

## APT ANNUAL REPORT 2008

Aontacht Phobail Teoranta (APT) established in 1988 under the auspices of the Midland Health Board (now HSE Dublin Mid-Leinster), is a company limited by guarantee with charitable status. The Company is a wholly controlled Subsidiary of the HSE. APT is located in the Kilcruttin Business Park, Tullamore, Co. Offaly and operates within the four counties of the Midlands Region: Laois/Offaly/Longford and Westmeath.

APT aims, by way of a partnership approach and focusing on the development of innovative measures, to deliver a quality and responsive service to enhance the lives of people with disabilities and other disadvantaged persons and to enable their fuller participation in society.

### APT ACTIVITIES

APT tackles a wide range of initiatives in the fields of Housing, Access, Training, Employment, Education and Disability Awareness.

**Occupational Guidance Service:** Advice and Assistance from dedicated Occupational Guidance Advisors.

**Employer Based Training:** Addresses the job needs of people with disabilities through an 'On-the-Job' training scheme, work experience and a career direction service.

**Cheers! Shops Service:** Aims to provide a high quality service to patients, visitors and staff of the hospitals. Offers the opportunity of Training & Employment for people with disabilities.

**Project Development:** APT has a long standing commitment to the development of innovative projects that respond to the needs of people with disabilities and other disadvantaged persons.

### OCCUPATIONAL GUIDANCE SERVICE / REHABILITATIVE TRAINING

APT provides, on behalf of the Health Service Executive and in partnership with approved Training Agencies, an Occupational Guidance Service and co-ordinates the development and delivery of Rehabilitative Training (RT) Services in the region to assist people with disabilities identify and obtain appropriate training in life skills and social skills.

Occupational Guidance (O.G.) is the process through which individuals are assisted in clarifying options about their future in terms of training, employment and education. The Occupational Guidance Service provides information, advice, support and direction to people with disabilities.

Rehabilitative Training is available to people with disabilities that would benefit from the development of their life skills, social skills and basic work skills.

A National OGS Database is used by the OG staff to record and update all referrals.

In 2008, there were 110 new referrals for Occupational Guidance. A continuation of the pattern of referrals was noted i.e. more people in the moderate range of intellectual disability being referred for OG services.

There were 134 WTE Rehabilitative Training places available in the region. There was a 97% utilisation of these places.

150 clients participated in full time and part time RT training programmes in the following Training Centres:

National Learning Network, Portlaoise  
National Learning Network, Athlone  
National Learning Network, Tullamore  
National Learning Network, Longford  
National Learning Network, Mullingar  
Springfield Centre, Mullingar  
Mullingar Resource Centre, Mullingar  
St Christopher's, Longford  
St Mary's, Delvin  
Rehab Care, Athlone & Tullamore

## **DAY SERVICE REVIEW**

During 2008 the Occupational Guidance Service was actively involved in supporting the National Review of HSE Funded Adult Day Services. The aim was to set the basis for the reconfiguration and modernisation of existing Funded Adult Day Services.

APT was requested by HSE to carry out the administration of the review in the Midlands and Occupational Guidance staff undertook the review by administering a census questionnaire to over 60 Day Service locations. This information was collated, checked and validated before being placed on the National Database. This task could not have been completed without the support and commitment of the Occupational Guidance Service.

## **EMPLOYER BASED TRAINING**

Employer Based Training (EBT) is an initiative linking employment and training. The aim is to use the expertise of the employer and the practical experience of the workplace to train people with a disability to become potential employees.

APT uses an inclusive model of training for EBT which means that training occurs at the job site. Any extra occupational training required, for example, Manual Handling or Basic Food Hygiene, is also provided for the trainees. APT also covers the cost of insurance, while training allowances are covered by FAS.

APT has assisted many people to acquire skills through EBT to obtain employment in numerous companies throughout the Midlands Region, including:

- Banks
- Catering Services
- Child Care Services
- Factories
- Hospitals
- Hotels
- Office/Administration Services
- Retail Sales Outlets and many more

In 2008, 8 individuals with disabilities participated in on- the- job training with APT. We wish to acknowledge the support of FAS in providing the funding for this programme.

## **CHEERS SHOPS!**

APT now manages seven Cheers! Shops offering a wide variety of goods and hot beverages in the following HSE hospitals:

- Midland Regional Hospital Portlaoise
- St Fintan's Hospital Portlaoise
- St Vincent's Hospital Mountmellick
- Midland Regional Hospital Tullamore (separate Coffee Dock & Shop)
- Midland Regional Hospital Mullingar
- St Loman's Hospital Mullingar
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### **The Cheers! Shops exist:**

- To provide training & employment for people with disability
- To provide a quality service to the hospitals for patients, visitors & hospital staff
- To demonstrate the abilities of people with disability

The Shops are run on a commercial basis using profits made for other projects benefiting people with disability.

In 2008, APT opened its new Coffee Shop in the foyer of the new hospital wing in the General Hospital, Tullamore. This followed the opening of the new shop in the same location in the second half of 2007. APT's capital investment in these new 'Cheers' facilities was in excess of €90,000

The larger 'Cheers' Shops continued to be profitable offsetting trading losses in the smaller shops where patient numbers and services continue to decrease.

Overall results for the business in 2008 showed an increase in sales of 3% over 2007 figures.

A total of 40 staff are employed in 'Cheers' including 15 people with disabilities. A further 8 individuals with disabilities benefited from on the job training, work experience or job sampling in 'Cheers' in 2008.

A new Shop Staff pension scheme was setup and ready for role out from the 1<sup>st</sup> January 2009.

## **HOUSING PROJECT**

In 2008, in association with the HSE, APT continued, through its community housing programme, to accommodate approximately 75 individuals with mental health difficulties or intellectual disabilities at nine different locations throughout the Midlands and Mid-West regions. This project was initiated in 1989 by APT in cooperation with the Department of the Environment.

It was agreed that one of the Companies houses in Blackhall, Mullingar would be sold to make way for the town centre development and that new accommodation would be sourced for the existing residents.

## **NEW PROJECTS**

APT has a long history of carrying out research into disadvantage experienced by people with disabilities and others and of undertaking actions based on the findings. As a result, APT develops projects in its own right or in cooperation with other voluntary or statutory bodies. In some instances, APT has agreed to assist other organizations / projects by providing grant aid.

### **MESA Pilot Supported Employment Project**

The Midland Employment Support Agency (MESA) in cooperation with APT delivered a Pilot Supported Employment Programme in response to a demand for a service from job seekers with disabilities who wished to work and required significant support to do so but did not meet the criteria for the FAS funded National Supported Employment programme.

18 individuals with disabilities engaged in a number of work experiences and job samplings and were supported by 2 Job Coaches funded by APT. 7 individuals progressed to mainstream employment with another transferring to the National Programme having received initial intensive support from the pilot.

### **Microboard Association of Ireland Ltd**

MAI, the Microboard Association of Ireland was established by APT in 2006 as a support structure to help people with disabilities and their communities to develop Microboards. A Microboard is a small group of committed family and friends who work with and around a focus person to create a small non-profit association to address the individual's needs in an empowering and customised fashion.

The initial funding for the project was provided by Pobal. This funding ceased in April '08 and in May MAI launched the Evaluation of The Microboards Project Final Report. Since then, APT has funded the Microboards facilitator and associated costs. MAI was incorporated in November as a company limited by guarantee, to enhance its opportunity for mainstream funding in 2009. In addition to working with individuals and families, MAI are now considering working with disability provider organisations around the establishment of Microboards for some of their clients.

### **Educational Disadvantage**

#### **EAR Project**

In 2008, APT provided further funding support to Athlone Community Taskforce to implement actions identified from their Educational Action Research (EAR) Project 2005-2007, aimed at addressing educational disadvantage in the Athlone area.

APT also provided funding to Midland Regional Youth Services to enable them employ 2 part time youth workers to provide a service to young people at risk engaged as a result of the EAR project. In response to identified needs, youth group activities were established in a number of locations.

#### **Mid-Offaly Forum on Educational Disadvantage**

APT agreed in 2008 to participate in the newly formed Mid-Offaly Forum on Educational Disadvantage which aims to raise awareness of issues relating to educational disadvantage and to identify and promote good practice. APT has agreed to fund and participate in organizing, in 2009, a regional conference on the issue of retention and early school leaving.

### **3<sup>rd</sup> Level Education Project**

Following on a research study commissioned by APT in 2006 into 3<sup>rd</sup> level education provision for people with intellectual disabilities, the Company set about establishing, in cooperation with Athlone Institute of Technology (AIT) and the HSE, a programme to address this need in the region. It is planned in 2009, subject to obtaining the necessary funding, to have a 'Higher Certificate in Contemporary Living' programme in place in AIT.

### **Corporate Governance**

During the year, the Company continued to strengthen its internal controls paying particular attention to recommendations from the Internal Auditors and from the Comptroller & Auditor General.

The Financial Procedures were reviewed and approved by the Board in April 2008.

### **Upgrade of Office**

In 2008, APT's offices located in the Kilcruddin Business Park, Tullamore were extended and totally refurbished.

### **APT Board of Directors**

Liam O'Callaghan (Chairperson)

John Cregan

Breda Crehan-Roche

Mary Grogan

Marian Murray

John O'Donovan

Gerry Raleigh

John Ronaghan