

Community Hub for Accessible Technology (CHAT)

Eight Years of AT Community of Practice Activities Synthesis Report (2018–2026)



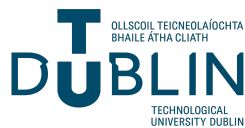
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Executive Summary

Since 2014, the Community Hub for Accessible Technology (CHAT) has been built and sustained by people: AT users and disabled people, family members, frontline staff, educators, researchers, practitioners, advocates, and policy contributors, coming together across health, education, employment, arts, and community settings to share what they know and to advocate for what they need. CHAT is a community of practice network whose unique value lies in the relationships, trust, and lived knowledge it has generated and continues to generate across Ireland's assistive technology ecosystem.

This report draws on qualitative data from 25 CHAT events, operated by FreedomTech and jointly facilitated by Enable Ireland and the Disability Federation of Ireland, between September 2018 and February 2026. The research used three data sources: 23 transcripts from event summaries and reports; 11 pre-registration surveys yielding approximately 800 responses; and 9 Sli.do in-event polls or Q&A exports. All findings are grounded in the voices of participants.

The WHO Assistive Technology Capacity Assessment for Ireland (ATA-C, 2026), independently commissioned by the Government of Ireland, recognises CHAT as a community of practice that provides 'grassroots capacity-building and resource and knowledge sharing' within Ireland's AT personnel system. The evidence in this report demonstrates that CHAT's contribution extends across all five domains of the WHO GATE-5P framework, i.e., people, policy, products, provision, and personnel, and that the community has consistently identified systemic gaps that the ATA-C has now confirmed. Recognising, resourcing, and scaling the CHAT network as part of Ireland's national AT infrastructure represents a significant opportunity that should be pursued.

In the analysis presented in this report, ten key findings emerge from the data:

- CHAT functions as an open, inclusive community of practice network with demonstrable policy influence and independent recognition by the WHO, evidence that sustaining and resourcing the network is an immediate national AT priority.
- Assistive Technology is consistently recognised as a rights enabler, not simply a clinical provision across all data sources & throughout the years under review.
- Rights and Legislation as tools for strengthening the AT ecosystem.
- Co-design with lived experience is mentioned throughout as a non-negotiable condition for effective AT provision, service design, and policy development.
- Funding is identified as the primary systemic barrier across multiple data sources. Participants indicate the problem is not only the absence of funding, but its inconsistency, variation by area/community, effort or luck, and lack of multi-annual planning.
- A lack of continuity of AT support across settings and life transitions is identified as a failure point
- AT Passport is identified as a practical solution towards centralisation and coordination.
- Staff and family training, confidence, and attitudes are identified as systemic weaknesses, with participants naming peer and community-based models, including DigiCoach, as preferred alternatives to specialist-dependent provision, empowering individuals with lived experience as paid expert contributors.
- Artificial intelligence and emerging technologies are identified as transformative. However, concerns exist around governance and privacy.
- Importance of outcome measure and economic value as impact measure – e.g., [myATOF](https://www.at-outcomes.org) - <https://www.at-outcomes.org>

1. Introduction

1.1 Background

Community Hub for Accessible Technology (CHAT) was established as a cross-sector platform for shared learning, honest discussion, and community-driven innovation around assistive and accessible technology (AT) in Ireland. It operates under the umbrella of FreedomTech, a partnership between Enable Ireland and the Disability Federation of Ireland (DFI), and functions as an open, inclusive community of practice.

Between September 2018 and February 2026, CHAT hosted 25 documented events across a range of themes: AT in rehabilitation and health; AT in education at primary, secondary, and higher levels; AT and employment; smart cities and smart homes; digital literacy; AT in the arts; AI and accessibility; European legislation and policy; AT outcome measurement; and national AT ecosystem development. Events were hosted at institutions including the National Rehabilitation Hospital, University College Cork, Technological University, Dublin Grangegorman, Trinity College Dublin, Microsoft Ireland, the Irish Human Rights and Equality Commission, the National Learning Network (Limerick), and the Project Arts Centre.

The community that has formed through CHAT is defined by AT users, disabled people, older people, disabled artists, family members, frontline staff, educators, researchers, technology partners, and service providers, and by the relationships of trust and shared learning they have built across sectors over time. Many of the people who attended CHAT's first event at the National Rehabilitation Hospital in September 2018 are still part of the network today. Many who discovered CHAT through a single online event during the pandemic years have become sustained contributors. The community itself, its connections, its shared language, its culture of honest, rights-based dialogue, is an outcome of the CHAT programme that sits alongside, and in some respects exceeds, the individual outputs of any single event.

CHAT's contribution to Ireland's AT ecosystem has been independently recognised. The [WHO Assistive Technology Capacity Assessment for Ireland](#) (2026),⁷ a government-commissioned evaluation of Ireland's capacity to deliver equitable access to AT, identifies the CHAT network under its findings on personnel and workforce capacity as providing 'grassroots capacity-building and resource and knowledge sharing' across the national AT system. The DigiCoach model, a peer-led approach to digital AT coaching that has been developed and amplified through CHAT events since 2021, is featured as a national exemplar in the same report. Ireland's [AT Discussion paper](#) (2016) is also cited among the ATA-C report's foundational references. These recognitions reflect CHAT's standing as a substantive contributor to Ireland's AT policy and practice landscape.

1.2 Purpose of this Report

This report provides a qualitative synthesis of the results of all past CHAT events from 2018 to 2026 and the qualitative evidence generated during each event. The themes, findings and recommendations represented in this report come from the voices of participants at CHAT events. Evidence used in this report was drawn entirely from the source documents collected over the past eight years of CHAT (i.e., event transcripts, Slido responses, pre-registration survey data).

In addition, reference is made to the WHO Assistive Technology Capacity Assessment Ireland (2026), in how the CHAT community already aligns with the findings of that assessment and how it is recognised for its impact in the AT ecosystem - this is explicitly discussed in sections 1.3 and 3.5 of the report.

1.3 CHAT as Community of Practice Network: Who We Are and What We Build

Since 2018, CHAT has functioned as a community that has built and nourished itself. It is an open, non-partisan, and cross-sectoral network in which knowledge moves through relationships, trust, and lived experience. The CHAT community of practice network includes:

- Assistive technology users and disabled people who attend, present, contribute to discussions, and shape the agenda of every event
- Family members and personal assistants who navigate AT systems on behalf of people they support
- Frontline staff, support workers, and DigiCoaches who implement AT in everyday service delivery
- Educators at primary, secondary, further, and higher levels who work to embed AT in learning environments
- Occupational therapists, speech and language therapists, physiotherapists, and other health and social care professionals
- Researchers, policy contributors, and advocates working to influence Ireland's AT infrastructure
- Technology partners, suppliers, and developers engaged in making AT more accessible and affordable
- Service providers, voluntary organisations, and disability service leaders from across all regions of Ireland
- Government departments and statutory bodies, including the HSE, the NDA, the IHREC, and DCDE, whose representatives have attended, contributed to, and in some cases hosted CHAT events

The CHAT network is sustained by the relationships, mutual trust, and shared commitment to rights-based practice that have been cultivated across these constituencies over eight years. The human infrastructure of CHAT, the connections formed between an AT user in Limerick and a researcher in Dublin, between a DigiCoach in Cork and a policy officer in the Department of Children, Disability and Equality, is itself a key outcome of CHAT.

The community has functioned as a model soft national coordination mechanism within Ireland's fragmented assistive technology system. In the absence of a national AT coordination body (a gap that the WHO Assistive Technology Capacity Assessment for Ireland (2026) identifies explicitly), CHAT has created a trusted, cross-sector space where knowledge is shared through lived experience, peer exchange, and real-world demonstration. It has advanced peer-led models such as Virtual Services and DigiCoaching, promoted co-design as standard practice, and supported the visibility and scaling of innovative approaches, including the AT Passport through the CREATE grant stream. In doing so, it has contributed to cultural change by reframing assistive technology as everyday infrastructure rather than specialist provision.

A central feature of the CHAT network is that AT users have not simply attended or contributed to events; they have built them. They have hosted them, facilitated them, co-designed their content, and in many cases delivered them. This is what distinguishes CHAT from most professional development or policy forums in the AT sector, and it is what its co-design model means in practice, not in principle.

Across the 25 events documented in this archive, AT users appear in many roles including facilitators, speakers, panellists, peer experts, co-designers, etc.

The DigiCoach model developed through St John of God Community Services and amplified across CHAT represents the most developed expression of this principle at a systemic level. DigiCoaches are AT users and people with lived experience of disability who are employed (not volunteered) as peer technology coaches within disability services, schools, and community settings..

The WHO Assistive Technology Capacity Assessment for Ireland (2026), a collaborative initiative between the Government of Ireland and the WHO Regional Office for Europe, conducted between September 2024 and May 2025, independently recognises CHAT's contribution within the national AT system. Under its findings on personnel and workforce capacity, the report states:

"Existing communities of practice currently provide avenues for interprofessional and cross-sectoral training. For example, the Community Hub for Accessible Technology (CHAT) is a community of practice focused on AT, which includes over 200 individuals and organisations across Ireland. CHAT gatherings are hosted by different member organisations and are opportunities for collective learning and resource sharing." [WHO Assistive Technology Capacity Assessment in Ireland, WHO Regional Office for Europe, 2026, p.146]

In its summary of personnel system strengths, the WHO report further notes:

"Networks for interprofessional learning, such as the CHAT network, provide grassroots capacity-building and resource and knowledge sharing." [WHO Assistive Technology Capacity Assessment in Ireland, WHO Regional Office for Europe, 2026, p.147]

These citations from an independent, government-commissioned assessment validate what the CHAT community has experienced and articulated since 2018: that the network is an important stakeholder to Ireland's AT ecosystem, and is already contributing to it in ways that formal structures have not yet replicated. Recognising, resourcing, and scaling this existing community-led model represents a significant opportunity to strengthen the national AT ecosystem without duplicating structures.

Under CHAT, events are not designed for AT users and then delivered to them. They are designed and delivered with AT users as central contributors as MCs, speakers, panellists, hosts, co-designers, and community convenors. This is the community infrastructure that this report is evidence of, and that the recommendations that follow are designed to sustain.

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1.3.1 AT Users as Builders, Convenors, and Co-Designers of CHAT

AT users and DigiCoaches have, across all 25 CHAT events documented in this report, profoundly contributed to shaping and co-designing CHAT through their lived experience. From roles such as contribution to the event, especially in distinguished roles that include keynote speakers, MCs, workshop facilitators, panel members, live demonstrators, and co-designers, AT users and DigiCoaches are central to CHAT.

The DigiCoach model, developed through St John of God Community Services and amplified across CHAT, represents the most developed expression of this principle at a systemic level. DigiCoaches are AT users and people with lived experience of disability who are employed as peer technology coaches within disability services, schools, and community settings. The model exemplifies *'lived experience as the workforce, not consultation'*, a statement that precisely captures what Table 1 makes visible: AT users as workers, builders, and community convenors, not beneficiaries or sources of evidence.

The WHO Assistive Technology Capacity Assessment for Ireland (2026) independently recognises this model, featuring the SJOG DigiCoach programme in Box 6 of the People chapter and describing it as a model that 'fosters a culture of shared learning and inclusion, with service users actively shaping and delivering training.' That recognition in a WHO-commissioned government document is a direct validation of what the CHAT community has been building through co-design and co-delivery since 2018.

In summary, CHAT Events are not designed for AT users and are then delivered to them. They are designed and delivered with AT users as central contributors. The table above is evidence of that claim, in addition, a complete record of all named contributors is in Annex 1

2. Methodology

2.1 Data Sources

The report draws on three data sources across 25 named events (see Table 1 for the List of Events and related details). Three categories of source document were analysed:

- Event transcripts and summary reports: 23 documents, covering all CHAT events from September 2018 to February 2026. These range from detailed transcripts to structured summary reports. All are named and cited.
- Pre-registration survey exports: 11 Microsoft Excel datasets, containing open-text responses to pre-event questions. Datasets cover Events 2, 10, 11, 12, 13, 14, 17, 19, 21, 23*, and 24*. Total responses across datasets are approximately 800. Each dataset uses a single open-text question per event.
- Sli.do exports: PDF poll results and Q&A summary reports from 9 events: Events 2, 3, 4, 6, 8, 11, 12, 16, and 22. Poll types include open-text polls, wordcloud polls, multiple-choice polls, rating scales, and live Q&A submissions.

2.2 Report Analysis Approach

A qualitative thematic analysis was completed for each data source: transcript, pre-registration surveys and Slido responses. Initially, codes were generated from transcript content; emerging themes were then checked for their existence within both pre-registration surveys and Slido responses. A comparative reading of the three data sources was then conducted to identify patterns and convergence across them.

2.3 Limitations

Event transcripts vary in detail and format. Events 9 is represented by a short summary only (video unavailable), and Events 23* and 24* are represented solely by registration survey data.

3. Overview of the CHAT Archive (2018–2026)

3.1 Events Summary

The following table (Table 1) summarises all 25 CHAT events, including participant figures, formats, and data sources. Participant figures are drawn from CHAT_Report_2019-2025.docx (covering Sept 2019 – April 2025) and transcripts where available.

Table 1: CHAT Events 2018 - 2026

S/N	Event / Title	Date	Participants	Format	Data Sources
1	CHAT @NRH AT in Acquired Disability	Sept 2018	83 †	In-person	Transcript
2	CHAT @UCC AT in Education	Dec 2018	85 †	In-person	Transcript · Reg · Sli.do
3	CHAT @IHREC Rights & UNCRPD	Apr 2019	60	In-person	Transcript · Sli.do

S/N	Event / Title	Date	Participants	Format	Data Sources
4	CHAT @Microsoft AT to Work	Jun 2019	110 †	In-person	Transcript · Sli.do Q&A
5	CHAT @TUDublin Living Life with AT	Oct 2019	112	In-person	Transcript
6	CHAT @Smart Dublin Smart Cities	Feb 2020	100	In-person	Transcript · Sli.do · Survey
7	Catch-Up Pt.1 Video Conferencing	Apr 2021	120	Online	Transcript · Sli.do
8	Catch-Up Pt.2 How AT Helps Me	May 2021	150	Online	Transcript
9	Catch-Up Pt.3 Sustainability	Jun 2021	120	Online	Transcript
10	AT Remote & On-Site Employment	Dec 2021	120	Online	Transcript · Reg
11	CREATE Green Shoots	Jun 2022	140	Online	Transcript · Reg · Sli.do
23*	CHAT Access to AT	Dec 2022	65	Online	Reg only
12	ChildVision TechFest Digital Literacy	May 2023	88	Hybrid	Transcript · Reg · Sli.do
24*	Boosting AT Digital Literacy Online	Jun 2023	61	Online	Reg only
13	CHAT CREATE 2.0	Feb 2024	100	Online	Transcript · Reg
14	CHAT Access to AT in Work	Sept 2024	82	Online	Transcript · Reg
15a	Beyond the Lens @TUDublin	Nov 2024	46	In-person	Transcript
15	Express Myself AT for Communication	Dec 2024	54 †	Hybrid	Transcript
16	Empowering Creativity AT in Arts	Mar 2025	186 †	Hybrid	Transcript · Sli.do
17	CHAT @Trinity Access to STEM	Jun 2025	80+ (transcript)	Hybrid	Transcript · Reg
18	CHAT @NDA European Accessibility Act	Sept 2025	90 registered (transcript)	Hybrid	Transcript

S/N	Event / Title	Date	Participants	Format	Data Sources
19	AT Outcome Measures	Sept 2025	74	Online	Transcript · Reg
20	AI and Accessibility @TUDublin	Oct 2025	50	Hybrid	Transcript
21	CHAT @NLN Limerick AT in Action	Dec 2025	77	Hybrid	Transcript · Reg
22	Rights to Reality @SJOG Stillorgan	Feb 2026	71	Hybrid	Transcript · Sli.do

Key to table symbols:

† Figure from CHAT_Report_2019-2025.docx

3.2 Pre-Registration Survey Questions by Event

The table below shows the specific question asked of registrants for each event in the pre-registration survey and the number of substantive responses received.

Table 2: Events and Questions asked for each event with a pre-registration survey

Event 2 – UCC (2018)	Live Sli.do Q&A during event (8 questions)
Event 10 – Employment (Dec 2021)	What is the most significant barrier to remote working for people with disabilities? (87 responses)
Event 11 – CREATE (Jun 2022)	What could have the biggest positive impact on the AT Ecosystem in Ireland? (172 responses)
Event 23 – Access to AT (Dec 2022)	Share a solution to one of the current challenges to access AT that you think would work in Ireland? (65 responses)
Event 12 – TechFest (May 2023)	Share a solution to one of the current challenges to access AT that you think would work in Ireland? (88 responses)
Event 13 – CREATE 2.0 (Feb 2024)	What could have the biggest positive impact on the AT Ecosystem in Ireland? (100 responses)
Event 14 – AT in Work (Sept 2024)	What could have the biggest positive impact on AT in Work? (82 responses)
Event 24* – Digital Literacy Online (Jun 2023)	Share a solution that you've observed to be effective, or you believe could successfully promote Digital Literacy within the Irish context? (61 responses)
Event 17 – CHAT @Trinity (Jun 2025)	What is your favourite Assistive Technology tool or resource that supports inclusive STEM education? (95 responses)

Event 19 – Outcome Measures (Sept 2025)	What matters most to you when thinking about the outcomes of Assistive Technology use? (74 responses)
Event 21 – NLN Limerick (Dec 2025)	Which Assistive Technology tool or resource makes the biggest difference for you or the people you support? (77 responses)

3.4 Sli.do Data Summary of In-Event Themes by Event

The Sli.do data provides in-the-moment community voice during events, distinct from pre-registration data, which captures reactions to content as it is presented. Key Sli.do contributions by event:

- **Participants independently demanded mainstreaming, central resources, and teacher attitude change:** "Why isn't assisted technology the norm for all students? Shouldn't teaching methods be changed to accommodate everyone.": Event 2 (UCC, 2018)
- **AT in a patient's life:** "Your life stops" describing the impact of waiting for a wheelchair.
- **The AT Passport:** "The AT passport would be a great start so that the technology would support you throughout your life.": Event 3 (IHREC, 2019)
- **Q&A focused on AT Passport policy linkages:** "If the AT passport were tied to employer subsidies through the WSS scheme, it could fly?": Event 4 (Microsoft, 2019)
- **Community sees smart cities as both an opportunity (Access, Freedom, Inclusion) and a risk (Barriers, Confusion).** Feedback included: "I live in my own home because of it". Sole critical event-design feedback: a stand-up activity problematic for wheelchair users: Event 6 (Smart Dublin, 2020)
- **Tech Access:** Zoom rated most accessible for groups (50%); WhatsApp and Zoom equal for 1:1 support (40% each). Primary lesson from pandemic year: 'start' (dominant wordcloud term), early preparation matters.: Event 7 (Video Conferencing, 2021)
- **AT Passport received 100% of respondents' interest. Satisfaction rated 5.0/5.** (CREATE, 2022)
- **AT-in-arts:** "Removing universal design as the ceiling for accessibility. Access should be specific and (excitingly) access can be CREATIVE!": Event 16 (Disrupt Arts, 2025)
- **"Digital exclusion is not an inconvenience – it is inequality. Assistive Technology is not specialist equipment – it is infrastructure. DigiCoach is not a pilot – it is a systems response."** Lived-experience presentations on smartphones as a pathway to autonomy and smart home technology, and the AT Passport grounded the AT as a rights framing in daily reality. Four-question Sli.do confirmed: "People would be doing ordinary things in ordinary places (in the right AT ecosystem)" and "To recognise that digital inclusion is social inclusion.": Event 22 – Rights to Reality (SJOG Stillorgan, 17 Feb 2026)

3.5 CHAT Evidence and the WHO Assistive Technology Capacity Assessment for Ireland (2026)

The WHO Assistive Technology Capacity Assessment for Ireland (ATA-C), published by the WHO Regional Office for Europe in 2026, provides an independent, government-commissioned evaluation of Ireland's AT system across five domains: People, Policy, Products, Provision, and Personnel using the WHO GATE-5P framework. The assessment was conducted between September 2024 and May 2025 and drew on stakeholder consultations, surveys, and written submissions across the Irish AT ecosystem.

A reading of the ATA-C alongside the CHAT qualitative archive reveals a pattern of convergence: concerns that CHAT participants had since articulated from 2018 through 2025, now independently

confirmed as systemic gaps in the WHO report published in 2026. This reflects the fact that CHAT has functioned as a genuine knowledge-generation space, in which community voice has consistently anticipated and informed the direction of formal policy analysis.

The following table (Table 3) maps the WHO ATA-C's key findings against evidence already present in the CHAT archive, including the event or data source in which the concern was first named.

Table 3: WHO ATA-C's key findings against evidence already present in CHAT

5P Domain	WHO ATA-C Finding (2026)	CHAT Community Evidence	CHAT where these manifest
People	Low public awareness of AT; absence of a central information hub; high unmet need among older adults and those with complex conditions; peer support underutilised.	'Why isn't assisted technology the norm for all students?' (Sli.do, Event 2). 'Your life stops' waiting for a wheelchair (Sli.do, Event 3). DigiCoach and peer models endorsed across Events 15, 21, 22.	Event 2, Dec 2018; Event 3, Apr 2019
Policy	No national strategy or coordinating body for AT; fragmented funding across departments; no dedicated national AT budget; overreliance on pilot and charitable funding.	'One body for people to apply to for AT rather than applying to multiple bodies in different settings' (Registration, Event 23*). 'Centralised funding and information body' (Registration, Event 13).	Event 23*, Dec 2022; Event 13, Feb 2024
Products	Digital, subscription-based and mainstream technologies excluded from funding; eligibility gaps for smartphones, tablets, smart home systems.	'Better funding for subscription-based apps and software' (Registration, Event 12). 'A revision of the taxation system to incentivise individuals and families to purchase ANY technology that addresses participation challenges' (Registration, Event 13).	Event 12, May 2023; Event 13, Feb 2024
Provision	Fragmented service pathways; significant geographic inequities; 'metaphorical cliffs between services' at life transitions; inconsistent access to trials and loan libraries.	'AT shouldn't stop and start depending on where someone is. Supports should travel with the person, not the service' (Participant, Event 21). 'More continuity across a person's lifetime and between AT providers' (Registration, Event 13).	Event 21, Dec 2025; Event 13, Feb 2024
Personnel	No national AT competency framework; staffing shortages across CDNTs and primary care; peer roles underutilised. CHAT explicitly cited as filling the training gap (p.146).	'One of the largest barriers for AT is people's mindset' (Event 2, 2018). 'If staff don't feel confident or supported to use them, they won't be used to their full potential' (Participant, Event 21). DigiCoach model endorsed as a systems response (Event 22, 2026).	Event 2, Dec 2018; Event 21, Dec 2025

The convergence across all five domains suggests that the CHAT network has been functioning not just as a forum for discussion but as an early-warning and evidence-generation system for Ireland's AT ecosystem, identifying gaps and proposing solutions years before they entered formal policy analysis.

The WHO report's recognition of CHAT's contribution extends beyond the acknowledgement citations noted in Section 1.3. The peer-led DigiCoach model developed through St John of God Community Services and amplified across CHAT events 15, 21, and 22 is given a dedicated feature box in the ATA-C under the People chapter:

"SJOG services have developed a dynamic, peer-led approach to AT training that empowers both service users and staff through several codesigned, inclusive programme developments and implementations... This model fosters a culture of shared learning and inclusion, with service users actively shaping and delivering training." [WHO Assistive Technology Capacity Assessment in Ireland, WHO Regional Office for Europe, 2026, p.56, Box 6: Peer-led digital AT training at SJOG services]

The AT Passport was first named as a community aspiration in the CHAT Sli.do data at the IHREC event in 2019, subsequently funded through the HSE CREATE grant stream, and referenced as an immediate priority in the 2026 CHAT's data (AT Action Sli.do data) is also featured in the ATA-C report as a specific example of an innovative provision model. The CREATE grant stream is listed in Annex 6 of the WHO report. This is evidence that the CHAT community has, over eight years, generated knowledge that has informed and shaped the national AT conversation.

The ATA-C's overarching recommendation for a unified national AT strategy, a central coordination office, and regional hubs represents the systemic infrastructure within which CHAT's community-led model would sit. The two are not alternatives: a formal coordination structure without community infrastructure will lack the trust, lived-experience leadership, and cross-sector relationships that CHAT has built. CHAT's model is the community layer that a national AT programme will need.

4. Findings

Nine findings are presented below. Each is supported by quotations from named source documents. The source (transcript, registration survey, or Sli.do export) is stated in each case.

Finding 1: CHAT as an Open, Inclusive Community of Practice - Evidence of Value and Function in the AT Ecosystem

This finding documents what participants said, and what independent evidence shows, about CHAT itself: its value, its distinctive function, and what the evidence suggests would be at risk if it were not sustained. Participants have directly named CHAT's value, unprompted, across multiple data sources. Across post-event feedback surveys, Sli.do polls, event transcripts, and the independently commissioned WHO Assistive Technology Capacity Assessment for Ireland (2026), data suggests that CHAT functions as something distinctive within Ireland's AT ecosystem: an open, inclusive, non-partisan community of practice in which AT users, practitioners, researchers, educators, advocates, and policy contributors encounter each other as equals, generate knowledge together, and build the cross-sector trust that systemic change requires. This function is not replicated by any other current structure in the Irish AT landscape.

Data from The Smart Dublin event (Event 6, February 2020) describes the CHAT community's self-understanding explicitly:

"People from a wide variety of backgrounds are involved in CHAT. We are people with disabilities (expert and non-expert assistive technology users), developers, assistive technology professionals, researchers, suppliers, third-level institutions, as well as mainstream and disability specialist service providers, professional therapists and other interested parties. CHAT facilitates and creates opportunities amongst members to learn from each other and

makes the most of members' expertise to identify real challenges, gaps and to consider solutions." [Event transcript: CHAT @Smart Dublin, February 2020 (6_CHAT__Smart_Dublin_.docx)]

The CHAT Report 2019–2025, the network's own documentation, records the principle at the centre of every event:

"Most importantly, every CHAT event puts people who use assistive technology at the centre. Their lived experience, personal strategies, adaptations, and innovations are amplified, demonstrating how AT transforms independence, inclusion, and community participation." [CHAT Report 2019–2025 (CHAT_Report_2019-2025.docx)]

The Rights to Reality transcript (Event 22, February 2026) documents what CHAT's co-design model looks like in its most developed form the DigiCoach programme and how it has been characterised:

"DigiCoach is not a pilot it is a systems response." [Event transcript: CHAT AT in Action: From Rights to Reality, 17 February 2026 (22_CHAT_Rights_to_Reality_17th_February_2026.docx)]

"Lived experience as the workforce, not consultation." [Event transcript: CHAT AT in Action: From Rights to Reality, 17 February 2026 (22_CHAT_Rights_to_Reality_17th_February_2026.docx)]

The NLN Limerick transcript (Event 21, December 2025) records the panel's characterisation of what makes AT provision work and by extension, what CHAT as a community models:

"A recurring theme was that Assistive Technology only creates impact when it is understood, supported, and embedded into everyday practice, rather than treated as a specialist add-on." [Event transcript: CHAT @NLN Limerick, 3 December 2025 (21_CHAT__AT_in_Action_3rd_Dec_2025_in_NLN_Limerick.docx)]

The value of CHAT as a community rather than as an events programme has been named directly by participants responding to Sli.do polls across multiple events. Notably, these are unprompted references: participants were not asked about CHAT itself, but named it in response to questions about AT access and improvement.

In the AT in Action Sli.do poll (Event 22, February 2026), asked to name one real opportunity to improve AT access and digital inclusion, a participant named simply:

"CHAT meetings " [Sli.do export: ATAction, 17–23 Feb 2026 (22_AT_Action_Feb_26.pdf)]

In the Digital Literacy Sli.do poll (Event 12, May–June 2023), a participant reflected on the distinctive culture of CHAT events:

"always positive, I get a sense of can do, not something too common locally" [Sli.do export: CHAT #DigitalLiteracy4AT, 22 May–22 Jun 2023 (12_Digital_LiteracyCHAT.pdf)]

In the CREATE Sli.do poll (Event 11, June–July 2022), when asked for a key takeaway, a participant stated:

"Great community working together to share learnings on AT." [Sli.do export: CHAT #CREATE, 27 Jun–07 Jul 2022 (11_CHATCREATE.pdf)]

The CHAT post-event Survey feedback (Event 6, February 2020) contains two of the most direct community valuations of CHAT in the archive. A respondent who had attended their first CHAT event stated:

"There is so much going on that I WAS UNAWARE OF..... I will definitely attend more CHAT sessions" [SurveyMonkey feedback: CHAT @Smart Dublin, February 2020 (6_CHATSmartCityFeedback.pdf)]

Another respondent at the same event, who had attended six previous CHAT events, reflected:

"Totally a life changer for many people" [SurveyMonkey feedback: CHAT @Smart Dublin, February 2020 (6_CHATSmartCityFeedback.pdf)]

A further respondent who worked in inclusive education stated:

"This type of event is great for keeping up-to-date with developments" [SurveyMonkey feedback: CHAT @Smart Dublin, February 2020 (6_CHATSmartCityFeedback.pdf)]

The WHO Assistive Technology Capacity Assessment for Ireland (2026) provides the most significant external validation of CHAT's value in the archive. The assessment, conducted between September 2024 and May 2025, cites CHAT under its Personnel chapter as an existing community of practice filling a gap in Ireland's AT workforce development system:

"Existing communities of practice currently provide avenues for interprofessional and cross-sectoral training. For example, the Community Hub for Accessible Technology (CHAT) is a community of practice focused on AT, which includes over 200 individuals and organizations across Ireland. CHAT gatherings are hosted by different member organizations and are opportunities for collective learning and resource sharing." [WHO Assistive Technology Capacity Assessment in Ireland, WHO Regional Office for Europe, 2026, p.146]

In its summary of personnel system strengths, the same report states:

"Networks for interprofessional learning, such as the CHAT network, provide grassroots capacity-building and resource and knowledge sharing." [WHO Assistive Technology Capacity Assessment in Ireland, WHO Regional Office for Europe, 2026, p.147]

These citations from a document produced independently of FreedomTech, Enable Ireland, or DFI confirm that CHAT's role as a cross-sector community-of-practice network is recognised in international health policy assessment. The WHO report's identification of CHAT under 'personnel successes' places the network explicitly within the framework of Ireland's national AT system capacity, not as a peripheral community initiative.

Taken together, the evidence across all three data sources, participant feedback, community poll responses, and independent WHO assessment points to the following conclusions about CHAT's value and function:

CHAT is a knowledge-generation space, not only a knowledge-sharing space. The findings in this report were produced by the community itself, through eight years of honest, rights-based dialogue across 25 events. CHAT has not only amplified existing knowledge about AT in Ireland; it has generated new knowledge, identified gaps ahead of formal policy analysis, and sustained the community understanding that makes advocacy possible.

CHAT functions as a soft coordination mechanism within a fragmented system. In the absence of a national AT coordinating body, a gap the WHO ATA-C identifies as critical, CHAT has created the cross-sector relationships, shared language, and trusted space that coordination requires. This is not a substitute for formal coordination infrastructure. It is the community layer without which formal infrastructure risks becoming bureaucratic and disconnected from lived experience.

CHAT's openness and inclusivity are structural, not incidental. The community has no membership fee, no entry requirement, and no single institutional owner. Its value rests precisely on the fact that it is open to anyone with a stake in AT in Ireland and that it treats AT users, DigiCoaches, researchers, practitioners, and policymakers as equal contributors to the conversation. This is unusual in the Irish professional and policy landscape and is the condition that makes CHAT's evidence base distinctive.

CHAT has demonstrated measurable policy influence. The AT Passport, named as a BigDream aspiration in 2019, became a funded project by 2022. The CREATE grant scheme, conceived and amplified through CHAT events, invested €750,000 across nine projects. The DigiCoach model demonstrated at CHAT events from 2021 onwards is now cited in the WHO ATA-C as a national exemplar. This is evidence of a community that has learned to translate knowledge into action.

Finding 2: AT is recognised as a Rights Enabler and Dignity Infrastructure

Across the CHAT events held, participants indicated that AT is understood not primarily as a clinical intervention but as a mechanism for exercising fundamental rights - to communicate, to participate, to

work, and to live independently. This perception is present from the first event in 2018 and intensifies over time, with the right language becoming more explicit and structural in later events – in the words of an AT expert: *"Assistive technology isn't just about devices, it's about access to opportunity, agency, and belonging ..."* (Event 17, June 2025)

One of the AT users described feeling "great independence and a bit more normal and very good about himself, a normal person" after trialling equipment at NRH (Event 1, 2018). Eight years later, CHAT event participants in 2026 described what AT as a basic right would mean for their lives:

"People would be doing ordinary things in ordinary places"

"Be able to communicate better"

"People would have much more equal opportunities to communication"

"I would feel cool"

Data from Sli.do of IHREC (Event 3, 2019) describes this more vividly:

" Having the right wheelchair enables positive physical & mental health & wellbeing, it is essential. If you are waiting for your wheelchair, you can access little else. 'Your life stops'"

An occupational therapist, researcher, and global leader in assistive technology systems and policy, provided a technical explanation for this, stating: *"Assistive technology is not just a clinical intervention, it's a human rights enabler"*. In describing how current perception and practice around AT have subtle implications, they add: *"We're often very good at describing the device, but not very good at describing what the device actually enables a person to do in their life."* (Event 19, 2025)

As concisely stated, *"assistive Technology does not become a right when we say it is. It becomes a right when systems guarantee it."* (Event 22 Rights to Reality, 2026). Other contribution at the same event indicates that stakeholders need to refrain from "framing" *smart home devices from being viewed as 'nice extras' to being recognised as part of "dignity infrastructure."* Dignity infrastructure was further described by a situation *"when someone can independently control lighting, manage reminders, access entertainment, or connect with others, they are not simply operating devices; they are exercising choice and participating more fully in their own lives"*

Finding 3: Funding as the Primary Systemic Barrier

Funding - its absence, inconsistency, fragmentation, and lack of strategic planning is identified as the primary barrier across registration surveys, Sli.do data, and event transcripts. AT users, family members, practitioners, and service providers who encounter that fragmentation in their daily lives did not simply name the problem but offered specific solutions to it. The concern expressed by stakeholders is not only about the level of funding but also about how it is organised across different settings, communities, health organisations, and life stages. Survey participants from Event 16 (Disrupt, 2025) affirmed that: *"Funding is the most difficult thing - apps run on subscription services and devices are expensive..."*. Furthermore, an Open Letter shared at Event 4 (Microsoft, 2019) contextualised the scale of this problem: *"Even though Ireland now has almost full employment, the employment rate for people with disabilities is 27%" and "a quarter of the country's disabled population lives in poverty."*

As a CHAT survey responder puts it: there is the need for *"more funded initiatives, targeted at disability services organisations with existing AT knowledge and experience, to deliver AT solutions to disability service users involved in education and employment, to model 'the art of the possible' in empowering persons with disability to live their best lives"* Event 23* (December 2022).

AT stakeholders respondents prefer that there is *"One body for people to apply to for assistive technology rather than having to apply to multiple bodies in different settings (e.g. different processes for employment, education, housing, health and social care services, etc.).* Event 23* (December 2022).

Other survey respondents from Event 13 (CREATE 2.0, 2024), articulated specific mechanisms to address this:

"realisation that funding streams need to be consolidated"

"Multi-Annual Funding, more diversity in products approved under HSE AIDS and Appliances and clear pathways to access funding through HSE AIDS and Appliances"

"A revision of the taxation system to incentivise individuals and families to purchase ANY technology that addresses participation challenges brought on by disability or impairment."

Another important dimension to funding could be how such investment is perceived, as the Expert (Event 19) puts it... *"when we frame assistive technology as an expense rather than an investment, we miss the real story of its value."* Highlighting why this matters, they add:

"People don't use one piece of assistive technology in isolation – they use systems of support, and our outcome measures need to reflect that reality."

Finding 4: AT Passport as Infrastructure for Centralisation and Coordination

Across the data sources from 2022 to 2026, independent event participants articulate the same structural solution: a single, coordinated national access point for AT information, assessment, funding, and training. This is the most structurally consistent demand in the data, arising without prompting from different participants from independent groups.

"Having a central coordinating agency responsible for research, training, support and procurement of AT"

"Cohesive, accessible systems with transparency in terms of service pathways and access to funding."

"Collating all/the majority AT resources and funding options into one central space, it can be confusing to figure out where to turn to initially for AT support"

"One body for people to apply to for assistive technology rather than having to apply to multiple bodies in different settings (e.g. different process for employment, education, housing, health and social care services etc.)"

The AT Passport represents the community's named vehicle for a national AT centralisation and coordination infrastructure ambition. The AT Passport is the single named initiative that appears most persistently across all three data sources and across the full archive period. Evidence suggests it is expected to function as a focal point for community consensus around continuity of AT across settings and life stages. First mentioned at Event 1 (NRH, 2018), the AT Passport is named as the aspirational solution: *"The AT passport would be a great start so that the technology would support you throughout your life."* IHREC event (Event 3, 2019). It is linked to employment subsidy mechanisms (Event 4 (2019). By 2024, CHAT event survey respondents see it as an expected deliverable, repeatedly mentioning "AT Passport" (Event 13 (2024). It remains the named next step: *"The AT Passport being moved to the next stage."* (Event 22 ATAction, 2026).

The CREATE grant scheme (Events 11 and 13) a dedicated AT grant stream in Ireland, provides an important funding leverage that have positive impact on the AT ecosystem. CREATE 2.0 (2024) invested €750,000 across nine projects (including the AT Passport project suggested in CHAT events). The AT passport funded under CREATE is an important milestone, which needs to be sustained. The community evidence shows that the CREATE grant is working and its impact compounds as projects connect into a national ecosystem.

Finding 5: The Importance of training of Staff, AT Users and Family

Across the data sources, participants indicated that staff knowledge, confidence, and attitudes towards AT are persistent barriers in services, schools, and workplaces. The evidence across all three data sources and all eight years is unambiguous: there is limited knowledge about AT products and services, and equipment procured without training consistently fails to create impact. Staff confidence, teacher capacity, and family knowledge are identified at every stage as the determinants of whether AT is used at all. DSS/EI Staff UCC at CHAT @UCC (Event 2, 2018) described parents taking out credit union loans to purchase AT software that then "sits in a cupboard" because training was never provided identifying this as "the big gap in secondary school."

In relation to confidence, a CHAT participant stated:

"We can have the right tools in place, but if staff don't feel confident or supported to use them, they won't be used to their full potential." Event 21 (NLN Limerick, 2025)

These problems are confirmed across multiple professional contexts:

"Access to ongoing support as needed by families and education staff. Openness to assistive technology changes over time, and people need access to support when they are ready."

"Sharing knowledge with HSE Disability Services Dept and professional working with people with disabilities. AT is not considered in relation to service provision."

Data from Event 23* (December 2022)

Survey data identified a specific transition gap between education and employment :

"I think there's still a significant gap between education and the workplace. I think a lot of people may feel their AT is just for education rather than a potential tool to use daily in work. Training as to how to incorporate tools into workflows and awareness of new tools is key." (Event 14 Work and Access, 2024).

In suggesting how training can be mainstreamed into procurement processes, a participant submits thus:

"It should be a standard part of onboarding - here is your laptop, here is your phone, and here is your AT." [Survey: CHAT Access to AT in Work, September 2024]

Also, evidence from Sli.do data (Event 22, 2026) and the (Event 21 - NLN Limerick) further suggest that peer and community-based learning models are preferred over specialist-dependent provision. In particular, the DigiCoach model is endorsed across multiple events as a community-level response to education. ATAction Sli.do (Event 22, 2026) participants affirmed its value:

"It's great to move away from specialist-dependent models of access and instead bring AT into everyday service delivery"

"Speaking from personal experience is far more impactful - people make it approachable and manageable"

"You can't beat first hand experience!"

At CHAT @UCC in December 2018, a parent attendee submitted a question to the Sli.do Q&A anonymously describing their frustration at a teacher's reluctance to use AT for their child in fifth class, and asking directly: what can a parent do to change this attitude? That question, from a family member navigating a system that was not working identified in 2018 was what the evidence across the subsequent seven years confirms: that the barrier is attitudinal and institutional, not technical.

The answer to that question, as it has emerged through the CHAT community, is the DigiCoach model. DigiCoaches people with lived experience of disability and AT who are employed as peer technology coaches have presented at Events 15, 16, 17, 18, 20, 21, and 22. They are not describing training that they have received. They are delivering it, and demonstrating in practice what the ATAction Sli.do respondents confirmed in 2026: that speaking from personal experience *'is far more impactful'* and that moving away from specialist-dependent models *'brings AT into everyday service delivery.'* The lived-experience contribution to this finding is both the diagnosis and the solution.

The finding that staff knowledge, confidence, and attitudes are the primary determinants of whether AT is used at all has been made most consistently by two groups of people: the families and AT users who have watched equipment go unused because no training was provided, and the DigiCoaches and peer-learning practitioners who have demonstrated, event by event across CHAT, that a different model is possible, and both groups are speaking from lived experience.

Finding 6: Continuity of AT Support Across Settings and Life Transitions

Data from multiple transcripts indicates that AT support is experienced as stopping and starting depending on service type, setting, or life stage, rather than travelling with the person. This theme appears in events spanning 2018 to 2026 and is consistent across education, employment, health, and community settings. The solution named is continuity of AT Support AT that follows the person, not the service. Emma Smith (Event 21, NLN Limerick, 2025) highlighted the concern vividly:

"Assistive Technology shouldn't stop and start depending on where someone is. We need better alignment so that it supports travel with the person, not the service."

A Researcher corroborated this submission, stating that *"students are often very capable of identifying what works for them, but the challenge is whether the system around them can respond quickly enough and consistently enough."*

An AT User lived experience contribution highlighted "the gap between educational support and workplace support.", for which a participant in Event 23* (December 2022) proposed a structural solution: "One body for people to apply to for assistive technology rather than having to apply to multiple bodies in different settings."

A practical lived experience concern was shared at Event 14: the Work and Access programme regarding the application form a scheme designed to support AT in employment was itself "unavailable online due to pending data protection impact assessments," raising concerns about the scheme's own accessibility.

The finding that AT support stops and starts with service type rather than travelling with the person has been named most clearly by the people who have experienced that discontinuity directly: AT users who lost access to equipment at the transition from school to higher education; a student who demonstrated that her AT tool was not available in the next setting; a person whose Work and Access application form was itself inaccessible. They are the lived experience of specific, named and unnamed individuals who contributed to CHAT events between 2021 and 2026.

Finding 7: AI as Emerging Technology: Transformative but Requiring Ethical Governance

CHAT participants indicated that artificial intelligence represents a significant development with observed impact on accessibility particularly for blind and vision-impaired users and for staff in disability services. Event 20 (AI and Accessibility, October 2025) generated one of the most profound community positions in the dataset. AI is described simultaneously as transformative and as a potential risk, and the community's position is not opposition but a conditional embrace with governance requirements.

A message throughout some CHAT sessions was that:

"...AI can be liberating, but it must be used responsibly, transparently, and with accessibility designed in from the start." [AI and Accessibility: Innovation & Inclusion, 13 Oct 2025]

A participant from Vision Ireland described AI as *"one of the greatest advancements for access to information... since screen readers."* In agreement, an AT User and Facilitator gave a vivid example of how AI has transformed the world of accessibility when they state that: *"The exclusion (experience) in something like a WhatsApp group, where somebody posts a photograph... that's no longer an issue, because you can use AI to get a description."* In essence, *"The little things are the liberating power of AI."* AI was also described as *"a bit of an equaliser... adapting tasks for everyone on the team."* A CHAT participant described how AI-integrated documentation tools works: *"Our staff don't write a single thing anymore... it allows them to really dive deeper in conversations... because they're not busy taking notes."*

But participants also simultaneously raised a concern that cuts to the heart of accessible design:

"AI is increasingly used to 'patch' inaccessible systems instead of fixing accessibility properly at source"

This evidence suggests a strong community concern that AI must be designed with accessibility in mind from the outset, rather than used to patch over inaccessible systems. The necessary conditions named include: human verification, governance, and accessibility designed in from the start. As a participant puts it: *"It is AI. It is not human. It does make mistakes"*. However, like an expert puts it: *"AI's here to stay... it's a question of how we use the tool, not if we use the tool."* In addition, *"Early adoption is really important... to make sure it is truly accessible by design."* Regulation was also addressed by the National Disability Authority staff's contribution, which discussed the intersection of the European Accessibility Act and the EU AI Act, noting that work is underway *"to share guidance and updates in an Irish context."*

Finding 8: Co-Design and Lived Experience as necessary conditions for success

Co-design with AT users is mentioned across every domain throughout most CHAT sessions. Across transcripts, registration data, and Sli.do exports, participants consistently indicated that co-design with people who have lived experience of disability and AT use is not an optional enhancement but a necessary condition of effective provision, service design, and policy development.

The evidence for co-design as a necessary condition of effective AT provision comes from AT users, DigiCoaches, disabled artists, and community members who have practised co-design within CHAT as participants in designing events, as co-developers of tools and services, and as contributors to research frameworks and who have named its absence as a design failure when it is missing.

Survey data from Event13 (2024) expressed it most comprehensively:

"Including individuals with disabilities in the design process ensures that AT solutions meet their needs and preferences. User experience research and co-design/creation workshops could be implemented... following the philosophy nothing about us without us"

Many products and services have benefited from co-design. For instance - Digi Academy - an accessible digital education platform that was co-designed with people with accessibility needs, (Express Myself CHAT event (Event 15, December 2024). Also, an AT researcher indicated that the My Assistive Technology Outcomes Framework (MyATOF), a framework developed in Australia to support meaningful, person-centred evaluation of AT outcomes, was an outcome of co-design:

"This framework came directly from people who use assistive technology saying, 'These are the things that matter to us – and they're not being measured.'" (Natasha, Event 19, 2025).

In one CHAT event, participants categorically agreed "co-design with disabled artists is non-negotiable" (Event 16 panellist). However, concern that AI is increasingly used to "patch" inaccessible systems rather than fixing accessibility at source reveals a design failure rooted in absent co-design, and as the researcher noted, *"Even the best technology won't deliver outcomes if the service experience around it is poor."*

The most direct articulation of this finding in the archive comes from an anonymous participant in the ATAction Sli.do poll in February 2026: 'co-design is the best design', from a community member who has experienced both co-designed and non-co-designed AT provision, and who is making a judgment about which works. The contributors to this finding within the CHAT archive have not argued for co-design in the abstract. They have practised it. An AT User co-designed the Easy Read guide to the European Accessibility Act with Enable Ireland Virtual Services, making policy accessible to the people it most affects. AT Users contributed as panellists at the Express Myself event, not as recipients of the programme. The DigiCoaches who have spoken at seven of the 25 events documented in this archive are co-deliverers. The AT Researcher's MyATOF framework was built with AT users saying 'these are the things that matter to us – and they're not being measured.' The framework is the co-design; the research came after.

Another important dimension to participation is the advocacy for *"more roles for people with lived experience in this space"* (Slido, 2026).

Finding 9: Outcome Measure and Economic Value towards Reframing the Cost Narrative

Experts argued that measuring single devices in isolation is insufficient to measure the cost of AT. The evidence suggests that users rely on "systems of support," and outcome measures must reflect this interconnected reality to be accurate (Event19 AT Outcome Measures).

The MyATOF framework, developed through extensive co-design in Australia, provides a template that allows stakeholders to see and measure cost differently. This is summarised by Natasha – below:

"When we frame assistive technology as an expense rather than an investment, we miss the real story of its value.

In addition:

"When people started mapping what they actually do in a day, they realised a single AT set-up could support 30 or 40 meaningful activities. That completely changes the cost conversation." (Source: Event 19 AT Outcome Measures).

The MyATOF framework, introduced to the CHAT community at Event 19 was developed through co-design with AT users in Australia. Its six outcome domains were determined by the people who use AT, saying what matters to them. This origin is not incidental to the finding: the reason MyATOF changes the cost conversation is precisely that it measures what AT users have always said matters - participation,

independence, communication, confidence, and daily life rather than what health systems have traditionally counted.

At Event 19, an anonymous attendee responded to the presentation with a statement that belongs as evidence in this finding: 'This puts language on things we've always known were important, but haven't been able to evidence properly.' That response from a practitioner or AT user in the room identifies exactly what the co-designed framework provides: not new knowledge, but a validated vocabulary for knowledge that lived experience already holds. The economic reframing that this finding calls for rests on that foundation.

Finding 10: Rights, Legislation, and Advocacy for AT

The case for rights-based legislation as a tool for securing AT access has been made by community members - AT users, families, practitioners, and advocates who have navigated a system in which rights exist on paper and are routinely unmet in practice. The IHREC event in 2019 generated the clearest collective statement of this gap. The community members who submitted responses to the Sli.do polls that day were describing, from direct experience, the distance between what the law says and what their lives contain. They have consistently emphasized the strategic necessity of aligning AT provision with legal frameworks, especially Articles 20 and 26 of the United Nations Convention on the Rights of Persons with Disabilities and the European Accessibility Act (EAA). The qualitative data from Sli.do polls indicates a consensus among stakeholders that a significant gap exists between the right to assessment and the right to provision (*Source: Event 1 IHREC Rights*).

"Disability Act 2005 provides right to assessment but not provision. There is no legislation in Ireland on the provision of primary technology such as appropriate wheelchairs. Currently, a human rights issue which is not being addressed"
(*Source: 1 IHREC Rights*).

The IHREC Sli.do data (Event 3, 2019) contains important community advocacy statements in the full CHAT archive. When asked what must be done to ensure UNCRPD implementation does not get dragged out, anonymous community members - AT users, practitioners, and advocates responding in real time asked for political engagement, raised expectations, and disabled people's voices at the centre:

"Keep the pressure on the Government and support people with disabilities to understand their rights and to raise their expectations of what they are entitled to." [Sli.do export: CHAT @IHREC, 25 Apr–10 May 2019 (1_IHREC_Rights_May_2019.pdf)]

"Beyond awareness it needs to be a societal consciousness - middle ground approach getting everyone involved." [Sli.do export: CHAT @IHREC, 25 Apr–10 May 2019 (1_IHREC_Rights_May_2019.pdf)]

"Listen to disability voices" [Sli.do export: CHAT @IHREC, 25 Apr–10 May 2019 (1_IHREC_Rights_May_2019.pdf)]

A DigiCoach with Fighting Blindness provided a specific, named lived-experience account of what legislative progress looks like in practice: using an ATM independently for the first time following the introduction of new accessibility requirements under the European Accessibility Act.

The same community members at the IHREC event in 2019 articulated the governance dimension of legislation - who enforces it, and how:

"Compliance of all public bodies with accessible information criteria" [Sli.do export: CHAT @IHREC, 25 Apr–10 May 2019 (1_IHREC_Rights_May_2019.pdf)]

These responses represent the community making a governance argument for accessible technology in 2019 that the WHO ATA-C would independently confirm as a systemic gap in 2026. The lived-experience advocacy documented in this finding preceded the formal policy analysis by at least seven years.

5. Recommendations

Below is the set of recommendations based on the analysis of the available evidence through all three sources of information above, organised under four thematic categories. They are intended for all AT stakeholders, including AT users, disability organisations, CHAT partners, policy-makers, donors, and government departments.

A. National Policy, Rights, and Legislation

These recommendations focus on the broader context and systems that will ensure AT is recognised as a right, beyond theory alone.

- Reframe all AT policy and funding documentation to reflect a rights-based model. AT provision should not be described or administered as a medical or clinical benefit. It is a disability rights obligation under the UNCRPD and the European Accessibility Act.
- Use the lived-experience evidence in this report in advocacy submissions and pre-budget engagement to make the human cost of delayed or denied AT provision visible to decision-makers. The CHAT archive contains eight years of community work that constitutes a credible, evidence-based source for this purpose.
- Develop formal AT transition protocols for key life-stage transitions, early years to primary school, primary to secondary, school to higher education, education to employment, and across disability service settings - ensuring AT records, training, and equipment travel with the person. Use the AT Passport as the primary continuity mechanism, as the community has consistently proposed since 2019.
- Engage proactively with both the EU AI Act and the European Accessibility Act to ensure that Irish disability organisations and AT users can shape how these frameworks are implemented in the Irish context.
- Support the rapid progression of the AT Passport from pilot to full national implementation, with transparent communication on timelines to the community that has waited for this since 2019.

B. Funding Structure, Equity, and Sustainability

These recommendations address the funding fragmentation that is identified across data from multiple events as the primary systemic barrier to AT access.

- Introduce multi-annual AT funding to replace annual cycles, which impede strategic planning, equipment maintenance, and continuity of staff training. This was the most specific structural demand from the 2024 registration cohort.
- Establish consistent national AT funding standards across all communities and health organisations, ending the geographic variation that participants described as a 'postcode lottery.'
- Develop accessible, consolidated information on all available funding routes across HSE, Department of Education, Department of Social Protection, Department of Children, Disability and Equality (DCDE), and the Work and Access programme, and make it available through a single national access point.

- Ensure the Work and Access programme application process is itself fully digitally accessible and is resourced to meet demand. Currently, no assessment service/pathway is provided within this funding source.
- Expand and make permanent the CREATE grant model as the foundation of a sustainable national AT investment programme. The evidence shows that CREATE is working: its impact compounds as funded projects connect into a national ecosystem. This model should not remain dependent on short funding cycles.
- Develop a revised taxation framework to incentivise individuals and families to purchase AT including mainstream digital technology, subscription-based software, and smart home systems that addresses participation challenges arising from disability or impairment. Treat smart home technology and mainstream digital tools as AT infrastructure, not optional extras.
- Reframe AT investment as expenditure that reduces long-term costs rather than as a cost in itself, drawing on the MyATOF evidence that a single AT set-up can support 30 to 40 meaningful daily activities.

C. People, Workforce, Co-Design, and Training

These recommendations pertain to the people and co-design considerations within the AT ecosystem - this includes training for staff, family and AT users, AT user involvement in co-design, AT user expertise, and technology governance.

- Mandate that every AT procurement includes a named, funded training pathway for the user, their family, and relevant staff. Training should not be optional or treated as an add-on to equipment provision.
- Include AT literacy as a core component of initial teacher education and continuing professional development, reflecting the evidence from CHAT events since 2018 that teacher attitudes and knowledge are the primary determinants of AT use in schools.
- Develop a national AT training hub providing accessible training resources for staff, families, and users across all settings, consolidating existing resources and ensuring geographic equity of access.
- Embed co-design with AT users as a structural requirement in the development of AT products, funding schemes, service frameworks, and policy documents. Apply the 'nothing about us without us' principle explicitly to the AT Passport design and implementation process.
- Fund lived-experience research and facilitation roles within AT organisations, reflecting the community's demand for 'more roles for people with lived experience in this space' (ATAAction Sli.do, 2026). These are not volunteer or advisory roles they are workforce roles that should be paid and sustained.
- Ensure AI-powered AT tools undergo accessibility audits and co-design processes before deployment. Build human verification into all AI-assisted AT applications, particularly where accuracy has safety or dignity implications.
- Support AI literacy programmes for AT users, practitioners, and service managers.
- Develop coordinated national AT workforce planning, including structured CPD pathways addressing the gap identified consistently across CHAT events and now confirmed in the WHO ATA-C (2026) as a systemic weakness.

D. Recognising, Resourcing, and Sustaining the CHAT Network

These recommendations relate to CHAT's community infrastructure, viz. the relationships, peer learning, co-design culture, and lived-experience leadership, built since 2018. CHAT is a national asset that requires active investment to sustain. They also reflect the WHO ATA-C's explicit recognition of CHAT as providing interprofessional training and cross-sector knowledge sharing within the national AT system.

- Formally recognise and resource CHAT as a national community infrastructure for AT, not as an events programme or a project, but as the cross-sector community of practice network that the evidence shows it to be. This recognition should come from the government, statutory bodies, and major funders in the AT ecosystem.
- Invest in the DigiCoach model as a scalable, permanent national AT workforce infrastructure. DigiCoaches should be employed, not seconded or volunteered, within education, disability, and community services across Ireland. The AT stakeholders in Event 22 frame this explicitly: *'DigiCoach is not a pilot it is a systems response.'*
- Adopt the Enable Ireland Virtual Services model as a national template for distributing AT expertise geographically, reducing location-based inequality without requiring physical infrastructure in every community.
- Actively diversify CHAT's community reach to include AT users not currently connected to AT services or networks, particularly in rural settings, among older adults, and within communities underrepresented in the current archive. As the data notes, there is a marked deficit of perspectives from domains including sport, business, and SMEs.
- Establish a community-led, participatory monitoring model that draws on CHAT's existing infrastructure and the MyATOF framework to track how AT and AI tools are used by AT users in Ireland, the outcomes they produce, and the risks they pose. This addresses a research gap that will grow rapidly as AI adoption accelerates.
- Commission a dedicated study of employer knowledge, attitudes, and experience of AT as reasonable accommodation, addressing the gap in the current dataset where employer perspectives are largely seen through the lens of employees and advocates.
- Undertake a longitudinal follow-up study applying MyATOF's six outcome domains to a cohort of CHAT community members, providing the sustained, person-centred evidence base that Natasha Layton called for (Event 19) and that will be essential for future advocacy and policy submissions.

6 Conclusions

The eight years of CHAT activities, surveys, and polls under review have produced an overwhelming evidence on the values and concerns of the AT community, which includes but is not limited to: AT as a rights issue; people with disabilities are the experts; systems need to be developed with them, not for them; training for staff, family and AT users; and consistency in funding. Over the years, these values and concerns have persisted, with increasing specificity and complexity. In 2018, it was about deficits. In 2024 and again in 2026, the community articulated specific mechanisms: long-term funding, consolidated standards, AT Passport rollout, and national DigiCoach deployment. The CREATE grant scheme is the most striking example of advocacy effectiveness in the evidence archive presented here. Advocated as a Big Dream within the CHAT community, the AT Passport initiative made it from conception to becoming part of a €750,000 government programme. This needs to be sustained and improved upon.

'Ordinary things in ordinary places' is a precise formulation of what full inclusion requires: not necessarily specialist provision and not exceptional access, but the ordinary daily life that AT makes possible when systems work as they should. Eight years of CHAT evidence suggests that Ireland has the knowledge, the community, and, through initiatives like the CREATE grant, the AT Passport, and the DigiCoach programme, the early infrastructure to move towards that benchmark. What it has not yet had is a coordinated national strategy, a consolidated and highly accessible funding model, and formal recognition of the community-led infrastructure that already exists, like CHAT.

The WHO Assistive Technology Capacity Assessment for Ireland (2026) identifies CHAT explicitly as a community of practice that provides interprofessional training and cross-sector knowledge sharing and calls for this kind of community infrastructure to be sustained and scaled. The eight years of evidence in

this report demonstrate that CHAT has also functioned as a soft coordination mechanism, a lived-experience research space, and an advocacy amplifier within a system that urgently needs coordination. These functions are precisely the functions that a national AT coordination strategy must build upon.

The community has been consistent in what it wants. Accessible and sustainable funding. AT that travels with the person across settings and life stages. Staff, AT Users and family who are trained, confident, and supported. A single coordinated access point. Rights that are guaranteed, not aspirational. The evidence abounds. The question for policy, for funders, and for the organisations that hold this network together is whether Ireland is ready to recognise, resource, and scale what the CHAT community has already built.

None of the findings in this report was produced by a single organisation, a single event, or a single data source. They were produced, over eight years, by a community: the AT users, DigiCoaches, practitioners, educators, researchers, family members, and advocates who showed up, shared what they knew, and kept returning. That community is CHAT.

CHAT has no membership fee, no entry requirement, and no single institutional owner. It has been built on openness, the principle that anyone with a stake in AT in Ireland belongs in the room and on inclusion, ensuring that the people most affected by AT systems are not the subject of the conversation but its authors. These are values that were chosen, practised, and renewed, event by event, across 25 gatherings in hospitals and universities, arts centres and disability services, online and in person, from Cork to Limerick to Dublin and beyond.

What the CHAT community has built is described throughout this report: the evidence, the advocacy, the models, the relationships, and the trust. However, what it has built cannot be fully captured in a qualitative evidence report without being verbose. CHAT to many is something personal and more accessible, a space where people who care about AT in Ireland know they are not alone. It is a place where a parent frustrated by a teacher's attitude in 2018 can share their concern, a DigiCoach demonstrates the future of peer learning in 2026, an innovator can share their innovation and a place where 'nothing about us without us' is a shared commitment, all of which are part of an ongoing conversation to improve the AT ecosystem.

7. References Source Documents

All 23 event transcripts, 11 registration datasets, and 9 Sli.do exports cited in this report are listed below with their filenames as found in the source archive.

7.1 Event Transcripts

1. 1_CHAT_NRH_Sept_2018.docx CHAT @NRH, AT in Acquired Disability, September 2018
2. 2_CHAT_UCC_Dec_2018.docx CHAT @UCC, AT in Education, December 2018
3. 3_CHAT_IHREC_April_2019.docx CHAT @IHREC, Rights & UNCRPD, April 2019
4. 4_Microsoft_AT_June_2019.docx CHAT @Microsoft, AT to Work, June 2019
5. 5_TU_Dublin_Oct_2019.docx CHAT @TUDublin, Living Life with AT, October 2019
6. 6_CHAT_Smart_Dublin_.docx CHAT @Smart Dublin, Smart Homes and Smart Cities, February 2020
7. 7_CHAT_CATCH-UP_Series_2021_-_29th_April_2021.docx Catch-Up Pt.1, Accessible Video Conferencing, April 2021
8. 8_CHAT_Series_2_-_How_Accessible_Technology_helps_me.docx Catch-Up Pt.2, How AT Helps Me, May 2021

9. 9_CHAT_Series_3_-_Sustainability_of_Online_Supports_and_Services.docx Catch-Up Pt.3, Sustainability of Online Supports, 2021
10. 10_CHAT__AT_supporting_Remote_and_On-Site_Employment_Opportunities.docx AT Remote & On-Site Employment, December 2021
11. 11_CHAT__Green_shoots__CREATE-ing_an_AT_Ecosystem.docx CREATE Green Shoots, June 2022
12. 12_CHAT__ChildVision_TechFest.docx ChildVision TechFest, Digital Literacy, May 2023
13. 13_CHAT_CREATE_2.docx CHAT CREATE 2.0, February 2024
14. 14_CHAT_Access_to_AT_in_Work__19th_Sept_24.docx CHAT Access to AT in Work, September 2024
15. 15a_CHAT_-_Beyond_the_lens_Oct_2024.docx Beyond the Lens @TUDublin, October 2024
16. 15_CHAT__Express_Myself__December_2024.docx Express Myself, AT for Communication, December 2024
17. 16_CHAT__Disrupt_Festival_2025.docx Empowering Creativity, AT in the Arts, March 2025
18. 17_CHAT__Trinity__Access_to_STEM__Assistive_Technology_Supporting_Inclusive_Classrooms.docx CHAT @Trinity, Access to STEM, June 2025
19. 18_CHAT__NDA__European_Accessibility_ACT__September_2025.docx CHAT @NDA, European Accessibility Act, September 2025
20. 19_AT_Outcome_Measures__Natasha_Layton_23rd_September_2025.docx AT Outcome Measures, Natasha Layton, September 2025
21. 20__CHAT__AI_and_Accessibility__Innovation__Inclusion_13th_October_2025__TUDublin_Grangergorman.docx AI and Accessibility, October 2025
22. 21_CHAT__AT_in_Action_3rd_Dec_2025_in_NLN_Limerick.docx CHAT @NLN Limerick, AT in Action, December 2025
23. 22_CHAT_Rights_to_Reality_17th_February_2026.docx Rights to Reality @SJOG Stillorgan, February 2026

8.2 Pre-Registration Survey Datasets

24. 2_Questions-CHAT__UCC.xlsx Event 2, CHAT @UCC, December 2018
25. 10_CHAT_Dec_21_Reg_Q.xlsx Event 10, AT Remote & On-Site Employment, December 2021
26. 11_Registration_Question_CREATE_June_22.xlsx Event 11, CREATE Green Shoots, June 2022
27. 12_CHAT_Reg_q_Tech_Fest_May23.xlsx Event 12, ChildVision TechFest, May 2023
28. 13_Registration_Question_Feb_24_CHAT_CREATE_2_0.xlsx Event 13, CREATE 2.0, February 2024
29. 14_Registration_Question_CHAT_Work_2024.xlsx Event 14, AT in Work, September 2024
30. 17_Registration_questions_Trinity_CHAT_AT_in_education_Jun_2025.xlsx Event 17, CHAT @Trinity, June 2025
31. 19_Reg_report_outcome_measures_Sep_2025.xlsx Event 19, AT Outcome Measures, September 2025
32. 21_NLN_CHAT_Dec_2025.xlsx Event 21, CHAT @NLN Limerick, December 2025
33. 23*_CHAT_Reg_Q_Access_AT_Dec_22.xlsx Event 23*, CHAT Access to AT, December 2022
34. 24_CHAT_reg_q_Tech_fest_onlin_Jun_23.xlsx Event 24*, CHAT Digital Literacy Online, June 2023

8.3 Sli.do Poll and Q&A Exports

35. 2_UCC_CHAT.pdf and 2_analytics-report_UCC.pdf CHAT @UCC, December 2018
36. 1_IHREC_Rights_May_2019.pdf CHAT @IHREC, 25 Apr–10 May 2019
37. 4_SLLi_do_CHAT_Work_2019.pdf CHAT @Microsoft, June 2019
38. 6_Smart_Cities_Mar_2020.pdf and 6_CHATSmartCityFeedback.pdf CHAT @Smart Dublin, Feb–Mar 2020
39. 8_CHATOnline.pdf CHAT #ATRemote, 26 Apr–06 May 2021
40. 11_CHATCREATE.pdf CHAT #CREATE, 27 Jun–07 Jul 2022
41. 12_Digital_LiteracyCHAT.pdf CHAT #DigitalLiteracy4AT, May–Jun 2023
42. 16_DisruptCHAT.pdf CHAT @Disrupt: AT in Art, 07–13 Mar 2025
43. 22_AT_Action_Feb_26.pdf ATAction, 17–23 Feb 2026

Annex 1: FreedomTech / Enable Ireland / DFI Programme Leadership

Name	Organisation / Role
Sarah Gavra Boland	FreedomTech / Enable Ireland Co-founder and Co-director CHAT
Siobhan Long	Enable Ireland Co-director FreedomTech; AT Passport Lead
Allen Dunne	Disability Federation of Ireland (DFI)
Pierce Richardson	DFI MakeWayDay