



CARE TO COMFORT

Care to Comfort was born from the idea of providing a service that not only allowed people to sleep in luxurious comfort in their own homes but to do so with as much ease and independence as possible.

Founded in 2011 by two lifelong friends, Yvonne Cassidy and Martin Deasy, Care to Comfort was established with the shared goal of reaching as many people as possible who were currently using or searching for a specialised bed for their home. They specifically wanted to give their customers the chance to see that there were more options available than a standard hospital bed and that having a bed that provides them with additional support didn't need to be at the cost of design and comfort. Yvonne and Martin are especially proud that their beds provide this support without the clinical coldness of their beds feeling like a piece of medical equipment.

After extensive individual careers, Yvonne, and Martin, took their combined experience of being in customer facing industries and strove to create a new company

that did more than provide a product. They recognised the importance of the customer experience and put this at the centre of the ethos of their company. They were adamant that their customers found the experience of buying one of their beds as straightforward and seamless as possible, it wasn't just their beds they wanted the customer to feel supported by but also by the team at Care to Comfort too.

Originally, Yvonne and Martin had envisioned their market to be primarily the elderly. However, as the company has grown, so too has their customer base. Many of their customers have conditions such as Parkinson's, MS, Motor Neuron, and spinal injuries. Care to Comfort's electric adjustable beds all have the function of 'head-raising' and 'feet-raising', as standard, and they also offer the extra function of 'vertical-lift' which in the situation where their clients need attention in the bed, the bed base is 'raised vertically', so the carer (or carers) do not need to bend and strain their backs to provide assistance.

In an effort to broaden the service they provide, Care to Comfort undertook considerable research and obtained detailed customer feedback, and then in 2019, they created and launched its 'Split Bed'. This range of dual control; electric adjustable beds look like a regular bed, but it has the additional function of a clasp that opens on the foot-board which allows the bed to split (or separate). Along with the vertical-lift function, this feature allows carer's access to both sides of one half of the bed. Once the carer's have finished their work, the bed can be very easily put back into its original look, allowing the person requiring assistance and their partner the comfort to sleep side by side in a unified bed.

In the 13 years since the company was established, Care to Comfort has continued to grow to meet the needs of their customers and will continue to do so into the future. Yvonne and Martin recognise that there are unique and individual requirements for each of their customers and like their beds, they will adapt to ensure they provide this to the highest standard possible. To date Care to Comfort have won many awards for our services and products, and are very proud of their 5 star reviews.

Contact details.
www.caretocomfort.ie

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yvonne@caretocomfort.ie

Martin Deasy 0864112270
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WELCOME

Spinal Injuries Ireland is 30 years old, surviving sometimes against the odds but at all times with the common purpose of supporting people with a spinal cord injury in Ireland. Thank you to all who have contributed to the organisation and getting SII to where we are today... as an evidence based innovative organisation based in a State of the Art Resource Centre on Pottery Road behind the NRH.

It was a small group of former patients along with Sr Marie (Aileen) McCarthy who were instrumental in setting up which was initially an Action Group and then became a company in 1994. In this publication we hear from people who were involved in the early days and some who still are!

30 years of support and encouragement from our volunteers including our peers, activities, fundraising and particularly our Board of Directors who have directed the organisation to where we are today.

To all the staff who have contributed over the years to the formation of SII and particularly to our colleagues and friends in the NRH who we are happy to collaborate with.

To all our donors and supporters... we could not have got here without you. To the HSE who provide 40% of our funding annually which gives us the foundation to then fundraise almost €1 million annually... financial security is essential for the sustainability of our small charity.

And to our Service users who on a daily basis gives everyone in the organisation the motivation to deliver the best services and supports. We rely on you to keep us informed of the issues that impact you and what we can do to improve them. On this our 30th year we are pleased to announce that we are hosting a Spinal Cord Injury conference in the RDS Dublin on 2nd November and we hope to see as many of you there as possible

Here is to the next 30 years

Best Wishes

John Twomey, Chairman

Fiona Bolger, CEO

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Care to Comfort are also sole agents in Ireland for Rotobed

RotoBed® aims to deliver the world's best rotating bed. With the care bed RotoBed®Free and the newly developed RotoBed®Home for users in their own homes, it takes less than a minute for the user to get from lying down to standing up. For the user, this means a daily life with less pain, higher quality of life and more freedom and dignity. The nursing staff of citizens with a RotoBed® will also achieve a better working environment, less stressful work positions and more efficient transfers. The new generation of rotative beds will go to a height as low as 32 cm above the floor – and holding a maximum user weight of 190 kg they are suitable for both overweight and tall or small users. Citizens suffering from conditions such as dementia, Parkinson's and sclerosis may also benefit from a RotoBed®

MEDICAL CARD UPDATE



As part of our continuous advocacy programme regarding Medical Cards for people with a spinal cord injury, our CEO Fiona Bolger met with Shaun Flanagan, HSE Assistant National Director Primary Care Reimbursement Service (PCRS), who has oversight of the medical card division. He provided the following information on medical cards.

HSE PCRS - Background

In 2011 The HSE centralised medical cards under the remit of the PCRS. In 2014, the HSE published the "Report of the Expert Panel on Medical Need for Medical Card Eligibility," more commonly known as the Keane Report. This report was commissioned by the Irish government to review the criteria used to assess eligibility for medical cards in Ireland. The panel was chaired by Dr Frank Keane, a former President of the Royal College of Physicians of Ireland.

The main recommendation of the Keane Report was in favour of means testing as the primary method for determining eligibility for medical cards. Means testing involves assessing an individual's financial situation, such as income and assets, to determine their eligibility for benefits or services.

The report recommended that medical card eligibility should primarily be based on a person's means, with medical need being a secondary consideration. This was a departure from the previous system, which relied heavily on assessing medical need without considering means.

Their rationale behind the recommendation for means testing was to ensure that medical cards are targeted at those who need them most, while also promoting fairness and sustainability in the allocation of healthcare resources. By focusing on means, the government could potentially allocate resources more efficiently and effectively, providing support to those who are most in need of financial assistance for healthcare costs.

Following the publication of the Keane Report, there were discussions and debates within the government and the wider public about implementing its recommendations.

It's worth noting that while means testing was recommended as the primary method for determining medical card eligibility, the report also emphasised the importance of flexibility and discretion in the assessment process to ensure that individual circumstances are taken into account. Discretion is used in a lot of cases when deciding on whether a person with a spinal cord injury needs a medical card.

Initial Emergency Cards during acute and rehabilitation phases

All patients will receive an emergency card for the first 6 months. They will be written to at 3 months to complete a means test assessment, but often people are still in hospital and do not have the ability to find all their documentation at this early stage. The most important thing is for all applicants to communicate with the PCRS so they can allocate and extend cards. Do not ignore correspondence from the HSE PCRS.

Discretionary Medical cards

Discretionary cards are rarely not renewed. There is political support for people to hold on to discretionary cards once they are issued with them. In most cases, cards are automatically renewed. If it is revoked it tends to be for another reason for example, DSW/Revenue. Otherwise it will only be reviewed every three years. If your card has been reviewed and revoked, please ensure you have filled out a BIQ medical support form. If you do not have one you can get one from Spinal Injuries Ireland at info@spinalinjuries.ie

All schemes are now under PCRS, LTI, Medical Cards, DPS, Europe travel Card, GP Visit. They will always try to find a solution for an applicant.

If you have any concerns or questions relating to the above information, please contact us on info@spinalinjuries.ie or call us on 01-653 2180.

You can contact HSE PCRS Medical Card Application Form section at:

Locall: 0818 224 478

Email: pcrs.applications@hse.ie

CAUDA EQUINA AWARENESS CAMPAIGN



Spinal Injuries Ireland (SII) is acutely aware of the impact Cauda Equina Syndrome (CES) can have on people's lives. In Spring of this year, we created a campaign to raise awareness, as the effects of CES can often be prevented if caught early.

Cauda Equina Syndrome (CES) is a rare but serious condition that affects the bundle of nerves at the lower end of the spinal cord. These nerves, called the cauda equina, help control your bladder and bowel function and enable you to move your legs and feet. CES happens when these nerves are compressed or damaged, often due to a herniated disc, injury, or tumour. Symptoms can include severe back pain, numbness in the legs or feet, trouble walking, and issues with bladder or bowel control. If you experience any of these symptoms, it's important to seek medical help right away to avoid permanent damage.

Thanks to the recent campaign to raise awareness of CES, the services team have seen a noticeable increase in the number of enquiries coming to us. This growing interest shows that our campaign is reaching and

engaging the public, healthcare professionals, and those directly affected by CES.

Our approach was multi-platform, covering Meta (Facebook), Instagram, TikTok, and LinkedIn. The campaign kicked off with a video and awareness push on Meta aimed at both medical professionals and the general public. This helped us build audiences for remarketing in later stages of the campaign. We reached over half a million people and generated almost 20,000 link clicks from Meta advertising.

We also took our campaign to TikTok for the first time! Our video campaign on the platform generated over 27,500 views of 6 seconds or more, offering an engaging space for our messaging.

On LinkedIn, we achieved almost 9,500 video views.

Altogether, our campaign reached a whopping 715,344 people across all channels and resulted in 272,488 video views and 23,185 link clicks.

These results reflect a significant impact in spreading awareness about CES and encouraging active engagement. This campaign lays the groundwork for our ongoing efforts to educate and inform the public and healthcare professionals about the challenges of living with CES.

With grateful thanks to Coloplast for supporting the Cauda Equina Awareness Campaign.

For further information, contact one of the services team on: (01) 653 2180 or by emailing us at info@spinalinjuries.ie

SAVE THE DATE!

Annual Conference Sponsored by Coloplast



Saturday 2nd November 2024



STEPHANIE WATSON

Operations & Compliance Manager



Originally coming from the airlines, I knew only too well the challenges wheelchair users struggled with around boarding and disembarking, something I previously took for granted growing up. I knew then, I wanted to work in Healthcare. I have over 20 years' experience working in Healthcare in both public and private Dublin Hospitals and Primary Care, with roles in Administration, Project Management and Operations.

While working full time, I completed an MSc in Leadership & Healthcare Management with the Royal College of Surgeons juggling bringing up my 2 primary school going boys now teenagers. A challenge I will never forget yet so worthwhile!

From April 2023, Mary Dunne the current Operations Manager began the handover of her role with me prior to her retirement. I knew instantly I had big shoes to fill! Mary took me through the day to day operations and it was a pleasure to work alongside Mary and learn from her expertise before she retired last June.

I am thoroughly enjoying my role and continue to strive working towards the SII Mission and values, all the while ensuring that all people who have spinal cord injury have access to the key supports and services and can fully participate in the social, economic and cultural life of their community, as far as they are able.

I joined Spinal Injuries Ireland in April 2023. I am delighted and very privileged to be part of this fantastic team and volunteers, who work tirelessly supporting people with a spinal cord injury, their families and carers. I have learnt so much over the last year, especially the challenges people with a SCI face on a daily basis. I was astonished to learn that 2-3 people each week suffer a spinal cord injury and it can happen to anyone at any time.

Casa Croí Accessible Villa with Pool Hoist

The wheelchair-accessible villa is fitted with air conditioning, ceiling fans and the master bedroom is en suite with a roll in shower. A self-propelled shower chair is also provided. All doors within the villa have been widened to 90cm width for ease of movement throughout the rooms. There is an internal hallway that leads into the bedrooms of 87cm. The villa features secure private parking and the tiled fully enclosed garden features local plants and trees.

The villa can sleep up to 7 people within the three bedrooms.

There is also a single sofa bed available. A travel cot is also available upon request.

The swimming pool is easily accessed via an easy-to-use pool hoist and there is ample room beside the pool to sunbathe. There is also a large solarium upstairs in the villa that provides additional room for sun worshippers. The dining area has a comfortable table and chairs for your al fresco dining.

The villa has been designed for the needs of the owners who both have a spinal injury. Please email or phone to discuss your own access requirements.

<https://www.villawheelchairaccessible.com/>



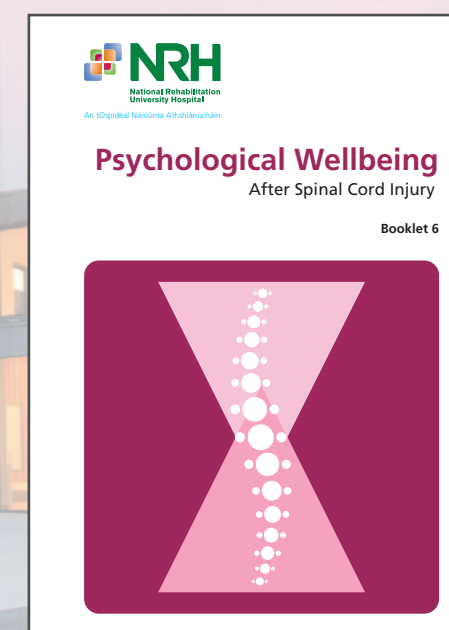
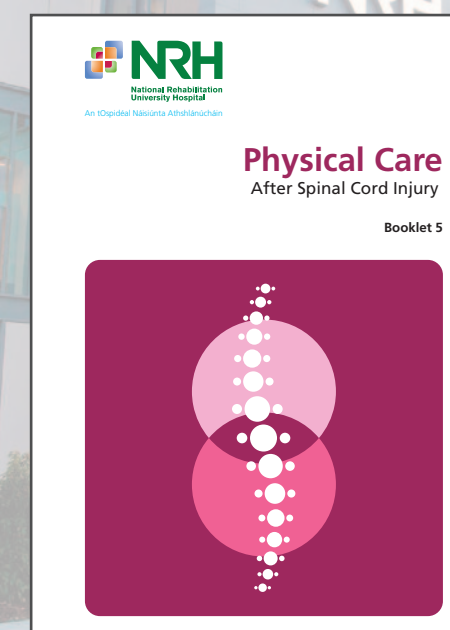
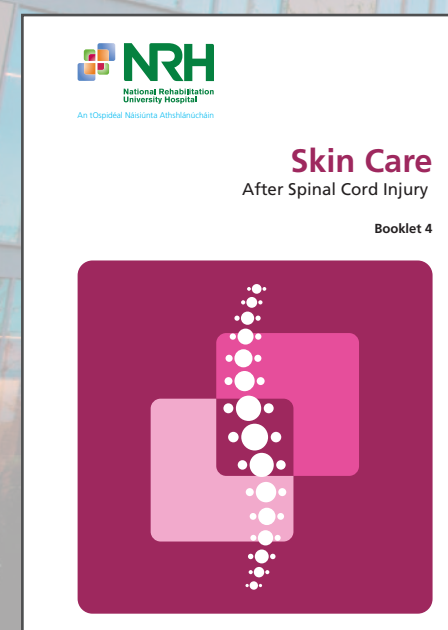
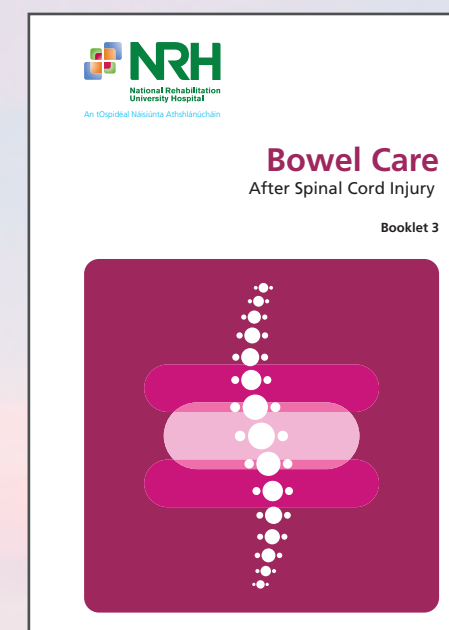
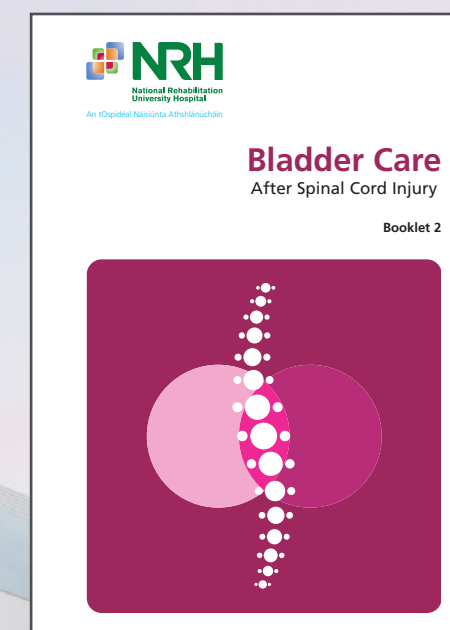
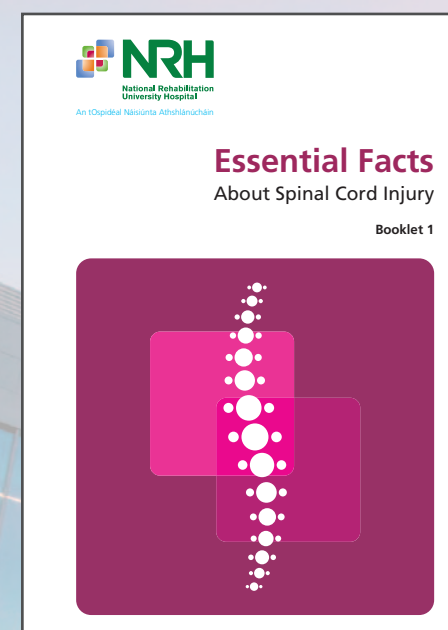
NRH EDUCATIONAL BOOKLETS AND VIDEOS

SII is delighted to fund the filming of the NRH clinicians behind the recent series of education leaflets and videos developed by the Spinal Cord System of Care (SCSC) Team in the NRH. The videos are available to watch on the SII YouTube Channel or through our website: www.spinalinjuries.ie. <https://spinalinjuries.ie/resource/nrh-education-videos/>

These booklets provide information so that you can understand as much as possible about your spinal cord injury and helps you to learn, or re-learn, everyday living skills so you can achieve the safest possible level of independence.

You can contact SII if you would like a printed copy or access to the videos Email: info@spinalinjuries.ie or Tel: 01-653 2180

Essential Facts



THE HOSPITAL SATURDAY FUND GRANTS

Spinal Injuries Ireland administers various individual grant aid to people living with SCI in Ireland from a variety of different grant agencies. A significant portion of our grant aid given to individuals comes from The Hospital Saturday Fund (HSF), a UK charity that was founded in 1873 by pioneers in social and philanthropic work to help people to afford medical care.



In 2024, The Hospital Saturday Fund will provide €2.5million in donations and grants to medical charities, hospices and hospitals across Ireland as well as Malta and the UK. Assistance is also given to individuals whose illness or disability has caused financial difficulties.

All grants submitted to The Hospital Saturday Fund are administered by the Spinal Injuries Ireland's Outreach Officers.

WHAT WE CAN GIVE

Spinal Injuries Ireland, through the The Hospital Saturday Fund, will consider the giving of partial or full grants to individuals for the following:

Specialised Mobility Equipment (excluding for sporting purposes): Wheelchairs, Powerpacks for wheelchairs, Mobility Scooters, Car adaptations Medical Appliances and Aids: Hearing Aids, Nebulisers, Specialist Vision Aids, Support Dogs Specialised Computer Equipment (excluding smartphones) for medical reasons only Therapeutic Equipment: Orthopaedic beds, Mattresses or pillows, Riser/recliners chairs, Lift hoist/aids Therapeutic Treatment: Physiotherapy, Hydrotherapy, Acupuncture, Speech therapy, Osteopathy, Chiropractic

treatment, Reflexology, Massage therapy, Aromatherapy, Psychotherapy Home Adaptations: Walk in showers, Accessibility adaptation to bathrooms, Access ramps, Non-slip flooring, Stair lifts, Dropped kerbs to allow parking for medical needs.

The maximum amount that can be applied for is €3,000.

Please note: We are able to make a grant to an individual no more than once per calendar year. Grant decisions can take between 12-14 weeks from the closing date.

If successful, payment will be made to the supplier of the goods/services or the organisation supporting the application (but NOT the individual requiring assistance.)

A quotation from the supplier or service provider must be included with the application. We do not accept links to the supplier website, but a screenshot including the price is acceptable.

Next grant application closing Dates: 10th July and 23rd September 2024.

For further information, contact one of the services team on: (01) 653 2180 or by emailing us at info@spinalinjuries.ie

ACTIVITIES 2024



Activities Programmeme - Gaming

Gaming has become a major part of many people's lives, particularly for younger generations, and the spinal cord injury (SCI) community has enthusiastically embraced this trend. At Spinal Injuries Ireland, we recognize the importance of gaming in people's daily lives.

We are excited to announce that Eoin Naughton has joined the team as our new Activities Officer. Eoin became interested in SII following his Tall Ship experience in Antigua last year and began volunteering with us last summer. We are delighted to have his enthusiasm and experience, particularly with his background in the Navy, and his passion for organising

events and activities. Eoin has been busy building a diverse activities programme, and one of his first initiatives was to arrange a visit to the Google Discovery Hub.

This recent partnership with the Google Discovery Hub at their Dublin headquarters is providing new opportunities for our service users to explore and engage with the latest technology. Our inaugural visit to the centre included service user and current inpatient Eoghan Gorman, who got to experience the technology firsthand. This collaboration opens up exciting possibilities for our community to connect with innovative gaming experiences and interactive exhibits at the centre.

Eoghan Gorman described the visit as *"an eye-opening experience into the possibilities of assistive gaming that could be a pastime for anyone with any disability."*

This is not our only visit to the Google Discovery Hub—Google has invited us back! If you're interested in exploring the centre and its innovative technology, get in touch with one of our Services team members, and we'll do our best to arrange a visit for you.

The NRH hospital has also caught the 'gaming bug' (OPD Social Worker Aidan Trant) And started a gaming group for outpatients, offering people a chance to play games together and have an excuse for a catch-up. This new group is fostering peer interaction and creating a supportive space for people to connect. For further information on the NRH gaming group, please contact aidan.trant@nrh.ie.

Diane Davison



In July 1993 I broke and dislocated my neck at C2 in a horse-riding accident. Following my excellent care and eventual complete recovery in the NRH, I was made aware that there was then very little support for patients following their discharge from hospital. Sister Aileen (Marie) McCarthy used to drive round the country in a van, visiting former patients and encouraging them to be as active as possible.

In 1994 a small group of people formed the Spinal Injuries Action Association headed by former patient Colm Whooley and asked me to be involved, which I gladly did. They were based in a small portacabin on the grounds of the NRH, which didn't even have running water.

The main aim was to encourage newly injured patients to be as active as possible and be involved in sports.

There were various fund-raising events, including kayaking down the Shannon to Athlone. Former patients enjoyed regular kayaking on the lakes at Blessington.

As a family we were very involved and did what we could to support the small charity. As it developed into Spinal Injuries Ireland and moved into a larger portacabin I became a Board member. I saw SII grow to the professional organisation it is today, now based in a great resource centre on Pottery Road.



Preview of Activities - Mondello Park

Spinal Injuries Ireland is set to collaborate on an exciting new partnership with Mondello Park, the well-known motorsport venue, heralding a future filled with dynamic opportunities for the spinal cord injury community. This collaboration aims to bring the thrill of motorsport by providing unique, adrenaline-filled experiences and fostering a sense of inclusion and empowerment. By integrating accessible motorsport activities, Spinal Injuries Ireland and Mondello Park are enhancing rehabilitation and giving people a chance to get out there and have fun on the racetrack!

This initiative is poised to offer new pathways for engagement, making the world of motorsport a more inclusive arena for all.

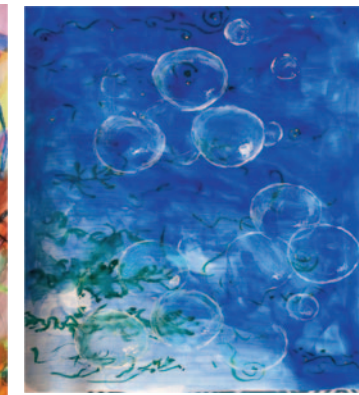
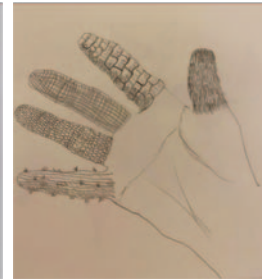
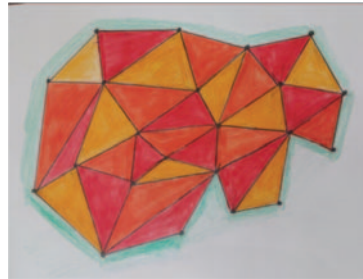




SII SPINALART WITH ABBEY ART STUDIOS

SPONSORED BY RETHINK IRELAND LOGO AND ABBEY ART STUDIOS

RETHINK
IRELAND



SII's Head of Services, Bairbre O'Sullivan, reflects on the SpinalArt so far...

In our digital age, the mix of art and technology has opened doors to innovative ways to expand creative expression as well as engage with communities. Our SpinalArt Programmeme is one example of these, where an online platform has given us an opportunity to make art and experience peer support at the same time. We began with the vision of making the practice of art accessible and easy to do. Keeping in mind all the various challenges that go with a SCI, we looked at providing art packs and conducting online art classes.

The programme launched with Module 1 "the Pilot" in November 2023, and with a generous grant from ReThink Ireland, it was expanded in March 2024 with two parallel modules: Module 1 and Module 2. Upon signing up, each participant received an Art Pack delivered to their door.

Art Journaling

SpinalArt embraces the concept of art journaling as a foundation for creating, expressing, and enjoying. The Art Journal engages the mind in a different way from regular journaling and taps into people's creativity without the pressure of creating an art piece. An art journal is like a regular journal, but with art, pictures, and stuff added in. Some have lots of writing, others

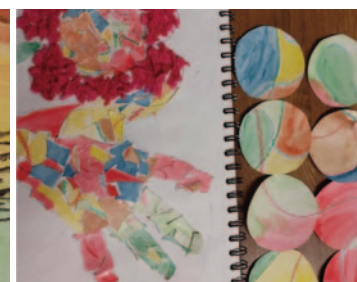
just pictures. It's a way to have fun and take care of yourself creatively.

Since its launch, the response to the programme has been overwhelming, with individuals watching the taster, signing up by sending in their creation to us, and receiving an art pack with everything they needed! The success of the programme is not merely measured in numbers but in the impact that it has had on the experience of those taking part.

"It's brilliant having the recordings if you are unwell; you can catch up when you are feeling better." Olivia, Louth

The heart of our programme lies in the genuine engagement and feedback received from our community. Participants have told us how fun it's been and we are pleased to have an opportunity to delve into their creativity, finding solace and inspiration in the virtual realm. The exchange of ideas, encouragement, and support provided by Susan Farrelly, artist/teacher extraordinaire, within the online platform has cultivated a sense of camaraderie and belonging, proving that distance is no barrier to fostering meaningful connections. One participant noted, *"there is a really nice chat before and after the classes that has developed over time; it's become an important part of my week."*

"Absolutely loving the workshops; it is a great way to chill out and relax while getting some art pieces done." Clare, Meath



On the road

Taking it one step further, we took to the road with our regional workshops in May, visiting the south, west, and northeast of the country to meet participants face-to-face. We were surprised by the enthusiasm of the online participants who showed up, many bringing their art journals with them, to give us a look into their creative worlds. We were genuinely touched by the openness of those who shared their journal entries with us. Meeting both seasoned participants and new artists joining our ranks was a testament to the programme's growing impact and reach.

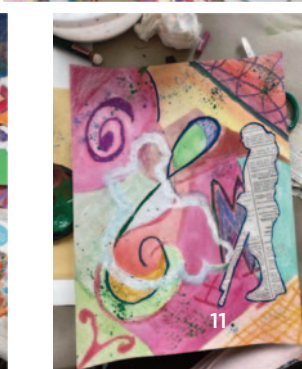
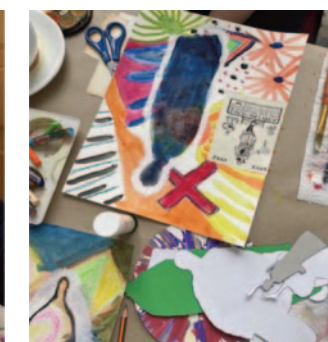
Peer Support

What truly sets our Spinal Art Programmeme apart is the embodiment of peer support at its best. The conversation flowed easily throughout the sessions, and subject matter ranged from the comical to the tragic; hints and tips were shared and personal stories told. No story is the same; no spinal injury is the same. It is a

testament to the resilience and creativity of our human spirit. Through shared experiences and mutual encouragement, participants have not only sharpened their skills as artists but have also discovered the strength that lies within their community.

As we reflect on the SpinalArt journey so far, we are filled with appreciation for the opportunity to witness firsthand the transformative power of art and community. Our SpinalArt programmeme creates a path towards a fulfilling future for all.

Our next phase is the creation and development of our SpinalArt Exhibition, which we are looking to roll out in Autumn 2024 and Spring 2025. We plan to continue the programme with more regional meetups in September and our Online sessions for Module 2 and Module 3 in September/October. We're on the lookout for people to take on the roles of facilitators, so if you are interested, please contact us at info@spinalinjuries.ie. To have a look at our SpinalArt Programme, visit our webpage at www.spinalinjuries.ie/spinalart



ON THE WATER

SII Powerboat

Our Powerboat, Niamh, has been cleaned and serviced and is back in the Dunlaoghaire Marina for the 2024 season. Former NRH Physiotherapist Fionnuala O’Kelly was on board to provide our annual manual handling training to our volunteers.

We are delighted to be back up and running after the long winter. Throughout the summer, each Tuesday evening, our volunteers pick up patients in the SII Bus and bring them to the marina for a trip out into Dublin Bay, up and down the river Liffey, around Dalkey Island and stopping for fish and chips before returning back to the hospital.

This year, we are offering trips on the Niamh to members of our SCI Community. So if you are interested, get in touch with us at info@spinalinjuries.ie or Tel: 01-6532180

The SII volunteers will be bringing down our powerboat, Niamh, to Virginia, Cavan this year to support the Inclusion Games, which is an annual award-winning FREE multi-watersport event for all abilities/disabilities who experience barriers accessing mainstream sport.



Inclusion Games - 22nd & 23rd June 2024
Kindly hosted by Ramor Watersports Club on Lough Ramor, Virginia, County Cavan

Catering for ALL ages, participants together with family and friends can access the exciting sports of Sailing, Canoeing, Kayaking, Rowing, Paddleboarding, Powerboating, Motorboating, Dragonboating, Waterskiing, and more!

All activities and equipment are provided and no experience is necessary.

You can book to attend the games through the Irish Sailing Website at: www.sailing.ie/



Dive into Summer Excitement: Adaptable Wakeboarding at Wake N Ski

Wakeboarder Dave O’Chaoimh’s is back again this year offering a series of exclusive sessions at Wake N Ski, nestled in the heart of Summerhill, Co. Meath. Following its feature in last winter’s magazine, wakeboarding is back to inject some serious thrill into the summer, offering a unique blend of snowboarding and waterskiing. It’s like hitting the slopes, but on water.

Wake N Ski Dates: Wednesday July 3rd at 12 noon & Thursday August 1st at 12 noon. **contact us on** info@spinalinjuries.ie or Tel: 01-653 21800. These are your chances to dive headfirst into the action-packed world of adaptable wakeboarding. Whether you’ve done it before or a newbie eager to test the waters, these sessions guarantee an experience you won’t forget.

To secure your spot, get in touch with our Activities Officer Eoin or Peer Outreach Officer, Jack. But be warned: spots are limited to just three per session. So, if you’re looking to shred some waves and hone your wakeboarding skills under the watchful eye of Dave O’Chaoimh, don’t hang about.

Each session promises more than just an adrenaline rush. Whether you’re in it for the rush or simply craving some summer sun with a twist, wakeboarding at Wake N Ski serves up the perfect blend of adventure and relaxation.

Don’t let summer slip away without seizing the opportunity to experience the thrill of wakeboarding. Join the SII team at Wake N Ski and create memories that will last a lifetime.

CORPORATE FUNDRAISING



We are delighted to announce that Spinal Injuries Ireland is having by far its best ever year of Corporate Fundraising.

A huge part of this is thanks to Flutter, who have chosen SII as their Charity Partner of the Year for 2024.

The on-going support from our eight Business Members is another great success story of the year to date. We are hugely grateful to our Legal Practice Business Partners O’Brien Lynam Solicitors, Callan Tansey Solicitors LLP, Lavelle Partners, McMahon Goldrick Solicitors and McCarthy & Co Solicitors LLP. Likewise we are very grateful to our Financial Advisors Business Partners Moneywise and Gillen for their on-going support, as well as to our Care Provider Partners Care to Comfort, who have written an article for us in this magazine. Thank you all for your terrific support.

A huge thanks also to Abbvie for having us in to speak with their staff and for the generous donation. And another huge thanks goes to the RCSI, who had us as their Charity of Choice for their Ball, which took place on Friday the 23rd of February, and which raised a phenomenal €10,000!



Thank you so much to each and every one of our corporate donors for their incredibly generous support.

PEER CATCH-UPS

Our peer “catch ups” are continuing on zoom every few months. Our next catch ups are scheduled to begin in July. Peer catch-up sessions offer a judgment-free space where individuals can discuss various topics related to spinal cord injuries, share tips, and connect with others who truly understand. Feel free to just listen without any pressure to take part. Topics like travel, accessibility, pain management, bowel and bladder management, equipment and many others are discussed in a judgement free zone. Check the events page of the website for upcoming catch ups. If you would like to speak with a trained peer support volunteer on a 1:1 basis this can also be arranged as chatting with someone who has that “lived experience” can be really important. Peer support provides valuable opportunities for people to share tips, experiences, and support each other in navigating the complexities of living with such injuries.

Being your own best advocate has been a theme of conversation in some of the recent zoom catch ups. Having a spinal cord injury is a complex matter and dealing with the myriad of medical teams involved can be complicated so advice from your peers on dealing with this is key, having a notebook to write down important information or asking a friend or family member to do it, asking relevant questions, and getting

5 ONLINE CATCH UPS ON ZOOM	
TO REGISTER, VISIT OUR EVENTS PAGE AT WWW.SPINALINJURIES.IE/EVENTS	
10 Jul	Manual Wheel Chair Users 7PM
17 Jul	CES 7PM
24 Jul	PowerChair Users 7PM
31 Jul	Walkers 7PM
7 Aug	Family Members & Carers 7PM

understandable answers can help you keep track of your medical journey and ensure you don’t forget any crucial details.

“to be involved in a community that totally understand and are dealing with similar issues, it was like having an epiphany! Thanks again.”

For more information: see www.spinalinjuries.ie or contact hilary@spinalinjuries.ie

UCD Conducting Spinal Cord Injury Pain Research

Nearly 1 in 2 people with spinal cord injury suffer with severe nerve pain also called neuropathic pain. This type of pain tends to be more intense than other types of pain, results in reduced quality of life, and interferes significantly with daily activities, mood and sleep.

Most people are prescribed medications such as Gabapentin and Pregabalin to help to manage their neuropathic pain. While these can help to manage the pain, pain remains in up to 2 out of every 3 people. In addition there can be significant side-effects associated with these medications. As a result, there has been a consistent call from people with spinal cord injury for alternative treatments for neuropathic pain.

Virtual walking through the use of virtual reality and “tricking the brain” using imagined movements have shown promise for reducing nerve pain intensity after spinal cord injury. Despite this, the use of actual walking has not been well studied. Many people with spinal cord injury may find walking very difficult or may be unable to walk, however exoskeletons allow these people to walk with the assistance of robotic technology and a trained therapist.



Image 1: EKSO NR Exoskeleton



Image 2: Research Partners

To help explore alternative treatments for neuropathic pain, University College Dublin (UCD) are conducting research funded by the Health Research Board Ireland (HRB) comparing the effects of exoskeleton walking and a blended relaxation programme on nerve pain after spinal cord injury. The type of study known as a randomised controlled trial means participants will be put into one of the two groups in a random way- so that there is equal odds of being in either group. The exoskeleton programme will take place three times per week for twelve weeks in the UCD Motion Analysis Laboratory. The relaxation program will also take place three times per week for twelve weeks. Two sessions each week will take place online and one session will take place in person in UCD.

In order to participate in this study, people need to fit the following criteria:

- Medically stable and >6 months after a traumatic spinal cord injury.
- > 18 years old
- Neuropathic pain for > 3 months since their injury. On a stable medication program.

Formal recruitment for this study is not expected to commence until September 2024, however should people want to find out more information about the research, they can contact lead researcher Conor White via email at conor.white3@ucdconnect.ie.

A PATH TO FINANCIAL FREEDOM

Gillen.

Folklore has it that Albert Einstein stated that ‘compound interest is the eighth wonder of the world; he who understands it, earns it, he who doesn’t, pays it’.

I owe the following intriguing example to Christopher Tsai of Tsai Capital: ‘Which would you prefer; €1 million now or 1c now that doubles in value every day for 30 days?’

If you chose the latter, you chose right. That doubling process, or compounding, made you €5.4 million in the 30 days. However, had you stopped at day 27, you would have had just €0.67 million and should have taken the €1 million upfront.

The last yards made all the difference. As Charlie Munger, x-vice Chairman of Berkshire Hathaway, often said – ‘don’t interrupt compounding’.

Buffett’s own biography was aptly titled Snowball; build a small snowball at the top of a hill, push it downhill and watch it grow on nothing more than its own weight.

The rate of growth matters as does the timeline. Every person joining the workforce should be encouraged to study the phenomenal power of compounding. It takes under five minutes.

Yet, the last thing most young people do when they get their first job is to start their pension. It’s simply the most sensible thing they can do. Saving for a deposit for a house or apartment should be done alongside, and not to the exclusion of, pension compounding.

There’s over 200 years of evidence to support the case that so long as you can take a 10-year view the odds are extremely high that savings through the stock markets should deliver (much) better returns than saving through bank deposits.

The reason is quite straightforward. Businesses generate better returns on the capital invested in them than can be earned from bank deposits. And businesses can reinvest their surplus earnings for growth. It’s an economic truth, at least in democratic and pro-business economies.

Let’s take some home-grown examples. Ryanair, Europe’s low-cost airline, generated a 25 per cent after-tax return on its shareholders’ funds in the year to March 2023. DCC, the business services group, generated a 15 per cent after-tax return on its shareholders’ funds in the same period.

Microsoft, the second largest company in the World, is routinely generating returns on its shareholders’ funds in the mid-30 percent levels.

Not all businesses are as profitable as the three mentioned, but my point is, in aggregate, business generates higher returns.

And it makes sense to compound off those higher returns. And learning that the higher returns don’t come in a straight line is part of life’s journey.

For young savers, who are, by definition, saving regularly, the risks are so much lower. A €500 monthly savings programme started on 1st January 2000 resulted in total monthly savings over that 24-year period of €144,500.

By end 2023, such a commitment would have grown in value to €459,000 for a circa 7.8% compound per annum return, if invested in the FTSE World Equity Index. For the sake of simplicity, I have ignored costs, but I’m sure readers get the point.

There were several times along the way where one could have got nervous, interrupted the compounding process, and sold out hoping to get back in lower down when conditions were calmer.

But holding on was the key. Regular investing via a well-diversified fund covers most of the risks you are likely to face. In this case, you got through the Global Financial Crisis in 2008. In fact, it was the significantly better value that you got by continuing to buy when many were despondently selling during that crisis that added a lot of value to your savings programme.

You had no debt. This is an important factor, and one that those who promote physical property investing as superior don’t mention. Debt is risk, never forget that.

The global stock markets were very overvalued when you started your savings programme back in early 2000. It didn’t matter, as you started out with just €500 at that time. Regular investing will see you invest when markets are both expensive and cheap, so that the odds are very high that over time you’ll get reasonable value and, thus, a reasonable return, a return that should easily trump those available from risk-free assets like bank deposits.

Our short booklet titled A Path to Financial Freedom covers this topic in detail. A complimentary copy can be obtained by emailing to info@gillenmarkets.com.

Rory Gillen

GillenMarkets is an Irish-based Investment advisor/Wealth manager, a provider of investment training courses and the publisher of Ireland’s only subscription-based investment newsletter.

We're delighted to announce that Spinal Injuries Ireland has been chosen as Charity Partner for 2024 by Flutter, the world's biggest sports betting, gaming and entertainment provider. This is a hugely important partnership for SII. Flutter staff will run events throughout the year to raise money for SII, and this will culminate in a Ball at the end of the year, with Flutter setting themselves an overall fundraising target of €300,000 for people living with spinal cord injuries.



So far, Flutter have not only donated €11,000 to SII for winning the partnership, but they have also held two fundraising events. Firstly, they held a table quiz in their offices which was attended by three SII teams and raised over €2,000 for people living with SCI's around the country. This event was quickly followed by another fundraiser held by the Flutter staff, a 6-a-side football tournament held in UCD. This was attended by over 60 staff and again raised over €2,000 for people with SCI's.

Flutter recently invited Spinal Injuries Ireland staff in to attend a talk by Paralympian and Invictus Games participant JJ Chalmers, which was live streamed from the Flutter Leeds office, to celebrate Global Accessibility Awareness Day on May 16th. The SII team got the chance to chat with Flutter staff and answer any questions they might have had regarding accessibility and living with a SCI. We're very grateful to Flutter for inviting us in.



Flutter haven't stopped there though. Every chance they get they are seeing how they can support Spinal Injuries Ireland. For example, Flutter have also recently made a €3,000 donation to help cover the costs of our Summer BBQ, a fantastically generous contribution and one which covers the bulk of the overheads. Flutter entered a team on our behalf to run the June Womens Mini Marathon, more on this in our next edition! They are also sharing the details of our Monthly Prize draw with their staff and are selling tickets to the Taste of Dublin to their staff, the income from which will be used to cover the cost of food for people with SCI's at Taste. We are also actively engaged with the Flutter team in helping plan their annual Ball, which will take place in the Mansion House in September.



Spinal Injuries Ireland would like to thank each and every staff member of Flutter for all the terrific support to date. The way the staff have got behind this initiative has been fantastic to see. It's clear both the staff and the company itself are truly invested in making this partnership work for the benefit of our service users. We can't thank Flutter enough for choosing Spinal Injuries Ireland as their Charity Partner for 2024 and for supporting so many people with spinal cord injuries in Ireland this year.

A Day In My Wheels



Our A Day In My Wheels programme has gone from strength to strength over the last year.

After gathering feedback from participants and people with SCI's alike, we have changed the format to make it less focused solely on the accessibility side of things and to make it a more holistic learning experience for companies and participants involved.

A Day In My Wheels is now an interactive educational learning experience aimed at giving companies a holistic understanding of the challenges around inclusivity, diversity and employability in the workplace. The format of the 2 hour session is typically as follows:

- 30 minute talk on inclusivity, diversity and employability in the workplace. What the national picture looks like and what companies can do to improve their inclusivity and diversity offering.
- 45-60 minute wheelchair skills training session: We will bring 8 wheelchairs to the company for staff to take part in an interactive skills session led by our SII Ambassadors. Our Ambassadors will set various challenges (weaving through cones, going up and down ramps, navigating footpaths etc) which will both challenge and educate teams in the many hidden challenges of accessibility. This is a fun and memorable way for teams to get a brief glimpse as to what it might be like to have a spinal cord injury.
- 30 minute Q&A. Our Ambassadors will sit down with the team for a coffee to discuss the various hidden challenges of spinal cord injuries. It is a good, informal way for teams to ask questions of our Ambassadors to garner a deeper understanding of life with an SCI.

Since our last magazine update we have run extremely successful A Day In My Wheels in Google, Flutter, the Central Bank, and Dublin Bus raising over €30,000 for people with SCI's, and we have several more queued up for the coming months. If your company would like to learn more about SCI, diversity and inclusivity in the workplace, please get in touch and we can discuss how to run an event that will work well for you and your team.

Contact Phil@spinalinjuries.ie or Tel: 01-6532180

Rebecca from the Central Bank quote regarding ADIMW...

"The 'A Day in My Wheels' event" was the most impactful awareness event we have participated in. Hearing first-hand from SII ambassadors about their daily challenges was truly eye-opening.

Their willingness to share their experiences and engage with our attendees sparked meaningful conversations about accessibility, employment and social inclusion. A truly unforgettable experience!

Well done to Bairbre, Gemma, Jack, Philly and Eoin for delivering such a great event!

Accessible Greenway Cycle – Saturday 28th September

Join us for our second annual Greenway Cycle this September 28th as we cycle 40kms from Westport to Achill along the stunning Great Western Greenway. Offering mild gradients courtesy of its initial beginning as a railway line and with magnificent landscape backdrops such as Clew Bay, Clare Island, and Croagh Patrick, this accessible cycle is one for all levels of experience and abilities. Voted as one of the top three cycle trails in the world by the New York Times, this is an experience not to be missed. After an afternoon of cycling, participants will enjoy an overnight stay in the Westport Coast Hotel where dinner, bed and breakfast is provided.



Cork Jazz Ball 2024 – Save the Date! Saturday 26th October

Join us for an evening of Jazz on Saturday 26th October 2024 in the Radisson Blu, Little Island in Cork. The evening kicks off with a drinks reception at 6.30pm followed by dinner at 7.30pm, after which guests can dance the night away to live jazz.



COMMUNITY FUNDRAISING

Our Community Fundraisers have been outdoing themselves so far this year. First off we had Jazmine Swaris, who's mother Philly has a spinal cord injury. Jazmine decided to throw herself out of a plane to raise funds for Spinal Injuries Ireland! Jazmine did a skydive and raised over €2,800 for SII. An incredibly brave feat and a brilliant bit of fundraising. **Thanks Jazmine!**

In November of last year, Rory Sinclair and Nico Bakker completed the Clonakilty Marathon, a notoriously tough event. Not only did they complete it but they also raised over €1,100 for people with spinal cord injuries whilst they were at it. **Thank you from all of us here to both Rory and Nico.**

Recently we also had Kyle McCarthy and Mike McNeive run the Paris Marathon for us. Taking on a challenge like this is not for the fainthearted but both men completed the endurance run with flying colours, raising over €2,300 for Spinal Injuries Ireland whilst they were at it, with hopefully more to come through matched giving. **Thanks Kyle and Mike, it's an incredible achievement.**

And in keeping with the extreme theme of our recent community fundraisers, we have four men, Ian Browne, Matt Brown, Owen Fitzpatrick and Philip Connolly who are planning on summiting Mont Blanc in aid of Spinal Injuries Ireland the Dublin Wicklow Mountain Rescue Team on the 7th of June. Training is well in hand, having already brushed up on their mountaineering skills on Ben Nevis in February. The team are hoping to raise over €7,500 for the two charities. **Best of luck to Ian and the team from everyone here at Spinal Injuries Ireland!**

Of course, we also have our key fundraiser Robert Kenny who continues to do bucket collections for us on a weekly basis. Rob has been with SII for over 20 years and we wouldn't be the same organisation without him. To date this year, Rob has raised over 20,000 and counting, ably assisted by his P.A.'s Aga and Nara Lemanski. A big thank you to Rob and Aga and Nara. It really is incredible how much support you provide for our service users. **Thanks once again.**

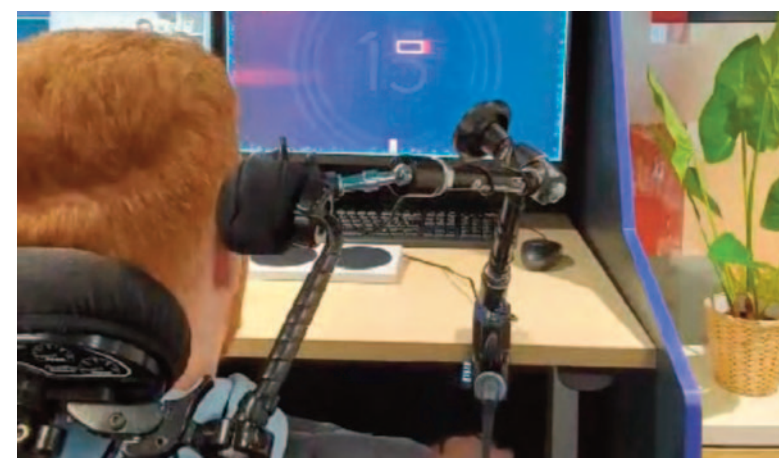


Google Ireland opens the Accessibility Discovery Centre

Last month Google opened the Accessibility Discovery Centre (ADC), a dedicated accessibility space within Google's EMEA HQ where Google engineers, researchers and wider product teams will focus on driving new innovation in accessible technology to help to remove some of the barriers that people with disabilities face everyday.



The ADC was built in consultation with local partners including Spinal Injuries Ireland, ADHD Ireland, the National Disability Authority, Fighting Blindness and Google's internal Disability Alliance employee resource group. Not only a workshop for research and product development, the centre will be a space for cross-industry learning, sharing information and building greater understanding and empathy among the accessibility community.



The ADC will also facilitate tours to increase awareness of the power of technology to empower those with disabilities. These tours will include real life examples of new technologies empowering people with disabilities via a series of interactive zones and gaming zones that bring to life the ways people with disabilities interact with technology. The opening is also an acknowledgement that there is much more to do to meet people's ever changing needs, allowing Google to learn from and partner with accessibility and disability communities to keep improving and innovating for users.



"The Accessibility Discovery Centre isn't just a place where we will build better products and services - it's also a medium through which we can engage more effectively with different disability communities to better understand and address their needs. The new space can break down barriers and will ultimately change lives for the better. Today's event marks the beginning of that exciting journey that will first understand the myriad problems that exist and then address them in an inclusive manner." Christopher Patnoe, Head of Accessibility and Disability Inclusion, Google EMEA.

If you're an academic, community or charitable/non-profit organisation and wish to visit the Google Ireland Accessibility Discovery Centre, email adc.dublin@google.com

Philip Quinlan, Spinal Injuries Ireland

"It's so good to see Google engaging with people with spinal cord injuries and other disabilities like this. Social isolation is a big issue for people with spinal cord injuries and gaming is a great way to overcome this. By setting up this centre, Google is supporting young men and women with injuries to socially engage with friends and peers online, helping them to overcome the challenge of social isolation. It's a great initiative."

SPINAL INJURIES IRELAND SPRING LUNCH

Over 400 people gathered in the Intercontinental Hotel on Saturday, 13th April, for Spinal Injuries Ireland's Spring Lunch. This annual event has been running for 15 years and is always a huge addition to the Spring social calendar.

Philip Quinlan, Event Manager with Spinal Injuries Ireland organised the event and introduced inspirational speaker Ciaran Pollard, who received a standing ovation after his address. They both urged the guests to dig deep as Spinal Injuries Ireland needs to fundraise almost €1million annually to provide vital services to its 2,400 service users.

There was also an auction on the day which was incredibly well supported and conducted by Robert Hoban of Offr who proved to be extremely effective in encouraging the bids and maximising the revenue from

fantastic lots such as Taylor Swift tickets and a cask of Powerscourt Whiskey which sold for an amazing €15,500.

Spinal Injuries Ireland CEO said "We are extremely grateful to everyone who attended the event, donated prizes and gave so generously. SII has survived and thrived over the last 30 years thanks to the ring of support from donors, sponsors, business partners, service users, families, and our colleagues in the NRH.

It is estimated that the event raised €100,000 for SII.



JOIN US FOR THE COSTA RICA ADVENTURE OF A LIFETIME



We are delighted to announce a new adventure for people with spinal cord injuries and able-bodied people alike – our Costa Rica Accessible Trekking Challenge!

This 8-day / 7-night accessible group trip to Costa Rica will take you to the vibrant capital city of San Jose, the charming towns of Arenal and Jaco, and the spectacular Manuel Antonio National Park.

With a wide variety of activities included in the itinerary, you will visit local museums, explore wonderful nature, sample delicious local food, and even try your hand at accessible surfing!

This collection of unforgettable experiences will be complemented by the peace of mind of having accessibility and adapted bathrooms along the way for those who need it.

Truly, the perfect setting to live the adventure of a lifetime.

LUMP SUM INVESTMENT OPTIONS IN IRELAND

MONEYWISE

Sources of information on possible assets for lump sum investments have spiralled out of control in recent years. Most from social media should be ignored. Here are some tips that you may find useful if you have to find a home for a substantial sum of money sitting in your current account.

Firstly, talk to a few different independent investment companies. Ask for a fully costed plan that covers all of the assets listed below. Talk to more than one stockbroking firm. Compare and contrast the information you are being provided with.

Draw up an income and expenditure model in Excel. Work out where money is coming from, where it is being spent or needs to be spent, and budget accordingly.

Debts

This must be your first port of call. If you are in a position to do so, aim to clear all non-mortgage related debt, credit card debt, and personal or cars loan. The interest rates vary enormously for these financial products and can be over 20% for credit cards and over 10% for loans. By clearing these debts, you are locking in an annualised return at the interest rate you are being charged.

A discussion about clearing some mortgage debt should be a part of the equation, depending on the overall sums involved.

Deposit base

Although most unlikely to keep pace with inflation, a secure deposit base must be the foundation of all well diversified investment portfolios. Information is readily available of the best rates on offer. Shop around. Try not to have over €100,000 in any one bank (or €200,000 for a joint account). This is the level that is covered by the Deposit Guarantee Scheme. The Irish banking system has tended towards a rolling one year fixed account as the optimum strategy.

A stockbroking account

This is also a necessary building block to a well diversified portfolio. Again, shop around. The big players in the markets place tend to be more expensive. Equities (shares) and bonds (Government and corporate) will likely dominate such an account. This is a long-term investment strategy and it requires patience. Over time, you are looking to beat inflation by 2% to 3% per annum. But there will be good years and bad years.

Global equity markets are just below the all-time highs that they reached in March 2024. If you are concerned about short-term volatility in markets, you can drip-feed monies into this account over a 12 to 24 month period.

An investment property

The buy-to-let market has seen many landlords exit this asset class in recent years, with a not undeserved perception that tenants are getting the rule book written in their favour. However a passive source of income that is not subject to the vagaries of the stockmarket is always a comfort when markets are volatile.

We are all aware that property in Ireland is expensive. But rents are also high. Neither prices or rents looks like coming down anytime soon. If the ECB base rate moving from zero to 4.5% in a short period of time has no impact of property prices, I do not know what will. It is possible that story has yet to play its hand fully as yet. Top tip: from personal experience, do not act as the letting agent or property manager. Pay a property professional a fee to cover this and have nothing whatsoever to do with the letting.

Pooled investment funds

The widespread diversification on offer in this space probably means that this also needs to feature. But with a tax regime that gobbles up 41% of any growth achieved, and where the investor carries the can on the downside, this has become a less popular route of late.

A few don't's!

Please do not invest in a fancy car. Cars are not investments, they are depreciating assets.

Please don't jump on the crypto-currency bandwagon. It is too volatile and too dangerous. Fortunes have been made by early adopters in this space and lost for many late-comers.

And finally, it's an old adage but no less true for it: Do not put all your eggs in the one basket. Diversification is crucial.--



CONGRATULATIONS ON REACHING THE AMAZING MILESTONE OF 30 YEARS

Colm Whooley - Congratulations on reaching the amazing milestone of 30 years.

It is hard to believe it is 30 years, since the initial idea of setting up what was originally called Spinal Injuries Action Association.

I am not going to mention anyone in particular, because I know I would leave someone out. But a big thank you to all those who contribute so much to the development and evolution of Spinal Injuries Ireland. Including staff, volunteers the management and the staff in the NRH during my time as CEO there and now into the future.

If a support organisation does anything, challenging the limiting beliefs, that are so understandable in the early days of a person's rehabilitation is so important.

Giving people new reference points and an insight into what is possible were the guiding principles back when Spinal Injuries Ireland was established. Guided by the lived experience and understanding that staff and board members with a spinal cord injury brought to the ethos of the organisation.

As the organisation continues to develop, I hope this can still be a guiding principle.

Wishing all those working at Spinal Injuries Ireland the best in the coming years.

Derry Durand – Nearly 30 years ago

Nearly 30 years ago, Sister Aileen McCarthy (or Sister Marie, as I knew her back then) invited me and a number of other former patients to a meeting in the Day Room in the 'old' NRH. Her intention was to get former patients to come together to help each other. We called ourselves the 'Spinal Injury Action Association', which subsequently became Spinal Injuries Ireland. We believed we could put our energies together to help inform fellow patients, educate those newly injured and in some cases agitate for action. I am proud to now look at what Spinal Injuries has become.

I am still an active member 30 years later and act as a peer mentor. This is personally very rewarding as I can

share my story and hopefully provide some inspiration to others.

It's not what has happened to you, it's what you do with what has happened to you that really matters.

Philip Quinlan – How things have changed

How things have changed. I remember starting in spinal in 2002 in a tiny cold portacabin in the car park just beside the entrance to the old hospital. I was on a part-time FAS scheme. We had only four full time permanent staff then. Now we have 17 staff (?) and work from a beautiful modern office.

Back then we were really just offering information to all our service users through our quarterly magazine and our website and linking in with the patients who were referred to us by staff in the hospital.

We had no fundraising staff then so I initiated that role. The main aim was to get one outreach officer on the road visiting our service users because that's when they had the biggest challenge having left the hospital and all its support. Now we have 4 outreach officers plus other support staff so it's fantastic service now.

We have a range of other services like our peer support programme, our counselling service, our activities programme and we also advocate for people with a spinal injury.



Eva Wallace -- SII celebrating 30 years of memories and milestones

Just a note to honour the trailblazer and visionary leader Sr Marie of the Cross or in more recent times known as Sr Aileen Mc Carthy. She played a crucial role in supporting both her patients & staff throughout the rehabilitation process. As we all know Spinal Cord Injury / disease is often a sudden life changing event, which can present in a multiple physical, psychological, social, economic, challenges to an individual and can have a big impact on their families & friends.

Embracing rehabilitation under the watchful eye of Sr Aileen was an experience not to be easily forgotten, as she guided patients through an incredibly challenging time in their lives. I suppose one could say she was the driving force, the forerunner that encouraged and supported the setup of SII. Aileen was supported by excellent staff both nurses and health care assistants, too many to mention, without whom she could never have been able to achieve so much. Her easy no nonsense style was apparent, think of Frank Sinatra "I did it my way"!

As we know the importance of education to prevent complications is paramount and given in a practical manner. Arranging a first trip away from the hospital, a social outing to Leopardstown (that could be racing or indeed the nightclub!), Zoo, Rugby, GAA, Soccer, Golf, Bowling, Table Tennis, Weddings, Funeral etc! Maybe a trip into the city for a bit of Christmas shopping or to the cinema, National Concert Hall or occasionally even a pint in Bakers etc. Great memories of being rostered to support some Irish Wheelchair Holidays with patients from the ward or indeed to take a patient home with complex needs to promote a safe holistic discharge. Sr Aileen was one v special lady that inspired both staff, patients & families alike to improve the quality of life for her patients. Congratulations to SII celebrating 30 years & for continuing with her vision.

Robert Kenny – My Years in SII

Hi Rob Kenny here! Many of you know me.

I started on a FAS scheme at the end of 1997 in NRH SII prefab, I undertook and successfully completed a computer course. One of the funny things was, there were so many of us doing the course we had to let

Christine, Colum and Joan Carty into the small office first, we had to slot in one wheelchair at a time at each desk, it took a while each morning! When anyone had to use the bathroom everyone had to maneuver their wheelchairs to let a colleague pass, the giddiness was contagious and became part of our routine. Eugene Cahill, the SII accountant at the time carried out the course, he was very understanding and mentored us through our learning.

Another day we carried out mock phone calls to service users, I enjoyed this aspect greatly and afterwards I was offered a position working in SII Reception. I worked on the reception for 18 years and was promoted to Fundraising officer.

Time has changed considerably and today I enjoy fundraising and meeting with the members of the public at the various shopping centres throughout Dublin, all the while educating people and building awareness of the challenges people with a spinal cord injury face each day. The people I meet are salt of the earth and always give so generously and I love the chats we have!

I would like to say a big thank you to all the people who have supported SII, Sr Marie our founder, NRH staff and ex patients and donors. It has been amazing to see all the fantastic developments throughout the years and to be part of SII going from strength to strength.

Frank Lawlor – Peer Family Support and Volunteer

I have been a volunteer with SII for 10 years', driving the bus and later becoming a family peer mentor. I find it very rewarding and have made good friends with the team.

A few years ago I brought a patient from Portlaoise Hospital to his home in Roscrea on Father's day. I was treated as a guest by his family and was asked to sing a song after a sit down dinner. I know the trip meant a lot to the man and also to me a very special Father's day.

This is my most special memory as I was asked to step in at the last minute. There would have been no home trip for the man otherwise and I just could not refuse.



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