



**DFI Guide to issues of relevance to the Disability Sector contained in the
new Social Partnership Agreement
“Towards 2016” ***

20th June 2006

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* Please note that this document is not an analysis of the Agreement. It is put together to assist you to focus on particular areas of interest for the disability sector and should be read along with the Agreement

1. Overarching Comments

- Page 2 states that the shared overall goal for the Agreement is to realise the NESC vision for Irish society by: “nurturing the complementary relationship between social policy and economic prosperity.” This reasserts that the economic and the social are the two sides of the one coin, as expressed through the NESC Strategy and the Developmental Welfare State.
- Part One of the Document is of most relevance to the Disability Sector, in particular Chapter 3, ‘The Life Cycle Framework’ and Chapter 4, ‘Implementation Arrangements’.
- Page 30: states that the key lifecycle stages are Children, People with Disabilities, Older People and People with Disabilities (who, in accordance with the policy of mainstreaming, will benefit from measures at all stages of the life cycle). This ensures that disability is present throughout the life cycle.

2. Lifecycle Stages

People with Disabilities Ch 3 (pp 60 – 64)

National Disability Strategy

- The Agreement outlines the vision for people with disabilities (p.60)
- The framework within which the commitments are outlined in the Agreement is within the National Disability Strategy. There is a commitment to publish a document which will pull together the different elements of the National Disability Strategy. (p.60)
- Implementation of the National Disability Strategy will also take account of linkages with other relevant strategies and policies.
- Cross departmental issues will be dealt with in a coherent manner.

Priority Actions

Health and Education (p.61)

- Part 2 of the Disability Act and the Education for Persons with Special Educational Needs Act will be implemented.

- Person centred supports will continue to be provided for long stay residents in psychiatric hospitals, with a view to their movement back into community living.
- Person centred supports will continue to be provided to ‘adults with significant disabilities’ having regard to the support needs they require.
- Establishing the Social Services Inspectorate on a statutory basis through the legislation for the establishment of HIQA
- Developing a strategic integrated approach to rehabilitation services within the context of the Multi-Annual Investment Programme with a view to supporting people back into employment.
- Guidelines to ensure that the investment in the National Disability Strategy delivers value for money and tangible benefits for people with disabilities will be developed.

Employment (p.62)

- Vocational training and employment services for people with disabilities will be consolidated and progressed.
- The potential for extending the NEAP FÁS referral process to people with disabilities in the context of their special needs and mainstreaming, will be explored.
- Public service employment in accordance with the provisions of the Disability Act.
- Workway Initiative will be used to inform future policy and best practice in relation to the employment of people with disabilities.

National Standards (p.62)

- National Standards will be introduced in respect of specialist health and personal social services, taking account of the draft standards already produced by the NDA.

Income (p.62)

- Work for the continued enhancement and integration of supports in line with overall social welfare commitments and targets. Other issues around cost of disability are to be considered following the development of a needs assessment system provided for under the Disability Act.

Housing and Accommodation (p 62-63)

- A commitment to develop a National Housing Strategy for People with Disabilities.

Information and Advocacy Services (p.63)

- The development of information and advocacy services for people with disabilities (particularly under new legislation for the development of the new personal advocacy service). This will complement the other advocacy and support functions of Comhairle in relation to people with disabilities.

Transport

- The question of accessible public transport will be addressed in the Sectoral Plan being developed by the Department of Transport.

Governance Framework

Monitoring Progress (p63)

- Progress Reports will be prepared on sectoral plans after three years and the Disability Act will be reviewed after 5 years.
- There will be bi-annual meetings between senior officials and other stakeholders in relation to progress on the National Disability Strategy
- Departmental Strategy Statements will take account of service accessibility and sectoral plan measures, where relevant.
- The Government commitment to amend the Cabinet Handbook to incorporate a requirement that all substantive memoranda submitted to Government to take account of the impact on people with disabilities, has found expression in the Agreement.
- The role of the voluntary disability sector as advocate and service delivery mechanism is recognised.
- A National Carers Strategy will be developed.

Research and Data (p.64)

- The implementation of the National Health Information Strategy recommendations to use a unique patient identifier and the development of an electronic health care record, will be progressed.
- The use of the National Longitudinal Study of Children will be used to identify children who have been diagnosed with having a disability by age 9 months, 3 years, 9 years and 13 years. This study will allow for prevalence and incidence of disability to be recorded.
- Reporting arrangements have been put in place in relation to spending under the multi-annual investment programme.

Lifecycle Stage - Children

- As outlined in p.30, people with disabilities are included at every stage in the lifecycle and consequently, where relevant, commitments relating to children, should also be inclusive of children with disabilities.
- There are a number of relevant commitments relating to early childhood education and care for children with disabilities and to address early school leaving (p.32)

Education

- An additional 100 posts will be provided for the National Educational Welfare Board and the National Educational Psychological Service by 2009. (p33)
- The Development of Special Educational Needs Services in the framework of the Education for Persons with Special Educational Needs Act will be progressed. (p34)

Health

- Child and adolescent community mental health teams will be developed under the framework of 'A Vision for Change'. (p.35)
- A new strategic health promotion policy will be developed by end 2007. (p35)

Income Supports

- Work aimed at assisting children in families on low incomes will be progressed as a priority. (p37)

Children and their families

- A study of the extent to which children carry out inappropriate care roles will be undertaken. Based on the outcome of this study, a programme of in-home supports will be developed to alleviate specific problem areas identified for children. (p37)
- Integrated services and interventions for children at local level will be developed. (p38)

Lifecycle Stage - People of Working Age

- As outlined in p.30, people with disabilities are included at every stage in the lifecycle and consequently, where relevant, commitments relating to people of working age, should also be inclusive of people of working age with disabilities.

Access to Employment: (pp 43-44)

- There should be a greater focus on activation and participation through an integrated approach across programmes
- Extension of the National Employment Action Plan referral process to people with disabilities.
- Funding for the Community Services Programme which targets, amongst other groups, people with disabilities, will be further increased.

Income

- Advancing the NAPS target of €150 per week in 2002 terms for lowest social welfare rates by 2007 (p44)
- The standard means test for SWA rent supplement will be kept under review.

Education

- Provide additional supports for students with disabilities to enhance access to further and higher education. (p42)
- Increase participation in Lifelong Learning (p42-43)
- Formulate a National Skills Strategy.
- Prioritise adult literacy in the area of adult education
- The Back to Education Initiative will be expanded by 2000 places by 2009. (p42 – 43).
- Develop a strategic approach to rehabilitation services through the Multi – Annual Investment Programme (p46)
- Commitments relating to caring responsibilities. (p46 – 47)

Health

- Development of person-centred primary care service through multi-disciplinary teams and networks. New service arrangements will facilitate the delivery of services on an integrated basis, both within the community sector and across the health sector as a whole. (p45)
- A commitment to developing 300 primary care teams by 2008, 400 by 2009, and 500 by 2011. (p45)
- Review all existing eligibility legislation and drafting legislation that clarifies and simplifies eligibility entitlements to health services. (p.45)
- Deliver tangible reductions in waiting times for public patients. (p.45)
- Develop high-quality community based mental health services (p45)
- Review the eligibility criteria for assessment for medical cards (p.46)
- Further develop palliative care in Ireland. (p46)
- 2007 HSE Corporate Plan will, include a section devoted to Consistency and Social Inclusion which is to contain details of initiatives being pursued by the HSE. (p46)

- Commitment to consultation with the CV Pillar on the health aspects of the agreement and the health reform programme. (p52)

Housing and Sustainable Communities

- Ensuring housing supports which maximise individual choice and personal autonomy (p47)

Research and Data

- The Office for Social Inclusion will continue to work on developing a data strategy to enable effective monitoring of policies to combat poverty and social exclusion. (p52)

Lifecycle Stage - Older People

- As outlined in p.30, people with disabilities are included at every stage in the lifecycle and consequently, where relevant, commitments relating to older people, should also be inclusive of older people with disabilities.

Long Term Care Services

- An infrastructure of care for older people will be developed (P.54)
- The DoHC and HSE will establish a structured consultation with social partners on the development of policy in relation to long term care issues for older people.

Housing and Accommodation

- There is a commitment to ensure that future Housing Action Plans address special needs in a more strategic manner and specify, in particular, the role of the voluntary and co-operative housing sectors in meeting the associated accommodation requirements. (p56)
- The range of responses include, for older people on lower incomes, the availability of disabled persons and essential repairs grants scheme and the special scheme of housing aid for the elderly, which allow people to remain in their own homes (p56)

Transport

- Ensure mobility for older people, having particular regard to the transport needs of older people with disabilities. (p57)

Health

- Ensuring that older people will be provided with the appropriate access to a full range of health services to suit their needs, including primary care, acute care and mental health care. (p57)
- Innovative measures: pilot programmes of care for older people / home support packages. (p.58)
- Community Intervention teams will assist in preventing avoidable hospital admission and the facilitation of early discharge from hospitals (p.59)

3. Implementation Mechanisms

Implementation mechanisms and monitoring are dealt with in different places and at different levels in the document as set out below.

Implementation of the Lifecycle Approach Chapter 3

- **(pp 65 – 67)** The section relates to disability, but is not only specific to disability, and there are a number of useful commitments under various headings, including “Role of the Community and Voluntary Sector” and “Funding the Community and Voluntary Sector”.
- **Regarding people with disabilities: pp 63 – 64**

Implementation mechanisms (Chapter 4)

- The text states that the agreement will require:
 - A capacity to adapt flexibly to required institutional and service and delivery changes at both national and local level.
 - Learning from insights provided by the Lifecycle Framework
 - Evidence about effectiveness of different interventions in terms of outcomes
 - An ongoing commitment to reform and modernisation in the public service
 - The development of effective networks across public, voluntary and private sectors.
- There is a commitment from Government to involving the social partners in the development of policy and that this will happen through the provision of meaningful opportunities for the social partners to input into policy and the design of implementation of arrangements.
- The National Economic and Social Development Office (NESDO) is set out, under “Institutions of Social Partnership” (P.68) as the overarching institutional framework to support the process of social partnership. It then sets out how NESD, NESF and NCPP will operate within that framework.

- Under “Mechanisms for Implementation”, (P.69), it is stated that there will be a Steering Group representing Government and each of the social partnership pillars.
- The next heading, “Developing the Lifecycle Approach” (P.69), commences with the following paragraph:

“The lifecycle approach adopted in this agreement offers the potential of a more streamlined, outcomes-focused approach to monitoring and reporting on progress within social partnership across key national strategies such as the NAP Inclusion and NDP 2007-13. It is also envisaged that the next NAP Inclusion would also be based around the lifecycle framework. It will also be necessary to ensure an appropriate gender dimension, through linkage to the forthcoming National Women’s Strategy. This approach will also facilitate communication of progress under these strategies to the wider public.”

- Attention is then given to “Data / Information”, followed by “Integrating Delivery at Local Level”, before the chapter concludes with a short section called “Monitoring and Review Arrangements” (P. 71), which deals with:
 - Social partners annual meeting with the political process, chaired by the Taoiseach
 - Quarterly plenary meetings of the four social partnership pillars
 - A formal review of the agreement during 2008

Other Commitment to Implementation

Within Part 2 of the agreement, “Pay, the Workplace”, and “Employment Rights and Compliance”, there are useful commitments at 30.5 (P. 47) in relation to the Health Sector, and at 32.16 (P.64), “National Disability Strategy”, in relation to the Local Government Sector.