



Spinal  
Injuries  
Ireland  
Support at every stage



ANNUAL  
REPORT  
2024

# CONTENTS

2

Chairperson's Address

3

Chief Executive's Review

4

RTE Nationwide Programme Highlight

5

Research

6

2024 Impact

7

My Story – Eoghan Gorman

8-10

SII Conference, My Life Wellbeing

11

Spinal Art

12-14

Services Review

15

AGM

16-19

Fundraising Review & Flutter  
Charity Partner of the Year 2024

20

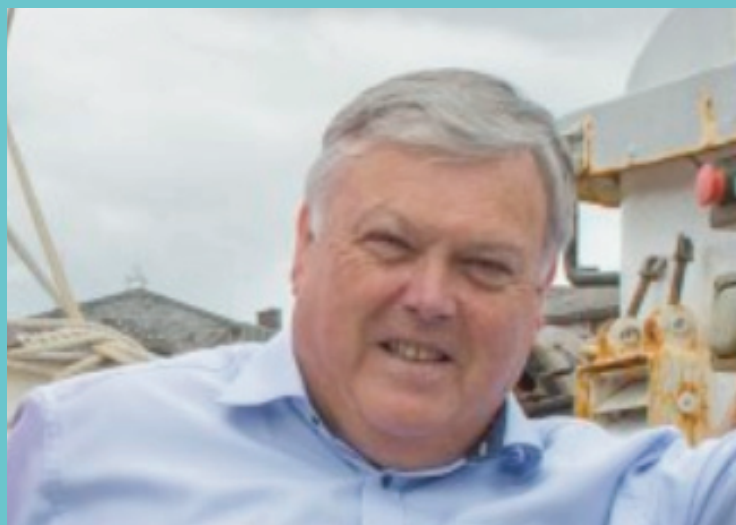
A Day in my wheels

21

Farewell to Eric O'Connor,  
Finance Manager

22

Financial Statements



## CHAIRPERSON'S ADDRESS

As an organisation that struggles to fund its services, 2024 offered the organisation great piece of mind. We were very lucky to achieve Charity of the Year status with Flutter. In recent years we have sustained losses and for this year it was great to finish the year with a positive balance. This partnership with Flutter was much more than just funding. Flutter completely adopted the work of Spinal Injuries Ireland and included SII wherever possible including an inclusive basketball match, a day in my wheels, a day at Leopardstown races and the highlight was a ball in the Mansion House, Dublin organised by the Flutter team. You can read all about this partnership on pages 18 & 19.

I would also like to thank all our and supporters who took on challenges, attended events, did collections ... we could not survive without you. The Flutter funding is one off fundraising but we rely on our core supporters every year to ensure that we continue to provide essential services to service users and their families.

It is wonderful to see how the team are growing our services annually and in particular the introduction of more adventurous activities such as trips to Mondello and the wakeboard skiing. Our powerboat continued to bring patients out from the NRH during the summer months although the weather was not too kind to us and some trips had to be cancelled.

Thank you to our staff and volunteers who continued to work tirelessly to provide services to our service users during 2024. 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

This year marks a personal milestone—ten years since I took on the role of CEO at Spinal Injuries Ireland. In that time, our community of service users has grown from 1,400 to 2,508 people. This increase reflects broader societal changes: an aging population, a rise in non-traumatic spinal injuries, and greater awareness and diagnosis of conditions such as cauda equina syndrome.

But numbers only tell part of the story. What truly matters is how our team has responded—adapting, expanding, and innovating to meet the evolving needs of this small but deeply deserving community of individuals and their families.

The 2024 statistics speak volumes:

- Growth in counselling services
- Increased distribution of grants
- Enhanced communication and engagement
- Expansion of OPD clinics

Yet it's the quieter moments that define our impact—listening with empathy, sharing resources, connecting someone with a peer volunteer, or simply offering an outing that brings joy. These are the touches that transform services into lifelines.

I'm incredibly proud of our team, who truly excelled in 2024. This includes not only our frontline outreach and advocacy services, but also our operations, finance, administration, and fundraising teams—each playing a vital role in delivering and sustaining our work.

Our volunteers deserve special recognition. From offering peer support in person or by phone, to powering our activities like summer outings on the boat, their generosity of time and spirit is unmatched. Our Finance, Governance and Risk Committee and Board of Directors also give tirelessly, ensuring our organisation remains strong, accountable, and mission driven.

To everyone who fundraised for us this year—whether you trekked through Costa Rica, cycled Paris2Nice, ran marathons, climbed mountains, attended the Spring Lunch or Cork Jazz Ball, collected donations, or joined our monthly prize draw—thank you. To our sponsors and corporate partners, the support, advice and funding you provide is outstanding. Your loyalty and support are the heartbeat of Spinal Injuries Ireland.

We are also deeply grateful to the HSE, whose funding enables us to serve as a vital partner in the Spinal Cord System of Care. And to the healthcare professionals at the NRH, Mater, CUH, and other acute hospitals—your collaboration and care make our work possible.

As the saying goes, it takes a village. And over the past decade it's been the kindness, commitment, and belief of our entire community that has allowed Spinal Injuries Ireland not just to exist, but to thrive.

**Thank you**

**Fiona Bolger, CEO.**



# RTÉ NATIONWIDE SPINAL INJURIES IRELAND FEATURE 10TH JULY 2024



Spinal Injuries Ireland were delighted to be invited to showcase our services on RTE's Nationwide programme.

There was lots of excitement around the office as we prepared for filming with reporter Ann Cassin, part of the Nationwide team.

## What the Episode Covered:

- The programme featured **Susan Farrelly**, Artist from County Louth who sustained a spinal cord injury over ten years ago. She now teaches art to others with spinal cord injuries.
- It also highlighted **Spinal Injuries Ireland**, focusing on how we support individuals' after discharge from the National Rehabilitation Hospital in Dún Laoghaire.
- The episode showcased our **Community Outreach Services**. Our Community Outreach Officer (COO) Eleanor Little, was interviewed and she took Ann through the services we offer, in particular our Counselling sessions. Previous to working with Spinal Injuries Ireland, Eleanor was an Occupational Therapist previously based in the National Rehabilitation Hospital, Dublin, she has a wealth of experience and knowledge of spinal cord injuries. Nationwide also filmed our adaptive activities, and in particular individuals with a spinal cord injury and their families taking high-speed boat rides in Dublin Bay, facilitated by our fantastic team of volunteers. This was our show piece, illustrating how people living with spinal cord injuries are reclaiming active, meaningful lives.

<https://www.rte.ie/player/series/nationwide/SI0000001172?epguid=IH10002393-23-0075>



The RTE Nationwide feature provided an inspiring spotlight on individuals living with spinal cord injuries and the community supports helping them rebuild their lives.



# BREAKTHROUGHS & BEYOND: RESEARCH THAT MATTERS

## At Spinal Injuries Ireland, we're always keeping an eye on the latest research.

Whether it's breakthroughs in treatment, rehabilitation, or quality of life, we stay informed—and involved. We're proud to work with research partners on projects that aim to make a real difference for people living with spinal cord injuries.

Two research projects have recently drawn our attention. One remains in the early stages of development but presents promising possibilities for future treatment. The other has progressed significantly, having received FDA approval and now awaiting regulatory clearance in Europe. Together, they reflect the breadth and momentum of current research in spinal cord injury.

### RCSI/TCD

This research from RCSI is exploring a new way to help the spinal cord heal using gentle electrical pulses. It's still in the testing phase, but it shows real promise for helping people with spinal injuries regain movement. It's a step toward future treatments that could improve recovery and quality of life."

### Spinal Cord Injury and Nerve Regeneration: What RCSI's Research Means for You

Researchers at RCSI (Royal College of Surgeons in Ireland) are exploring a promising new way to help nerves in the spinal cord heal after injury. Their approach involves electrical stimulation, which means using tiny pulses of electricity to "wake up" damaged nerves and encourage them to regrow.

#### What Did They Do?

- They tested this method in animal models with spinal cord injuries.
- The electrical stimulation was applied directly to the injured area.
- They found that this helped nerve cells reconnect and improved movement in the affected limbs.

#### Why Is This Important?

- Normally, nerves in the spinal cord don't heal well after injury.
- This research shows that electrical stimulation can boost the body's natural healing.
- It could lead to new treatments that help people regain movement and independence.

#### What's Next?

- The technique is still in the early stages—it's not yet available for people.

- Researchers need to do more testing to make sure it's safe and effective.
- If successful, it could become part of rehabilitation programs in the future.

### ONWARD MEDICAL ARC-EX

#### Spinal Cord Stimulation: What the Onward ARC-EX Therapy Could Mean for You

The ARC-EX is a new therapy developed by Onward Medical that uses non-invasive electrical stimulation to help people with spinal cord injuries—especially those with tetraplegia—regain hand and arm function. It's already shown strong results in clinical trials and could soon be available in Europe.

#### What Did They Do?

- The ARC-EX was tested in a large clinical trial called Up-LIFT, involving 65 people with chronic spinal cord injuries.
- Participants received targeted electrical stimulation through electrodes placed on the skin at the back of the neck.
- The therapy was combined with personalized rehabilitation exercises.

#### Why Is This Important?

- 90% of participants improved in hand or arm strength or function.
- % reported a better quality of life.
- Even people injured over 30 years ago saw benefits.
- The therapy is non-invasive, meaning no surgery is needed.
- It's safe, with no serious side effects reported.

#### What's Next?

- The ARC-EX is expected to receive CE approval in Europe in late 2025.
- It will first be available in specialist rehabilitation centres.
- Wider access, including home use, is expected in 2026.
- Onward Medical is working with partners like the Reeve Foundation to support rollout and training.

#### What This Means for people living with SCI

This therapy is a major step forward. It's already helping people regain movement and independence, and it could soon be available in Ireland. While it will start in specialist clinics, it's expected to become more widely available in the coming years.



# 2024 IMPACT

## Membership



2508

+128

## National Rehabilitation Hospital

### OUTPATIENTS CLINICS

2024 72 New engagements  
2023 59 New Engagements

+22%

## Counselling sessions

252

+59%

## National Lottery Grant Aid

Successful Applications for individuals

€24,771

+44%

## Activities

263



During 2024, 263 patients joined us for pizza on the spinal unit of the NRH

## Grant Aid - Individuals

Hospital Saturday Fund  
Grant Aid to Individuals

€54,790

+71%

## Peer Zoom Evenings

Quarterly Meet ups

274

service users

Met up on our online Zoom chats



4600

Magazines delivered!

245

Volunteer Hours



## Education Courses

"the pain course made a massive difference to my life, I know it sounds dramatic, but the way he gets you to think differently is amazing."

## Our Counselling Service

"Counselling for our family has made coming to terms with my son's SCI."

## HSE National Lottery Grant Facilitation

"This has been a great help and I feel much safer in my house alone as a person with a spinal injury."

# MY STORY – EOGHAN GORMAN



**My name is Eoghan Gorman. I am 26 years old and from Clondalkin. I'm someone who loves to be as active as possible.**

My sport of choice was martial arts—I spent 18 years of my life dedicated to multiple styles, competing both nationally and internationally. I also worked as a furniture maker for four years, and any free time I had was spent doing as many activities as possible: mountain biking, running, hiking, sea swimming—you name it, I was probably trying to fit it into my day somewhere.

This fast-paced, action-packed lifestyle came to a sudden stop on the 3rd of October 2021, when I was mountain biking with a friend and had a crash. I broke my neck at the C3 level and have been left without any function or sensation below my shoulders ever since.

Immediately after the accident, I was rushed to St. Vincent's Hospital before being transferred to the Mater Hospital, where I was admitted for four months.

During this time, I had to battle to get off a tracheostomy, which isn't a guaranteed success at my level of injury. I was then moved to the NRH (National Rehabilitation Hospital), where I stayed much longer than initially intended—2.5 years, to be exact.

The reason for this extended stay wasn't simple. There were many hurdles we had to overcome before I could be discharged back into the community. The main issues delaying my discharge were related to my care plan and housing. I had nowhere to live and no one to support my needs. After a year of failed attempts to find a home, my partner Saoirse and I were offered a social house, which we gladly accepted. We thought it was the solution to all our problems, but my care package required both nurses and carers, which presented a bigger issue. So I remained in hospital for another 1.5 years until governance and funding were signed over to allow a nursing agency to step in and get me home.

This extremely long stay at the NRH left me feeling completely institutionalised—I even referred to the hospital as home. Although the next step—going home—was exciting, it was also daunting. I had forgotten what it was like to live in a house, away from all the doctors, nurses, healthcare assistants, and the support system I had become so familiar with.

The first couple of weeks at home made me realise what it was like to have freedom again—to do as I pleased without needing approval from the ward beforehand.

I quickly realised that in order to achieve what I wanted from life again, I had to start by taking as much control over my life as possible. I've learned that being responsible for guiding my daily routine can be challenging, but with planning and patience, I can get things done. I'm happy now to be living as independently as possible, despite all the challenges that come with living with a spinal cord injury.

# SII WELLBEING CONFERENCE 2024

## SUPPORTED BY COLOPLAST



**The Spinal Injuries Ireland (SII) National Conference, held on November 2nd at the RDS Concert Hall in Dublin, was made possible thanks to the generous support of our sponsor, Coloplast.**

This landmark event drew over 300 attendees, including wheelchair users, healthcare professionals, and academics. The conference provided a vital platform for discussing the latest research and personal experiences related to spinal cord injuries in Ireland.

Prominent speakers included Dr. Marco Baptista from the Christopher & Dana Reeve Foundation, who shared groundbreaking global research on potential cures for spinal cord injuries, and Dr. Eimear Smith, Rehabilitation Consultant NRH & Mater Hospitals, who discussed the implications of this research for Irish patients. Ronan Langan, leading the DCU Exoskeleton programme, presented his work on exoskeleton technology, complemented by a live demonstration by SII service user Jack Kavanagh.

The conference underscored the importance of fostering knowledge sharing and support within the spinal cord injury community. The high engagement and turnout highlighted the value of such events in empowering individuals and advancing research.

The event concluded with the Irish premiere of “Super/Man: The Christopher Reeve Story,” celebrating the life and advocacy of the late actor. An exhibition area showcased the latest resources and innovations in spinal cord injury care. Plans are already in motion for the next conference in 2026, reflecting the ongoing commitment to improving the lives of those affected by spinal injuries.

### Date:

November 2nd, 2024

### Location:

RDS Concert Hall, Dublin

### Purpose:

To share groundbreaking research on spinal cord injury (SCI) and provide a platform for personal experiences and discussions living life well with a SCI.

## 2. Event Overview



ATTENDEES



SERVICE USERS



HEALTHCARE  
PROFESSIONALS



OTHER

### MCs

SII staff members Jack Shannon-Cole and Gemma Willis.



## Keynote Speakers



**Dr. Marco Baptista.** Scientific Lead at the Christopher & Dana Reeve Foundation, presented the latest global research on possible cures.



**Dr. Eimear Smith.** Rehabilitation Consultant at the Mater and the National Rehabilitation Hospital, discussed the implications of this research for individuals in Ireland.



**Ronan Langan.** Physiotherapist and lead of the DCU Exoskeleton programme, detailed research on exoskeleton technology.



**Fergus Farrell.** Sportsman, Motivational Speaker, spoke about his SCI journey and having a hidden disability as someone who walks with a SCI.



**Tabitha Fung.** International Tennis Player and Speaker spoke about how she manages the challenges of her SCI and how exercise has helped her with her rehabilitation.



**Jack Kavanagh.** SII service user, demonstrated the capabilities of the Exo suit.



## Key Highlights

- The conference attracted over 300 attendees, showcasing significant interest and engagement.
- International Experts in the field of SCI research.
- The Irish premiere of “Super/Man: The Christopher Reeve Story” concluded with a personal message from Christopher Reeves son Matthew to all attendees at the conference.



**Thank you!**

**Amazing**

Transformative, so critical to get together "in real life" with the other service users as well as your lovely selves.

Very informative and necessary for keeping up to date with what is happening in the accessible world.

Very well organised with a friendly team greeting all attendees.

**The conference was inspiring and uplifting!**

The talks were fantastic even the ones I didn't expect to like just blew me away. The stalls were great too.

The 2024 My Life Wellbeing Conference was an enlivening, informative and positive experience.

Speakers were clear and kept on time mainly, with clear understanding on each topic.

Excellent conference with a variety of speakers, great interaction with peers.

Brilliant speakers, very informative and well organised conference

Great to have an event focusing on 'Wellbeing' for those that have a SCI

Fantastic opportunity to connect with people and learn the latest and greatest associated with those living with SCI

Enjoyable and informative, I would have preferred 1 speaker giving their experience and maybe have another therapy talk instead on the importance of physical activity in general on health

A great opportunity to learn about new innovations. A great social occasion getting to meet peers face to face

It was very well organised and the entire event felt really professional

Very informative, excellent speakers, venue very accessible and event very well organised.



# WEBSITE STATISTICS

WEBSITE  
SESSIONS  
GREW BY

60.5%

from 22,214 in 2023  
to 35,637 in 2024

WEBSITE  
VISITS  
INCREASED BY

69.4%

from 2023 to 2024,  
rising from 114,028 to  
193,158, showing strong  
year-over-year growth.

## SPINALART: CREATIVITY, CONNECTION, AND CONFIDENCE



**In 2024, Spinal Injuries Ireland, in partnership with artist Susan Farrelly, delivered the SpinalArt Programme—a visual art initiative designed to support people living with spinal cord injuries through accessible art workshops.**

Funded by Rethink Ireland's Disability Participation and Awareness Fund, the programme offered both online and in-person sessions, reaching over 400 individuals across Ireland.

SpinalArt was more than just an art class. It became a space for expression, connection, and personal growth. Participants received art packs and joined workshops from home or at regional meetups, with many reporting increased confidence, new skills, and a sense of community. One participant shared, ***"It was a space to take me out of my headspace living with pain all the time—it was a great distraction."***

The programme's hybrid format proved especially impactful, allowing people who had never engaged with art—or with Spinal Injuries Ireland—to take part. Attendance was strong, with 69% of registered participants joining sessions regularly. Feedback showed

that the workshops were pitched at the right level, and many participants planned to continue their art practice beyond the programme.

SpinalArt also made a measurable difference. One participant said, ***"I was asked to step in as illustrator for Fighting Words (creative writing for kids) which I NEVER would have the gut to do – feel like I put some of the things I learned from you to practice!"*** Another noted, ***"Susan is a great teacher, she explains everything very well. I don't think you could be any better."***

Looking ahead, Spinal Injuries Ireland plans to build on this success. Recommendations from the impact report include expanding the hybrid delivery model, continuing to measure outcomes, exploring partnerships with other organisations, and curating an exhibition to showcase participants' work.

SpinalArt has shown that creativity can be a powerful tool for healing, connection, and empowerment. It's a testament to what's possible when art meets accessibility—and when people are given the space to express themselves.

# SERVICES REVIEW



Our online Zoom sessions remained well-attended, offering a safe space for connection, shared experience, and informal discussion. These sessions catered to a wide range of service users — including powerchair users, manual chair users, walkers, and family members — and covered a broad spectrum of topics, from equipment and pain management to travel and mental health.

In-person peer support also grew in 2024. Our monthly pizza nights in the NRH Spinal Ward provided a relaxed setting for inpatients to meet peer volunteers and hear first-hand accounts of life after injury. One-to-one peer support was offered throughout the year, with matches made based on injury type, life stage, and individual needs. These connections offered reassurance, practical advice, and a sense of solidarity at key points in the recovery process.

Thanks to the continued efforts of our Outreach Officer, Hilary Keppel, the peer programme remained responsive, well-coordinated, and accessible to service users across the country.

Participation in our activities programme increased significantly in 2024. Service users and their families accessed a wide range of events and outings, from concerts and sports matches to family-friendly attractions. These experiences offered opportunities for social connection, confidence-building, and enjoyment.

Our RIB, Niamh, returned to the water for the Watersport Inclusion Games and a series of trips in Dublin Bay. We also welcomed NRH staff on board for familiarisation outings, helping them better understand the value of these experiences for patients. These activities were made possible through the support of our volunteers and partners, including Dun Laoghaire Marina and MGM Boats.

Mondello Park proved to be a resounding success, drawing strong interest from thrill-seekers eager to experience the excitement of rally car driving. Building on this momentum, the event is set to become a firm fixture in our annual activities calendar, with plans to continue into the future.

*“Brilliant day out and an experience I didn't think I would ever have after my injury”*

Our SpinalArt programme, supported by ReThink Ireland, continued to grow in popularity throughout 2024. This year marked a milestone as the programme brought our workshops to different counties around Ireland, bringing the creative work of our service users to new audiences nationwide. The exhibitions showcased a wide range of artistic expression — from painting and photography to poetry and mixed media — and highlighted the role of creativity in recovery, identity, and wellbeing.

SpinalArt not only celebrated the talents of participants but also helped raise awareness of spinal cord injury and the lived experiences of those affected. Feedback from attendees was overwhelmingly positive, and the programme has helped foster new connections between artists, communities, and support networks.

*“The course was so good and has left me with an array of artwork that is possible. I have been admiring art all my life and when I saw the email inviting me to join and the beautiful art supplies came as surprise. I started the course and loved every week.”*

Our education programme remained a key part of our service offering, with individuals participating in a range of online workshops and seminars. Topics included neurogenic bowel and bladder, chronic pain,





relationships and intimacy, and wellbeing — all delivered in collaboration with expert facilitators and partner organisations.

*“Doing the course doesn't take away the pain but [the facilitator Phil] arms you with so much knowledge on chronic pain as well as loads of tips and strategies on how to manage it and its impact on your life more effectively.”*

Counselling services experienced a sharp rise in demand in 2024, with referrals increasing by 140% compared to the previous year. This growth reflects the ongoing need for psychological support among individuals adjusting to life with a spinal cord injury, as well as increased awareness of the service.

*“Counselling helped me to cope with my son's injury and equip me with the tools to move forward”*

Thanks to the generosity of our supporters and the success of our Christmas fundraising campaign, which raised over €28,000, we were able to meet this increased demand and continue offering counselling at no cost to service users. This ensured that no one was turned away due to financial barriers.

Our psychotherapists, Mary Scarff and Rhona Clarkin, continued to provide one-to-one support throughout the year, with sessions delivered online to improve accessibility. The service remained particularly important for those living with ongoing challenges such as pain, isolation, or relationship changes.

In 2024, Spinal Injuries Ireland facilitated significant financial support for service users through targeted grant programmes. A total of €54,790 was distributed via the Hospital Saturday Fund, supporting 40 individuals with an average allocation of €1,864. This marked a 103% increase in funding compared to the previous year. Additionally, €24,771 was awarded through the National Lottery HSE Grant, representing a 44% increase on 2023 figures. These grants enabled service users to access essential assistive technology, equipment, and supports that directly improved their quality of life and independence.

*“I had deferred my degree due to my injury and now with the tablet I am finishing my work.”*

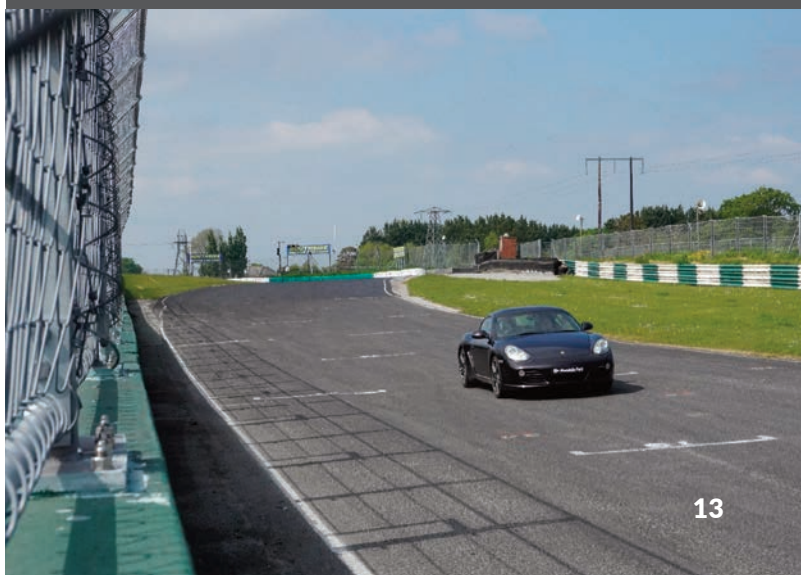
*“I do not have to try and mobilise quickly and risk a trip or fall if the doorbell rings. I can now view who is there on my phone and answer safely.”*

SII continued to play an active role in national and international research throughout 2024. We contributed to several key initiatives aimed at improving outcomes for people living with spinal cord injury (SCI) in Ireland, working with researchers from University of Limerick, NRH and UCD.

A major milestone was the submission of a research paper titled “To Make Noise and Get Action: Strategic Priorities to Support People Living with Spinal Cord Injury in Ireland” to the journal Spinal Cord. This collaborative project, involving the University of Limerick, DCU, and international partners, outlines a roadmap for improving services and supports based on the lived experiences of people with SCI.

We also partnered on a national survey exploring physical activity and exercise needs within the SCI community. Conducted in collaboration with DCU, the NRH, and the University of Limerick, the survey gathered insights from over 180 participants and will inform the development of targeted programmes and resources in 2025.

Our Head of Services, Bairbre O'Sullivan, continued to represent SII on the National Office of Clinical Audit (NOCA) PPI committee and contributed to the TRAUMA research project, which aims to integrate ambulance and trauma data to improve care pathways.







## Neurological Services

Throughout 2024 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 of Ireland (NAI) and the Disability Federation of Ireland (DFI) of Ireland as member of both organisations.

Neurological conditions now represent the leading cause of ill health and disability worldwide. According to the World Health Organisation (WHO) one in three of us will develop a neurological condition at some point in our lifetime. Over 860,000 Irish people are living with a neurological condition, 50,000 people are diagnosed with a neurological condition each year.

For budget 2025, SII was part of the Pre Budget submission where the NAI called for the following investment in neurological care services in this year's Budget to begin to tackle the regional inequity in access to neurology and neurorehabilitation services:

- Funding to complete the rollout of community neurorehabilitation team in each of the 9 CHOs around the country as outlined in the National Neurorehabilitation Strategy: a key commitment in the current Programme for Government.
- Funding for 5 Consultant Neurology posts to provide urgently needed dedicated neurology services in the following regional hospitals: Bantry, Letterkenny, Wexford, Mayo and Portlaoise.

Following Budget 2025, an election was called for November 2024. The NAI & its membership including SII sustained a campaign around the General Election, and a subsequent programme of engagement to secure commitments in the new Government's programme.

We will continue to work with the NAI to secure delivery on these commitments

## Disability Allowance & Medical Cards

Both the Disability Allowance and the Medical Cards are protected under statute however we have worked closely with the PCRS (Primary Care Re-imbursement Service) who has responsibility for medical cards. 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 successfully appealed a number of cases during 2024.

The Disability Allowance is managed by the Department of Social Protection. In late 2024 we were made aware of an allowance being withdrawn from a Service User. SII continues to appeal the case on behalf of the Service User.



Spinal Injuries Ireland's Annual General Meeting (AGM) took place virtually via Zoom on 18th September 2024, allowing broad participation from service users, board members, staff, and stakeholders across the country. The online format once again proved effective in facilitating inclusive engagement and nationwide accessibility.

The meeting was dynamic and collaborative, offering a platform to reflect on the year's key achievements, present audited financial statements, and discuss strategic priorities focused on enhancing the lives of individuals living with a spinal cord injury and their families.

CEO Ms Fiona Bolger provided an overview of SII's progress throughout 2024, highlighting support provided to over 2,400 service users, their families, and carers nationwide. It was another impactful year for in-person engagement, with staff and directors reconnecting directly with the community through a variety of face-to-face events.

Notable highlights included our presence at the NRH Outpatient (OPD) Clinics from January, the success of social events such as pizza evenings, an expanded Activities Programme, and the launch of the SpinalArt initiative, granted by ReThink Ireland, which received overwhelmingly positive feedback from participants and families alike.

We were pleased to welcome new members to our Services Team, including Gemma Willis and Jack Shannon Cole, who joined as Peer Support Officers in July. They have integrated seamlessly, working closely with the interdisciplinary team at the NRH.

Advocacy efforts also remained central to our mission, with continued work around improving access to essential welfare supports, including the medical card and disability allowance. We also engaged directly with the HSE to highlight the importance of these income supports.

Finance Manager Mr. Eric O'Connor, presented the Audited Accounts and Auditor's Report for 2023. These had been circulated in advance in the AGM documentation and made available on our website.

Further details on operational and fundraising outcomes were shared through comprehensive presentations. Looking ahead, Fiona introduced our upcoming Annual Conference, to be held in the RDS in November 2024 under the theme "My Life Wellbeing." This event will showcase lived experiences, the latest in SCI research from Dr Mark Baptista of the Reeve Foundation New York and Dr Eimear Smith Rehabilitation Consultant NRH, adaptive fitness, exoskeleton technology, and innovations in assistive devices.



Head of Services Ms Bairbre O'Sullivan provided an in-depth presentation of key service developments, such as the growth of peer-led initiatives, and a strengthened outreach model.

Counselling services also grew significantly, with increased sessions offered to both service users and their families, reflecting rising demand and the importance of emotional and psychological support.

In terms of communications, we outlined plans to grow our digital presence and expand our reach through improved social media engagement, ensuring clear and timely updates for all stakeholders.

Head of Fundraising Mr Phil O'Kelly reported a strong year for fundraising, marked by new events and community donations. A major milestone was SII's selection as Flutter's Charity Partner of the Year 2024, which significantly increased public awareness of our work. Their Dublin Charity Ball in September held in the Mansion House raised over €250,000, thanks to the generosity of their staff, sponsors, donors, and volunteers.

Other highlights included the Annual Spring Lunch, Cork Jazz Ball, and our Christmas Campaign, once again supported by broadcaster Marty Whelan.

Heartfelt thanks were extended to outgoing board members Brian Dempsey and Emma Cahill for their unwavering support, time, and dedication over the years.

A sincere thank you was extended to the wider spinal cord injury community, including healthcare professionals, donors, volunteers, board members, and our dedicated team for their continued support, generosity, and tireless commitment throughout the year.

The AGM concluded with a live Q&A session, during which Chairman John Twomey opened the floor for feedback and discussion, fostering real-time interaction and participation, despite the virtual setting.

# FUNDRAISING REVIEW

## Corporate Fundraising

In 2024, Spinal Injuries Ireland (SII) experienced an extraordinary year in corporate engagement, with partnerships that not only raised substantial funds but deeply influenced the internal cultures of the companies involved. The standout example was our Charity Partner of the Year, Flutter Entertainment. Their contribution of €400,000 was not simply a matter of writing a cheque - it was a demonstration of embedded, authentic, values-led partnership.

Flutter's support included a Charity Ball in the Mansion House, which alone raised over €250,000 and was entirely planned, managed, and executed by Flutter staff. In addition, they hosted table quizzes, football tournaments, and ran internal campaigns to raise awareness of spinal cord injuries. We even ran a wheelchair basketball tournament together, more on that in the Events section. Perhaps most importantly, they hosted two "A Day In My Wheels" workshops which acted as a catalyst for internal change. Accessibility challenges identified by staff were addressed promptly and proactively. Flutter worked with their facilities team, at our suggestion, to ensure long-term accessibility improvements in their Dublin office. By the end of the partnership, the relationship had shifted from donor and beneficiary to co-advocate and ally.

Beyond Flutter, we were privileged to work with Microsoft, where staff inspired by Tim Horgan, a colleague of theirs living with an SCI, created a prototype voice-activated, AI-enabled pain tracking app, which placed second in the global Microsoft Hackathon. Microsoft also welcomed SII into their workplace for a talk on accessibility and inclusion, creating further opportunities for staff engagement. AbbVie also extended a warm welcome and followed up with a generous donation, and the Royal College of Surgeons Ireland (RCSI) Radiology Department raised €10,000 for SII as their Charity of Choice at their 2024 Ball.

Together, these partnerships show how the corporate sector in Ireland is not only funding our services but embedding the values of inclusion and equity within their workplaces.



## Events

SII's events calendar in 2024 was yet again packed with creative, inclusive, and high-impact fundraising activities. These events generated enthusiasm across our supporter base, while also raising vital funds to support our mission.

Our biggest event in the calendar was, as always, our Spring Lunch, with almost 400 people attending a wonderful event in the InterContinental Hotel in Ballsbridge. Ciaran Pollard spoke wonderfully on the day, helping us raise over €130,000, and then Spring Break took to the stage for an evening of dancing, which included a conga line! A massive thanks one again to all supporters on the day.

Another key success was the Accessible Greenway Cycle from Westport to Achill, which brought together cyclists of all abilities and raised €13,000. Our Cork Jazz Ball also made a big splash on the social calendar, raising €30,000 and attracting a mix of corporate partners and community supporters.



The third annual London Lunch continued to deliver international support for our cause, raising another €30,000 and serving as a powerful testament to the global goodwill we've cultivated through our storytelling and impact.







In partnership with Flutter, we also co-hosted a wheelchair basketball tournament in the National Basketball Arena. This inclusive event attracted over 100 participants and spectators, showcasing the potential of sport to engage people meaningfully with the experience of living with a spinal cord injury.

Our events strategy has increasingly focused on quality over quantity—choosing inclusive, high-visibility activities that generate awareness and donations while providing opportunities for real connection with our mission.

## Challenges

While our formal fundraising challenges are still growing, we continued to see strong support from participants in athletic and adventure-based fundraising. Flutter entered a team to run the Women's Mini Marathon on behalf of SII and contributed to our Taste of Dublin fundraiser by purchasing event tickets and covering the cost of food for service users.

We are also continuing to develop new challenge opportunities through our Activities team, including exploring adaptive sports days and inclusive watersports at events like the Inclusion Games in Cavan. These initiatives provide more than just fundraising potential—they deepen the connection between participants and the community we serve.

And to cap it off, a group of 16 travelled all the way to Costa Rica for an incredible week of accessible exploring, where they visited National Parks, saw sloths and blue morpho butterflies and eyelash vipers, and they even went accessible surfing for a couple of days! The group raised over €80,000 for people with spinal cord injuries across Ireland.

## Community Fundraising

In 2024, SII's community fundraising continued to show the strength of grassroots support across the country. From peer-led initiatives to regional meetups, our community supporters demonstrated creativity, compassion, and drive.

A highlight of the year was the increase in peer-led local events, including coffee mornings, bake sales, and local pub quizzes. The impact of these events goes beyond financials—they keep SII's message alive in communities across Ireland and foster a sense of shared purpose.

Our peer network also played a key role in promoting events and engaging others. Volunteers helped transport NRH participants to the marina for our summer powerboat trips in Dun Laoghaire and assisted with inclusive wakeboarding sessions at Wake N Ski in Meath.

Community spirit also drove attendance at our online peer catch-ups and art journaling sessions as part of the SpinalArt programme, which combined creativity with connection.

On top of all this, our fantastic fundraiser Robert Kenny was out and about in shopping centres across Dublin asking people to support. Rob raised a phenomenal €80,000 in 2024, really an incredible achievement.







## Business Partners

Our Business Partners remain an essential part of SII's sustainability. These organisations provide not just donations but expertise, credibility, and community connections that benefit our entire network.

In 2024, we received steadfast support from legal firms including O'Brien Lynam Solicitors, Lavelle Partners, McMahon Goldrick, and McCarthy & Co LLP, as well as from financial advisors GillenMarkets and Moneywise. Care to comfort and Ideal Technology also contributed to our magazines and outreach services

These partnerships help ensure that people living with spinal cord injuries in Ireland have access to trusted,

informed advice and services, and they play a vital role in connecting our service users with resources beyond the clinical.

Together, these five fundraising pillars—Corporate, Events, Challenges, Community, and Business Partnerships - formed the bedrock of an exceptional year at SII. The growth we experienced in each area has not only secured vital funding but strengthened the community and corporate ecosystems we rely on to serve those with spinal cord injuries. As we look ahead to 2025, we do so with deep gratitude and ambitious plans for even greater impact.

## FLUTTER CHARITY PARTNERSHIP OF THE YEAR 2024



In 2024, Spinal Injuries Ireland (SII) was privileged to enter into a transformative partnership with Flutter Dublin, a collaboration that not only raised vital funds but achieved a genuine cultural shift within one of Ireland's most recognisable companies. This was not a transactional relationship. It was a values-driven partnership that challenged perceptions, changed behaviours, and created a ripple effect of inclusion and understanding that continues to grow beyond the partnership.

Over the course of the year, Flutter raised €400,000 for SII through a mix of innovative and inclusive fundraising events. Their dedication went far beyond financial support—they threw themselves wholeheartedly into understanding the lived experiences of those with spinal cord injuries. A series of "A Day In My Wheels" workshops brought employees face-to-face with the daily challenges of wheelchair users by asking them to sit in and use wheelchairs. Allowing them to experience their environment differently. These sessions were not tick-box exercises but meaningful engagements that sparked real introspection and led directly to action.



The earliest and most powerful indicators of Flutter's commitment to change came shortly after our first workshop. We noticed that all of the kitchen glassware in their office was stored on high shelves, completely inaccessible to a wheelchair user. By the end of the partnership, this had been quietly and permanently corrected. Another subtle change we noticed, was in our meetings with Flutter towards the end of the year, they would leave two or three chairs against the wall. This left automatic space for a wheelchair user to join the table without having to awkwardly move a chair or ask for it to be removed. These small details represent the essence of this partnership: an organisation that listened, learned, and acted. They created an equitable environment not just an equal environment. From that moment forward, Flutter's teams were not just supporters of the cause—they became advocates for accessibility and inclusion.

Flutter invited us to work closely with their facilities team to conduct a full accessibility review of their offices. This collaboration was taken seriously and implemented thoroughly. From floor plans to furniture, from signage to social spaces, Flutter committed to ensuring that their physical workspace matched the inclusive ethos they were building. This wasn't a publicity stunt—it was infrastructure-level change, driven by employee demand and executive buy-in alike.

Engagement across the company was extraordinary. From football five-a-side tournaments to internal fundraisers like table quizzes and bake sales, to an entire day at their Leopardstown Race Festival being dedicated to Spinal Injuries Ireland, every corner of the organisation played a role. One of the most unique events, which continued to build on experiencing life from a wheelchair user's perspective was our wheelchair basketball tournament. 100 staff participated in the event at the National Basketball Arena—an unforgettable day that blended Flutter's deeply engrained love of sport, with education, and empathy in equal measure. These events didn't just raise money; they broke down barriers and fostered camaraderie around a shared commitment to inclusivity.

The crown jewel of Flutter's fundraising calendar was a spectacular charity ball in the Mansion House. Planned and executed entirely by Flutter staff, the event raised over €250,000 in a single night—funds that contributed significantly to the €400,000 total. Flutter sold every table, secured the venue, managed logistics, and handled every aspect of the evening, allowing SII to simply show up and tell our story. The ball was more than a fundraiser; it was a testament to Flutter's belief in our mission and their willingness to lead on it.



Crucially, the impact of this partnership extends well beyond 2024. Through the exposure and endorsement provided by Flutter, SII has since secured several long-term partnerships with other corporates. These relationships may never have materialised without the credibility and reach that our work with Flutter generated. The ripple effects of this partnership continue to shape our donor network and corporate engagement strategy.

But what sets this partnership apart is the internal transformation it sparked. Across departments and leadership levels, Flutter staff embraced our mission not as a temporary project, but as a cause worth championing long-term. Language shifted. Priorities evolved. Employees took what they learned and applied it not only to their workplace, but to their thinking, their communities, and their lives. That kind of impact can't be measured in euros alone—it's the foundation of lasting change.

Today, even after the formal partnership has ended, Flutter remains one of our most vocal allies. They continue to reference SII in internal meetings, advocate for accessible practices, and introduce us to new networks. The partnership may have been scheduled to last a year, but the cultural transformation it triggered has left a permanent imprint on the organisation.

This was not a corporate relationship driven by obligation or brand positioning—it was driven by empathy, humility, and a genuine desire to learn and lead. For SII, it was a dream partnership. For Flutter, it became a benchmark for how business can be done with heart. Together, we didn't just raise money—we changed minds, changed systems, and laid the groundwork for a more inclusive future. That is the true measure of success.

# A Day In My Wheels

## Soon to be CPD Accredited!



**Our aims with A Day in My Wheels are to educate people on spinal cord injuries, the challenges faced, both visible and hidden, and how to create a more inclusive workplace and more widely, an inclusive world.**

### **The format is a 2 hour session and consists of:**

30 minute talk on inclusivity, diversity and employability in the workplace. We educate around what a spinal cord injury is and the challenges faced by those with an injury. We cover what the national picture looks like and what companies can do to improve their inclusivity and diversity offering.

60 minute wheelchair skills training session: We bring 8 wheelchairs to the company for staff to take part in an interactive skills session led by our SII Ambassadors. Our Ambassadors set various challenges (weaving through cones, going up and down ramps, navigating footpaths etc) which 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 meet 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.

In the past six months we have had some fantastic sessions. We worked with Kirby Group, an engineering and construction company. They hosted A Day in My Wheels on-site at one of their construction sites. We focused on health and safety for their session as there is a constant need to improve worksite safety and understanding in this industry. We had over 40 people attend the session. The Q&A portion of the day was a

highlight, with Kirby team members asking a wide range of questions and really listening to the answers from our ambassadors.

The Institute of Education hosted us in September. One of our Peer Officers, Gemma, spoke to a hall of over 100 students. She spoke about her story, from her injury to how she lives life to the fullest now post-injury. The students took turns using the wheelchairs for the interactive portion of the day to leave the school and made their way to St. Stephen's Green, experiencing the real world challenges faced every day. We were delighted to be in with the students, they will be the voices and minds of the next generation. We hope this experience will have created future disability advocates to continue working towards a more equal society.

On top of that, this year we are partnered with Flutter Entertainment as their charity of the year. Flutter have been hugely engaged with SII. Continuously wanting to learn more about spinal injuries and how they, as a team in their personal and professional lives, can help support and be inclusive of people with SCI and the disability community as a whole. They hosted two sessions of A Day in My Wheels this year bringing it to more and more of their colleagues. Not only did they take up the two sessions of A Day in My Wheels but they also took on a new challenge; wheelchair basketball!

For the first time, Spinal Injuries Ireland teamed up with Flutter to create a wheelchair basketball tournament. Organised by Peer Officer, Jack Shannon Cole and hosted in the National Basketball Arena, we saw 16 teams of





five come together to compete. There were over 80 participants with each team being led by a wheelchair basketball player with a lived experience to really show them how the pros do it! We also had a brilliant audience, cheering every basket made and commiserating every missed shot. Many thanks to the support team who made the day possible. We had winners and losers but the lasting memory will be the smiles on everyone's faces throughout the day. The teams spent the day learning how to play a fast paced and competitive game while also getting another glimpse into life as a wheelchair user.

Ann Costello from Flutter said: *"I can't put into words how much everyone enjoyed the day – I am STILL receiving messages about it"*

A Day in My Wheels has continued to give companies around Ireland a better understanding of the challenges faced by people with SCI each and everyday. We know each time we finish a session that we have created another group of people who will advocate for people with SCI and wheelchair users. Not only that, but they have more awareness of their environment and surroundings, even just simple things like moving a bin on a path out of the way.

## FAREWELL TO ERIC O'CONNOR

### We wish you well on your retirement



After more than five years of dedicated service, we bid a warm farewell to Eric O'Connor, our Finance Manager.

Throughout Eric's time with us, Eric has played a key role in strengthening our financial operations, bringing diligence, professionalism, and a deep commitment to our mission.

Eric's contributions have helped ensure we remained financially sustainable while delivering vital services to our service users who need them most. We are truly grateful for the impact Eric has made — not just through his expertise, but also through his integrity, and team spirit.

On behalf of everyone at Spinal Injuries Ireland, thank you, Eric for your outstanding work and heartfelt dedication. We wish you all the very best in your retirement chapter.

# FINANCIAL STATEMENTS

## Income and Expenditure Account Year ended 31st December 2024

	2023	2024
<b>Incoming Resources</b>		
Income from charitable activities	477,924	485,659
Income from donations and other sources	717,592	1,027,121
Gross Income for reporting period	<u><b>1,195,516</b></u>	<u><b>1,485,780</b></u>
<b>Expenditure</b>		
Expenditure on raising funds	475,408	402,395
Expenditure on charitable activities	875,621	1,055,755
	<u><b>1,333,029</b></u>	<u><b>1,458,170</b></u>
<b>Net Income/ (Expenditure) before tax for the reporting period</b>	(-137,513)	27,610

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 2024

	2023	2024
<b>Fixed Assets</b>		
Tangible Assets	14,141	10,353
<b>Current Assets</b>		
Debtors and prepayments	41,517	140,733
Cash at bank and in hand	1,069,525	1,034,737
<b>Total</b>	<u><b>1,111,042</b></u>	<u><b>1,175,470</b></u>
<b>Liabilities</b>		
Creditors: Amounts falling due within one year	(99,837)	(132,867)
Net Current Assets	1,011,205	1,042,603
<b>Net Assets</b>	<u><b>1,025,346</b></u>	<u><b>1,052,956</b></u>
<b>Funds of the charity:</b>		
Restricted Income Funds	69,717	11,462
Unrestricted Income Funds	955,629	1,041,494
<b>Total Charity Funds</b>	<u><b>1,025,346</b></u>	<u><b>1,052,956</b></u>



## Directors/Trustees

John Twomey  
Michael Lynam  
Eimear Smith  
Diarmuid Corry  
Kieran FitzGerald  
Ursula Barry (From Feb 2025)  
Noelle Cassidy (From Feb 2025)  
Brian Dempsey  
Emma Cahill

## Company Secretary

Alison Redden

## Chief Executive Officer

Fiona Bolger

## Registered Office

G3, The Pottery, Bakers Point,  
Pottery Road,  
Dun Laoghaire  
Co Dublin  
A96 Y932

## Company Registration Number

225205

## Charity Regulatory Authority Number

20031855

## Charity Number

CHY 11535

## Principal Bankers

Bank of Ireland Plc  
112 St Mobhi Road  
Glasnevin  
Dublin 9  
D09 E062

## Solicitors

Augustus Cullen Law  
7 Wentworth Place  
Wicklow  
A67 FX59

## Auditors

Power & Associates  
Chartered Certified Accountants  
Statutory Auditors  
1 Sussex Street  
Dun Laoghaire  
Co Dublin  
A96 C8N3

## SUPPORTED BY:



SLIGO • DUBLIN • BOYLE • BALLINA • GALWAY • LIMERICK  
www.callantansey.ie 071-9162032



CHY: 11535

Registered Charity Number: 20031855

[www.spinalinjuries.ie](http://www.spinalinjuries.ie)

