



**Briefing Note from Disability Representatives on the  
Oireachtas Disability Group to the Cabinet Committee on  
Disability**

**09.01.2020**

## Introduction

The Oireachtas Disability Group, (ODG) is a cross-party/non-party group of Dáil Deputies, Senators and the following community and voluntary representatives from the disability sector: Disability Federation of Ireland, Inclusion Ireland, National Federation of Voluntary Service Providers, the Not for Profit Association, and Independent Living Movement Ireland. The community and voluntary representatives on the ODG have come together to put forward a number of key priority issues to address in the upcoming Cabinet meeting.

We welcome the announcement of a Cabinet meeting on disability on the 9<sup>th</sup> of January. This meeting is necessary given the crisis in disability services and the ratification of the UN CRPD. In the context of the UN CRPD, all Departments have a role to play in the lives of people with disabilities. The 640,000 people with disabilities and their families have the right to expect planned and co-ordinated inclusion, and the responsibility for this inclusion must come from the leadership of each Department.

## Urgent Priorities

The ODG has been meeting for three years. Over this time, we have put forward a number of priority measures to inform budget and policy under this government. Two years after the ratification of the UN CRPD commitment to these measures is essential:

- Invest in community services for people with disabilities. This will involve an initial investment of €211m each year from 2020-2024.<sup>1</sup>
- People with disabilities cannot secure housing from local authorities in the absence of support packages and a clear pathway to obtaining them from the HSE. Fund support packages that will include adequate funding for personal and social services supports and housing adaptations.<sup>2</sup>
- The Plan for Effective Participation identifies the need to fund the participation of people with disabilities in decision-making structures.<sup>3</sup> This needs to be funded and replicated in other Departments, for example local authorities, ETBs etc. as provided for in the UN CRPD.
- The poverty rate for people with disabilities is alarming. To address this, *cost of disability* funding needs to be provided.
- Employment is one key way to address poverty but planning needs to begin earlier to enable people with disabilities to access employment. This includes:
  - Provide career guidance services for young adults in special schools
  - Extend the DARE scheme to further education and to students with intellectual disabilities.
  - Establish a cross departmental working group on assistive technology and employment, that follows the individual through all life stages and transitions.<sup>4</sup>

---

<sup>1</sup> Oireachtas Disability Group (2019). *Pre Budget 2020 Asks*;

Working Group 1 (2018). *Transforming Lives: Programme to implement the recommendations of the 'value for money and policy review of disability services in Ireland', Report on Future Needs for Disability Services.*

<sup>2</sup> Inclusion Ireland (2019). *Housing for people with intellectual disabilities; The lack of supports for independent living.*

<sup>3</sup> Working Group 3 (2018). *Transforming Lives: Effective Participation in Decision-Making, Planning for Ordinary Lives in Ordinary Places.*

<sup>4</sup> Enable Ireland and DFI (2016). *Assistive Technology for People with Disabilities and Older People: A Discussion Paper.*

- The State must ensure that people with disabilities have equal access to GP, physiotherapy, occupational therapy and other mainstream health services.
- Each Department must commit to ensuring accessibility. Accessibility includes the built environment, transport, communications, audio-visual announcements, information in Braille, wheelchair ramps, etc.

These are achievable requirements that we have reinforced over a number of years. To underpin the delivery of these we recommend:

1. The establishment of a Joint Oireachtas Committee on the implementation of the UN CRPD to oversee developments on these and other core issues.
2. That the Department of the Taoiseach takes the lead role in co-ordinating the implementation of the UN CRPD across government Departments.

### **Current Crisis**

At this historic meeting, we would ask that you ground your deliberations in the following realities:

- 24% of adults with a disability live in consistent poverty compared to 11% in 2011.
- Disabled people in Ireland are four times less likely to be employed. Just 31% of working age people with a disability are at work, compared to 71% of the general population.
- Over 1400 people with disabilities are living in nursing homes, many of whom could live independently with the right supports. For another cohort of our population, many parents are providing unsustainable support into their 70s, 80s and beyond. In a small recent sample of just 18 organisations, 183 people are living with a carer over the age of 80.
- There is an unprecedented crisis for disability services. Services are carrying €40 million+ deficits and there is an urgent need for the restoration of pay parity for Section 39 organisations. In some cases, the ongoing ability to deliver services is at risk. The above deficit figure does not include the growing level of unmet need. The HSE Service Plan 2020 announced an additional 1% cut across all services.
- Not enough money is being spent to support people to live independently in their community. Only 0.3% of all people with disabilities get a Personal Assistance Service.<sup>5</sup> Currently, there is no legal right to personal assistance in Ireland.

It is essential that the Cabinet is aware that for people with disabilities living in Ireland there remain huge obstacles and barriers to everyday life. People struggle to access vital healthcare, housing, education and supports on a daily basis. Many of these issues mentioned are not in line with the Articles of the UN CRPD- which Ireland ratified in 2018. It is therefore important that the State provides leadership and takes measures to address these issues, whether that is in budgetary, legislative reforms and/ or through the implementation of proactive policy initiatives and programmes.

---

<sup>5</sup> HSE (2017). *National Service Plan 2018*.