



Disability Federation of Ireland

An Advocate for the Voluntary Disability Sector
Supporting Organisations to Enable People with Disabilities

NEWSLETTER BUDGET SPECIAL

Recession – Reasons to Progress the National Disability Strategy

Now is not the time for the Government to run “at half mast” in relation to its commitment to a National Disability Strategy. The recession is no excuse for failing to meet commitments to disabled people. The Government has put a plan in place to deal with the banking collapse and, more recently, to deal with our deficit. Government committed, over a year ago, “to prioritise the interests of people with disabilities and draw up a Plan to actively advance the implementation of the National Disability Strategy throughout the recession”. That plan is still not agreed by Government despite calls from DFI since the Supplementary Budget of April 2009.

Disability is something that individuals and their families cannot insure against. In this sense the National Disability Strategy is the State underwriting against that need and the commitment to prioritise disability is to be seen as a comfort and support to the general community in these very difficult times.

The recession has thrown up opportunities, as well as challenges, to achieve change in a cost-effective manner while progressing the inclusion of people with disabilities in day to day life. We have to find ways to deliver more with less. There is a growing need for services, recession or no recession. While Ireland is experiencing difficult economic times, it is essential that the impetus of the National Disability Strategy is maintained, and that disability remains high on the Government agenda.

The €8 per week cut in income supports, as announced in the Budget, is a “serious blow to disabled people and their families”. Government has long acknowledged that people with disabilities have extra costs in relation to their ordinary day-to-day living on items such as food, heating, clothing, and transport. DFI is very concerned that more and more people with disabilities are receding into poverty and away from inclusion.

This further cut comes on top of the 6% cut last year, and is again being made on means-tested income. It must be remembered that disabled people are subject to cuts in general, and to the extra demands being made on their income. There is no evidence in this Budget of overall protection of this vulnerable group, and the consequence of this is that more disabled people will experience poverty. This is something that DFI will fight against throughout 2011.

The maximum cut of 1.8% to the disability and mental health budgets came as a great relief in the context of the overall cut of 5% to the health budget. From the statement by Minister Moloney on the 3rd of December (International Disability Day), which set out the key themes emerging from the Value for Money process, it is clear that organisations need to start the year by implementing changes that will give better value for money in the context of ensuring person centred services. While funding is decreasing we well know that the demand and need for services is increasing. That is the challenge for the year ahead.

John Dolan
Chief Executive Officer

Merry
Christmas

To all our membership from the Board, Management and Staff of DFI, thank you for all your support during the past year. Happy Christmas and a prosperous new year to you all



HEALTH

Special Consideration for Disability and Mental Health Funding

DFI broadly welcomes the decision by the Minister for Health and Children, Mary Harney T.D. that the HSE is not to apply an across the board expenditure reduction, and that the special needs of people with disabilities and mental ill-health are recognised. The Minister announced that there should be less reductions in the budgets for disability and mental health services, and correspondingly greater reductions in the allocations for acute hospital services. In her press release she stated:

“In the case of disability and mental health, I am particularly anxious that the momentum underway to reform and modernise service delivery is supported. This is the basis on which the HSE has been asked to priorities these areas. Overall, the challenge for all service areas will be to continue to take costs out of the system while maintaining and developing much needed services for the public.”

We are pleased that DFI's year long budget campaign has paid off with the announcement by Minister Moloney that the disability and mental health sector is to be cut by 1.8%. While this cut will still impact on the provision of services to disabled people, we recognise that it is significantly less compared to other areas of the health budget and to what had been communicated to DFI in advance of the Budget. The HSE had determined the need to achieve a savings efficiency target of 5-7% in funding to disability service providers. We will now work to determine the extent of funding cuts to our members in light of the announcement made in Budget 2011.

DFI is conscious of the need to protect funding voted by the Oireachtas for disability and mental health. In 2007 the Comptroller and Auditor General Annual Report exposed the fact that €53m of funds voted for disability and mental health services was redirected to meet the costs of overspending in the hospitals. In 2008, a further €17million of funding under the Multi-Annual Funding commitment was not spent.

It remains unclear as to whether the Government will exercise the power which it has under the Health Act 2004 to issue directions to the Health Executive to ring fence disability and mental health funding. DFI will continue to demand that funding for the disability service programme is spent on vital supports for people with disabilities and is not redirected to cover over spending in the wider health services.

Additional Funding for Disability and Suicide Prevention

DFI welcomes the additional €10m funding being provided to the HSE for disability in 2011. This is to meet anticipated extra demand in respect of emergency residential, respite and personal/home support hours for people with disabilities, and day places for school leavers in September 2011. In addition, Minister Moloney committed to ensuring that the HSE would manage the additional resources so that existing support needs, and demands for additional places and supports, are managed effectively within the overall allocation and reductions.

An additional €1m was also announced for the prevention of suicide. This funding is to enable the National Office for Suicide Prevention (NOSP) to build on initiatives to date and bring added momentum and new impetus to its efforts to address the increasing risk of suicide. The following areas were identified for targeting:

- Develop the number and range of training and awareness programmes;
- Improve and standardise the response to deliberate self harm;
- Develop the capacity of primary care to respond to suicidal behaviour and consider new models of response;
- Ensure that helpline supports for those in emotional distress are coordinated and widely publicised.

Minister Barry Andrews T.D. announces Youth Café Funding Scheme

Minister for Children and Youth Affairs, Mr. Barry Andrews T.D., announced details of the allocation of €1.5 million to 64 projects throughout the country to support the development of both existing and new youth cafés. The most significant share of the funds is being made available to individual projects to facilitate the setting up of new youth cafés, with approximately 22% of the funds being earmarked to support existing youth cafés that wish to improve or expand their existing services or facilities.

DFI has had meaningful engagement with the Office for the Minister for Children (OMC) and welcomes this innovative funding stream. We recognise the need to have safe recreational facilities for young people and dedicated youth services. Young people with disabilities are often excluded from local activities, either because they are held in inaccessible premises or because of a lack of awareness or willingness to work with a young disabled person. We acknowledge that

the guidelines and toolkit on how to run a Youth Café considers the need of disabled young people and through our engagement we will lobby to ensure that these recommendations are being implemented at local level and collect evidence where it is not.

SOCIAL WELFARE

Social Welfare Cuts Put Disabled People at Risk of Poverty

DFI is deeply concerned at the impact that the cut to disability payments will have on vulnerable disabled people, many of whom already live in poverty. A cut to social welfare for a disabled person is not the same as that for an ordinary job seeker. Many disabled people experience extra costs which are a direct result of having a disability and that eats into their income. For instance, a practical example is of a person who uses a power wheelchair which needs to be charged for eight hours, which is the equivalent of six washes in the washing machine.

It is clear that there is a continued lack of disability proofing across Government departments to ensure that the cumulative effects of cuts will not put people with disabilities at a disadvantage, when compared to other vulnerable groups in society. The decision to cut disability payments to €188 per week demonstrates that disabled people were not prioritised in Budget 2011. DFI welcomed the Government decision to protect older people through the retention of the State pension at current levels. Equally the same protection must be afforded to disabled people, one in five of whom are living in poverty¹.

The Minister has stated that he is interested in meeting representatives from the disability sector in the New Year to discuss a mechanism for identifying disabled welfare recipients who have extra costs, so that they may be protected in future budgetary measures. DFI will endeavor to do this. However we are frustrated by the failure of this Government to act on the issue during its leadership, with the result that disabled people are now exposed to greater hardship during this recession. DFI calls on the Government to reverse its decision to cut disability payments and afford disabled people the same protection as older persons over 65 years.

¹ SILC 2008

Child Benefit to Disadvantage Families Headed by a Disabled Person

Children growing up in families headed by a disabled person are at greater risk of poverty compared to other sections of the population. For instance, research conducted by the ESRI² reported that chronic health problems of the household reference person have significant consequences for children, leading to an “at risk of poverty rate” of 31 per cent compared to a rate of 17 per cent among those without a chronic condition. Having a condition that strongly limits daily activities has an even greater impact on child poverty rates, with over half (58%) at risk of poverty and a 46% in consistent poverty (see table below).

Poverty among Children by Health Status of Household Reference Person, 2007

Health Status	At Risk of Poverty	Consistent Poverty
No Chronic Illness	16.8	4.6
Chronic Illness	31.4	18.3
Activity strongly limited by health problem	57.7	46.1
Activity limited	29.6	12.8
Activity Not limited	16.7	4.

Source (ESRI, 2010) ‘Monitoring Poverty Trends in Ireland 2001-2007’

* The consistent poverty rate combines income poverty and the enforced absence of at least two items from an eleven item deprivation scale such as a warm coat

DFI is deeply concerned about the impact of the reduction in child benefit on such families. Budget 2011 will reduce Child Benefit payments by €10 for all children, and by an additional €10 for the third and subsequent children. There is no compensation for poor families who may already be struggling with the financial consequences of having a disability. They are being treated the same as high income families, which is unjust and should be re-considered.

² ESRI (2010) ‘Monitoring Poverty Trends In Ireland 2001-2007: Key Issues for Children, People of Working Age and Older People’, Economic Social Research Institute

EDUCATION

Disadvantaged Targeted in Unfair Cuts to Education

The Tánaiste and Minister for Education and Skills, Mary Coughlan T.D. announced that Budget 2011 would go as far as it could to protect frontline education services in 2011. However, DFI strongly believes that the Government has not gone far enough to ensure that children with disabilities and disabled adult learners have equal access to education, and that the economic burden of new measures on parents with a disabled child is not too great.

A number of measures were introduced that unfairly target the disadvantaged in education. In terms of disability, school transport costs for primary and post primary pupils have been increased by €50, payable by parents. While medical card holders are exempt from the charges, families already struggling with the added cost of having a child with disability are at risk of being pushed further into poverty as a result of these measures. Furthermore, the number of Special Needs Assistants has been capped, along with the number of NEPS psychologists (restricted to 178 rather than the increase to 210 outlined in Budget 2010)³. The lack of implementation of the EPSEN Act remains a key concern for DFI, and it is clear from Budget 2011 that children with disabilities are not a priority.

REVENUE AND TAXATION

Lack of Disability Proofing of Taxation Measures in Budget 2011

Budget 2011 has introduced a range of measures to bring low-paid workers into the tax system. Families headed by a disabled person are already at risk of poverty and face further hardship as a result of new budgetary measures. The combined effect of a reduction in the minimum wage (by €1 per hour), a reduction in tax credits (see below), the new Universal Social Charge (USC) and a cut to child benefit means that these families will experience a severe restriction on their personal finances. The changes will have a particularly negative impact on the person who has costs associated with their disability that are currently not subsidised by the State. For instance, an employee who has no alternative but to drive to work because he cannot access the local bus will have extra costs associated with driving, particularly with the decision to increase tax on petrol and diesel.

³ Children's Rights Alliance Budget Analysis 2011

Tax Credits and Tax Bands

The Government confirmed the proposals, outlined in the National Recovery Plan (NRP) 2011-2014, of changes to tax bands and tax reliefs of approximately 10%. An outline of the amendments to the tax bands and tax credits for 2011 is shown in the Table below. Furthermore, the Budget confirms the proposal in the NRP for a phased elimination, over the next four years, of the income tax age exemption and age tax credit, which is currently available to individuals over 65 years.

Historically, additional tax credits were given in recognition of the extra costs associated with having a sensory disability (such as Blind Tax Credit and Guide Dog Tax Credit), a child with a disability and to value the role of the carer. The flat rate cut of 10% to all tax credits demonstrates the lack of disability proofing in Budget 2011.

Tax Credit	2010 €	2011 €
Single Person	1,830	1,650
Married Person	3,660	3,300
PAYE Credit	1,830	1,650
Incapacitated Child Credit	3,660	3,300
Blind Tax Credit		
Single Person	1,830	1,650
Married – One Spouse Blind	1,830	1,650
Married – Both Spouses Blind	3,660	3,300
Age Tax Credit		
Single / Widowed	325	245
Married	650	490
Dependent Relative	80	70
Home Carer	900	810

Universal Social Charge

In his Budget 2010 speech the Minister noted that the income tax system has become imbalanced and that half of all income earners did not pay income tax. In addition, the structure of the Income levy, the Health levy and PRSI system were over complex and relied on narrow bases which differed for each charge⁴.

Structure of the new Universal Social Charge	
Rate	Income
0%	€0 - €4,004
2%	€0 - €10,036
4%	€10,037 - €16,016
7%	More than €16,016

The impact of the Universal Social Charge is to ensure that those on incomes as low as €4,004 will have to make a contribution towards the taxation system. DFI is particularly concerned about the working poor (those working more than 10 hours) in receipt of the minimum wage which has also been reduced.

From a disability perspective, we believe that the decision was not disability proofed to protect an already vulnerable group of people. For instance, disabled people who are in work, but who hold a medical card to cover the extra costs associated with their disability, were exempt from the health and income levy but they will now be subject to the Universal Social Charge.

We are acutely aware of the disadvantage faced by disabled people in accessing the labour market, and disabled workers who already have extra costs of disability may be discouraged to continue to work, particularly those on a low income. DFI will continue to work to identify the impact that this new charge will have on disabled people in terms of accessing the labour market, particularly in relation to existing schemes such as the income disregard.

⁴ KPMG Budget 2011 Analysis <http://www.kpmg.ie/budget2011/analysis/TaxingTimesDec2010.pdf>

Rent Relief

Currently, people who rent accommodation as their primary residence are entitled to a tax credit. The value of the credit is €400 for a single person and €800 for a married / widowed person, with double credits for those aged over 55 years. These credits will be reduced by 20% in 2011 and phased out over a four year period; the same timeline as previously announced for Mortgage Interest Relief.

HOUSING

Social Housing and Adaptation Budgets Slashed in Budget 2011

DFI criticises the decision by the Government to reduce the funding for social housing provision by a staggering 36%, down from €829m to €529m. That is less than half of what it was in 2008 at €1,572m. The social housing budget line provides housing for people on low incomes, including those with disabilities and mental ill-health, as well as supporting voluntary housing associations to develop housing projects.

Looking at specific funding streams, DFI is disappointed to see that the Capital Assistance Scheme, used by housing associations to provide much needed social housing, including sheltered and supported housing for older people, people with disabilities and the homeless, has been reduced from €145m in 2010 to €75m in 2011. The decrease in funding will have a significant impact on the capacity of the housing associations to meet the new and existing needs of disabled people.

DFI is further angered by the reduction in the housing adaptation grant for older people and people with disabilities through Budget 2011. Provisions for the grant will be reduced by 21% from €94m in 2010 to €73m in 2011. The Government's commitment to support the de-institutionalisation of people with disabilities and those wanting to live independently in the community is now clearly in jeopardy, and this is unacceptable.

TRANSPORT

Cuts for Transport, But Rural Transport Programme Retained

The capital provision for public transport was cut from €615m to €394m in 2011. Included in this is provision for accessibility, but as of yet DFI is unable to evaluate the exact cut (if any) and the likely impact it will have on the accessible transport programme. We are as much concerned about making the rural and urban bus fleets accessible as we are with maintenance of the current accessible buses and coaches. We will keep our members updated as we seek further clarification on the matter.

DFI welcomes the announcement by the Minister for Transport Noel Dempsey T.D. that provision for the Rural Transport Programme is retained and has only been slightly reduced at €10.6m (from €11m in 2010) in recognition of the important role it plays in combating rural isolation, particularly for older people and those with disabilities. This type of community transport is also a vital activator for disabled people ensuring that they can participate in the community and access services.

NOTE:

Please do not hesitate to contact your local support officer or Louise Mc Cann by e-mail louisemccann@disability-federation.ie or phone 01 4250126 to inform us of your experiences of funding cuts and the impact on your services. The more information we have the better we can be informed in our lobbying campaign throughout 2011. We are also committed to keeping our members updated on any further information with regard to funding cuts through Budget 2011.



The Disability Federation of Ireland (DFI) is the national support organisation and advocate for voluntary disability organisations in Ireland who provide services to people with disabilities and disabling conditions

Hidden	Intellectual
Mental Health	Physical
Sensory	Emotional
Neurological	

DFI works to ensure that Irish society is fully inclusive of people with disabilities and disabling conditions so that they can exercise fully their civil, social and human rights. In pursuit of this vision:

- Acts as an advocate for the voluntary disability sector.
- Supports organisations to further enable people with disabilities.

There are over 127 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
- Networking
- Training and Support
- Advocacy and Representation
- Research and Policy Development
- Organisation and Management Development

DFI also supports the broader voluntary and disability sector through its representation of the disability strand with the Community and Voluntary Pillar of the Social Partnership process and other fora at regional, national and European level. DFI is recognised as a representative on disability issues to a broad range of local, national and regional fora this includes working with the HSE, and Social Partnership.

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Newsletters

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/ABIIL_Newsletter_Spring_2010.pdf

[it](#) 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, Freephone 1800 403 403

Community Workers' Co-operative – Community Work News. E-mail:
info@cwic.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

Cumhacht - People with Disabilities in Ireland
http://www.pwdi.ie/news_events/newsletter/index.htm, E-mail:
info@pwdi.ie, Tel: 01-8721744

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@irishdeafsociety.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@irishdeafsociety.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: 01-8721501, 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: vmcutch@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

Simon News - Simon Community, Tel: 01-6711606 E-mail:
info@simoncommunity.com

Shine News - Schizophrenia Ireland, Tel: (0)1 8601620
E-mail: info@sirl.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.i

Wheel E-Bulletin Tel:01- 454 8727,
E-mail: info@wheel.ie





Disability Federation of Ireland is a national support and representation mechanism for voluntary disability sector organisations, covering all areas of disability and disabling conditions. There are currently over 100 voluntary disability organisations in the DFI Membership.

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