



Spinal
Injuries
Ireland

Support at every stage



ANNUAL
REPORT
2023

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CHAIRPERSON'S ADDRESS

Thank you to our staff and volunteers who continued to work tirelessly to provide services to our service users during 2023.

This year enabled SII to engage fully with our service users in a post-covid environment. The highlight for 40 lucky people was the Tall Ships challenge to Antigua and Guadeloupe. As a wheelchair user I appreciate the benefits of sailing and being on the water and all the feedback from our service users illustrated the importance of trying something new and adventurous while engaging in peer-to-peer networking. In addition, the Tall Ships Challenge was a major fundraiser for SII.

Our engagement with the NRH grew during the year and in particular SII was delighted to provide the funding to film the NRH education programme. This ensures that service users in the community receive the same education programme as inpatients. The booklets and videos can be found on www.spinalinjuries.ie and are there as a permanent resource. The funding for this education project was granted from the RCSI Department of Radiology and Radiation Oncologists who nominated SII as their charity at their annual Ball.

The Board of SII maintains a high focus on complying with the Charities Regulator Governance Code and the organisation's statutory and regulatory obligations, and applicable codes of practices such as the Charities Institute Triple Lock Standards, the Statement of Recommended Practices (SORP) and the Guidelines for Charitable Organisations on Fundraising from the Public, which demonstrates transparent reporting and strong fundraising and governance within the organisation. We could not do this without the commitment by the staff, volunteers and the board of directors and I am hugely thankful for their support.

John C. Twomey
Chairman



CHIEF EXECUTIVE'S REVIEW

2023 was another tough financial year for Spinal Injuries Ireland. We finished the year with a €137,513 loss for the year. Fortunately, the organisation has a cash surplus however it is not sustainable to keep dipping in to this rainy day fund. The Board of Directors has approved a fundraising plan of the next four years which hopefully will assist us in covering all our costs annually. When we only receive less than 40% of our funding from the state, it is a big task to fundraise to cover the remainder of the costs.

With this in mind, we are eternally grateful to everyone who fundraised for us during the year, whether you took on a challenge such as the Tall Ships, Paris2Nice or a marathon or a climb, attended an event such as the Cork Jazz Ball and the Spring lunch, collected money or entered our monthly prize draw, we could not survive without your loyal support and contribution so a huge thank you.

Likewise our volunteers who give their time freely to fundraise, run our activities programme, and manage peer to peer events and one to one support, our Service Users rely on you for your hard work and contribution.

2023 has been a busy year for SII, we welcomed new peer officers Gemma Willis and Jack Shannon Cole, generated more grant aid for our service users, started a new SpinalArt programme with support from Rethink Ireland, lobbied, increased our outpatient support at the NRH, brought service users out on our boat Niamh as well as wakeboarding, introduced more business partners and collaborated with our major sponsor Coloplast who has supported our educational and public affairs programmes since 2016.

Finally, we could not do what we do without the support of all the SCI community from service users to healthcare professionals in the NRH, Mater and CUH and other acute hospitals and also our donors, supporters, volunteers, staff and Board of Directors. A huge thank you.

Fiona Bolger
CEO

YANNA HARTIN STORY



My name is Yanna Hartin. Last summer I finished my Leaving cert before enjoying a summer of fun with friends which was intended to be a break before starting my time in college. Little did I know it would be the last of my spontaneous summers.

On August 9th 2023, I was on the way to work, as a passenger in the car, when we crashed into a wall. As a result of the impact of the crash I was immediately completely paralyzed from T12 L1. After being brought to Cavan General Hospital for the initial assessments I was rushed to the Mater hospital for an emergency spinal surgery. After twelve long days in the Mater, I was sent to Our Lady of Lourdes Hospital in Drogheda while I awaited a space in the NRH. While my friends were starting their first year of college I was learning how to transfer, dress myself, shower myself, do intermittent self catheterisation and in general adapt to being paralysed while still trying to live like every other 18 year old girl. After all I am just like every other young girl. I simply sit instead of stand.

I was transferred from Drogheda to the NRH on the 10th of October 2023. To begin it was certainly a very daunting experience for an 18 year old girl so new to my injury and a new way of living. However, I am naturally a very social person and quickly became friends with many of my peers in the NRH. While I was definitely very scared to begin it was in these friendships that I found much peace with my injury, I was surrounded by other people in similar situations and on a similar journey to myself.

During my time in the NRH my physio and OT were nothing short of amazing. They helped me so much both physically and mentally. While I was getting stronger, I was also regaining my confidence that I would be able to live an independent life and do everything I had ever planned on doing. With the help of my OT, physio and the SII team I slowly got back to the girl I once was. I started driving again, I started playing sports again, going home on the weekends and going out with friends.

Through SII I've had some incredible experiences like going out on the RIB in Dun Laoghaire, going to concerts and meeting so many amazing people in similar situations to myself. The SII peer support officers Jack and Gemma spent countless hours with me in the NRH and when I went home giving me priceless advice on life as a young wheelchair user. Lived experience from other people is the most valuable in my opinion and they were both a wealth of knowledge no matter the topic. I also experienced firsthand the impact that talking to Jack and Gemma had on my peers and the reassurance we all got from seeing that there really are no limits to life just because it looks a little different now.

On the 28th of June I was discharged from the NRH and went home to my family in Cavan. While I had been at home nearly every weekend during my time in the NRH it was still a big adjustment to being at home full time. However, I now have the freedom to begin planning my future. For me this includes traveling abroad for the first time as a wheelchair user, getting my driver's license, attending college in September, playing wheelchair basketball, going to concerts and no doubt much more is to come.

PRE BUDGET SUBMISSION

SII submitted a pre budget submission to Government in September 2023

Spinal Injuries Ireland calls for automatic medical cards and 10-year reviews for people living with Spinal Cord Injury 21st September 2023: Spinal Injuries Ireland has published a pre-budget submission calling on the Government to automatically provide medical cards to anyone living with a Spinal Cord Injury (SCI) for a period of ten years without review. The organisation estimates that some 700 people, or almost one third of its 2,200 service users, do not have a medical card despite those who sustain a Spinal Cord Injury being medically certified as having a lifelong condition that requires medical support. It said that medical card holders were living in fear of HSE reviews that could result in the loss of their medical card and that this fear had also become a barrier to them returning to the workforce and achieving the optimal outcome from their rehabilitation. *"The system for determining eligibility for medical cards is arbitrary and inhuman. It is delaying or denying treatment and the supply of necessary equipment to many people living with a Spinal Cord Injury, and it is also preventing them from returning to work,"* said Fiona Bolger, CEO of Spinal Injuries Ireland. *"The current process of reviewing medical cards annually or once every three years has created a climate of fear and uncertainty. It is causing enormous distress and anxiety and it is making it extremely difficult for anyone with a Spinal Cord Injury to make long-term life plans,"* she added. *"Spinal Injuries Ireland is calling on the Government to automatically provide medical cards to people with a Spinal Cord Injury on the basis of their certified medical needs rather than their means and to extend the review cycle for medical card holders with a SCI to ten years,"* she continued.

The organisation said that people with a Spinal Cord Injury had to evaluate the potential loss of their medical card when it came to pursuing employment opportunities because the weekly income thresholds for retaining the card were too low at €184 for a single person living alone, or €164 for a single person living with their family. *"Our research has found that up to 700 of our service users do not have a medical card. This is a sobering statistic when you consider that the World Health Organisation (WHO) has described a Spinal Cord Injury as one of the most devastating and life changing injuries that a person can sustain,"* said Ms. Bolger. *"54% of those we*



work with have been subject to a medical card review. Young people, in particular, are living in fear of losing access to medical services if they return to work. They are choosing not to do so, or to only earn up to the income threshold, which impacts their opportunity to develop careers and to achieve social, psychological and intellectual fulfilment," she added. Spinal Injuries Ireland estimates that three people sustain a devastating Spinal Cord Injury every week in Ireland. Some lose the ability to walk and depending on the level of injury can also lose arm and hand function. A SCI can also result in serious secondary health issues including chronic pain, loss of body function, severe psychological distress, and financial issues. The experience is life changing for individuals who are suddenly faced with the cost of medical care, bowel and bladder care and pressure relieving equipment along with specialist requirements such as a motorised chair, a bed hoist and having to adapt their car or home to their new reality. *"In many cases people with a SCI are unable to return to their former employment. Spouses, family members or partners commonly give up their employment to provide them with home care. There is a huge loss of family income, and it is estimated that 25% of those with a SCI live below the poverty line,"* said Ms. Bolger.

You can view our full Pre Budget Submission on our website at <https://spinalinjuries.ie/wp-content/uploads/2023/09/Pre-Budget-2024-Submission-September-2023.pdf>

Services we provide:

Community Outreach Services



Counselling Services

Educational Webinars



Peer Support

- One to One support
- Group Catch-ups
- Inpatient support
- HCP information



Information and Education Services for Healthcare Community

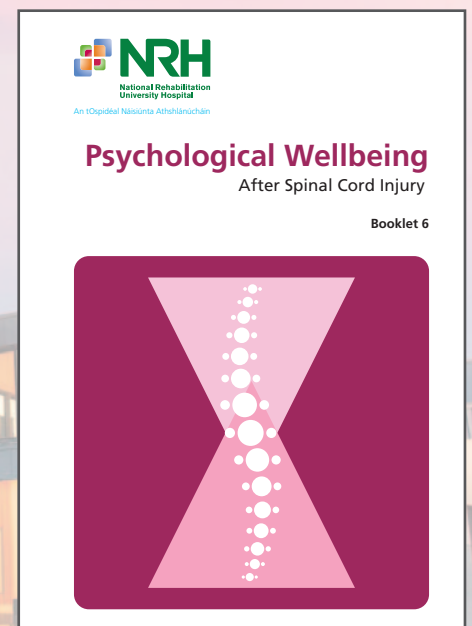
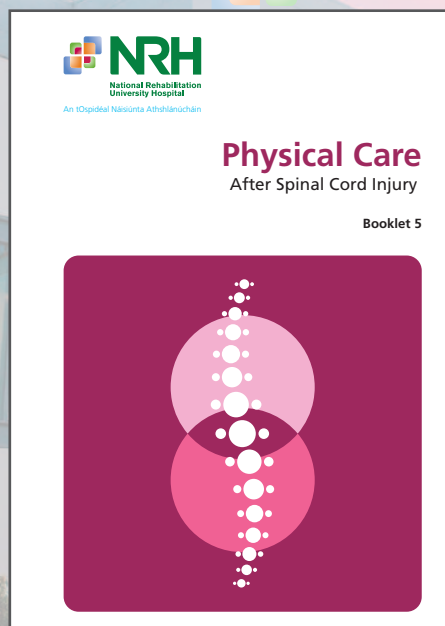
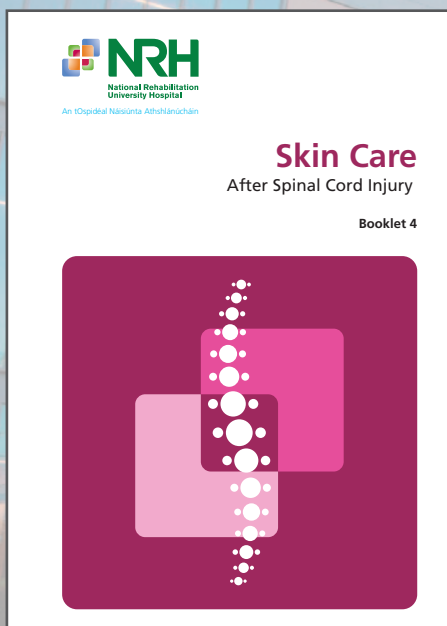
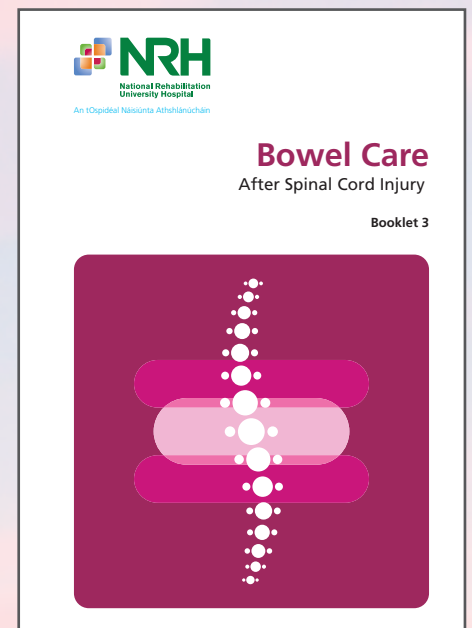
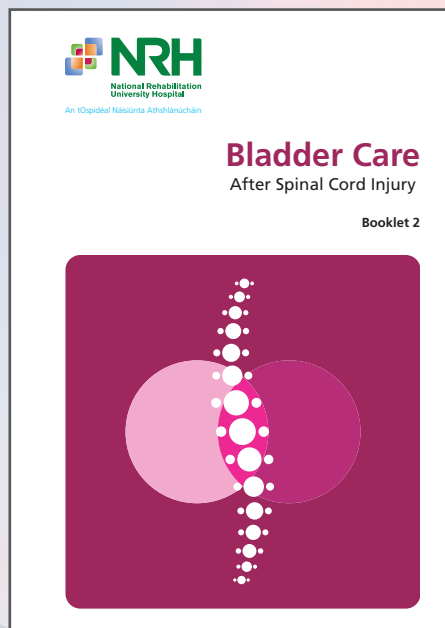
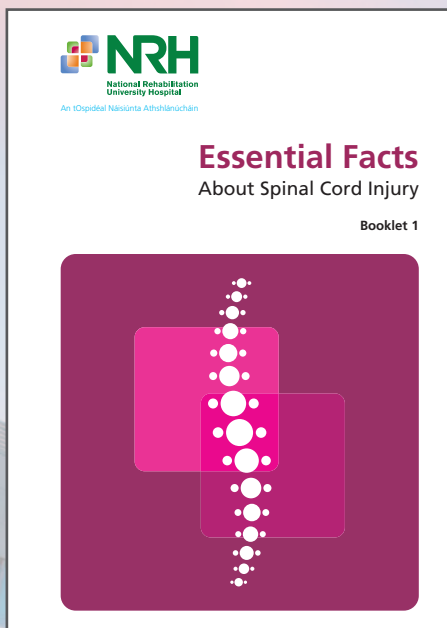
SCI Research



NRH EDUCATIONAL BOOKLETS AND VIDEOS

SII funded and arranged the filming of NRH Education Videos and Booklets, the aim of these is to enhance accessibility for NRH patients. The final filming and editing process, completed in September 2023 and are now available on our website <https://spinalinjuries.ie/resource/nrh-education-videos/>

Essential Facts



SERVICES REVIEW

Our Services Team:

SII Services Team consists of Community Outreach, Peer Outreach, Activities and Communications. Out of our team of 7, 4 of these staff members have personal experience with spinal cord injuries, which uniquely positions them to empathise with and understand the challenges faced by our community.

The Heart of SII:

- **Our Activity Volunteers:** Our volunteers generously contributed over 300 hours of their time. Their expertise, experience and good humour were invaluable across various aspects of our work, including a range of different activities, individual support and fundraising.
- **Our peer volunteers** wholeheartedly embraced the chance to offer face-to-face and virtual support within their communities. They continually support activities in the NRH, visiting patients as well as meeting people post-discharge in their communities as well as continuing to provide virtual support.

Throughout the year, our dedicated team at Spinal Injuries Ireland (SII) worked diligently to support individuals with spinal cord injuries.

We present the Services Review 2023 under the following headings:

1. Activities, Education and Support Services
2. Peer to Peer Support
3. National Rehabilitation Hospital Outreach and Support
4. Advocacy and Representation

1. Activities, Education and Support Services

Whilst calls to our Outreach Team began to see a return to a more "normal" number of enquiries following the Covid-19 pandemic with a total of 573 calls and emails, we saw an increase relating to service users experiencing delays and failures in implementing suitable care packages were failing because of shortages in the number of available, specially trained care staff for those with SCI.

In addition to providing support, the Outreach Team apply for grant aid on behalf of service users. This year we received funding of €31, 989 in individual Grants through HSF/Protestant Aid/Grace O'Malley Funds up from €12,300 in 2022 - an increase of 160%. €19,000 in National Lottery Grants

Grants from the HSE National Lottery of 14,4991 provided assistive technology such as computers, tablets, and Smart Home Technology has made an enormous difference to people around the country.

"I feel a lot safer knowing who is at the door before I go to answer it, thank you SII" Kevin, Wicklow

"Thanks so much for arranging the Smart Blinds ... I am so much more independent now" Joe, Cork

Our Visual Arts programme was given a boost this year. In the first instance we received €3,187 to provide an





online art project for the Louth/Meath area, giving us an opportunity to pilot our Spinal Art Programme. This led to the large fund of €86,000 granted by ReThink Ireland, giving us the opportunity to prepare for SpinalArt Programme which officially commenced in 2024.

We collaborated with clinical and nonclinical specialists to deliver training and education. Virtual Education allow us to include more people in our sessions which we delivered through the year. Subjects included, Bowel & Bladder Care, Relationships and Sexuality, Mental Health and Pain Control. SII provided sponsorship for Karen Stokes, wellness practitioner to speak at the CES Get Together in Athlone in August 2023. Along with our Coloplast colleagues, our COO Hilary Keppel met with service users for a day of catching up and sharing information.

Our Let's Go Activities programme provided tickets to Hockey, Football, Camogie, Hurling and Rugby as well as concerts and family days out.

***"We had such a great time at Ireland vs France football in Tallaght last night, it was great to see her smile back."** Parent of Service user*

Our Powerboat has continued to change people's outlook while in the NRH. Despite the unpredictable weather, our volunteers managed to get people out on the RIB, around Dublin Bay, up and down the Liffey, around Dalkey Island and Fish and Chips on the way home. In 2023 we were delighted to support the Paediatric Unit in the NRH with their Whizzy Wheels

Respite weekend and took out 8 children and their parents and siblings for RIB Trips. According to Sharon Leahy, NRH OT who was the coordinator, it was the highlight for everyone! None of it is possible without the support of our volunteers, bus drivers Dave and Frank, and RIB drivers and crew, Glenn, Eugene, Sue, Philip, Orna and Keith.

2. Peer to Peer Support

Individual peer support continues to have a profound impact thanks to our 41 dedicated peer volunteers who provide discreet and personalised peer support to individuals facing recent injuries and often navigating trauma. The peer-to-peer programme connects those in need with experienced peers who have successfully overcome similar challenges. This confidential service, though unobtrusive, remains one of our most significant contributions.

3. National Rehabilitation Hospital Outreach and Support

Reconnecting with our colleagues in the National Rehabilitation Hospital continued to expand during 2023 and the services team were onsite at OPD on Tuesday and Wednesday mornings throughout the year and met with 231 service users and engaging with 51 people who they had missed out on meeting during the COVID Pandemic.

The Services Team prioritises connecting with patients when they are in the NRH. In 2023 our monthly Pizza Evenings attracted large numbers. We served pizza to over 250 patients over the year with 24 peer volunteers coming along to meet with patients.

Gemma Willis and Jack Shannon-Cole commenced as Peer Outreach Officers with SII in July 2023 bringing their experience and knowledge to the role, having worked informally alongside SII for many years as peer support and ambassadors. They have become regular faces on the Spinal Ward in the NRH in the evenings, meeting newly injured patients, offering advice and information and referring them to our Community Outreach Officers for support post discharge.

In addition, Gemma and Jack check in with service users nationwide to ensure that people are receiving information about our services.

We supported the National Rehabilitation Hospital events: Women's Day, Men's Day Farmer's Day, Interagency week, Community Education Day, Staff Training Days, the NRH Sports Championships as well as involvement with the outpatient gaming programme in late 2023.

4. Advocacy, Research and Representation

In response to national scrutiny regarding healthcare inequalities, throughout 2023 we continued to advocate for better services for our service users and their family members across Ireland.

We continued to play an active role as part of the Neurological Alliance and DFI, keeping our focus on spinal services, reviewing and developing best practice for the National Systems of Care for people affected by SCI.

The Outreach Team remains acutely aware of the ongoing stress stemming from the potential loss of Medical Cards for service users and how this can significantly impact their ability to access community

healthcare, secure funding for care, and meet their basic medical needs. Our CEO, Fiona Bolger, has made substantial headway by meeting directly with PCRS Director Shaun Flanagan. The PCRS's stance is clear: if someone requires a medical card, they should receive it, regardless of their financial means. This process is facilitated through the Burden of Illness form. Additionally, the PCRS will now accept appeals directly from SII on behalf of individuals whose cards have been revoked.

We provided direct advocacy to negotiate vital support services, such as helping secure funding for community healthcare support.

As SII is in the only organisation supporting people living in Ireland with SCI, we're uniquely placed to be the sector lead in patient-led research and in ensuring the patient voice forms part of all research. We continued our membership of national and university PPIs as well as being a voice in NOCA's Trauma Governance Audit Committee. We gain an understanding of what is important to people living with SCI through our own surveys as well as contributing to external research by providing willing participants from our database of service users.

Awareness of Spinal Cord Injury and the work of our organisation continued through 2023. Our Head of Services was invited to present our 2022 Research findings at the European Spinal Cord Injury Federation in April 2023 and the Reeve Foundation Team in July 2023.

Our collaboration with the Christopher Reeve Foundation in the USA continues to strengthen and our sharing of information and resources is of value to both organisations. Reeve's Research initiatives continue to evolve funding Neuroplasticity, Cell Replacement and Bioelectric Stimulation Clinical Trials.

Our CEO Fiona Bolger was part of the HIQA Working Group who developed a pathway for domiciliary invasive ventilation for patients with spinal cord injuries.

Web/Media/Digital/Magazine

We sent 75 ezines to a total of 44,551 email addresses keeping them up to date with services information, webinar information, peer support Zoom meetings and upcoming events.

The Summer and Winter editions of our magazines were posted to 4,481 service users. Both are also available on our website

<https://spinalinjuries.ie/resource/magazines/>.

Our website traffic increased by almost 135% with just over 41,000 new users in 2022. We worked with DEPT digital agency to create new campaigns and build brand awareness and connect with new service users. As a result, our online donations also increased from €1,753.00 in 2021 to €30,007 in 2023.

2023 IMPACT

Service Users



2380

+91

National Rehabilitation Hospital

305

Service users we met in OPD

+85%

Counselling sessions

193

+176%

Grant Aid

Successful Applications for individuals

€50,989

+114%

Activities

250



During 2023, 250 patients joined us for pizza on the spinal unit of the NRH

Social Media

Facebook and Instagram Reach

1,514,502

Peer Zoom Evenings Quarterly Meet ups

232

service users

Met up on our online Zoom chats



Filming of NRH Booklets Education Booklets

STAFF

New Community & Peer Outreach Officers
Aimee, Gemma & Jack

Our Powerboat Trips

"it made me realise that there is a life ahead, to feel the wind on your face – it felt great"

Ryan O'Dwyer

Our Counselling Service

"Counselling in SII has enabled me to accept and adapt to the major changes in my life as a result of sustaining a spinal cord injury".
Breda

Our Grant Facilitation

"The Assistive Technology Grant I received through SII meant has given me a life line – I now have a laptop to chat to family and friends on Zoom"
Joe

FUNDRAISING REVIEW

Tall Ships:

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 raised €142,860, a huge thanks to our supports.

Spring Lunch

The Spring Lunch was yet again another glamorous event held at the Intercontinental Hotel in Ballsbridge on Saturday, March 25th. The event was attended by 400 guests and raised an impressive €128,000, making it the largest annual fundraising event for SII. The lunch featured personal stories, including one shared by Declan Naughton about his spinal cord injury journey and the impact of SII's peer support program. The event also included a raffle and auction that raised additional funds, and entertainment from the Spring Break kept



guests engaged, contributing to the overall success of the event. Attendees enjoyed a delightful meal while showcasing their commitment to supporting individuals living with spinal cord injuries.

Summer BBQ

Our Summer BBQ took place at the Merrion Cricket Club on Saturday, June 10th. The event featured a tasty barbecue curtesy of Paul Quinlan Catering, a heartfelt story shared by Jennifer Hester, an auction conducted by Rob Hoban, and a musical performance by Mundy. Attendees showed incredible generosity by raising €43,000 to support individuals with spinal cord injuries.

London Lunch

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.

Rugby World Cup

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!

Accessible Greenway Cycle along the Great Western Greenway

This October saw the launch of a new event on 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!

Cork Jazz Ball

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. Their time and expertise are always hugely appreciated.



COMMUNITY FUNDRAISING

Members of the public have been actively involved in fundraising efforts for Spinal Injuries Ireland through initiatives like the Monthly Prize Draw, charity runs, bake sales, virtual events, and online fundraising pages.

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 put paid to one of the team's participation but the other 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.

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.

Our Fundraising had a big lift this year thanks to the dedication of team member Robert Kenny, who spent most Fridays and Saturdays throughout the year carrying out cash collections in shopping centres in the Dublin and Wicklow region. Rob, supported by his two brilliant PA's Aga and Nara, raised over €60,000 for





Spinal Injuries Ireland. An incredible achievement. 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'Caoimhe, 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!raising €7,870.

Corporate Support

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.



A DAY IN MY WHEELS



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. Also to 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 087 3821182 or email phil@spinalinjuries.ie.



The Spinal Injuries Ireland Annual General Meeting (AGM) took place on 30th August 2023 online via Zoom and brought together our largest number of service user members, stakeholders, Board members, SII Management to review our progress throughout the past year.

The meeting was both collaborative and engaging and provided an opportunity to discuss key achievements, financial statements and strategic initiatives aimed at improving the lives of individuals living with a spinal cord injury and their families.

Dr Eimear Smith, NRH Rehabilitation consultant giving a keynote address titled “The future of spinal cord injury care in Ireland”. This was a valuable insight of how in 1961 the NRH began to deliver care to people affected by a spinal cord injury in Ireland. Dr Smith remembered fondly Sister Aileen McCarthy. She spoke of health cutbacks around 2008 which resulted in dropping to a low number of just 26 beds in March 2020 followed by the impact of Covid-19.

In June 2020 the NRH moved to a new purpose built facility where spinal cord injury service occupies level 2 of the new building. There are 40 inpatient beds in the spinal unit.

Dr. Smith stated that the NRH and SII are also working closely with the HSE on Phase 2 of the new NRH – initially Phase 2 was only going to be treatment areas but in more recent times it has been decided there will be new beds in phase 2 and the number of additional beds is yet to be decided.

Within the new building are three SCI units:

- Fern (high dependency unit, 5 beds/ ventilated patients/ tracheostomy patients)
- Lily (15 beds)
- Oak (20 beds)
- The Daisy unit is the paediatric service 1/2 beds are reserved for children with a spinal cord injury at any time.

Dr. Smith stated that the scope of service hasn't much changed in the new hospital but anybody with a SCI of any cause (traumatic or non-traumatic) is open to referral to NRH. Their admission is at the discretion of a Consultant in Rehabilitation Medicine but we are open to people affected by SCI of any cause and that is something that is unique to our sister units for example in the UK where patients with traumatic injuries are given priority. Dr Smith highlighted the ongoing issues nationally with waiting lists but continuously plan to meet the needs of everybody suffering with a spinal cord injury in Ireland.

She then stated that the NRH is CARF accredited. In June the spinal cord injury programme was accredited for the sixth time for the next three years. Staffing levels within the new building were then discussed.

Declan Laughton and Ciara Staunton joined the NRH this year. They have both been through the programme with SCI and are now working as part of the NRH team on peer support and education. Jack Shannon Cole and Gemma Willis have also been appointed to similar roles in SII.

Another new development within the NRH is the fact that the NRH will soon be a paperless hospital. By the end of 2023 we will have a fully implemented electronic patient record. Project Fusion is the team tasked with implementing this. Intersystems responsible for working with them and TrakCare will be the system which will be used. A big development for the NRH towards the end of 2023.

A Trauma System for Ireland was then discussed which deals with how to better develop trauma care for people with any trauma within this country. The Report of the Trauma Steering Group was discussed. It implements a number of recommendations on how to best deliver trauma care within this country and the focus is on having the right patient in the right place at the right time.

Rehabilitation Medicine Clinical Strategy and Programmes Division Model of Care was also outlined. This looks at how rehabilitation services are delivered to people affected by a range of conditions. However for people with a SCI really neither of these documents will change things hugely which she will address later. These documents will probably mean a bit more for people with other conditions rather than those affected by SCI. One of the changes that this Trauma Strategy for Ireland will implement is the idea of two trauma networks (Central & Southern networks which were discussed in detail). Within each of these Trauma networks there is what is called a Major Trauma Centre (e.g. Dublin – Mater and Cork – CUH) and all serious trauma cases will eventually end up in either CUH or MMUH. Trauma units haven't been completely delegated yet – these will look after severe trauma but not as severe as a Major Trauma Centre. Local injury trauma units will look at conditions such as sprained wrists or ankles etc so much less severe trauma.

Ambulance by-pass protocol was then discussed. This is in place and means patients will be brought directly to the appropriate place for care.



Rehabilitation facilities were then discussed and the fact that there is an emphasis on developing rehabilitation facilities at “Level 2”.

Trauma Strategy for Ireland probably won't make a huge difference for people affected by Traumatic SCI because by and large people will still be brought to the national spinal injuries unit Mater Hospital. There are around 50-60 Traumatic SCI in Ireland a year. Really too few to have split into two Centres. A need to centralise care was then discussed and SCI are a good example of why centralised care is so important and there is a recognition nationally that one Centre is enough for people with a traumatic SCI. We know that right now everyone with a traumatic SCI doesn't get to the Mater for that acute care but this is something that might be able to be improved in the next few years.

Another big development is the implementation Community neuro-rehabilitation teams (CNRTs). There will be six regional health authorities. CNR teams will provide psychology, speech therapy, occupational therapy, physio etc. They will not be SCI specific and will deal with a range of issues and may mean that people with SCI may be able to go home a bit sooner from the NRH. With collaboration between NRH therapists and therapists in the community patients can complete their rehabilitation in their own home. So far in 2023 funding has been granted for Cork and Kerry for development of CNRT. Galway, Roscommon, Mayo have had some funding also. Good to see this development of the CNRTs. Hopefully we will see better outcomes for people who can complete their rehabilitation local to home.

Heath Technology Appraisal (HTA) – Domiciliary Ventilation for adults with SCI document was then discussed – how can we assist these people to get home. How can we best deliver care to people who are ventilatory dependent in their homes. Funding is not approved for this at present however it provides a framework for which we can build for the future.

Complex discharge planning was then discussed which focuses on how to get people with huge care packages home NRH more complex cases. Home care package in excess of 56 per week would be included in this change in care delivery. This is a centralised approach and funding will be centralised. It will come from a national budget which is a much better way to care for people. Lack of carers in the community but good to be this far along with this process.

Dr. Smith then discussed some of the challenges faced now and likely in future. Firstly, everybody knows that recruitment and retention of staff both in hospitals & in the community is a huge problem at the moment. We have vacancies for physiotherapists, huge vacancy in hospitals for nurses. By 2030 WHO predicts a shortfall of 10 million healthcare staff worldwide.

Secondly, there is huge social challenges in this country such as a shortage of housing (very few wheelchair accessible houses available), substance misuse (very difficult if someone has SCI and addiction issues – difficult to see both needs met adequately).

Additionally, community rehabilitation supports still lacking. Collaboration with NRH particularly important here. Finally, there is huge demand in NRH out-patient services.

Now more than ever collaborative working is extremely important and Dr Smith was pleased to say NRH and SII are working closer together and better than ever before and hopefully with this sort of approach we can do something to diminish or even overcome these challenges.

Ms. Bolger agreed that there has never been a time where there has been such a collaboration between the NRH and SII and she looks forward to further work together.

Attendees also participated in meaningful discussions, shared insights, and together we reinforced the commitment to advocacy, support services, and raising awareness about the challenges faced by those with spinal cord injuries in Ireland. The meeting concluded with a renewed dedication to driving impactful change in the community across Ireland and with our partners in the UK, US and throughout Europe.

FINANCIAL STATEMENTS

Income and Expenditure Account Year ended 31st December 2023

	2022	2023
Income	1,110,023	1,195,516
Interest receivable and similar income	90	-
Gross Income for reporting period	1,110,113	1,195,516
Expenditure	1,206,771	1,317,262
Depreciation and charges for impairment of fixed assets	14,832	15,767
total expenditure in the reporting period	1,221,603	1,333,029
Net Income/ (Expenditure) before tax for the reporting period	-111,490	-137,513

All income and expenditure arise from continuing operations.

There were no other recognised gains or losses during the period under review.

Balance Sheet as at 31st December 2023

	2022	2023
Fixed Assets		
Tangible Assets	24,922	14,141
Current Assets		
Debtors and prepayments	88,662	41,517
Cash at bank and in hand	1,166,126	1,069,525
Total	1,254,788	1,111,042
Liabilities		
Creditors: Amounts falling due within one year	(116,851)	(99,837)
Net Current Assets	1,137,937	1,011,205
Net Assets	1,162,859	1,025,346
Funds of the charity:		
Restricted Income Funds	9,392	69,717
Unrestricted Income Funds	1,153,467	955,629
Total Charity Funds	1,162,859	1,025,346

Directors/Trustees

John Twomey
Eimear Smith
Brian Dempsey
Emma Cahill
Michael Lynam
Diarmuid Corry
Kieran FitzGerald

Company Secretary

Alison Redden

Chief Executive Officer

Fiona Bolger

Registered Office

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Co Dublin
A96 Y932

Company Registration Number

225205

Charity Regulatory Authority Number

20031855

Charity Number

CHY 11535

Principal Bankers

Bank of Ireland Plc
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Solicitors

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Auditors

Power & Associates
Chartered Certified Accountants
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SUPPORTED BY:



Feidhmeannacht na Seirbhíse Sláinte
Health Service Executive



CHY: 11535

Registered Charity Number: 20031855

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