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# Annual Report 2019



## Chairperson's Address

*I am pleased to present the DESSA Annual Report for the financial year 2019. We continue to promote the human rights of disabled people and work to build inclusive, accessible and non-disabling communities.*

*In a very busy year a number of projects stand out.*

*2019 saw the continued implementation of our family support work through the Empowering Parents Programme in which advocacy support and training was delivered to 50 parents in Dublin, Kildare and Kerry.*

*Our work with Children and Young People's Services Committees (CYPSCs) expanded. During the year DESSA launched the Framework for Inclusion in conjunction with Waterford CYPSCs. This Framework sets out the vision and commitment of Waterford CYPSC to providing equitable services and opportunities for the full participation and inclusion of disabled children and young people in Irish life. It also provides guidance on the steps involved in making inclusion happen. On foot of this work DESSA developed innovative projects with Wexford and Donegal CYPSCs and has delivered training and supports to over 120 staff across a range of community, children and young people's agencies and disability services.*

*2019 was a year in which the DESSA board adopted our Strategy Statement 'Enabling Participation and Contribution'. This is a three year social inclusion strategy, the aim of which is to provide opportunities for people to fully participate in and contribute to, the social, economic and civic life of their communities.*

*I am delighted to announce a new and exciting project for 2020 called Inclusion for Families. This project, funded by the Community Foundation of Ireland's Early Childhood Ireland National Pyjama Day Fund, is a partnership initiative with the FRC National Forum and will entail the capacity building of Family Support Workers, across Ireland, to support families experiencing disability.*

*My sincere thanks to our staff, Alice Griffin and Linda Howe for their ongoing work and commitment to advancing the DESSA principles of inclusion and equality. I would like to acknowledge and thank my colleagues on the Board and Committees of DESSA for the important contribution and commitment they have made to the effective governance of the organisation.*

*I would also like to thank our funders, the Department of Rural and Community Development and Pobal for their ongoing support and commitment to DESSA. And finally, a big thank you to our project funders Kerry ETB, Tusla, the Department of Children & Youth Affairs and to the Community Foundation of Ireland.*

*I look forward to the continued challenge of our work in 2020.*

**Jacqui Browne**  
**July 2020**



## About Us

### **Vision Statement**

Ireland is an inclusive and non-disabling society, a place where disabled people can fully participate, contribute and achieve their goals and aspirations.

### **Mission Statement**

To pursue the active involvement and full participation of disabled people in society by creating inclusive and non-disabling communities. We do this by delivering strategic capacity building supports to the community & voluntary sector and to disabled people and their families.

### **Our History**

Established in 2001 DESSA is a national community development organisation and is unique in developing disability specific work within a community development context. DESSA is about promoting disability rights in Ireland, creating a society where everyone with lived experience of disability and their families can participate equally as full citizens. We do this by to eliminating barriers to enable disabled people to reach their potential and participate fully in their community.

DESSA's core remit entails the delivery of direct training, advocacy and information support services to individuals and families with lived experience of disability and to organisations supporting them. DESSA also works to develop the capacity of organisations in the Community & Voluntary sector to create non-disabling communities.

## 2019 Achievements – Year at a Glance

Delivery of **Disability Equality Awareness** training to 180 staff and volunteers of community & voluntary organisations nationwide

Launch of the **Disability Inclusion Framework** at the **Capacity for Inclusion Seminar** in conjunction with Waterford CYPSC

Facilitating the establishment of a **parent advocacy organisation, the St. John of God Family Forum Group**, representing parents of adult day service users in Co. Kerry

Participation of 185 staff and volunteers from children and young people's services, youth organisations and community development groups in **Inclusive Disability Policy & Practice** in Donegal, Waterford and Wexford

Facilitation of the **Getting Included Network** in south county Dublin involving 10 community organisations, eight disability service providers in partnership with South County Dublin Area Partnership

Delivery of advocacy skills training through the **Empowering Parents Programme** to 50 parents in Kerry, Kildare and Dublin

### **Partnerships & Collaborations with**

- Communiversity
- Donegal CYPSC
- Dublin 12 Arch Club
- Dublin South City Partnership
- FRC National Forum
- Getting Included Network
- Irish Guide Dogs for the Blind
- Kerry Airport
- Kerry Education & Training Board
- South County Dublin Partnership
- St. John of God Family Forum Group
- Waterford CYPSC
- Wexford CYPSC

Dissemination of information to over 500 individuals and families experiencing disability, Family Resource Centres, Local Area Partnerships, disability service providers and peer support groups



## Our Strategies

The UN Convention on the Rights of Persons with Disabilities, which was ratified by Ireland in March, 2018 is the framework within which DESSA implements its goals and objectives.

Implementation of all DESSA actions is guided by a set of principles which is concerned with building positive relationships and partnerships between disabled people, their families and their community.

These principles are Human Rights; Social Justice & Equality; Empowerment; Inclusion and Respect.

### Goals

#### **Goal 1 Best Practice Advocacy**

Promoting and championing the rights of disabled people and families through strong advocacy

#### **Goal 2 Community Engagement and Social Inclusion**

Influencing community attitudes and awareness and increasing organisational capacity and competence

#### **Goal 3 Partnership and Collaboration**

Building effective and sustainable partnerships for inclusion

#### **Goal 4 Strong Accountable Governance & Management**

Improving systems and processes of governance, transparency & accountability



## Snapshots of DESSA Work

### **Community Engagement & Social Inclusion: Our Work with CYPSCs**

In 2019 DESSA worked with three Children & Young People's Services Committees (CYPSCs) in Donegal, Waterford and Wexford. Capacity building workshops were delivered to over 150 staff from over 45 agencies working with children and young people. This work evolved in collaboration with our CYPSC partners in different ways. In Waterford the Capacity for Inclusion project entailed the delivery of accredited training, the launch of a Disability Inclusion Framework document and a seminar showcasing the project outcomes. In Donegal the Disability Inclusion project was implemented and entailed a countywide consultation event and a series of practical capacity building workshops on realising inclusion. Wexford CYPSC undertook an inclusion learning process to identify and address the key issues impacting on children and young people who are disabled or who have complex health needs.

The aim of this work, across all three CYPSCs, was the same - to create positive quality of life outcomes for disabled children and young people. It gave participants - staff working with children and young people, the capacity and competence to understand the key factors that impact on a disabled child or young person's access to equal opportunities in Irish life and developed a shared understanding of inclusion and disability equality. It also supported staff to network and develop a co-ordinated strategic approach to social inclusion enabling children and young people the opportunities to live fulfilling lives.

# Snapshots of DESSA Work

## Community Engagement & Social Inclusion: Our Work with CYPSCs

### Key Messages

- Disability is a human rights issue to be mainstreamed into all programmes for children and young people.
- All people who work with or on behalf of children must become informed about disability as a human rights issue, and understand the social model perspective which focuses on barriers posed to persons with impairments by their environment, rather than their bodily impairment.
- Agencies must proactively involve and enable disabled children and young people to be heard in service planning, delivery and review.

This work was funded by Tusla and the Department of Children and Youth Affairs under the Quality and Capacity Building Initiative (QCBI) and through the What Works Initiative.

DESSA will continue this work in 2020 building on our existing partnerships and creating new ones with other CYPSCs across Ireland.

## **Best Practice Advocacy: Our Work with Families**

Supporting parents to acquire the knowledge and skills to effectively advocate on behalf of their children.

DESSA continues to support the meaningful inclusion and equal participation of children and families experiencing disability by providing information, advice and training to parents.

Empowering Parents is a six week course which aims to encourage parents to think differently about their child's disability, to see new possibilities and adopt new approaches in realising their children's rights. It also aims to enable parents to get the most from public services and access supports within their local community, by building their confidence and advocacy skills.

In 2019 over 50 parents across Ireland participated in the DESSA advocacy programme Empowering Parents. To date over 1,200 parents have engaged in this programme. DESSA delivers the programme in partnership with a range of organisations including ETBs, disability services, local development companies, family resource centres and advocacy organisations. DESSA currently has a service level agreement with Kerry ETB to deliver three programmes in Kerry annually.

### **Key Messages**

- Inclusion benefits all children and families.
- Access to a childcare or play setting is a right for all children.
- Parents of children with impairments are the natural advocates for their children.
- Parents need support to better articulate their concerns about the inclusion of their children and feel more confident about being able to overcome discriminatory disability barriers.

## Our Board, Staff and Legal Information

DESSA, the Disability Equality Specialist Support Agency is a company limited by guarantee and not having a share capital. DESSA is also a registered charity with the Revenue Commissioners.

### Directors

Jacqui Browne (Chairperson Appointed 30<sup>th</sup> April 2019)

Brian Miller (Treasurer Appointed 30<sup>th</sup> April 2019)

Pat Wylie (Secretary Appointed 30<sup>th</sup> April 2019)

Martin Kelly

Susan Carton

Geraldine Graydon

Anne Colgan

Michael Gogarty (Resigned 30<sup>th</sup> April 2019)

### Staff

Alice Griffin, Manager

Linda Howe, Administrator

Company Number

360818

Charity Number

CHY 16068

Registered Office

Thomas Court Centre, 26 Hanbury Lane,  
Dublin 8

Auditors

Hayden Brown, Grafton Buildings, 34  
Grafton Street, Dublin 2