



**DISABILITY FEDERATION
OF IRELAND**

Membership Survey

Ann Clarke and Tom Martin

Contents

Foreword	2
Introduction	4
Snapshot of Respondents	4
Who Our Members Support	6
How Our Members Support	7
How our members are staffed	8
Income and Funding	9
How our members are funded	9
Regulation and Governance	10
Our member's organisational structures	10
Engagement with DFI	11
Respondent's satisfaction with DFI's work in 2023	11
Conclusion	12

Foreword

At the Disability Federation of Ireland (DFI) we are dedicated to ensuring that people with disabilities have the opportunity to participate fully in all aspects of Irish society. Through our federation of members, we work collaboratively to support the implementation of the United Nations Convention on the Rights of Persons with Disabilities (UN CRPD), advocate for progressive policy change, and foster self-advocacy by people with disabilities.

Our vision - “an Ireland where people with disabilities are participating fully in all aspects of society,” is made possible by the dedication and commitment of our 118 members. DFI members play a crucial role in making this vision a reality, providing essential services, advocacy, and support to people with disabilities across the country.

This report, based on an independent survey commissioned by DFI, provides a valuable snapshot of the disability sector in Ireland today. It highlights the remarkable impact of our member organisations while also serving as a resource for policymakers, stakeholders, and the public. The research was undertaken independently by Ann Clarke and Tom Martin, and we are sincerely grateful for their expertise and dedication in compiling these insights. Their work ensures a robust and impartial analysis of the challenges, successes, and evolving landscape of disability services in Ireland.

We extend our sincere gratitude to all our members who completed this survey. Their input is invaluable in shaping DFI’s work plan for 2025 and guiding our next strategic plan. By sharing their experiences, challenges, and successes, our members help us tailor our supports, ensuring that DFI’s efforts continue to align closely with their evolving needs.

As we look ahead to 2025, we remain committed to working alongside our members, championing their efforts, and driving positive change. Together, we will continue to build a more inclusive and equitable Ireland.



Elaine Teague

Elaine Teague
CEO, Disability Federation of Ireland

DFI Member Organisations:

Ability West	Bodywhys	Centre for Independent Living Sligo	DEBRA Ireland
Acquired Brain Injury Ireland	Care Alliance Ireland	Centre for Independent Living Tipperary	Disabled Drivers Association
ACTS - Accessible Community Transport Southside	CASA - Caring & Sharing Association	Centre for Independent Living Waterford	Donegal Special Needs Parents Committee
ADHD Ireland	Cavan and Monaghan Parents Committee	Centre for Independent Living West Limerick	Down Syndrome Ireland
AHEAD	Central Remedial Clinic	Centre for Independent Living Westmeath	Dyslexia Ireland
Aiseanna Tacaíochta	Centre for Independent Living Blanchardstown	Centre for Independent Living Wexford	Dyspraxia DCD Ireland
AK Inspired Ability	Centre for Independent Living Carlow	Cheshire Ireland	Early Onset Parkinson's Disease
Alcohol Forum	Centre for Independent Living Cork	Childvision	Employability West Cork
Anne Sullivan Centre	Centre for Independent Living Donegal	Chime	Enable Ireland
Arthritis Ireland	Centre for Independent Living Galway	Cork Deaf Association	Epilepsy Ireland
Arts & Disability Ireland	Centre for Independent Living Kilkenny	Cork Stroke Support	Family Carers Ireland
Association of Occupational Therapists of Ireland (AOTI)	Centre for Independent Living Longford	County Roscommon Disability Support Group	FASD Ireland
Athlone Access Awareness	Centre for Independent Living Offaly	Crann Centre CLG	Fighting Blindness
Autism Support and Family Advocacy Network (ASFAN)		Cystic Fibrosis Association of Ireland	Fionnathan Productions
Autism Support Louth & Meath		Dara Community Living	Galway Autism Partnership (GAP)
Bloomfield Mental Health Services			Galway Rural Development
Bluestack Special Needs Foundation Ltd			GROW
			HAIL (Housing Association for Integrated Living)

Headway Ireland -
The National Head
Injuries Association

Heart Children
Ireland

Huntington's
Disease Association
of Ireland

i.C.A.R.E.

Inspire Wellbeing

Irish Guide Dogs for
The Blind

Irish Haemophilia
Society

Irish Heart
Foundation

Irish Kidney
Association

Irish Lung Fibrosis
Association (ILFA)

Irish Motor
Neurone Disease
Association

Irish Society for
Autism

Irish Wheelchair
Association

KARE

Lakers Sport &
Recreation Club

Leitrim Association
of People With
Disabilities

Lucan Disability
Action Group

Mayo Autism Camp

Mental Health
Reform

Migraine
Association of
Ireland

Move4Parkinson's

Multiple Sclerosis
Society of Ireland

Muscular Dystrophy
Ireland

National Federation
of Arch Clubs

Neurofibromatosis
Association of
Ireland

Neurological
Alliance
of Ireland

North Tipperary
Disability Support
Service

North West MS
Therapy Centre

North West
Parents and Friends
Association

PALS Autism
Support Group

Parkinson's Ireland

Polio Survivors
Ireland

Positive Futures

Prader Willi
Syndrome
Association Ireland
(PWSAI)

Reach Deaf
Services

Rehab Group

Respond

RHS Home Care

See My Skills

Special Olympics
Ireland

Spina Bifida
Hydrocephalus
Ireland

Spinal Injuries
Ireland

St. Catherine's
Association

St. Gabriel's
Foundation

St. Hilda's Services

Vantastic

Vision Ireland
(formerly National
Council for The
Blind
of Ireland)

WALK

Western Care
Association

Youth Advocacy
Programme Ireland
(YAP)

Introduction

Between 4 July and 15 October 2024, we conducted an online survey of our 118 members, seeking insights into their activities for 2023. A total of 71 organisations responded (60%), with 64 providing fully completed responses. For the seven partially completed surveys, we supplemented the data with information from their annual reports to build a comprehensive picture of our members, the people they serve, and the services they provide.

As this survey demonstrates, 71 of our member respondents touch the lives of over 133,500 individuals annually, providing critical supports and services that empower individuals and enrich communities. Together, they employ more than 11,000 and receive almost €500m in statutory funding.

Being a member of DFI means access to a strong, supportive network that enhances organisational capacity. Through DFI's advocacy, training, and guidance, we help our members navigate complex regulatory landscapes, amplify their voices in national policy discussions, and strengthen their organisational governance.

Members also benefit from DFI's representation in key decision-making forums and enjoy opportunities for collaboration. This helps foster a collective approach to tackling issues facing people with disabilities in Ireland.

Snapshot of Respondents

Understanding the composition and reach of DFI's members is essential to appreciating their collective impact. Our members are involved in everything from providing services to advocacy and advice to community support and more. This section provides an overview of the key characteristics of members that responded to the survey. It highlights their national and regional presence, their collaborative efforts, and their service/support structures. These insights offer a snapshot of the diversity and scale of DFI's membership.

55% of members provide services and supports nationally and 45% regionally



89% are a registered charity



40% collaborate or partner with others to provide services and supports



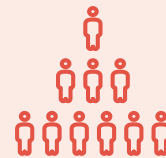
97% of our members provide services supports to adults 53% also supported children



They support over **133,500** individuals and provide 4.6million service and support hours



DFI members employ over **11,400** people



97% of our members provide services and supports to adults and **53%** also supported children



42% of respondents have in-house advocacy or campaigns and self-advocacy

44% of respondents provide supports for independent living. Of them:

- 43% provide transport services
- 55% provide support to participate in education
- 41% provided personal assistance services

The main supports and services provided by our members are:



95% are positive about DFI supports



They were supported by nearly **8,000** volunteers in 2023



• independent living (**70%**)

• specialist services (**70%**)

• training (**67%**)

• respite (**47%**)

• residential (**33%**)

Our members had a total income of **€496 million** in 2023 **85%** of this income came from statutory funding, which includes support from public and government bodies. The remaining 15% was sourced from non-statutory funding, such as donations, private grants, and sponsorships.



Our members provide a broad range of direct and indirect services and supports across all Health Regions



Who Our Members Support

DFI members play a crucial role in supporting people with disabilities across Ireland. This section details the scale of their impact, including the number of individuals receiving services and supports, the different types of disabilities people have, and the range of advocacy and information services provided.

The findings of the survey revealed:

More than 133,500 individuals received services or supports in 2023.

Our members provided these individuals with over 4.6 million hours of support.

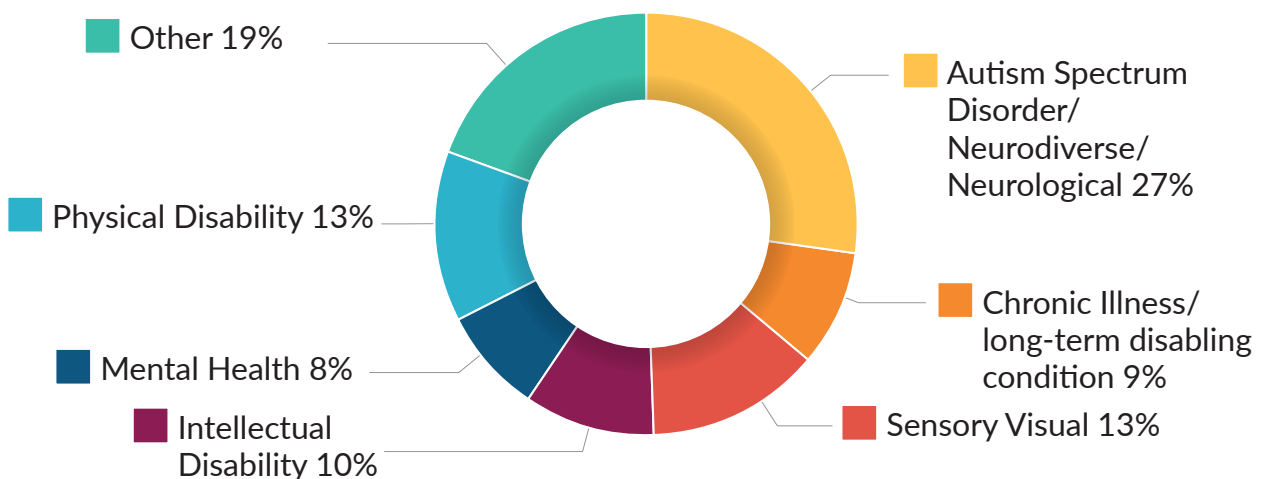
97% provided services and supports to adults.

53% also supported children.

Members work with a broad range of disabilities. The disability category to which most members provided support services was Autism Spectrum Disorder/Neurodiverse/Neurological, followed by Physical Disability, Sensory Visual, Intellectual Disability, Chronic Illness/long-term disability condition, Mental Health and Other.

All provided some form of information, advocacy and education.

DFI members work with a diverse range of disabilities



"The support and guidance given by DFI in the last 6 to 12 months has been excellent. DFI has become my first port of call for any query or concern that may come up during the course of our work."

How Our Members Support

DFI members provide a wide range of services, from direct supports to community-based interventions. This section explores the different types of assistance offered, including independent living supports, specialist services, training, and residential care. It also highlights the workforce and volunteer contributions that make these services possible, as well as the collaborative efforts among organisations to expand their reach and effectiveness.

The findings of the survey revealed:

55% provided services and supports on a national basis, and 45% provided them locally or regionally.

Services and supports were provided by over 11,400 employees and more than 8,000 volunteers.

Around one-third provided residential services, and an estimated 47% provided respite services.

Two-thirds provided training services.

70% provided supports with daily living.

An estimated 70% provided specialist supports such as assistive technology, key workers and general aids/appliances/equipment.

40% collaborated or partnered with others to provide these services and supports, and a further 19% are interested in exploring this as a possibility in the future

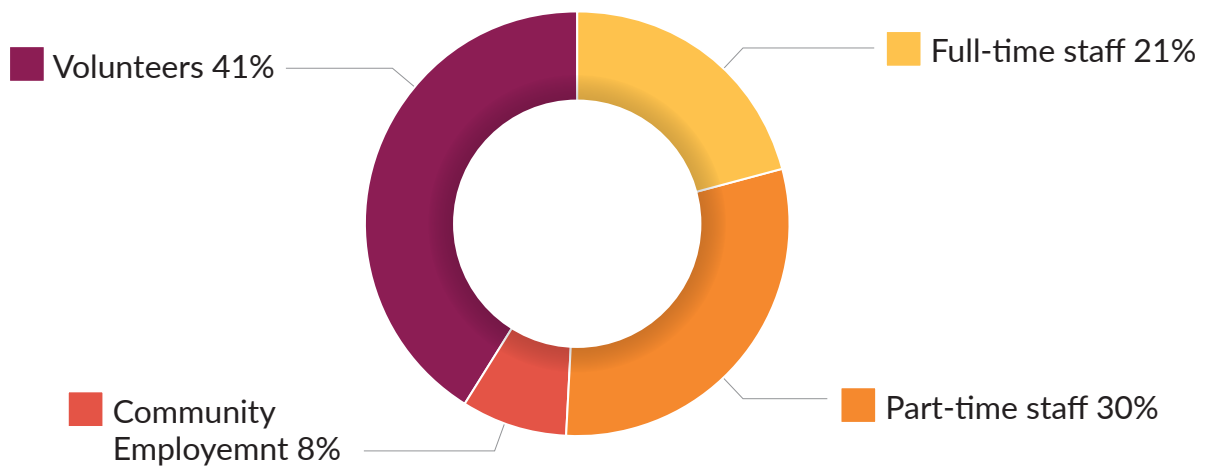
In addition to providing direct services and supports:

- 58% carried out national awareness campaigns
- 58% made pre-Budget submissions
- 51% conducted political campaigns to raise awareness about and highlight general disability issues and condition-specific issues.

Members also engaged in the representation activities of DFI or joined other umbrella groups on relevant campaigns.

How our members are staffed

62 organisations played a vital role in employment, providing jobs for nearly 7,000 people across full-time, part-time, and Community Employment (CE) schemes. These organisations collectively supported thousands of workers, from dedicated full-time staff to flexible part-time roles, along with nearly a thousand individuals gaining valuable experience through CE placements. On average, each organisation had a mix of full-time and part-time staff, as well as CE participants, contributing to their workforce and mission. The findings of the survey revealed the workforce is comprised of the following staffing structure:



“DFI have proven themselves to have their finger on the pulse with relevant and up-to-date information disseminated to their members on a regular basis. This has proven invaluable to ourselves as a member where the overwhelming nature of our work can sometimes be isolating.”

Income and Funding

Sustainable funding is critical to the continued operation of member organisations. This section examines the financial landscape, outlining sources of income and the distribution of funding. It identifies key financial contributors such as statutory agencies, while also highlighting the role of trading and fundraising in ensuring financial stability.

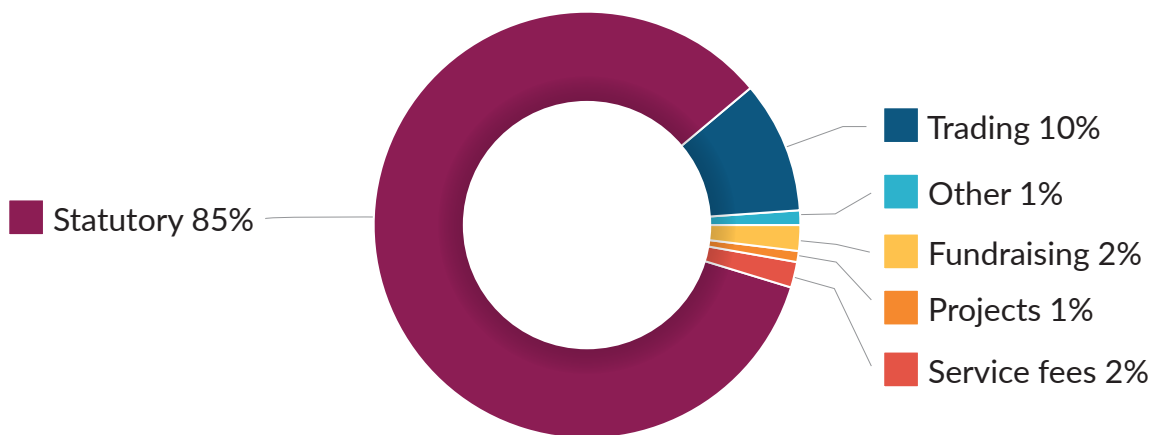
The findings of the survey revealed:

Total income in 2023 reported by our members was €496m.

85% of this income came from statutory sources, the largest being the HSE under Section 39 funding. Pobal was also an important funding source, as was the Department of Social Protection. However, 23% of our members did not receive any HSE funding.

Trading activities and fundraising were the next most significant sources of income. Members generated over €44 million through trading, including the sale of goods and services, as well as rental income. An additional €11 million was raised through fundraising efforts.

How our members are funded



"I am happy with the support from DFI. As a social care service, we link in a lot ...approachable and efficient."

Regulation and Governance

Strong governance structures are fundamental to the effectiveness and credibility of disability organisations. This section outlines the regulatory status of our members, including charity registration, corporate structures, and adherence to quality standards. It also highlights the role of Disabled People's Organisations (DPOs) and the representation of people with disabilities within governance structures, reinforcing the commitment to inclusive leadership and accountability.

The findings of the survey revealed:

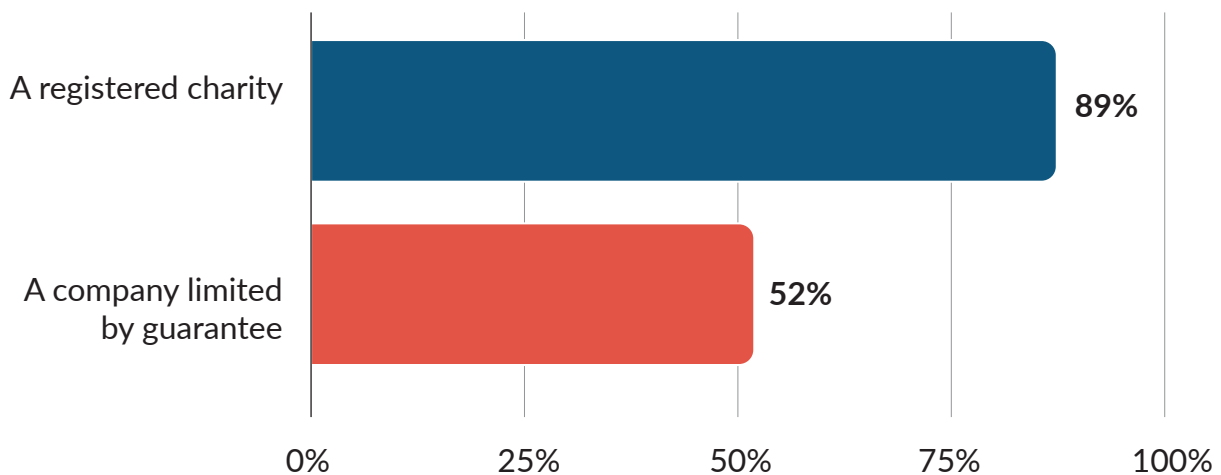
89% of members were registered as charities, and 46% of these were also companies limited by guarantee.

28% identified themselves as Disabled People's Organisations (DPOs).

26% of the Boards or Governance Committees were people with disabilities, and some organisations also have Boards or Governance Committees with members who have a family member with a disability.

36% have implemented a recognised Quality standard such as Triple Lock, Improving Quality or the Quality Mark.

Our member's organisational structures



"Having access to the media briefings was very helpful ... The continued advocacy is very important."

Engagement with DFI

DFI serves as a vital support for its members, providing advocacy, training, and networking opportunities. This section highlights how members engage with us and the ways in which we support their work. With high levels of satisfaction reported, this section reinforces the value of DFI's role in amplifying the voices of disability organisations and strengthening their collective influence.

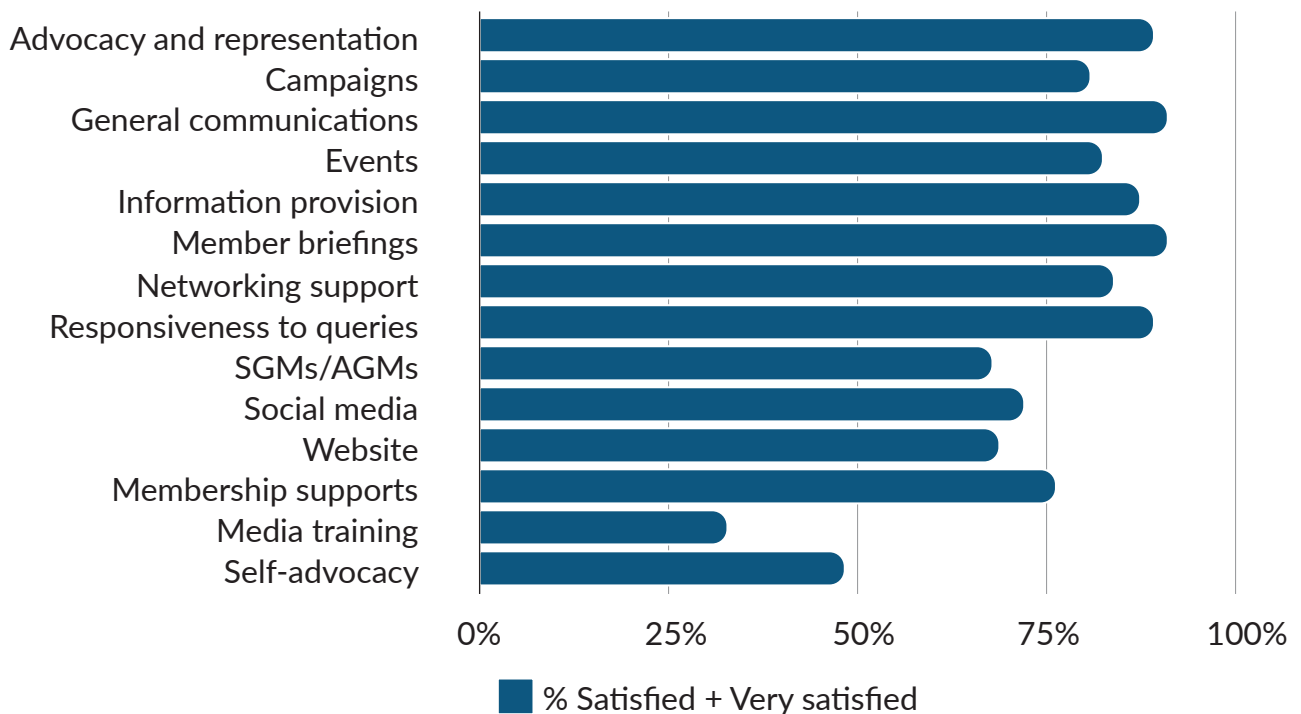
The findings of the survey revealed:

DFI supports its members in many different ways. This includes advocacy and representation, campaigns, events, communications, information and briefings, HR, self-advocacy, networking, training, and responses to individual queries.

DFI offers two levels of membership – Affiliate and Associate. Our Affiliate members are all registered charities providing direct disability services and supports. Affiliate members appoint Company Members who guide and support the strategic direction of DFI.

Satisfaction with DFI's work is generally high.

Respondent's satisfaction with DFI's work in 2023



'This year has seen a significant development for us as a CIL in the support given [by DFI] to form the NCIL body.'

Conclusion

These findings reflect the vital contributions of DFI member organisations in supporting people with disabilities across Ireland. With over 133,500 individuals receiving essential services, our members form the backbone of disability support across the country. The insights gathered in this report will inform DFI's advocacy and strategic planning, ensuring that the needs and priorities of members continue to be represented at national and local levels.

Sustained collaboration, strong governance, and secure funding will be key to maintaining and expanding the impact of DFI members. The dedication of staff, volunteers, and leadership within these organisations underscores the collective effort to create a more inclusive Ireland. By continuing to advocate for better policies, increased funding, and stronger community engagement, DFI and its members remain at the forefront of shaping a society where people with disabilities can fully participate and thrive.



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.

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