

Strategic Plan 2021-2026



The Anne Sullivan Foundation
for people who are deafblind



The
Anne Sullivan
Centre for people who are deafblind

ValuingCherishingConnecting

Revised July 2021

Foreword

In 1989 a group of concerned parents whose children had been diagnosed with Congenital Rubella Syndrome came together and formed the Anne Sullivan Foundation for people who are deafblind in Ireland. The Foundation's name was chosen to pay tribute to an Irish immigrant who came to prominence as a teacher to people who were deafblind in the United States.



Anne Sullivan's parents left Limerick during the famine and settled in Massachusetts, where Anne was born in 1866. Anne attended Perkins School for the Blind in Boston where she graduated as Valedictorian of her class, aged 20.

During her time at Perkins, Anne learned to communicate with friends who were deafblind, including Laura Bridgeman. In 1886 Anne was hired by the Keller family to care for their daughter Helen in Alabama who was deafblind.

Anne Sullivan served as Helen Keller's educator for over a decade and accompanied her to Radcliffe College where she became the first deafblind person to graduate with a Bachelor of Arts Degree. The pair remained lifelong companions and when Anne died in 1936, Helen was holding her hand.

The Anne Sullivan Centre opened in 1996 as the first residential home for people who are deafblind in Ireland. Until then, children who were deafblind were either educated in schools for the deaf or were living in institutions aimed at providing services to the "mentally ill" and "intellectually disabled". This group of founding parents recognized, more than 30 years ago, the need to establish specialised quality care, support and educational services to those who are deafblind. Anne Sullivan services today are driven by the same combination of vision, commitment and determination to provide quality services that promote the fundamental rights of those who are deafblind to pursue independent, meaningful, active and fulfilling lives.

This strategic plan builds on the former strategic plan 2017- 2021 and recognises the significant developments in policy, legislation and service provision which have taken place over the last 30 years within the disability sector. It sets out the vision, mission and goals of the organisation and the activities that the Anne Sullivan Centre will engage in over the next five years.

This plan has been developed by the ASC Board, ASF Board, staff, volunteers, families and other significant stakeholders. In Ireland, the reality for people who are deafblind to enjoy equal participation in society is far from equal. The Anne Sullivan Centre and Foundation, through this strategy, is committing to developing a range of support services to enhance the lives of people who are deafblind and to advocating for and empowering those who are deafblind~ ensuring that their rights and needs are met.

Janes O' Loughlin

Aidan Waldron

Chairperson Anne Sullivan Foundation

Chairperson Anne Sullivan Centre

Introduction:

The Anne Sullivan Centre currently provides residential and day service support to people who are deafblind. In 2010 the Anne Sullivan Foundation funded an expansion of services to include the provision of a national outreach service to children and adults who are deafblind across the country.

We are a small organisation that provides intensive professional support to adults and children who are experiencing multi- sensory challenges. Such challenges often necessitate a high level of specialised staff engagement with children and adults who have complex needs and experiences which are unique.

The clear advice from international experts on best practice is not to split the responsibility for the provision of services to children and adults who are deafblind between organisations for the deaf and organisations for the blind. as it fails to recognise the **uniqueness** of the disability. The best possible support is from deafblind specialists.

The condition of deafblindness is much more than a combination of deafness and blindness.

“Deafblindness is a combined vision and hearing impairment of such severity that it is hard for the impaired senses to compensate for each other. Thus, deafblindness is a distinct disability.” (Nordic definition www.nordicwelfare.com.)

To help compensate for a combined vision and hearing impairment the sense of touch becomes critically important. The severity of a combined vision and hearing impairment depends on:

- the time of on-set, especially in relation to communication development and language acquisition
- the degree and nature of the vision and hearing impairments
- whether it is congenital or acquired
- whether it is combined with other disabilities
- whether it is stable or progressive

A person who is deafblind can be affected in one of the following ways:

- Totally deaf and blind from birth
- Totally deaf and blind after losing residual vision/hearing
- Totally blind with residual hearing
- Totally deaf with residual vision
- Some residual hearing and vision

The Anne Sullivan Centre and its associated services is an independently governed, not for profit care and support service, which is funded by the HSE; the outreach and advocacy services are supported by the Anne Sullivan Foundation.

We currently provide the following activities

- Residential support for adults who are deafblind

- Day services support for adults who are deafblind
- Outreach support for children and adults who are deafblind and living in the community
- Advocacy and campaigning
- Training and research

Our Vision

We want to see a society where all people are given an equal opportunity to participate fully and equally in society in line with the commitments set down in the United Nations Convention on the Rights of People with Disabilities (**UNCRPD**).

Our Mission

We continue Anne Sullivan's legacy by empowering people who are deafblind to pursue meaningful, active and fulfilling lives. We do this by providing care, advocacy and support services in partnership with people who are deafblind, their families, statutory and non-statutory organisations and local communities.

Our Values

- We are a **person-centred** organisation that strives for equality, fairness and respect for all
- We provide **quality** services that are inclusive; focussed on empowerment, communication and advocacy
- We are **accountable** to each other, our service users and our funders; we use our **resources** in a way that is effective and efficient
- We work as part of a **team**; always challenging ourselves to do better and measure our performance.
- We are guided by the principles and commitments inherent in the **UNCRPD**

Our Goals 2021-2026

By 2026 we will expand and maximise the level of meaningful support and advocacy to people who are deafblind and to the network of people who support them to ensure that those we engage with:

- Feel valued and included.
- Develop their potential.

- Are equipped to make their own personal choices regarding communication, education, living, working and participating in society.

To achieve these goals we are embarking on a new five-year strategic plan and investment programme under 5 strategic pillars- Services; Innovative Tools and Technologies; Campaigning and Influencing Policy, Sustainable Funding and Governance.

Pillar 1 -Services

The Anne Sullivan Centre and Foundation acknowledge that its services should complement the range of services currently provided by statutory and voluntary providers. They should also be in line with the “National Disability Strategy” and other key statutory policy and legislative guidelines¹. Within this context The Anne Sullivan Centre and Foundation are committing to enhancing and developing the following over the next 5 years:

We will

- Develop a services strategy to guide the expansion of our services.
- Define the range and blend of services that we will provide into the future inclusive of day services, residential services, respite and outreach services.
- Have a systematic approach to quality care and adhere to all regulatory requirements pertaining to residential, respite, outreach and day service provision.
- Continually strive for excellence in delivering quality care and support to our service users.
- Extend our reach by utilising specially recruited and trained volunteers to deliver specialised service options to people in the community on a nationwide basis.
- Develop relationships with the local community to demonstrate that our services are community based.

¹ Value for Money & Policy Review of Disability Services in Ireland (2009)

“Time to Move on from Congregated Settings~ A Strategy for Community Inclusion”

“New Directions- A Report of the National Working Group for the Review of HSE funded Adult Day Services”

Pillar 2 -Innovative Tools and Technologies

The aim of this strategic pillar is to influence the development and adoption of assistive and augmentative tools and technologies to enhance the lives of people who are deafblind.

A person is considered deafblind if they have some combination of hearing loss and vision loss. While there are some people who are totally deaf and totally blind, the majority of people who are deafblind have some amount of residual hearing and/or vision. Some will have more vision than hearing; others will have more hearing than vision. Our goal is to support people who are deafblind to access the technology (low and high tech) which will support them to stay connected with the world.

Assistive technology (AT) is a broad term that refers to hardware and software that enables people with disabilities to live independent lives. People who are deafblind may use a combination of AT for blind users and AT for deaf users, depending on their individual needs. Some examples are:

AT for visual disabilities

- **Screen readers:** A programme that analyses the layout and content of a website and provides a text to speech translation. The playback speed can be set by the users and commands allow them to skip from heading to heading, click links and do other important tasks.
- **Braille displays:** A device that translates digital text into braille dots that can be read with the fingers. Braille is very important to many deafblind people.
- **Dictation:** Speech recognition software allows a users to navigate, type and interact with websites using their voice.

AT for hearing disabilities

- **Alerting devices:** A device that converts an audio alert (e.g., doorbell, alarm clock) into a visual or physical alert that the person can perceive.
- **Telecommunications:** Options available for people who are deafblind include amplified telephones and video chat.
- **Enhanced listening:** Systems can be used to connect an audio feed directly to someone's hearing aid or cochlear implant.
- **Visual communication:** Captions and transcripts (with the ability to enlarge or zoom in) provide audio information in a visual format.

Over the next five years we will:

- Increase awareness of assistive and augmentative tools and technologies available to improve the lives of people who are deafblind.
- Optimize relationships with other organisations and educational institutions to further the development of assistive and digital technologies for people who are deafblind.
- Review and enhance www.annesullivan.ie as a digital gateway for people who are deafblind.
- Provide training on the different technologies available to people who are deafblind.
- Continue to develop and expand the suite of web/technology-based support services to people who are deafblind, their families and other professional support networks.

Pillar 3 -Campaigning and Influencing Policy

Campaigning and influencing policy is one of the most effective ways of achieving change for people. Campaigning is diverse and can involve a range of activities from lobbying decision makers to raising issues in the media. The ASF is committed to facilitating **1. Public Awareness Campaigning** focused on mobilising public support for the State to recognise deafblindness as a distinct disability. **2. Lobbying and Campaigning** focused on trying to bring about changes in governmental policy and laws.

The Anne Sullivan Foundation is committed to being an independent advocate and voice for and with people who are deafblind with their families. Over the next five years we will focus our campaigning on the following key areas:

- Embed the recognition of deafblindness as a unique disability in Government policies and strategies which requires specialist support and early intervention at each stage of the life-cycle of a person who is deafblind. Such recognition will ultimately lead to better identification and better health and educational outcomes for people who are deafblind.
- Increase awareness of the condition of deafblindness through social media and targeted marketing and communication initiatives.
- Engage in a brand awareness initiative promoting the work of the Anne Sullivan Centre and Foundation thus supporting the recognition of deafblindness as a unique disability.
- Engage people who are deafblind in our campaigning and advocacy work by providing support, training and a forum to hear their views on supporting the campaign for recognition.
- Work in partnership with national and international organisations to lobby for effective change to enhance the lives of all those who are deafblind.

Pillar 4 -Sustainable Funding

Over the next five years the Anne Sullivan Foundation will ensure a sustainable funding model is in place for outreach services, residential and day services accommodation.

The Anne Sullivan Centre receives funding from the HSE under section 39 of the Health Act. This funding supports residential and day services provision. The Anne Sullivan Foundation funds the outreach and advocacy services. The ASC and ASF Board will now review alternative funding model options for residential property and outreach services. The aim will be to develop a residential property future roadmap (day/respice/residential) to create quality premises that reflects the needs and wishes of the people we support.

Pillar 5- Governance

Governance influences how an organisation's objectives are set and achieved, how risk is monitored and addressed and how performance is optimised. Like culture, it is a core component of the unique characteristics of a successful organisation. Over the life span of this strategic plan we will ensure that the Anne Sullivan Centre and Anne Sullivan Foundation continues to achieve its charitable objectives with integrity and is managed in an effective, efficient, accountable and transparent way.

Operational plan

People who are deafblind can face significant difficulties and challenges when it comes to participating in everyday life activities. It is imperative that the Anne Sullivan Centre and the Anne Sullivan Foundation continue to be key agents of change working on behalf of and advocating for and with people who are deafblind in Ireland. The United Nations Convention on the Rights of People with Disabilities (UNCRPD) was ratified in March 2018. Legislation providing for persons with disabilities to enjoy legal capacity on the same basis as other citizens and to provide the basis for supported decision-making will give effect to Article 12 of the UNCRPD. The National Disability Strategy gives us another opportunity to ensure that the needs and rights of people who are deafblind are integrated into national policy.

The Anne Sullivan Centre and Anne Sullivan Foundation have produced this five-year strategic plan fully mindful of the challenging yet progressive environment in which we currently live in. This operational plan sets out a programme of work that we will undertake during the lifespan of this strategy in order to achieve our strategic goals.

Strategic Pillar	Action	Responsibility	Timeframe	Priority	Measure of success
Services	Develop a services strategy to guide the range, blend and expansion of services provided by the ASF and ASC (residential, outreach, day and respite service)	GKH and Management team	Q 1- Q4 2022	High	Services strategy will be developed to inform the range and blend of services provided.
	Seek to expand the number of people accessing ASC Day Services. Move from self-assessment to monitoring and reviewing day services under “New Directions” and working towards HIQA inspections	TB and NF	Q1 – Q 4 2022	Medium	There will be two additional day service users attending the day service in Dublin - depending on premises size. Explore opportunities to expand to a new location with a sustainable funding model in place. New Directions will be fully embedded in the Day Services.
	Employ a Literacy Officer to develop a project on adapting sensory books for children aged 5-12 years.	Literacy Officer and Outreach team.	Q3 -2021- Q2 - 2022	High	Project successfully completed. Minimum of 50 children aged between 5 and 12 will have benefited from sensory books being available to them.
	Deafblind training course- review current modules and add new modules	TB and Outreach Team	Q3-Q4	Medium	Course will be reviewed and amended.
	Analyse our data to better understand the needs and wishes of the people we support. Expand the outreach service in line with same.	TB and Outreach team.	Q1-Q4 2021 and ongoing	High	We will have a clear understanding of the service needs and wishes of the people we support on our outreach database.

					Seek to expand the outreach service over the next 5 years in line with this understanding of service needs and locations.
	Extend our reach by utilizing trained volunteers to provide community-based supports to people who are deafblind	SS and Outreach Team	Q1-Q4 2022	Medium	5 volunteers piloted by 2022- volunteers will be recruited and supported to offer community based supports to people who are deafblind and living in the community.
	Develop the SCW role to take on leadership/management skills development e.g. Supervisions	RSM and TL's	Q1-Q4	High	TL will mentor SCW's who are training to supervise RSW's. SCW's will have supervised relief RSW's by year end.
	Expand on the vocational/educational and personal development goals for service users. Continue with a positive risk-taking model of support to service users.	RSM, TB and team	Q2-Q4	High	Residents will have fully reengaged with community based activities in a meaningful way.
	Ensure that the ADM framework and principles are embedded in our service delivery options /approaches	Management team	Q1-Q4	High	Service users will be consulted in all aspects of their lives and their rights will be at the forefront of all that we do at the ASC and ASF
	Sustain the ratio of one vehicle per house/service to facilitate service users "living ordinary lives in ordinary places"	SS and management team	Q2-Q4	High	Each service location will have access to their own vehicle.

	Adhere to all regulatory requirements across the organisation.	GKH, ASF and ASC Boards (Q and Safety subcommittee)	Q1- Q4-2026	High	All regulatory requirements will be met and reviewed on an ongoing basis.
	Continue with upgrade of houses in line with Safe premises	RSM and TL's	Q1-Q4	Medium	All houses will be homely, clean and of the highest standards in relation to IP&C
	Build relationships with the local community evidencing that our services are community based.	GKH and Client Partnerships Manager (CPM)	Q1-Q3 2022	High	The CPM will develop strong positive relationships with a minimum of 5 local corporates
	Continue to build relationships with HSE (Disability Sections) nationally to ensure quality service delivery and ongoing funding partnerships.	GKH, TB and MH	Q1-Q4 2026	High	Funding partnerships with the HSE will remain strong and new funding secured for any new activities
	Approach the HSE to secure funding for PA's and Outreach potentially in Cork	TB and Outreach team	Q3-Q4	Medium	Funding will be secured for additional services in one additional location
	Continue to develop and extend technology based supports to people who are deafblind, their families and other professional support networks.	SS and Outreach Team. Campaigning and Advocacy Manager	Q1-Q4 2026	Medium	The team will have extended their technology support initiatives to people who are deafblind and other associated people/organisations
	A staff recruitment, retention and development strategy will be in place	HR and CEO	Q1-Q4	High	Staff vacancies will be minimal. Staff will stay with the ASC and service delivery will be of a high standard.

Strategic Pillar 2	Action	Responsibility	Timeframe	Priority	Measure of Success
Innovative Tools and Technologies	Increase awareness of assistive tools and augmentative technologies to improve the lives of people who are deafblind	Outreach Team	Q1-Q4 2026	Medium	The policy and campaigning officer will have run a series of awareness initiatives to build capacity and awareness in this pillar
	Develop and optimize relationships with strategic organisations and universities to further develop AT and tools to support people who are deafblind Continue partnership with university of Birmingham	Outreach Team, Advocacy and Campaigns Manager (ACM) and GKH Outreach team	Q1- Q4 2022	Medium	The team will have made links with at least 5 additional organisations/ educational institutions to support the development of AT tools and technologies for people who are deafblind
	Review and enhance www.annesullivan.ie	SS and CPM	Q3 2022	Medium	The website will be reviewed and modernized so that it becomes a key point of contact for deafblind awareness and fundraising efforts.
	Maintain and enhance the “resource catalogue” so that the public are informed about assistive technologies and tools available to support people who are deafblind	Advocacy and campaigning Manager	Q1- Q 4- 2022	High	The Resource catalogue will be reviewed and updated to include tools which will support children and adults who are deafblind.
	Provide training to the public on what technologies are available	Outreach Team	Q1-Q4 2022	Medium	The Outreach team will provide information sessions to the public on

					assistive tools and technologies
	Ensure that the ASF and ASC are the point of reference nationally for social connections, deafblind awareness and information programmes	GKH and management team	Q1-Q4 2026	High	The ASF and ASC will be a centre of excellence for deafblind information and support.
Strategic Pillar 3	Action	Responsibility	Timeframe	Priority	Measure of success
Campaigning and influencing policy	Develop a proposal/strategy on how we can influence governmental policy	Derval O' Brien and Mary Mitchell O' Connor	Q1-Q2 2022	High	There will be a cohesive strategy developed by end of 2022 informing how to influence governmental policy
	Explore the possibility of "buying in" professional consultancy to support the development of a campaigning and policy strategy as above	Derval and Mary	Q1-Q2 2022	Medium	Agreement as to whether we need this additional consultancy support.
	Advocacy/campaigning and policy manager will lead on and drive our campaigning and policy strategy	Advocacy and campaigns manager	Q4 2021	High	Staff member in place and progressing this strategy
	Increase awareness of deafblindness through social media and targeted marketing and communications initiatives	SS, Combined Media, and ACM	Q1- Q4 2022	Medium	Increased hits to website and increase in focussed communications initiatives throughout 2022
	Reconnect with the advocacy group members to support the campaign for the recognition of deafblindness. Continue to develop and expand this network of advocates to lead on advocacy & campaigning efforts.	ACM and Kirsty	Q4 2021- Q4 2022	High	Campaigning and policy Officer recruited to lead on this and reengage with the advocacy groups. One new advocacy group established in a new

					location to inform our advocacy initiatives and campaigns.
	Develop partnerships with national and international organisations to support our call to action to effect change for people who are deafblind. Establish a working group for Ireland and UK to progress recognition	ACM and Outreach team.	Q1-Q4 2026	Medium	New relationships developed to support our call to action.
	Participate in consultation forums which facilitates ASF messages regarding deafblind recognition being integrated into Government policy documents e.g. National Disability Strategy	GKH and Management team.	Q3 2021	High	Ensure that submissions are made on behalf of the ASF and people who are deafblind where appropriate.
	Build data and insight into the history of the ASF and the experiences of people who are deafblind to inform our campaigning and policy initiatives.	SL	Q4 2021- Q4 2022	Medium	History of ASF is completed and other research opportunities are leveraged to promote the recognition and supports needed for people who are deafblind.
	Continue to Liaise with Government officials to raise the issue of deafblindness	Advocacy and campaigns manager	Q1-Q4	High	A minimum of 4 meetings will have taken place with local and national officials by year end.
	Compile a shadow report for submission to the UN committee on UNCRRPD	ACM	Q1-Q4	High	Report will be compiled and ready for submission.
Strategic Pillar 4	Action	Responsibility	Timeframe	Priority	Measure of success

Sustainable Funding	Subcommittee to review alternative funding models for residential and outreach services.	GKH and ASF subcommittee	Q 4 2021	High	There will be a clear vision and agreement on funding models for the residential property build as well as the outreach services. All funding options will be considered e.g. social housing, government funding etc. and agreement reached on the most effective and efficient funding model.
	Develop a residential property road map that reflects the needs and wishes of the people we support and agree a funding model. Key to this will be consultation and engagement with service users, families, Boards, HSE, Housing bodies and other relevant stakeholders.	Property subcommittee and GKH - ASC Board members to join once the road map has been agreed	Q3 – Q4 2021	High	Consultation phase will have concluded and an agreement reached on how best to secure appropriate property and funding to relocate residents to.
	Agree the quantum of people that the ASC, ASF will provide accommodation to	Management team ,ASC and ASF Board Committee	Q3-Q4 2021	High	There will be clarity on how many new homes we will provide based on a minimum of 14 residents with consideration given to additional expansion/respite facilities.
	Develop a road map for day services inclusive of location, size and funding models to support/build same	Management team, ASC and ASF Board subcommittee	Q3-Q4 2021	High	There will be clarity on the size and location of a new day service facility.

					There will be a clear funding vision re same.
	Employ a donor engagement officer to develop a comprehensive fundraising and corporate relationship strategy.	Derval and Louise S	Q3 2021- Q4 2022	High	DEO in place; fundraising and corporate relationship strategy will be developed giving the ASF a clear vision on the way forward to reach a sustainable funding model for service provision.
Strategic Pillar 5	Action	Responsibility	Timeframe	Priority	Measure of success
Governance	Continue with a gap analysis of current Board needs/skills and appoint new members as a matter of priority.	ASC Board and Quality and Safety Committee	Q3-Q4 2021	High	New Board members will be recruited and in place to support ASC governance functions.
	Maintain full compliance with all regulations inclusive of the Charities Regulators Governance Code	ASC Board, ASF Board and GKH.	Q1-Q4 2026	High	All regulatory requirements will be fully adhered to and evidence of same in place
	Invest in focussed Board succession planning as an integral component of this strategic plan.	ASC Board and Q and S sub committee	Q1-Q4 2022	High	Succession planning will be a key consideration of the Board activities and a strategy developed to ensure this is operationalized.
	Progress our IT systems to enhance our accountability, tracking and effective usage of our resources e.g. Xero	Finance team	Q1- Q4	Medium	Xero will be fully operational within the finance department with

					online authorization and monitoring of resources.
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