

# Bone Health in the Intellectual Disability Population: Empowerment of Peers through Education

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## Introduction

The Irish Longitudinal DA on Ageing (TILDA) Intellectual Disabilities Study Wave (2014) report osteoporosis and falls related injuries are a significant health concern for people with an intellectual disability.



### Fact

70% have reduced bone density

### Fact

33% of over 50 year olds fall each year

### Despite these numbers no education resource existed to inform:

1. People with an intellectual disability
2. Carers
3. Health and social care staff
4. Families

## Methodology

In 2014 Forever Autumn Community of Practice collaborated with intellectual Disability (ID) service providers to develop an education resource on bone health and falls awareness.

A multidisciplinary approach involving service users informed the content. The aim of the education resource is to provide information on bone health and falls awareness with a specific focus on exercise and nutrition for people with an ID.

It also aims to raise awareness of reduced bone mineral density and risk of falling in this population.



## Results

Through engagement with an Educational Technologist to design and develop the content, a suite of resources is available via [www.happybones.ie](http://www.happybones.ie).

Service users and their families were actively involved in the development of the educational resources.

The material is developed in differing formats that makes it easily accessible - on line through website, eBook store, and YouTube – the resources include 3 short videos in which service users feature - **Paula's Story, Having a DXA scan, and Best Foot Forward - Chrissie's Story.**

## Conclusion

Happy Bones has generated a lot of interest both nationally and internationally. The programme has resulted in an increased awareness of the importance of good bone health, falls awareness and falls prevention strategies among all age groups. It has generated an increase in the numbers of people with an intellectual disability being referred for osteoporosis screening and receiving recommended interventions.



Through their new knowledge the service users initiated the promotion of the resources at many events within their organisation and further afield.



This facilitated sharing of their learned experiences with their peers to promote a healthy active lifestyle with a goal to maintain strong bones. It demonstrates how collaborative working across service providers and engaging with service users **can influence the life** of people with an intellectual disability.