

Budget 2016: Recovery needs ‘to take hold’ for people with disabilities

September 2015 – We, the under-signed national voluntary disability organisations¹, representing the diversity of people with disabilities, including mental health, and their families make this joint statement to Government regarding Budget 2016.

Disability can happen to any one of us – at least one in 10 adults of working age have a disability. People with disabilities and their families therefore, need a form of social insurance that in the event of disability in their family, they will be provided with an adequate income and the disability support services they require. 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 hold’ in Ireland². We want to see this demonstrated for people with disabilities in Budget 2016 and in the run up to the General Election.

Budget 2016 will provide us with a clear expression of government priorities. To-date, we have seen that the economic has taken precedence over the social with a whole series of cuts to the services and supports that are essential for people with disabilities who are striving to live healthy lives and participate in their communities.

We are calling for investment in our social and community infrastructure, to enable people with disabilities live full and independent lives, not lives hampered by barriers, and obstacles to inclusion. Fairness has to be a priority for the next government.

If one of the goals of this government is to leave a positive legacy for people with disabilities, then this needs to be tangibly demonstrated in Budget 2016.

We are seeking demonstrable change in the following areas that support sustainable social outcomes:

1. Improve income and activation supports for 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.

This means the Government must demonstrate how it plans to address the extra costs of disability people face as well as their disproportionate likelihood of living in poverty.

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² 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. Improve resourcing of disability specific services that enable people with disabilities to live independently and with dignity.

The budget for disability services has been reduced by €159.4 million or 9.4% since 2008. This has had a negative impact on disability specific services, as well as on mainstream health services. This budget provides for the essential community based services that support people's health, independent living 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 services for people with disabilities across the health, social care, education, labour market, and housing areas has resulted in a seriously damaged infrastructure to meet their needs.

3. Improve resourcing of the mainstream community infrastructure supports to ensure people with disabilities are able to access these on a par with every other citizen.

We want to stress the importance of the principle that people with disabilities have the same fundamental rights as all members of the community. The majority of people with disabilities live in their communities, and rightly so, wish to be able to access the same community services and supports as their non-disabled counterparts. Similarly, people with disabilities who are living in inappropriate settings, wish to live in their communities, with the provision of the necessary supports.

However, living in the community presents many challenges for people with disabilities including barriers in accessing mainstream services as well as the capacity of these services to meet people's needs.

This government must ensure that budget planning for community services takes the needs of people with disabilities into account.

Signed:

Care Alliance Ireland

Center for Independent Living

Disability Federation of Ireland

Genetic and Rare Diseases Ireland

Inclusion Ireland

National Federation of Voluntary Bodies

Neurological Alliance of Ireland

Not for Profit Business Association

Mental Health Reform