Policy on Consent and Decision Making completed
- Terms of Reference review
- Restrictive Practice Policy review
- Delivered Board training - Assisted decision making and accessible information
- Will and Preference - examples and discussion
- Board Governance Handbook review
- Strategic Planning Day presentation
- Policy on informed consent

Evonne Gilligan, Co-Chair of the Inclusive Subcommittee & Carole Davis, Board Director

Family Voices and Testimonials

In Dara we value the contribution and connection to family in each person's life. We acknowledge that the support and involvement of family in a person's life is one of the most important relationships for them.

Decision Support Service - Aine Flynn met with Families and staff in Dara to discuss the role of the Decision Support Service.

Dara hosted their annual family and staff gathering in 2025 in Donadea.

Quotes from Families

"In an AI driven world where people are becoming more dependant on answers not of their own making; it's both heartening and comforting to see Dara staff dealing with service users in an understanding manner based on their needs and abilities. Good people are behind every good successful organisation; Dara community services has what it takes to give our family the confidence that our son is in good hands."

COLM FULHAM

"As a family we like working with Dara as we feel that they keep our daughter at the centre of all the decisions made about her care and support. We think they have taken the time to get to know her and understand what is important to her. We feel that allows her to have real input into what her support looks like and to have as much autonomy as possible as to how she lives her life. We feel that all communication between Dara, our daughter, her support workers and ourselves is always very friendly, open and positive so it feels that we are all working towards the same goal."

RITA WALSHE

The Hub

The Hub hosted several events during the year including St. Patricks Day celebrations, monthly markets, Christmas market and Christmas Carols and Songs.

In December 2025 Dara and the Celbridge Access Group hosted an event to mark disability week and International Day of People with Disabilities where people supported by Dara gave presentations on the pillars of the National Human Rights Strategy for Disabled People 2025-2030. These presentations were highly commended on the day by local councillors, university lecturers, H.S.E. and community groups.

The Step down Changing places bathroom in the Hub was opened to the public in 2025.

Engagement With Community Partners

Dara works closely with our community partners i.e local businesses, community Garda, Celbrige Access Group, Kildare local authority, Arch Club and others to ensure people supported have access to servcies and supports they need to live a full life.

Wayfinding Centre - Two people supported have become ambassadors for the wayfinding centre in Glasnevin. The Wayfinding Centre's vision is to be a global leader in providing innovative and sustainable solutions for transport and mobility challenges experienced by people with a disability. It is a collaborative space where people with a disability, transport staff, built environment professionals, designers, academics and policy makers come together to accelerate an inclusive mobility agenda. This will result in paid work for people supported.

Fire Safety Talk from the Chief fire officer in Kildare came to the Hub and did a talk of fire safety for people supported and staff members the event was well attended and feedback positive.

Housing clinic - Kildare County Council hosted a housing drop-in clinic in the Hub which was open to all people living in local areas.

Department of Children, Disability and Equality - we hosted a visit from our colleagues in DCDE to discuss the vision for disability services. They met with senior management team, support coordinators and one person supported presented on his experience of attending Trinity College and his supports through Dara Possibilities.

DARA
living a full life

DARA COMMUNITY LIVING

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Dara is the trading name for Dara Residential Services for People with an Intellectual Disability.
Company Limited by Guarantee (CLG)
Registered Charity Number: CHY 14185
Charities Registration Number (CRA Number): 20045531
Registered Company Number: 363818

Rialtas na hÉireann Government of Ireland
Arna chomhchistiú ag an Aontas Eorpach Co-funded by the European Union
pobal government supporting communities

This project is co-funded by the Government of Ireland, through the Department of Social Protection, and the European Union.