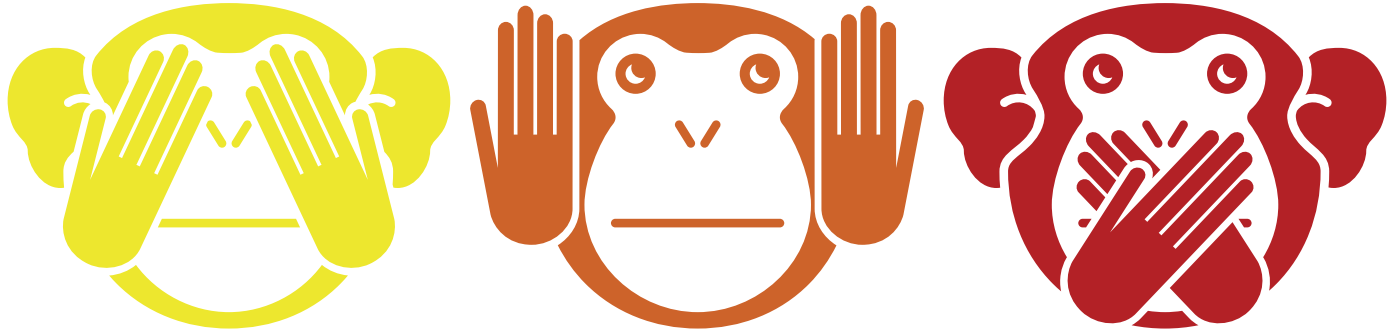


Time to Get Real

DFI Pre Budget Submission 2021



Our expectation is that Budget 2021 will deliver on the strong commitments made in the Programme for Government to people with disabilities. Strong funding commitments are needed to implement the UN Convention on the Rights of Persons with Disabilities, UN CRPD. This will involve action across all Government departments.

Individuals and families are at breaking point after five months of reduced or closed services. They were already in crisis before COVID-19:

- Ireland has the lowest employment rate for people with disabilities in the EU. It is almost 20% lower than the EU average of 50.8%.¹
- Almost half of those not at work due to illness or disability, are at risk of poverty. This rate is 14% for the general population.²
- Over 1,300 people aged under-65 live in nursing homes.³
- Only 0.3% of all people with disabilities access a Personal Assistant Service, PAS.⁴

¹ EDF (2020), Poverty and Social Exclusion of People with Disabilities: European Human Rights Report: Issue, p. 48.

² 47.7% at risk of poverty. See CSO, SILC 2018, based on the principal economic status of people not at work due to illness or disability. <https://bit.ly/32tUJHj>

³ DCU and DFI (2018), The situation of younger people in nursing homes in Ireland- phase 1. <https://bit.ly/3hAGYwG>

⁴ HSE, National Service Plan 2018.

COVID-19 has exposed issues already facing people with disabilities and their organisations, including:

- Voluntary disability services carry funding deficits of over €40m.⁵ Charities will lose an average of 40% of their income due to COVID-19.⁶
- Lack of investment in community supports like PAS and home supports, which increased isolation.
- Digital poverty prevented some accessing services that went online.
- Under-65s trapped in nursing homes faced increased risk.
- The €350 Pandemic Unemployment Payment rate exposed the inadequacy of current social welfare rates, including Disability and Carers' Allowance.

By the end of this Government, the number of people with disabilities will have increased by around 20% due to demographic pressures.⁷ Budget 2021 is an opportunity to plan for growing needs and better ways of providing supports across all Government departments.

Budget Asks

Income

Poverty rates for people with disabilities in Ireland are 10% higher than the EU average. Ireland ranks amongst the worst five countries in Europe.⁸ The ongoing Indecon research recognises that the Disability Allowance is inadequate and does not reflect the extra costs of disability. Budget 2021 should:⁹

- Implement the Indecon Cost of Disability recommendations. Pending this, introduce €20 Cost of Disability payment for those on Disability Allowance.
- Increase core social welfare rates by €7 a year over the next three years to move towards benchmarking.
- Extend the right to work from home and the Pandemic Unemployment Payment for high and extremely high-risk people.



⁵ Joint Oireachtas Committee on Health (2019).

⁶ Charities Institute Ireland (2020). COVID-19 Impact Survey.

⁷ Projected figure by 2026. See National Disability Authority (2018), Disability Statistics.

⁸ CSO, SILC 2018 op cit, EDF 2020 p.18-19.

⁹ See DFI's Pre-Budget Submission 2021 to Department of Employment Affairs and Social Protection for more detailed recommendations on poverty, income, social protection and employment. <https://bit.ly/3guOV5b>

Health and Social Care

Publish the Department of Health's Capacity Review of Disability Services. Pending this, provide a Multi-Annual Investment Programme of €211m each year for five years to fund community services.¹⁰ This should include:

- €12m for PAS and Home Supports.
- €15m for Respite Services including to support people with physical, sensory and neurological disabilities.
- €27m over two years for adult therapy services.
- Ring-fenced funding for personalised budgets.
- A minimum of 300 therapy staff for children's services over the next four years.

Invest €120m to cover the full costs of COVID-19 expenditure in disability services in 2021. In addition:

- Resolve the deficits of €40m+. A recent HSE report confirmed the danger that voluntary disability services are not sustainable.¹¹
- Invest €7m in post-acute rehabilitation beds, rehabilitation supports, and community supports.
- Invest €4.5m to develop a neuro-rehabilitation service model pilot in HSE Community Health Organisations 6 and 7.
- Invest €2m in neurology services to address growing waiting lists for neurology services.¹²
- Target funding for community support and housing adaptation packages to move people under-65 out of nursing homes.
- Fund pay restoration in section 39 organisations excluded from the 2019 process.



¹⁰. This programme, in keeping with the Articles of the UN CRPD, should include funding for: Personal Budgets, Residential Supports, Personal Assistant Services, Home Supports, Day Services, Respite Care, Adult Therapies and other community services and supports.

¹¹. The Irish Times (3rd Aug 2020). HSE says provision of disability services by voluntary bodies not sustainable. <https://bit.ly/2QI0A6x>

¹². As of 30th July 2020, 22,458 people were on the outpatient waiting list for neurology with 6,455 waiting more than 18 months. <https://bit.ly/2Dch5oc>

Community Services and Supports

Fund community services that enable people to live independently in their own homes:

- Provide €1.5m to fund an Assistive Technology Passport to follow people through education, employment and independent living.¹³
- Commit 7.5% of social housing for people on social housing waiting lists because of disability.¹⁴
- Increase funding for Housing Adaptation Grants by €25.9m and expand eligibility criteria.¹⁵
- Provide a minimum of €100m funding for the Capital Assistance Scheme.
- Appoint Disability Experts at Education and Training Boards as the lead support for students with disabilities, at a cost of €1.5m.
- Extend the Fund for Students with Disabilities to students at all levels of Further Education, including part-time students.¹⁶
- Invest €1.6m to appoint 20 additional National Educational Psychological Service, NEPS, psychologists.¹⁷
- Establish the Transport Support Scheme to replace the Mobility Allowance.¹⁸



¹³. DFI and Enable Ireland (2016). Assistive Technology for People with Disabilities and Older People: A Discussion Paper. <https://bit.ly/3hAGYwG>

¹⁴. Based on Rebuilding Ireland and Housing Agency, Summary of Social Housing Assessments (2018). <https://bit.ly/2Zvpbxo>

¹⁵. To restore the funding to 2010 levels per Minister Eoghan Murphy, 11th June 2019, response to PQs [23645/19] and [23646/19].

¹⁶. This is in line with recommendation 10 of HEA (2017), Review of the Fund for Students with Disabilities.

¹⁷. To progressively achieve a target of 238.

¹⁸. This would end the six-and-a-half-year delay highlighted by the Ombudsman in January 2020. <https://bit.ly/3lqfmwA>