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# New Vision for Rehab

**B**ECOMING THE CHIEF EXECUTIVE of an organisation as large and diverse as Rehab, and only the third in its 57-year history, is quite a challenge. However, it is one which Angela Kerins, Group Chief Executive, who took up office on 1st December 2006, has been relishing.

Speaking to *Rehab News*, she says, "It has certainly been a very busy year. But it has also been very challenging, interesting and enjoyable, and a lot of people can be very proud of what has been achieved. We now have a new Group Management Team in place, and in the last twelve months a huge amount of effort has been put in by staff across the organisation which will ensure that Rehab is well-equipped for the future."

One of Angela's first actions as Chief Executive was to write to every member of staff

throughout Rehab. This was to inform them of developments, including the recruitment of key new members of the Group Management Team and the plans, now complete, for a comprehensive consultation strategy which she undertook during the summer, involving focus groups with staff, clients and families and a staff ideas survey.

"I found this extremely valuable. The experience and knowledge of frontline staff, and the insights of service-users and their families are crucial to take into consideration when planning and developing services. I will be repeating this exercise in our services outside of Ireland, particularly in England and Scotland imminently. It is also important that every staff member feels part of Rehab Group and knows their ideas are valued and welcomed as part of our efforts to deliver world-class services to our clients.



“Very strong feedback came through from clients and staff that they would like to see more collaboration between Rehab Group divisions, both staff and service-users, at local, regional and national levels, as well as more ways for families to interact with Rehab. So, we have now established regional committees which will ensure that managers and staff regionally have the opportunity to share knowledge and make services more seamless. Regional meetings took place in Ireland last October and are planned shortly for the UK.

“The breadth of activity in the Group is remarkable and there are huge opportunities for shared learning. I want all staff to take this opportunity, to share ideas, knowledge and best practice.

“Each division has its own challenges but there are lots of commonalities. We all operate in changing environments, with the welcome introduction of new standards in services, changes in funding mechanisms and in customer expectations. Everyone in Rehab Group is working under the same mission

statement and our activities must be complementary and make maximum use of all our resources, including our knowledge and expertise.

“I feel very strongly about the involvement of our clients. Across Rehab Group, service-users must be clearly facilitated to have their say – the client representation bodies are growing and this is a very positive development.”

And so to year two: what are the plans for 2008 and beyond? “Rehab is growing and responding to need at an incredibly-fast pace. This challenges everyone and we must ensure we are equipped to meet the changing needs of people with disabilities, older people and those who are marginalised. There is a great ‘can do’ attitude in Rehab and I want to foster that. The new management team’s task is to unleash and harness this energy.”

And are there any major developments? “There are many exciting projects happening: for example, in RehabCare many new services are being developed in residential, respite and homecare throughout the country. In National Learning Network, we are developing new training strategies and looking at new educational initiatives. Chaseley Trust is seeking new opportunities, Momentum has good ideas for expansion and Rehab Enterprises has big plans for recycling. The reviews of our human resources and finance functions are now complete and being implemented, and the policy programme is well underway with all parts of the Group contributing. Significant IT investment is happening and communication is being enhanced by the new staff intranet. All these combine to bring about efficiencies and, ultimately, service improvements.

“Rehab has had a very successful past, and all those who have preceded us, including our two previous Chief Executives, Frank Flannery and Frank Cahill, staff and volunteers, have built a wonderful organisation that provides excellent services, has a well-deserved reputation and is sustainable. It’s important that we recognise and are proud of their achievements. Now, in building on that, Rehab has a great future ahead; it’s a person-centred, entrepreneurial, ‘can do’ organisation with energy, drive and ambition. So as the song says ‘let’s take the passion and make it happen!’” ■