



Disability Federation of Ireland
Strategic Plan 2022 - 2025



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Foreword



The Disability Federation of Ireland, DFI, is a federation of member organisations working with others to achieve a vision of an Ireland where people with disabilities are participating fully in all aspects of society. Our mission is to work with people with disabilities to implement the UN CRPD and ensure their equal participation in society.

DFI has a broad and varied membership, with differing purposes, ways of working and capacities. Some of our organisations receive little or no state funding and have few or no staff. Others have a majority or all their funding from state sources with extensive staff numbers.

We work with many others at local, national and international level towards achieving our vision. In developing this plan, we recognised the importance of consulting with all stakeholders to get their views on their experiences of DFI and what the Federation should prioritise. Hence, we consulted widely with member organisations, people with disabilities, external organisations, funders, staff, and our Board by means of surveys, interviews and facilitated sessions.

Member organisations are an integral part of the Federation and their engagement and involvement is critical to the delivery of the mission. Engaging members must be a priority in this plan.

Stakeholders saw the primary purpose of DFI as advocacy and representation on behalf of member organisations and people with disabilities. They emphasised the importance of advocating in three specific areas: for people with disabilities, for policy change and for member organisations sustainability.

The context in which DFI is operating was taken into consideration when planning the strategic direction of the Federation. This includes full implementation of the UN CRPD, the ongoing impact of Covid, funding cuts, sectoral reform, the political landscape, sustainability, regulatory compliance and increasing digitalisation.

Having reflected on the consultation and the policy context within which DFI is working, key themes emerged for DFI's strategy. We identified six strategic objectives that will guide us in the pursuit of our mission over the next four years.

Objectives one to three focus outwards, all advocating for policy change in line with the UN CRPD. Strengthening the voice of people with disabilities and advocating on behalf of member organisations to ensure that they are supported and resourced to be of service to people with disabilities.

Strategic objectives four, five and six are enabling objectives. They address the need for greater communication at all levels, among members and staff, and amongst people with disabilities. We will actively engage with our members, encouraging them to advise on and participate in our work and to take up representative roles locally, nationally and at European level. It will be crucial that, through our actions, we communicate to our members that they are DFI. We need to actively engage all members in achieving our mission.

We place a strong focus on identifying metrics for measuring progress on achieving the strategic objectives. This is to ensure clarity and a consistent understanding of what is to be achieved. It will help DFI to monitor progress over the period of the Strategic Plan and communicate with stakeholders on progress.

We have defined clear actions in this plan to address how DFI will achieve the strategic objectives.

Fran Brennan
Chairperson

Context to the Strategic Plan

What influenced the drafting of our Strategic Plan

In 2000 the mainstreaming policy was announced by our government. In 2018 the UN CRPD was finally ratified. Between those dates we had the banking crisis and now Covid-19.

The world in which disability organisations operate has changed beyond recognition. Expectations and ambition across our stakeholders have changed. That includes the state, the public, our organisations and people with disabilities.

Our shared objective to UN CRPD implementation remains yet how we work and with whom we work changes. Some of the questions before us were; how do we best support people with disabilities along with their families, how do we work effectively and efficiently with so many other organisations and entities across society and by so doing, how do we achieve sustainability and stay relevant. We will face challenges and opportunities will present themselves. We need to be well prepared to deal with both.

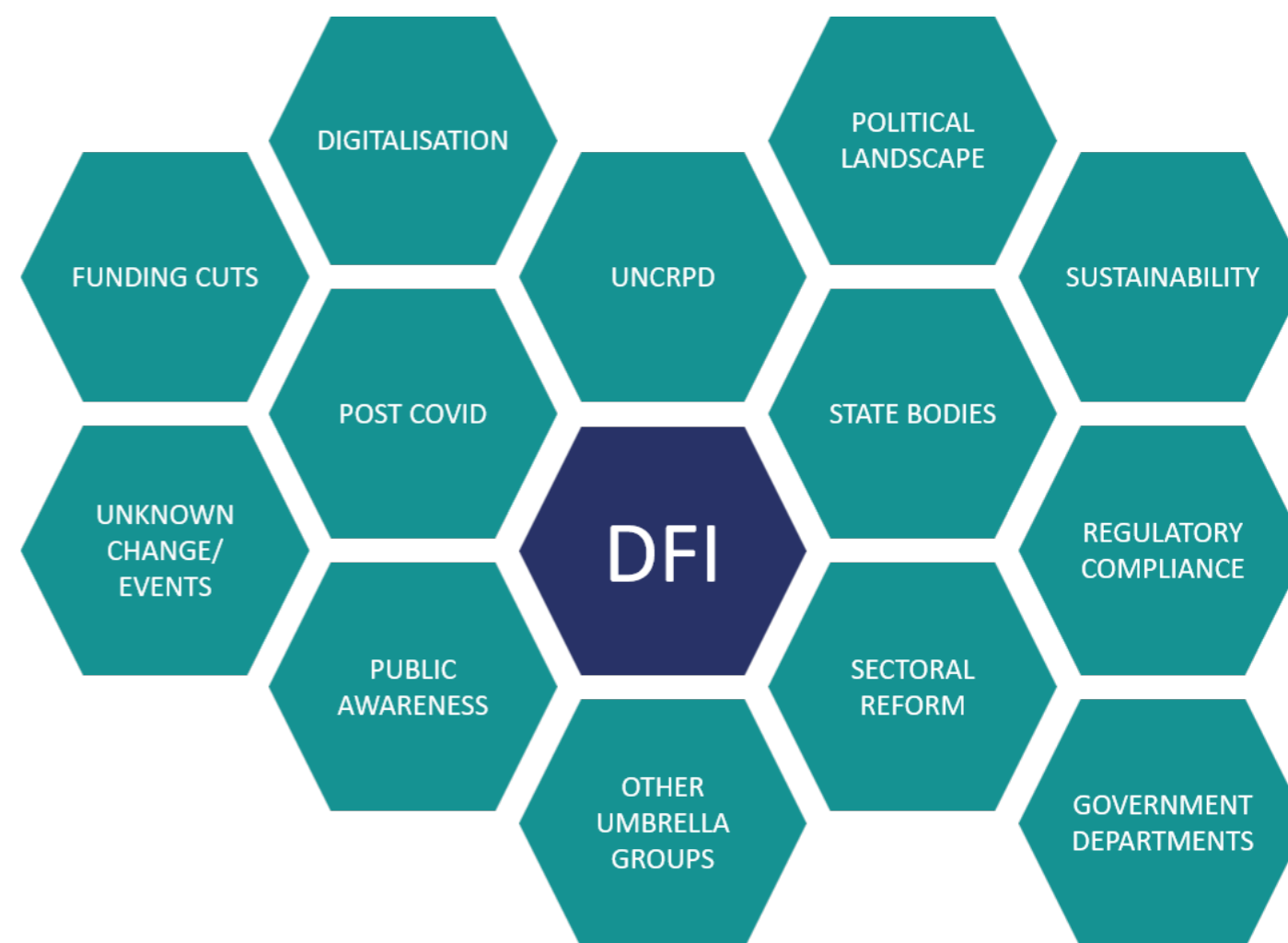


6 Arun Asan from Galway Access For All.

These are the concerns that stayed with us throughout the drafting process. Our consideration of them was influenced by the consultation process along with reflection on our recent plan and more generally on the greatly changed environment over recent decades.

The graphic presentation below sets out some of the many separate and intersecting parts of that greatly changed environment.

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Context to the Strategic Plan

What the stakeholders told us

The Stakeholder Consultation produced differing views on DFI. Some respondents valued DFI's ability to influence policy, provide supports and keep them informed. The knowledge, passion, and professionalism of DFI staff was also valued.

Also highlighted were some areas for improvement. A significant proportion of member organisations felt disengaged and questioned the relevance of DFI. There was varied feedback regarding communication, some member organisations valued it while others questioned the relevance, regularity and methods used. Some people with disabilities were not familiar with DFI, and varied perceptions regarding DFI's role in advocating for them were mentioned.

Some stakeholders questioned DFI's impact, while others credited DFI with delivering significant impact. This inconsistency may be due to gaps in communication. Other issues identified included the need for greater focus and clarity, resourcing and capacity issues, and the need for greater collaboration with other umbrella groups.



#MakeWayDay campaigners in Galway show that a serious campaign is also a time for participation and fun.

Process

The process for development of the strategy comprised:

- Definition of DFI's vision and mission
- Stakeholder Consultation
- Contextual analysis
- Definition of four-year goal
- Definition of strategic objectives, metrics and actions

The Steering Team for the strategy development consisted of Board members Fran Brennan, Chairperson, Alison McCallion and Ann-Marie Ellison; and DFI management and staff members John Dolan, CEO, Allen Dunne, Joanne McCarthy and Catherine Harrington.



Beckett Bridge, Dublin taking part in #PurpleLights20 to mark International Day of People with Disabilities, IDPwD, on 3rd December



DFI's vision

An Ireland where people with disabilities are participating fully in all aspects of society.



DFI's mission

DFI is a federation of member organisations working with people with disabilities to implement the UN CRPD and ensure their equal participation in society.



Four-year goal

Member organisations are actively involved in DFI, working to implement the UN CRPD and to achieve the equal participation of people with disabilities in society.



The goal will be delivered by:

- Advocating for policy change
- Recognition of the value of member organisations
- Fostering self-advocacy by people with disabilities

This work will be enabled by:

- Member organisations working collaboratively
- Reconfiguration of DFI structure, processes and resources
- Excellent communication
- Enhanced focus of our limited resources

Outcomes

Our aspiration is that this strategy, along with the work of others, will contribute to the following outcomes:

- 1. Policy implementation developments at national level spanning income and access to community participation.**
- 2. Member organisations in a sustainable and stronger position to support people with disabilities to have a full life.**
- 3. People with disabilities being more active within their communities, as participants, advocates, and representatives.**

Strategic objectives

We identified six strategic objectives that will guide us in the pursuit of our mission over the next four years.

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Strategic objectives four, five and six are enabling objectives. They address the need for greater communication at all levels, among members and staff, and amongst people with disabilities. We will actively engage with our members, encouraging them to advise on and participate in our work and to take up representative roles locally, nationally and at European level. It will be crucial that, through our actions, we communicate to our members that they are DFI. We need to actively engage all members in achieving our mission.

Strategic Objective 1 - Advocacy and Policy



Strategic Objective 2 - Representation of the Value of the Federation's Members



Strategic Objective 3 - Support for Self-Advocacy by People with Disabilities



Strategic Objective 4 - Member Engagement



Strategic Objective 5 - Communication



Strategic Objective 6 - Corporate





OBJECTIVE:

1. ADVOCACY AND POLICY

Co-ordinate policy analysis and advocacy to progress UN CRPD implementation



ACTIONS

- Develop, coordinate and implement advocacy processes with member organisations and sub-groups of member organisations
- Review prioritisation of issues for advocacy
- Develop and agree Advocacy Plan with members
- Prepare policy documents for dissemination to members and stakeholders
- Develop and implement mechanisms for review of impact of advocacy work
- Identify and engage with key external partners / stakeholders to progress core issues identified in the Advocacy Plan
- Co-ordinate the collective implementation, with members, of the Advocacy Plan



OBJECTIVE:

2. REPRESENTATION OF THE VALUE OF THE FEDERATION'S MEMBERS

The Federation's members are:

- **recognised as essential service providers and**
- **fully funded for all contracted services**



ACTIONS

- Commission research to inform and support advocacy on the value and sustainability of member organisations
- Develop agreed approach to facilitate member organisations in quantifying the cost of delivering contracted services
- Develop and implement a plan, including metrics, for representation and advocacy on value and sustainability of member organisations and monitor progress annually
- Work to have the findings of the report from the Independent Review Group examining the role of voluntary organisations implemented
- Develop agreements for collaboration with other umbrella organisations

¹: 3 identified plus 1 unanticipated



OBJECTIVE:

3. SUPPORT FOR SELF-ADVOCACY BY PEOPLE WITH DISABILITIES

People with disabilities actively participating and representing their issues, supported by peer advocacy networks



ACTIONS

- Create a process to move towards greater facilitation and empowerment of people with disabilities to represent themselves
- Work with member organisations to support self-advocacy and enhance the capacity of their service owners to self-advocate, commencing with the named representatives from affiliated member organisations
- Develop and implement capacity building offering for self-advocacy groups (both within & external to DFI). To include education about rights under UN CRPD
- Continue to develop and initiate self-advocacy groups
- Work with other stakeholders and networks to progress the self-determination and self-advocacy of people with disabilities as part of a national unified movement
- Collaborate with partners and stakeholders to develop and have implemented an agreed process to empower people with disabilities for whom there are substantial barriers to achieving self-advocacy in line with the Assisted Decision Making Act



OBJECTIVE:

4. MEMBER ENGAGEMENT

DFI member organisations feel actively engaged and an integral part of the Federation



ACTIONS

- Develop and roll out a member engagement process, supporting systems and plan including Key Performance Indicators, KPI, for active member engagement
- Review DFI membership
- Cultivate & establish partnerships with other stakeholders, including other umbrella organisations, to respond to organisations needs
- Annual Survey of Member Organisations



OBJECTIVE:

5. COMMUNICATION

DFI is recognised as a valued source of information for all disability stakeholders, effectively informing and influencing key aspects of disability policy implementation



ACTIONS

- Strengthen DFI's capacity to inform and influence
- Explore and use new approaches, technologies, and best practice in communication
- Develop Communications Strategy, to include innovative approaches, development of content, metrics for social media engagement, raising of awareness of DFI among people with disabilities and optimising communication methods for different stakeholders



OBJECTIVE:

6. CORPORATE

Reconfigure DFI structure, processes, and resources to effectively and efficiently deliver DFI's Strategic Plan



ACTIONS

- Restructure DFI to support the Strategic Plan
- Determine the future of our capacity building offerings and supports to our member organisations
- Further develop a culture of best practice, measurement and continuous improvement
- Identify and address new internal process gaps including internal communications processes
- Align Performance Management System with Strategic Plan
- Develop and implement a Capacity Plan
- Develop and implement a diversified Funding Plan
- Implement Level two/Improving Quality, IQ
- Develop ICT Strategy
- Support staff training and development to deliver on the Strategic Plan

DFI's Constitution and the Strategic Plan ²

The Articles require the company members to consider and approve the Strategic Plan, the object of which is to progress the achievement of the Federation's objects³, and to do this at a general meeting, following its development by the Board.

"The Federation shall in each year hold:

(b) two other general meetings of the Members⁴, to be known as Strategic General Meetings, for the purposes of the consideration and approval of this Federation's Strategic Plan (at one Strategic General Meeting held in the year a strategic plan is adopted) and the discussion of progress in relation to its achievement (at those other Strategic General Meetings during the currency of an existing strategic plan), and the Federation shall specify the meetings as such in the notices calling them." (Article 11. (b))."

"The Directors shall periodically develop a strategic plan in relation to the achievement of the Federations objectives which plan must be approved by the Members." (Article 38 (4))."



Laura Magahy, Sláintecare, and Eileen O'Meara at the DFI AGM 2019.

² The DFI Constitution is otherwise known as the Memorandum and Articles of Association.

³ The Federation's Objects are set out in Clause 3, Main Object, and Clause 4, Subsidiary Objects in our Memorandum of Association. **(Appendix 1)**

⁴ Members in this context are "Company Members"

Implementation and Monitoring

Progress will be considered three times each year in general meetings, namely the Annual General Meeting and the two Strategic General Meetings, where the Board will have provided progress reports. These reports will consider progress against the strategic objectives and metrics.



Minister Roderic O'Gorman, Minister for Children, Equality, Disability, Integration and Youth, addresses DFI's virtual AGM at our Fumbally Lane offices.

Appendix A: Main and Subsidiary Objects of DFI

“Clause 3: Main Object

The main object for which the Federation is established is to benefit the community by supporting the contribution, protecting the rights and valuing the role of persons with disabilities and disabling conditions in the community and encouraging their fullest participation in shaping a society that promotes the wellbeing and quality of life of such persons, in particular, by:

- (a) Providing assistance to organisations established for exclusively charitable purposes which provide services or other help or supports to people with disabilities or otherwise seek to enable or advance the interests of such persons, thereby advancing the efficient and effective use of the property of such charitable organisations and more efficient delivery of services by them;
- (b) Acting as a support for the full and equal participation of persons with disabilities and disabling conditions concerning all aspects of their lives by causing or supporting such action as is deemed appropriate to help people with disabilities to express their views and wishes; have their interests represented; access information and services; and explore choices and options thus empowering people with disabilities to speak up for themselves, to fulfil their potential and be involved in and influence decisions that are being made about their future;
- (c) Representing the interests of people with disabilities, and charitable organisations established to assist them, at national, European and international level so as to clearly communicate their needs and assist in the formation of strategies designed to best advance their interests and best secure their wellbeing and rights; and
- (d) Positively influencing and shaping beliefs and values, attitudes, and opinion regarding people with disabilities and educating the public on the valuable contribution that can be made by people with disabilities to society, thus encouraging Irish society to become fully inclusive of persons with disabilities and disabling conditions so that they can exercise their full civil, economic, social and human rights and thereby be enabled to reach their full potential.

Clause 4: Subsidiary Objects

The following objects set out hereafter are exclusively subsidiary and ancillary to the main object of the Federation set out in Clause 3 above and these objects are to be used only for the attainment of that main object and any income generated therefrom is to be applied for the main attainment of that main object and any income generated therefrom is to be applied for the main object only:

- (a) To influence the development, implementation and monitoring of policies affecting persons with disabilities.
- (b) To improve the effectiveness and sustainability of the voluntary disability organisations associated with the Federation.
- (c) To strengthen the voice, impact, and relevance of the disability movement in Ireland.
- (d) To promote the wellbeing and participation of persons with a disabling condition or conditions whether physical, mental, sensory, hidden, communicative, neurological or otherwise in all aspects of Irish society.
- (e) To the extent only that they are compatible with Irish charity law, to protect the rights and dignity of persons with disabilities and ensure that they enjoy full equality under the law in keeping with the principles enshrined in the United Nations Universal Declaration of Human Rights, 1948 and the United Nations Convention on the Rights of Persons with Disabilities, 2006 or such other international agreements protecting the rights of people with disabilities as Ireland may ratify from time to time.”



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Four-year goal

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