



DFI Pre-Budget Submission 2016

No Recovery Without us

Disability affects everyone. People need a form of social insurance that provides for adequate income and support services. However at present our social infrastructure is not equipped to adequately respond in time when we, or someone we love, acquires a disability. The Taoiseach has told us that *'recovery has taken hold¹* in Ireland. We want to see this demonstrated for people with disabilities in Budget 2016 and in the run up to the General Election. Our message is clear; there should be 'no recovery without us'. If the goal is to have a positive legacy for people with disabilities then the Government must act now.

- 1 Increase disability payments by €20 per week, as an interim measure, to offset the cost of disability.
- 2 Restore the respite care grant to pre-austerity levels by increasing it by €325 per annum.
- 3 Introduce a disability tax credit, similar to the Blind Persons tax credit.
- 4 Grant medical cards based on medical need, not income.
- 5 Make all employment activation programmes eligible to people with disabilities.
- 6 Increase the Housing Adaptation Grant by €30 million to support people with disabilities currently living in communities.
- 7 Cut waiting lists for specialist and mainstream health services by 50% by 2017.
- 8 Increase the disability health budget by at least €50 million each year for the next three years.
- 9 In addition, increase the budget for Personal Assistant services by at least €15 million each year for the next three years.
- 10 Invest an additional €20 million in capital expenditure and €10 million in revenue on a multi-annual basis, to implement the 'Time to Move On from Congregated Settings' report.

Disability Federation of Ireland calls for the following:

Adequate income and activation supports

- 1 Increase disability payments by €20 per week.
- 2 Restore the respite care grant by €325 per annum.
- 3 Introduce a disability tax credit, similar to the Blind Persons tax credit.
- 4 Grant medical cards based on medical need, not income.
- 5 Make all employment activation programmes eligible to people with disabilities.

In Budget 2016, this Government must ensure that all people with disabilities have an adequate income that supports them to live with dignity, in accordance with their human rights. As an interim measure, DFI is calling for an increase of €20 to disability payments to offset some of the additional costs of disability, as well as the protection of all supplementary benefits. All activation programmes must be accessible to people with disabilities, regardless of the social welfare payment they are receiving.

Measures can be put in place to 'make work pay' for people with disabilities, including providing a Disability Tax Credit and medical card based on need. The Respite Care Grant was cut by over €300 in 2013 (19%) and we are asking that this be restored to pre-austerity levels.

Access to vital healthcare and personal care services

- 1 Increase the disability health budget by at least €50 million each year for the next three years.
- 2 Cut waiting lists for specialist and mainstream health services by 50% by 2017.
- 3 Increase the budget for Personal Assistant services by at least €15 million each year for the next three years.

The budget for disability services has been reduced by €159.4 million or 9.4% since 2008. This has had a negative impact on both disability specific and mainstream health services. These include essential community based services that support people's health and participation in their communities.

A properly resourced primary and community care infrastructure is required to provide for people with disabilities' needs and to respond to growing demand. The cumulative impact of successive austerity budgets, along with the gross under-resourcing of critical health services has resulted in increasing delays in treatment and growing numbers of people on waiting lists. We are asking the Government to introduce tangible performance targets with regard to waiting lists.

Disability matters! You or a member of your family will be affected by a disability or chronic illness during your lifetime.



Adequate housing and services to support living and inclusion in the community

- 1 Increase the Housing Adaptation Grant by €30 million.
- 2 Invest an additional €20 million in capital expenditure and €10 million in revenue on a multi-annual basis, to implement the 'Time to Move On from Congregated Settings' report.

Inadequate housing in the community remains a concern for the 600,000 people with disabilities living in the community. Despite an ageing population and the growing numbers of people with disabilities, funding for the Housing Adaptation Grant Scheme was cut by a staggering 56% from 2010 to 2014. Longer waiting lists for the Scheme and people living in intolerable conditions have been reported. With 'recovery taking hold' this funding needs to be restored. Access to appropriate social housing remains highly problematic for people with disabilities.

It is unacceptable that 2,900 people with disabilities are living in congregated settings. They are deprived of the basic human right to live in the community with choices that are equal to others. This figure does not include the growing number of people with disabilities hidden in nursing homes. Even if the current target of moving 150 people per year were met, it would take another 20 years to de-congregate everyone. These delays and the inability of the relevant government departments to take responsibility for the funding of appropriate housing demonstrates a lack of priority or sense of urgency for people with disabilities.

Disability Can Happen to Any One of Us!

People with disabilities are the largest minority group in Ireland and the only group that any one of us can become a member of at any time...

- At least 1 in 10 adults of working age have a disability (15-64 years)
- On average 120-130 children are born with Down Syndrome every year².
- An estimated 500 children are living with Spina Bifida in Ireland³.
- Around 915,000 people, including 1,100 children, are living with arthritis, making it the single biggest cause of disability⁴.
- The likelihood of acquiring a disability increases with age:

- **1 in 3** adults over 65 years has a disability



- **3 out of 4** females over 85 years has a disability



- In Ireland, each year approximately 10,000 people have an acquired brain injury and they face a dramatically altered life there after⁵.
- There are approximately 4,000 people under the age of 65 living with dementia in Ireland today, and 47,849 nationally⁶.
- There are approximately 187,112⁷ family carers in the Republic of Ireland, two thirds of whom are women and caring for someone with a disabling condition.

Make Disability Your Priority in Budget 2016

People with disabilities have the same general healthcare needs as everyone else

BUT

- In April 2015, 21,821 people remained on **waiting lists** for speech and language assessments and interventions⁸.
- More than 15,300 people were waiting for assessment by an occupational therapist, with 2,409 children waiting for **over a year**⁹.
- 28,749 people were waiting for a physiotherapy assessment in April 2015¹⁰.
- There is a growing waiting list for Personal Assistant services (207) and home help services (296)¹¹.

People with disabilities can and want to work where possible

BUT

- Intreo offices do not provide a comprehensive service to people with disabilities.
- Programmes arising from the Youth Guarantee are not open to young people on disability and illness payments¹².

- The MOMENTUM programme which funds free education and training for long-term unemployed is not open to people on disability and illness payments.

People with disabilities can live life to the full with an adequate income

BUT

- Living with a disability in Ireland can have extra costs ranging from €207 to €276 per week¹³.
- Families where the head of the household is unemployed due to chronic illness or disabilities are amongst the poorest in the country¹⁴.

The Disability Federation of Ireland (DFI) represents the interests and the expectations of people with disabilities to be fully included in Irish society.

References

- 1 Speech by An Taoiseach at St. Patrick's Day Parade – Dignitaries Breakfast, Atlanta. Saturday, 14 March 2015 – See more at: <http://bit.ly/1JthPNV>
- 2 Down Syndrome Ireland.
- 3 Governey, Sarah, Culligan, Eimear, Leonard, Dr. Jane (2014), The Health and Therapy Needs of Children with Spina Bifida in Ireland, Temple Street Children's University Hospital.
- 4 Arthritis Ireland www.arthritisireland.ie.
- 5 Acquired Brain Injury Ireland <http://www.abiireland.ie/about.html>
- 6 Department of Health (2014), The Irish National Dementia Strategy, Government of Ireland
- 7 Department of Health (2012), The National Carers' Strategy, Government of Ireland
- 8 Figures are relevant as of April 2015 and were provided to Róisín Shortall TD through a Parliamentary Question (PQ Ref. No. 18511/15).
- 9 Figures are relevant as of April 2015 and were provided to Róisín Shortall TD through a Parliamentary Question (PQ Ref. No. 18511/15)
- 10 Figures are relevant as of April 2015 and were provided to Róisín Shortall TD through a Parliamentary Question (PQ Ref. No. 18511/15).
- 11 HRB (2014) Table 3.4 Future Requirement for Personal Assistance and Support Services. These figures are an under-estimation of the true need of services due to the voluntary nature of the database, and because need and future need is self-reported.
- 12 The Youth Guarantee, supported by central EU funding of €6 billion, is to provide young people under the age of 25 with a good quality offer of employment, continued education, an apprenticeship or a traineeship within 3 months of becoming unemployed.
- 13 Cullinan, John (NUIG) / Lyons, Seán (2014), 'The Private Economic Cost of Disability' Table 4.2 ESRI
- 14 The Survey on Income and Living Conditions indicates that 53% of people not at work due to disability or illness experience enforced deprivation, an increase of over 30% since 2008.



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