

Oireachtas Disability Group (ODG)

Pre-Budget Submission



The ODG is comprised of Disabled Persons' Organisations (DPOs), organisations representing service providers and advocacy organisations. We work to advance the full implementation of the UN Convention on the Rights of Persons with Disabilities (UNCRPD) through our collaboration with Members of the Oireachtas.

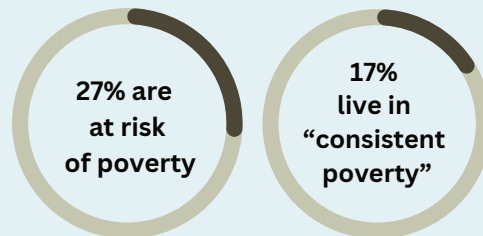
We present here the urgent priorities for disabled people that are needed to make rights real in Budget 2025.

**Disabled people are your constituents.
Families of disabled children and adults are your constituents.**

According to Census 2022, over one in every five people in Ireland report being disabled or having a long-lasting condition (disability includes psychosocial disabilities/mental health difficulties). People with disabilities and their families are your constituents.

We are voters. Our issues are your issues.

Disabled people unable to work due to their disability are experiencing substantially more poverty and deprivation than those without disabilities:



Ireland compares poorly against the average standards in Europe:

- EU average spend of GDP on social protection for disability is 2% while Ireland is 0.8% (the second lowest in the EU).
- Ireland has 39.5% of disabled people living at risk of poverty and social exclusion (EU average 28.8%).
- The disability employment rate in Ireland is 32.6% almost 20% below the EU average of 51.3%.



Disabled people are not currently experiencing their rights as a reality:

- The 'one-off' lump sum payments of €500 in 2023, decreasing to €400 in 2024, were an acknowledgement of the cost of disability but did not address the core issues outlined in the Government's own 2021 report on the Cost of Disability in Ireland.
- People cannot access their rights under Article 19 of the UNCRPD to live in the community with appropriate supports. For example, housing and supported living (residential supports) are being provided in emergency situations only and many people remain living in congregated settings, nursing homes and with older and ageing family carers, with no route to planned residential support in place or housing with PA services.
- Many children are on long waiting lists to access services and supports and struggle to access their right to education.

We have three clear asks in Budget 2025 to remove and address these barriers:

1. Tackle poverty among your disabled constituents.
2. Improve access to supports and housing provision for your disabled constituents.
3. Ensure support for Disabled Persons' Organisations and disability organisations providing vital services across your constituencies.

As Budget 2025 will be the final budget of the 33rd Dáil, the Government now has one last opportunity to deliver on the commitments it made to people with disabilities in the Programme for Government.

Disability Priority Asks

We ask you to commit to the following priority areas, in your pre-budget activities:

1. Take action on disability poverty & exclusion



- A €50 weekly cost of disability payment in Budget 2025 should be prioritised as an interim measure while the longer term mechanism for a fair and equitable permanent cost of disability payment is designed by Government.
- Increase Disability Allowance and other core social welfare payments at a minimum level of the poverty threshold: €318 per week.
- Develop pathways to employment and training including:
 - Maintain fully Disability Allowance for people taking up employment during a transition period and increase the income thresholds thereafter.
 - Link the Wage Subsidy Scheme (WSS) to increases in the National Minimum Wage (NMW) and restore the WSS from the current low of 49% to 70% of the NMW.

2. Improve supports and housing so disabled people can live independent lives



Deliver on the actions in the Disability Action Plan in ways that are human rights compliant.

- Provide housing to support 460 people to move out from their family's homes, congregated settings and nursing homes into the community in 2025.
- Increase the number of personal assistance hours by a minimum of 270,000.
- Increase home support and home care hours by a minimum of 40,000.
- Increase multidisciplinary therapists for children and adults-at least 250 extras posts.
- Develop CAMHS-ID teams as a priority in supporting children, ensuring that sufficient funding is provided for early intervention and prevention initiatives.
- Complete the review of personalised budgets, and secure a permanent funding base, increasing the number of beneficiaries.
- Fund the implementation of the Housing Strategy for Disabled People 2022-2027 including:
 - Urgently publish the review of Housing Adaptation Grants and implement changes to increase funding, increase the maximum grant amount to reflect building costs, and reform the means testing process.
 - Ensure a sufficient % (at least 7.5%) of new build housing is universally designed UD+ and UD++ for wheelchair liveable accommodation.
 - Remove barriers to the functioning of the Capital Assistance Scheme system, which is currently not meeting needs as intended (including ceilings and timeframes).

3. Support Disabled Persons' Organisations (DPOs) and organisations providing disability services, advocacy & advice



- Adequate, ongoing, multi-annual and sustainable funding is required for DPOs for the State to meet its obligations under the UNCRPD on all matters affecting disabled people.
- A sustainable multi-annual funding stream is required for disability and mental health services delivering vital services to disabled people on behalf of the HSE and the State.
- Ensure equality and pay parity for Section 39 organisations to return to alignment with HSE pay scales. **Without this, none of the above actions are viable.**

The Budgetary Process

Transparency and clarity in the budgetary process



Recent budget announcements have not been accessible and have left disabled people and their families, and the services that support them without a clear understanding of what has been allocated in relation to disability. Once again we ask for a clear and accessible budget announcement:

- Budget day announcement should be made easier to understand so everyone knows how it will impact their lives.
- Full transparency and clarity are also needed as the figures provided in Budget 2024 appear to fall short of the overall allocations.
- Last year disabled people and their families had to wait a further five months after the budget announcement (February 2024) to learn the full budget allocation through the HSE Service Plan.
- Clarity is needed on what funding is in fact being provided to deliver existing levels of service and that which provides for new service developments.
- Clarity on what Existing Levels of Service (ELS) means in accessible language, with clear indication on how much ELS is contained within the overall announcement.

Enabling a disability-proofed budget

In addition to our Budget priorities, we request that Government prioritise the following Disability Actions for the remainder of its term:

- Ratify the Optional Protocol (OP) to the UNCRPD and fully implement, resource and operationalise the UNCRPD.
- Fully implement, resource and operationalise the Taoiseach's Cabinet Committee on Children and Education and Disability.
- Fully resource the forthcoming National Disability Strategy (NDS) with oversight of its implementation to be located in Department of the Taoiseach.
- Prioritise the reform, passing, commencement and implementation of the Bill to reform the Mental Health Act, 2001.

UNCRPD & SDGs

The ODG acknowledges the synergies between the UNCRPD and the Sustainable Development Goals and supports the campaign calling on the Irish Government to put the furthest behind first in the implementation of the SDGs.

While all SDGs and targets are applicable to persons with disabilities, there are 7 explicit references to persons with disabilities within SDG targets, including:



Ireland's Obligations under the United Nations Convention on the Rights of People with a Disability (UNCRPD)



Following ratification of the UNCRPD in 2018, it is incumbent on our political representatives to progressively realise the human rights of disabled people/people with disabilities in line with the UN Convention on the Rights of Persons with Disabilities and our equality legislation.

Budget 2025 must prioritise the following obligations under the UNCRPD:

<p>Article 7 – Children with Disabilities: State Parties shall take all necessary measures to ensure the full enjoyment by children with disabilities of all human rights and fundamental freedoms on an equal basis.</p>	<p>Article 9 – Accessibility: State Parties shall take appropriate measures to ensure to persons with disabilities access, on an equal basis with others, to the physical environment, to transportation, to information and communications.</p>
<p>Article 19 – Living independently and being included as part of the community: State Parties recognise the equal right of all persons with disabilities to live in the community.</p>	<p>Article 27 - Work and Employment: State Parties recognise the right of persons with disabilities to work, on an equal basis with others</p>
<p>Article 28 – Adequate standard of living and social protection: State Parties recognise the right of persons with disabilities to an adequate standard of living for themselves and their families, including adequate food, clothing and housing, and to the continuous improvement of living conditions.</p>	<p>Article 29 – Participation in political and public life: State Parties shall guarantee to persons with disabilities political rights and the opportunity to enjoy them on an equal basis with others.</p>

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