Abstract: The authors of the current study form an action research team which supports a national service reform programme in Ireland. The reform programme aims to develop person-centred services in the areas of disability, mental health and homelessness. The action research team supports the reform of these services by uncovering implementation challenges as they emerge and sharing these with programme leaders. This presentation will draw on the early stage learnings from the disability strand of our work.

Disability services in Ireland have developed in a piecemeal manner, with services being offered directly by the Health Service Executive as well as by a large number of voluntary organisations. This model of service delivery presents a barrier to collaboration. While all organisations are presented with the same national policies to implement (e.g. A Time to Move on From Congregated Settings, New Directions), each has to forge its own path to implementation, from their own service’s unique starting point. The action research holds a number of opportunities to support collaboration and shared learning as services around the country implement their own reforms. This includes uncovering local learnings which can be shared both across the country with others doing similar work and upwards nationally.

The presentation will describe these potential opportunities, as well as the challenges to shared learning and collaboration experienced by the team to date. These include the difficulties making space for action research in a crisis led system and ensuring the right voices are at the table.