

Polio Survivors Ireland – Fact Sheet for Media

Polio, or infantile paralysis, is a disease that struck fear into the hearts of parents throughout the early 50's, in Ireland and many other Western countries. In April 12, 1955, the world came to a stop when the findings of a clinical trial were announced – the vaccine against Polio was considered 'Safe and Effective'.

The usual reaction to Ireland's Polio Survivors Ireland is 'I thought Polio was gone?'

Unfortunately, for the 5,000 Survivors of polio, thought to live in Ireland today, while the disease is no longer being contracted by now vaccinated children, many people are still living with disabilities brought on by the disease. Others are suffering with late effects, what's known as *Post Polio Syndrome*, significantly increasing their disability and causing pain and fatigue later in life.

- Polio Survivors Ireland is keen to reach polio survivors who may not be aware of the organisation. There are thought to be 5,000 survivors yet less than 1,000 are members of the charity.
- We would encourage people who have had polio to engage with the organisation – even if they don't need help now.
- They may be able to help their fellow polio survivors and to ensure that the charity is able to continue to support polio survivors into the future.

Late Effects of Polio (Post Polio Syndrome)

The late effects of polio are characterised by some or all of the following and, frequently, by additional secondary medical problems:

- Muscle and joint pain
- Lack of strength and increased muscle weakness
- Extreme fatigue
- Breathing problems often related to difficulty sleeping
- Swallowing problems
- Severe intolerance to cold weather
- Decline in ability to enjoy everyday activities such as walking

At present there is no cure for the condition but careful management, support and treatment can enable the polio survivor to live with some independence and dignity.

About Polio Survivors Ireland

Polio Survivors Ireland was established *For Polio Survivors by Polio Survivors* in 1993. We are the only organisation in Ireland providing practical support (and sometimes more importantly a listening ear) to those unfortunate enough to have contracted polio when babies or young children.

We provide stair lifts, callipers, bespoke footwear, electric scooters and wheelchairs. We also help Survivors access Physiotherapy, Occupational Therapy and Respite Breaks, as well as other supports. We work to raise awareness, provide information on polio and its late effects and to ensure polio survivors can live with dignity.

We have a network of support groups around the country and we provide a telephone support service for those who can't get out of the house.

We work tirelessly to:

- Create awareness of Post Polio Syndrome

- Provide information on polio and its late effects
- Ensure the needs of polio survivors relating to their condition are met to enable them to live independently and with dignity

Any of the estimated 5,000 polio survivors in Ireland can contact us for support irrespective of whether they are a member or not, on 01 889 89 20 or info@polio.ie or www.polio.ie

For further media information contact:

Emma Clarke Conway, Communications & Development Officer,
cdo@polio.ie or 087 2981944

Polio Survivors Ireland, Coleraine House, Coleraine Street, Dublin 7.