

WALK



ANNUAL REPORT 2023



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WALK's Vision, Mission & Values

OUR VISION

Our vision is an inclusive society where communities value and treat all people as equal citizens.

OUR MISSION

We are leaders in a movement for change, **empowering people** with disabilities to live self-determined lives in an **equal** and **inclusive society**.

OUR VALUES

SUPPORTS ARE:

RIGHTS
BASED

CAPACITY
BUILDING

RELATIONSHIP
ORIENTED

SOCIALLY
INCLUSIVE

PERSON
CENTRED

RESPECTFUL
OF THE RIGHT
TO SELF-
DETERMINATION

DELIVERED
LOCALLY

ORIENTED
TOWARDS
LEARNING &
CONTINUOUS
IMPROVEMENT

PROVEN
VALUE FOR
MONEY

WALK ARE...

- Flexible, resourceful and creative
- Contributors to the community
- Accountable to stakeholders
- Inclusive

Chairperson's statement

I am pleased to present our Annual Report for 2023. This year was another busy and productive year for WALK. On behalf of the Board of Directors I would like to take this opportunity to thank Joe and his team for their excellent work over the past year.

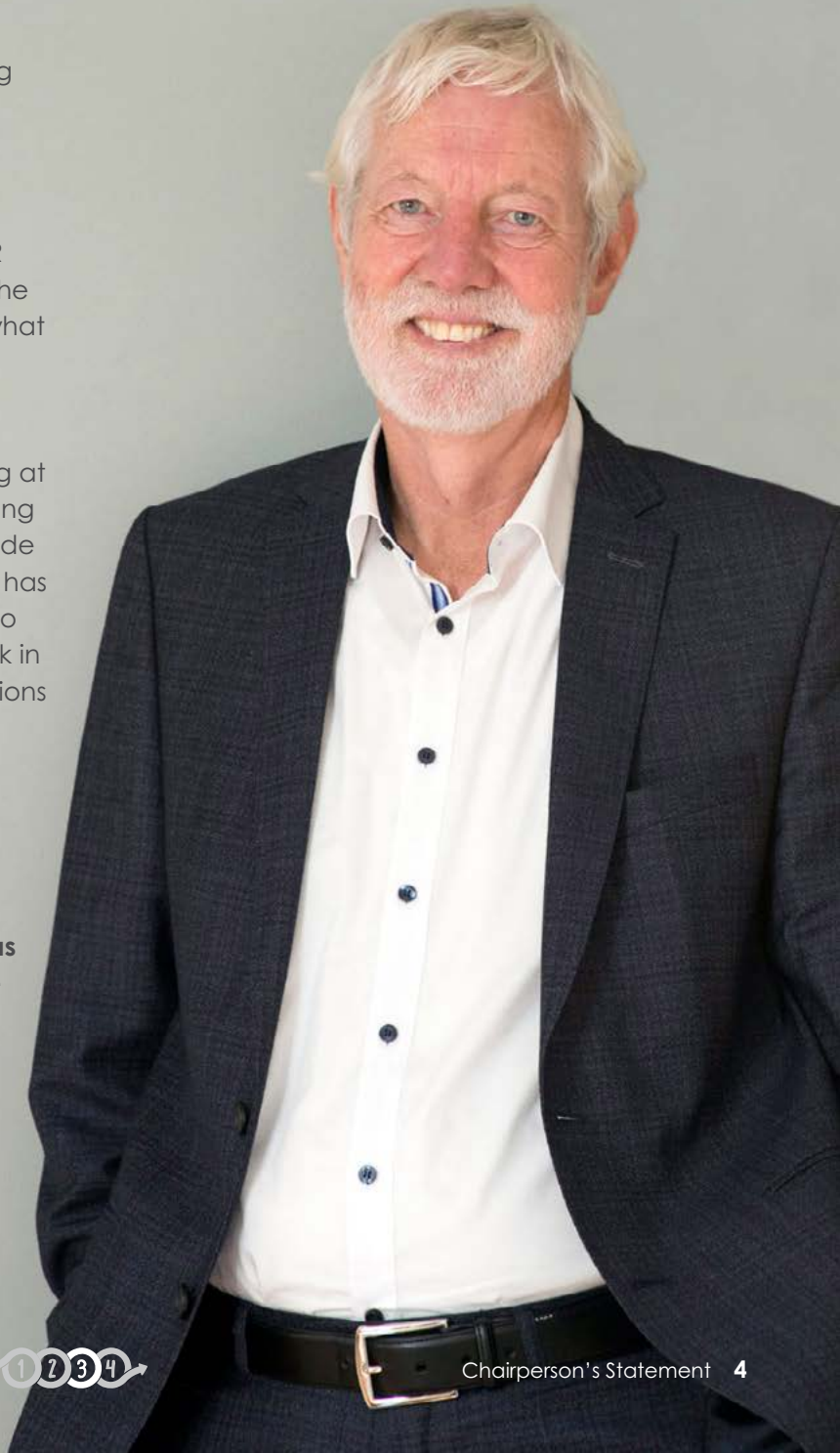
Some of our key achievements in 2023 have included the opening of a new service supporting individuals with a disability from the Ukraine, in Ireland; the progression of WALK's practice development, advocacy and human rights work and our success in securing funding from the Department of Education to grow the WALK PEER Supported Transition programme. As I reflect on the past year, I would like to say how proud I am of what has been achieved.

Our financial performance remains a significant challenge, and at the end of 2023 we are running at a significant deficit. This is a result of WALK not being adequately funded for the services that we provide and has meant that our Supported Living service has had to shift their priorities from residential reform to service survival. We will therefore continue to work in partnership with the HSE in 2024 to explore all options to remedy the current underfunding of WALK's services.

The shared values that our staff, volunteers and management bring to their work on a daily basis and the ongoing commitment and dedication of teams has been instrumental in ensuring WALK has remained focused and has continued to achieve ambitious goals during the past year.



John Bourke
Chairperson



CEO report

Welcome to WALK's 2023 Annual Report. 2023 was the third year of our 2021 – 2024 Strategic Plan. I am pleased to say that we have continued to make good progress in our Strategic Plan this year, despite the challenges that we continue to face.



In 2023 we have continued to progress our practice development, advocacy, and human rights work through delivering a programme of Person-Centred Practice and Leadership training, through the ongoing development of our practice champions and the delivery of human rights training to the people we support. We have developed the Human Rights Practice Developer role from a part time into a full-time role with a service wide remit, to further progress our work in increasing individuals' knowledge of their human rights and ensuring the voices of the people we support are heard at decision making levels.

In 2023, WALK and our partners Kare were delighted to win the Civil Service Excellence and Innovation award for the Oireachtas Work and Learn Programme which is run in partnership with the Houses of the Oireachtas. We have continued to develop our student placement model and have increased the number of higher education providers and departments that we are working with. Plus, a series of information sessions were delivered to families to support futures planning.

We also had our first comprehensive Governance review in 2023. The review was completed by Mazars a leading international audit, tax, advisory and consulting firm which has three offices in Ireland and operates internationally in over 100 countries. Maureen Kelly, Mazars Internal Audit Director was highly complementary of the significant work carried out in WALK in terms of Governance structures, processes, and commitment to best practice.

The ongoing challenge of underfunding, a significant end of year deficit and staff turnover has continued to put pressure on WALK's services. However, the high level of resilience, flexibility, and professionalism in our staff teams has enabled us to continue to achieve ambitious goals.

I am immensely proud of the work that has been done in the past year and on behalf of WALK I would like to thank each and every one of our staff and stakeholders for their dedication, hard work, and passion. I very much look forward to working with you all again in the coming year.

Joe Mason
CEO

What we do

WALK provides a number of different services for people with Intellectual Disabilities, Autism and Complex Needs. The collective goal of all our services is to help each person that we support to work towards a good life. We do this by supporting people to build their independence, through promoting valued experiences, through action learning, and through assisting individuals to become valued members of their communities.

THE SERVICES AND SUPPORTS THAT WE PROVIDED IN 2023...

WALK provided Supported Living services across 18 community settings. 17 in Dublin, and 1 in Kildare.

WALK's Supported Living services consist of a range of individualised and shared living arrangements. All supports are person centred and are underpinned by the principles of a rights-based approach, safety and wellbeing, responsiveness, and accountability.

The WALK PEER programme was funded by the Department of Education through the Dormant Accounts Fund in 2023

to collaborate with seven special schools and three post-primary schools around Ireland to pilot the supported transition model bridging the gap from School to further education, training, and employment.

WALK provided Day Support services across 13 Day Support hubs and 4 project sites across Dublin.

WALK's Day Support services are underpinned by the New Directions principles of person centredness, community involvement, active citizenship, and high-quality service provision.

Our Day Support services incorporate Careers and Employment which provides support to access training, work experience and employment in the open labour market.

WALK's Day Support services are also funded to provide respite (in WALK our respite services are called alternative breakaways).

These are community-based weekends away that provide a break to families in 2023.

What we do

Walkinstown Green Social Enterprise Ltd continued to offer vocational work experience placements and supported employment opportunities to people supported by WALK.

These initiatives have supported individuals to build their confidence, skills, and experience in the workplace through hands on practice and have led to transitions into opportunities with external employers.

WALK's Practice Development Team provides training and support to staff across WALK around person centred practice development, and human rights and participation.

Championing initiatives aimed at supporting individuals to make their own choices, to advocate for themselves, and to grow the meaningful participation of individuals with lived experience both in WALK's work and in participation and rights-based initiatives outside of WALK.

WALK's Finance and Administration Department includes Financial Reporting to stakeholders, the maintenance of statutory books and records, Information Technology, Human Resources, Facilities, Procurement and Administration.

The Finance and Administration Department works with teams across all WALK Family entities. This is to seek to ensure that appropriate harmonious policies, procedures, systems of control, reporting mechanisms, training programmes, and supports are in place.

WALK's Clinical Supports have continued to provide a range of health, wellbeing and safeguarding supports to the people who use WALK's services.

The Clinical Team provide training and support to people supported and staff teams focusing on the above areas and facilitate information sessions for families. To assist and empower the people we support to have autonomy over their lives.

A year in review...

Supported
Living
Celebration
Day 2023

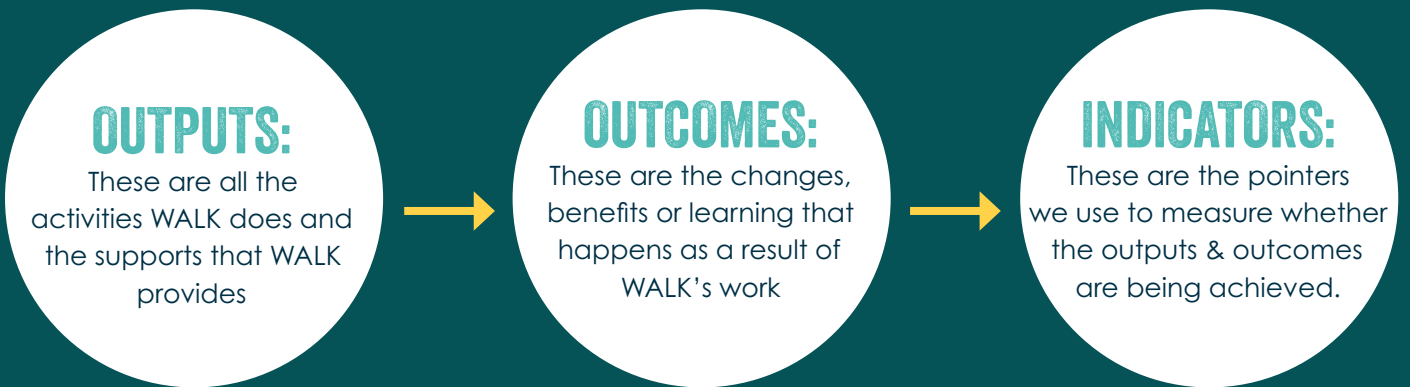
WALK's Strategic Plan Review

WALK's 2021 – 2024 Strategic Plan was launched in June 2021. Strategic Plan progress reports are published on WALK's website on a bi-monthly basis following Board of Director meetings.

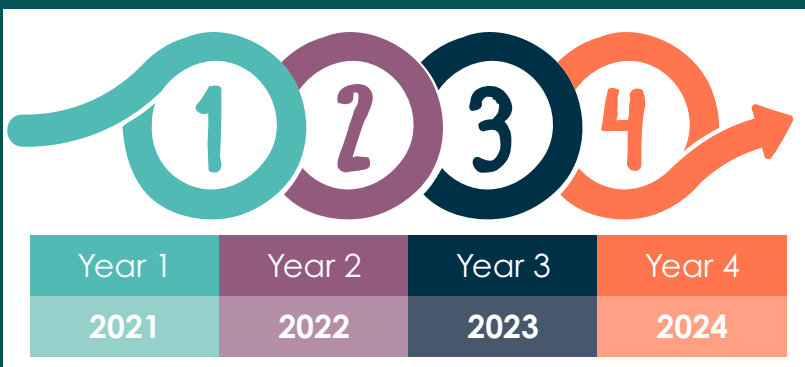
OUR STRATEGIC GOALS



Progress is measured on the following scale:



2023 represents year 3 of a 4-year cycle for WALK's Strategic Plan 2021 – 2024.

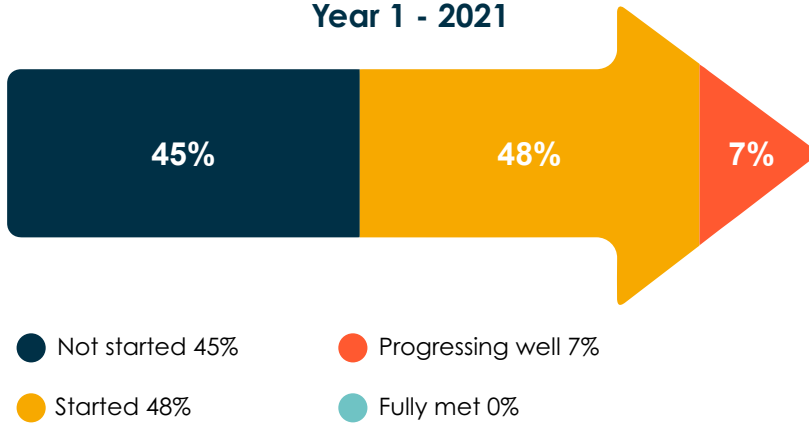


The Plan is measured using a monitoring and evaluation tool. This tool breaks the plan down into:

- Not started
- Started
- Progressing well
- Fully met

WALK's Strategic Plan Review

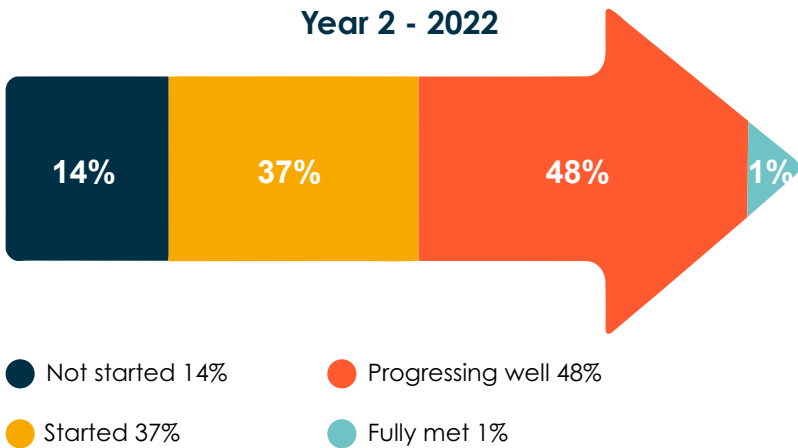
PROGRESS ON OUR STRATEGIC PLAN Year 1 - 2021



Below are the challenges that WALK faced in 2023 in relation to the implementation of our strategic objectives for the year -

Our financial performance remains a significant challenge, and at the end of 2023 we are running at a significant deficit due to WALK not being adequately funded for the services that we provide, or for the increased costs incurred as a result of inflationary pressures and the resourcing of regulatory requirements.

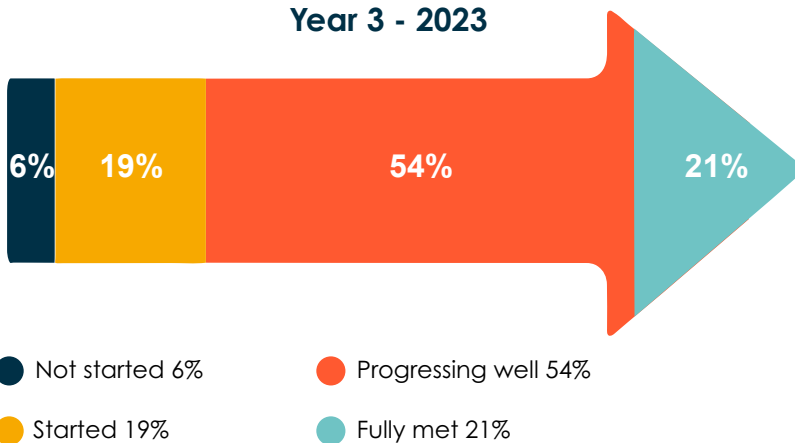
PROGRESS ON OUR STRATEGIC PLAN Year 2 - 2022



The unsustainable pay gap in section 39 agencies is ongoing and although there has been a small reduction in the level of staff turnover in 2023; staff turnover has continued to be high, to put pressure on the delivery of WALK's services and has meant a significant loss of knowledge and experience throughout the organisation.

In 2023, WALK have also experienced staff recruitment challenges which has meant that some positions have been left unfilled.

PROGRESS ON OUR STRATEGIC PLAN Year 3 - 2023



Although we have carried out significant work towards meeting our Strategic Objectives this year. The above challenges have delayed progress. We have therefore carried some of the plans that we outlined in our 2023 Strategic Plan review forwards to 2024.

WALK will continue to work in partnership with the HSE in 2024 to explore all options to remedy the current underfunding of our services and to address the above challenges.

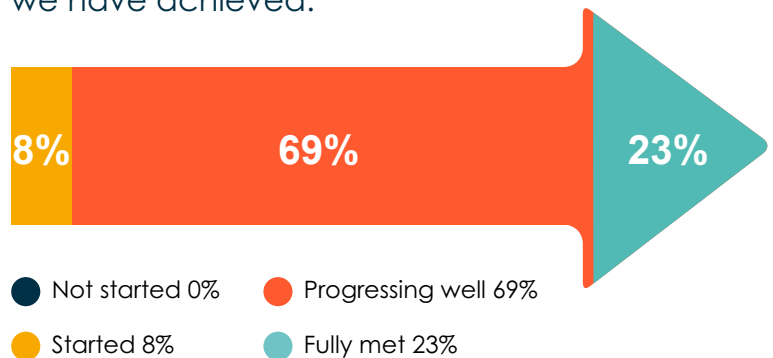
Strategic Action

THE ACHIEVEMENT OF OUR STRATEGIC GOALS IS UNDERPINNED BY THE COMPLETION OF THE FOUR STRATEGIC ACTIONS.

Our progress on each strategic action in 2023 is outlined below:

1 We will conduct a root and branch examination of our organisational structures and functions - to ensure that we have best configured our resources to support the achievement of service users' goals and face the challenges of the future.

By the end of 2023 (year 3 of 4) we have achieved:



Our main achievements in 2023 –

Prepared for and engaged in HSE Service Review.

Continued to reconfigure teams and departments to match the current and future needs of the organisation.

Reviewed and agreed Day Supports location capacity, and capacity for new referrals with Community Healthcare Organisations (CHOs).

Increased Human Rights and Participation Practice Developer role from a part time to full time role with a cross organisation remit to expand and build on success of Human Rights Practice Development.

Reviewed and strengthened the Peer Representative structure.

Increased focus of the work of teams on the person-centred goals of individuals supported rather than geographical locations or premises.

Implemented functional improvements across WALK, following recruitment lifecycle review.

Expanded student placement opportunities to include placement opportunities within WALK's Clinical Support services.

Revised Organisation Chart in place.

Piloted and reviewed Leadership development training. Plan in place to roll out training on an annual basis.

Future plans for 2024 –

Reconfiguration of teams and departments to be completed to ensure organisational needs are met for 2021 - 2024 Strategic Planning period.

Roll out next phase of Leadership Development Training.

Strengthen WALK's student placement model and provide opportunities across WALK's Day Support, Supported Living and Clinical Support services.

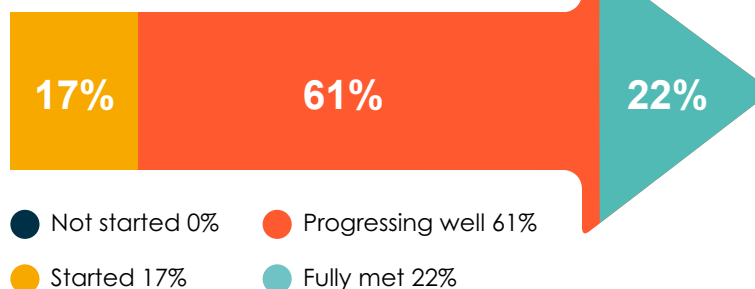
WALK will continue to work in partnership with the HSE in 2024 to explore all options to remedy the current underfunding of WALK's services.

Strategic Action

2

We will carry out an in-depth review of our service quality systems and our overall approach to person centred planning - to ensure that the systems we use promote a strong bias for action and the achievement of challenging goals.

By the end of 2023 (year 3 of 4) we have achieved:



Our main achievements in 2023 –

Application, selection and induction complete regarding involvement of people with lived experience of WALK services in organisations Assisted Decision-Making Steering Group.

Local quality assurance audits completed in Supported Living and Day Support services and corresponding action plans developed.

Health Care Forum developed in 2023 to help to enhance health care approaches and interventions.

Review of Practice Development Champions initiative complete and recommendations implemented.

Programme to embed Person Centred Practice across the organisation and to help grow our person-centred culture ongoing. Person-Centred Practice Training and Person-Centred Practice Leadership training delivered and champions working together to help inform practice.

Increased usage of centralised resource systems, including Sharepoint and Padlet, for Departmental / cross organisational resource sharing.

Ongoing collaboration with Circle Voluntary Housing, Respond Housing and Dublin City Council regarding potential new housing opportunities for the people we support.

Series of meetings with, and workshop delivered by Bob Rhodes (Lives Through Friends) to assist organisational learning in supporting individuals to develop natural support networks through friendships, connections, and circles of support. Funding successfully secured to progress partnership through HSE.

Future plans for 2024 –

Pilot project to be delivered in three WALK locations focused on supporting individuals to develop natural support networks through friendships, connections, and circles of support.

Continued programme of work to be rolled out around strengthening mechanisms for the involvement of the people we support in WALK, in line with WALK's Practice Development Vision and Strategy.

Practice Development Team Training programme to be rolled out in 2024, to include: Person Centred Practice staff training, Person Centred Leadership training, Person Centred Planning (MAP & PATH), and Human Rights training. Plus, the Champions Programme will be ongoing in 2024.

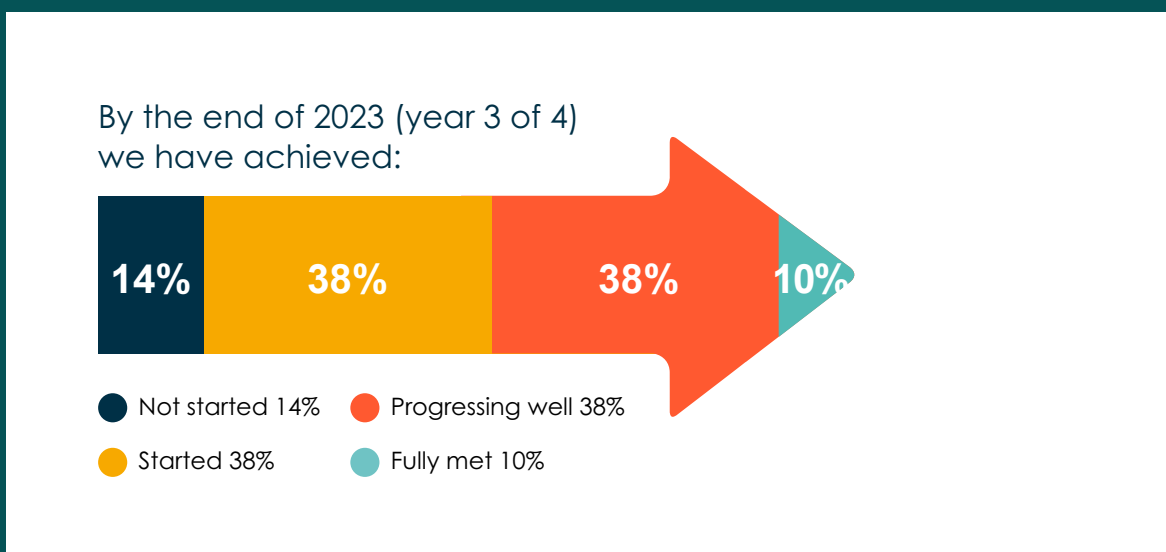
Continue local quality audits across Supported Living and Day Support services and the implementation of associated audit action plans.

Continue collaboration with Circle Voluntary Housing, Respond Housing and Dublin City Council to work towards further individualised living options for the people we support.

Strategic Action

3

We will progress the values-based enrichment of our recruitment, induction, staff training, management, and leadership functions – to ensure that the values we espouse are - situated within a unified organisational culture, are owned by all organisation members, that they promote habits of regular reflective practice and that they guide all organisational actions.



Our main achievements in 2023 –

Review of system of relief management and on call system completed.

Supported Living Team Coordinators designed and delivered training to Team Leaders in interview skills, supervision, and performance development.

Report reviewing staff turnover levels completed.

Increase in the range of formats used to advertise jobs.

Increased use of reflective practice in teams, training, and organisational events.

2023 Strategic Plan Reflection Day held.

Future plans for 2024 –

Cross representative group to review WALK's values.

Revised staff induction programme to be rolled out to new staff.

Professional Development System, competency framework and probation format to be reviewed.

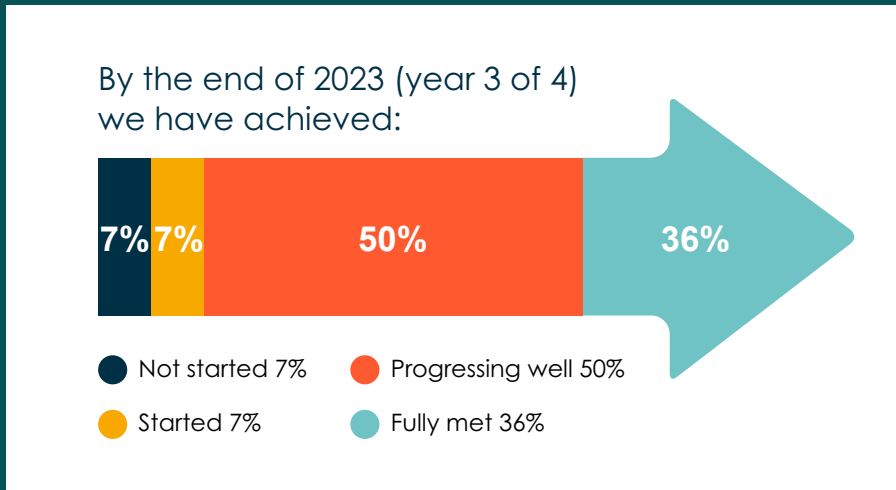
Continue rolling recruitment initiatives in Supported Living services.

Ongoing programme of training to be rolled out for Team Leaders.

Strategic Action



We will enhance our communications capability both internally and externally - to ensure that organisation members receive relevant information in a timely and efficient manner; and that key audiences in the external environment are well informed of the organisations mission, activities and need for resources and support.



Our main achievements in 2023 –

Procurement process for build of new WALK website complete, and project plan agreed to complete redesign.

Promotional videos complete, plus banner design agreed and ready for print.

Organisation briefing events recommenced with three briefings delivered in 2023.

Information sessions delivered for the people we support and families to disseminate information regarding the National Federation of Voluntary Bodies Pre-Budget Submission, how this relates to WALK's local issues and how they could get involved.

Two Townhall meetings held involving the people we support, families, WALK staff and local Political representatives regarding the budget campaign, capturing the voices of our key stakeholder groups on the current challenges they face and key asks.

Two lunch and learn sessions delivered for staff members and the people we support to build further awareness of the Guiding Principles of the Assisted Decision-Making Act and promote reflective practice.

Supported Living and Day Supports Celebration days held in 2023 to support staff to meet, reflect and collaborate with colleagues.

Future plans for 2024 –

Complete communication strategy for each stakeholder group.

Complete website redesign.

Series of family information sessions to be scheduled for 2024.

Real Life Stories

The true reflection on the work that WALK carries out can be found in the stories of the people we support.

This section provides a flavour of some of the many stories from the people we support. Documenting their journey over the last year, and providing examples of some of the innovative work that has taken place in WALK in 2023.

These stories demonstrate how WALK's vision, mission and values are lived daily in the work that we do.

Real Life Stories



Studying English at the Robert Emmet Community Development Project

NEW DAY SUPPORT HUB OPENS, IN CITYWEST:

In response to the ongoing conflict in the Ukraine, in October 2023 WALK commenced meetings with the HSE and families regarding plans to set up a new Day Support hub for individuals with an intellectual disability who had come to Ireland from the Ukraine to escape the conflict. Two staff from the Ukraine were recruited to support individuals and commenced meetings with families and the six individuals they'd be supporting in November 2023. Initial focuses for individuals included building independence and getting to know the local area through engaging in travel training – travelling to local community amenities.

The team have built links with local community organisations to access opportunities for the individuals supported including the Robert Emmet Community Development Project, South Inner City Community Development Association and Rua Red. Each person supported has a weekly schedule in line with their needs, interests and ambitions in areas including English classes, arts and crafts classes, local gym membership, cookery classes and membership of a local singing group.

In 2024, the team plan to work towards accessing journey to work training for the people supported which will include: CV building, support to navigate the Irish jobs market and engaging in interview skills preparation. Plus, the team plan to support individuals to participate in the bronze Gaisce President's Award consisting of working on a personal skill, a physical recreation activity, community involvement and an adventure journey which takes place over a six-month period.

Real Life Stories

“My name is Kathryn Griffin, and I have attended WALK’s Day Services since 2012. I have had many accomplishments on my journey with support from WALK, but most recently I started a paid position in the Food Lab in the 360 VHI Carrickmines Health Clinic.”

KATHRYN’S SUCCESS STORY



*Kathryn at work
in the Food Lab
in the 360 VHI
Carrickmines
Health Clinic*

Real Life Stories

“ In June 2023, I had just finished up a short-term work experience in Mutz Nuts pet store located in Tallaght Village where I was asked to do a number of tasks including: Cleaning the shop front and storage area, maintaining the visitors walk around area, arranging stock and weighing the food for the inhouse pets. I did this work experience for six weeks as a re-introduction to work because I hadn't worked since the pandemic. I knew I wanted to get back into work, but I didn't know exactly what I wanted to do or where I wanted to work.

Working with staff from Village Square, Job coaches and my family I was supported to focus on what I was interested in and to narrow down my work options as it was sometimes overwhelming with all the possibilities. This sometimes led me to apply for numerous positions. Whilst doing this, I don't think I was fully

KATHRYN'S SUCCESS STORY

aware of the tasks or what would be expected of me in some positions or if I would even like the environments.

So, my keyworker and support staff encouraged me to start a new exploration period where I narrowed my interests down to three main areas that would consistently pop up which were Catering, Retail and working with Animals. From this I was able to develop a CV that suited my targeted interests and I spoke with my support circle hoping to look into the pet store Mutz Nuts.

This was a success that led to the bigger success in VHI. While doing the six-week work placement, I realized I wanted to try another avenue as the pet store was not exactly what I wanted, although it was interesting. Jo my Job coach approached staff and I about the VHI Food Lab position which was a paid position, but it was further away, with new people and tasks that I didn't know... a lot of thinking was needed when considering this but while working with staff and family I started to realise that change was good and that new opportunities were good to take hold of as it was important to push myself further and see my true capabilities.

After my six-week placement it was now May 2023. Mason (My keyworker), Jo (My Jobcoach), and I met in Carrickmines where I was introduced to Petra (manager of VHI Food Lab) and her team. I felt like I fitted in straight away on the day I met everyone as it was an instant bond with the team.

Instead of a formal interview, Jo and Petra had set up a trial session which was basically 3 hours of work experience to show I could follow a task, collaborate with the team, and support staff where needed when it got busy. Low and behold I was approached by Petra asking me to join her team on a three-month relief basis.

It has now been nine months since I started my three months contracted hours, which is fantastic. Not only did I achieve getting the position, but I was asked to become a permanent relief staff which is amazing. I started off cleaning tables and greeting customers to eventually bringing food to the customers.

Now I have the skills to run the till, make coffees, serve food, deal with customer issues if there are any, and price the items each morning on top of my other tasks. I now even supervise students from fourth year secondary school placement... I really enjoy my job although like any job it brings stress, I will continue to work on coping skills for this and further develop my personal goals.

Since starting work, I have grown in confidence, communication skills, education with regard to food hygiene, customer service skills, math's, writing, social skills, and career goals. Outside of working 3 or 4 days a week I do online training for work which allows me to develop further skills.

This is my success story, I hope this helps inspire other people on their journeys!



Real Life Stories

BEN'S WORK EXPERIENCE WITH TALLAGHT ECHO:

Ben, a passionate poet and storyteller, achieved a significant milestone in 2023 securing work experience with the Tallaght Echo newspaper. The opportunity arose in April 2023 when Ben, armed with his love for words, submitted a selection of his poetry to the paper. Impressively, his talent resonated with the editorial team granting him the freedom to explore and write about topics close to his heart.



This included Ben choosing to write an article highlighting the artistic journey of one of his peers. Documenting their artistic journey and achievement of having their artwork showcased in an art gallery and national exhibition. This article not only showcased Ben's writing talent but also highlighted his ability to celebrate the achievements of others within the WALK community.

Not stopping there, Ben expanded his repertoire by developing his interviewing skills through interviewing renowned playwright Seamus O'Rourke, crafting an article that captivated readers and demonstrated Ben's newfound skills.

Despite Ben's work experience coming to an end in August 2023, Ben has been continuing on his writing journey through engaging in creative writing weekly to build his writing portfolio and is applying for writing apprenticeships. He also plans and facilitates weekly workshops for his peers in the Harold's Cross hub to share his learning and experience.



SAMUEL'S ARTISTIC JOURNEY SO FAR...

Samuel showcasing his art at the Connecting Artists exhibition

Samuel is passionate about engaging in art and enjoys producing his own art pieces. In 2023, through the Connection Arts Centre, 10 artists were selected nationwide to participate in a 10 week Connecting Artists Programme. Out of 100s of applicants, Samuel was one of the artists chosen.

The programme involved a weekly online group art session guided by an experienced art facilitator to help develop group members practice, and a weekly one to one mentoring session with a dedicated mentor providing guidance and support.

Throughout the programme each artist worked on developing a piece of art to be exhibited in the group exhibition. The programme culminated in a 3-day exhibition in the Royal College of Surgeons Ireland (RCSI), Dublin. The launch took place on the 16th of July and the national exhibition was officially opened by presenter Miriam O'Callaghan.

Samuel's art was part of the exhibition, with over 300 people

visiting the exhibition over the three days. Samuel's work was also featured in local newspapers including the Tallaght Echo and the Dublin Gazette.

In 2024, Samuel hopes to continue to create art pieces and for his work to be featured in further art exhibitions in the future.

The Connecting Artists exhibition at the Royal College of Surgeons



VOICE AND CHOICE: ASSISTED DECISION MAKING



On the 26th April 2023, the Assisted Decision Making (Capacity) Act 2015 commenced following several years of discussions, debates and revisions. The Act is a significant piece of human rights legislation repealing previous laws preventing people with intellectual disabilities and/or autism from making decisions about their own lives.

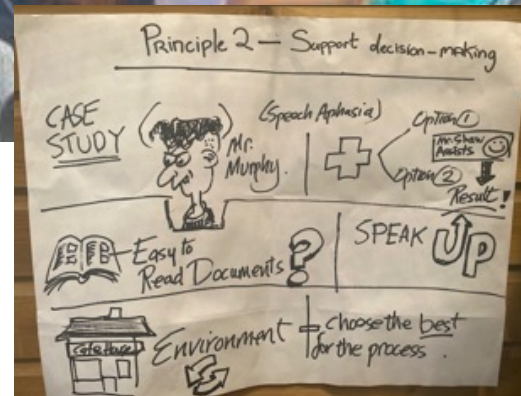
Following initial preparation work around the Assisted Decision-Making (ADM) Act in 2022 WALK's Assisted Decision-Making Steering Group, which includes representatives from across the organisation, continued their work in 2023. With the aim of raising awareness and encouraging learning about the Assisted

Above: Lunch and learn event focusing on the Guiding Principles of the Assisted Decision-Making Act; Right: Lunch and learn notes on Principle 2 of the Guiding Principles – Support Decision Making

Decision-Making Act amongst persons supported, staff members and families the group designed and delivered a number of projects throughout the year.

DECISION SUPPORT SERVICE INFORMATION SESSIONS:

Introductory information sessions were held online in May 2023 and were facilitated by Aine Flynn, Director of the Decision Support Service. Two sessions were held; one for people supported by WALK and one for families. The sessions outlined the main principles of the Act and why this legislation is important going forwards. Attendees found the sessions informative and were given the opportunity to ask questions.



LUNCH AND LEARN EVENTS:

The next series of events focusing on raising awareness around the Act were lunch and learn sessions. These events were held in June and July 2023 in the Green Kitchen, part of the Walkinstown Green Social Enterprise, and were aimed at people supported and staff from WALK's different departments.

These interactive sessions discussed the 9 Guiding Principles of the Assisted Decision Making (Capacity) Act. Participants were divided into groups and asked to explore what the Guiding Principles mean to them. By bringing together different stakeholders the sessions allowed different voices and perspectives to be heard.

Real Life Stories



Photo taken at the Assisted Decision-Making drama workshops

VOICE AND CHOICE: ADM DRAMA IN PARTNER- SHIP WITH BLUE DIAMOND DRAMA ACADEMY

Shortly after the full commencement of the Act, WALK's Assisted Decision-Making Steering Group were successful in securing funding from the National Lottery Community Fund to deliver a project aimed at increasing local knowledge of the Assisted Decision-Making Act. The first part of the project utilised drama and art as inclusive mediums to share information and support understanding of the act amongst people supported.

In partnership with the Blue Diamond Drama Academy, a performing arts company for people with intellectual disabilities, 10 participants from across WALK Day Supports took part in drama workshops, during July and August 2023, focused on voice and choice.

As well as using movement, mime and role playing, the workshops also provided an opportunity for participants to express their thoughts on decision making on paper, creating spoken word poetry.

Throughout the workshops, decision making was linked to human rights by participants. Access to education, employment and housing emerged as key themes in the discussions. However, many also spoke of their desire to make smaller, everyday decisions. One individual memorably presented a written piece on his desire to make decisions that would help others and wanting to become involved in local activism to benefit his community.

The Assisted Decision-Making drama workshops provided a unique opportunity for both people supported and staff to learn together, sharing ideas and experiences along the way.

INVOLVEMENT OF PERSONS WITH LIVED EXPERIENCE

As the work of the Assisted Decision-Making Steering Group progressed, WALK commenced plans to involve individuals with lived experience as part of the group to ensure their ideas and experience are a central voice in the groups work moving forwards. Following the application process, six individuals were successful. Prior to partaking in meetings, training was delivered in August 2023 to the successful candidates regarding the Act and what it means to be a part of a Steering Group.

NEXT STEPS...

In 2024, WALK's Assisted Decision-Making Steering Group will continue to focus on increasing knowledge and awareness around the Assisted Decision-Making Act through new interactive projects, this will include work with a graphic illustrator on an illustrated piece covering the project and individuals' experiences.

REBECCA'S JOURNEY TO INDEPENDENT TRAVEL:

Rebecca Egan joined WALK in September 2023. Since then, she has been an active participant in WALK's travel training programme. The first step Rebecca worked on has been the journey from her home to the WALK Galtymore hub. This has included learning the route, and building up her confidence to use, the Luas.

Initially, Rebecca was supported by staff to travel from Kingswood to Drimnagh. However, as Rebecca built up her skills and confidence in travelling by Luas staff gradually phased out travel supports, and Rebecca has now completed this stage of her travel training. Rebecca is now able to complete the journey to and from the WALK Galtymore hub independently.

In addition, Rebecca has taken another significant step forward in her journey to work and has enrolled in the Green Kitchen work experience programme. According to her manager, she has been successfully completing all assigned tasks and responsibilities.

In 2024 Rebecca plans to work on further developing her independent travel skills, to complete her work experience placement at the Green Kitchen and to work on the next steps in her journey to work.

Real Life Stories

EASPD (EUROPEAN ASSOCIATION OF PROVIDERS OF SERVICES FOR PEOPLE WITH A DISABILITY) 'LIGHTHOUSE' ACTIVITY



EASPD (European Association of Providers of Services for People with a Disability) 'Lighthouse' activity. (Hugh Cassidy – Second Row centre, Kevin Barnes – Second Row Right)

“A conversation about what really constitutes inclusion for us all, and especially our fellow citizens with intellectual disabilities and/or autism, was attended by Hugh Cassidy (Team Leader) and I, Kevin Barnes (Head of Practice Development) in Cheltenham, UK from the 6th – 8th September 2023. LivesthroughFriends, in association with The Butterfly Garden, hosted this year's European Association of

Providers of Services for People with a Disability (EASPD) 'Lighthouse' activity. Participants from Moldova, Malta, Greece, Belgium, Spain, Ireland, and Ukraine, who share their hosts' commitment to support and enable good contributing and included lives, spent three days together exploring what it takes to deliver these outcomes.

Over the next three days we talked and learnt from each other and our hosts. We heard from LivesthroughFriends who

spoke about the importance of community engagement and of staff focusing their work on building relationships with informal carers and voluntary organisations to support individuals as citizens. Bob Rhodes talked about it being a journey and of the importance of staying the course and highlighted that supporting individuals to build meaningful networks and relationships within their community in line with their best possible life increases meaningful engagement and reduces

Real Life Stories

service dependency. This reinforced the importance of continuing to work to develop transformative leaders and supporting them to build and sustain passionate, skilled, valued, resourceful and resilient teams.

Tim Keilty and Liz Leach Murphy Directors of LivestroughFriends spoke about Person Centredness and reminded us that contribution is the key to friendships, relationships, community, good health, and great lives; and of the importance of people and organisations in being ambitious for the people they support and what they can achieve.

There were a number of other valuable contributors at the conference including Rebecca Pauls and Shelley Nessman from the Plan Institute, in Canada. Who

spoke about the fact that being vulnerable can sometimes stop people from sharing their needs, but that people with disabilities are the ones who know best and that it is our job to listen. Martin Simon and Chris Brown, LivestroughFriends Directors, spoke on Strengths-Based Community Practice, and Koula Louannou and Vasilis Kalopisis from Petagma, Greece shared their experiences of developing meaningful supports through relationships, connections, families, and community.

Chris Evans, The Butterfly Garden's founder, talked about setting up the Butterfly Garden an educational, therapeutic, and recreational gardening initiative for people of all ages with a disability. It has been running for 20 years and is entirely funded through donations and people volunteering their time. With

Chris's generosity of spirit and inclusiveness rubbing off on those around him, creating community. There was significant learning through the 'Lighthouse' activity and following the conference a series of meetings with, and workshop delivered by Bob Rhodes (LivestroughFriends) took place at WALK. To assist organisational learning around supporting individuals to develop natural support networks through friendships, connections, and circles of support.

Subsequently, WALK staff delivered a presentation to the HSE which successfully secured funding to progress the partnership. In 2024, a pilot project will be delivered in three WALK locations focusing on supporting individuals to develop natural support networks through friendships, connections, and circles of support. ”

Mark's Acting Journey

Mark Lee uses WALK's Supported Living and Day Support services. Mark has a passion for drama and film making and has an interest in becoming an actor in the future. With a particular interest in being an actor in films.

In line with Mark's interest in drama and film making in 2023 Mark's keyworker researched local courses and identified a course focusing on 'Improvisation and Team

Building' run by Dublin South City Partnership. It was a one day a week short course, including improvisation skills and portraying different characters. The aim was to support Mark to build his skills and confidence in acting.

The course took place in Goldenbridge, a 20-minute walk from Mark's home. Mark walked to the class each week and participated in all the different aspects of the classes. He loved every minute of it. He socialised

with his classmates during the breaks, got to know new people with similar interests and built-up relationships.

Mark is loving life and is really happy. As well as exploring future avenues in the areas of drama and film, he is currently working on revamping his home - shopping for new furniture.

In terms of next steps, Mark is working with staff to research further drama and film workshops and opportunities. So, he can continue to build his skills in this area and work towards his goal of acting in the future.

Real Life Stories

JOE'S STORY – CHOICE AND COMMUNICATION

Joe has used WALK's Supported Living service for a number of years and joined WALK's Day Support services in 2020. Joe is nonverbal and uses alternative methods of communication to be understood and to understand. Joe's preferred methods of communication include using hand gestures and visual aids. Joe uses these methods to communicate his choices and what he wants in his day-to-day life.

Joe has a long-standing interest in gardening and made the decision that he wanted to further this interest when he joined WALK's Day Support hub in Crumlin. Initially Joe volunteered at Armagh Road, Crumlin and Clonmacnoise building his skills through regenerating the gardens and polytunnel. Following this Joe built on his gardening knowledge through completing a horticulture course at Loreto College. He then went on to get involved in the Horticulture Project at Richmond Barracks, as part of Dublin City Councils Creative Engagement team, taking on a social role with responsibility for maintaining the flowerbeds.

In 2023, Joe applied for a work placement in the Green Kitchen Garden centre and successfully interviewed for the position. It was the perfect fit for Joe as it connects with his love of gardening and his goal of getting paid employment in the area of gardening in the future.

In 2023 Joe also engaged in a video project to share his story around choice and communication.

The video can be accessed here:

https://youtu.be/t6km_OUfYDc



In 2024, Joe plans to continue to gain further experience in gardening and hopes to work towards progressing into paid employment in gardening in the future.

Joe Healy



Joe maintaining the flower beds at Richmond Barracks



Joe engaging in his work placement at the Green Kitchen

Real Life Stories



Adam Lawlor

ADAM'S STEPS TOWARDS BECOMING A FITNESS INSTRUCTOR / PERSONAL TRAINER

Adam's main goal for the future is to become a fitness instructor / personal trainer. Adam had been supported to complete a QQI level 5 course in Sports Psychology and Fitness in Pearse College prior to 2023 and completed work experience in local gyms including Energy Fitness and the Herberton Leisure Centre to build up his skillset.

After exploring his options further Adam found that to gain paid employment as a fitness instructor / personal trainer with a QQI level 5 qualification and work experience that his options were limited. So, Adam began exploring QQI level 6 courses

that he would need to achieve his dream job. Adam found a course in Pearse College and enrolled to complete his QQI level 6 course in Sports Psychology and Soccer Coaching.

Adam completed his first semester with a distinction, whilst also completing work experience in Energie Fitness, a local gym and maintaining his paid role as a retail assistant in Regatta. Adam is dedicated to his studies and ensuring the completion of his assignments. In 2024, when he has completed the course, Adam plans to work on securing his dream job as a fitness instructor / personal trainer.

Paul's gardening journey

Paul is supported through WALK's Supported Living services, and he has a huge passion for gardening. As well as looking after his garden at home, in line with his interests, Paul became a member of his local community clean up. Through meeting people at the community clean up Paul learnt about the local community gardens and made the decision to become a member of the community gardens.

Through Paul's hard work and dedication to looking after the

gardens, in 2023 Paul was given his own allotment to care for which he takes great pride in.

Paul's allotment is at Turvey Park. He spends his time there tending to his allotment and growing fruit and vegetables. In particular, Paul really enjoys growing more traditional fruits such as rhubarb and strawberries. Paul loves to share what he has grown with his housemates and family and enjoys baking rhubarb pie to share.

Paul benefits a lot from his gardening and talks about the peacefulness he experiences when gardening, the joy

of cooking and eating the produce he has grown.

In 2024, Paul is hoping that the skills he has learnt through his gardening journey so far will help him to gain employment in Horticulture. Following this he plans to put the money he earns towards travel, which is another passion of Paul's.



Paul working on his allotment

Real Life Stories

JADE'S JOURNEY FROM STUDENT PLACEMENT TO WALK EMPLOYEE

Jade is studying in TU Dublin, Tallaght Campus and completed her second-year student placement at Orwell. Orwell is home to two individuals who receive Supported Living supports through WALK.

Jade developed her skills over a 12-week period working closely with the Team Leader and the core staff team in Orwell learning from their guidance and expertise.

Jade built up really positive working relationships with people supported whilst on placement. Taking on a variety of tasks to support individuals to progress and achieve their person-centred goals. The individuals Jade had supported at Orwell during her placement advocated for Jade to join the team permanently following her placement.

Jade subsequently completed an interview for a Relief Support Worker position at WALK and was successful. Jade is now working as part of the core staff team in Orwell and is a valued addition to the team.

Jade is continuing to flourish into an outstanding Social Care Worker.

From left to right: Ollie, David and Jade at Avon Ri, Blessington



Real Life Stories

WALK'S PRE BUDGET EVENTS 2023

A series of information sessions were delivered for the people we support and families to disseminate information regarding the National Federation of Voluntary Service Providers Pre-Budget Submission, how this relates to WALK's local issues and how the people we support, and families could get involved.

Four information sessions were held two lunch and learn events for people supported and the staff supporting them, and two information sessions for families.

The information sessions outlined key budget messages relating to equality of opportunity, equality of access, the need for equity of resourcing, risks to the sustainability of disability services and key asks in these

areas. The sessions gave people the opportunity to learn more about the current and upcoming challenges in relation to budget 2024, and provided an opportunity for the people we support, their families and staff members to have their voices heard.

Following the information sessions a Townhall meeting was held in Rua Red Arts Centre on 19th September involving the people we support, families, WALK staff and local Political representatives regarding the budget campaign. This captured the voices of our key stakeholder groups on the current challenges they face, and their key asks to local Political Representatives. In addition, a follow up meeting was held on 29th November to provide feedback to people supported and families.



WALK Townhall event

Working with Others

As well as working with local community organisations WALK works to build connections and partnerships with businesses, educators, and national organisations to increase the opportunities available to the people we support and to progress our vision, mission and our Strategic Plan.

In 2023:

- WALK completed the Dormant Accounts / Department of Social Protection / Pobal projects and were delighted to be successful in our application for two projects to the Workability Programme.

These are the:

- **WALK Real Life Training (RLT)**
- **WGSE REAL Supported Employment**

- WALK successfully completed the Rethink Ireland project in 2023.

Below is a snapshot of some the projects and programmes WALK are currently engaged in and stories of how working alongside others has made a difference to individuals' lives.

Working with Others



OIREACTHAS WORK LEARNING PROGRAMME (OWL):

The Oireachtas Work Learning Programme (OWL) was launched as a pilot programme by the Ceann Comhairle, Sean Ó Feargháil TD in September 2018. The Programme is facilitated by the Houses of the Oireachtas and is a collaboration between WALK and Kare. The Programme is supported by the Adult Education Service run by the City of Dublin Education and Training Board, by the Health Service Executive and publicjobs.ie.

WALK would like to extend their huge gratitude to Ceann Comhairle, Sean Ó Feargháil TD for his ongoing support of the programme and all the staff members including Breda Burke, Roisin Deery and Peter Furlong (Kare) for their commitment and work to ensure the success of the OWL Programme in 2023.

In 2023, the OWL Programme won a Civil Service Excellence and Innovation Award.

An Oireachtas Work and Learn Graduation Ceremony took place to celebrate the achievements of the 10 individuals who successfully completed the OWL programme in 2023.



Civil Service Excellence and Innovation Award Ceremony



Working with Others

OIREACTHAS WORK LEARNING PROGRAMME, CRISTIAN'S STORY

Cristian Mockler is one of the 2023 trainees on the OWL Programme. Cristian's grandad is an usher in Leinster House, so Cristian was used to popping in and seeing how it all worked. Being able to take part in the OWL Programme and being able to experience work in the civil service setting has meant a lot to him.

Cristian completed his first rotation with the Facilities Team – moving and assembling items needed for different offices around the complex, taking note of health and safety hazards while moving items and receiving a certificate to operate an electric drill. After Christmas, Cristian started working with the Service Officers – delivering and collecting post throughout different buildings including the Department of the Taoiseach. In Cristian's own words:

“Working within such a building with all the many opportunities and meeting high ranked figures of authority is amazing. During my time here on the programme I have gained so many skills, and not just work skills but life skills too. As well as learning not to fear being different in the work environment, as everyone in Leinster House is supported to understand you and respect you no matter the circumstances.”

Having worked here for some time now the great part is I can now walk the corridors, and most people I meet know my name and say hi including Ministers and Deputies. It's also great that I get to work in the same building as my family member”.

“... the great part is I can now walk the corridors, and most people I meet know my name and say hi including Ministers and Deputies.”



Working with Others

The session provided a good opportunity for information sharing and to learn from others.

Lunch and learn at the WALKways Tallaght University Hospital Programme



WALKways TALLAGHT UNIVERSITY HOSPITAL PROGRAMME

The WALKways Tallaght University Hospital Programme is a year long transition programme for adults with intellectual disabilities to gain employability experience. The programme commenced as a partnership between WALK and Tallaght University Hospital in 2017.

WALK would like to extend their huge gratitude to the Departments who have hosted trainees

this year, and to the staff in the Hospital who have supported the work of the Programme in 2023.

The WALKways Tallaght University Hospital Programme graduation took place on 13th July 2023 celebrating the achievements of the 12 individuals who completed the programme.

On 3rd August 2023, the Programme held a lunch and learn session. Several Departments shared their experiences of hosting a trainee as part of the Programme.

Working with Others



Trainee Sam Thompson presented and talked about his personal experience of being part of the programme.

Working with Others

PFIZER INTERNSHIP PROGRAMME

The WALK Pfizer Internship Programme was developed as a partnership between Pfizer Grange Castle and WALK and commenced as a pilot programme in September 2022. The programme focuses on employability and socialisation and offers year-long paid internships for people with intellectual disabilities to learn about the world of work.

The WALK Pfizer Internship Programme hub was officially launched in April 2023 by Minister Anne Rabbitte, Minister of State with special responsibility for Disability.

In 2023 a video, Rise to the Challenge, was produced by Pfizer in partnership with WALK to document the journeys of two of the individuals on the Pfizer internship programme, Rebecca Conroy and Ross Hughes: "Rise to the Challenge" - The WALK Programme at Pfizer Grange Castle on Vimeo

[Click to play video](#)



*Minister Anne Rabbitte
officially launching WALK Pfizer
Internship Programme hub*

Working with Others

WALKINSTOWN GREEN SOCIAL ENTERPRISES LIMITED (WGSEL)



Walkinstown Green Social Enterprise Ltd is a self-sustaining social enterprise that fulfils a need within the local community whilst also creating education, training, and employment opportunities for people with an intellectual disability. Through the Green Kitchen Café and Green Garden Centre.

At Walkinstown Green Social Enterprise Ltd in 2023:

12

12 individuals engaged in work placements in roles including Kitchen Porter and Gardening Assistant. Developing a range of transferable skills including teamwork, customer service, and operating the till.

14

14 individuals were employed in the social enterprise with at least one person with an intellectual disability working in WGSE Ltd on every shift across the 7 days.

5

In 2023, 5 individuals supported progressed on from the Social Enterprise into paid employment in the open labour market in line with their goals and interests.



Working with Others

THE WALK PEER PROGRAMME



The WALK PEER programme was funded in 2023 by the Department of Education through the Dormant Accounts Fund to collaborate with seven special schools and three post-primary schools around Ireland to pilot the supported transition model. The project aims to support 170+ students to explore their post-school options and develop transition plans of their choice. The project will be evaluated by Dublin City University over a period of two years.



Rialtas na hÉireann
Government of Ireland



Arna chomhchistiú ag
an Aontas Eorpach
Co-funded by the
European Union



government supporting communities

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

Job Site Visit
to Boulder
Media

WALK PEER - A reflection on the importance of Job Site visits and Work Experience Placements:



An integral part of the WALK PEER programme is for participants to experience the world of work, further education, and training just like their peers on a Transition Year programme. Job Site Visits and Work Experience placements are great ways for a person to explore if a job or career path they have identified, while working through the journey-to-work process with their Careers and Employment Facilitator, is right for them.

Working with Others

Jobsite Visit
to Dunnes,
Dundalk



WALK PEER Careers and Employment Facilitators do this in several ways.

- 1. Groups:** Support a small group of students to a place of work that has numerous different types of job options and opportunities that might appeal to them. For example:
 - a. A hotel has reception, catering, housekeeping, facilities, and maintenance roles.
 - b. A shopping centre has roles in retail, café, maintenance, cinema, carpark etc.
 - c. A building site has opportunities in all the trades and project management.
 - d. A logistics company has warehouse, stock, IT, transport, and forklift work.
 - 2. Bespoke to the individual:** If a participant is very clear on their chosen career path a Job Site Visit and/or Work Experience is tailored to this. In 2023, examples of the Job Site Visits and/or Work Experiences facilitated included carpentry, metal fabrication, an animation studio, a garage with a mechanic, a pharmacy, retail stores, the Zoology department at UCD, working with reptiles, an agricultural college, a dance studio. Plus, many more.
 - 3. Multi school:** As the WALK PEER Programme is now in ten schools in five counties in Ireland, students have identified career paths that are common across all the partner schools. One interesting career path identified is in animation.
 - 4. Further Education and Training:** Most of the students in a special school leave with a L2 QQI qualification, which limits their options to further education. If a participant has identified a further education path they wish to follow, the Careers and Employment Facilitators arrange Job Site Visits to various colleges and courses to show alternate routes of Further Education and training for them to achieve their goal. In 2023, students participated in a range of different education courses in line with their goals and interests including studying to become a Special Needs Assistant, Art Portfolio courses and courses focused on pre apprenticeships.
- In 2024, as well as working to facilitate further Job Site visits and Work Experience opportunities. A key focus for the PEER programme will be working with Schools to facilitate the appropriate level of QQI qualifications being delivered in order to bridge the current gap between a L2 QQI qualification and accessing Further Education. Also, in line with multi school interests, PEER programme staff plan to support students from schools in Mullingar, Cavan, and Dundalk on a Job Site Visit to an animation studio in Dublin to learn more about the various animation jobs in pre-production and to connect with employees who also dreamed of working in animation when they were at school and college.

Working with Others



Carrie working in her current role as Healthcare Assistant in Dealgan House Nursing Home

In 2024, Carrie plans to continue her current employment. She is also budgeting to buy a car. Alongside this she plans to apply to complete an Emergency First Aid Responder course and to join the Ambulance Corps as she is eager to work on the next steps in her career.

Carrie's journey - WALK PEER Programme

Carrie's journey started in St Brigid's School, Dundalk when she took part in the Career Discovery programme under WALK's PEER Ability Project back in October 2015. The project led her to work experience positions with Horseware and DV8 clothing, which turned into a two-year position as a retail assistant in their Dundalk store.

Carrie wanted to get further training, but this proved to be difficult coming from a special school. Luckily, she had her family supports and WALK PEER to make this happen. Carrie had to trial HSE supported day service first and if she still wanted further training then she had to go on a waiting list at the time. She got her place and completed her QQI Level 4 certificate in Employment Based Skills Training in the National Learning Network in Dundalk.

Carrie didn't stop there; she got a taste for higher education and has since graduated from her QQI Level 5 Health Care Assistant course in O'Fiaich Institute of Further Education and pursued a Level 5 Fashion Design course in Drogheda Institute of Further Education. Carrie is creative minded and loves fashion and likes to build on this field in her spare time.

In 2023, one of Carrie's main focuses has been building up her skills and experience in her employment role as Health Care Assistant in Dealgan House Nursing Home which she commenced in May 2022. Her work focuses on caring for elderly patients. In 2023 in her spare time Carrie also worked on learning to drive in order to build up her independence. A huge achievement for Carrie this year was successfully passing her driving licence.

Working with Others

WALK REAL - SUPPORTED EMPLOYMENT



The WALK REAL Supported Employment Programme, works in collaboration with Social Enterprises and employers to guide and support participants to access training and employment in the open labour market.

WALK REAL Supported Employment Programme, Jacob's Journey to Work:



Dublin Bus Job site visit

Conversations with Dublin Bus management began in early 2023 including meetings between the WALK Careers and Employment team and the Dublin Bus Human Resources management team over a period of six months to discuss options and opportunities that may exist across the Dublin Bus business. Job site visits, work experience placements, job carving, role matching, and reasonable accommodations were all discussed regarding potential candidates from WALK's Supported Employment programmes.

A job site visit was organised on the 27th of June at the Broadstone garage, which eight WALK participants attended. The Dublin Bus Job site visit gave everyone a real insight into the different types of roles that Dublin Bus had to offer. Dublin Bus staff led a tour around the central control hub and those attending met all the staff who explained the importance of their work and how their department keeps the city moving.

The tour then moved on to the main garage area where the participants spoke to engineers and mechanics who explained what it takes to maintain a massive fleet of buses in prime working order, including demonstrating some of the new electric buses that are now part of the fleet and the future.



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

Working with Others

Jacob hopes to continue his work with Dublin Bus in 2024.

Jacob at work at Dublin Bus Garage

The Dublin bus team were extremely welcoming and informative throughout the day. Jacob McKenna, one of the participants, found the garage maintenance area particularly interesting and he spoke with one of the management team about his experience with helping his Grandad fix cars. He mentioned doing oil changes, wheel changes and car services. So, when the next meeting with Dublin Bus took place Jacob's name came up.

With the support of Jacob's family, WALK Day Support staff and the Careers and Employment team a next steps plan was developed with Dublin Bus which involved role carving/matching, identifying suitable days and hours, and suitable work tasks. Once the plan was

agreed by Jacob and Dublin Bus, he moved onto the recruitment/interview stage. Jacob had his interview for the position of Engineering Operative on the 18th of December, which proved to be a great success and Jacob was offered a job trial with Dublin Bus.

Jacob is loving the experience and has settled in brilliantly to his new role. He is learning all the time working on body work, fixing, and preparing panels, in the stock room, taking in deliveries, changing batteries, tyre checks, and general operative tasks. The supports provided by the team at Dublin Bus, and the collaboration between his family, the WALK Day Supports team, and the WALK Careers and Employment team made this all this possible.

Fundraising & Events

Fundraising & Events

COMMUNITY PROJECT FUND

WALK's Community Project Fund can be applied for by both staff and the people we support. Funding applications need to link directly to one of the Community Project Fund categories listed below:

COMMUNITY PROJECTS:

TO DEVELOP LOCAL EVENTS OR PROJECTS THAT ARE INCLUSIVE AND BENEFIT THE PEOPLE WE SUPPORT AND THE LOCAL COMMUNITY.

CAPITAL EQUIPMENT:

TO BUY EQUIPMENT SMALL OR LARGE THAT WOULD BENEFIT THE PEOPLE WE SUPPORT AND POTENTIALLY THE LOCAL COMMUNITY.

PERSON CENTRED GOALS:

TO ASSIST A PERSON TO ACHIEVE THEIR GOALS. THIS CAN BE THROUGH ACCESSING TRAINING, EDUCATION, OR RECREATION.

The following provides an overview of some of the areas that the Community Project Fund supported in 2023.

The Community Project Fund supported three individuals who have a strong interest in drama to pursue a foundation drama training programme with Blue Diamond Drama Academy. The training focused on developing participants communication and creative skills.

The Community Project Fund supported one person to renew their annual membership of the Tallaght Leisure Centre. To utilise the gym and swimming pool to support their health and wellbeing goals, and to sustain the relationships that they have built up with the staff and other members of the leisure centre over the years.

The Community Project Fund contributed to one individual's goal of running a functional small farm through supporting the purchase of items including: A polytunnel, in order to extend the growing season to throughout the year; equipment, including a push mower and seedlings and plants for the various planned beds.

The Community Project Fund provided financial support for one person who participated in the ICE Young Entrepreneur Training Programme in 2023, which provides practical business advice on setting up and running a business in Ireland. To purchase: T-shirts, socks and tie dye paints as materials to work towards progressing her tie dye business further.

The Community Project Fund supported one individual to run a small regeneration project in the back garden space of one of WALK's Day Support locations. This covered the purchase of gardening materials including: Topsoil, hanging baskets, garden paint and bird feeders. As well as to repair / renew the space, the aim of the project was also to support the individual to develop their leadership skills through them leading a small team to deliver the project.

Fundraising & Events

CUPCAKES FOR A CAUSE – RAISING MONEY FOR BREAST CANCER AWARENESS



Cupcakes for a Cause event

Fundraising & Events

In the Summer of 2023, some of the individuals supported through WALK's Day Support hub Sundrive embarked on a long sought out goal. They wanted to organise a bake sale.

A committee was formed to plan the bake sale. The initial task of the committee was to identify a charity to fundraise for. The Committee chose Breast Cancer Ireland. Following this each person was allocated a task as part of the Committee, tasks included: completing the necessary forms for Breast Cancer Ireland, rallying public interest by making posters and advertising through word of mouth, agreeing baking responsibilities with staff and individuals supported, pricing the baked goods, and organising decorations and tableware for the day.

Many cakes were baked, and cookies were rolled out in a collaborative effort between Committee members, which included both people supported and staff members. Tea and coffee was generously supplied by the Green Kitchen Café.



Christmas Jumper Coffee morning and Bake Sale - raising money for the DSPCA

In 2023 WALK's Crown Centre, one of our Day Support hubs, decided to plan a fundraising event to raise much needed funds for the DSPCA. As it was close to Christmas, the decision was made to theme the event as a 'Christmas Jumper Coffee morning and Bake Sale.'

People supported and staff from across WALK's different locations were invited. The event took place on the 20th of December.

Thanks to everyone involved, the event was well attended and a resounding success and raised €296.30 for the DSPCA.

Governance & Leadership

Governance & Leadership

WALK is governed by a voluntary Board of Directors. The Board is comprised of nine non-executive Directors with a range of knowledge, skills, and experience who generously give their time to attend Subcommittee and Board meetings. All governing decisions are made in line with WALK's vision, mission, values, and strategic plan.

WALK'S BOARD OF DIRECTORS, 2023:

John Bourke Chairperson	Pat McCarthy Vice Chairperson	Gerry Donohoe Company Secretary
Betty Brophy	Teresa Caney Whelan	Bernie Dunne
Peter Byrne	Gavin Murphy	Annita Lernihan

There were no new Directors recruited to WALK's Board in 2023. The Chief Executive Officer, Joe Mason, and Senior Leadership Team are responsible for the day-to-day operations of the organisation and report regularly to the Board of Directors at Subcommittee and Board meetings.

GOVERNANCE

1. WALK works to adopt policies, procedures, and structures in line with good Governance and best practice.
2. We seek to adhere with best practice as espoused by the Statement of Guiding Principles for Fundraising.
3. WALK's Financial Statements are prepared on a going concern basis and in accordance with the Statement of Recommended Practice applicable to charities preparing their accounts in accordance with the Financial Reporting Standard applicable in the UK and Republic of Ireland (FRS 102) (effective 1 January 2015) and (Charities SORP (FRS 102)) and the Companies Act 2014.

WALK is compliant with the Charities Governance Code



WALK has a Conflict-of-Interest Policy in place which was reviewed by the Board of Directors in March 2023.

Terms of Reference are in place for the Board and for each of the Board Subcommittees to make it explicit where monitoring lies within the organisation.

WALK's Board of Directors have reviewed all major risks and are satisfied that systems are in place to mitigate major risk.

Governance & Leadership

100% OF BOARD DEPARTMENTAL TARGETS MET IN 2023

Host an Annual AGM for WALK	Ensure all relevant information is submitted to Charities Regulator to deadline
Attend training to enhance skills, as required	Ensure all relevant information has been submitted to the lobbying register to deadline
Be involved in Annual Report creation, in line with good Governance	Oversee implementation of Strategic plan
Agree Charities Governance Code action plan for the year and ensure actions are implemented accordingly	Finance Subcommittee to review WALK Financial Policies and Procedures and agree updates, where necessary
Complete annual review of specific area of board performance, and report findings back to the board	To review other key Policies assigned for sign off by board

WALK BOARD OF DIRECTORS – Attendance records 2023

First name	Surname	January	March	May	July	September	November
John	Bourke					Absent	
Pat	McCarthy					Absent	Absent
Gerry	Donohoe			Absent			
Peter	Byrne						
Gavin	Murphy		Absent			Absent	
Betty	Brophy						
Bernie	Dunne						
Teresa	Caney Whelan						Absent
Annita	Lernihan				Absent	Absent	

NON-BOARD MEMBERS ATTENDANCE 2023:

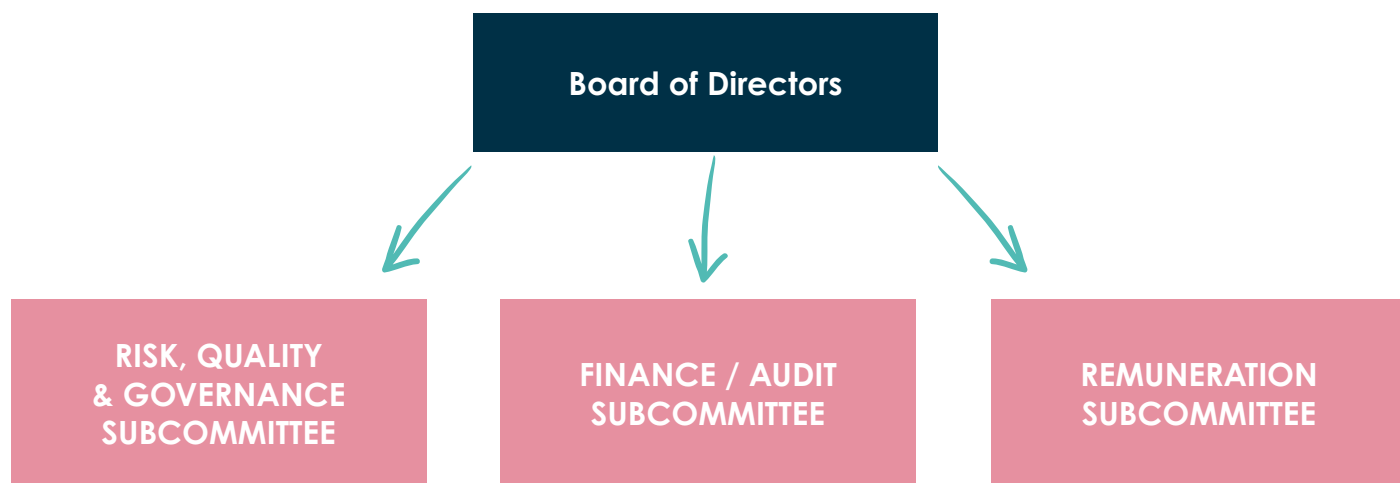
First name	Surname	February	March	May	July	September	November
Joe	Mason						Absent

The following members of the organisation attended meetings throughout the year to provide information to the Board on their areas of expertise, where required: Catherine Kelly, Eamonn Teague and Brid Corr Nolan.

Present Absent

Governance & Leadership

SUBCOMMITTEES OF THE BOARD OF DIRECTORS



RISK, QUALITY AND GOVERNANCE SUBCOMMITTEE

In brief, the Subcommittees objective is to oversee and evaluate the Risk Management systems in place in WALK and to review WALK's Risk Management Policy. Risk is a standing order on the Subcommittee agenda. Key risks are addressed, and risk ratings agreed at Subcommittee meetings. The Subcommittee provide an update to the board on risk at each meeting.

Risk, Quality and Governance Subcommittee members are Board Champions and leaders on Quality and encourage involvement by the Board thus embedding best practice in quality at a Board level, and monitor actions arising from any quality systems in place in WALK. The Committee also oversee Governance and ensure that action plans from any Board Governance systems are completed.

There are three non-executive Directors on the Risk, Quality and Governance Subcommittee. Gerry Donohoe, Peter Byrne, and Betty Brophy. Meetings are held bimonthly.

FINANCE / AUDIT SUBCOMMITTEE

In brief, the role of the Subcommittee is to provide an objective review of the accuracy of financial data, the financial reporting process, the integrity of the financial statements and significant financial reporting judgements contained in them; and of WALKs internal financial controls,

budgeting, budgetary control systems and financial risk management systems. In relation to the external audit to make recommendations to the board, in relation to the appointment of, re-appointment and removal of the external auditor and to approve the remuneration and terms of engagement of the external auditor. To review and monitor the external auditor's independence and objectivity and the effectiveness of the audit process and to report findings / recommendations to the Board.

There are three non-executive Directors on the Finance / Audit Subcommittee Gerry Donohoe, Bernie Dunne, and Patrick McCarthy and meetings are held bimonthly.

REMUNERATION SUBCOMMITTEE

In brief, the role of the Subcommittee is to review the remuneration policy as per the financial policy document. Recommend and monitor the level and structure of remuneration for Senior Management in line with other similar organisations and comparable HSE Salary Scales, and to agree the remuneration package of the Chief Executive Officer in line with the remuneration policy.

The Subcommittee meet as and when required and report any findings / recommendations to the board. The Remuneration Subcommittee comprises of the Chairperson of the Board, the Chairperson of the Finance/Audit Subcommittee and one other non-executive director.

Governance & Leadership

WALK COMMITTEES & MEETINGS

There are a number of committees and meetings in WALK. These committees and meetings consist of membership that ensures expertise can be drawn upon and work to ensure that all stakeholders are represented.

WALK'S HEALTH & SAFETY STEERING GROUP

The Health and Safety Steering Group work to manage and oversee Health and Safety in WALK. Including review and feedback regarding the Health and Safety systems in place in WALK and overseeing that Health and Safety Systems are being implemented. Local Health and Safety is overseen by Health and Safety Champions. Members of the Health and Safety Steering group meet with champions on a quarterly basis to provide updates on key Health and Safety information, and to act as a forum for champions to raise any local Health and Safety matters. The Steering Group meets monthly and consists of the Acting Health and Safety Officer, Buildings and Procurement Manager and representation from WALK's Day Support and Supported Living Departments.

RISK AND SAFEGUARDING OVERSIGHT GROUP (RASOG)

The Risk and Safeguarding Oversight Group oversee the rationale for and outcome of clinical interventions, practices and systems and review of restrictive practices to ensure they are in keeping with clinical best practices, are aligned with the values of the organisation and are effective in optimizing associated clinical risk management. The group meets quarterly and is made up of employees of WALK with relevant experience and / or clinical expertise as well as an external clinical consultant and independent members who are invited to join based on their areas of expertise.

INFECTION PREVENTION CONTROL (IPC) COMMITTEE

The Infection Prevention Control Committee oversee and provide direction, guidance, support, and expert advice in the implementation of Infection Prevention Control strategies. Facilitate the sharing of information between the different sections of the organisation, and ensure all measures are in place to reduce and prevent healthcare associated infection. The Infection Prevention Control Committee is made up of employees from across WALK's different service areas and meets every 12 weeks.

ASSISTED DECISION MAKING STEERING GROUP

The role of the Assisted Decision-Making Steering Group is to share information regarding the Assisted Decision-Making Act with WALK's key stakeholder groups, to provide a forum to share learning and best practice and to ensure WALK has relationships in place with key external bodies, as necessary, in relation to the Assisted Decision-Making Act. The group meet on a monthly basis and is made up of individuals with lived experience supported by WALK and staff members representing WALK's different Departments.

PERSON CENTRED PRACTICE CHAMPIONS GROUP

The purpose of the Person-Centred Practice Champions Group is to focus on supporting one person at a time to increase the chances of positive change and access to the good things in life. To build professional development through increasing champions knowledge, awareness, and skills in Person Centredness- and Person-Centred Thinking. To support action learning in local services that influences and cultivates environments where positive outcomes for people supported can be achieved, to contribute to ongoing organisational learning and to help grow our person-centred culture and alignment to residential and New Directions standards. The group meets on a monthly basis and is made up of employees from across WALK's different service areas.

Governance & Leadership

WALK COMMITTEES & MEETINGS (CONTINUED)

HUMAN RIGHTS & PARTICIPATION CHAMPIONS GROUP

The role of the Human Rights and Participation Champions Group is to focus on building the knowledge and skills of champions to: Support individuals that use our services to understand and advocate for their rights; to meaningfully participate in the work of WALK by strengthening Peer Representative and Committee involvement and to help promote the capacity of those that use our services to become active citizens within their community by raising awareness of both local and wider rights issues. To support the champions professional development, specifically by building their knowledge and awareness in Human Rights for Adults with Disabilities and to contribute to ongoing organisational learning and help grow our rights-based approach. The group meets on a monthly basis and is made up of employees from across WALK's different service areas.

The decision was taken to amalgamate the Human Rights and Participation Champions Group and the Person-Centred Practice Champions Groups in September 2023. To form one Practice Champions group focusing on Practice Development across both areas.

PEER REPRESENTATIVE GROUP

The purpose of the Peer Representative Group is to build the knowledge and awareness of Peer Representatives around the rights of persons with disabilities and their role and responsibilities as Peer Representative in relation to this. To keep Peer Representatives informed around organisational developments and wider rights-based issues that affect them in order for them to share this information with persons supported across WALK's different locations and support informed decision making. To provide a structure to ensure people supported have a named representative who they can bring their feedback and ideas to, and to build the capacity of Peer Representatives to meaningfully participate in and contribute their ideas to rights-based initiatives both within WALK and outside of WALK. The group consists of elected representatives from across WALK's service areas and meets monthly.

Governance & Leadership

STATEMENT OF FINANCIAL ACTIVITIES

(INCORPORATING INCOME AND EXPENDITURE ACCOUNT) 2023

		Unrestricted Funds 2023	Restricted Funds 2023	Total Funds 2023	Total Funds 2022
	Note	€	€	€	€
Income from:					
Donations and grants	2	-	8,100	8,100	23,781
Charitable activities	3	7,036	10,835,442	10,842,478	9,826,545
Other trading activities	4	-	20,608	20,608	50,645
Total Income		7,036	10,864,150	10,871,186	9,900,971
Expenditure on:					
Charitable activities		200	10,954,816	10,955,016	10,035,204
Total expenditure		200	10,954,816	10,955,016	10,035,204
Net movement in funds before other recognised gains / (losses)		6,836	(90,666)	(83,830)	(134,233)
Other gains		-	-	-	145,125
Reconciliation of funds:					
Total funds brought forward		448,627	5,509,959	5,958,586	5,947,694
Net movement in funds		6,836	(90,666)	(83,830)	10,892
Total funds carried forward		455,463	5,419,293	5,874,756	5,958,586

The statement of financial activities includes all gains and losses recognised in the year.

The notes on pages 15 to 34 of link below form part of these financial statements.

You can read WALK's Financial Statement for 2023 here:



Next steps

In 2024, WALK will continue to implement its operational plan in line with the three Strategic Goals and four Strategic Actions outlined in our 2021 – 2024 Strategic Plan.

Strategic progress will continue to be reviewed regularly through reporting on Departmental Plan progress. Regular updates will be provided to the Board of Directors through monitoring and evaluation reports and as part of the agenda for board meetings.


Regular updates will be provided to all WALK's other key stakeholder groups via our website.


In 2024 we will be embarking on our next Strategic Plan through consultation with our key stakeholder groups which include: The people we support, family members, staff, and WALK's Board of Directors.

Following this, we will put all the information together into key themes and develop these into Strategic Goals which will form the basis of our next Strategic Plan.

Our challenges as we enter 2024 are completing the priorities outlined in our 2021 – 2024 Strategic Plan and developing our next Strategic Plan. Alongside ensuring our sustainability as an organisation and the delivery of quality person centred services in the face of ongoing underfunding and high staff turnover.

WALK

 1 Longmile Road,
Walkinstown,
Dublin, D12 FT73

 +353 (0)1 465 03 88

 info@walk.ie

 www.walk.ie

 WALK1967

 WALK_IRL

 www.linkedin.com/company/walk-with-you/