

ConnectAbility

Promoting digital inclusion through Virtual Services



ConnectAbility is a service reform initiative designed to build capability in virtual service delivery by using digital tools to strengthen human connection, expand access, and reshape how disability services respond to real lives.

By focusing on relationships, co-design, learning, and collaboration, the project delivers immediate practical value while contributing to longer-term improvements in how services are designed and delivered.

What are Virtual Services?

Virtual Services are purpose-designed digital services that enable people to access opportunities for learning, connecting with peers and social activities online.

Importantly, rather than replicating existing in-person services, Virtual Services act as a complementary service model, increasing overall system capacity while preserving choice and flexibility for individuals.

What is ConnectAbility?

ConnectAbility (2025–2027) is a two-year, HSE-funded initiative led by Enable Ireland in partnership with the HSE Day Opportunities Team and nine disability service providers across the HSE Dublin and South East regions.

The project aims to design, test, and document a sustainable, replicable Virtual Service framework for adults with disabilities accessing day and rehabilitative training services. A suite of tailored resources and content will also be developed to complement the framework, including four bespoke training courses covering wellbeing and practical life skills.

The framework will be co-designed with people who use and deliver disability services, focusing on peer learning and shared capacity building. It will be flexible and adaptable to meet individuals' diverse needs.





Why do we need Virtual Services?

- **Responding to unmet and growing need**

In Ireland, over 1.1 million people report a disability or chronic condition.

Population growth, longer life expectancy, workforce pressures and geographic barriers mean that many people who could benefit from support do not currently access services at all.

The existing system is striving to meet increasing need through a range of flexible responses.

Virtual Services offer a practical response to this challenge by:

- Expanding reach beyond physical service locations
- Reducing transport and geographic barriers
- Supporting people whose personal circumstances make attendance difficult
- Maintaining connection during disruption (illness, extreme weather, service interruptions)

- **Advancing disability rights, inclusion and equity**

The project is grounded in UNCRPD principles, particularly rights to participation, inclusion, autonomy, and access to supports shaped around a person's life.

Disabled people increasingly expect and require innovative, accessible, and flexible service options that support social inclusion and agency.

Virtual Services support:

- Person-centred choice and agency over how and when people engage
- Community and connection, reducing isolation and loneliness
- Continuity of support when in-person engagement is not possible
- Access to wider communities and interests, not limited by locality

- **Building digital inclusion and sustainability**

Digital inclusion is central to social inclusion, with many people now using digital means to access products, services and information. Building digital skills and confidence ensures a more inclusive experience for all users.

The project contributes to national goals including:

- Digital literacy and confidence
- Inclusive digital public services
- Assistive technology adoption
- Environmental sustainability



What value will the project deliver?

For people using services:

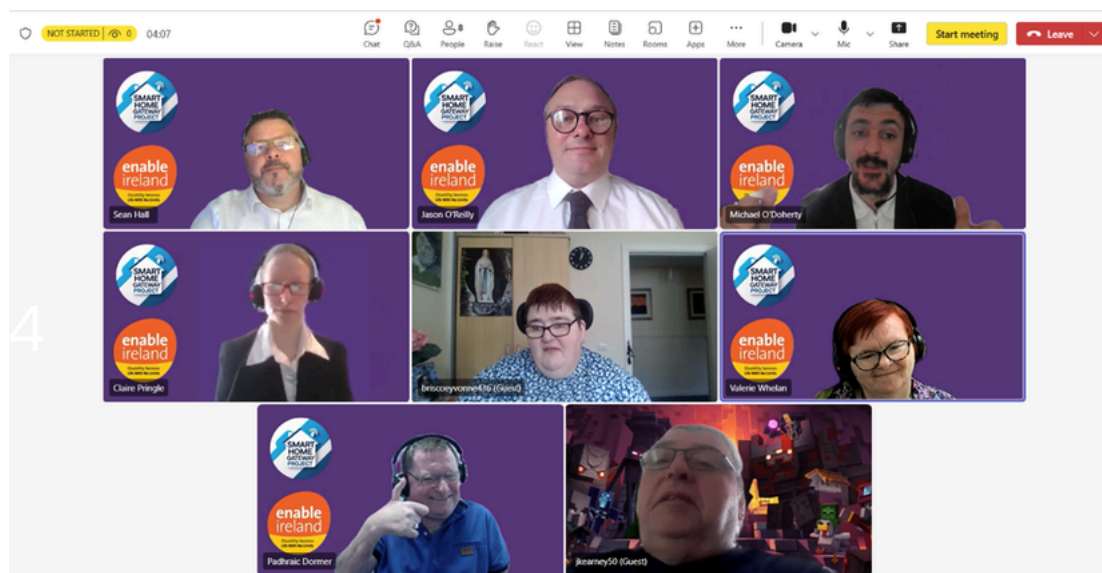
- Greater choice and control over how they engage
- Improved access to learning, connection, and community
- Reduced isolation and improved wellbeing
- More inclusive and accessible service options

For service providers:

- Increased capacity without equivalent increases in physical infrastructure
- Improved digital accessibility and assistive technology practice
- Shared learning resources and reduced duplication
- Stronger professional connection and collaboration

National Human Rights Strategy for Disabled People 2025 - 2030:

- A tested, practice-informed Virtual Service framework
- Learning that can inform future policy, funding, and commissioning decisions
- Practical evidence of person-centred service delivery
- A scalable model that balances efficiency with human connection



For more information on the project, or to request an Easy Read version of this document, please contact Valerie Healy, Project Manager:
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