

ACQUIRED  
BRAIN INJURY  
IRELAND

# Annual Report 2020



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## INTRODUCTION FROM OUR CHIEF EXECUTIVE

2020 was an extraordinary year for Acquired Brain Injury Ireland, as it was for organisations and individuals globally. It was a year when the capacity and strength of our services were put to the test, and our team was pushed to new limits of resourcefulness and resolve. Overnight, we were called on to shut our doors to the outside. We were asked to adopt new behaviours that would reduce social interaction and see us living at a remove from the communities of which are a part. Our focus shifted to what planning and protocols needed to be put in place immediately to protect the welfare of our staff and those we serve. Covid-19 was a jolt that turned our world and our work upside down.

The impact was a lot like acquiring a brain injury.

For so many brain injury survivors in Ireland, isolation is part of daily life. Unsupported, their 'invisible disability' makes it impossible for them to experience the values so central to our organisation's work: those that promote meaningful relationships, inclusion, contribution and the sharing of everyday places. The loneliness and separateness that we all experienced so acutely during the pandemic is tragically familiar for the individuals in our care.



That is why it is so critically important that every one of the 19,000 individuals who acquire a brain injury in Ireland annually have the chance to access the specialist rehabilitation services we provide. By making available timely, person-centred neuro-rehabilitation, we can fundamentally change lives and support survivors of brain injury to rebuild a future filled with potential.

I am so proud that in 2020, rather than faltering under the pressure of the pandemic, our services and those we serve thrived. Very quickly, our community-based and day services found creative and effective ways to transition their rehabilitation online. Our clinical teams and Rehabilitation Assistants began using rehabilitation apps, compiled activity packs to deliver to their clients' homes, and engaged in individual and group rehabilitation sessions on Zoom. Our assisted living services demonstrated rigour in their management of hygiene and safety standards and implemented many new social activities within their home 'bubbles' to uplift both residents and staff.

Most significantly, our remarkable service users embraced new digital platforms with openness and enthusiasm. Many undertook ambitious new personal challenges to stretch their abilities and support their peers. We have outlined some of those initiatives in this report.

In reflecting on the challenges and additional responsibilities borne as a result of Covid-19 throughout the year, I would like to sincerely thank every one of our team for their commitment and resilience. Because of you, survivors of brain injury and their families continue to rebuild their lives and chart a pathway to a richer future.

I would also like to thank the supporters, volunteers and partners who stood with us as we navigated through the pandemic and worked hard to sustain and grow our services. We could not have done it without you.



*Barbara O'Connell, Chief Executive, Acquired Brain Injury Ireland*

## MESSAGE FROM OUR CHAIR

Since its inception, Acquired Brain Injury Ireland has been driven by a strong mission and sense of purpose: to rebuild lives after brain injury. Throughout 2020 and in the wake of the Covid-19 pandemic, this shared intention became more evident and more vital than ever. As our operating reality shifted week by week, and sometimes day by day, our staff remained resolute in their work to support and empower those we serve.

This ability to adapt and respond is a testament to the robustness of the organisation, but also to the quality of its staff. I would like to thank our Chief Executive for her leadership under the most challenging of circumstances, the management team for deftly and effectively handling the public health crisis, and all employees for their steadfast commitment to keeping our clients safe. I would also like to acknowledge the contribution of the Board of Directors, who have shared their significant expertise and supported the organisation as it responded to Covid-19.

During this time of flux, our Strategic Priorities have anchored the work of Acquired Brain Injury Ireland. During the year we remained focused and determined in our work to progress:

1. *Equal Access* to neuro-rehabilitation
2. *Public Policy* that will influence change and raise the voice of brain injury survivors
3. *Education* to develop specialist training in brain injury rehabilitation
4. *Support Networks* to reduce the caregiver burden for families affected by brain injury
5. *Capacity* to build and optimise our organisational resources

In the months to come, our Strategic Plan 2019-2024 will continue to act as roadmap towards the realisation of our vision for a better future for brain injury survivors.

At Acquired Brain Injury Ireland we have been providing internationally accredited, life-changing rehabilitation services for two decades, and we will continue to do so long after the pandemic subsides. But without sustained and increased investment, the work that has provided a lifeline for so many brain injury survivors and their families this year will become untenable.

At a time when our acute health system is under significant strain, the value of supporting community-based services like ours becomes self-evident. As we move through the pandemic, we will continue to work closely with our partners, including those at the HSE, to find ways to safeguard and strengthen the vital work we do.

We remain indebted to our funders, and to the supporters and donors who give of their time, commitment and money to help rebuild lives after brain injury. I look forward to what more we can achieve together in the year ahead.



*Chair of the Board, Acquired Brain Injury Ireland*

## **OUR MISSION, VISION AND VALUES**

### **Our Mission**

We will passionately serve and relentlessly advocate to empower and support people impacted by brain injury to rebuild their lives.

### **Our Vision**

A society where brain injury is understood and all those impacted receive world-class, personalised rehabilitation and support, as and when they need it.

### **Our Values**

Dignity and respect –

We treat each other with the utmost dignity in our interactions.

Choices –

We empower each other through choices to manage and direct our lives within our capabilities.

Relationships –

We engage meaningfully with each other promoting honesty, integrity and kindness.

Contribution –

We encourage everyone to play their part no matter how small, within their capabilities.

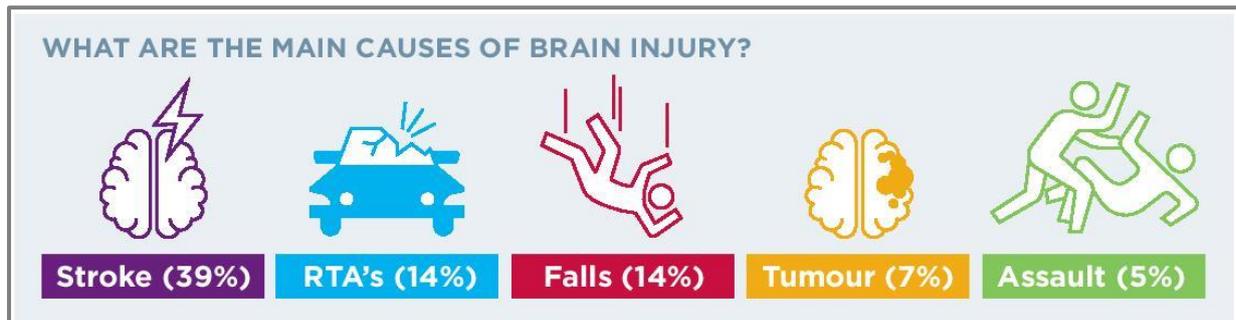
Sharing everyday places –

We value inclusion for all in our communities and sharing everyday experiences.

## BRAIN INJURY IN IRELAND

Brain injury is a hidden phenomenon in Irish society. Nobody ever thinks it will happen to them. Yet each year, as many as 19,000 lives are turned upside down from newly acquired brain injuries.

Brain injuries can happen suddenly and are often traumatic. The biggest causes of brain injury that we see in our services are stroke, road traffic accidents, assaults, falls and brain tumours.



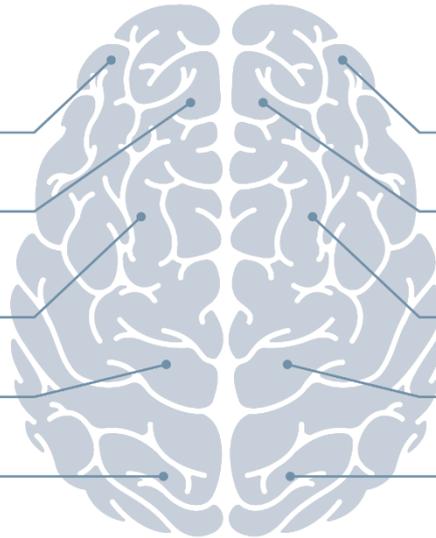
Too often people who acquire brain injuries are young and, due to the lack of services available at the time of their injury, these young people are often left in inappropriate settings such as nursing homes, community hospitals or at home where families are unable to cope.

This highlights a greater need for awareness around brain injury. The more people who understand acquired brain injury at political level, in the health system and widely in the public, the easier it is to push for the services needed to support individuals and their families.

Currently there is little Irish epidemiological research to show the actual incidence or prevalence of acquired brain injury. Without this research it is difficult to secure the additional financial resources required to ensure people have access to vital, specialist neuro-rehabilitation services like ours.

**In Ireland, here is what we know:**

- 1 **19,000** new brain injuries happen annually
- 2 **10,000** people are hospitalised with traumatic brain injuries annually
- 3 **8000-8,500** new strokes happen every year
- 4 **300** new brain tumours per annum
- 5 **120,000** people living with disabilities after brain injury



**In Acquired Brain Injury Ireland, here is what we know:**

- 1 Stroke is the **no.1 cause of brain injury** in our services
- 2 **69%** of the brain injury survivors we help are male
- 3 **1 in 5 brain injuries** are caused by road traffic accidents and assault
- 4 **6.5% increase** in referrals to our service
- 5 **1,161 clients** benefited from our services in 2020

## REBUILDING LIVES

34-year-old Paul from Dublin was living a happy and fulfilled life. He was married, a loving dad and a skilled mechanic, passionate about his profession. Paul's love of vehicles didn't stop at cars. He had a great love for his quad bike which he often spent time on with friends. It was also one of these quad journeys that nearly cost Paul his life.

Paul came off his bike in an accident. He was without a helmet – something he would never condone today – and he was knocked unconscious immediately from the impact. Emergency services worked on Paul as his parents arrived on the devastating scene. They didn't know if they would ever see their son alive again.

Paul was rushed to hospital in Tallaght before he was moved to Beaumont. Here he remained in a coma for many weeks. He had extensive injuries to his skull and his brain and required major surgery if there was to be any hope of saving his life. Part of Paul's skull was removed to relieve the swelling on his brain and, eventually, Paul returned to consciousness.

But the road to any sort of real recovery, and the return of the man his family had known and loved, was only beginning.



***“I’m lucky to be alive.”***

Paul had lost his everyday abilities. He had to re-learn everything: how to walk, how to talk, and how to eat again. What he needed was access to specialised rehabilitation that would enable him to regain those skills and begin to rebuild his life. Instead, following his surgery, Paul was placed in a hospital unequipped to deal with his situation where he lost valuable time on the road to rehabilitation and recovery.

Having spent almost two years in hospital beds, Paul was placed in the National Rehabilitation Hospital but during his time there he could only go so far. While he made improvements, it was clear that Paul would only flourish in an environment that provided opportunities to set and achieve personal goals, integrate back into the community that meant so much to him, and develop independent living skills to open doors to the future.

Neuro-rehabilitation services operating in the community in Ireland are stretched and underfunded. It took Paul time before a space at Acquired Brain Injury Ireland became available to him. Many are still waiting.

***“Acquired Brain Injury Ireland has given me some normality back as I work on independent living. Gaining my independence gets me back into the world, back into my community.”***

Once Paul became part of the Acquired Brain Injury Ireland family he worked with our rehabilitation team to take back control of his own life. He moved into one of our rehabilitation houses and began to set goals and implement strategies, allowing him to achieve a level of independence that he could only have dreamed of in the months following his accident.

Previously unable to eat, walk and talk, Paul now cooks all of his own meals, attends the gym, schedules his own diary and travels independently in the local and surrounding area. He has returned to a garage on a part-time basis and hopes to work full-time in the future. Paul now advocates for the rights of other brain injury survivors to access the same life-changing rehabilitation he received and is working towards his ultimate goal of living in his own home once again.

## WHAT WE DO

Acquired Brain Injury Ireland is the leading provider of community-based brain injury rehabilitation services (also known as neuro-rehabilitation) for adults with an acquired brain injury and their families in Ireland. A brain injury can affect a person's ability to manage their own life, which is why we work in communities across Ireland to empower people with practical strategies to rebuild their lives. Our services cater for different stages of an acquired brain injury as individuals make progress with rehabilitation goals. We also campaign, educate and advocate for the rights and needs of this hidden group in society.

### In 2020 –

- **73** survivors of brain injury received specialised rehabilitation in our Assisted Living services
- **352** brain injury survivors were supported through our Home and Community services
- **400** people were supported by our Case Managers
- **232** individuals with brain injury participated in our Clubhouse and Day Resource services
- Our On With Life programme delivered support services to family members and carers **countrywide**

## Our Services

### Case Management

When a brain injury happens, individuals and families often feel overwhelmed and don't know where to turn. The role of our Case Managers is designed for these times of distress. Our Case Managers are brain injury experts who act as a single point of contact, listening to the families' needs and identifying resources applicable to their situation. Through our Case Management service, we help to provide a clear pathway to support an individual's transition from hospital to home and link them to a variety of services.

### Home and Community Rehabilitation

Our Home and Community services deliver one-to-one brain injury rehabilitation to support individuals to achieve their goals at home, and to encourage integration back into their community and family life. Often people have experienced some rehabilitation in hospital, but further skills may need to be re-learned at home after discharge. Our Home and Community Rehabilitation services ensure those individuals continue to make progress on their recovery and maximise their potential after brain injury.

### Clubhouses

Our Clubhouses provide vital peer support to enhance independence and encourage learning of new skills. Attendees benefit from group and cognitive rehabilitation in a supportive and welcoming environment. These services create a space for survivors of brain injury to socialise and develop new relationships, as well as helping them to explore new interests that build on

their strengths and capabilities. Our Clubhouses and Day Services are particularly important to support individuals working on goals such as building self-esteem, independence, community involvement and personal growth.

### Transitional Living Unit

Our transitional living service bridges the gap for brain injury survivors as they prepare to return to independent living at home. The service provides intensive rehabilitation and support in an assisted living setting Monday to Friday, for a period from six weeks up to six months, depending on a client's needs. Currently we operate one Transitional Living Unit in Sligo and we continue to seek funding to grow this much needed service.

### Assisted Living

For some survivors of brain injury, returning home after a stay in hospital is not an option straight away. Our Assisted Living services offer those individuals a home from home, where they can benefit from long-term tailored brain injury rehabilitation. Our assisted living units typically support 4 or 5 residents in a house. In this setting, residents can work on rehabilitation goals related to personal care, cookery, home management and household finances, ultimately maximising their independence in a safe environment with 24/7 support. Community integration is a key focus throughout all our services, and, like any other clients, our residents are encouraged to access local amenities such as libraries and leisure facilities.

### Family Support Services

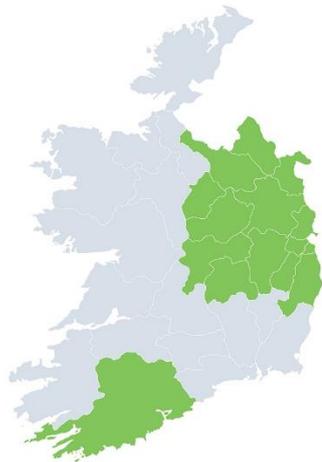
At Acquired Brain Injury Ireland, we understand that a brain injury doesn't just happen to the individual – it happens to the whole family. Delivering support to families individually or in groups is integral to the work we do. Through our On With Life Programme we provide a range of supports including information and education events, peer support networks, listening services and parenting skills training as needed. Our Case Managers and Local Service Managers are important points of contacts to families who need to access these supports. They may also refer cases on to other members of our clinical team, including psychology and social work.

### Vocational Rehabilitation Services

Our Step Ahead Programme provides vocational assessment and individualised planning and support for people with an acquired brain injury who wish to return to work, training or education. The programme engages with services all over the country, as well as reaching out to individuals and families not currently accessing other services from Acquired Brain Injury Ireland.



**Case Management**  
Number of clients: 400

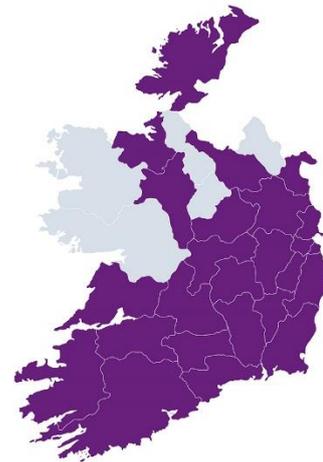


Our Case Managers are brain injury experts who act as a single point of contact providing a clear pathway and linkages to the variety of services to support a person's transition from hospital to home.

- Cavan
- Cork
- Dublin
- Kildare
- Laois
- Longford
- Louth
- Meath
- Monaghan
- Offaly
- Westmeath
- Wicklow



**Home and Community Rehabilitation**  
Number of clients: 352



Our Rehabilitation Assistants deliver one-to-one neuro-rehabilitation to support individuals with their rehabilitation goals at home and integrate back into their community and family life.

- Carlow
- Cavan
- Clare
- Cork
- Donegal
- Dublin
- Kerry
- Kildare
- Kilkenny
- Laois
- Limerick
- Louth
- Meath
- Offaly
- Roscommon
- Sligo
- Tipperary
- Waterford
- Westmeath
- Wexford
- Wicklow



**Clubhouses**  
Number of clients: 232



Our Clubhouses provide vital peer support, group rehabilitation and cognitive rehabilitation to enhance independence and encourage learning new skills.

- Carlow
- Clare
- Dublin
- Kerry
- Kilkenny
- Laois
- Limerick
- Longford
- Mayo
- Offaly
- Roscommon
- Sligo
- Tipperary
- Waterford
- Westmeath
- Wexford



### Transitional Living Services

Number of beds: 4



Our transitional living service is a bridge for brain injury survivors to prepare to return to independent living. It provides intensive rehabilitation and support in an assisted living setting from Monday to Friday from six weeks up to six months.

- Sligo



### Assisted Living

Number of beds: 73



Our unique neuro-rehabilitation assisted living services provide long-term, tailored rehabilitation and support to 4-5 residents in a house to maximise their independence in a safe and homely place on a 24/7 basis.

- Clare
- Cork
- Donegal
- Dublin
- Limerick
- Louth
- Offaly
- Waterford
- Wexford



### Family Services

Nationwide



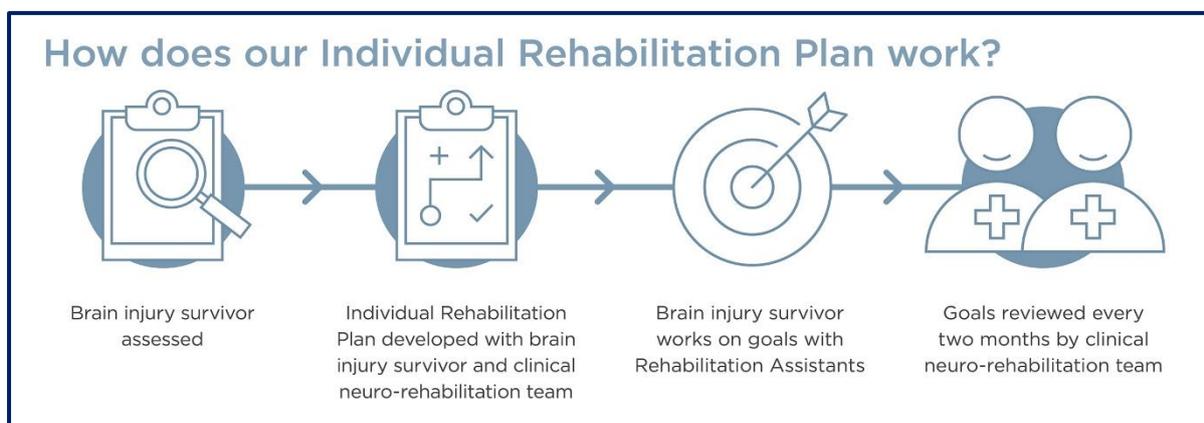
Our family services deliver support nationally through case management and, through the On With Life programme, through family therapy, parenting skills training, carer training and peer support groups.

- Case management
- Parenting skills training
- Family and carer training
- Peer support groups
- Nationwide

## Our Model: A Person-Centred Approach

Every brain is different, unique to each individual affected. At Acquired Brain Injury Ireland we look at the whole person. We take account of their environment, their ability and support needs. We look at the life they had before their brain injury. We support them and their families through a bio-psychosocial model which takes account of biological, psychological and social aspects of rehabilitation.

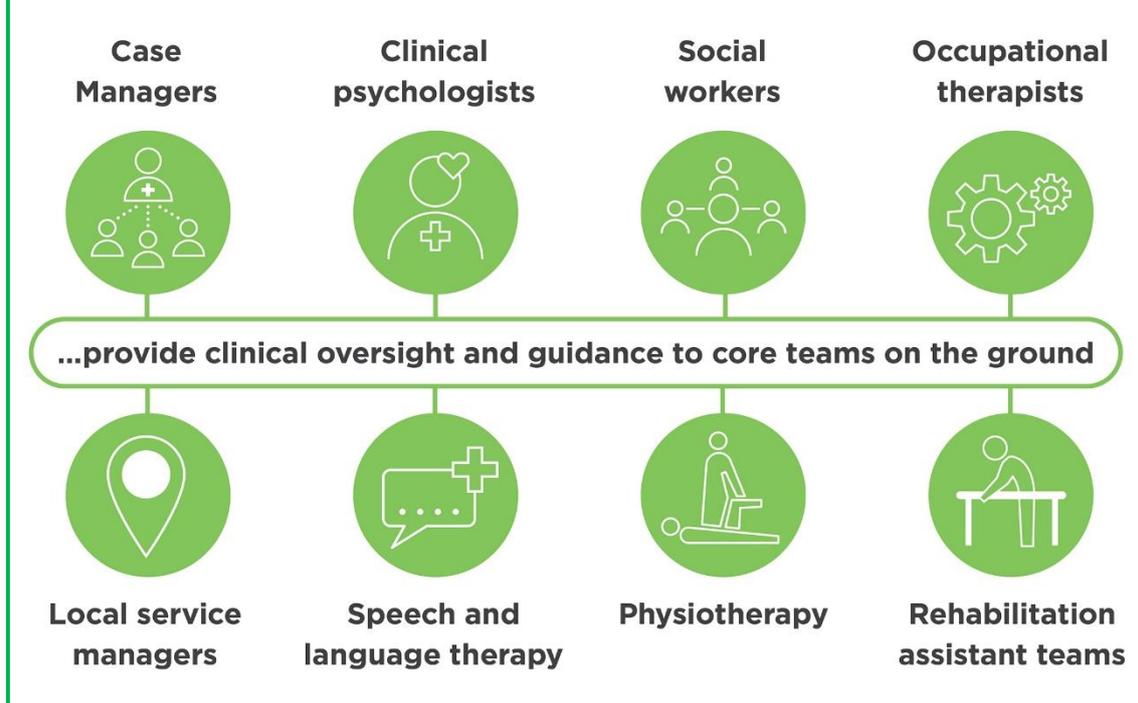
For this reason, we champion the Individual Rehabilitation Plan (IRP). The plan is developed with the individual, their family and our Inter-Disciplinary Team with a focus on achieving specific goals related to the individual's need and personalised rehabilitation. This bespoke person-centred approach to neuro-rehabilitation is at the core of everything we do at Acquired Brain Injury Ireland.



## Our Clinical Neuro-rehabilitation Teams

Acquired Brain Injury Ireland services are clinically-led and overseen by a range of clinicians with acquired brain injury expertise, including in Neuropsychology, Occupational Therapy and Social Work. The clinicians are supported by an expert team of Local Service Managers, Case Managers, Team Leaders and Rehabilitation Assistants.

## Our clinical neuro-rehabilitation teams:



### What Our Clients Say About Us

At Acquired Brain Injury Ireland, our day-to-day work is built on transparency and two-way communication with clients. Every year we run an independent customer satisfaction survey with clients, using the internationally benchmarked USPEQ model. We believe this is of the utmost importance to enable us to measure what we do through the feedback of those we serve, to ensure our standards are maintained, and that our clients are continually empowered to achieve their rehabilitation goals.

The USPEQ survey provides feedback in relation to five key areas: service responsiveness, informed choice, respect, participation, and overall value. This feedback informs the organisation of any areas of concern, so we can respond to reported issues or needs. It is also a source of motivation and positively drives our person-centred culture so we can continuously improve and grow services to help more brain injury survivors rebuild their lives.

In 2020, responses across almost every category increased on the previous year, even in the context of the Covid-19 pandemic.

### USPEQ findings 2020 –

- Effectiveness: **95.8%** said our ‘services enabled me to do things better’
- Value: **99.2%** said our services ‘met my need’
- Responsiveness: **96.6%** said I ‘got what I needed, when I needed it’
- Informed choice: **98.3%** said ‘I participated in life decisions’
- Respect: **99.2%** said that ‘staff treated me with respect/courtesy’
- Participation: **95.8%** said they felt ‘able to make important choices’

### Delivering a first-class, quality service

Acquired Brain Injury Ireland is committed to providing services that are accredited by the Commission on Accreditation of Rehabilitation Facilities (CARF). This accreditation is a prestigious and internationally-recognised quality mark which signals that the services we provide meet or exceed international best practice.

Acquired Brain Injury Ireland has been successfully accredited every three years since 2003. Our most recent accreditation inspection took place in October 2018. This also marked the first time we applied for accreditation in Case Management which was successfully achieved to gold standard, in recognition of the significant work by our Case Managers for many years.



We are currently accredited for the following services, and look forward to the next accreditation cycle in 2021:

1. Home and community services (Adults)
2. Home and community services (Children)
3. Residential Rehabilitation programmes (Adults)
4. Governance standards
5. Case Management

All Acquired Brain Injury Ireland neuro-rehabilitation assisted living services are fully registered with Health Information and Quality Authority (HIQA), with all mandatory three-year re-registrations successful. They are monitored under the Health Act 2007 (Care and support of residents in designated centres for persons (children and adults) with disabilities) regulations 2013. There were a number of HIQA inspections across services in 2020, all with excellent outcomes and very positive feedback regarding the work of staff teams and our person-centred practice.

## 2020: A YEAR OF GROWTH

At the end of 2020, Acquired Brain Injury Ireland has 16 **Assisted Living Services** in Dublin (six), Wexford, Waterford, Cork, Limerick, Clare (two), Sligo, Donegal, Drogheda and Offaly. While vacancies did arise from time to time as individuals transitioned out into the community, we were able to secure new clients to fill most of these vacancies within the services. However, this also presented challenges as the HSE Disability Services are increasingly reluctant to fund assisted living places due to their own funding issues.

Our **Home and Community Services** continue to be a significant and strong area for the organisation, with 15 services in operation nationally. Developments in this service are largely due to the HSE's funding response to local identified acquired brain injury needs. Business activity in this area during 2020 remained strong with an incremental increase in clients.

Despite the global pandemic, several additional important service developments were experienced throughout 2020, demonstrating their resilience and essential nature.

### Service developments included:

- Construction of a purpose-built **five-bedroom property in Waterford**, alongside three independent living units, completed in partnership with Anvers Housing Association CLG. Plans are underway for residents to move into this property in early 2021, which boasts accessibility throughout and is located centrally to Waterford city.
- A pilot **Case Management service** commenced in Cork: a very positive development for the organisation and an opportunity to showcase the benefits of this important service for the first time in the south region.
- Growth in each of our nine **Clubhouses/Day Services** and facilities, made possible mainly through the generosity of private grant funders and the support of community fundraising activities. The unpredictable nature of this funding leaves these centres vulnerable to closure.
- A new Community Services Manager and Rehabilitation Assistant post was funded in Meath, which is a doubling in size of the staff team for this county.
- Services were very successful in applications for National Lottery Grants, supported by the Fundraising Department, which provided additional funding for specific and time-bound projects and initiatives.
- **Grant income** was also used to fund additional rehabilitation equipment and to run groups and activities in the community that otherwise would not have been possible.
- We were also successful in achieving philanthropic funding from the Social Innovation Fund to support the extension of our **Step Ahead** services to the Munster area. Initiation of this project was delayed due to Covid-19 but commenced in September 2020 with all available assessments fully booked for the entire period of the project within a very short timeframe.

## RESPONDING TO COVID-19

In the context of an unprecedented and enormously challenging year, Acquired Brain Injury Ireland is immensely proud of how we have maintained and grown our services.

In the first quarter of 2020, our services and support functions responded quickly and robustly. We were required to align with public health guidance to protect the welfare of our staff and service users, but we also looked further at how we could preserve and progress their rehabilitation journeys in the face of the pandemic.

Our goal was clear – to keep people with brain injuries and their families safe and well, and to avoid additional demands being placed on an already stretched national health service during the Covid-19 crisis.

*“As an NGO, adaptability is in our DNA. We regularly flex our creative and innovative muscles in order to find solutions to enable our clients do things they have a right to do, in a world that is not set up for them. We couldn’t deliver personalised neuro-rehabilitation any other way.”*

- Barbara O’Connell, Chief Executive

### How we responded:

- Community Rehabilitation and Day Services transitioned to remote delivery using “telerehab”, online classes, workshops and assessments.
- Plans to incorporate technology as a key element of service delivery were accelerated, creating broader geographical reach and ease of access for those living in remote areas.
- Assisted Living Services adopted increased health and safety measures, including risk assessments, protocols and procedures to protect staff and vulnerable service-users.
- New technologies were introduced for use by those cocooning in Assisted Living Services so that they could connect with families and friends.
- Rehabilitation goals for residents were created and adapted to ensure continuity and progression of the rehabilitation journey, despite restrictions on movement outside of the home.
- Rehabilitation teams upskilled in the areas of online communication and digital technology.
- Staff took on additional responsibilities, including increased engagement with and emotional support to families and carers of those within our services.

*“Telerehabilitation is proving effective in delivering therapies to many clients during this time of physical distancing and it could play a role in the longer term as part of our toolkit... Using technology, I can still perform client assessments and deliver a range of therapies very successfully remotely, such as working with clients on memory strategies, fatigue management, helping people build structure and routine in their life.”*

- Brian McClean, Principal Clinical Neuropsychologist, Acquired Brain Injury Ireland



### Management response:

In addition to service developments and innovations, the organisation convened a Covid-19 Executive Management Team which met daily in the early months of the pandemic to consider issues arising. The Team took responsibility for:

- Building a business continuity plan
- Drafting new policies and procedures in line with public health guidance
- Internal communication
- Management of staff rosters, remote working requirements, annual leave and sick leave requests
- New comprehensive staff screening processes
- Resourcing of services as required including ensuring adequate supply of PPE
- Preparation of mandatory Covid-19 staff training
- Engagement with the HSE to advocate for additional Covid-19 associated costs
- Facilitation of vaccinations and registrations for both staff and clients

*“It is tough not being able to get out and talk to people. I really like talking to people and it’s been hard not to see the lads... Thanks to telerehab, I like the fact that we’re still in touch with each other. It’s given me structure which is really important. It’s keeping me ticking over until I get out and about again.”*

- Glenn, Brain Injury Survivor

## CAMPAIGNING, INFLUENCING POLICY AND DRIVING RESEARCH

### A Challenging Landscape

Unfortunately, due to insufficient resources, many national acquired brain injury service gaps in the community remained unaddressed in 2020. In particular there was insufficient investment in Case Management, Home and Community and Assisted Living services leading to significant waiting lists, delayed discharges from acute hospitals and the NRH, as well as inappropriate placement in nursing homes of people with an acquired brain injury.

Additionally, our organisation faces insufficient investment in:

- **Brain Injury Assessment Services:** For clinical and vocational assessment
- **Brain Injury Paediatric Services:** There is no permanently funded service provision, support or assessment for children and adolescents with an acquired brain injury in Ireland. While local funding for paediatric community services exists in some locations, there is no funding to expand this essential service nationally.
- **Case Management Services:** We are funded by HSE CHO areas 6, 7, 8 and 9 to deliver Case Management in Cavan, Dublin, Laois, Louth, Meath, Monaghan, Offaly and Westmeath. CHO area 4 (Cork) has also commenced Case Management service development, but a huge gap remains across the rest of the country where families are left to struggle to navigate the health system and get the resources they need to cope with brain injury.
- **Transitional Services:** Currently we are only funded to provide one four-bed Transitional Living Service in Sligo which serves the Sligo/Leitrim area. Transitional services are essential to bridge the gap between hospital and home and allow people with an acquired brain injury to acquire the skills to increase independence.
- **Step-down Facilities and Services:** Currently there are no step-down facilities for people with an acquired brain injury to meet their needs to transition from hospital. This often results in people under the age of 65 being inappropriately placed in nursing homes for the elderly. Acquired Brain Injury Ireland has a physical facility which could develop quickly given immediate investment.

### Submissions, Policy and Political Advocacy

2020 was an election year and we used the opportunity to raise the profile of brain injury and rehabilitation with our **Don't Save Me, Then Leave Me** campaign. Our services throughout Ireland contacted local election candidates to make them aware of the rehabilitation needs of people with brain injury and their families. Families and people with acquired brain injury were also actively involved in this campaign. Following the election, we successfully campaigned to have implementation of the Neuro-rehabilitation Strategy included in the Programme for Government.

Several submissions were completed this year, including to the Oireachtas Special Committee on Covid-19 Response on the impact of the pandemic on people with an acquired brain injury, their families, and our organisation. Our annual Pre-budget Submission focused on securing funding for Case Management services.



## Raising Awareness

Throughout 2020 Acquired Brain Injury Ireland coordinated and participated in a variety of local and national communication activities, helping to raise awareness of acquired brain injury as a condition and of the work we do as Ireland's leading neuro-rehabilitation service provider.

This included:

- A concerted campaign in the lead up to the 2020 General Election, resulting in editorial and Letters to the Editor published in regional and national news
- Interviews with our neuro-psychologists published in print media including information about how to cope with anxiety arising from the Covid-19 pandemic
- Local news coverage of fundraising activities hosted in advance of and during the pandemic
- Features raising awareness and encouraging participation in our On With Life and Step Ahead services

We also engaged with individuals, groups, organisations and communities to support survivors of brain injury and their families from the onset of the pandemic. We provided verified guidance, advice and practical rehabilitation supports for service users through our website and social media platforms (Facebook, Twitter, Instagram and LinkedIn).

We also used the hashtag #COVIDCantStopRehab to highlight how rehabilitation continued to be made available to brain injury survivors across residential and community services, in new and innovative ways.

## National Research Seminar

Following postponement of an in-person event in May due to Covid-19, our 3<sup>rd</sup> annual #BrainPower brain injury research seminar took place virtually in October. Over 100 people attended online. The theme for the event was **Brain Injury Research in Ireland: Promoting innovation, creativity and growth**. The Seminar is a national platform for researchers to disseminate their work and have an opportunity to network in their own community.



## Supporting Brain Injury Research in Ireland

Throughout 2020 we continued to grow and develop our research partnerships with several academic institutions:

- The Irish Research Council awarded funding for a post-doctoral research project based in the Global Brain Health Institute, Trinity College Dublin. Acquired Brain Injury Ireland is co-funding this health economics research.
- A partnership with Dublin City University saw the roll out of a research project on the epidemiology of Traumatic Brain Injury in Ireland, with funding from the Health Research Board and several other collaborators.
- Acquired Brain Injury Ireland was represented on the National Research Ethics Committee on Covid-19 and the HSE Consent in Research Policy Working Group.
- Our Research Ethics Committee approved three research applications.

## OUR PEOPLE

Just as every brain injury is unique, at Acquired Brain Injury Ireland our people are unique. Our teams are highly skilled and qualified in their area and extremely passionate about the work they do. Rebuilding lives through rehabilitation takes time. In addition to key skills, it requires the ability to see things differently and think outside the box. That's why we hire problem-solvers who have an ability to drive everyday solutions to help those in our services adapt to life after their brain injury.

Providing choice is at the heart of what we do, and our teams thrive on finding creative solutions to preserve our clients' rights to choose. Our approach to service delivery is about partnership and collaboration with our clients. Building positive relationships between clients and our Rehabilitation Assistants is essential to achieving personalised goals.

During 2020, our average employee headcount was 325 to meet the requirements of the organisation. This included 22 staff in our National Office, covering key functions such as finance, human resources, administration, research and policy, fundraising and communications.



### Human Resources Team

The Human Resources (HR) Team provides a broad range of services to the organisation across the employee life cycle, including recruitment and selection, induction and training, employee engagement, employee relations, HR administration, performance management, and learning and development. The team is responsible for ensuring compliance with legal and regulatory obligations and with the Commission on Accreditation of Rehabilitation

Facilities (CARF) requirements. The HR Team partners with the organisation to meet strategic and operational objectives through effective HR strategies.

## **HR Highlights in 2020**

A key project undertaken by the HR team in 2020 was a Strategic Redesign of the Organisation Structure. The new structure will play an important role in delivering on our strategic priority to build and optimise organisational capacity. It includes the new roles of Head of Service Operations, Head of People and Culture, Learning and Organisation Development Manager, IT Manager, and Quality and Risk Manager.

## **Employee Communications and Engagement**

Communication is essential to the work we do. At senior strategic level, Employee Communication and Engagement has been a key priority for the past two years.

Though our usual Colleague Engagement Days and Employee Feedback Survey were paused due to the pandemic, weekly updates were provided to all employees directly from our CEO. These communications focussed on ensuring that staff had up-to-date advice on Infection Control procedures in line with Public Health advice, in the context of an ever-changing environment. An employee survey was also carried out specifically in relation to the Covid-19 management response, to determine what further supports or concerns employees had. Employee feedback acknowledged that the organisation was responding to the pandemic and addressing the requirements as and when guidance from authorities was provided.

Actions from this survey included:

- Further equipment provided to ensure continuation of remote working, such as tablet devices
- Provision of sufficient PPE
- Provision of transit letters and ID cards to employees required to travel for essential work purposes
- Written updates from the CEO issued to all staff weekly on all relevant aspects of Covid-19

## **Learning and Development**

To ensure the highest standards of brain injury rehabilitation, we deliver ongoing best practice professional training for staff through our dedicated Learning and Development Team. This programme is vital to drive essential benefits for our staff and for the organisation, including:

- Increased job satisfaction and morale
- Increased employee motivation and buy-in
- Increased efficiencies and innovation
- Reduced employee turnover
- Risk management

Given the extenuating circumstances of the year and the restrictions around face-to-face engagement, training delivery was in a blended format. Despite these challenges, learning and development remained a vital element for the HR Team in 2020. 'LearnUpon', an online learning platform, was increasingly used to facilitate complete training delivery. This included mandatory and organisation-specific training according to HIQA regulations and best practice, which in turn continued to enhance our standards in line with CARF. We also developed a suite of training programmes on Infection Control to equip our staff to deliver safe services throughout the Pandemic.



## **FUNDRAISING AND COMMUNITY SUPPORT**

Acquired Brain Injury Ireland's work goes so much further through the generous donations and fundraising of hundreds of individuals, groups, and businesses. We are also supported by grants from many agencies around the country.

Combined, this support allows us to progress local and national projects that would not otherwise be possible, as well as enabling us to respond quickly and effectively when challenges arise. It allows us to purchase essential equipment, resources and activities required by our client group and supports us to engage essential specialist services on a contract basis.

We are extremely grateful to all our Donors, Funders and Grant Agencies for their support which truly makes a life-changing difference for survivors of acquired brain injury.

### **Objectives and Activities**

Throughout 2020 the Fundraising Department worked to raise sufficient funds to enable Acquired Brain Injury Ireland to deliver and expand its work.

The key objectives for the year were to:

1. Continue to grow an active supporter base with existing and new donors
2. Develop a diversified income base to ensure consistent and ongoing fundraising

### **Achievements**

Even with the outbreak of Covid-19 in March, fundraising activities during 2020 attracted generous support from all corners of the country. With a diversified income base, we were able to continue raising funds throughout the year.

#### Community Fundraising

Despite the challenges to community fundraising presented by Covid-19, we were successful in hosting a number of events, including a Valentine's Ball with our Midlands services in Tullamore. Events unavoidably postponed include the Paul McGrath Golf Classic and the JP McManus Pro-Am Pre-Qualifier. Our Bake for Brain Injury event, organised for the month of March, was also postponed upon announcement of the first national lock-down.

During the months when communities in Ireland re-opened, we re-imagined and re-organised most of our fundraising to virtual events, setting up online fundraisers and raising income in this new environment.

#### Corporate, Major Donors, Trusts and Grants

During 2020 private companies and public sector bodies supported Acquired Brain Injury Ireland's work through employee fundraising, corporate donations and project sponsorship.

Corporate supporters included GlaxoSmithKline, EI Electronics, UDG Healthcare, Tableau Software, Macquarie Bank, Surmodics, Coca-Cola and Google. Additionally, we received

grants from organisations including The Community Foundation for Ireland, Rethink Ireland, Pobal, The Hospital Saturday Fund, Monkstown Hospital Foundation and from several Local Authorities.

### Individual Giving

Developing a culture of committed Individual Giving as a future source of sustainable income is one of the key strategic priorities of the Fundraising Department. In 2020 we continued growing this income stream and developing relationships with our donors. Across the year we communicated with our supporters through direct mail appeals, newsletters and targeted communications using post, email and digital media. Overall in 2020 we exceeded our Individual Giving target by 33%.



## FINANCES AND ACCOUNTS

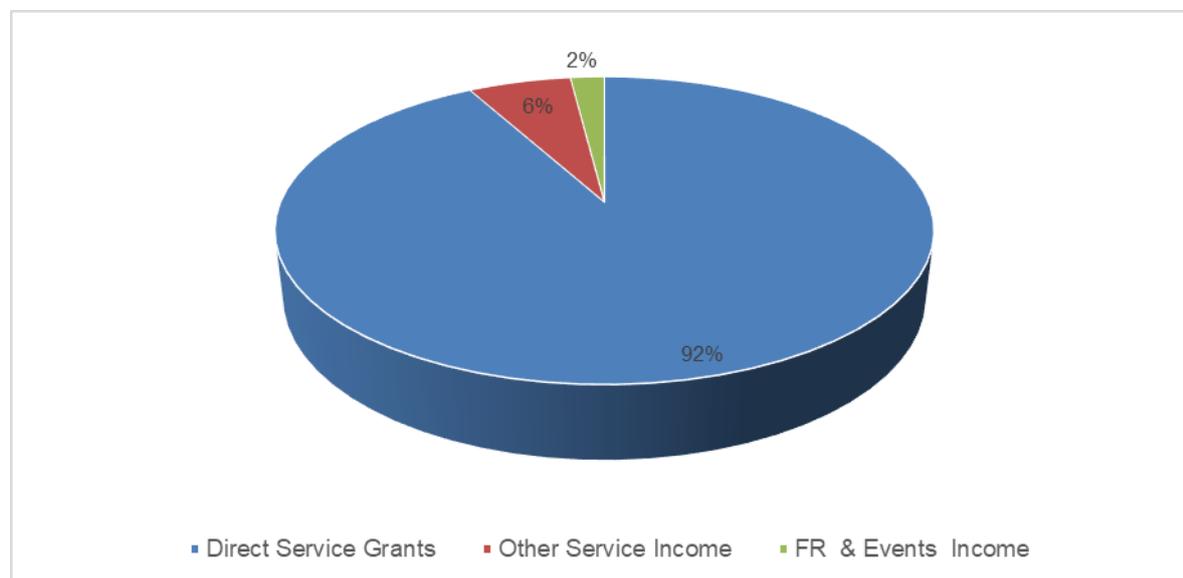
Acquired Brain Injury Ireland reported a surplus of €355k in 2020.

Total income for the year ended December 2020 at €15.7m represented an increase of €0.5m (3.4%) over 2019. Direct service and other income increased by 3.8% year on year. The Covid-19 pandemic had an impact on the organisation's community fundraising. Combined fundraised and events income reported a net decrease of €36k (12%) in 2020, versus €301k in 2019. Acquired Brain Injury Ireland recorded €179k income in respect of our Ability grant project. Funding for this project was granted by the Department of Employment Affairs and Social Protection – European Social Fund. The Department of Rural and Community Development provided €106k to the organisation in relation to our Carers and Families programme under the Dormant Account Fund. €20k was allocated through the Social Innovation Fund under the Dormant Account Fund.

Total charitable expenditure in 2020 decreased by 1% to €15.3m, primarily owing to once-off expenditure related to the organisation's move to a new national office premises.

Following a financial review and lengthy engagement with the HSE, a commitment to provide ongoing funding to support Acquired Brain Injury Ireland's operations was secured in 2020.

### 2020 income: % split



Direct service grants	92%
Other service income	6%
Fundraised and events income	2%

**Income & Expenditure Account**  
for the year ended 31 December 2020

	2020	2019
	€	€
Income	15,635,995	15,136,100
Expenditure	15,281,385	15,406,688
(Deficit)/Surplus before Taxation	354,610	(270,588)
Taxation	-	-
<b>(Deficit)/Surplus for the year</b>	<b>354,610</b>	<b>(270,588)</b>
<b>Statement of recognised gains &amp; losses</b>		
(Deficit)/Surplus for the year	354,610	(270,588)
<b>TOTAL RECOGNISED GAINS &amp; LOSSES FOR THE YEAR</b>	<b>354,610</b>	<b>(270,588)</b>

**Balance Sheet**  
as at 31 December 2020

	2020	2019
	€	€
<b>Tangible Assets</b>	1,804,022	1,998,463
<b>Current Assets</b>		
Debtors: amounts falling due within one year	753,529	558,176
Cash at bank and in hand	998,851	1,054,329
	1,752,380	1,612,515
<b>Current Liabilities</b>		
Creditors: amounts falling due within one year	1,645,697	1,901,912
Net Current Assets	106,683	(289,397)
Total Assets Less Current Liabilities	1,910,705	1,709,066
Creditors: amounts falling due after more than one year	361,820	459,729
<b>Net Assets</b>	<b>1,548,885</b>	<b>1,249,337</b>
<b>Total Reserves including Capital Reserves</b>	<b>1,548,885</b>	<b>1,249,337</b>

The accounts were approved on October 15<sup>th</sup> 2020

**Denis Buckley**  
Director

**Marzena Golinska**  
Director

## DIRECTORS AND OTHER INFORMATION

Directors	Mr Denis Buckley (Chairperson) (resigned 31 December 2020) Ms Niamh Cahill Ms Clair Cullinan (Interim Chair) Ms Marzena Golinska Mr Seamus Moore Mr Hugh O'Connor
Chief Executive & Secretary	Barbara O'Connell
Auditors	Duignan Carthy O'Neill Limited, Chartered Accountants and Registered Auditors, 84 Northumberland Road, Ballsbridge, Dublin 4
Registered Company Name	The Peter Bradley Foundation company limited by guarantee
Trading as	Acquired Brain Injury Ireland
Registered office	Century House, 100 George's Street Upper, Dun Laoghaire, Co Dublin, A96 R2V3
Registered Charity Number	CHY 14289
Solicitors	TP Robinson Solicitors, 24 Fitzwilliam Street Upper, Dublin 2
Bank	Allied Irish Bank plc, Cornelscourt, Dublin 18
CRA Number	20046200
Company Registration Number	334659

## **BOARD AND SUB-COMMITTEE MEETINGS**

### **Board Meetings**

The Board of Directors met seven times in 2020.

### **Remuneration Committee**

The Remuneration Committee did not meet in 2020. Members in 2020 were Seamus Moore and Denis Buckley.

### **Quality, Safety and Risk Committee**

This Committee did not meet in 2020. The committee is made up of Denis Buckley (Chairperson of the Board), Barbara O'Connell (Chief Executive) and Donnchadh Whelan (National Services Manager).

### **Finance and Audit Committee**

The Finance and Audit Committee met five times in 2020. Members included (Chairperson) Evelyn Fitzpatrick, Denis Buckley, Marzena Golinska and Clair Cullinan.

## CONTACT US

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