



People With Disabilities Need To Be Valued By Government

In a speech on citizenship delivered earlier this month, the Ombudsman, Emily O'Reilly, stated that "the recession cued particular suffering for people with disabilities and for their families". Noting the Government's shortcomings in responding to the needs of its diverse group of citizens, she questioned whether some citizens are valued more than others.

Ms O'Reilly's message corresponds with the approach taken by the Disability Federation of Ireland. As an organisation, we represent the rights of people with disabilities to be fully included in all aspects of Irish society. The disability movement has been hit hard over the past five years. This makes the work of the disability movement all the more essential in light of the challenges posed to people with disabilities during these years of austerity. We have seen the services and supports which they and their families need to access consistently withered away by the harsh measures imposed through recent budgets. Their disintegration denies people with disabilities the right to live the ordinary lives they are entitled to.

As Ms O'Reilly remarked, the choices to cut these programmes and supports were undoubtedly difficult for Government to make, but they were made nonetheless. The needs of a group of citizens, who should be valued equally, were not met. While we recognize that Government must set economic targets, they need to be there to ensure that people can live their lives with independence and well-being. Sustainable social outcomes for people with disabilities and their families should be prioritized alongside financial considerations. Recovery – both economic and social – must include people with disabilities.

DFI has joined with several organisations in recent weeks to call on government to protect and invest in people with disabilities in the upcoming budget, and to bring the social aspect back into the frame. We need to develop a long-term plan so that, when we move out of austerity in two or three year's time, we are not met with a wasteland in terms of the services and supports which people with disabilities need to access. Government now faces both a challenge and an opportunity. In leading and supporting the restoration of these services, it can demonstrate its true value of citizenship, and our organisation will be keen to respond to that.



Pre-Budget Submissions and Statements

Oireachtas Finance Committee Discusses DFI Pre-Budget Submission

Chief Executive of the Disability Federation of Ireland (DFI), John Dolan, presented the organisation's 2014 Pre-Budget Submission to the Oireachtas Committee on Finance, Public Expenditure and Reform on 12 September.

He told of the "great frustration" among people with disabilities and their families, following the continuous cuts to disability services and supports in recent years.

He also warned that, without a long-term sustainable plan for disability services, "we will find a wasteland before us" when austerity measures come to an end.

"The only entity capable of underwriting confidence that services will be made available is the Government. That is both a challenge and an opportunity for the Government", he contended.

Need for planning

DFI was one of thirty-six organisations invited to discuss their pre-budget submissions to the Committee. Following his presentation, Mr Dolan faced questions from Regina Doherty TD, Seán Fleming TD, Richard Boyd Barrett TD, and Senator Aideen Hayden.

Outlining the cuts to both disability-specific and mainstream supports in recent Budgets, Mr Dolan explained that long-term, multi-annual planning is needed for the restoration and sustainability of quality services and supports. He disclosed that "we are genuinely concerned there will be so much erosion that it will be a massive problem" when the austerity drive ends.

Without this planning, he warned that the period following the country's emergence from austerity "will be a time of greater hopelessness for people than the present". He added that DFI is "up for working to some kind of template or plan and moving beyond just the austerity mode".

Challenges

Mr Dolan's remarks were met with interest from the panel of Oireachtas members present, with all agreeing that "recent years have been very tough for the disability sector".

Addressing the issues raised in his presentation, the members asked Mr Dolan to discuss

the effects of cutbacks and “cuts by stealth”, the privatization of disability services, and the possibilities of spreadsheet planning for service provision in the future.

In particular, both Deputy Fleming and Senator Hayden noted that people with disabilities have been impacted by decisions taken by the Department of Social Protection, whose need to meet spending targets, they argue, has led to the increased reclassification of disability payments.

In response, Mr Dolan explained that, as well as dealing with mainstream cutbacks, people with disabilities and their families have been dealt a blow by the disability-specific cuts and the “continuous withering away of community infrastructure”.

With regards to the privatization of services, he pointed out that all of the organisations in the voluntary disability sector, within which DFI is centred, are registered charities and “brothers and sisters of the public service”. He put forward that “the real issues are the activities, the outcomes and the changes made to peoples’ lives” by these services.

He agreed that reclassification of payments is a growing concern. “While the classification can be changed, if there are real needs and problems they do not go away. They will fester and come back. Those are the challenges”.

Stark Choices

Mr Dolan accepted that Government has financial targets in place, but reminded the Committee that sustainable social outcomes for the disability movement need to be prioritized also.

“The Government is faced with stark choices. Disability is a universal risk among the people of this country. People and families are faced with the result of decisions.”

“A bulwark or protective screen around disability, chronic illness and disabling conditions is a protection for everybody, not just for one sector of society. This would be an insurance for everybody”.

For further information, the transcript of the Committee’s discussions on DFI and other organisation’s pre-budget submissions can be found at

[http://oireachtasdebates.oireachtas.ie/Debates%20Authoring/WebAttachments.nsf/\(\\$vLookUpByConstructedKey\)/committees~20130912~FIJ/\\$File/Daily%20Book%20Unrevised.pdf?openement](http://oireachtasdebates.oireachtas.ie/Debates%20Authoring/WebAttachments.nsf/($vLookUpByConstructedKey)/committees~20130912~FIJ/$File/Daily%20Book%20Unrevised.pdf?openement)

DFI Urges Government To Protect People With Disabilities in Budget



From left to right: Michael McCabe, Centre for Independent Living; Shari McDaid, Mental Health Reform; Des Kenny, Not for Profit Business Association; Liam O'Sullivan, Care Alliance Ireland; John Dolan, Disability Federation of Ireland; Mags Rogers, Neurological Alliance of Ireland. A representative from the National Federation of Voluntary Bodies is not pictured.

The Disability Federation of Ireland (DFI) came together with a number of national voluntary disability organisations to make a joint statement to Government in advance of the upcoming Budget.

John Dolan, Chief Executive of DFI, delivered the statement on behalf of seven organisations representing the diversity of people with disabilities and disabling conditions, including mental health, at an event held in Buswell's Hotel on Monday, 30th September.

The statement, calling for the “protection of and investment in people with disabilities”, was issued on behalf of DFI, the National Federation of Voluntary Bodies, Mental Health Reform, Care Alliance Ireland, the Neurological Alliance of Ireland, Not for Profit Business Association, and the Centre for Independent Living.

Need for social inclusion

The organisations are urging Government to ensure the quality of life for people with disabilities is safeguarded and enhanced by the restoration of services and supports which have been cut over the last few years. These cuts, demonstrating a lack of understanding

of the challenges facing people with disabilities and mental health issues, undermine community-based approaches to service provision and erode the independence of the people affected by them.

“Human rights and social inclusion should not become the collateral damage of this recession”, the organisations contend. “Budget 2014 must be driven not only by fiscal considerations but by the adjacent pursuit of sustainable social outcomes”.

Speaking at the event, Mr Dolan explained that the Government’s focus in recent budgets has been largely economic. Although Government supports policy objectives which promote community living for people with disabilities, it has consistently implemented austerity measures and cutbacks which curtail social inclusion.

“We are seeing the economic take precedence over the social. The two realms have become disconnected in practice, yet remain firmly linked in reality”, the organisations stated. They are thus “seeking a rebalancing of the recovery programme” in Budget 2014, pressing Government to take action across four main areas.

Four key demands

The seven bodies have called on Government to ensure funding for services and supports for people with disabilities, and to halt reductions to the basic standard of living of people with disabilities who require welfare support. This involves Government making all public and community-based supports accessible to people with disabilities, and recognising their disproportionate likelihood of experiencing poverty.

They also recommend the elevation of the Minister of State for Disability, Equality, Mental Health and Older People role to a Cabinet Position, reflecting the fact that disability is a societal issue, affecting people of all ages and their families both directly and indirectly. The implementation of the National Disability Strategy (NDS) must be driven from Cabinet level, they say.

Finally, the organisations have asked Government to “ensure the ambition, commitment and cultural shift required in reforming the public service exists”, in order to successfully fulfil the commitments outlined in the NDS.

“Budget 2014 will provide us with a clear expression of government priorities. We need to strategically plan for social inclusion, and this planning should be demonstrated in Budget 2014. Furthermore, innovative, quality services and supports should not be targeted in this budget”.

DFI And Others Call For National Strategy To Protect Public Services

Disability Federation of Ireland (DFI) joined five other national networks in calling on Government to produce a cross-departmental strategy to protect key public services.

At an event held on 23 September, DFI, The Wheel, Care Alliance Ireland, Irish Rural Link, Carmichael Centre for Voluntary Groups and the National Youth Council of Ireland issued a joint statement appealing to Government to ensure that children, young people, people of working age, older people, people with disabilities and the people who support and work with these groups, receive the services and supports they need to live life with dignity.

The six organisations say that since the start of the economic crisis in 2008, budgets for key public services have been cut by more than 20%, bringing real hardship for people who depend on these supports. Almost 60% of charities have experienced a decrease in income over the past three years, with 60% of those experiencing a decrease of up to a quarter.

“It is our collective judgement that cumulative cuts to public expenditure have pushed our public services and social infrastructure to the point that that they are no longer sustainable”.

“Government regularly makes the important point about the need to achieve sustainability in our public finances. We agree. The challenge however is to do this while preserving our social fabric and the public services on which millions of our citizens rely”.

Ivan Cooper, Director of Advocacy at The Wheel agrees: “A successful economy depends on a successful society. We can’t have one without the other. Yet our current national recovery programme is degrading the social basis for a sustainable future”, says Ivan.

John Dolan, Chief Executive of DFI, added that the ‘chipping away’ at both disability-specific and mainstream supports in past budgets has drastically impacted the independence and quality of life of people with disabilities. “Budget 2014 must be driven not only by fiscal considerations but by the adjacent pursuit of sustainable social outcomes,” he contends.

The six organisations have offered their support to Government to help develop and implement a plan for sustainable public services. They have also committed to involving people and communities in this collective effort.



Organisational Development

Employers Must Accommodate People With Disabilities: HR Update

The Disability Federation of Ireland, together with Adare Human Resource Management, operates a support structure which allows member organisations to exclusively avail of discounted Human Resource and Employment Law Support Services.

Employment Law and HR Services At A Glance

- **Contracts** of Employment & Employee Handbooks containing policies & procedures - drafting / review / update
- **HR Helpdesk** – provision of on-going access to Phone / Email HR Advice and Support
- **Representation** at Workplace Relations Commission, Rights Commissioners, Employment Appeals Tribunal (EAT) and other external employment bodies
- **HR Consultancy Services** – Recruitment / Investigations / Dispute Management

Adare Human Resource Management (HRM) provides these services to a large number of organisations within the community and voluntary sector. Organisations are supported by ensuring legal compliance in their practices, policies and procedures, and thus minimizing the risk of exposure to legal challenges.

For more information on this service, please get in touch with your DFI Support Officer or contact Derek McKay at dmckay@adarehrm.ie or on 01-612 7092.

Alternatively, visit

<http://www.disability-federation.ie/index.php?uniqueID=50>

Reasonable Accommodation In Employment

The Employment Equality Acts 1998-2012 determine that an Employer, where needed, shall take appropriate measures to enable a person with a disability to have access to employment, to participate or advance in employment, or undergo training.

To date, in 2013, the Equality Tribunal has heard 108 cases. Of these, eighteen referenced disability in relation to employment equality decisions. Six of the

eighteen cases relating to disability were upheld by the Equality Tribunal, resulting in awards this year of over €100,000.

It is difficult to define how far an organisation must go to accommodate a current or potential employee. The key learning is that, as long as no disproportionate burden is placed on an organisation in accommodating a person with a disability, provisions should be made to facilitate their employment.

The Acts provide that a person is not required to recruit or promote an individual to a position, to retain

an individual in a position, or to provide training or experience to an individual for a particular position if the individual is not fully capable to undertake the duties of that position. The conditions under which those duties are or may be required to be performed must be considered. If, with the assistance of special treatment or facilities, a person with a disability would be fully capable of accomplishing the duties required, the Employment Equality Acts ascertain that the person shall not be regarded as other than fully competent to undertake the position.

The Acts also maintain that refusal or failure by an Employer in providing special treatment or facilities for a person with a disability is not deemed reasonable unless the provision gives rise to a cost, other than a nominal cost, to the Employer. In determining what would place a disproportionate burden on an Employer, the Act decrees that financial and other costs, the scale and financial resources of the Employer, and the possibility of obtaining public funding or assistance should be taken into consideration.

Determining “Disability”

The Employment Equality Act 1998-2012 describes “disability” as

- the total or partial absence of a person’s bodily or mental functions.
- the presence of organisms in the body which cause, or are likely to cause, chronic disease or illness.
- the malfunction, malformation or disfigurement of a part of a person’s body.
- a condition or malfunction which results in a person learning differently from a person without the condition or malfunction.
- a condition, illness or disease which affects a person’s thought processes, perception of reality, emotions or judgement, or which results in disturbed behavior. This can be taken to include a disability which exists at present, which previously existed but no longer exists, or which may exist in the future.

DFI Joins With University of Limerick To Hold Symposium

Disability Federation of Ireland (DFI) is teaming with the University of Limerick (UL) to host a symposium on quality on Friday, 29 November. The one-day symposium, taking place in UL, will examine the implementation of quality systems in the voluntary disability sector, as well as the wider community and voluntary sector in Ireland. The topic will be discussed from an Irish perspective, exploring the challenges, opportunities and achievements in this area to date.

Professor Eamon Murphy of the Department of Quality and Applied Statistics in UL is one of the key speakers, while representatives of DFI, UL, the Centre for Independent Living and Fighting Blindness will also address the event. The content of the symposium will be based on research conducted by three post-graduate students of UL, reviewing the effectiveness of DFI quality programmes and initiatives, and collaborative projects between UL and DFI.

The event will appeal to those interested in the development and application of quality systems, such as HIQA, in community and voluntary organisations, including staff, board members, volunteers, sponsors, stakeholder groups, funding organisations and regulatory bodies. For more information, contact Dermot O'Donnell on 086 780 8639, or at dermotodonnell@disability-federation.ie.

Garda Vetting Act Delayed Until November

The Garda Vetting Bureau (Children and Vulnerable Persons) Act has been delayed, Disability Federation of Ireland has learned.

Legislation for the Act was initially passed in December 2012, with the enforcement order for the Act originally planned to come in during late May or early June this year. However, DFI received confirmation from David Brennan in the Department of Justice that the Act is currently under review with the Attorney General. Amendments are expected to come through the Dáil in November.

The seminar on Garda Vetting for DFI member organisations is now planned for November, while work continues on supporting and gathering feedback from member organisations on this issue. For more information on Garda Vetting, contact your DFI Support Officer or Eleanor Uí Fhiannachta on 01 708 0101.

DFI Continues Training Programme with Charities Evaluation Services

In conjunction with the Disability Federation of Ireland (DFI), consultant trainers from the Charities Evaluation Services (CES) will deliver a number of courses in the coming months.

The courses, individually focused on outcomes monitoring, data analysis and implementation of PQASSO, will be held in the DFI Head Office on a series of dates between October and December 2013.

The courses include:

- **How to Choose an Outcomes Monitoring Database - One-day**
Tuesday 22nd October 2013
- **How to Collect, Analyse, Present and Use Data – Two day**
Wednesday and Thursday, 23rd and 24th October 2013
- **Implementing PQASSO – Two Day**
Wednesday and Thursday, 4th & 5th December 2013

The training is designed to teach participants ways to support their monitoring and evaluation, centring on real-life, up-to-date case studies. Prices for the courses range between €140 for the one-day courses and €275 for those taking place over two days. Discounts may be available for group bookings.

More detailed information on the courses can be found at <http://www.disability-federation.ie/index.php?uniqueID=10635>. To register for a place, contact Eleanor Uí Fhiannacta at eleanoruifhiannacta@disability-federation.ie. For more information on the courses, contact Dermot O'Donnell on 086-7808639 or email dermotodonnell@disability-federation.ie.

Quality and Governance Update

DFI continued its work with the Charities Evaluation Service (CES) in holding a second PQASSO Champions Network, with Champions from thirteen organisations attending. Meanwhile, a restructured work plan for delivering training in DFI by CES was agreed for 2014 with three new course options under evaluation.

With the assistance of three students from the University of Limerick (UL), work progressed on the review of the DFI quality programme. A synthesis report from this work is being compiled for the DFI/UL Symposium on quality to be held on 29 November.

Furthermore, ten member organisations were involved with implementing the PQASSO quality system in July, with a further seven members following suit in August. Five member organisations engaged with the DFI Organisation Healthcheck process during this time also.

PQASSO is a quality standards specifically designed for voluntary and community organisations, while the Organisation Healthcheck assesses the governance and capacity levels of organisations across five different areas of performance.



Health Matters

Range of Disability Services Addressed At National Consultative Forum

Health service reform and the Comprehensive Employment Strategy were among the issues addressed at the latest meeting of the HSE National Consultative Forum on Disability (NCF) in July.

The NCF encompasses representative organisations and agencies from across the disability sector, working with the Health Service Executive (HSE) to develop and promote disability service provision.

Key topics discussed at the forum also included school-leavers, and HIQA standards and regulations. The structure and process for the representation of service users at national, regional and local levels, as well as the equitable treatment of the physical and sensory disability sector, remain outstanding issues for Disability Federation of Ireland (DFI).

Feedback

DFI continues its work relating to HIQA standards, developing its position and offering support to representatives on the Advocacy and Umbrellas consultative groups. The input of DFI members in the physical and sensory sector as voluntary participants in the initial inspection round of HIQA's draft regulations has been sought; DFI thus submitted a

Feedback is also sought on the policy documents developed by the Universal Access Working Group to which DFI contributes. The Access Officer training programme is currently under development by DFI and the HSE, with the first round of training scheduled to take place in the Dublin North East area in October. DFI is in the process of contacting people with disabilities and their families to determine their interest in participating in video vignettes of their experiences in accessing mainstream health services.

Meetings of the Regional Consultative Fora have been taking place since August, following their re-convening after the summer. Issues on their agendas include the regional implementation of the National Strategies on children's services, the development of Key Performance Indicators which reflect the move to community services, and congregated settings and the development of structures for the day-places implementation.

Participation by DFI on the National Progressing Disability Services for Children and Young People, and 'Children First' in Disability Services continues. The Report on Outcomes for Children's Services has been signed off by the National Group, while the Children First Group is currently drafting a communication strategy for its engagement with other working groups in 'Children First' and the Department of Children and Youth Affairs.



National Disability Strategy: Update

DFI Set To Monitor Implementation of the National Disability Strategy

Disability Federation of Ireland (DFI) will be represented on the monitoring group of the National Disability Strategy Implementation Plan (NDSIP).

DFI aims to have concrete activity at local levels that will inform the monitoring process. The organisation welcomed the publication of the NSDIP on 23 July, but expressed concern and disappointment at its shortcomings. The NDSIP gives a re-commitment to the high level goals of people with disabilities being treated as equal citizens, independence and choice, participation, and maximising potential.

Speaking at the time of its publication, John Dolan, chief executive of DFI, stated that “although we welcome this Implementation Plan, we strongly believe that people with disabilities deserve better”.

“Overall, it lacks ambition and does not include many of the priority actions which DFI have suggested since the start of the drafting process for the Plan.”

He outlined concern that the Government lacks the ambition to pursue the goals laid out in the National Disability Strategy (NDS), with the problem of inadequate public service reform underpinning the situation. “There is a conflict between the actions stated in the NDSIP, and the reality of Government decisions that have been taken over the past number of years”.

DFI Submits Feedback on Local Government Reform

Disability Federation of Ireland (DFI) has delivered its feedback on the local government reform process to the Department of Environment, Community and Local Government.

It did this through its contribution to the Community and Voluntary Pillar’s submission to the Department. DFI provided its comments on the National Economic and Social Council’s (NESC) report on the Crisis, as well as its report on Enterprise and Employment.

DFI sent its pre-budget submission and factsheets to the Department of Finance, based on an agreed approach that, this year, each organisation in the Pillar would send in its own submission. DFI also made a submission to the Employment Schemes Advisory Committee, centred on the key priorities which DFI would like to see the committee address.

If you are interested in reading the NESC’s reports, they are available at <http://www.nesc.ie/en/publications/publications/nesc-reports/>.

DFI Hosts Frank Discussion on Free Travel Scheme

The on-going review of the Free Travel Scheme by the Department of Social Protection (DSP) has been met with “an understandable fear”, the DFI Network of Interest on DSP Issues was told at its latest meeting on 19 September.

Christopher McCamley of the DSP delivered an update of the review to the representatives of DFI and six of its member organisations present at the meeting, asking for their feedback on the latest developments.

He explained that the review is needed in light of “budgetary pressures”, with the annual cost of the Free Travel Scheme rising from €55 million in 2005 to €77 million today. About 750,000 people in Ireland are currently eligible for the scheme. However, Mr McCamley also stated that “the review isn't just to save money. It's to look at the objectives of the scheme. We're very conscious of the social inclusion element”.

While he couldn't completely rule out the abolishment of the scheme, Mr McCamley inferred that this is an unlikely conclusion of the review. He outlined a number of potential outcomes, which mainly involved the introduction of some modifications. These could include an annual charge for those availing of the scheme, restrictions on travelling at peak times, or concessionary fares (for example, free travel locally but fees for long-distance journeys, or free bus journeys but supplementary costs for taking the train).

Representatives present argued that the DSP needs to consider “the diversity of disability” and to ensure that people with disabilities are afforded the flexibility and independence they are entitled to through whatever changes may be made. Limitations on peak-time travel, for instance, could affect an individual's employment opportunities, while restrictions on long- or short-distance travel could pose accessibility issues.

Mr McCamley concluded by explaining that he doesn't “expect or intend for the review to be finished before the Budget”, inviting the forum to submit its comments and suggestions to him in the coming weeks. If you would like to add your comment to a submission to the Department on this issue, please contact Joan O'Donnell at joanodonnell@disability-federation.ie or on 01 425 0122.



The Department of Social Protection is reviewing the Free Travel Scheme, which currently costs €77 million every year.

Photo by Grant Cochrane, used with permission from freedigitalphotos.net

Submissions Sought

A number of other issues were also raised at the meeting, including the review of the Wage Subsidy Scheme (WSS). The DSP is currently reviewing the WSS, and is interested in taking people's opinions on board as part of this. Comments given before the end of September can be incorporated into the review process. If you have a view on this, please contact Joan O'Donnell as above or, alternatively, contact the Department directly at alan.chapman@welfare.ie.

The applications and appeals process for disability payments was also addressed. When the DFI Network of Interest on DSP Issues met earlier in the summer, a discussion developed around the frequency with which applications that are refused initially are granted on appeal. When the issue was taken to the DSP Stakeholder Forum, it became clear that this is also an issue that the Department is grappling with and has had to give additional resources to.

DFI Submitting New Proposals to Broadcasting Authority of Ireland

Disability Federation of Ireland (DFI), along with Dublin Community TV (DCTV), hosted a discussion on the representation of people with disabilities in the media on 30 August.

DFI is engaging with DCTV to facilitate member organisations in discussing proposals for greater transparency and commitment from broadcasters. The aim of this joint work is to improve the media portrayal and representation of people with disabilities.

The discussion addressed how the representation of people with disabilities can be improved, opinions on the current language and portrayal, and the barriers to participation for potential employees, volunteers and subjects. Ideas for an



The Broadcasting Authority of Ireland is reviewing the portrayal of people with disabilities in the media as part of its new strategy.

Photo by worradmu, used with permission from freedigitalphotos.net.

annual, televised review of how the Irish broadcast media is representing people with disabilities were also raised.

DFI and DCTV are involved in a Broadcasting Authority of Ireland (BAI) committee currently considering these issues. The two groups are to submit a proposal to the BAI/ National Disability Authority Steering Group this month to improve the process by which broadcasters review their performance in this area.

BAI Seek Submissions On New Strategy

The Broadcasting Authority of Ireland (BAI) launched a public consultation on its 2014-2016 strategy on 27 August.

A draft strategy statement, outlining its objectives for the next three years and its plans to engage with the public and broadcasting sector, has been made available as part of the consultation process. Organisations and members of the public now have until 22 October to respond to the new proposals. Submissions can be made online, by email or by post.

The draft Strategy Statement of the BAI – along with supporting information – is available at www.baifuture.ie. Submissions on the statement can be made through the website, by email to info@bai.ie, or by post to: BAI, 2-5 Warrington Place, Dublin 2.

For more information on the work with DCTV or the BAI strategy submissions, please contact Joan O'Donnell at joanodonnell@disability-federation.ie or on 086 383 4587.

Housing Needs for People with Disabilities Remain Unmet

On 15 August, Jan O'Sullivan, the Minister of State with special responsibility for Housing and Planning, announced that 260 additional social housing units would be purchased in 2013 using funds generated through various efficiency measures.

While very welcome, this capital investment is only a small dent in the level of unmet housing need. The extra units amount to only 12% of the number of households with a disability-based social housing need, as measured in the last published assessment in 2008.

Local authorities received €20 million to acquire 131 homes, while €12.2 million was allocated to the acquisition of 135 units by housing associations to “enable people with disabilities to live independently in the community”. The Housing Association for Integrated

Living (HAIL) gains 10 units in Fingal, for example, with the full list of recipients, their client group and the location of the units available on the Department's website at www.environ.ie.

Housing Adaptation Grants

After the huge cut in capital funding for these schemes in 2013, the Department of the Environment organised a review group to consider how best to use the depleted moneys. DFI representatives on the group highlighted the importance of the grants for people, pointing out that the rules must take into account the high cost of the adaptations sometimes required by those with severe disabilities, as well as the need to anticipate and plan for the future by those with progressive conditions.

That said, the Department appears determined to tighten the means test and to distribute the funds as widely as possible. The review is currently with Minister O'Sullivan. Close monitoring of the impact of the schemes should be a priority to restore the level of funding as soon as possible.

Implementation Monitoring Group

DFI participates in the Implementation Monitoring Group (IMG) for Housing Strategy for People With Disabilities. At a meeting on 10 September, the IMG discussed implementation of the strategy, with the main focus on the de-congregation programme.

Although advances were reported, with a number of residents in congregated settings having their personal plans, none of the €1 million transferred from the Department of Health to pay for leasing housing units in the community has been drawn down. As a last resort, given approval by the Department of Expenditure and Reform, the Department will try to purchase a few units since the money cannot be diverted to any other purpose.

Activity by the Housing Disability Steering Groups in the five pilot local authorities was noted. DFI was concerned that these groups address the needs of people with disabilities in the community as well as those in congregated settings. Improving local authority information on the precise needs of households close to the top of the housing list was named as a priority, for example. The National Disability Authority said that the work on the development of universal design housing guidelines was close to completion, with a costing exercise for the guidelines underway as well.

The Department is preparing a first progress report on the Strategy, due for release at the end of the year. DFI and other IMG members have submitted their views to the drafters.

DFI's Housing Group will meet again at 10.30am on 14 October to consider how the Housing Strategy is being implemented and to make further proposals towards it. If you are interested in joining this group, please contact John Doyle at johndoyle@disability-federation.ie.



News and General Information

Graduation Ceremony for Advocacy Training “A Great Success”



PJ Cleere of DFI, Linda Howe of DESSA, and Cathy McGrath of DFI at the graduation



Brid O'Neill receiving her certificate from Linda Howe of DESSA on the day; Brid is a successful participant of both courses.

DFI extends its congratulations to all the graduates of the DFI-DESSA Joint Advocacy Training Initiative on the successful completion of their training.

On Tuesday, 24 September, the thirty-four participants of the course came together in DFI Head Office for its inaugural Graduation Ceremony. Joined by family members and friends,

over forty people celebrated the hard work and shared learning experienced through the course.

PJ Cleere, Support Officer with DFI, said that the ceremony was “a great success”, adding that “the feedback on the day from family and graduates made me proud to be part of the process”.

“The environment was very positive, and several people remarked to me that it was so special and different to other graduations they had attended, that they really felt part of the proceedings and that there was genuine support for their achievement”.

The two training courses were delivered jointly by DFI and DESSA in late 2012 and earlier this year. To find out more about the courses, contact Cathy McGrath on 086 384 7440.

DFI Announces Partnership With Better Together Campaign

Disability Federation of Ireland (DFI) has been welcomed as a Non-Profit Partner of the 2013 Better Together Campaign.

The campaign, aiming to raise awareness and support for Ireland’s community and voluntary sector, launched on Tuesday, 24 September. The Better Together Video Competition and Charity Hero Awards will take place as part of it.

The partnership means that DFI will have a presence on the Better Together website, Facebook page and selected marketing material over the next twelve months, as well as being represented at the Better Together Awards in December.

Video Competition

As part of the Better Together Video Competition, charities, community groups and associations are invited to upload videos showcasing their work to the Better Together website.

Organisations can submit their videos into one of four categories – small, medium, or large non-profits, or business - depending on their size and turnover. The deadline for entries closes on 8 November.

The public have until 22 November to vote for their favourite videos, with the top forty favourite videos being shortlisted across the four categories. The winners in each of the three non-profit categories will receive a €1,000 cash prize.

Charity Hero Awards

The Charity Hero Award came about as collaboration between Better Together and the Volunteer Ireland Awards. It marks the lifetime achievements of a volunteer who has made an extraordinary contribution to a good cause. The recipient of the award is to be announced at the Better Together Awards on Thursday, 12 December 2013.

The ten longest-serving volunteers among the thirty shortlisted candidates for the Volunteer Ireland Awards are eligible for the prize. Between 6 November and 6 December, the public can vote for the award nominees through the Better Together website. An independent judging panel will select a winner from the five nominees receiving the most votes.

For more information on the Video Competition and how to enter, visit

<http://www.bettertogether.ie/2013-better-together-video-competition>. To learn more about the Charity Hero Awards, visit <http://www.bettertogether.ie/charity-hero-award>.

DFI Continues To Strengthen Its Engagement with the Media

Disability Federation of Ireland has taken an active approach in engaging with the media in recent months, increasingly becoming the “go to” organisation with regards to disability-related issues. We succeeded in having an opinion piece published in the Irish Examiner, spawning other opportunities with outlets including TV3, the Irish Times and the online news site, The Journal.



Photo by Stuart Miles, used with permission by freedigitalphotos.net

Work undertaken on our communications over the past year or so has resulted in having an intern focusing on this area, and the benefits are already visible. We have also given placements to two other interns during this time, resulting in greater support for our European work and general research support. Our work on developing a mid-term review of the current Government's performance is particularly notable here, as well as the allied work on our pre-budget position, the preparation for upcoming EU and local government elections, and the detailed submission that we contributed to the European Disability Forum (EDF) as part of their Alternative Report in the implementation of the Convention on the Rights of Persons with Disabilities within the European Union.

Call for Participation in Joint NGO Response to Upcoming Budget

The Public Interest Law Alliance (PILA) and the Equality Budgeting Campaign are to facilitate a joint civil society response to the budget next month.

The two groups are organising an event on 17 October to help NGO's representing the most vulnerable sections of society to come together in calling for a fairer budget.

A press conference and a discussion forum will be held between 1pm and 3.30pm on that date in the National Library, Kildare Street in Dublin.

Budget Reforms

The groups are appealing for reforms to the budget process, including equality impact assessments and minimum living standards on Ireland's human rights obligations.

In order to develop a joint post-budget submission on these issues, PILA will circulate a survey to be completed by the participating NGO's when the Budget is announced on 15 October. PILA and the Equality Budgeting Campaign will then assemble the responses in advance of the event to be held two days later.

A number of NGO's are already involved in the initiative. If your organisation wishes to participate in the survey and joint press conference on 17 October, contact Mairéad Healy, Project Officer of PILA, on 01 872 8048 or at mairiad.healy@flac.ie.

For more information on the Equality Budgeting Campaign, email equalitybudgetingcampaign@gmail.com or visit their website at www.equalitybudgeting.ie.

Free Event to Examine New Taxback Scheme For Charities

The Good Form Group and the Irish Charities Tax Reform group (ICTR) will hold an information meeting on the simplified tax relief scheme for charities next month.

The free event will take place between 9am and 10.30am on 1 October in the Franciscan Friary at 4 Merchant's Quay, Dublin 8.

Spaces are filling up fast, but registration is still open through the website of ICTR at <http://www.ictr.ie/civicrm/event/register?id=37&reset=1>.

Taxback Scheme

The meeting addresses how the scheme will operate, examining the new taxback forms and other related procedures. The tax relief scheme on donations to charity was simplified through Budget 2013 and the subsequent Finance Act, with the new forms, called CHY3 and 4, launched earlier in June.

The event will also provide an opportunity to report back on Phase One of the Good Form Initiative.

Good Form is a new charity taxback group launched by a consortium of twenty-six Irish charities, aiming to boost fundraising figures at no extra cost to Irish donors.

Good Form estimates that Irish charities are currently missing out on approximately €15 million a year in unclaimed taxback.

Participants will be given the chance to have their questions relating to the new taxback schemes answered, and to discuss the next steps of the Good Form Initiative.

For more information on the event and the Good Form initiative, visit <http://www.ictr.ie/content/good-form>. Alternatively, call ICTR on 01 676 9908 or email ictr@ictr.ie.



Irish charities are missing out on approximately €15 million in unclaimed taxback every year.

Photo by ambro used with permission of freedigitalphotos.net

The Advocacy Initiative Calls For Papers on Advocacy and Collaboration

The Advocacy Initiative has announced its fifth Knowledge Exchange Forum on the theme of collaboration and advocacy to be held on Wednesday, 20 November.

The forum aims to provide an opportunity to learn from experience of collaborative advocacy and explore the potential of collaboration for social justice advocacy in Ireland.

As part of this, the organisation is inviting those with experience of collaboration in this area to submit their experiences for inclusion in the event.

The Advocacy Initiative is a community and voluntary sector project that promotes understanding, awareness and effectiveness of social justice advocacy in Ireland.

It wishes to highlight examples of collaboration and gain insight into what has been learned from these experiences at the forum.

Research by the organisation shows that advocates all believe that stronger collaborations in the community and voluntary sector will lead to more effective advocacy and better social justice outcomes.

The forum will allow those involved in advocacy to explore how increased collaboration could strengthen their impact, and offer a space for peer support, learning and networking.

Interested applicants should send proposals of between 300-500 words to Anna Visser, Director of the Advocacy Initiative, at connect@advocacyinitiative.ie.

Age Action to Hold Launch of New Booklet on Income Security

Age Action is set to release its new booklet, 'Income Security: Why It Matters For Older People Everywhere', on 14th October 2013.

The booklet examines the importance of income security for older people, both in Ireland and in developing countries.

An event to mark its release takes place from 10.45am on the day in the Wood Quay Venue, based in Dublin City Council Civic Offices, Wood Quay, Dublin 8.

Joe Costello TD, Minister of State for Trade and Development, will launch the booklet, which has been published to raise awareness of the issue for the United Nations Day for the Eradication of Poverty on 17 October.

Other speakers at the event include Eppu Mikkonen-Jeanneret, Head of Policy at the NGO HelpAge International, who will speak in more detail about income security in developing countries. Robin Webster, CEO of Age Action, will chair the launch.

Age Action runs an ageing and development programme in conjunction with HelpAge International, which is funded by the Irish Aid, the government's development programme. The programme aims to promote global policies to assert and defend the rights of older people.

If you are interested in attending the launch, please register with Lianne Murphy, Development Officer of Age Action, at ageinganddevelopment@ageaction.ie or on 01 475 6989.

Aspire To Host International Conference On Autism Spectrum Disorders

Aspire, the Asperger Syndrome Association of Ireland, has joined with Trinity College Dublin to host a two-day international conference this November.

‘Challenging DSM-5’ aims to explore the DSM-5 approach to the diagnosis of children, young people and adults with an autism spectrum disorder (ASD). The conference will take place on 8 and 9 November 2013 in Trinity College.

Those interested in attending can register through the conference website at <http://challengingdsm5.org>. One-day tickets cost €150 each, with tickets for both days rising to €250. Early-bird prices and concessions are also available.

New Research

DSM-5 is the standard classification of psychiatric disorders used by mental health professionals. The objective of the conference is to analyse and discuss the impact of DSM-5 on the lives of those with an autism spectrum disorder.

A number of well-known speakers, representing a range of professional interests, will examine the implications that this system of diagnosing has for those with an ASD, their families, friends, colleagues, and teachers.

Additionally, the results of a large-scale research project conducted by Aspire and the college’s School of Education over the past nine years will be presented for the first time. The project, called ‘Social Drama’, promotes the social skills education and development of children and adolescents with an ASD.

The findings of the project have identified twelve new sub-types in the high-functioning end of the autism spectrum. The research indicates that individuals in the various sub-types initiate and respond to social interaction in different ways, holding potential for changes in future research and policy development in this field.

A live demonstration of a Social Drama class will take place at the conference. A live demonstration of this highly effective drama approach to personal and social development will be presented at the conference.

The conference is open to everyone, but is particularly aimed at those with an ASD, their families and teachers, and those with a professional interest in the field. For more information, contact Aileen Cruise on 01 878 0027 or at development@aspireireland.ie. The full programme for the conference can be found at http://app.certain.com/accounts/register123/odyseey/events/aspergers/Draft_Conference_Timetable_FS_2.pdf.

Rural Transport Day Set To Celebrate Social Inclusion in County Meath

Flexibus, a scheme under the Meath Accessible Transport Project Ltd, is hosting its Rural Transport Day on Friday, 25 October in Navan.

The event celebrates the ways in which rural transport connects communities, and supports social inclusion in County Meath. Held as part of Social Inclusion Week 2013, it takes place between 10am and 1pm in Navan Shopping Centre.



Flexibus is celebrating the importance of rural transport schemes in promoting social inclusion.

Photo by anankmkl used with permission from freedigitalphotos.net

Organisers promise music, bingo, refreshments and plenty of surprises on the day. Everyone is welcome to join in, with Meath TV will be streaming the event live on the internet at www.meathtv.com, so that nobody will miss out.

Flexibus is the community transport group operating in the Meath area, originally established in June 2002. Its services are open to people with disabilities who need accessible transport, and community groups with limited funding and transport needs, along with others. For more information, visit www.meathtransport.com.

Spaces are available for other organisations to display their stands at the event to celebrate Social Inclusion Week also. Please contact Maureen McKinley at mmckinley@meathcoco.ie if you wish to avail of this service.

For further information, please get in touch with Patricia McKenna of the Meath Accessible Transport Project on 046-9074830, or Joan O'Donnell of DFI on 086 383 4587.



Features and Opinions

Highlighting “Little Details” Of Accessibility Can Make Big Differences

Accessibility is a constant consideration for people with disabilities and their families as they go about their everyday lives.

Sets of steps, tight corners, or narrow corridors – which many people might not instantly recognize as obstacles – can make accessing or moving around a building more difficult, or even prevent it all together.

New blog

‘Legless In Dublin’, a new blog established by freelance journalist Louise Bruton, aims to raise awareness of this issue, outlining the ease of accessibility – or lack thereof – across a range of venues in the capital.

Louise, who has a walking disability from birth, had been using crutches for years, but began using a wheelchair in her early twenties after noticing that her mobility was slowing down. Starting off as a music journalist, she spent a lot of time reviewing gigs, sometimes encountering problems in the venues they were held in. Later, as her career progressed, she visited more hotels and restaurants for conferences or business meetings, finding that it could often be difficult to get information about their level of accessibility.

“Accessibility ties into both my work and my social life”, she says. “I realized there wasn’t enough detail about these places online, so you might be turning up somewhere not knowing the situation. A ‘yes’ or ‘no’ isn’t enough; I want to give a bit more information about what’s out there. I want to highlight the little details”.

These “little details” include everything from the seating, ground surface, doors, bathrooms, stairs, parking options, spaciousness, and the helpfulness of staff. Acknowledging that everyone has different levels of ability and mobility, she notes the tiny particulars of every place she visits - the slippiness of the floor, chairs that may be too heavy to lift, bathrooms which double up as storage cupboards – and marks them out of ten.

“I want the blog to be a quick guide so that people would know what’s out there and maybe make it that bit easier. A lot of people might not have had a lifelong condition, so going out

and having to consider those issues can be that bit daunting in the beginning”, she explains. “It’s had a really positive reaction; it’s been great. At first, I wasn’t sure if people would feel it’s needed, but it’s brilliant knowing that I can help people with their social lives”.

Awareness

Louise feels her work is important not only in providing useful information for people, but also in raising awareness of the issue of accessibility in general. Across the wider community, people who may not have previously considered accessibility as an issue are getting in touch to find out more.

Having reviewed numerous pubs, clubs, restaurants, cinemas and festivals already, the feedback she’s received encourages her in continuing to expand the blog. “A lot of people might never have thought about access until their attention has been brought to it, whether that’s by their own friends, family or their own experiences. I think that’s why other people find it so interesting – it’s a new way of thinking about things”.

“The plan is to go more nationwide, but I need to get more of a business plan in place to figure out exactly how I could do that first. I want to put together a steadier game-plan”.

Improvements

Martin Naughton, Support Officer with the Disability Federation of Ireland (DFI), agrees that initiatives highlighting accessibility, such as the blog, are very important. “It’s a great way of raising awareness of accessibility, and it triggers off higher expectations for people with disabilities”.

He explains that, although building regulations and equality legislation have advanced significantly in recent years, there is still some way to go to ensure full access for people with disabilities. Part M of the Building Regulations 2000, called “Access for People With Disabilities”, outlines the means by which buildings must be usable for people with disabilities, while the National Disability Authority has developed a best practice guideline, “Building For Everyone”, to promote universal accessibility also.

These set out the specifications for physical access to buildings, such as the turning space at the top of stairs, the size of the bathrooms, or the slope of ramps.

Martin recalls, “forty years ago, there was no disability strategy; there were no building codes. Today, we have tools that mean we can make places more accessible. However, they are still ignored or disrespected too often”.

“We still see inaccessible buses and taxis on the road, and inaccessible buildings are still being built. We need all public facilities and services to be accessible to everyone”.

Toni Gleeson, also a DFI Support Officer, concurs, adding that physical access isn’t the only concern. “Access is also about a state of mind. It’s about the person with a disability feeling accepted, and people around them respecting them and acknowledging their needs. It’s about embracing that mindset”.

Changing Attitudes

For Louise, that mindset is changing for the better. People are more informed and open-minded about accessibility now than ever before, she believes, and business owners and venue staff have been largely receptive to any problems she has spotlighted. Although accepting that the cost of making adjustments can be a challenge and full accessibility won’t happen overnight, she feels there is a growing sense of consideration and change.

For DFI, a positive attitude towards accessibility is an important step towards achieving full inclusion for people with disabilities. The more people are aware of the issue, the more everyone can work together to improve it. As John Dolan, Chief Executive of the organisation, points out, “if accessibility is improved for people with disabilities, it is ultimately improved for everyone in society”.

To find out more about ‘Legless in Dublin’ and to read Louise’s reviews, visit <http://leglessindublin.blogspot.ie/>.



Part M of the Building Regulations outline the guidelines for accessibility which planners and architects must adhere to

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DFI MEMBER ORGANISATIONS | NEWSLETTER DIRECTORY

For information, please contact the relevant organisation directly.

Ability - Newsletter of the Irish Association for Spina Bifida and Hydrocephalus, Tel: 01 4572329, E-mail: info@iasbah.ie

Acquired Brain Injury Ireland Newsletter, Tel 01 2804164 email: cbrack@abiireland.ie

http://www.abiireland.ie/docs/ABII_Newsletter_Spring_2010.pdf

Arthritis Ireland - Newsletter—Tel: 01 661 8188

E-mail: info@arthritisireland.ie

Aspire - Asperger Syndrome Association of Ireland. 01-8780027/9, E-mail: admin@aspire-irl.org

Asthma Society News - Tel: 01-8788511,

E-mail: office@asthmasociety.ie

Brainstorm - Migraine Association of Ireland, Tel: 01-8064121,

E-mail: info@migraine.ie

Brainwave - Quarterly Newsletter, Tel: 01 4557500, E-mail: info@epilepsy.ie

Care Alliance Ireland - E-mail: ndo@carealliance.ie

Clar na nÓg - National Youth Council of Ireland Tel: 01-4784122 E-mail: info@nyci.ie

Cleft Lip and Palate Association of Ireland - www.cleft.ie/newsletter/index.htm, Tel: (01) 2848227,

E-mail: georginawade@cleft.ie

Community Exchange Newsletter, E-mail: info@activelink.ie

Tel: +1 667 7326

Connect - Irish Motor Neuron Disease Association. E-mail: info@imnda.ie Freefone 1800 403 403

Community Workers' Co-operative – Community Work News. E-mail: info@cwcc.ie Tel: +353 (0) 91 779 030

Cornerstone - Homeless Agency - <http://www.homelessagency.ie/research/cornerstone.asp>, Tel: 01 7036100 , E-mail: homeless@dublincity.ie

Debra Ireland Newsletter, Tel: 01 678 5044, E-mail: info@debraireland.org

Down Syndrome Ireland - Tel: 01-8730999, E-mail: info@downsyndrome.ie

Enable Ireland - Newsletter—Tel: 1850 204 304 E-mail:

communications@enableireland.ie

Equality News - Tel: 01-4173333, E-mail: info@equality.ie

E-Info Deaf Source— E-mail: info@irishdeafcommunity.ie Tel: +353 1860 1878

Féach - Support to parents of blind and visually impaired children. Tel: 01 493 1896, E-mail: info@feach.ie

Fighting Blindness - Tel: 01 7093050, E-mail: avril.daly@fightingblindness.ie

Frontline of Learning Disability -Tel: 01-2862649. E-mail: frontline@indigo.ie

GROWing - Information on Mental Health, Tel: 1890 474 474, E-mail: info@grow.ie

Guidelines - Irish Guide Dogs Association. Tel: 021 4878200 E-mail: info@guidedogs.ie

Headway Ireland - National Association for Acquired Brain Injury - 'Making Headway', Tel: 01-8102066, E-mail: info@headway.ie

Heart News: - Newsletter of Irish Heart Foundation. Tel: 01 668 5001 E-mail: info@irishheart.ie

Heartstrings - Newsletter of Heart Children Ireland, published quarterly, Tel: 1850 217017

E-mail: heartchildren@eircom.net

Heatwave - Irish Raynauds Scleroderma Society, E-mail: info@irishraynauds.com Tel: 01 2020184

HOPE - Huntington's Disease Association of Ireland. Tel: 01-872 1303, E-mail: hdai@indigo.ie

Inclusion Ireland - Tel: 01 8559891,

E-mail: info@inclusionireland.ie

Irish Deaf News - Irish Deaf Society. Minicom: 01-8601910; 01-8601878; E-mail: info@irishdeafcommunity.ie

Irish Wheelchair Association - 'Spokeout', Tel: 01-8186 400, E-mail: Joanna.marsden@iwa.ie

Kerry Network of People with Disabilities - Network News 066-7180611, E-mail: kerryPWD@eircom.net

MS News—Newsletter of MS Ireland. Tel: 01 6781600, E-mail: info@ms-society.ie

Muscular Dystrophy Ireland - MDI News Update Tel: 01-6236414, or 01- 6236415 E-mail: info@mdi.ie

DeafHear.ie - Link Magazine - Tel: 01 8723800, E-mail: info@deafhear.ie Minicom: (01) 817 5777

NCBI News - Newsletter of the National Council for the Blind of Ireland, Tel: 01 8307033, E-mail: press@ncbi.ie www.ncbi.ie

Neuro News - Neurofibromatosis Association of Ireland, Tel: 01-8726338, E-mail: nfaireland@eircom.net

People First - Central Remedial Clinic Tel: 01-8057400 E-mail: vmmcutch@crc.ie

Post Polio Support Group - Newsletter, Tel: 071 64791 E-mail: newsletter@ppsg.ie

Poverty Today - Combat Poverty Agency. Tel:01-670 6746

Rehab News -Tel: 01-2057200 E-mail: dara.duffy@rehab.ie

Social Housing - Irish Council for Social Housing Tel: 01-6618334;

E-mail: info@icsh.ie

Sonas aPc – Tel (01) 2608138. www.sonasapc.ie.

Speaking up for Advocacy – Citizens Information Board Newsletter on advocacy. Tel: 01 6059035, E-mail: mairide.woods@ciboard.ie

Volunteer Stroke Scheme News- Tel: 01-4559036. E-mail: info@strokescheme.ie

Wheel E-Bulletin Tel:01- 454 8727,

E-mail: info@wheel.ie



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**Representing the interests and expectations of people with disabilities to be fully included
Comprising organisations that represent and support people with disabilities**

The Disability Federation of Ireland (DFI) represents the interests and the expectations of people with disabilities to be fully included in Irish society. It comprises organisations that represent and support people with disabilities and disabling conditions.

The vision of DFI is that Irish society is fully inclusive of people with disabilities and disabling conditions so that they can exercise their full civil, economic, social and human rights and that they are enabled to reach their full potential in life. DFI's mission is to act as an advocate for the full and equal inclusion of people with disabilities and disabling conditions in all aspects of their lives.

There are over 120 organisations within membership or as associates of DFI. DFI also works with a growing number of organisations and groups around the country that have a significant disability interest, mainly from the statutory and voluntary sectors. DFI provides:

- Information
- Training and Support
- Networking
- Advocacy and Representation
- Research and Policy Development / Implementation
- Organisation and Management Development

DFI works on the basis that disability is a societal issue and so works with Government, and across the social and economic strands and interests of society.

For further information, go to www.disability-federation.ie

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