

# Delivering Our Future



RehabGroup

Investing in People, Changing Perspectives

Strategy 2021 - 2026





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# Introduction



**Aidan Walsh**  
Chairperson



**Barry McGinn**  
Chief Executive Officer

**“ We engaged with hundreds of stakeholders to ensure that their perspectives and views underpin our future direction. As a result, we believe this strategy is far more wide-ranging than approaches of the past.”**

For more than 70 years, the Rehab Group has been working to break down the barriers that prevent people with disabilities from living ordinary lives in their communities. Through these decades of work - and the dedication and commitment of our employees - many thousands of people have seen their lives transformed; achieving levels of independence, educational attainment, and career progression that may have seemed out of reach.

It is work we are immensely proud of. But it remains unfinished.

Building on this legacy, we are delighted to present our new strategy; ‘Delivering our Future’. This is an exciting and ambitious plan that outlines what we hope to achieve in the next five years.

We knew that the people best placed to talk to about the future of the Rehab Group, were those using, engaging with, and working within our services, our funders, our community partners, families, and those whose lives are directly impacted by the quality of the services we provide.





To ensure those voices were heard, and that this strategy is rooted in everyday experience, we conducted one of the biggest listening exercises in the history of the organisation. We engaged with hundreds of stakeholders to ensure that their perspectives and views underpin our future direction. As a result, we believe this strategy is far more wide-ranging than approaches of the past.

Indeed, this theme of collaboration continues beyond the consultation phase; the strategy sets out how we will co-create and deliver services for the future with a greater emphasis on the input of people who use our services and on maximising opportunities for independence. We will do this by putting the people that use our services at the centre of service design and delivery.

At its core, the strategy commits to providing the highest possible standards of care and learning and progressive employment opportunities for people with disabilities.

We outline our ambition to build on the high-quality care services we currently provide and signal our willingness and intent to be at the forefront of meeting the projected increase in demand for services in communities across Ireland, in collaboration with the Health Services Executive. We will sustain and build the expertise of RehabCare, providing innovative, responsive services which are informed by best practice.

We state our objective to ensure the Group's Learning services are responsive, adaptive, progressive, and consistent with policy direction, funder plans, and ambition. We will work to be leaders in the Specialist Supported Education space, enabling positive outcomes and impact at an individual, organisational and societal level. We will do this through the ongoing development and enhancement of our key programmes, reflecting changing policy direction, demography, community needs, and the labour market. We commit to working closely with our colleagues and partners in the Education and Training Boards to respond with clarity to our students' needs in the future.

We want to ensure that, as an employer of people with disabilities, we are role models. We set out how we will support people to fulfil their potential through work. We commit to the development of a new model of transitional work, providing a supported and facilitated engagement with employers and employees, which we hope will open up further employment opportunities in both Ireland and Scotland, and remove the obstacles contributing to Ireland's limited track record in this area.

This strategy was drafted during one of the most challenging periods we have ever experienced as an organisation, where every day our dedicated staff continued to provide support and much-needed continuity to some of the most vulnerable people in society. Our employees are fundamental to the success of this strategy. We commit to investing in and developing them and providing them with opportunities for progression, skills development, and career enhancement. We need to ensure employees are given the opportunity to leverage their ideas and expertise to drive improvements in how we work.



Many people living with disabilities experienced the hardships of the pandemic disproportionately; facing increased isolation and challenge but displaying trademark resilience and adaptability.

We need to work harder than ever to ensure people with disabilities are not left behind as society reopens. We commit to being disruptors in every space that is still encumbered by obstacles and challenges for the people we support.

It is critical that we work with our key funders, regulators, and policymakers in the public policy arena. We also commit to seeking out new partnerships which can broaden our organisational reach and impact. We are very much looking forward to developing and evolving these relationships over the lifetime of our strategy. We will transform how we use evidence and data to better understand and highlight where the gaps are for the people we support.

Rehab Group has experienced significant change over the last number of years, driven by a dynamic policy and regulatory landscape, shifts in practice, expectation and preference, and a need for prudent financial management to safeguard its future. To effectively support the ambitions of this plan, we will need to ensure that our organisation remains financially sustainable and that we embrace change with the deftness and agility that has characterised the organisation's response to the pandemic.

We would like to recognise and thank the people in our services, their families, our employees, our funders, customers, community partners, and our Board of Directors, who took the time to feed into the strategy development process during such a challenging time. We want to thank every member of the Rehab family for bringing their commitment to the people we support every single day.

The breadth of this strategy reflects the reality that disability affects people differently across different aspects of everyday life. By working together on this dynamic plan, and focussing on our strengths, we commit to delivering a better future for all.



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Chairperson



**Barry McGinn**  
Chief Executive Officer

## What we do

- We are an independent voluntary organisation providing services and support for people with disabilities for more than 70 years.
- We are an internationally recognised and pioneering charity, enabling more than 10,000 people with disabilities to live lives of their choosing.
- We work closely with State funders and private organisations to deliver services and fulfil contracts.
- We are a major employer, with 2,900 dedicated and committed employees, including a large number who are employed in our social enterprises.
- We are a rights-based and inclusion focused organisation.
- We are a campaigning organisation that advocates on behalf of the people who use our services and their families.
- We are an accountable and transparent organisation that is highly regulated and operates to the highest standards of corporate governance.

## What is our purpose?

Our purpose is to empower those we support to lead more independent lives and play an active and meaningful role in their communities through the provision of high quality, flexible and sustainable:

• **Care services.**

• **Learning, training and education.**

• **Employment-skills and opportunities.**

## Who do we support?

Children, adults, and older persons with disabilities and their families, and people who need support to lead meaningful and more independent lives.



## Where do we operate?




We provide Care and Learning services in almost every county in Ireland and provide Employment opportunities in Ireland, Scotland and Poland.

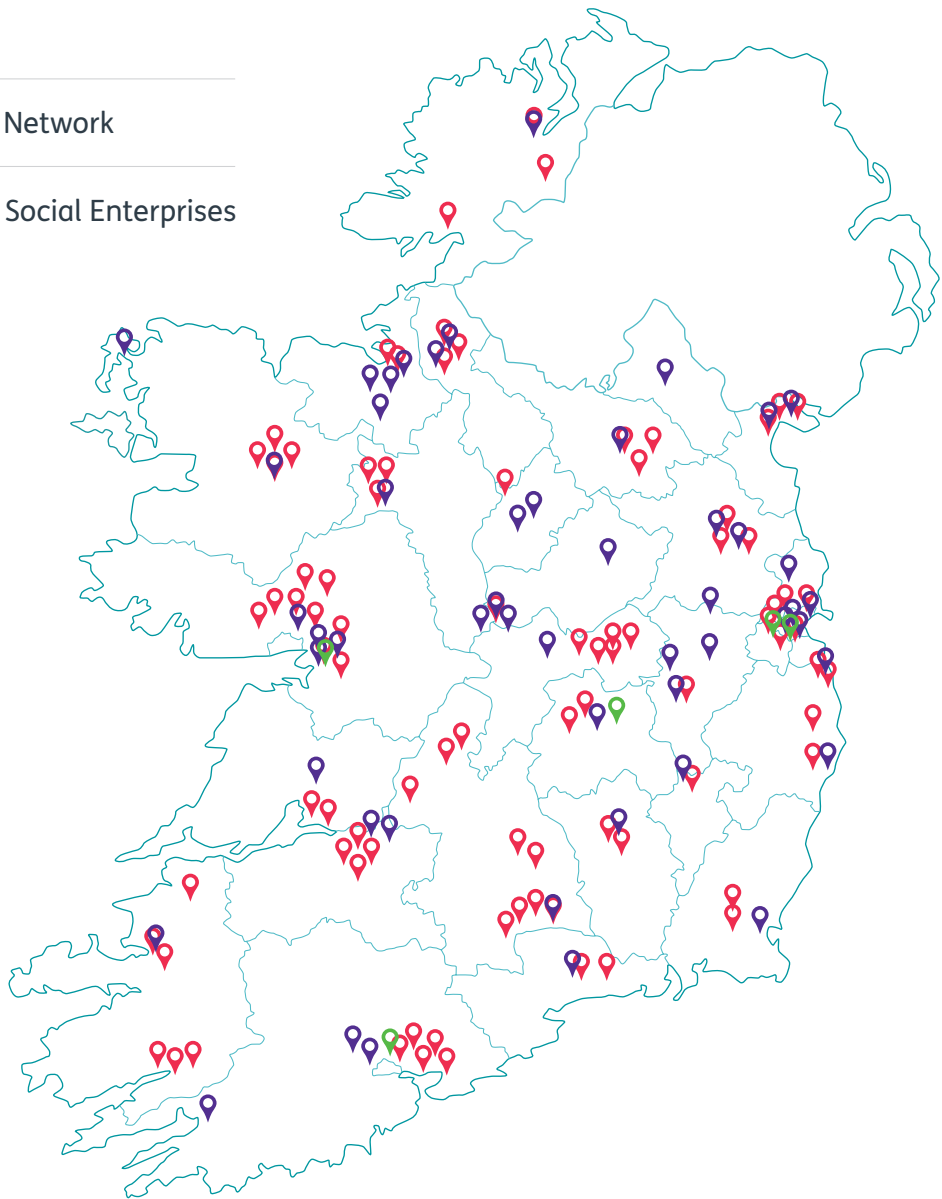
**RehabCare** provides innovative and responsive care, based on the current and changing needs of the people who use our services. Our strategy aims to strengthen our position as a provider of choice, offering a high-quality range of Care services in every community healthcare organisation in Ireland, aligned to international best practices.

**National Learning Network (NLN)** provides high-quality, innovative and, individualised education and training. Our services are guided by international best practice in disability inclusion. Our strategy aims to develop and grow our expertise in this area and play a recognised leadership role in its advancement.

Through our **Employability and Social Enterprise Division** we are one of the largest providers of employment for people with disabilities. This strategy will champion and promote the employment of people with disabilities through trialling an innovative Transitional Workforce Model (TWM) of employment. We will continue to advocate for the rights of people with disabilities to employment.



-  RehabCare
-  National Learning Network
-  Employability and Social Enterprises



# Operating environment



In considering our strategic priorities for the next five years it is vital that we understand our operating environment and how this operating context is likely to evolve over the course of the strategy.

‘Delivering Our Future’ was developed during the COVID-19 pandemic, at a time when the world faced unprecedented social, economic, and political upheaval. Rehab Group was at the forefront of the pandemic response, quickly pivoting to facilitate the continued provision of care and support to some of the most vulnerable groups in society. As an organisation, we learnt a lot from this and will seek to integrate the learnings and creative practices employed by our teams during the pandemic into our work in the future.

## Policy context:

As a major national provider of government-funded services in Ireland, Rehab Group works in partnership with a range of State departments and agencies including the Department of Children, Equality, Disability, Integration and Youth. Key government policy developments across health and social care, specialist education, housing, and employment have been considered in our strategy development and will impact its implementation. They will also impact the people that use our services and how these services develop.





Our strategic plan responds to several critical policy areas. All of our services focus on delivery close to the person's natural supports and community, as well as promoting health and well-being, aligned with Sláintecare (2021-2023). We will roll out a comprehensive Autism Framework so that our supports for people with Autism are consistently based on best practice. This aligns with the Government's commitment to the implementation of a National Autism plan.

Informed by the Further Education and Training (FET) Strategy (2020-2024), National Learning Network will continue to build and provide services around the pillars of inclusion, pathways, and skills development.

### **Legislative context:**

We will advocate alongside the people using our services for the rights of people with disabilities to employment, education, and social supports in line with the United Nations Convention on the Rights of Persons with Disabilities.

Ireland's track record on employment rates for people with disabilities in Europe is limited. As such, we will place a particular emphasis on the critical need to legislate for the use of Article 20 of the EU Public Procurement Directive, which reserves public contracts for employers of people with disabilities. We will also lobby for the implementation of the Comprehensive Employment Strategy for People with Disabilities (2015-2024). As a leading voice and advocacy organisation for people with disabilities and those in need of support. Rehab Group supports debate and policy development across the disability sector. In doing so, the voices of those people that use our services can be consulted on how changes at policy level can impact their lives.





## **Funding context:**

The disability sector faces funding difficulties into the future, due to the rising costs of services, regulation, and current funding models. A report produced by an Independent Review Group (2018), chaired by Dr. Catherine Day, recommended that the HSE move to a model of multi-annual budgeting to facilitate strategic service planning, as well as the need for better integration of services provided across voluntary organisations. These key messages are also reflected in the HSE Corporate plan (2021-2024), along with a focus on early intervention, and alternative and more personalised models of accommodation and respite services for people with disabilities. The Disability Capacity Review sets out the likely level of investment required to address changing and emergent need in the disability sector.

In the context of National Learning Network the current utilisation-based funding models can provide a challenge to innovation and change. Building on our existing positive relationships with our funders will be critical to agreeing and putting in place sustainable funding streams so that we can support the realisation of our strategic goals, which align closely to those of both the HSE and the ETBs. We recognise the need to share learning and work collaboratively as together we develop new ways of responding to emerging student needs. This will ensure effective, innovative and impactful models of service delivery are designed and delivered throughout the lifetime of the strategy in line with changing policy direction, demographic needs and funder ambitions.

These priority areas for funders, along with the rollout of personalised budgeting for individuals, have the potential to fundamentally change how voluntary organisations like the Rehab Group are funded and operate. Through the course of this strategy, we will seek to trial a variety of approaches to personalised budgets to support individual choice and independence as part of our service offering.



## Regulatory context:

Rehab Group operates in several highly-regulated environments. Our services are delivered to some of the most vulnerable people and, as such, robust regulatory oversight is fundamental to ensuring that they remain safe and supported in the best possible way. We will continue to maintain and strengthen our positive working relationships with our regulators. As a group, our operations are managed with the highest level of governance and oversight. We strive to achieve this by utilising the Charities Governance Code as a benchmark to conduct regular reviews of how we operate. Further regulation is anticipated in areas of the social care sector including Home Support and Day Services.

The regulation of Home Support services has been flagged as a government priority in the coming years. With our extensive experience in providing services across the country that are registered as designated centres, we welcome and are well placed to respond to the development of Home Support regulation.

The New Directions framework seeks to embed critical reforms to the provision of Day services. Whilst our Day services are already progressive and person-centred, throughout this strategy, the pillars of New Directions will influence the provision of all of our Day services across both NLN and RehabCare. We will ensure that all of our Day services are individualised, goal-orientated and outcome-focused, and remain linked to an individual's local community. This will involve changes to how, when, and where we provide these services.



### **Economic and social context:**

In Ireland and across the world there remains uncertainty around how economies, which have experienced large-scale closure of services and reductions in output, will recover in the short to medium term. Against this background, some sectors have seen a decline in turnover, whilst others have seen growth driven by demand. Our way of working has changed and our efforts to build and develop employment opportunities for people with disabilities will need to be responsive and dynamic, to harness the opportunities that these changes will bring.

### **Technological context:**

We are a person-focused organisation, but we know that we need to embrace technology, both at an organisational and individual level to maximise our effectiveness. We recognise that the social, in-person nature of our care and learning is vital, but we also know that technology, along with the appropriate supports, has the potential to transform the lives of people with disabilities and allow them to achieve greater independence. As part of this strategy, we will increase the use of technology to augment our service delivery at every level.

### **Environmental context:**

Rehab Group, like other organisations, has a responsibility to ensure that we are taking all possible steps to actively promote environmental sustainability. This includes seeking to reduce our CO2 emissions across all aspects of our day-to-day work. It is also incumbent on us to provide education and supports to our employees and the people using our services so that everyone can understand and take active steps in their own lives to protect the environment and all of our futures.

# Our Vision, Mission and Values

We aspire to embody an inclusive culture that is collaborative, transparent, compassionate, and accountable to ensure the best outcomes for the people we support. Our vision, mission and values shape what we do:

## Vision

An internationally recognised and expert organisation that positively impacts the lives of those it supports equipping them with the confidence, skills and self-belief to achieve their expressed goals.

## Mission

Enable people to pursue opportunities in their lives, to be more independent, participate in and contribute to society living the life of their choosing.





## Values

- **Quality** – consistently achieving high standards.
- **Dignity** – valuing the worth of all.
- **Teamwork** – collaborating for success.
- **Justice** – acting fairly and equitably.
- **Respect** – listening and considering the views and wishes of all.
- **Advocacy** – amplifying the voices of those we support to help reduce societal barriers and narrow inequalities.



# A unique history



1949

The Rehabilitation Institute of Ireland is formed in 1949 on Pleasants Street in Dublin, offering training to **10** people with TB to support them return to work.

The service expands to two new service centres in Cork and Limerick.

1952



1973

**350** people enrolled in Skills Training and Work Preparation training.

A total of **1,655** people in training programmes in **25** counties nationwide.

1983



1990

1990 Rehab begins operating services throughout Britain.

Rehab is renamed, The Rehab Group to reflect the diversity of services. Four separate divisions are formed, National Training and Development Institute (NTDI), Rehab Care, Rehab Enterprises and Rehab Lotteries.

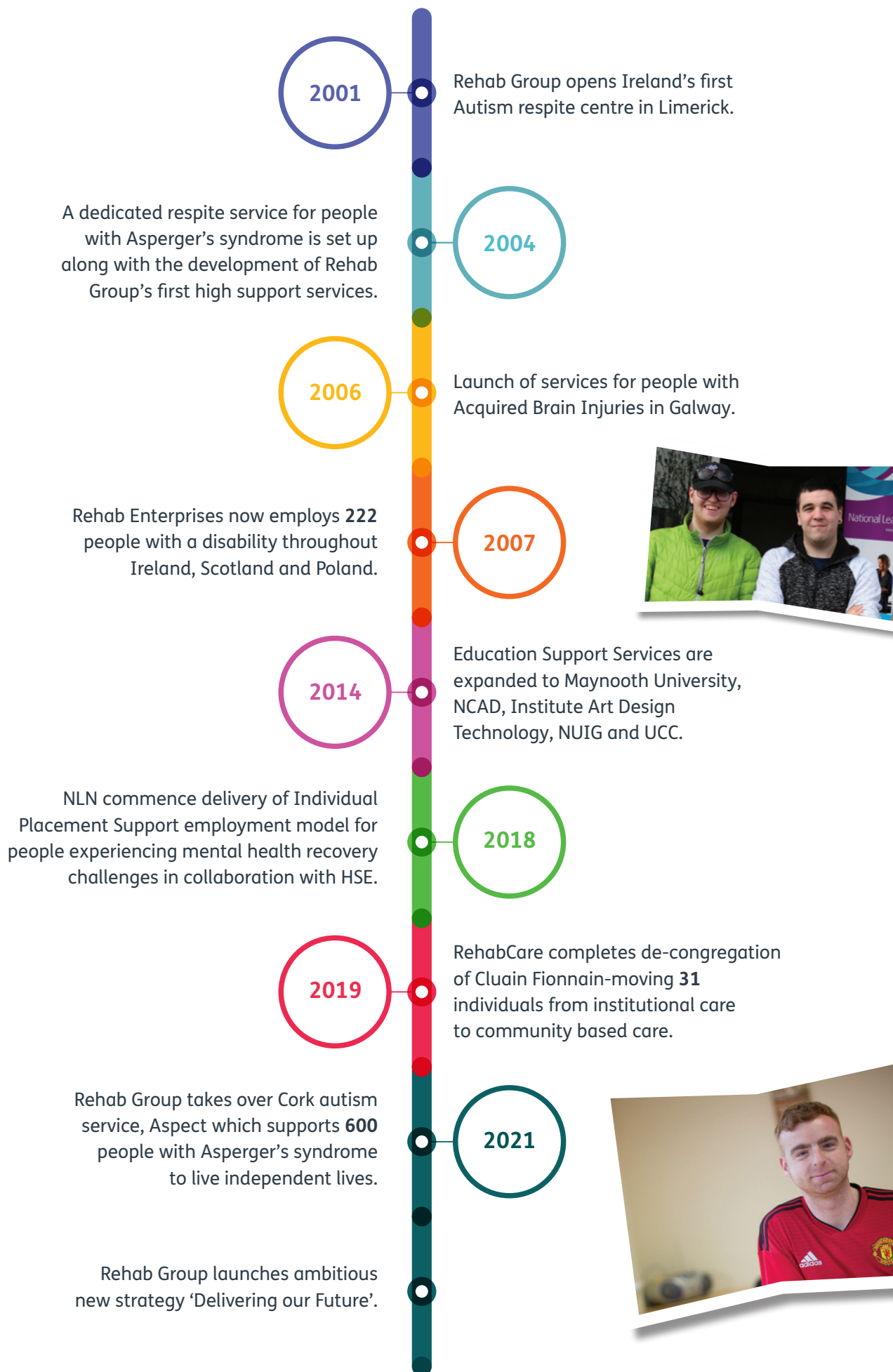
1994

1997

Carelink home support service is established to provide care and supports for people in their own homes.

NTDI is renamed as National Learning Network to provide integrated inclusion focused specialist training services across Ireland.

2000



# Strategic plan development process



**This strategy is informed by a substantial consultation process which includes feedback from our employees, the people who use our services, their families, our funders in the Education Training Boards and the Health Service Executive, regulatory authorities and many other community partners.**

This work involved hundreds of hours of listening, engaging and, debating our mission, our purpose and, how we deliver our services. We want to thank all those who participated so willingly in the process and contributed so passionately.

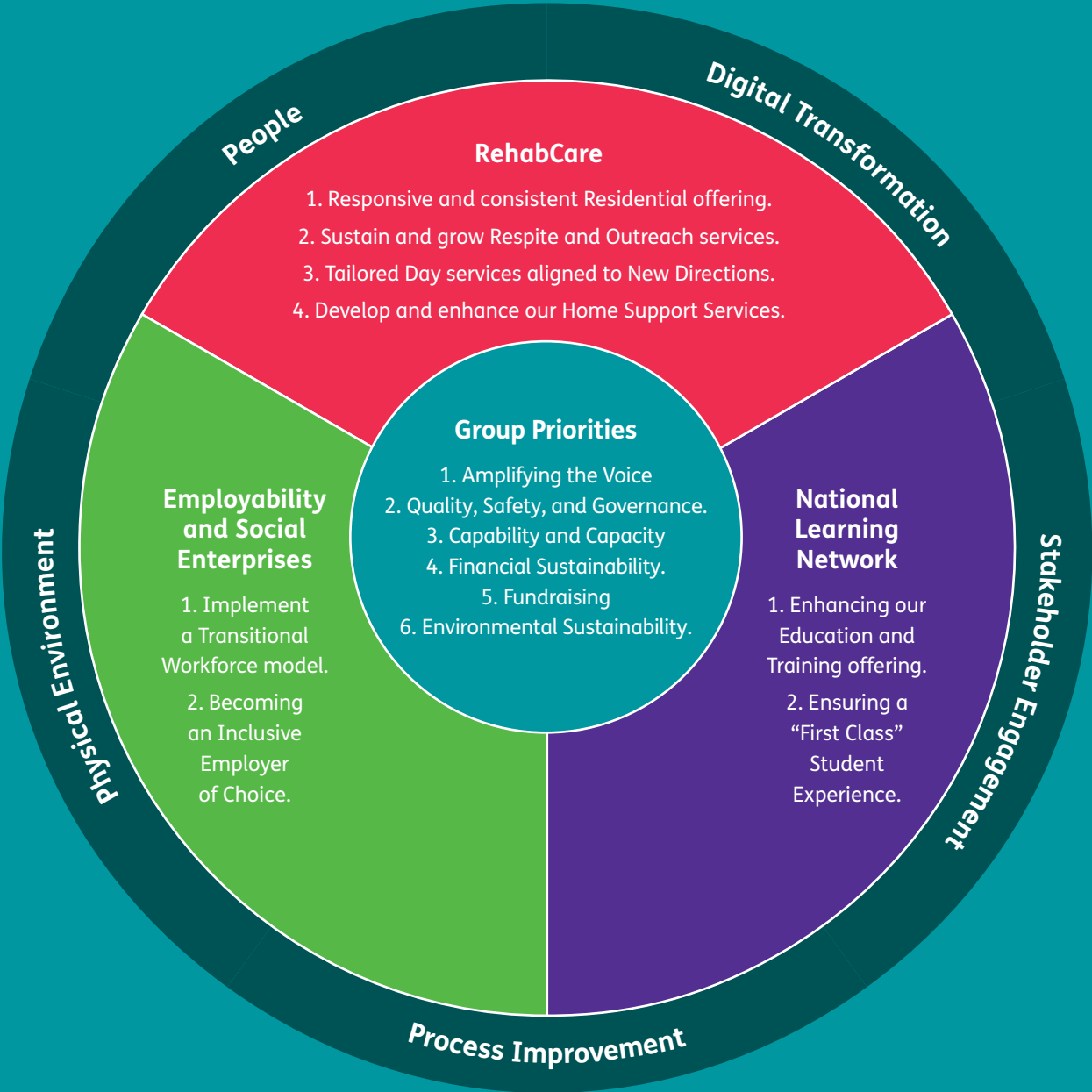
We have tried our best to ensure that the ambitions and goals contained here chart the best way forward for the organisation.





# Our strategic priorities for the next five years

This strategy sets out Rehab Group’s strategic objectives for the coming five years. These objectives are ambitious, purposeful, and mission-focused. They are also achievable, measurable, and seek to make a meaningful and positive impact on the people that use our services.



# Group strategic priorities

In the process of developing our new strategy, it became clear that several key strategic goals underpin and are common to all aspects of our work. These have been shaped into Group priorities, as they impact all service areas and departments.



A disability representative system will be in place to influence planning, governance, and service delivery.



Public policy decisions will address the needs, rights, and entitlements of people with disabilities as a result of Rehab Group advocating at local and national levels.

## Priority 1

### Amplifying the voice of the people that use our services

The people who use our services are our most important stakeholders. Our overall objective is to ensure that their voices are heard and responded to, internally and externally. We will embed the principles of Co-Production, where we develop policy and services in collaboration with the people that use our services. Through meaningful engagement, we will work to remove the barriers that exist across areas for people with disabilities, delivering tangible action, which makes a difference to people's day-to-day lives.

#### We will do this by:

- Embedding the principles of Co-Production across our service development and delivery.
- Expanding our existing one-to-one advocacy service.
- Growing our representation structures through family focus forums in each region and our advocacy events and conferences.
- Supporting people who use our services to collaborate, campaign, challenge attitudes, and influence decision-makers.
- Seeking to influence public policy with a particular focus on employment issues, training, social care, and the human rights of people with disabilities.
- Growing our commissioning of research to inform campaign work, and to present evidence and experience-based policy proposals.



**Greater consistency  
in the quality  
of services  
delivered nationally.**



**HIQA compliance  
achieved for all  
residential,  
day, and home  
support services.**



**Exceeding standards  
and quality targets  
in our specialist  
areas of operation.**

## **Priority 2**

# **Improving quality, safety, and governance**

Rehab Group has a good track record in meeting quality standards set by regulatory bodies, and we have a strong governance framework in place focusing on continuous improvement, quality, safety, and accountability. We will position ourselves to embrace changes in the regulatory environment and continue to strive to ensure that the quality and safety standards set by ourselves not only meet the required prescribed standards but achieve standards of excellence.

### **We will do this by:**

- Ensuring the Rehab Group actively responds to changes in the regulatory and statutory environment.
- Ensuring the quality of our service delivery includes the voice, needs, and aspirations of our service users, students, and their families.
- Enhancing the capacity and capabilities of employees to ensure the successful provision of high-quality, safe services that meets a standard of excellence that is beyond the required standard set by regulators.
- Embedding a culture of quality, safety, and continuous improvement across the organisation.
- Ensuring appropriate governance and management structures are in place.
- Introducing external accreditations and benchmarking the Rehab Group services with other national and international providers.



Enhanced outcomes for the people using our services through the provision of inclusive, co-produced, and best practice approaches.



The provision of innovative, outcome-focused services through skilled support teams.

### Priority 3

## Developing the capability, capacity, and expertise of the organisation

We will be acknowledged as sector leaders in all areas of our core service provision, through building on and strengthening our existing capabilities and expertise. We will ensure that our service provision is innovative, based on international best practice and that outcomes are progression focused in all areas.

### We will do this by:

- Enhancing our practice, research, and innovation capabilities from the ground up, by developing the competencies and skills of our support teams.
- Building capability and expertise through the enhancement and development of our multidisciplinary supports for the people using our services.
- Commissioning research that will enhance the design of service delivery and the lives of the people that we support to ensure our services will be outcome-focused.
- Implementing our Autism strategy and seeking accreditation.





**A financially sustainable and future-proofed organisation ensuring the long-term viability of services.**

#### **Priority 4**

## **Ensuring financial sustainability**

Maintaining a financially sustainable organisation for the long term is crucial to the delivery of the Rehab Group's strategic priorities. Rehab Group will be best placed to continue to support the people who use our services, through ensuring that continued prudent financial management is embedded in the organisation.

#### **We will do this by:**

- Implementing a financial strategy that ensures the long-term stability of the organisation.
- Engaging with funders to optimise the resources available to deliver services in the most effective and cost-efficient manner possible.
- Maintaining a prudent and responsive approach to cost management across all elements of expenditure, using a strategic procurement approach where relevant.
- Ensuring that all of our expenditure decisions are governed by a VFM (Value for Money) perspective, which will include rigorous project cost appraisals.
- Optimising additional funding from our Fundraising operations.



**An established, consistent, and secure fundraising stream that augments our service delivery.**



**Increased community awareness of national campaigns and brand recognition.**

## Priority 5

# Building our fundraising income

Building Rehab Group's overall fundraising capacity will support an enhanced quality of service. Active local fundraising, with campaign and advocacy links, will augment Rehab Group's standing in the communities we operate in.

## We will do this by:

- Creating and deploying a long-term fundraising strategy, which targets the opportunities available.
- Developing capacity to grow local and centre-specific fundraising, by allocating targeted fundraising revenue for local use.
- Using our public-facing centres to highlight and fundraise against national campaigns.



Increased environmental awareness within our organisation, leading to a reduction in our CO2e footprint.

## Priority 6

# Growing our environmental sustainability

We take our responsibility to the environment very seriously, as an organisation of size and scale. Through the development of this strategy, the people that use our services, our employees and our funders, have emphasised how important environmental sustainability is. Our new strategy sees us reinforce our commitment to sustainability, in recognition that we are a large employer and provider of services nationally and there is scope for us to reduce our overall environmental impact.

### We will do this by:

- Establishing a “champion’s network” of employees and service users who can influence, promote and deliver our sustainability objectives.
- Baselining our CO2e footprint and setting reduction targets.
- Developing a new Rehab Group Sustainability Policy and Strategy.

# RehabCare and Newgrove Housing Association







**“ I do lots of activities here, we go on trips and we go to the gym and go for a coffee. I do a lot of art work and we do meditation together as a group in the mornings. We have great chats here together and have lots of craic. I am happy and I live in an apartment where there is a key worker there that I can talk to and who can help me if I need anything.”**

Mary Catherine Reilly - RehabCare Castlebar

**RehabCare is known nationally as a trusted, high-quality and consistent service provider. Across all RehabCare services, an individualised approach is taken to ensure that each person has a support service that meets their needs but also enables them to progress on their individual journey, develop and become more independent over time.**

Over the next five years, we will grow our services across all Community Health Organisations (CHO), to build on our position as a sector leader. We will continue to develop services in geographic areas where the need is greatest, in line with Government policy, demographic trends, and funder priorities.

We will seek to develop and implement new and innovative models of service, particularly in the areas of Respite, while also exploring approaches to personalised budgets as part of the RehabCare offering.

Through our approved housing body, Newgrove, we will continue to support the delivery of RehabCare strategic priorities, so the people that use our services can live in and be part of their local communities.



**More people living independent lives of their choosing in their local communities.**



**Increased residential and accommodation options for people, consistent with need.**

## **Priority 1**

# **Provide a responsive and consistent Residential offering**

While each residential service has a unique offering, based on the needs of residents and the funding packages attached, RehabCare will continue to offer a range of flexible services nationally. For some service users, RehabCare and Newgrove Housing Association will offer a stable, consistent, and high-quality accommodation service for as long as they wish to avail of the service. In other instances, individuals will choose to have a tailored package of support, where they will transition to lower support services, or independent living arrangements, over time.

## **We will do this by:**

- Ensuring our current residential service provision meets the changing needs and aspirations of existing residents. Additional Capital Assistance Scheme (CAS) funded properties will be required.
- Developing new and alternative progression-focused models of accommodation that meet the individual needs and wishes of service users.



More people  
accessing innovative  
and flexible  
respite options.

## Priority 2

# Sustain and grow respite and outreach services

Respite and Outreach offer the opportunity to identify needs early, and to build planned and well-informed longer-term services and supports around a person.

### We will do this by:

- Specifically pursuing opportunities to develop alternative models of Respite that meet the individual needs and wishes of service users - residential respite, as well as day, weekend, home-based and therapeutic respite services.
- Further developing our Outreach service offering, ensuring that we are both progression and outcomes focused, as well as meeting the social needs of service users.



More people  
accessing  
progressive,  
outcome-focused  
and individualised  
day services, aligned  
with New Directions.

### Priority 3

## Provide tailored day services aligned to New Directions

Day Service provision has evolved over the last five years and will continue to evolve over the term of this strategy. To align with New Directions, our Day Service provision will require our services to be tailored to the needs of each individual; they will need to be outcome-focused and based on international best practice. Creative ways of providing services were developed as a necessity during the pandemic, and we will harness the positive elements developed during this time. We will also ensure that social skills development, social opportunities, and peer support continue to be core to any service remodelling and service provision.

### We will do this by:

- Continuing to strengthen and grow our school leavers' service provision in each CHO area.
- Remodelling our Day services to ensure outcomes focused service delivery and alignment to New Directions.
- Developing a distinct day service that is responsive to the needs of older people with disabilities.
- Extending our recognised external accreditation and validation.
- Preparing for statutory regulation.





Recognised for the provision of high-quality, sustainable, and regulated home support services.

#### Priority 4

## Develop and enhance our home support services

Home Support Services, both for older persons and people with disabilities, have grown and evolved over the years to meet the diverse needs of our service users. An aging population, with complex needs, provides a strong justification for further development of home support services over the next five years.

We have an opportunity to further refine our expertise in the Home Support sector, particularly with regard to the provision of supports to older persons with disabilities. We will achieve this through upskilling our support teams, changing our structures to meet the evolving needs of service users, and ensuring ongoing rigorous governance.

#### We will do this by:

- Investing in the necessary infrastructure to ensure efficient, effective, and high-quality service provision.

# National Learning Network







**“ When I came to NLN, my confidence was on the floor. I was broken. It took some time working with the support staff in NLN, to build it back up again. The whole atmosphere in NLN is all about ‘I can’. It’s all about trying and trying again until you succeed. My confidence is restored. It changed my life.”**

Joe Molloy, NLN Raheen, Co Limerick

**National Learning Network is a progressive leader in the delivery of personalised education, training, and development opportunities for people with disabilities or people requiring additional supports throughout Irish communities.**

We operate nationally across 50 learning colleges. We support 6,500 students each year across Rehabilitative Training, Specialist Vocational Training and in Education Support Services in Higher Education organisations.

National Learning Network offers students a range of interlinking education and training options, funded by SOLAS and the 16 ETBs, the HSE and a number of Higher Education organisations. All courses we deliver offer mainstream qualifications on the National Qualifications Framework at levels 2-6. In the Higher Education sector we provide bespoke student support services including assessment of need with supports in academic and social skills development.

Whilst student backgrounds are diverse, ranging from those with no formal education, to university students, they all share common threads - the need for personalised training, individualised supports, and outcome-focused service delivery.

Throughout the lifetime of our Strategy, we will seek to ensure National Learning Network is recognised as a progressive leader in inclusive education and training. Our services must be adaptive, responsive and constantly innovating. We will work collaboratively with our key funders to find new ways to respond to emerging needs. We will do this through the ongoing development and enhancement of our key delivery models, building a strong national identity and reflecting changing policy direction, demography, community needs, and the labour market.

A key enabler of our Strategic priorities will be a dedicated organisational structure in National Learning Network, driving delivery to achieve successful, impactful and sustainable results at individual, organisational and societal level.

We will also work with our funders and government departments to put in place sustainable funding models that ensure diverse, differentiated options are available to support equity of access to appropriate education and training options for all students with disabilities and those requiring additional specialist supports.







**Greater opportunities for students requiring additional supports to progress, gain a qualification, access Further or Higher Education and Employment.**

## Priority 1

# Enhancing and advancing inclusive learning opportunities

One of our key Strategic goals is ensuring increased equity of access for students with disabilities, and those needing additional specialist supports to access pathways to Further Education and training and Higher Education that meet their particular needs.

We recognise that there is a substantive shift in policy direction and we will work with our funders and government departments to drive change including developing new models of delivery, increasing awareness of post school options and creating societal value around inclusion of persons with disability in both mainstream and specialist training and education provision. We will work to provide enhanced transitional and progression options for school leavers with intellectual disabilities and those with a diagnosis of Autism.

We recognise that key to our success is the further development of our collaborative working relationships with the Education and Training Boards, playing a clearly defined role in the Further Education and Training eco-system and supporting the achievement of the inclusion objectives of the Further Education and Training Strategy, Transforming Learning 2021-2024.

This will be achieved through greater collaboration to support innovation and increased interconnectedness.

**We will do this by:**

- Being the primary pathway for students who need personalised supports to transition, engage and thrive in Further Education, training, apprenticeships and employment. Working closely with SOLAS and the 16 ETBs to expand the range of post-school course options available to students with disabilities to support seamless post-school pathways. We will also actively seek to identify collaborative and creative ways of delivering courses and support services across the FET sector.
- Working collaboratively with the Health Service Executive to expand and enhance School Leaver Transitioning Opportunities, as well as Rehabilitative Training and Community Inclusion Hubs aligned to New Directions.
- Developing our capacity as practice leaders in Education Support Services, working through Disability and Access Offices in mainstream Further and Higher Education. We will seek to ensure that we actively support promoting student support services for all those with disabilities accessing FET and Higher Education. We will provide bespoke Student Support Services including assessment of need, coupled with student supports in academic skills as well as skills to support social inclusion and enhanced well-being.
- Innovating in Contracted Training, providing labour market-relevant courses, working with people who are unemployed and/or people who are at risk of unemployment, to future-proof the skills base in industries and local economies.
- Expanding the evidence-based employment service, Individual Placement and Support, supporting people with mental health conditions to achieve sustainable employment in mainstream competitive jobs, either part-time or full-time, based on individual preferences.





**A constructive,  
supportive learning  
environment,  
resulting in the  
best platform for  
student success.**

## **Priority 2**

# **Ensuring a “First-Class” student experience**

Prioritising the student experience and student success is a hallmark of our learning environment. Embedding Universal Design for Learning in our daily practices, and augmenting inclusive training with diverse student supports, ensures delivery of a first-class student experience.

### **We do this by:**

- Including and amplifying the voice of students in the design of courses.
- Delivering Universal Design for Learning informed blended courses and online courses.
- Enhancing our online learning capacity, offering even more flexibility.
- Developing technology-enhanced, creative learning spaces, as well as supporting digital skills development in training centres.
- Enhancing Student Support Services and augmenting the existing framework that includes psychology, learning, and advocacy supports.
- Introduction of a peer mentoring/peer support model.



# Employability and Social Enterprises







“ When I left school, I didn’t know what to do, and ended up spending three years at home just playing video games. Then I found National Learning Network and sampled lots of different kinds of jobs before deciding on Rehab Recycle. Everyone is supportive here and we are all friends. If you have any questions or issues the Work Path Facilitator is there to help. The job has lots of variety. I’m very happy here.”

Stephen McCarthy, Rehab Recycle, Cork



**An increase in the numbers of people with disabilities employed internally and externally by partner organisations.**

**We will be recognised as a leader in the area of inclusive employment for people with disabilities, and act as a role model and support external companies as employers of people with disabilities.**

Our new strategy outlines a different model of employment for both Rehab Group and private companies, which includes a supportive placement service for both people with a disability and employers, providing training and meaningful work.



**A new innovative model of employment for people with disabilities in place.**

Through this work, and a comprehensive advocacy and public affairs campaign, our broad goal is to increase the number of people with disabilities in employment.

We also aim to double the number of people with disabilities employed in Rehab Group over the next five years.



## Priority 1

# Implement transitional workforce model

Rehab Group aims to play a significant leadership role in supporting people with disabilities to develop and progress in their careers. To do this, we must demonstrate our credentials as an inclusive employer with a diverse workforce of people with disabilities within Rehab Group. At the same time, we must champion and support the employment of people with disabilities outside of our own direct control, such as national procurement through Article 20. We will continue to support people across NLN and RehabCare services to seek and obtain employment.

To achieve this, Employability and Social Enterprises (Ireland) and Haven Products (Scotland) will introduce a new model of supported employment for people with disabilities called the Transitional Workforce Model (TWM). This model will partner with the business community to provide opportunities for people with disabilities that have been underdeveloped.

Training for this new stream of employees will largely be developed in conjunction with the specific employers, to ensure the organisations' unique needs and requirements are understood and met.

### We will do this by:

- Rolling out of TWM across Ireland and Scotland.
- Working to influence the Irish Government and State bodies concerning their use of public procurement opportunities that support the employment for people with disabilities.
- Using our strength to lobby and campaign at all levels for Article 20 of Directive 2014/24/EU to finally be put to use in Ireland to support employment opportunities for people with disabilities.



## Priority 2

# Becoming an inclusive employer of choice

Through our new model, the Employment and Social Enterprises Division will be a showcase for how mainstream employers can adapt to the needs of people with disabilities, creating an environment to excel in.

Rehab Group wants to be an employer that our employees are proud to work for and an organisation that people want to work with. To be a truly inclusive employer, we need to make our working environment not just accessible but actively welcoming for colleagues with diverse backgrounds – a place where people with disabilities can excel and make a meaningful and valued contribution.

Among the pieces of work required to make this a reality is a shift in emphasis to ensure that our recruitment procedures and processes are inclusion-driven, developing a specific Continuing Professional Development (CPD) training course for all managers to ensure these goals are being met at the local level, and provision of in-house disability awareness training for all employees.

### **We will do this by:**

- Providing greater development opportunities for employees with disabilities, so that they can be supported to grow, develop, and progress within the organisation.
- Reviewing and redrafting recruitment procedures and processes to be inclusion-driven.
- Providing disability awareness training for all employees in-house and specific CPD for managers.

# How we will make our strategy work

Through the development of our new strategy, several key enablers have been identified to support the delivery of our strategic priorities. These are – our People, Digital Transformation, Physical Environment, Process Improvement, and Strategic Engagement and Partnership.







**A responsive workforce, skilled to meet the changing needs of our service users.**



**An inclusive and diverse organisation, with high levels of staff well-being and retention.**

## Enabler 1

# People

With 2,900 employees, our organisation is a diverse, complex and rewarding workplace. Through the development of our strategy, and following an intensive engagement with our employees, we have identified the **People and Culture pillars** necessary to deliver on our strategic priorities.

### We will do this by:

- **Developing Leadership and Culture:** strengthening our leadership capabilities and embedding positive culture.
- **Becoming a more inclusive employer:** as an employer we need to be at the forefront of raising awareness on diversity and inclusion, and in particular, promoting training and employment for individuals who have a disability.
- **Attracting the best and retaining our talent:** we need to attract, retain, and develop high-quality, committed employees to Rehab, to ensure we can deliver on our strategic and operational objectives in a competitive sector.
- **Developing our people:** the key to the success of delivering our strategic priorities is the development of our employees to be the best they can be.
- **Organisational design:** Rehab Group will design a fit-for-purpose organisational structure that will build capacity and support the delivery of the strategic priorities.
- **Workforce Planning:** we will ensure that we plan for the workforce demands of the future.



**Wider use of integrated digital technology to support the delivery of our strategic priorities, improved service quality and service users' lives.**

## **Enabler 2**

# **Digital transformation**

We recognise that digital transformation is a key enabler, and will play an important role in our ability to provide excellent services and will provide the environment that our employees need to perform to the best of their abilities.

### **We will do this by:**

- Creating a new integrated Information and Communications Technology (ICT) strategy that will use the best available technology, supporting service delivery in the most efficient way possible.
- Enhancing the service user and student experience by providing technology and digital tools that increase the opportunity to learn and succeed.
- Enhancing the abilities and effectiveness of employees by removing the barriers created by legacy equipment and platforms.
- Making effective ICT investment decisions, managing third-party contracts efficiently, and utilising our total expenditure to greater effect.
- Providing appropriate protection against threats in the form of cyber security and data breaches, to safeguard our information and assure information governance of data is in line with GDPR and our regulators' needs.



**Fit-for-purpose  
spaces that  
support enhanced  
accessibility and  
standards for users.**

### Enabler 3

## Physical environment

Our property portfolio is varied and will require continued investment in maintenance and refurbishment so that our working environments and the space used by the people who use our services remain safe, compliant with legislation, and provides the environments that enhance our service offerings.

We will ensure that best practice principles in universal design will be an important component in our portfolio, recognising the accessibility needs of those who use our services and how these can contribute to better outcomes.

### We will do this by:

- Creating a new integrated Property Strategy that will provide a framework for capital investment decisions, along with operational standards that meet the changing needs.
- Ensuring our assets remain fit-for-purpose, accessible to people that use our service, and provide a safe working environment for employees.
- Utilising and managing our assets to ensure the long-term financial sustainability of the organisation.





Improved systems, structures and processes within Rehab Group, leading to a more responsive organisation.

#### Enabler 4

## Process improvement

During our strategic development process, we have heard from our employees that our internal processes could be more efficient. We will simplify these processes, by empowering our people to be able to make the decisions that matter to achieving our strategic goals.

#### We will do this by:

- Working towards a shared set of priorities and business plans across all directorates.
- Removing processes that create inefficiencies and frustrations by introducing more streamlined and efficient processes on an organisational basis.
- Enabling greater autonomy and decision-making within a framework of supported decision-making.
- Enhancing how we communicate and ensuring that content is accessible and useful for readers.
- Enabling more structured opportunities for collaboration and partnership working, whilst recognising the flexible needs of future working environments.





**A strong, mutually beneficial and collaborative relationship with funders and stakeholders underpinned by shared objectives and priorities.**

## **Enabler 5**

# **Stakeholder engagement and partnership**

Rehab Group has a wide range of stakeholders. Maintaining and growing these relationships, to further our strategic aims and objectives, is a fundamental consideration to the successful delivery of our strategy. Understanding the future needs within the sectors we operate in and our role in meeting these needs should be a shared priority. We will seek to influence policy development and ensure that the voice of our people is heard.

### **We will do this by:**

- Developing a stakeholder engagement plan, which builds on the work done in developing our strategy.
- Campaigning at a national level on key issues, to influence public policy. We will place particular emphasis on the need for Article 20 to be adopted into legislation.
- Engaging with major stakeholders to garner political and financial support for the people that use our services.
- Further building on local and regional relationships with funders, both HSE and ETBs, across all regions.

**“ At NLN, I wasn’t afraid to ask for help. I have Autism and now I have a support dog, Honey who goes everywhere with me. Because of NLN, I’m now working as a clerical officer in the Coolock Primary Care centre. Being at NLN opened up work for me; before NLN I could only dream of having a job.”**

Kevin Buckley NLN, Phibsboro  
and his support dog, Honey.





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RehabGroup

Investing in People, Changing Perspectives



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