



Parkinson's Ireland

www.parkinsons.ie

Spring 2026

Walk with us on April 11th

See inside for venues and times



#AWalkInTheParkForParkinson's





A MESSAGE FROM THE CEO - SHANE O'BRIEN

Dear friends,

As we approach Parkinson's Awareness Month in April, it's a good time to reflect on the progress and shared purpose that continue to drive Parkinson's Ireland forward.

The past few months have brought significant developments across our services, advocacy, research, and community engagement. This has been made possible by your support and the dedication of our staff, volunteers, and branches nationwide.

Strengthening Our Services

In close cooperation with our Mayo branch, we were delighted to officially open our new Mayo Nurse Service, led by Laura Niepage (Parkinson's Nurse Specialist). Promotion across local media, including Midwest Radio, has helped ensure strong awareness of this important new service. Appointments have already begun, and Laura has been working closely with local HSE teams to integrate fully into community pathways.

Our new counselling service will officially be launched over the coming months with Kathleen Moore joining us to lead the service. This marks a major milestone as we expand mental health supports for people with Parkinson's and their loved ones.

It has also been encouraging to see new activities flourish across the country—from Walking Football restarting in Dublin with a second venue, to the first ever classes in Westmeath, Kilkenny and Carlow. These initiatives showcase our commitment to expanding inclusive, community based supports wherever they are needed.

Parkinson's Awareness Month

April will once again be a landmark month for the organisation. Our **"Every Minute Matters -**

Meds on Time" campaign will shine a light on the importance of timely medication, both in hospital settings, and in the day-to-day self-management of the condition. This continues to be an important issue for our community. Seven lived experience ambassadors are participating, helping bring personal stories to the forefront. We thank them for their honesty and having the courage to share their stories to help other people.

Our flagship national fundraiser, **"A Walk in the Park for Parkinson's"** sponsored by Dovidá, returns on the 11th of April with 21 venues—six more than last year—thanks to the hard work of branches and volunteers.

Later that month, the annual online **Education Conference** takes place on 25th of April, bringing together experts, people living with Parkinson's, loved ones and volunteers for a day of learning and connection.

Advocacy

We continue to play an active role in influencing policy. We recently met with the Minister for Disability, Emer Higgins TD, to discuss issues relevant to Parkinson's and to remind her of the increasing rate of diagnosis and the need to increase services and supports.

Other recent engagements include participation in the HSE's Parkinson's Disease Pathway Project and support for national disability advocacy campaigns. Our advocacy efforts helped to contribute to a pause in the charges for Blister Packs in pharmacies and the announcement of a government consultation on a potential cost of disability payment.

We remain focused on ensuring that we use the collective strength of the organisation to give a voice to people with Parkinson's and their loved ones.

Research

Progress continues on the All-Island PD Research Hub run by University College Cork and Queen's University Belfast. The project has been titled 'PD Life'. Recruitment of PhD students is underway, and we look forward to the official launch. Parkinson's Ireland sits on the steering group for the project and



will be playing an integral role in ensuring Public and Patient Involvement (PPI) at all stages of the project. The peer reviews for our Health Research Charities Ireland/Health Research Board Joint Funding Scheme are complete, and the selection committee is now evaluating applications.

These initiatives show that Parkinson's Ireland will be playing an important role in Parkinson's research in the years ahead.

New Membership Model

Our new membership model, with a once off payment for life, has been very well received. If you have yet to renew, we would encourage you to do so as soon as possible.

Young Onset Conference:

Our first Young Onset Parkinson's Conference was a major success in December 2025. We met many people who were engaging with us for the first time/ were recently diagnosed.

Existing Supports and Classes:

- Our Parkinson's nurse and dietitian helpline continues to operate from Monday to Friday, from 9am-5pm.
- We are also accepting appointments for our in-person Mayo nurse service.
- Please liaise with your local branch regarding services in your area and also keep an eye on our weekly e-newsletter for updates.
- This is an exciting and ambitious period for Parkinson's Ireland. With new services launching, national campaigns underway, and momentum building behind research and advocacy, we remain firmly focused on improving the lives of people with Parkinson's and their families.
- Please support our work by registering for 'A Walk in the Park for Parkinson's' on the 11th of April. You can find your nearest venue and register for the event on our website www.parkinsons.ie

Take care,
Shane

PARKINSON'S IRELAND ONLINE NATIONAL CONFERENCE 2026

Time to Talk about Parkinson's
Saturday 25th April 2025 11am - 2pm

Anmarie O'Connor Chair

Catriona Kinnevey - Person with Young Onset Parkinson's Disease

Dr Niamh Connolly - Researcher

Cathy O'Shea - Physiotherapist

Niamh O'Hanlon - IMSN- Chief Pharmacist

Professor Eilis Dowd - Researcher

Dr Rob Durcan - Neurologist

This year our National online conference will take place on Saturday 25th April 11am-2pm

For full agenda please visit our website www.parkinsons.ie



Lifetime Membership of Parkinson's Ireland



The charity has moved from its current annual membership model to lifetime membership for a once-off payment of €50. We will be facilitating phased payments for anyone who wishes to avail of this.

As a charity, we measure success on the services that we deliver and outcomes rather than our overall income. We hope to reach as many people with Parkinson's and their loved ones as possible and maximise engagement with our services and supports. Existing members have received their renewal invoice with details of payment options.

The benefits of membership include:

Supportive services and resources

- Access to **specialist support** including the Parkinson's Disease nurse helpline and dietician callback service, helping you with questions about symptoms, treatment and daily living with Parkinson's.
- **Information and education** through webinars, newsletters, magazines and informational leaflets to help you understand and manage the condition.
- A national network of **branches and local groups** where members can meet others, take part

in activities and build social support locally.

Activities and community engagement

- Members can take part in **online and in-person activities** such as exercise classes, yoga, singing, webinars, newly diagnosed programmes and other social or wellbeing events that aim to improve quality of life.
- Being part of a community that **connects you with others** who understand Parkinson's and offers peer support.

Advocacy

- Your membership helps support advocacy work that raises awareness and pushes for better healthcare services, policy changes and improved access to care for people with Parkinson's across Ireland.

Newsletter and Magazine

- Members receive updates and insights on Parkinson's Disease and on a variety of topics.



www.parkinsons.ie

Autumn 2024

Call to Action



Walk with us



SOCIAL GATHERING 2026

Parkinson's Ireland are delighted to announce our Social Gathering will take place this year from
Monday 5th October - Wednesday 7th October
Hodson Bay Hotel, Athlone

Please join us for this gathering in the beautiful surroundings of the Hodson Bay Hotel.

THE OFFER INCLUDES

- Two Nights B&B
- Lunch
- Two nights Gala Dinner and entertainment both evenings.
- Full Day Conference to include

An exciting line up of speakers, workshops, set dancing and yoga.

Price includes all of the above

€465 .00 per Double/Twin for 2 nights

€347.00 per single room for 2 nights



BOOK NOW

**CONTACT THE HOTEL DIRECTLY ON 090-644 2005 TO BOOK.
EARLY BOOKING IS ADVISED TO AVOID DISAPPOINTMENT.**

NEW COUNSELLING SERVICE COMING

Our new counselling service will be officially launched over the coming months as we welcome Kathleen Moore to our team.

Kathleen Moore Avila is a fully accredited counselling psychotherapist with the Irish Association of Counselling and Psychotherapy and comes with 15 years' experience working across the charity sector. She has extensive training and experience supporting individuals and families in grief and loss, suicide intervention, critical incident stress management and spend several years working as therapist with pieta and as a suicide bereavement liaison officer in conjunction with Pieta and the HSE. She has also worked in private practice and has completed numerous



and Spino Cerebellar Ataxia. She has understood the unique emotional aspects of a chronic illness and is passionate about providing a safe non-judgemental space to process complex emotions including grief, anxiety and fear. She supports clients to identify internal resilience and in finding new meaning. She believes that given the fact that we may have similarities in symptoms and feelings, we are all individual to some extent in how we respond and communicate, some are more visual and another more tactile so including various expressive capacities

trainings on trauma abuse and neglect. Most recently Kathleen has come from working as a psychotherapist with the counselling and wellbeing team at Vision Ireland where she worked therapeutically over the phone and online with individuals and their families who experience a vision impairment and present with numerous different diagnosis some conditions included Optic Neuritis, Optic Atrophy, Acquired brain injury

- if appropriate means she can enhance each person's
- abilities to communicate effectively and authentical-
- ly. She has found that this combined with cognitive
- behavioural therapy and solution focused therapy is
- a particularly gentle way of working. She has a spe-
- cial interest in the positive effects of nature on the
- nervous system and can combine this with therapeutic
- work if appropriate.

PARKINSON'S NURSE/DIETITIAN

Parkinson's Nurse Specialists/ Dietitian Callback Service

To request a callback from our Parkinson's Nurse Specialists or Dietitian please call our freephone **1800 359 359.**





WONDERFUL NEWS FOR THE MAYO AREA INTRODUCING LAURA NIEPAGE, PARKINSON'S NURSE SPECIALIST FOR THE MAYO AREA

Parkinson's Ireland is pleased to introduce our new Parkinson's Nurse Specialist, Laura Niepage, who will be based at Ballina Primary Care Centre in Co. Mayo.

Laura trained in Adult Nursing in Germany, qualifying in 2012. During her clinical placements, she developed a strong interest in neurology, particularly the supportive and rehabilitative aspects of caring for people living with long term neurological conditions.

Her first post was in a Neuro Rehabilitation Intensive Care Unit in Germany. In 2015, she moved to London and worked on a Neurology ward within a private hospital. In 2017, she undertook specialist training to become a Parkinson's Disease Nurse under the supervision of Dr Sophie Molloy. Since then, she has completed masterclasses in Parkinson's care and has delivered specialist nursing support primarily within community settings.

Her clinical interests include holistic symptom



management, supporting people with Parkinson's and their families through periods of transition, and promoting independence wherever possible.

Laura has a particular interest in care coordination and system navigation, and in developing clearer and accessible pathways of clinical and non clinical support for people with Parkinson's. She is passionate about ensuring that people with Parkinson's and their carers feel informed and empowered, reducing unnecessary reliance on healthcare services while promoting clarity, independence and

personal agency.

The service in Ballina is provided free of charge and is available by appointment only. **Appointments can be requested by calling 1800 359 359 or by emailing nurse@parkinsons.ie.**

SPECIAL CAMPAIGN DURING PARKINSON'S AWARENESS MONTH

Something important is coming this April. We are running a special campaign during Parkinson's Awareness Month. It highlights a simple but vital message for people living with Parkinson's: taking medication on time, every time, truly matters. Timing can make a real difference to daily life.

With thanks to our ambassadors for the powerful image supporting this campaign.

Learn more about medication safety at www.parkinsons.ie



Meeting with Minister Emer Higgins

Parkinson's Ireland was pleased to meet with Minister for Disability, Emer Higgins, along with officials from the Department of Children, Disability and Equality.

We welcome the Minister's continued engagement and her recognition of the growing numbers of people living with Parkinson's Disease and the increasing importance of the services our organisation provides.

During the meeting, we discussed three priority issues for people with Parkinson's and their loved ones:

- Transition of people with Parkinson's under the age of 65 living in nursing homes.
- Sustainable funding for Parkinson's counselling service and other multi-disciplinary services.
- Development of Community Neurorehabilitation Teams nationwide.

Parkinson's is the fastest-growing neurological condition, with cases expected to more than double globally by 2050 due largely to an ageing population. It is the second-most common neurodegenerative disease, after Alzheimer's, and results in the longest average hospital stay of all neurological conditions in Ireland. These trends underline the urgent need for investment in community-based supports, mental-health services, and neurorehabilitation to help people manage the condition and remain independent.

Parkinson's Ireland thanks Minister Higgins and her officials for a constructive and forward-looking meeting. We welcome her acknowledgment of the rising prevalence of Parkinson's and the essential role of our services in meeting the needs of a rapidly expanding community. We look forward to continued collaboration to ensure people with Parkinson's disease and their loved ones receive the supports they require.

Launch of Mayo Parkinson's Nurse Service

Parkinson's Ireland has recently launched our Mayo-based Parkinson's Nurse Service. I would like to take this opportunity to thank Tony Canavan (Regional Executive Officer - HSE West and North West), Mary Warde (Integrated Health Area Manager - Mayo), and John Nally



(Primary Care Capital Projects Lead - Galway, Mayo & Roscommon) for their help in securing the premises for Laura at Ballina Primary Care Centre.

HRB-HRCI Joint Funding Scheme Update

Three applications have passed the peer-review stage and the lead candidates for each application will now have a window in which they can respond to their reviews. A selection committee will then make a recommendation to the Board of Parkinson's Ireland on which applications to fund.

'My Neuro Nurse' Campaign for Brain Awareness Week

The Neurological Alliance of Ireland (NAI) has launched My Neurology Nurse and Me, a national awareness campaign highlighting the vital role of neurology nurse specialists in supporting the 860,000 people in Ireland living with neurological conditions.

Running during National Brain Awareness Week (16-22 March), the campaign aims to shine a spotlight on how specialist nurses provide expert clinical guidance, em-



power patients, and offer consistent support from diagnosis through long-term management. Neurology nurses help people navigate complex care pathways, improve outcomes, and act as a trusted point of continuity within the healthcare system.

Throughout the week, the campaign features media activity, webinars, educational videos, and patient and nurse stories, all shared using the hashtag #MyNeurologyNurseAndMe. Healthcare professionals, advocacy groups, and the wider public are encouraged to participate and share their experiences.

Parkinson’s Ireland are partaking in the campaign by producing three videos from our Parkinson’s Nurse Specialists to highlights our wide array of services and the importance of offering them to people living with neurological conditions. These videos will be posted on our website and all our social media channels during Brain Awareness Week.

Ireland’s first Postgraduate Diploma in Neurology Nursing

RCSI has launched Ireland’s first Postgraduate Diploma in Neurology Nursing, marking a major milestone in strengthening specialist neurology education and care. The programme, developed through collaboration between RCSI, the HSE National Clinical Programme for Neurology, the Neurological Alliance of Ireland, and other key partners, aims to build a skilled and sustainable neurology nursing workforce to better support people living with conditions such as Parkinson’s, Multiple Sclerosis, and Epilepsy. Our CEO, Shane O’Brien, attended the launch event, and we look forward to seeing the positive impact this new qualification will have on neurology services and patient care across Ireland.

Under 2016 NICE Guidelines, there should be 1 Parkinson’s Nurse Specialist for every 300 patients in Ireland. Given the population in 2025, there should be 60 Parkinson’s Nurse Specialists. Currently, there are only 22, and Parkinson’s Ireland provide 3 of these. We look forward to seeing the effect that this new course has on the number of condition-specific specialist nurses in Ireland,

Cost of Disability Campaign with the DFI

Over recent months, Parkinson’s Ireland have been supporting the Disability Federation Ireland (DFI) alongside disabled people, colleagues across the sector, and the wider community to highlight the ongoing reality of the Cost of Disability. Through data, public engagement,

and direct discussions with Ministers, the message has been clear: disabled people need meaningful support now. Despite strong public backing for an immediate response, Government has indicated that solutions will not be implemented until 2027—an unacceptable delay when poverty and rising costs are pressing issues today.

The financial strain facing disabled people remains severe. With inflation still driving up essentials and utility arrears continuing to rise, disabled people are up to €1,400 worse off this year, forcing many into impossible choices between heating and eating. Poverty does not pause, and neither does the pressure placed on those already carrying significant additional costs.

This national movement continues to grow, powered by disabled people who have shared their experiences and highlighted the urgency for action. Parkinson’s Ireland is proud to support the Cost of Disability campaign and stand with those calling for fair and immediate financial support for disabled people across Ireland.

What You Can Do:

- See our Cost of Disability factsheet – available on the DFI website www.disability-federation.ie
- Take action, Email your TD
- See our campaign flyer – also available on the DFI website

Delay of proposed charges for Blister Packs

Parkinson’s Ireland welcomes the recent decision by the government to delay the decision to withdraw funding for certain medications offered in blister packs or monitored dosing systems.

Parkinson’s Ireland wrote to the Minister for Health, Jennifer Carroll MacNeill TD, and Minister of State Jennifer Murnane O’Connor TD to highlight the serious impact that this proposed change would have on certain people living with Parkinson’s Disease and their care partners. Within a number of days, the Irish Pharmacy Union (IPU) release a statement saying that after “extensive engaging with the Department of Health and HSE”, it was agreed to pause the introduction of charges until a later date in the first quarter of 2026.

Parkinson’s Ireland remains committed to advocating on your behalf and will keep you informed as developments occur, with the ultimate objective of securing a full reversal of this decision.

A WALK IN THE PARK - SATURDAY, 11th APRIL 2026



“A Walk in the Park” for Parkinson’s will take place nationwide on Saturday 11th April 2026.

We hope as many of you as possible will join us again to raise awareness for Parkinson’s Disease in Ireland.

This annual event promises to be a fun day out for our members, their loved ones and the public. This is our charity’s annual flagship fundraiser.

Why Participate?

RAISE AWARENESS- Join us for a positive day of awareness and fundraising for Parkinson’s

IMPACT- By participating, you contribute to raising awareness about Parkinson’s as a condition and promoting better care and support for those living with Parkinson’s.

We are delighted to have Dovidá on board as our sponsor again this year.

About Dovidá: Dovidá is Ireland’s leading provider of home care services, committed to their mission to enhance the lives of ageing adults and their families. Dovidá empowers aging adults to maintain their independence and dignity within the familiar comforts of home. Their dedicated care givers play an integral role in delivering exceptional care and support to clients and their families.

Register at walkinthepark.ie



- **Carlow:** Oak Park- 11am
- **Cavan:** Con Smith Park- 11am
- **Clare:** Lees Road, Ennis- 11am
- **Cork:** Glounthaune Community Centre- 11am
- **Donegal:** Bernard McGlinchey Town Park- 11am
- **Dublin:** Merrion Square Park- 11am
- **Galway:** Claddagh Hall- 11am
- **Kildare:** Moorefield GAA Club- 1pm
- **Laois:** The Colt GAA Club- 11am
- **Limerick:** The Demense park, Newcastlewest- 11am
- **Longford:** The Mall- 11am
- **Mayo:** Lough Lannagh Castlebar- 11am
- **Meath:** Claremont Stadium- 11:30am
- **Monaghan:** Walking Track Carrickmacross- 11am
- **Offaly:** Lloyd Town Park- 11am
- **Sligo:** Doorly Park- 11am
- **Tipperary:** Templemore Park- 12pm
- **Waterford:** People’s Park- 11am
- **Westmeath:** Dovidá Lakepoint Park, St. Loman’s GAA- 11am
- **Wexford:** Min Ryan Park- 11am
- **Wicklow:** Avondale House- 11am





PARKINSON'S PASSPORT

Hospital admissions can be especially difficult for people with Parkinson's and for family members. While medication timing is vital, many problems in hospital arise because staff do not fully understand the individual needs of the person on admission.

Preparation can make a real difference. Having clear information available helps staff understand how Parkinson's affects the person day to day, what support they need and how best to communicate with them, particularly in busy or stressful settings.

Alongside the Parkinson's Ireland Parkinson's Passport, the HSE also has a Health Passport, available on their website. This is designed to support people with disabilities and can be very useful for people with Parkinson's who experience cognitive changes or communication difficulties. There is limited awareness of this resource, but it can help ensure a person's needs and preferences are understood throughout their hospital stay.

Families and carers play an important advocacy role by bringing passport documents to hospital, asking staff to refer to them and checking that key information is shared between teams. Small actions like this can improve communication, continuity of care and the overall hospital experience.

To request a Parkinson's Ireland Parkinson's Passport, please call 1 800 359 359 and we will be happy to send one in the post.



THE DUBLIN NEUROLOGICAL INSTITUTE

At the Dublin Neurological Institute (DNI), our research team aims to better understand the challenges faced by people living with Parkinson's disease and related neurological conditions. Working closely with members of the Parkinson's community and health care professionals and scientists, we explore new ways to improve quality of life, from early detection to daytoday wellbeing.

We currently have several exciting studies underway and are inviting volunteers to take part.

Using Speech as Window into Early changes in PD

The Dublin Neurological Institute in partnership with TCD are looking for volunteers for research on speech impairments in PD.

Speech impairments in Parkinson's disease and parkinsonian conditions are often among the first changes observed, beginning early in the disease

- course, or before the onset of motor symptoms. Early
- speech changes include a monotone voice, reduced
- volume, imprecise articulation, and slowed speech.
- The variety of words used and number of ideas
- contained in speech can also help us understand
- some of the cognitive changes that may be taking
- place. The study will consist of a series of speech
- tasks, to collect samples of your speech, language
- and voice, followed by a short cognitive assessment
- to understand how speech can provide us a window
- into our cognitive ability. This study should take no
- more than 30-40 minutes in total, and takes place in
- the DNI, at 57 Eccles Street, Dublin 7.

Parkinson's and Technology Survey

- The Dublin Neurological Institute invites you to
- take part in a research survey designed to gather
- information about the attitudes and experiences
- of individuals with Parkinson's disease and their





SCAN QR FOR MORE INFORMATION

thoughts on using technology for disease monitoring. The results of this survey may help improve future care and support for people with Parkinson’s disease by helping us understand how they interact with technology.

You can access the survey through the following link: <https://tinyurl.com/3pt73cf5>

Assistance Dogs for gait in PD.

Together, in partnership with Dogs for the Disabled, we are running an exciting study on the benefits of assistance dogs for people with Parkinson’s. This research explores how having a trained assistance dog may improve balance, walking, and overall wellbeing. Participants who join the study are matched with an assistance dog that becomes their companion for the long term. It’s a meaningful commitment and a unique opportunity to be part of research that could bring lasting, lifechanging benefits.

As featured in the Leinster Leader, see Nicola and Nemo’s story! <https://www.leinsterleader.ie/news/local-news/1662415/finding-nemo-kildare-county-champion-for-dogs-for-the-disabled-shares-her-story.html>

Thank you!

And finally, the research team at the Dublin Neurological Institute would like to extend our deepest gratitude to all who volunteered for our study investigating the causes and contributors to fall in PD, we have wrapped up data collection and hope to share our findings soon!

FEATURED FUNDRAISER:

Cian McGuinness’s 31 Day Cold Plunge Challenge

In December, Cian McGuinness completed a sea cold plunge every day for 31 days in memory of his dad, John McGuinness, who passed away from Lewy Body Parkinson’s in 2022.

His inspiring challenge raised an incredible €1,713, thanks to the generosity of friends, family and supporters. We are hugely grateful to Cian for his commitment and for turning a powerful personal tribute into meaningful impact.



For an A to Z guide to Fundraising ideas scan the QR code



UNDERSTANDING PUBLIC AWARENESS AND THE LIVED EXPERIENCE OF PARKINSON'S DISEASE IN IRELAND

BY SOPHIE CROOKS



Parkinson's Disease (PD) is the fastest growing neurological condition worldwide, yet public understanding of the condition remains limited. My doctoral research, carried out in Queen's University Belfast in partnership with Parkinson's Ireland, is the first study to explore both public awareness of PD and the lived experiences of people affected by the condition across the island of Ireland. Using a mixed-methods approach, including a large public survey and in-depth interviews with people with PD, carers, and specialist nurses, the research

• highlights important gaps in awareness and the consequences these gaps have for everyday life.

• **Parkinson's Disease: More than a Tremor**

• In our all-Ireland survey of almost 800 people, we found that while the public is generally familiar with the well-known motor symptoms of PD such as tremor and mobility difficulties, awareness of the condition's broader symptom profile is much more limited. Motor symptoms were what most respondents most strongly associated with PD, yet understanding of non-motor symptoms, including sleep disturbance, anxiety, depression,

• fatigue, pain, hallucinations, and cognitive changes, was significantly lower. Only 42% of participants reported feeling informed about available treatments, and over one-third (33.7%) said they had witnessed or encountered some form of stigma related to Parkinson's.

• A number of misconceptions also emerged. Some respondents believed PD was simply a natural part of ageing, while others were unsure whether it could be treated, prevented, or cured. These findings are consistent with international research showing that public understanding often centres on the most visible symptoms. However, this is



important because non-motor symptoms can have a profound impact on quality of life. When the public focuses solely on tremor or movement difficulties, other symptoms may be overlooked or misinterpreted, which can influence how people with PD are perceived and supported. Encouragingly, almost half of those surveyed (46.2%) identified social media as the most effective platform for raising awareness, highlighting a clear opportunity to improve understanding and promote more supportive attitudes across Ireland.

Breaking the Stigma

The interviews with people living with PD and their carers brought to life the real-world consequences of public misunderstanding. Many participants described feeling noticeably self-conscious in public, particularly when symptoms such as tremor, freezing of gait, or involuntary movements drew unwanted attention. Several recounted situations where others assumed they were intoxicated, or confused—assumptions that often led to feelings of embarrassment, frustration, or shame. These



moments, while sometimes brief, accumulated over time and shaped how individuals navigated their daily lives.

Because of these experiences, many people reported withdrawing from social activities they once enjoyed, choosing instead to stay home or restrict outings to familiar environments. Some planned trips outside the house with great care, timing them around symptoms or choosing only places where they felt they would not be judged. This gradual pull away from everyday life often contributed to a loss of confidence, reduced independence, and increasing reliance on close family members.

Yet the research also highlighted an encouraging side. Alongside the challenging experiences were stories of compassion. Strangers offering assistance, communities showing patience, and moments where a simple explanation transformed an interaction. Parkinson’s Disease Nurse Specialists echoed this balance, noting that while misinformation and stigma persist, the public is generally receptive and willing to understand when given clear, accessible information. Their insight underscores a hopeful message: targeted education and greater visibility can have a powerful impact, helping to foster more understanding, supportive environments for those living with PD.

Education: The Path to Better Support

A key finding across all groups,

the public, people with PD, carers, and nurses, is that awareness campaigns and community engagement could make a significant difference. People expressed a strong desire for more visible, accessible information about PD, particularly about non-motor symptoms and the day-to-day realities of living with the condition.

Participants suggested practical opportunities such as:

- ▲ **Public awareness campaigns** that highlight a broader understanding of PD.

- ▲ **Education in schools, universities, and workplaces**, so PD is recognised beyond stereotypes.

- ▲ More visibility of people with PD in media and public life, showing both challenges and strengths.

- ▲ **Community-based activities** (e.g., exercise groups, choirs, dance classes) that are more readily available, promote inclusion and reduce social isolation.

The findings reflect both the challenges and the optimism within the PD community. While stigma and misunderstanding persist, there is enormous potential to improve public knowledge and create more inclusive, supportive communities across the island of Ireland.

BRANCH NEWS

NORTH WEST BRANCH

The members would like to thank Kathleen Kennedy for all her work as Chairperson of our branch. Kathleen worked tirelessly for all and tried to ensure that we had access to services and other social events. She made a huge impact to our branch. Thank you, Kathleen, for listening, for guidance, for encouragement, and for giving 5 years to us as our Chairperson. It is very much appreciated.

Physio Eireann run online classes for people living with Parkinson's every Monday 1.15pm to 1.45pm. All are welcome to join so if you know someone who would be interested, please tell them to contact Physio Eireann on 085 1707997 or email info@physioeireann.com. New participants are always welcome. These classes are paid for by the branch.

The North West Vintage and Heritage Club are holding an Auto Jumble and Car Boot Sale on 12th of April in Bee Park Community



Meath Branch Members

Centre, Manorhamilton and they have chosen our branch to be the beneficiary of the event. We are very grateful to them.

The National "Walk in the Park" is taking place on Saturday 11th April at 11am. We have 2 venues this year, Bernard McGlinchey Town Park, Letterkenny, and Doorly Park Sligo. We hope to have large attendance at both venues. Further information regarding Registration etc will be given later.

I want to take this opportunity to wish all our members a Happy Easter.

Contact Ann Foxe 086 1605847

MEATH BRANCH

We are busy at the moment. We continue with our classes every Monday at 12 noon in the Claremont Stadium Navan. We hosted a stand at the International Woman's Day Health Event in the Claremont Stadium, on Friday 6th March.

A Fashion Show has been organised on Sunday 27th March at 7pm in the Headfort Golf Club Kells, and the proceeds are to be divided between Parkinson's Meath Branch and the Alzheimer's Memory Café in Kells. The next monthly meeting for a Cuppa & Chat will be held in the Balreask Arms, Trim Road Navan on Friday 27th March. After that it will be all hands on deck to organise the National Walk in Claremont Stadium on the 11th April.

Contact Mary Burke 087 2836794



Cork Branch Members



CORK BRANCH

We had a very active Christmas period with another brilliant information meeting featuring Professor Suzanne Timmons, Lorna Kenny researcher and Ian O'Brien aka EUR UP IAN!

There was a lot of great carol singing by our Perpetual Motion Parkinson's Ireland Cork branch choir in Kent train station in aid of Focus Ireland (followed by a festive lunch) and in Cork airport in aid of the branch and by the Sing for your life group in Bantry.

Our local support group tea/coffee mornings and dance classes held festive celebrations including Rince le cheile in Ballinhassig lead by Fionan Cogan and Dance for Parkinson's lead by Marisa Carroll.

The new year got off to a great start with the Roberts cove vintage group tractor run on 4th January which raised an amazing €4,000 for the work of the branch. A huge thanks to all involved.

The new life membership registration is proving popular with membership soaring towards 200. Please continue to register to stay informed of activities and events!

We are very grateful to FDC consultants who recently donated €2,000 from their charitable fund. Thanks to Ted Horgan our former chairman who worked with FDC for many years, to Pauline and all at FDC who have supported us very generously also in the past.

Our Annual lunch was held in Clayton Silversprings with about 80 people with Parkinson's and carers singing, dancing and supporting each other. The food was excellent

and the staff very patient and helpful as always.

We were honoured to be nominated for a Cork County Lord Mayor's charity award.

We were very grateful to be invited to participate in the Munster Table tennis open and hope to re- kindle interest in this valuable form of exercise.

Our information meetings in Sacred Heart parish hall held almost monthly are very popular with excellent speakers. In February we heard from Dr. Emma O'Shea about Lewey body and Parkinson's disease dementia and international Research breakthroughs and from Amayo Cote of Siel Bleu about the importance of exercise. We have again applied for lottery grants to hopefully facilitate trial classes in Mallow and Midleton.

Information was also given about our new tai chi classes in Youghal and Ballinlough and all ongoing classes which members are strongly encouraged to attend. Members reported positively on other exercise initiatives including Exwell classes, neuro gyms such as the function zone and PD Rebels in UCC Mardyke arena. More information on our new branch Facebook page and through emails from Jackie.

Our new committee are working hard for more information meetings, local support groups, activity classes, co- operation with PDRC, UCC, MUH, HSE and especially for an action packed Parkinson's Awareness month with a walk for Parkinson's from Glounthaune community centre at 11 am on 11th April and our Annual mass in Sacred

heart parish church Cork on 22nd April at 7 pm.

Contact Jerome ph 086-3614572

LONGFORD BRANCH

Our AGM was well attended on December 6th in Longford Rugby Club 2025 activities were reviewed and plans for 2026 were outlined and discussed. This was followed by a lovely Christmas dinner. Members love events where they can meet up, socialise, discuss the events of the day and exchange treatment updates.

Activities for 2026 started with the return of our Monday exercise classes which are very popular with members who find them very beneficial. These classes are adapted to the abilities of the members and will continue all year with a break during the summer. In addition, our Singing programme is due to run from Easter into summer. These will help with vocal chord and muscle maintenance, speech and language control as well as a fun evening out. Planning continues for our Walk in the Park on 11th April.

All members and their carers are invited to our new monthly 'Meet and Greet' which starts on Monday 2nd March after our exercise class in the Family Centre, Longford. We hope to see you there for a chat and a cuppa etc.

Also many thanks to everyone who has paid their lifetime membership. This is the last call to anyone who has yet to pay €50 lifetime membership. Lifetime membership covers insurance for all Parkinson's

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Longford Branch Members



Longford Branch Members

activities, e.g. exercise classes; excursions, social activities and meetings. I would appreciate it if you could let me know if you wish to remain a member of the Longford branch and we can arrange

payment of fee.

Contact: AI 087 7640 409

Westmeath Exercise Classes

Parkinson's are delighted to

announce the commencement of weekly exercise classes for people living with Parkinson's in the Westmeath area. These exercise classes are delivered by Siel Bleu who specialise in evidence based exercise programmes for people living with long term health conditions.

When: Every Friday

Where: Seomra Cheoil, Aras an Mhuilinn, Mount Street, Mullingar

Time: 3.45pm-4.45pm

TIPPERARY BRANCH NEWS

The Tipperary branch welcomes all new members who joined us this year. Our door is always open. We hold our meetings on the first Thursday of each month at 2pm in the Order of Malta Centre, Thurles. All meetings end with refreshments and a friendly chat. We have a busy schedule for the next few months ahead of us.

On Thursday 3rd April we will have



Tipperary Branch Members



Presentation to Martin Heffernan by Pat Hunter, Lisburn Racquets Club

our AGM followed by a musical session.

A Walk in the Park will be held on Saturday 11th April at 12pm in Templemore Park. If you would like to join us for this event please register at www.parkinsons.ie or alternatively you can register on the day.

On 1st May our guest speaker is Mags Richardson, Parkinson's nurse. Mags always offers invaluable advice and support to us.

On the 5th June we will have our end of year Summer Party. Music and finger food will be served. This event is always one of the highlights of the year.

We will reconvene after the summer break on Thursday 2nd October.

The Nenagh support group holds weekly 2 hour get togethers in the Pastoral Centre on Mondays 2-4pm. These sessions include physiotherapist led exercise class, a sing along, refreshments and chat.

Clonmel support group meetings are held in Hotel Minella on the first Tuesday of the month at 10.30 am.

Our group photo below was taken with our physiotherapist Maria.

Maria always keeps us on our

The Tipperary Branch had a physiotherapy session during their most recent meeting in the Order of Malta Centre, Thurles. The physio will be with us again at our next meeting on Thursday 5th March at 2pm. We meet on the 1st Thursday of every month.

Martin Heffernan started a Parkinson's Bat and Chat group

in the last year. Most recently the group met on February 21st and enjoyed the exercise and benefits that table tennis offers, followed by light refreshments. A small group travelling from Tipperary town, Cahir and Ballyporeen attended. Another get-together is planned for March. All, including partners are welcome. Contact Martin on 086 3631474.

Separately Martin competed in the Ulster Open Parkinson's Table Tennis competition in Lisburn in November and in a very competitive event won his class. Our branch is very proud of his achievement and also his initiative in setting up Bat and Chat.

Nenagh Support Group meet every Monday from 2 - 3pm with exercise classes and a sing song.

Clonmel Support Group meet on the 1st Tuesday of the month in Hotel Minella and have talks and chat.

Walk in the Park takes place this year on 11th April at 12 noon. All are welcome.

We wish Mary Carey's daughter

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Dublin Branch Members

Shauna the very best of luck as she will participate in the Westport marathon on 18th April, as a fundraiser for Parkinson's Ireland!

Contact Mary 086-3916726.

DUBLIN BRANCH

We held our first branch meeting this year in the Royal Hospital Donnybrook on the 10th March.

We presented the work of Dublin Parkinson's to HSE Southwest in Tallaght in early March, handing out information and making contacts with HSE Healthcare staff across the region.

We are planning to have informal coffee and chat mornings for our members northside and southside. Please check the weekly news updates for details.

We hope to see as many of you as possible at our Annual Walk in the Park on the 11th April, see the details of how to register in this Newsletter.

Next branch meeting

Saturday 23rd May at 3.00pm in the Royal Marine Hotel Dun Laoghaire. A96 K063.

We are delighted to announce that



The poster is titled "Fitness For Parkinsons" and features the Monaghan Sports Partnership logo in the top right corner. It lists three 8-week programs: "8 WEEKS BOXERCISE / STRENGTH" (with a rainbow icon), "8 WEEKS POLES 4 PARKINSON'S" (with a rainbow icon), and "8 WEEKS TAI CHI / CHAIR YOGA" (with a flower icon). Each program includes a brief description of its benefits. At the bottom, it states: "THIS 6 MONTH PROGRAMME WILL HELP COMBAT THE PHYSICAL AND MENTAL EFFECTS OF PARKINSON'S DISEASE". Contact information for Aisling is provided at the bottom: "FOR MORE INFORMATION CONTACT AISLING 087 - 0942883 OR EMAIL AISLING.MCDERMOTT@MONAGHANCOCO.IE".

Dr. Owen Killian, Movement Fellow at St. Vincent's Hospital researching movement disorders and Functional Movement Disorder (FMD) will be our speaker and our members are promised an interesting and stimulating talk followed by tea/coffee and refreshments.

We hope as many of you as possible will be able to come along.

We want to say a big thank you to everyone who fundraised and gave us donations during 2025, every donation is much appreciated.

In particular we want to mention the Men's Sheds who raised funds from carol singing and their calendar raising just under €6,000 for us, photo below of presentation of cheque to Phil Twomey & Kieran Connolly.

Templeogue Men's Sheds Fundraising Presentation to Dublin Parkinson's February 2026

Contact: Phil 087 780 2414

MONAGHAN BRANCH

We meet every Tuesday at 2:30pm in Peake Fitness Carrickmacross. As and from 5th March we are also going to meet on a Thursday for activated pole walking from 2:30-3:30pm.



Jerome Maume, Chair of the Cork branch, has given many years of service to the Parkinson's community in Cork, supporting members and organising local classes. Maurice Nagle has been a passionate volunteer with Young Parkinson's Ireland for a number of years, giving his time and energy to support others



Wexford Branch presentation by Parkinson's Ireland CEO Shane O'Brien



Wexford Branch Members



Wexford Branch Members

Every Thursday in Doohamlet we have chair yoga classes from 2:30 – 3:30pm

On Thursday 19th February we started an 8 week course – boxercise/strength & gym classes at the fitness habit Ballybay in conjunction with Monaghan sports partnership.

It's our intention going forward to have something each week in these venues as these are very important exercises for those who have Parkinson's.

We held a table quiz in Corduff/Raferagh community centre on Friday 13th March. It was great to see so many branch members there.

We are also taking part in "the walk in the park" on 11th April. Registration @ 11am at Peake Fitness.4

Contact Seamus on 0872482292

WEXFORD BRANCH

Hi Everyone, thank you for taking the time to read our latest newsletter.

We're coming into the brighter days finally and watching the daffodils bloom would do your heart good

We made the most of the bad weather with a trip to Killarney in January where over 30 of us made the trip and we had a great time

Our Coffee Mornings are being held around the County, and we would love to see you at one of them in your area. Our Classes are running every week and are a great success Chair Yoga has over 20 attend every week.

Singing for Health Choir has up to 18 every week (but we could always do with a few more).

Physio Classes are helping up to 10 members weekly.

Please contact us if you would like to

join any of our classes.

We are working in the background organising our Annual 'A Walk in the Park for Parkinson's' event which will be held in Min Ryan Park Wexford Town on April 11th so Please save the date.

We really would appreciate it if you could support us on the day.

Finally we would like to congratulate our Chairman Mr Pat Lacey on receiving his Honorary Membership Award from Shane in recognition for all his hard work – Pat has a BIG birthday coming up so we would like to wish him a very Happy Birthday.

Contacts: Chairman – Pat Lacey 087-2585992

Secretary – Breda Kennedy 087-0958984.

MID WEST BRANCH

We are delighted to report that the Midwest Branch is thriving. All our activity classes are busy and the members all enjoy them.

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Mid West Branch Members



Mid West Branch Members



Mid West Branch Members

We have some changes to our Information afternoons. Normally we held them on the first Tuesday of the month but we have now changed to the SECOND TUESDAY OF EACH MONTH.

We found quite a few members were missing out when there was a bank holiday on the Monday. They were either going away or they were inclined to forget.

The most important change is as follows:- We have changed the location to Na Piersaigh GAA HALL, CAHERDAVIN LAWN, LIMERICK AT 2PM.

When you come to the crossroads for the Greenhills Hotel you take the opposite turning and it is clearly signposted up on the right. We had our meeting there last month and it was very comfortable and of course the ladies made the usual cup of tea, Prices increased in the hotel so rather than waste any money we made the change.

If you keep an eye on the weekly ELetter that comes from National office we will keep you up to date with the name of each speaker. If you are a member and you don't get this ELetter just contact Mary McMahon our secretary she will check it out for you.

Our Christmas dinner in the Woodlands was a great success. Food excellent and the Newcastle west group led by Maura entertained us to music and a singsong. Many thanks to Maura, well assisted by Geraldine.

The ladies turned out in great style and the men were well able to match them. There were loads of prizes for the raffle which added some excitement to the day.

Any function is not complete without Pat O'Dea who got his group out to dance a set or two. Clive did the hornpipe with Pat and there was no sign of PD when the music kicked in.

There are two walks coming up to mark World Parkinson's Week 11th April. We are moving out of the city this year. The first venue is in THE DEMENSE, NEWCASTLE WEST, CO. LIMERICK.

The second venue is taking place on Lee's Road Sports Park, Ennis Co Clare. These walks are not too demanding so get your friends and family to support you and have some fun.

Sadie Doyle's husband brought his jazz band to the Milk Market in Limerick for a session before Christmas. Quite a crowd stopped to listen and even a few had a dance or two.

These type of events are not only great fundraisers but we always get some new people asking about the condition. It raises awareness in a very positive way. Thank you Sadie.

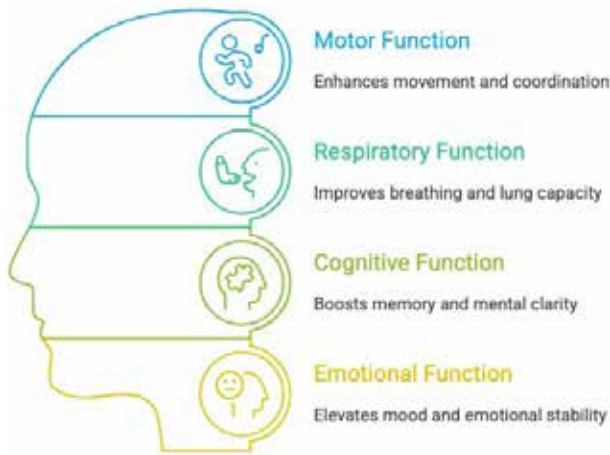
Hoping this wet weather passes soon and we can enjoy some sunshine and get out and about. Wishing you all the very best.

Contact Gerry 086 257 6363



PARKINSONS ONLINE PROGRAMME

Comprehensive Benefits of Singing Therapy



The Parkinsongs online music therapy program is a pilot project which was run by the Midwest branch for the last 10 weeks. This was designed and facilitated by Dr Cathy McGlynn, a board certified music therapist, to support individuals living with Parkinson’s Disease in improving vocal clarity, respiratory function, articulation, coordination and movement. In her work with people living with PD, Cathy observed how many of the excellent in-person services and therapies in the country are not available to those living in remote areas, and to those who cannot access in-person classes due to issues with mobility and transport. An online clinical practice can offer therapy to everyone living with PD from the comfort of their own homes; improving access issues can improve inclusivity.

This program is based on a growing body of scientific research that demonstrates how music therapy can offer a range of benefits for people with PD, which include improved respiratory function and vocal strength; better articulation and speech intelligibility; improved mood and emotional wellbeing through dopamine release, and improved cognitive engagement and processing.

The programme consisted of weekly one-hour sessions over a 10-week period on Zoom. Exercises focused on improving articulation, resonance, tone and pitch elevation and the latter half of the programme incorporated rhythm and movement as a means of improving gait and coordination. Participants gave positive feedback on the experience and embraced the online format. Some group members used the recordings to repeat the class a few times in a given week. Overall this pilot programme yielded positive feedback and enthusiastic engagement and the group will be submitting evaluations of the programme that will be incorporated into future planning. It was wonderful to see people return each week for the class, especially those who cannot attend in-person therapies.

A Participant’s View:

I had the advantage of attending the weekly In-Person Voice Exercise and Singing classes facilitated by Cathy and her colleague Anne so I was familiar with many of the base Breathing and Singing Exercises. Otherwise week 1 of the online sessions would have been challenging. I found the programme great and the step by step approach to understanding proven vocal therapies and their practical application to MY Parkinson’s experience was really beneficial. I looked forward to our Tuesday mornings online. After each weekly session, a recording of that session was distributed which enabled us to practice the exercises at will. This was a real bonus. As the weeks went by, additional layers were explained and added - it was quite enlightening not just to participate in a given exercise but to hear the scientific/medical basis for it as it relates to Parkinson’s or indeed other neurological conditions. The usual distance barrier was removed and we had participants from far and near across our branch area.

I feel that 10 sessions is about right. I would shudder to think what interventions would have to be omitted to shorten it. I would strongly recommend the Online Vocal Therapy programme to anyone living with Parkinson’s and I look forward to a full evaluation (just started) of it.



Parkinson's Ireland



Please attach this form to my file

To be handed to your Doctor and used for planned or unplanned admission to hospital.

I am living with Parkinson's Disease. I may have difficulty speaking or writing clearly. My condition may deteriorate if my medication is not taken at the correct times prescribed for me.

I WILL NEED A FULL GLASS OF WATER PER PD TABLET



Name

Contact Number

Next of Kin

Contact Number

Doctor/Neurologist

Contact Number

Name of PD Medication	Dosage	Times
<input type="text"/>	<input type="text"/>	<input type="text"/>
<input type="text"/>	<input type="text"/>	<input type="text"/>
<input type="text"/>	<input type="text"/>	<input type="text"/>
<input type="text"/>	<input type="text"/>	<input type="text"/>
<input type="text"/>	<input type="text"/>	<input type="text"/>

Other Medication



Don't leave it until there is an emergency to fill out this form. By asking your Health Care Professional to attach this to your file you will be helping them to manage your condition while you are in hospital.

We work hard to guarantee that the information provided by our services is up to date, objective, and accurate. Please use this in conjunction with medical advice from your Parkinson's team and do not make any changes prior to discussing with your medical team. Please see our website for most up to date version.