



Why Our Model Matters

“Direct payments are a means to an end;
that end is Independent Living”

(Frances Hasler, disability scholar)

Direct Payments give people with disabilities the dignity of choice and control over their own services, which are crucial to their independence and quality of life.

We are the main organisation in Ireland providing Direct Payments to people with disabilities, offering:

- real flexibility and choice to people with disabilities
- personal growth and development for our Leaders
- true cost-effectiveness and value for money.

Our model empowers Leaders to pursue and achieve their life goals and ambitions, enabling them to tailor their services to their own needs, circumstances and aspirations. As well as gaining real independence and choice, they grow on a personal level, accepting new responsibilities, learning new skills and sharing their lived experience of disability with others.

Our model ensures value for money as Leaders and their families work with a customised budget, removing administration costs and maximising the number of PA hours they receive. They stand as local business leaders and strengthen social enterprise by purchasing services and building support networks in their communities.

Our model represents a huge step forward towards having the independence and equality of people with disabilities fully recognised and secured.



At **ÁT**, we bring everyone together to support and empower people with disabilities in being as independent as they can be, enabling them to move away from depending on service providers and to enjoy control of their own lives, just like everybody else.



We have come this far together; now we can dream bigger and dream better again.



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Áiseanna Tacaíochta (ÁT) provides leadership and support to empower people with disabilities to live with the independence, choice and freedom they are entitled to.

For the first time in Ireland, we facilitate Direct Payments to people with disabilities, enabling them to take control of their own budgets, their own services and, ultimately, their own lives.



Who We Are

ÁT is emerging as a lead organisation in the Independent Living movement in Europe by offering a Direct Payments model to people with disabilities for the first time. Our goal is to make Independent Living accessible to all and to establish it as a recognised right for people with disabilities.

Our model breaks the cycle of dependency on service providers and customises services to each person's circumstances. We empower our members—who we call Leaders—and their families to take support and build on it through their own communities, creating true inclusion and flexibility.

By giving people with disabilities more control, independence and responsibility, we are moving towards a more fair, inclusive and progressive future that is anchored by equality and citizenship.



Our Model in Action

We act as an intermediary between the Health Service Executive (HSE) and our Leaders to set up a direct payment to the person. They then receive a budget from the HSE which they use to choose and manage their own services, mainly Personal Assistance (PA).



We support each Leader and their family groups in setting up their own Company so that funding can be sent directly to them. This gives them the opportunity to decide when and how they use their services, ensuring that these supports fit in with their lives and not the other way around.



What We Do

68% of people who use disability services in Ireland are not satisfied with the level of control they have over their own lives.

We work to change this.



Everything we do is underpinned by the philosophy of Independent Living. Our role stretches across a number of different aspects to support people with disabilities in reaching this goal and in taking on new responsibilities for themselves.

Leadership

We support our Leaders and their families through all the practical aspects of establishing and running a company, and in managing their budgets and PA services most effectively. We provide all the information and resources they need, enabling them to take charge of their own lives in the community.

Circles of Support

We assist our Leaders and their families in setting up their Circle of Support, made up of people from their local communities, to help them run their companies. Every person plays a different role in the company, from accounting to Health and Safety, so that the Leader is fully supported in everything that they do.

Peer Support

Our Leaders are empowered to actively and successfully pursue their ambitions, and we ask them to mentor new and incoming members as they too begin this journey. Our Peer Support Network shares invaluable information, advice and skills training based on experience, so that, together, our Leaders and their families build on one another's success to achieve this new vision of Independent Living.



Governance

Transparency and accountability is hugely important to us. We have a governance structure in place to ensure all standards are met across our operations, following all statutory policies and procedures. We tailor relevant policies to our Leaders and ensure that they are compliant with the HSE and other regulations. They produce monthly and quarterly financial returns, while ÁT undergoes an annual external audit to safeguard financial accountability.

Training

As well as the training provided through our online Interactive Hub for members, we run regular training days with our Leaders, their families and Circles of Support. They tell us of the most beneficial courses for them, and we respond. As such, training areas will expand into the future, but currently include:

- Family and Peer Support
- Health and Safety
- Financial Assistance.

Advocacy

We believe we are setting a precedent for the future of disability policy in Ireland, and are building deep links and solidarity across the Independent Living movement so that our voices will be heard. We engage with Government, agencies, disability and community organisations, and all aspects of wider society to make Independent Living the reality for all.

