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Page: 11
Reach: 43000
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St. Michael's House launches first 'Total Communications Project' in partnership with Dundrum Town Centre

St. Michael's House, one of Ireland's largest providers of community-based services for individuals with intellectual disabilities, has launched a new partnership with Dundrum Town Centre to enhance the experience of customers and promote social inclusion for individuals with additional communication needs.

The 'Total Communication Project' will enhance customer experience in an inclusive way and will be informed by people with intellectual disabilities, industry experts and their families.

It is an approach that recognises that people communicate in many different ways, including through the use of spoken language, body language, sign, pictures and use of technology.

The 'Total Communication Project' identifies that all of these different modes of communication are equal and valued.

Following completion of this project, Dundrum Town Centre will be the first shopping centre in Dublin that is actively promoting the use of a Total Communication approach to ensure that different modes of communication are recognised, used and respected. During the

rollout, St. Michael's House is aiming to train fifty staff members from Dundrum Town Centre using a bespoke Total Communication training package.

The project will be implemented in phases from November 2021 to the middle of 2022. Following a survey of Dundrum Town Centre staff and of parents whose children attend SMH services, a 'walk-round' by several adult service users will be completed to gain an understanding of the existing communications support and environment. Recommendations will then be developed focusing on two key areas - the people and the place.

The first area will look at supporting staff in Dundrum Town Centre by providing them with a bespoke training package delivered by Speech and Language Therapists from St Michael's House. This will provide baseline training for staff to provide them with knowledge and skills to support customers with additional communication needs in the shopping centre.

Jacqui McDonnell, Head of Communications and Fundraising at St. Michael's House said: "St. Michael's House is delighted to launch this

partnership with our charity partner Dundrum Town Centre.

"Over the next few months, our staff and service users will work with our partners to examine the type of communication support that is needed in a community shopping centre setting. We are proud to be driving this important initiative to ensure the needs of all people with disabilities are recognised and that they receive support in the community."



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Pictured (L-R) at Dundrum Town Centre: Don Nugent, Director of Dundrum Town Centre; Karl Daly, service user from St Michael's House; Sarah Foley, Environmental and Community Coordinator at Dundrum Town Centre; and Jenny O'Brien Speech & Language Manager at St Michael's House