



## Annual Report to Charity Regulator: 2022-2023



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## Introduction:

Neurodiversity Ireland was established to support Irish communities in creating neurodiverse-friendly villages that welcome and celebrate different brains and unique thinkers. Neurodiversity Ireland do this through by providing supports under 4 key pillars:

- (1) Establish Sandymount village as our flagship neurodiverse-friendly community, driving education, awareness, and inclusivity for neurodivergent individuals.
- (2) Launch Neurodiversity Ireland as a country-wide initiative. We will encourage and support the development of neurodiverse-friendly communities across Ireland.
- (3) Support neurodivergent people and their families, by working within their local communities, schools, and sports clubs to implement neurodiverse inclusive policies.
- (4) Establish the Neurodiversity Ireland Sensory Centre, providing facilities and services needed for occupational therapy, speech and language therapy and sensory process for neurodivergent children.



- **What Neurodiversity Ireland has done to further each of its charitable purposes:**

Over the course of our first year, we set in place a number of initiatives to help meet our objectives and these include the following:

1. Community Awareness Evening in different communities
2. Autism Acceptance Campaign - art competition, cartoon

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3. Aviva summer camp 2022 which was attended by over 100 children
  4. Preparation for Blackrock camps/classes at Easter 2023
  5. Webinars to support parents and carers from all over Ireland with over 1,200 attendees
  6. Set up support groups for parents and carers to share information
  7. Regular parent support coffee mornings
  8. Prepared submission to Government on EPSSEN
  9. Set up a dedicated website with information and supports for parents, carers and other interested parties, such as companies and organisations.
  10. Parent information night with NCSE - date 8th Feb 2023
  11. Football for All weekly at Marian College/Irishtown Stadium
  12. Dyslexia awareness month - webinars, books for schools and podcast
  13. Partnership with UCD and TCD - collaboration with TCD School of Occupational Therapy and UCD School of Child and Adolescent Psychiatry
  14. Established dedicated Neurodiversity Parking spaces in Sandymount village and outside schools
  15. Launch of NDI lanyard and bracelet
  16. Training of retailers in Sandymount and display of NDI sticker
  17. Autism Assistance dogs visit to Sandymount Schools to raise awareness on the role of the dog in the community for autistic children - March 2022
  18. TCD NI talk to 3rd year Occupational Therapy students, invited by Dr Katie Cremin - December 2022.

As we develop and grow we will continue to focus on supporting the communities, both locally and nationally to meet our mission.

- **Who your charity has helped.**

Our charity Neurodiversity Ireland supports neurodivergent children and their families throughout Ireland. Neurodivergent people are those whose brains work differently from

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the majority of people. This can include autistic people and children with ADHD, dyslexia, dyspraxia, language development differences, Tourette's, OCD etc.

Neurodiversity Ireland provides a range of supports to neurodivergent children and their families, including:

- Information and advice on neurodiversity and the rights of neurodivergent people, via website and whatsapp support group, meetings and information campaigns;
- Support groups for parents and carers and peer mentoring for neurodivergent children and their families
- Awareness-raising talks for professionals and the wider community
- Advocacy for the rights of neurodivergent children for example EPSEN submission on inclusion in education

Neurodiversity Ireland also works to create a more inclusive and neurodiverse-friendly society in Ireland and our focus as a children's charity is on ensuring the participation of children in daily life and a more inclusive educational environment.

Here are some examples of how Neurodiversity Ireland has helped neurodivergent children and their families:

- *We have provided a parent/carer support Whatsapp group where parents and carers can connect with other parents and carers who have neurodivergent children.*
- *We have hosted 10 webinars on particular issues giving parents/carers access to vital information that they likely otherwise cannot access due to waiting lists. This has included guests who are internationally recognised Child Psychologists, Occupational Therapists and published authors who are considered Subject Matter Experts.*
- *We have worked with communities, schools, and sports clubs to implement neurodiverse-inclusive policies so that all children might be included and supported, such as Football, swimming, rugby and GAA.*

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- *We have established the Neurodiversity Ireland Sensory Centre in Blackrock where we provide OT-led interactive playgroups, with focus on sensory processing activities, art and emotional regulation techniques.*

Neurodiversity Ireland is a valuable resource for neurodivergent children and their families in Ireland.

Some testimonials received from parents/carers:

*“What a great week at camp, everyone was so welcoming and accepting. Well done to the guys at NI and all the Occupational Therapists. You are simply amazing”*

*“Thanks for organising camp. XXX is sitting in his buggy since 8am which is the time his bus usually comes at...waiting to go”*

*“Having NI has helped my son enormously. He has access to the OT Club which he is so excited to attend every week and he gets to participate in summer camps; things that would not be possible for us to access otherwise. As well as that, our family has been able to tap in to a community where we can access specific information, support and social activities that are neurodiverse friendly which helps us feel less isolated in our community”*

*“Thanks so much for making such an effort every week and giving up your time to entertain our kiddos. We have really enjoyed our Sunday morning fun.”*

*“Thanks so much to the team for all the effort every Sunday morning. XXX absolutely loves it and has been regularly demanding to wear his football kit and saying “football”.”*

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## Our Flagship Community

Neurodiversity Ireland's flagship community is Sandymount, where we support families within the community and aim to make Sandymount an inclusive space to live, be educated and where neurodivergent children are fully integrated into all aspects of their society.

Sandymount has four primary schools, three of which have specific classes for autistic children. These classes have opened in the last two years and have made a huge impact for the children who attend, within their own local community. Neurodiversity Ireland have partnered with Dublin City Council to provide Neurodiversity Ireland car parking spaces outside of the schools and in the main street of the village with easy access to local amenities, for those for whom access is often difficult or impossible.

*"Thank you Neurodiversity Ireland for providing safe and accessible parking outside the school. To know the spaces are available and we can get our child safely to and from school without navigating a busy road at drop off and pick up times has been a game changer for us. Thank you!"*

Neurodiversity Ireland works closely with the businesses in Sandymount to ensure they understand the needs and the small accommodations they can make, that make a large impact to those who need it, within their community. In shops for example, they understand that our lanyard wearers may need to skip the queue. Our community event was a wonderful evening for businesses to come together and learn about Neurodiversity Ireland and embrace as a collective, our mission for the community.



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- **How your charity raised and spent funds.**

Neurodiversity Ireland relies on fundraising and outreach activities (such as education talks to organisations) to fund the supports we provide. We have raised funds through a variety of activities, including:

- **Community events:** Neurodiversity Ireland has organised a number of community events, such as the Infinity Ball and Sandymfest, a fundraiser that helped to raise awareness of neurodiversity and funds for the creation of a Sensory Centre servicing Dublin and Leinster;
- **Corporate sponsorships and talks:** Neurodiversity Ireland has received corporate sponsorships from a number of companies, including Kilsaran, Energia and Aviva Insurance.
- **Individual donations:** Individual donations, either one-time or recurring, are a vital source of funding for Neurodiversity Ireland, donated via our website.

Neurodiversity Ireland is grateful for the support of the community, corporations and the government. Their fundraising efforts have helped to provide critical services to neurodivergent children and their families in Ireland. These funds have been used to cover the costs associated with the various camps and initiatives to support neurodivergent children and their families.

Here are some specific examples of how Neurodiversity Ireland has raised funds:

- In 2023, Neurodiversity Ireland held their inaugural Infinity Ball, which raised over €100,000. The event was sponsored by Kilsaran and attended by Minister of State for Disability, Anne Rabbitte.

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- In 2023, Neurodiversity Ireland launched a GoFundMe campaign to raise funds for the creation of the Neurodiversity Ireland Sensory Therapy Centre – Dublin. The campaign has raised over €50,000 to date.
  - In 2023, Neurodiversity Ireland received a grant from the Credit union for a Sensory space for our Blackrock centre.

Neurodiversity Ireland is committed to providing essential supports to neurodivergent children and their families in Ireland. Their fundraising efforts are essential to achieving this goal.

### **Where the benefits of the charity's work were felt.**

The benefits of Neurodiversity Ireland's work are felt by neurodivergent children and their families all across Ireland. Neurodiversity Ireland provides a range of supports that help neurodivergent children to live fulfilling and independent lives, now and in the future.

Here are some specific examples of how Neurodiversity Ireland's work has benefited neurodivergent children and their families:

- Neurodiversity Ireland's parent/carer support Whatsapp group has provided a lifeline for almost 500 parents and carers of neurodivergent children. The group provides a safe and supportive space for parents and carers to share their experiences and advice, to share information and to ask for help.
- Neurodiversity Ireland's webinars on particular issues touching on neurodiversity have helped many neurodivergent children and their families by empowering parents and carers with the knowledge they need to support their child.
- Neurodiversity Ireland's in-person meetings, from coffee gatherings to informative Educational Advice evenings attended by Schools and NCSE members help to provide a wealth of information and support to parents facing the difficulty of getting their child an educational placement. The feedback we receive is consistent in that we are providing support to parents and carers and they did not have had

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previously and have created a community of parents to share information and gain support.

- Neurodiversity Ireland's work with communities, schools, and sports clubs to implement neurodiverse inclusive policies has made a real difference to the lives of many neurodivergent children. These policies have helped to create more welcoming and inclusive environments for neurodivergent children.
- Neurodiversity Ireland's work to establish the Neurodiversity Ireland Sensory Centre will provide much-needed support to neurodivergent children and their families. The centre will provide support for children who may have differences with speech and language, sensory processing, and who may benefit from occupational therapy supports.

Neurodiversity Ireland is a vital resource for neurodivergent children and their families in Ireland. Their work has a positive impact on the lives of many neurodivergent children across the country.

In addition to the specific examples above, Neurodiversity Ireland's work also has a broader impact on society. By raising awareness of neurodiversity and challenging the stigma still associated with it, Neurodiversity Ireland is helping to create a more inclusive and understanding society for everyone. We recognise that neurodivergent children have challenges, and we seek to constantly learn how best to support them and their families in their local communities where possible.