

SPINAL NEWS

WINTER 2023



Festive Recipes

Meet our Legal Partners

**Join our Art
Programme**

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This magazine contains real life features and SII does not endorse any products or services listed within.



WELCOME

It was great to meet and engage with so many of the spinal cord community during 2023 whether it was through our online peer catch ups, education programmes, or in person at our clinics in the NRH or at our pizza evenings and lunches. And also, to our supporters who attended events, took on challenges, business partners or donors, you are a major part of our community and we could not exist without you. We need to fundraise 60 cent in every Euro on an annual basis and this would be impossible if the community did not pull together.

This year we decided to feature Robert Kenny on our front cover. As many of you know, Robert is our longest serving staff member with over 20 years’ service and for 2023 he decided to take on an extra personal target to raise funds through supermarket collections and not only did he do it but he exceeded it. You can read all about it on Page 23.

You may recall we ran a Christmas campaign last year with Marty Whelan to raise funds for our counselling service. This campaign enabled us to increase our counselling services by 160% to service users and family members so if there is someone in your family who needs this support please reach out to us in the New Year. We are running this campaign again this Christmas and if you know someone who can support it please spread the word.

There are hundreds of people who make Spinal Injuries Ireland the organisation it is. Particularly our volunteers (administrators, peer mentors, board directors, bus drivers, powerboat crew, fundraisers, advocates & ambassadors). Your time and knowledge makes life so much easier and accessible for so many people and we are very grateful to you.

To our staff who are so committed to providing the best services to people with a SCI and sometimes with limited resources they still go that extra mile, Thank you.

Thanks to our sponsor Coloplast who is providing the funding for SII to host an in person conference in the RDS on Saturday 9th November 2024 focussing on innovations in self care and featuring international speakers and the latest available technology. Please pencil this date in your diary and we will be in contact with all the details. This is an event for you, your family, carers and also for healthcare professionals so it is well worth planning to attend.

On behalf of all the team I want to wish you all a very Happy Christmas and health and happiness for 2024. We look forward to seeing you all in 2024 and please do not hesitate to reach out to us at any time.

Kind Regards

Fiona Bolger CEO

Our Values



Informed

We know how to help



Compassionate

We deliver this with empathy and understanding



Reliable

We follow through every time



Empowering

We give hope and inspiration

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SERVICES UPDATE



NRH

The Services Team holds SII clinics every Tuesday and Wednesday morning alongside the OPD clinics in the NRH. These clinics serve as valuable occasions to reconnect with individuals we haven't seen in a while and to engage with those who haven't had the chance to meet with us before. If your OPD appointment falls on a day when we're not present, reach out to us at 01-6532180 or via email at info@spinalinjuries.ie. We'll arrange to meet with you during your visit to the NRH.

Our Pizza Night in the NRH continues to grow in popularity and gives us a chance to introduce some of the SII peer volunteers to patients currently undergoing rehabilitation. In the last year we provided pizza at 12 pizza evenings, with over 240 patient interactions.

Jack Shannon-Cole and Gemma Willis, SII's two Peer Outreach Officers link up with newly injured patients on the Spinal Ward of the NRH, letting people know about SII and establishing our relationships with patients before discharge. Gemma and Jack refer patients back to our Outreach Officers who provide ongoing support and refer patients for our other services.

The Women's Day event at the NRH in October centred around the theme of wellness. Hilary Keppel, SII's Community Outreach Officer, not only presented the work of SII but also distributed wellness goodie bags to participants. November saw the inaugural Men's Day at the NRH, with Jack Shannon Cole representing SII and sharing insights into our supports and initiatives.

SII has funded and arranged the filming of NRH Education Booklets, aiming to enhance accessibility for NRH patients. The filming process, completed in September 2023, has brought us to the final editing stage. Once finalised, these booklets will be accessible through both the NRH and SII websites. Stay tuned for notifications on the release dates – we'll keep you posted!

Grants

The Services Team has been actively securing grants for a range of essential needs, including assistive technology, small home adaptations, Physiotherapy, and Hydrotherapy. Across 4 CHO areas, the HSE National Lottery Grants have made a significant impact, allocating €15,000 for assistive technology.

This support comes in the form of laptops, smart doorbells, tablets, phones, and Dragon software. Notably, the online Art Classes brought a splash of light and colour into the lives of service users in the Northeast, brightening up the cold winter evenings.

Thanks to the Hospital Saturday Fund, individuals have gained access to crucial physiotherapy and hydrotherapy services. Furthermore, the fund has played a role in facilitating the return to work and college for several individuals by providing them with laptops.

In the challenging aftermath of a spinal cord injury, the last thing anyone should face is the struggle of adapting their home for their new circumstances. Unfortunately, this is a reality many individuals confront. Denise Lennon, our Community Outreach Officer in Cork, continues to find grant opportunities for people in the south of the country. This year, she successfully secured funding for small home adaptations for several service users in the south of the country. Thanks to the invaluable support from the Grace O'Malley and Protestant Aid Funding sources, individuals can now experience a more accessible and accommodating living environment.

Spreading Awareness

Our 2023 research highlighted that when people leave the hospital after a spinal cord injury, it feels like "falling off a cliff". We've been talking a lot about how spinal cord injuries impact daily life, the costs involved, and how others perceive it. Our Services Team has been actively sharing this information, speaking to various groups and places such as Google, Flutter and Dublin Bus, and taking part on webinars, most recently the Design Council of Ireland live webinar on bringing awareness around accessibility to Irish Design.



We continue to work to make sure people understand the challenges and experiences associated with spinal cord injuries. If you would like to get involved and help us with our advocacy and awareness, get in touch with us at advocacy@spinalinjuries.ie

Our collaboration with the National Office of Clinical Audit, University National Patient Engagement committees, and the Irish Platform for Patients' Organisation (IPPOSI) plays a crucial role in spreading awareness about spinal cord injuries and addressing related issues. Notably, the ongoing efforts of the National Trauma Audit Committee are dedicated to enhancing the care pathway for trauma patients. Currently, their focus is on streamlining patient information from ambulance services and all hospitals, a move that holds the promise of saving lives. Our Head of Services, Bairbre O'Sullivan, sits on this committee and notes that *'witnessing the genuine passion and dedication of the different people involved throughout a patient's trauma journey is heartening and there are already changes towards better communication between everyone involved.'*



INSIGHTS BY JACK SHANNON COLE: NAVIGATING HARDSHIP:

The Unsettling Reality of Social Welfare for Individuals with Disabilities in Ireland



Within the context of Ireland's social welfare system, individuals with disabilities face distinct challenges.

While the recent budget highlights some increases in specific allowances, the financial landscape for this demographic remains complex. The Disability Allowance, often a crucial support for those unable to work due to long-term illness or disability, faces growing challenges amidst rising consumer costs.

It's essential to recognize the ongoing challenges people with disabilities encounter, particularly in accessing employment. Despite legislative efforts to promote inclusivity, substantial barriers persist, impacting individuals' ability to secure meaningful work. Navigating the job market remains a challenge, contributing to financial instability and reliance on social welfare.

Surviving on the Disability Allowance, which has seen a marginal increase in the recent budget, is undoubtedly challenging. While the increment acknowledges the need for adjustments, it may struggle to keep pace with the persistent rise in consumer costs. As prices for essential goods and services increase, the support provided by the Disability Allowance often does not fully meet the evolving needs of individuals with disabilities.

Additionally, the provision allowing individuals to earn supplementary income by renting out a room in their

homes, though commendable, signals the underlying struggle for financial sustainability. It prompts individuals with disabilities to explore alternative means of income, reflecting the need for a holistic approach to support.

The three electricity credits of €150 each, aimed at alleviating financial strain during specific periods, provide welcome relief. However, they are perceived as a temporary solution to a more comprehensive issue. While any financial support is appreciated, there's a recognition that deeper systemic issues contribute to the ongoing financial challenges faced by individuals with disabilities throughout the year.

The Christmas Bonus, presented as a generous gesture, offers a temporary reprieve amid ongoing financial struggles. The double week in January 2024, while a brief respite, underscores the precarious financial situation many individuals with disabilities find themselves in, reliant on intermittent injections of financial support.

As the new year approaches, the promised increase of €12 in the maximum rate of all weekly social welfare payments is seen as a positive step, acknowledging the need for adjustments. However, when considered alongside the realities of inflation and rising living costs, it is recognized as a nominal gesture in the ongoing battle against financial hardship. In this challenging landscape, organizations like Spinal Injuries Ireland play a crucial role, actively addressing the hardships faced by those with spinal cord injuries and advocating for change within the broader narrative of social welfare.



While the new pilot scheme for part-time students, set to launch in September 2024, offers hope, questions linger about its potential impact. The scheme, tailored for part-time undergraduate students attending eligible programs, holds promise in addressing financial struggles and systemic barriers in pursuing education. While details are still in development, there is cautious optimism about its potential positive influence.

Though the scheme outlines specific criteria, including nationality, residency, and progression standards, and involves a means test, it is acknowledged as a step towards addressing immediate financial struggles and systemic barriers faced by individuals with disabilities in their pursuit of education and financial stability. While challenges persist, there's a recognition of the positive steps taken and the ongoing need for a balanced and comprehensive approach to support individuals with disabilities in Ireland.

CHANGES IN BUDGET24

- €400 once-off payment in November 2023 for those getting Career's Support Grant, Disability Allowance, Invalidity Pension or Blind Pension.
- Rent a Room Relief – Up to €14,000 income through renting a room in your home.
- Three Electricity credits of €150 each.
- Christmas Bonus of 100% of your social welfare
- Once off double week payment of social welfare in January
- €12 increase in Disability Allowance for January 2024
- Financial support opportunities for those looking to attend part time college accredited courses.

FUNDRAISING NEWS

We're so grateful to all of our Business Members who continue to support people with spinal cord injuries across the country. To Callan Tansey Solicitors, Care to Comfort - Electrical Adjustable Bed Specialists, Gillen Markets, Lavelle Partners, McCarthy & Co Solicitors, McMahon Goldrick Solicitors, Moneywise – Financial Planning Advisory Specialists, OBL Solicitors, we really appreciate the support. It is a huge help both to ourselves as an organisation as well as to our service users.

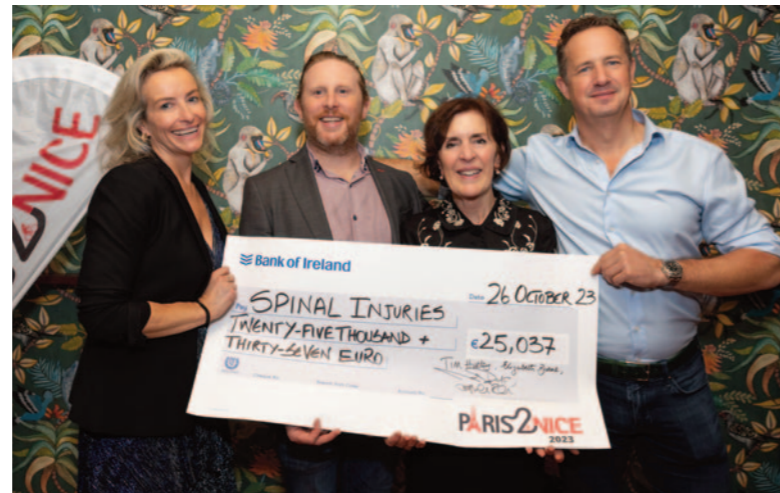
In September we held our second ever **London Lunch**, attended by 120 guests in the stunning location of Queen's Tennis Club, South Kensington, London. The day kicked off with a fabulous Champagne reception in glorious sunshine on the balcony overlooking the courts. This was then followed by a delicious three course lunch in the President's Suite. The amazing Mark Pollock spoke to our guests, who very generously donated over €30,000 on the day. Thank you to all who attended and looking forward to seeing you in London again next year.



With the Rugby World Cup on this year, we decided to organise a viewing of the **Ireland vs South Africa** group game in Old Belvedere Rugby Club. This was the brainchild of "Old Belvo" member David Butler, who not only came up with the suggestion but also was a great help in spreading the word and making sure it was a full house. Thanks also to Old Belvedere General Manager Ian Donnelly for pushing the event out to the club members and for ensuring the night went so smoothly, as well as to Paul Quinlan for providing such a delicious feast at such a knock-down price. But above all else, thanks to each and every one of the 150 people who attended and donated on the night. It was a huge success and together we raised over €13,000 for SII. And we even eked out an Ireland win. The perfect night!

We had a strong team taking part in the annual **Paris2Nice fundraiser** this year, with 4 cyclists taking on

the immense challenge of cycling from Paris all the way down to Nice over a six-day period. But the cycle wasn't the only challenge they took on. Prior to departure, they each agreed to raise over €3,000 for Spinal Injuries Ireland. The team didn't just reach their target, they more than doubled it, raising over €25,000! There were lots of inventive means of fundraising employed, with one participant even running a wine-tasting evening which was a huge success. Unfortunately an injury to one participant meant that only three managed to complete the huge cycle To Mark Roche, Elizabeth Burke, Tim Hurley and Jacqueline Fennell, thank you all so much for the amazing time, effort and hard work that went into this. We are hugely grateful.



This October saw the launch of a new event in our calendar, the **Accessible Greenway Cycle along the Great Western Greenway**. This was a tremendous success for its first year, with 26 participants raising over €13,000 for people with spinal cord injuries. Despite two people getting flat tyres en route, everyone had a great time, capped off by a lovely group meal in the Westport Coast Hotel. Thank you to everyone who attended for making it such a great success. We are looking forward to cycling with you all again next year!



The Greenway Cycle was swiftly followed by one of the annual highlights each year, our **Cork Jazz Ball**. With almost 200 people in attendance, the room was buzzing and everyone had a great time. Singer Sean Boland kindly volunteered his time to sing during the meal, which got everyone off to a great start, and Sean was followed by a band and DJ late into the night. It was a fantastic night, raising over €30,000 for Spinal Injuries Ireland. A massive thanks to James Whelan, Sean Cusack, John Twomey, and Brendan Manning of Occasions Events for their continued drive and energy to deliver such an enjoyable and successful event.

Our **A Day In My Wheels** campaign continues to go from strength to strength. We had a fantastic event, kindly hosted by Cork County Council in County Hall in October and supported by Conor Healy of Cork Chamber of Commerce. There were almost 40 people in attendance, including Lord Mayor Frank O'Flynn and Irish rugby legend CJ Stander. A huge thanks also goes to all our Ambassadors for sharing their time and experiences with our participants, it was a terrific learning experience for all involved. Lester Cassidy, Rich Murray, Mark Dalton, Ahmed Shah Kamil and Mary McGrath, we can't thank you all enough. Aisling Kennedy and the team in Google, in particular Orlaith Downey and Audrey Breen, we are hugely grateful for the incredible fundraising you did for people with spinal cord injuries and we're delighted that your engagement in A Day In My Wheels is leading to further collaborations in the future. We are looking forward to working with you. Also



thanks to all the staff in Dublin Bus, Flutter, Carbery Group, The Central Bank and Broadlake, who either took part or are about to take part in their own A Day In My Wheels event. If you would like to find out more about this awareness and educational programme, please contact Phil O'Kelly on 0873821182 or email phil@spinalinjuries.ie.

Our **Monthly Prize Draw** continues to perform well, raising over €2,000 per month for Spinal Injuries Ireland. Thanks to each and every one of our supporters who have bought tickets, it's a great support and it is reassuring for us to know we can rely on that steady income each month.

Community fundraising saw a wide range of activities this year carried out by a number of adventurous supporters! Ger Gill, despite having a spinal cord injury himself, jumped out of a plane and went sky diving, raising over €2,000 for both ourselves and the NRH. Tim Brady entered and won second prize in the UCD Investment Society, sponsored by Goodbody Stockbrokers, a donation of €4,000 to a charity of his choosing and Tim very kindly chose Spinal Injuries Ireland. David O'Caomhe, who initiated the wakeboarding experience for our service users over the summer, didn't stop there. He decided he wanted to do more so he cycled from Malin to Mizen in aid of SII, raising over €4,000 in doing so! We also had a few runners hit the streets to raise funds for SII, with Roisin O'Sullivan not only taking part in our Greenway Cycle but also doing the Dublin Marathon for people with spinal cord injuries, raising over €2,000 on the way. Sinead Collins, who had an SCI but recovered from it, also took on a running challenge, one of her own design. Sinead ran over 100Kms across the month of November and also raised over €2,000. Thank you so much, Sinead! A huge thanks goes to all the staff and students at the Faculty of Radiologists & Radiation Oncologists in the Royal College of Surgeons in Ireland. They very kindly chose Spinal Injuries Ireland as their charity of choice for their gala ball this year, raising an amazing €8,500.

Thank you to each and every one of you who donated to Spinal Injuries Ireland this year. We rely on public funding for 60% of our income so we literally couldn't do what we do without you. Thank you!

Open Disclosure Requirement in New Patient Safety Act 2023



Authors: Avril Scally, Head of Medical Negligence and Nicholas Moore, Solicitor at Lavelle Partners LLP



The new Patient Safety (Notifiable Incidents and Open Disclosure) Act 2023, ("2023 Act") marks a significant shift in Ireland's healthcare landscape. The legislation introduces mandatory disclosure requirements for healthcare providers in the event of certain serious safety incidents, aiming to instigate cultural change, enhance learning and embed openness and transparency across the healthcare system in Ireland, which is a very welcome development.

Background

Before the 2023 Act, voluntary disclosure was governed by Part 4 of the Civil Liability (Amendment) Act 2017, which came into effect on September 22, 2018. The 2017 Act, building upon the groundwork laid by the Health Service Executive's ("HSE") Open Disclosure Policy 2013, established the initial framework for open disclosure in the Irish health service.

Key Amendments

The following important amendments to the 2017 Act were introduced at Committee and Report Stages in the Dáil:

Review of Act Mechanism

- Section 80 stipulates a mandatory review of the Act by the Minister within two years of its commencement. This timeframe allows for the integration of the Act's provisions within the health sector and enables the assimilation of initial learnings from various organisations implementing its protocols.
- The amendment empowers the Minister to conduct a comprehensive review, engaging with any individual, body or organisation having regard to their work or functions.

Patient Screening Review

- An amendment flagged by the Minister during the Committee Stage of the Bill introduces mandatory open disclosure for completed individual patient-requested reviews of cancer screening conducted by the HSE's National Screening Service.
- This amendment ensures that patients receive legally mandated full disclosure of the results of their screening reviews.

Nursing Home Incident Review

- The 2023 Act grants the Health Information and Quality Authority's ("HIQA") Chief Inspector of Social Services discretionary power to conduct a review of specific serious patient safety incidents occurring in nursing homes during healthcare provision.
- This discretionary power complements the responsibility of nursing home services to address raised concerns, providing a structured pathway for addressing concerns raised by patients and families.

Notifiable Incidents

- Schedule 1: Schedule 1 of the 2023 Act outlines a comprehensive list of notifiable incidents that are now subject to mandatory open disclosure. These incidents encompass a range of scenarios, including surgical errors, unintended deaths, medication errors and specific cases related to pregnancy and childbirth.

Open Disclosure and Liability

- Section 5: The Act mandates health service providers to convene a notifiable incident disclosure meeting when they are satisfied that a notifiable incident has occurred. This facilitates the open disclosure of the incident to the patient or relevant person.
- Section 10: This section provides an important clarification for healthcare providers and their insurers by explicitly stating that information and apologies made during a notifiable incident disclosure meeting do not constitute an express or implied admission of fault or liability. Importantly, this information is not admissible as evidence in proceedings against the health service provider.

Non-Compliance

- Section 77: Failure to comply with open disclosure of a notifiable incident, without a reasonable excuse, is deemed a criminal offence under this section.

Conclusion

The introduction of the 2023 Act and the incorporation of mandatory disclosure requirements signals a positive

shift in both patient care and the healthcare provider's approach. The legislation's broader objectives are meaningful in seeking to transform the prevailing culture, foster transparent communication about serious incidents and ensure better accountability in the Irish healthcare sector.

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Financial Damages in Catastrophic Cases and the Real Rate of Return

By Jack O'Brien of O'Brien Lynam Solicitors



- General Damages: Money for pain, suffering, and future anticipated pain, including psychological conditions. Courts use guidelines, but they have some freedom in deciding awards.
- "CAP" on General Damages: Recent guidelines have slightly increased awards for severe injuries, like paraplegia and permanent brain damage, to €550,000.00.
- Special Damages: Money to cover financial losses due to the injury, including lost wages, medical expenses, childcare, and future care costs. These are more straightforward to calculate.
- Future Care/Real Rate of Return: Determining compensation for future losses, especially complicated when looking decades ahead. The "Real Rate of Return" is crucial, and a lower rate means higher costs for the defendant.

When someone is seriously injured due to someone else's negligence, they have the right to compensation. The idea is to put the injured person in the financial position they would have been in if the injury hadn't occurred. The law typically sees money as the way to make things right and often awards a lump sum.

The Civil Liability Act of 2017 allows for regular payments if it's secure. However, insurers prefer lump sums because keeping cases open for a long time can be inconvenient. So, most awards are one-time payments, settling the matter completely.

It's clear that no amount of money can truly compensate for life-changing injuries. To make compensation fair, courts consider different categories of damages, mainly:

In a specific case, a change in the discount rate from 3% to 1% led to a significant increase in damages awarded, illustrating the impact of this rate on compensation. Unlike in the UK and Northern Ireland, where the discount rate is legislatively set, in Ireland, it's determined by the Judiciary. Some suggest legislation to adjust it regularly, preventing the need for costly litigation.

This overview isn't a substitute for legal advice, which is always recommended.

If you have had an accident and need help navigating a damages claim, please feel free to contact me, Jack, directly on +353-1-6345884 or email me at jobrien@obl.ie. We're here to help.

Seeking Compensation Following a Spinal Injury

By John McCarthy, Partner at McCarthy + Co Solicitors LLP



About McCarthy + Co Solicitors

With more than 30 years of experience in bringing personal injury and medical negligence cases, the team here at McCarthy + Co provides expert guidance and empathetic legal counsel to people who have suffered spinal injuries as well as confidential support and advice to their close family members. In August 2023 we were proud to join Spinal Injuries Ireland's new Business Partnership Programme, a programme committed to helping improve the lives of those dealing with spinal cord injuries. If you have recently sustained such an injury, or you are a close relative of someone dealing with the aftermath of an injury, our team will be glad to assist you with free and confidential advice on your legal entitlements.

Frequently Asked Questions

Having assisted many individuals and families dealing with the aftermath of a serious injury, I am often asked about the levels of compensation that can be claimed. Here are my answers to some of the questions I am most often asked.

What are general damages in personal injury cases?

General damages refer to the compensation awarded for non-monetary losses suffered by an individual due to an injury. These damages are intended to cover intangible harms such as pain and suffering, emotional distress, loss of enjoyment of life, and physical impairment or disfigurement. Unlike special damages, which cover quantifiable financial losses like medical bills or lost wages, general damages are more subjective and are assessed based on the severity of the injury and its impact on the individual's quality of life. In March 2021, the Judicial Council of Ireland published new Personal Injuries Guidelines outlining the award range for distinct types of injuries, with the most devastating and catastrophic of injuries attracting an award of general damages up to €550,000.

What are special damages?

Special damages are the quantifiable financial losses that a person incurs as a result of their injury. These include specific, measurable expenses like medical bills, rehabilitation costs, lost wages, and any future income loss due to the injury. Special damages are intended to compensate the injured party for the direct economic impact of their injury, essentially putting them back in the financial position they would have been in had the injury not occurred. The calculation of special damages,

relying on tangible evidence such as bills, receipts, and employment records, can be quite complex where future care costs need to be factored in or where a claim for loss of earnings into the future requires to be made.

Are there other costs that can be recovered specific to a spinal cord injury?

Yes, people who have sustained spinal cord injuries have various avenues for reclaiming costs related to their injury. This includes the expenses for specialist treatment and ongoing medical care. In cases where the injured party is left wheelchair-bound and their current accommodation becomes unsuitable, they may be entitled to recover costs associated with either refurbishing their existing home or acquiring a new property that meets their needs. Additionally, those who have suffered catastrophic spinal injuries might require round-the-clock specialist nursing care. Lastly, those with spinal cord injuries often need advanced medical devices, aids, and specially adapted vehicles to alleviate their suffering and assist in their daily living. All these costs are recoverable as part of a personal injuries claim.

Are there time limits for bringing a personal injury claim?

Yes. In Ireland, the individual who sustained an injury (or their representatives) have two years from the date of the accident or the date of knowledge of the injury to initiate legal proceedings. This time limit, known as the 'Statute of Limitations,' is crucial to adhere to, as failing to commence a claim within this period typically results in the loss of the right to seek compensation. It's important for anyone considering a personal injuries claim to be aware of these time constraints to ensure that their legal rights are preserved.

Further questions?

If you have recently sustained a spinal cord injury, or you are a relative of someone who has sustained such an injury, and you have further questions about your entitlement to pursue a personal injuries claim, I would be glad to assist you with free and confidential legal counsel. You can contact me via email at john@mccarthy.ie or visit our website at mccarthy.ie.

Dealing with a spinal injury is a profoundly transformative experience that presents many difficult challenges, both physical and emotional. If you have recently sustained such an injury, you are likely to find yourself confronting not just the immediate physical implications of the injury, but also a complex array of emotional and psychological adjustments, as well as financial hardship.

In the first few months following your injury, you will understandably feel consumed by your medical care and the advice given to you by doctors, nurses, physical therapists, occupational therapists, and other specialists. You are likely to be focused on your future rehabilitation, listening to advice on how to adapt to new physical limitations whilst learning new ways to perform daily tasks.

There is so much to take in that seeking compensation for your injuries may be quite far down the list of your priorities. However, if your injury was sustained due to the negligence of a third party, a time will come where you will want to consider how you can go about taking action against the individual or the organisation that caused your pain and suffering.

At McCarthy + Co Solicitors LLP, I lead our personal injuries legal team, helping individuals and the families of injured individuals to seek compensation for serious injuries they have sustained through no fault of their own.

Recruitment

WE'RE HIRING
COMMUNITY OUTREACH OFFICER

Supporting individuals and their family members living with a spinal cord injury.

- Flexible hours available
- Based in our Dublin Resource Centre
- Hybrid & Flexible working hours available
- Comprehensive Benefit Package

CLOSING DATE: 31ST JANUARY 2024
FURTHER INFORMATION: WWW.SPINALINJURIES.IE

CONTACT US
01-653 2180

Claiming Financial Compensation

By Grace Carroll, McMahon Goldrick Solicitors



Establishing Quantum

There are three categories of reports that your solicitor will obtain for the purpose of building the value of your case;

- 1. Medical reports.** If appropriate, some of these reports may be obtained from your treating doctors e.g. your GP, your neurologist, your rehabilitation consultant etc. These reports are obtained for the purpose of detailing your current condition and your future prognosis from a medical perspective.
- 2. Quantum reports.** These are the reports which your solicitors will use for the purpose of calculating the bulk of the value of your claim for compensation. Several experts will be instructed to assess your current needs, and what your needs will be in the future.

These can include physiotherapists, occupational therapists, care consultants, housing experts, assistive technology experts, vocational assessors, psychologists, rehabilitation consultants etc.

They will make recommendations to help you live a more independent life. E.g. the housing expert advises in relation to the costs of building an accessible home. The care expert advises in relation to the number of private care hours you require. The occupational therapist advises what your equipment needs are. The vocational assessor will ascertain your future loss of earnings.

- 3. Actuarial report.** Lastly, an actuary will review all the quantum reports to calculate the total value of their recommendations.

The costs you incurred to date will also be included. E.g. any costs you incurred making adaptations to your home, and the hours put in by loved ones who have cared for you will be valued.

The solicitors for the Defendant will obtain their own quantum reports.

Concluding a Case

The majority of cases settle outside of court. However, if a case goes to trial, the judge will hear evidence from each party and their expert witnesses.

If you are successful in your claim, then payment will be made to you by the Defendant's insurance company in a personal injury case, and the State Claims Agency in a HSE medical negligence case.

If you are living with a spinal cord injury, and that injury was caused by the negligence of another party, then you may be able to bring a case to receive compensation.

Spinal cord injuries fall under two categories of claims;

- 1. A personal injury claim** (e.g. an injury arising from a work place accident).
- 2. A medical negligence claim** (e.g. an injury arising from a mishandled medical procedure).

Establishing Negligence

Firstly, your solicitor will obtain an expert report to support the argument that the injury arose due to another party's negligence.

E.g. an independent forensic engineer would prepare a report to establish negligence in a road traffic accident, or an independent neurosurgeon would prepare a report to establish medical negligence.

Issuing Proceedings

When an supportive report is obtained, court proceedings will then be issued. Life changing spinal cord injuries are typically issued in the High Court.

When your proceedings have been issued, the Defendant will obtain their own reports which comment on negligence.

Immediate Steps to Take

1. Speak to a solicitor;

Age 18+: You have two years to issue proceedings from the date of your injury (there are some limited exceptions to this). It is crucial that you quickly contact a solicitor who can advise whether or not you might have a claim.

Under age 18: The child's guardian can bring a claim on their behalf at any point in time up until the child's 18th birthday. It is still advisable to speak with a solicitor asap, to ensure that the necessary evidence is preserved.

2. Make a note of the incident;

If you can, you should write down all the details that you can recall. This can be difficult to do after experiencing such a traumatic event, but it will be very helpful for your solicitors. You should include details such as what you were doing on the day of incurring the injury, the timing, who you were with, what medical services you received etc.

Choosing a Specialist Firm of Solicitors

Suffering from a spinal injury can be devastating not only for the injured person, but also for their loved ones. It is common for the injured person to have previously been the main financial provider in their home, and additionally, the once independent person may now be reliant on their family members for their care needs. This places a mental and physical toll on all involved. It is recommended that you engage solicitors who not only have a full understanding of how spinal cord injuries impact a person from a medical perspective, but also how they can impact the family as a whole.

Importantly, due to the fact that recommendations made in the expert reports make up the bulk of the value of the claim, it is crucial that your solicitors know who the leading experts are, so that you can obtain meaningful compensation to help safeguard your future, and live a more independent life.

It is always advised that a catastrophically injured person instructs a specialist firm of solicitors.

If you are thinking of claiming financial compensation and would like legal advice, please contact me on 01 677 00 44 or email grace.carroll@rmcm.ie



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to provide nursing and clinical guidance to people living with spinal cord injury in Ireland

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Essential

Candidates must be NMBI Registered
A minimum of 3 years post qualification experience

Desirable

Experience working with SCI

CLOSING DATE:
31ST JANUARY 2024

For further information log onto: www.spinalinjuries.ie
or contact our Head of Services on 086 8100678





Meet Susan Farrelly, an artist and educator who with Spinal Injuries Ireland has been running Art Workshops in Co. Louth. Susan shares her expertise by teaching painting, observation skills, and leads painting and drawing mixed media workshops through her business, Abbey Art Studios, encouraging others to revel in experimenting with tone, texture, and color.

It was a diagnosis of Cauda Equina Syndrome (CES) in 2014 that brought this love of accessible art into sharp focus. During her rehabilitation in the NRH, Susan used art *“to keep me tethered to the core part of myself that wasn’t changed by CES.”* It kept me company and helped me channel things I couldn’t vocalise into real and tangible expressions.

Sunday afternoons in the NRH, often a quiet time on Our Lady’s Ward, were spent listening to radio plays and journaling, and this is where Susan found true comfort in the process. *“It was helping me to record, retain restock.”*



When something as impactful as a spinal cord injury happens, it challenges a person’s identity, and at the core of Susan’s art practice is this subject. *“Many people find it difficult to sit with themselves after an injury, both in a psychological and physical way, finding options in the tools that we use to make it physically easy to use.”*

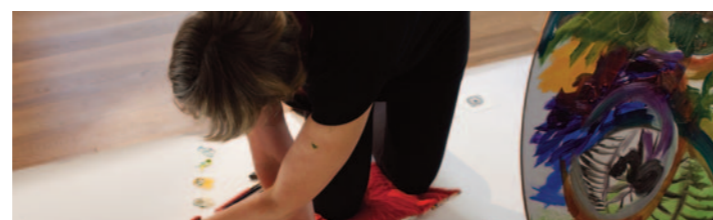
It was during this time that Susan first encountered SII and connected with other people who live with an SCI. *“The value of Peer Support for me was having a baseline of understanding and acceptance. I didn’t have to explain anything,” and Susan found support in “spending time with like-minded individuals who empathize and understand the challenges.”*

“Creating moments for people that they feel valued, invest holistically in yourself. SII was very good at facilitating that nurturing.”

As Susan was discovering how to manage her own physical and mental energy, she brought to her workshops a focus on how people need to have different levels of engagement depending on their abilities and how important it is *“for people to discover themselves at their own pace...”*

“The act of creating art—whether it’s ‘anything’ or simply filling a blank page with color—is quietly empowering. Susan observes this empowerment in action during her art classes, noting how participants engage with the process: ‘seeing people rip up pieces of paper, experimenting with color, having a book—it’s a deeply reflective journey. They can keep adding to it, creating a journal of rehabilitation; it’s all those small things.’”

While the world was just beginning to embrace online platforms during the 2020 lockdown, Susan had already piloted an online studio space and refined the format of art workshops that she knew worked. One of the participants noted how supportive the workshops were, *“Expressing myself in the class helped me be me, not me with a spinal injury.”*



In 2023, recognizing the limitations for some individuals to attend in person, Susan, in partnership with SII, pursued another HSE National Lottery Grant. Together, they offered participants a choice—either engage online or attend in person. Opting for flexibility, the majority chose the online option, where Susan offered the added convenience of access to recorded classes for playback. The distribution of art packs by mail emerged as more than a logistical solution, transforming into a tangible form of accessibility, the art packs becoming *“a form of accessibility in itself.”*

Through her empathy, ability, skill, and genuine interest in others, Susan, without a doubt, is a true catalyst for enriching the lives of those who take part in her workshops, adding a touch of genuine positivity and inspiration to every interaction.

In partnership with Spinal Injuries Ireland, Abbey Art Studios is currently engaged in an online art program supported by the HSE’s National Lottery Fund. The upcoming ReThink-funded initiative, “SpinalArt,” is scheduled for launch in January 2024 with the aim of bringing the enriching practice of art to individuals living with spinal cord injuries across Ireland. For further information, see overleaf or visit our website at www.spinalinjuries.ie.



If you have thought about doing art but can’t get yourself to an art class, our online workshops might be the thing for you! You don’t need any prior experience in art making at all.

We are thrilled to announce **SpinalArt**, a major programme of hybrid art workshop through 2024 funded through the ReThink Ireland Fund. SpinalArt is a joint collaboration between SII and Abbey Art Studios.

Beginning in February, **SpinalArt** will be an opportunity for members of the Spinal Injuries Ireland community to engage online and to immerse themselves in ideas and see their world in new ways through art. This programme continues and expands the workshop series previously run in the Northeast of the country.

“I really enjoyed the art class. It was a space to take me out of my headspace living with pain all the time, it was a great distraction”. Jackie, Kildare

The Programme

When you sign up for the **SpinalArt** series, you will receive guidance from artists, engage in different styles of visual art and join a community of learners unlike any other. The workshops are live online and also recorded so you can complete the course at your own pace, enabling you to balance your creative pursuits with other parts of your life. By logging onto our **SpinalArt** Web portal, you will have access to additional resources to give you further inspiration and support. In addition, the **SpinalArt** team will provide 1-1 support as well as in person workshops nationwide. Whether you are an inpatient at the NRH or living in the community everyone is welcome to participate.

“The class was very enjoyable, relaxing and a welcome distraction from everyday life. Susan was a great laugh, we learnt lots without evening knowing it!”
Carol, Limerick

How it works

Once you have completed the Tester session and decide this is for you, you can sign up for the Level 1 workshop series which begins in March 2023. Once you have signed up to Level 1, we will send to your home, the SpinalArt pack. The **SpinalArt** pack contains everything you need, apart from a jar of water and some cloth.

Level 1 series workshops is 6 weeks long. Once you have completed Level 1 you can continue through Levels 2 and 3.

All workshops are free, but places are limited. Applications are open to members of the Spinal Injuries Ireland community.



Like to know more? Details of dates and times will be released in early January. In the meantime, if you want to know more, contact us on art@spinalinjuries.ie or contact one of the Services Team on 01 6532180.



Despite the inclement weather, our fantastic team of volunteers, took to the sea. Our weekly voyages up and down the Liffey and around Dalkey Island proved so popular with some of our NRH patients that some people managed a second trip! There was plenty of singing and laughing this year! Sue, Glenn, Eugene, Frank, Philip, Eoghan, Dave and Keith continue to support the programme with their care, kindness and expertise, supporting Lucy and the SII Team in making the trips fun for everyone!



The SII bus got a new look:

Demand for tickets to games and concerts continued through 2023, and the team organised tickets to many major sporting events and concerts for some service users and family members in 2023! Some highlights included Ireland vs England Matches, Tickets to Bloom, Emerald Park, the Zoo, and Womens Rugby Matches, Ireland Rugby Matches and Concert Tickets nationwide.



A Splash of Fun for the SII Community



SII and Ireland's wakeboarding trailblazer, David O'Caoimh, kicked off their collaboration with a wakeboarding event in late August at Wake N Ski in Co. Meath. With Eamon Prunty, local legend and World Champion disabled waterskiier, in tow, Dave gave hands-on guidance to four SII community members—Philly, Jack, Hugo, and Chloe. The result? A day filled with thrills and spills, leaving everyone ready for more.

What is Wakeboarding?

Dave describes wakeboarding as a combination of snowboarding and waterskiing, a captivating experience akin to "snowboarding on water." The sport involves riding a board, similar in size to a snowboard, and performing stunts that blend the skills of both snowboarding and waterskiing.

Where do you do Wakeboarding?

While traditional wakeboarding typically takes place behind a boat, there's a new wave of excitement in the form of 'WakeParks.' These are emerging around the country. Dave likens these parks to the snowparks of snowboarding, tailored for wakeboarding. Instead of a boat, a pylon system, powered by an electric motor, tows wakeboarders up and down through the water. While Ireland boasts two WakeParks, the sport has gained tremendous popularity in other European countries, with Germany leading the pack with over 80 WakeParks.

What equipment is used?

When discussing the essential gear for wakeboarding, Dave simplifies it as "a board, bindings (the shoes), a life jacket, and a rope." While the sport traditionally took place behind boats, the emergence of WakeParks has expanded its accessibility. Despite Ireland's colder climate, which might put some people off, wakeboarding is flourishing, bolstered by facilities such as Wake N Ski in Meath and Ballyhass WakePark in Cork.

Is Wakeboarding not really physically challenging?!

Contrary to the perception of wakeboarding as a physically demanding sport, Dave dispels the myth, stating, "No!! Everyone thinks it's more physical than it is." While acknowledging the need for a certain level of physicality, Dave notes that teaching younger children is often easier than teaching adults, as children tend to focus more on technique than sheer power.

What inspired Dave to get involved with the Spinal Injuries Ireland team?

The idea to collaborate with Spinal Injuries Ireland (SII) stemmed from various factors in Dave's life. Having been part of the extreme sports community, he has met individuals with spinal injuries and organised fundraisers for them. His involvement with Wake N Ski and meeting Eamon Prunty further fuelled the desire to connect with SII. Dave recalls, "Eamon knew about a friend of mine who I used to Skateboard with who unfortunately suffered a spinal injury 7 years ago. Eamon is quite the legend and is very keen to see more wheelchair users out on the water. He urged me to invite my friend Scott out, and we managed to put a huge smile on Scott's face. That's where the idea to get in touch with SII came from."



Will there be more SII Wakeboarding events organised?

Inspired by this success, plans are already in motion to organise more wakeboarding events for the SII community in 2024, aiming to share the thrill of wakeboarding with an even broader audience. Dave's commitment to expanding the horizons of wakeboarding and making it an inclusive experience underscores the transformative power of sports that bring joy and adventure to people of all abilities.

This month, our InFocus shines a light on innovative products and designs crafted for accessibility. From adaptive kettles simplifying daily routines to the unique offerings of Adaptafashion, discover brands tailored for those with limited abilities. We look at what small companies are doing to come up with practical solutions that blend functionality and style, making daily tasks more straightforward.

Wild Threads: Unveiling Clothing Solutions Crafted in County Donegal

Navigating the world of fashion can pose challenges for individuals with spinal cord injuries, given the hurdles presented by inaccessible retail stores and limited online options. When SII received positive feedback from service users about Adaptafashion, a distinctive Irish-owned business based in Donegal, we decided to explore further.

Sarah Timoney, with over a decade of experience in the health sector specializing in aged care and disability in both Ireland and Australia, serves as the driving force behind Adaptafashion. Faced with the persistent challenges individuals encounter in clothing choices, Sarah embarked on research to address the limited options available. This journey culminated in the creation of Adaptafashion, a brand dedicated to offering stylish and affordable clothing solutions.

Adaptafashion's designs prioritise functionality over mere aesthetics, featuring thoughtful modifications and fastening closures to simplify the dressing and undressing process. Specifically catering to wheelchair users, their drop-front trousers include practical features like extra fabric, elasticated backs, and an easy-to-use Velcro opening on either side. The trousers also offer a detachable elastic waistband for added comfort around the stomach area, catering to various needs such as Stoma and Catheter care.

Although their primary focus is on providing a range of off-the-shelf clothing options, Adaptafashion offers the flexibility to tailor designs to individual requirements upon request, this approach allows for personalisation when needed, ensuring a versatile and inclusive selection for a diverse range of customers.

For those interested in a wardrobe that seamlessly blends style with accessibility, Adaptafashion is an option worth exploring. To check out their offerings and learn more, visit their website at www.adaptafashion.ie or email Sarah directly at sarah@adaptafashion.ie.

Adaptafashion is extending a discount to SII service users. Simply use the code: SPINALINJURIES when placing an order to enjoy a €5 discount.

Revolutionising the Daily Brew: Independence with the Uccello Kettle

The Uccello Kettle is a thoughtfully designed kettle, created to bring added ease to daily life, particularly for those facing challenges with strength, mobility, dexterity, and/or visibility. More than just a kitchen tool, this kettle acts as a catalyst for newfound autonomy.

With its easy-to-use features and a tilt-to-pour action, the Uccello Kettle simplifies the challenges often found with traditional kettles. This thoughtful design streamlines the daily tea and coffee routine, providing a straightforward solution for anyone who finds pouring from a kettle a bit tricky.

Firsthand accounts from users emphasise the positive impact of the Uccello Kettle. From its simple and safe design to its contribution to autonomy, we have received some great feedback from our service users. Gemma Willis, SII Peer Outreach Officer told us,

"It's an absolutely fantastic kettle that I would highly recommend to anyone. It's so safe and simple to use that it doesn't matter what your disability is—it's so easy to use."

Exclusive to Spinal Injuries Ireland, a discount code is available: "SpinalInjuriesIreland" offers a 10% discount, bringing the Uccello Kettle from €79.99 to €72.00.

With free delivery, four available colours, and a 2-year warranty guarantee, it's not just a purchase; it's an exploration of convenience and accessibility.

More info at: www.uccelldesigns.ie or through DID Electric Stores nationwide



Our amazing peer volunteers support SII and our activities and events in so many ways. Some visit the NRH spinal ward for the monthly pizza evenings, while others join us for our patient and peer lunches at the Resource Centre. They're not just here for a good food! They're sharing their experience of the lived experience with inpatients and families, making a real difference.

These volunteers are the backbone of our quarterly Zoom catch-ups, too. In 2023 we ran 20 Wednesday evening Zooms catering for people with different types of mobility. It's a chance for us to chat about the tough stuff, get some down-to-earth advice, and feel a bit less alone. These online group sessions provide a safe space for people to discuss topics they find challenging and get practical advice and answers from those who understand. People have also feedback to us that the simple action of not feeling alone is a huge boost.

We've covered everything from work and pacing to talking with family about spinal cord injuries, travel, equipment, fatigue, and dealing with pain in recent sessions. Looking ahead to 2024, you'll find all the Zoom catch-up details on our website's events page.

For those who would like to lend a helping hand and make a difference, peer volunteering is a wonderful

avenue of support. Contact Hilary at 085 8584300 for more details on how you can get involved. We particularly welcome individuals with firsthand experience of SCI and family members who can provide valuable support to those whose loved ones are navigating the challenges of recent injuries. Peer Volunteer Training is provisionally scheduled for February 2024.

Dates for our New Year Catch-ups will be posted in early January 2024. Keep an eye on your inbox; we'll send you an email with registration information a week before your meeting.

In the meantime, if you want to get in touch to us to chat about peer support please contact Hilary at the office on 01-6532180 or by email at: Hilary@spinalinjuries.ie

"I think it's very important that people at the beginning of their injuries see people like us and think, 'Right ok, life does go on and I can function'. We can be productive, we can be financially independent, we can travel the world, do sports and we can go out and have a social life. That's why peer mentoring is so important for patients and people living with spinal cord injuries."

- Karen, Peer Volunteer



JOIN US FOR THE CARIBBEAN ADVENTURE OF A LIFETIME



Following the success of our first two SII Tall Ships Challenges back in 2019 and again in 2022, which were in Cork and Poole respectively, we decided the only way to improve on the voyages was to head for warmer climes! 2023 saw our first venture to the Caribbean, and it really was the adventure of a lifetime.

Spinal Injuries Ireland commissioned the SV Tenacious Tall Ship and led a crew of 40 people of all abilities on the voyage. Over a three day period, we sailed from the stunning location of Falmouth Harbour in Antigua, down past the volcano island of Montserrat, to the island of Guadeloupe. There, we disembarked in the picture perfect town of Deshaies, famed for hosting the TV series Death in Paradise, where we went swimming with sea turtles and sampled the local cuisine.

We boarded the ship after a beautiful day on the beach and spent the night at anchor off the island. The following day, we had a swim off the side of the ship before raising anchor and setting off for Antigua and our flight back home.

All in all we spent 7 nights on board the ship. The days were filled with a variety of duties – hauling and flaking the ropes, setting the sails, mess duty and even

swabbing the decks! Tiring but rewarding work for all the crew. But our nights were filled with music and stars as we soaked up the warm, tranquil Caribbean atmosphere.

We can't wait to bring another crew to the Caribbean to share in the experience.

Our crew shall be made up of 8 people who use wheelchairs, their personal assistants, and 24 further people of all backgrounds and abilities. No sailing experience is required; all that is needed is determination. There are no passengers on this Tall Ship though. Every person has a role, every person is an equal member of the crew, and every person contributes to the success of this voyage as part of a powerful team. If you join the crew you will be on shift, on duty and part of the team!

Dates: 11th to the 19th of February 2024.

If you'd like to find out more, please contact Phil on 0873821182 or phil@spinalinjuries.ie

THE STAR FUNDRAISER WITH THE GIFT OF THE GAB



If you've gone shopping in a Dublin supermarket on a Thursday, Friday or Saturday this year, chances are that you might have bumped into our star fundraiser, Robert Kenny. Rob runs our bucket collection fundraisers for us and has been a man on a mission the whole year long.

Rob is Spinal Injuries Ireland's longest serving employee, having been with the organisation for over 20 years now at this stage. But this year, Rob has really gone above and beyond. At the start of the year he collared the Head of Fundraising and said he wanted to run a fundraising campaign that was a lot more ambitious than any he had ever done before. He wanted to single-handedly try and raise over €30,000 for people with spinal cord injuries by running bucket collections in supermarkets throughout the year. This was an absolutely huge undertaking but it'd take more than that to put Rob off. He called as many supermarkets as he could find and booked in collection dates for the entire year.

If you meet Rob, he will always have a kind word or a joke to share, and he is constantly looking on the bright side of life. He has a way with people - as he would say himself his superpower is the gift of the gab! Rob's success this year is testament to that. Rob didn't just beat his target of €30,000, he absolutely smashed it! By the end of November, he had raised over €50,000 for people who use Spinal Injuries Ireland's services! We have been completely blown away by this – it is a phenomenal achievement. Rain,

hail or shine, Rob has been there, fundraising in supermarkets and shopping centres all over Dublin. With an average donation of around the €3 mark, this means Rob has been chatting with over 17,000 people around Dublin throughout the year, asking for their support and all the while representing Spinal Injuries Ireland in such a friendly and overall brilliant manner.

Rob also drove the modernisation of our bucket collection fundraising, introducing a new "Tap & Go" donation option, which has brought in over €10,000 in donations through this channel alone. We are so grateful to each and every person who made a donation to Spinal Injuries Ireland this year, and to Rob for being such a driving force in raising money for those who need it most.

It also has to be mentioned, Rob has been brilliantly aided by his lovely personal assistant Aga throughout the year too. When Rob comes back into the Head Office with his buckets full of coins, Aga has diligently and patiently counted every last penny with Rob, ensuring that every last cent is accounted for. Thank you, Aga!

And Rob's not finished yet. He has plans to expand! Rob is actively looking for volunteers who would like to join him on this venture by running their own bucket collections for Spinal Injuries Ireland around the country. If you are interested in volunteering some time to do this, please get in touch with either Rob or the Head of Fundraising Phil O'Kelly on 01 653 2180. We'd love to have you on board!



FESTIVE DELIGHTS: A CULINARY JOURNEY OF SWEET AND SAVOURY FLAVOURS

Explore a festive culinary delight from Chef Myles O'Brien of The Tavern Bar & Restaurant in Murrisk, Co. Mayo, situated at the foothills of Croagh Patrick with stunning views of Clew Bay. Despite navigating rehabilitation at the NRH following a motorcycle accident this year, Myles took a moment from his schedule to generously share his Venison Bourguignon recipe, offering a taste of the holiday season. Join us in savouring the flavours and expertise of a seasoned chef, making this recipe a warm addition to your festive celebrations



Tavern Venison Bourguignon

Ingredients

- 1.6kg diced venison haunch cut into large chunks
- 3 bay leaves
- small bunch thyme
- 2 bottles cheap red wine
- 2 tbsp oil
- 3 large or 6 normal carrots cut into large chunks
- 2 onions roughly chopped
- 3 tbsp plain flour
- 1 tbsp tomato purée
- 1 teaspoon smoked Paprika
- To serve
- small knob butter
- 300g bacon lardons
- 500g pearl onions or small shallots, peeled
- 400g mushrooms halved
- chopped fresh parsley

Method

Put 1.6kg venison chunks into a large bowl with 3 bay leaves, a small bunch of thyme, 2 bottles of red wine, paprika and some pepper, then cover and leave in the fridge overnight.

Heat the oven to 200C/180C fan/gas 6.

Place a colander over another large bowl and strain the marinated meat, keeping the wine.

Heat 1 tbsp oil in a large frying pan, then brown the meat in batches, transferring to a plate once browned. When all the meat is browned, pour a little wine into the now-empty frying pan and bubble to release any caramelised bits from the pan.

Heat 1 tbsp oil in a large casserole and fry 3 large or 6 normal carrots, cut into large chunks, and 2 roughly chopped onions until they start to colour. Stir in 3 tbsp plain flour for 1 min, then add 1 tbsp tomato purée.

Add the venison and any juices, the wine from the frying pan and the rest of the wine and herbs. Season and bring to a simmer. Give everything a good stir, then cover.

Transfer to the oven and bake for 2 hrs until the meat is really tender. Cool. Will freeze for up to 3 months.

To serve, defrost completely overnight in the fridge if frozen, then place on a low heat to warm through.

Meanwhile, heat a small knob of butter in a frying pan and add 300g bacon lardons and 500g peeled pearl onions or small shallots. Sizzle for about 10 mins until the bacon starts to crisp and the onions soften and colour.

Add 400g halved mushrooms and fry for another 5 mins, then stir everything into the stew and heat for 10 mins more. Serve sprinkled with chopped parsley.

Caramel Brownies

Satisfy your sweet cravings with the delightful creations of Pastry Chef Gemma Willis. Since her spinal cord injury in 2016, Gemma has continued to impress with her cakes and desserts.

Known for crafting wedding cakes and co-owning a greeting card business, Gemma also serves as a Peer Outreach Officer with Spinal Injuries Ireland.

Dive into the rich flavors and culinary artistry as Gemma generously shares her mouthwatering Caramel Brownie recipe. This sweet treat is a reflection of Gemma's passion for creating delicious moments—perfect for adding a touch of sweetness to any occasion.



Method

Preheat oven to 160 degrees

Grease and line a 23cm tin with baking paper

Melt the butter and the two types of chocolate in a bowl over a simmering pot of water or microwave in short bursts, set aside

Pour 175g of the caramel into a bowl with salt and mix, set a side

Place the remaining caramel in a large bowl with the sugar and 4 eggs and beat with a mixer. Pour it into the melted chocolate

In a separate bowl sift the flour and cocoa powder together

Pour the flour into the melted chocolate mixture and combine until smooth

Pour half of the chocolate mix into the tin

Drizzle half of the caramel mixture over the chocolate mix with a spoon, pouring the remaining chocolate mixture on top, drizzle the remaining caramel on top, using a skewer swirl the caramel through the brownie mixture

For a gooey brownie, bake for 19-20mins (it will jiggle when you shake)

Allow to cool completely before cutting for a perfect square

Sit back and enjoy

Ingredients

- 200g Butter
- 379g/can of Caramel
- 50g Cocoa Powder
- 100g Dark Chocolate
- 4 Eggs
- 200g Light Brown Sugar
- 100g Milk Chocolate
- 1tsp Salt
- 130g Plain Flour



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