



Disability Federation of Ireland

Newsletter

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

June 2008

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Decision time for new Taoiseach and Minister for Disability

In the Programme for Government published in 2007 a commitment was made “to ensure that at least half of the strategy (Disability) will be implemented by 2010”. Our national leaders made this commitment - and understandably raised expectations of the disability support organisations and their service users all around the country. At the present rate of progress it is not possible that half of the National Disability Strategy will be implemented by 2010 – and at this time we are having difficulty establishing what exactly can be achieved by 2010.

The Programme for Government committed to ‘setting-out objectives and outcomes’, for the sector – and this has not happened. We are aware that some funds ‘set-out’ for the sector have been diverted to other health sectors, and this is totally unacceptable and undermines the intent and spirit of Towards 2016. The Government has committed to continue to prioritise its commitment to people with disabilities over the next five years – and notwithstanding the changed economic environment - we are insisting that there is no reneging on this commitment.

DFI is particularly concerned that many of the commitments made in the National Disability Strategy, Towards 2016 and in the Programme for Government, are not being honoured. Last June in the Programme for Government there was a recommitment to prioritising the needs of people with disabilities.

Not alone has there been slow progress to date in delivering the National Disability Strategy but we know that funding allocated to disability in the HSE this year is not likely to be delivered and the HSE is seeking to take back money from disability to use elsewhere. We have a new Taoiseach and Minister for Disability. They have got to take early action to ensure their commitment to prioritising disability is met. This years allocation needs to be honoured in full and the 2009 Budget and Estimates have to seriously crank up disability investment. We will be in a good position to judge what has happened by the time the Local Authority and European elections come round next year. Government needs to act decisively now

John Dolan
CEO

Annual General Meeting

The Annual General Meeting of DFI took place on 14th May 2008 in Jury's Inn, Parnell Street, Dublin.

The Chairperson of DFI, Geraldine Clare, noted that during the year the work of DFI was focused on the ongoing implementation of the National Disability Strategy (NDS). She stated that full implementation of the NDS is critical for people with disabilities, and that huge effort needs to be put into facilitating and monitoring its progress across the disability and statutory sectors.

The CEO, John Dolan commented that voluntary disability organisations continue to work against a background of massive underfunding. A significant amount of DFI's work during 2007 revolved around the General Election, and Estimates and Budget Campaign 2008. In addition, through the DFI Conference, the importance of collaborative approaches to working with other voluntary organisations and with the statutory sector was raised .

Elections to the Board of Directors

There were six vacancies on the Board. As five nominees were proposed for the vacancies, no election process was necessary and those five nominees were deemed to be elected. These were Mike Glynn (Brainwave), Anne Coffey (KARE), Geraldine Clare (AWARE), Maurice O'Connell (Alzheimer Society of Ireland) and Don Bailey (Vantastic).

HEALTH

Service Level and Grant Aid Agreements.

DFI held a meeting with member organisations to discuss the new HSE Draft Service Level Agreements (SLAs) and Grant Aid Agreements after its AGM on the 14th May 2008 in Jury's Inn, Parnell Street, Dublin.

John Dolan, CEO, outlined the substance and the HSE rationale for developing these draft HSE Service Level and Grant Aid Agreements before providing some initial comments on these documents. He noted that DFI welcomes the idea of having agreed working terms for services and supports being provided on foot of funding. However, he underlined that such arrangements need to have regard to a number of matters and reflect certain principles, noting

the current absence of a partnership approach in the draft documents and the potential challenges of complying with the terms and conditions surrounding performance monitoring and internal audits.

Concerns about the draft SLAs in principle were expressed by many of those present. It was argued that the voluntary disability sector is part of the broad public service benefit, and we bring added value to the process, for example, voluntary fundraising and the capacity to engage with communities and individuals. Yet the absence of a partnership approach in the draft documents was evident, and this was explicit in the proposed terms and conditions surrounding performance monitoring and internal audits. Further concerns were raised in relation to the capacity of organisations to adhere to many of these terms and conditions, and it was noted that there are resourcing implications to delivering on such expectations.

In conclusion John Dolan stated that member organisations present, without exception, had set out clearly their fundamental and core issues with the proposed agreements. Consequently DFI has been provided with a clear mandate in relation to responding to the issues on behalf of the membership. Noting the presence of many members of the DFI Board he reassured them that this would continue to receive priority attention in order to get the necessary result.

If you would like further information on the draft SLAs please contact Jacinta Dixon, jacintadixon@disability-federation.ie.

HIQA Standards for Residential Services for People with Disabilities

The HIQA Standards Advisory Group has continued to meet on a regular basis over the last few months. The standards are now in the final stages of development and will be going out for public consultation at the end of the summer. The public consultation will involve input from service users, families and carers and service providers.

For further information on these standards please contact Jacqueline Thomson, Support Officer on 01 454 7978 or jacquelinethomson@disability-federation.ie.

NDS / Towards 2016

Formal Review of Towards 2016

The Community and Voluntary Pillar of Social Partnership attended a Bilateral meeting on the 13th May with the Department of the Taoiseach and other Government Departments on the review of the Social Partnership Agreement, *Towards 2016*.

John Dolan, DFI , spoke about the disability commitments contained in the Agreement. He stated that progress to date is unacceptable, judged against the benchmark of the goals the agreement committed to achieve by 2016. He also emphasised the commitments made in the Programme for Government, including reaching the half way point in NDS by 2010. Key points in his presentation included the following issues:

- Unacceptable progress on NDS is unsurprising given efforts have not focussed on reaching the five long term goals for people with a disability. For example, the Budget and Estimates in 2008 failed to identify the NDS actions and outcomes for the year and the funds to resource them, despite the undertaking to do so in the Programme for Government. A project management process for the NDS has to be established during this year to plan staged progress to achieving the high level goals identified in the agreement, and to ensure the allocation of resources to deliver on these.
- It is recognised the successful implementation of the National Disability Strategy greatly depends on ensuring that people with disabilities have access to appropriate levels of personal social services. Although this is acknowledged, it is also true to note that the funding crisis with respect to health services is compromising delivery on health commitments. Funding to cover core deficits of voluntary organisations giving essential services has been whittled down to zero; disability funds have been shifted to alleviate deficits elsewhere in the HSE; the multi- annual disability investment programme for 2008 did not reflect the price inflation that has occurred, and there was no additional development funding allowed. Indeed confidence is now lacking that any funding officially allocated to disability actually will be used for that purpose. It was noted that other agencies, such as the Department of Finance, play a role with regard to resolving this health funding issue.

- Examples of priority actions that the partnership agreement needs to reprioritise for delivery by 2010 include a cost of disability payment directed at least to those on means-tested benefits; the Independent Assessment of Needs (IAN) implemented with significantly stepped-up resources for the early cohorts plus a clear project implementation plan for people older than 18 years; establishment of a new multi-annual investment programme based on the service needs revealed by the IAN.
- The current Government mantra, that the economic and fiscal environment has seriously deteriorated, cannot be used to downgrade efforts on the disability front. Removal of the deficit in people with a disability's ability to participate in Irish society, and their inclusion in the mainstream, is an explicit, over-arching priority of Government, as most recently expressed in the Programme for Government.

Following input from all the partners, it was noted that the Department of the Taoiseach will draft a review of *Towards 2016* for consideration by the high level Steering Group established under the Agreement. It is anticipated that the review will be finalised and published in the next few months.

Ministerial Changes

Although the Taoiseach Brian Cowan retains Mary Harney as Minister for Health and Children, there are a number of changes at Minister of State level where people with a disability have an interest:

- John Moloney from Laois-Offaly is now Minister of State at the Department of Health and Children, with responsibilities crossing the Department of Education and Science, the Department of Enterprise, Trade and Employment and the Department of Justice, Equality and Law Reform (with special responsibility for Equality, Disability Issues and Mental Health);
- Michael Finneran is Minister of State at the Department of the Environment, Heritage and Local Government (with special responsibility for Housing, Urban Renewal and Developing Areas);
- Michael Kitt is Minister of State at the Department of the Environment, Heritage and Local Government (with special responsibility for Local Services);
- John Curran is Minister of State at the Department of Community, Rural and Gaeltacht Affairs (with special responsibility for Drugs Strategy and Community Affairs);

In addition, there were two changes at Ministerial level to note:

- Mary Hanafin is now Minister for Social and Family Affairs, and
- Batt O’Keeffe is Minister for Education and Science.

NESF Meeting

DFI participated in the NESF inaugural plenary meeting on 14th May. NESF is a social partnership organisation; its members bring diverse experience and interests. Its remit is to advise the Taoiseach on policies to achieve greater equality and social inclusion in the context of social partnership, by analysing, monitoring and evaluating relevant programmes and policies.

The Forum’s priorities are set within the life cycle approach, encompassing children, people of working age, older people, people with disabilities, and communities. The aim of the Forum is to select themes for study from the life cycle approach where policy initiatives are already in place and operational, measurement is possible, targets or indicators available, and where the stakeholders are likely to appreciate NESF contributing to the resolution of problems. At the meeting several possible work programme policy themes were considered. Two themes were chosen – on older people and on children. A third theme is still to be decided on.

DFI highlighted potential policy themes on disability issues that the Forum could consider over the course of its three year strategy. It was pointed out that in developing the themes selected, the disability dimension would need to be taken into account. As stated in *Towards 2016* people with a disability “in accordance with the policy of mainstreaming, will benefit from measures at all stages of the life cycle”.

Disability Stakeholders Group

The Disability Stakeholders Group (DSG) has established Subcommittees to cover the five Government Departments with Sectoral Plans and the Department of Education and Science. These Subgroups are monitoring developments affecting people with a disability. The following are the DFI contacts, should anyone wish to make a query or input.

Dept of Health & Children	Jacqueline Thomson	jacquelinethomson@disability-federation.ie
Dept of Environment, Heritage & Local Government	Lillian Buchanan	lillianbuchanan@disability-federation.ie
Dept of Employment & Enterprise	Martin Naughton	martinnaughton@disability-federation.ie
Dept of Communications, Energy & Natural Resources	Joan O'Donnell	joanodonnell@disability-federation.ie
Dept of Transport	Marcus Hufsky	marcushufsky@disability-federation.ie
Dept of Social & Family Affairs	Louise McCann	louisemccann@disability-federation.ie
Dept of Education and Science	Louise McCann	louisemccann@disability-federation.ie

Public Consultation on Department of Transport Sectoral Plan – 'Transport Access for All'

The Transport Sectoral Plan under the Disability Act, 2005

Transport Access for All was published in 2006 as the Transport Sectoral Plan for improving the accessibility of public transport in Ireland. It sets out a series of policy objectives and targets for accessible transport across all modes of transport - measures to make trains, buses, taxi and hackney services, as well as air and marine transport, accessible to people with disabilities.

The Department of Transport has now begun a Review of Transport Access for All. The Review is being undertaken in line with a commitment in the present Plan.

DFI hosted a consultation event on the 9th April which facilitated and informed this process. Senior Officials from DOT were invited to present at the seminar.

You are now invited to make a submission on matters that you consider should be addressed in a review of the present Plan.

All details in relation to the DOT Sectoral Plan under the Disability Act 2005 can be viewed on the website for the Department of Transport.

The link for the site is as follows:

<http://www.transport.ie/viewitem.asp?id=10598&lang=ENG&loc=845>.

The Closing Date for receipt of comments is Friday 27 June 2008.

There is also a call from the Department of Transport for individual people with disabilities to complete a survey. This survey will contribute to the Review of the DOT Sectoral Plan.

The aim of the outcome of the survey is to help Government to know whether the plans for making public transport accessible are working and, if not, where the gaps and problems lie.

The link for the Transport Access for All- Review 2008 Survey form is as follows:

<http://pro20.sgizmo.com/survey.php?SURVEY=7PC0ZJ9VIKBU83J5LHYNDS06C76TAH-47526-8560748&pswsgt=121118695>

For further information please contact Public Transport Access Division

Department of Transport, 44 Kildare St, Dublin 2, Tel: 01 – 6041644 or email

PTAccessibility@transport.ie

FÁS National Advisory Committee on Disability

The FÁS National Advisory Committee has commenced a two-pronged work plan for 2008 to promote increased employment amongst people with a disability.

One focus is on identifying and reducing the knowledge gap of employers who have vacancies and improve their confidence to employ people with a disability. This work will be centred in the Midlands region. FÁS is to use its various sources of information to reach out to potential employers. Schemes for mobilising these employers are being explored.

The Committee's other focus is to gain more active engagement of disabled clients with FÁS Employment Services and Training Services. Improvements in FÁS tracking will facilitate analysis of the impact of FÁS services, again concentrating on a particular region. A number of voluntary disability organisations will also be integrated into the employment service as outreach guidance clinics.

For further information, please contact DFI's representative on the Committee, Martin Naughton at martinnaughton@disability-federation.ie

Launch and dissemination of Final Feasibility Study Report and General Statement of Guiding Principles

The final feasibility report ***Regulation of Fundraising by charities through legislation and codes of practice*** prepared by Peter Cassells and the ***General Statement of Guiding Principles for Fundraising*** compiled by the special Working Group established in July 2007 were formally launched by **Minister Éamon Ó Cuív TD** (Dept. CRaGA) at the first of a series of regional seminars held in Dublin on the 14th May. The feasibility study sets out a scheme to develop Codes of Good Practice on the operational and administrative aspects of fundraising by charities. The scheme arises from proposals contained in the Charities Bill 2007. It can be downloaded from Irish Charities Tax Research Ltd website: www.ictr.ie.

NATIONAL / LOCAL GOVERNMENT

Funds in 2008 for Housing Adaptation Grants

The new Minister of State with responsibility for Housing Urban Renewal and Developing Areas, Mr Michael Finneran T.D., announced €71.4m from the Department of the Environment, Heritage and Local Government for Local Authorities to allocate in grants under the Housing Adaptation Grants for Older People and People with a Disability during 2008. Carlow County for example is allotted €1.2m, Kerry €2.6m, Dublin City €12.6m, Cork City €1.9m, Galway City €1.0m. It is up to individual Councils how the funds are distributed between the two grant schemes.

It is also estimated that an additional €12m will be spent on adapting local authority rental housing to suit a disabled member of the household. This grand total of €83.4m for 2008 is slightly higher (2.7%) than the €81.2m allocated in 2007. The Minister noted that the full allocation for 2007 for both local authority and other housing was spent, involving the adaptation of some 10,393 housing units.

The 2008 allocations by Local Authorities are on the Department's website, www.environ.ie

The Western Region: Key Statistics

Western Development Commission

The Western Development Commission has published The Western Region: Key Statistics.

The Western Development Commission (WDC) is a statutory body promoting economic and social development in counties Donegal, Sligo, Leitrim, Roscommon, Mayo, Galway and Clare.

The WDC is involved in policy analysis and development, the promotion of regional initiatives and the operation of the WDC Investment Fund.

The Western Region: Key Statistics booklet provides a social and economic profile of the Western Region. It includes data on population, employment, education, income, enterprise, economic sectors and infrastructure. The data from the 2006 Census, as well as other sources, illustrate the situation in the region in relation to the national experience, as well as changing trends.

Copies of the report can be obtained from the WDC. The publication can be downloaded from www.wdc.ie. For more information contact WDC, Dillion House, Ballaghaderreen, Co. Roscommon.

SOCIAL INCLUSION

Department of Social and Family Affairs

Value-for-Money Review of the Disability Allowance Scheme

In our capacity as representatives at the Department of Social and Family Affairs (DSFA) Disability Consultative Forum, DFI has made a submission to the Value for Money Review of the Disability Allowance Scheme.

When Disability Allowance (DA) transferred from the Department of Health and Children in 1996 there were just over 37,000 recipients and this had increased 89,046 in December 2007. In the same period, expenditure on Disability Allowance has increased from just over €157m in 1996 to €738m in 2006.

While the overall objectives and outcomes of DA are to be examined, a strong emphasis has been placed on the extent to which it supports people of working age into employment. DFI have argued that the review of DA must be framed within the context of current Government Policy and reflect the vision and long-term goals for people with disabilities set out in *Towards 2016*.

DFI recognised that employment is one of the most effective means of lifting people out of poverty and facilitating their participation in society. At the same time we noted that a significant number of recipients will remain dependent on social welfare and are unable to work due to the nature of their disability. In this case, DA must be evaluated in terms of income adequacy and social inclusion, and not just as a means of moving people off welfare and into employment. Finally, the need for a Cost of Disability Payment was outlined particularly for customers whose income is eroded because of the extra costs associated with their disability.

The submission further examined the DA scheme as a means of activation which is prioritised in the DSFA Sectoral Plan. We acknowledged the need for DSFA to provide support to people with disabilities to reach their potential and to facilitate access to employment, training and education where possible. Barriers to activation were examined which included the issue surrounding the withdrawal of the medical card after three years.

For a full copy of the DFI submission, please contact Louise Mc Cann, (Support Officer) at 01 4250126 or louisemccann@disability-federation.ie

FUNDING

Enhancing Disability Services Programme (EDS)

Final Round Call for Applications

The Department of Justice, Equality and Law Reform (DoJELR) invites applications for funding under the final round of the 'Enhancing Disability Services Programme' from Voluntary, Not For Profit organisations working in the disability sector based in the State.

The Programme aims to contribute to the development of improved services for people with disabilities through:

- Promoting the development of collaborative approaches and innovative linkages between existing infrastructure and new needs;
- Improving co-ordination between disability organisations; and
- Enhancing existing structures and developing operational capacity.

Appraisal of the applications and the management and support of the successful projects will be undertaken by Pobal on behalf of the DoJELR.

Application forms for the EDS programme, together with the programme guidelines are available from the DoJELR website (www.justice.ie) and also from Pobal's website (www.pobal.ie). They are also available directly from Pobal by telephoning 01-4484892.

For further information contact Ms Anna Buzzon at EDS, Pobal, Holbrook House, Holles

The closing date is 5 pm on Friday 27th June 2008

Community Foundation Launches New Ray Murphy Fund

The Community Foundation for Ireland recently announced the establishment of The Ray Murphy Fund. The Fund has been set up to assist and encourage managers within the community and voluntary sectors to access leadership education and training. The Community Foundation will contribute €200,000 to the fund over the next 10 years.

The Fund will make grants available to build leadership within the community sector for the next 10 years. The Community Foundation will also arrange seminars around the country for grant winners to share their learning and skills with other community groups. Five grants will be awarded annually and will be for a maximum of €4,000 each. The Community foundation will contribute €20,000 a year to the fund.

The Community Foundation is currently accepting applications for grants under this scheme and further grant information and application guidelines are available from The Community Foundation for Ireland's office at 01-874 7354 or on their website

www.communityfoundation.ie. Note: There is no deadline for applications to this fund.

Community Enterprise Centre Application

Enterprise Ireland is seeking proposals from eligible communities in urban and rural locations that have the commitment, energy and aptitude to develop an Enterprise Centre within and for their own local community.

Assistance may be provided on a competitive basis for the acquisition, adaptation or construction of a suitable building in which micro enterprises can establish.

These centres provide a supportive environment for potential entrepreneurs and are in line with Enterprise Ireland's strategy of achieving regional balance. The application form and guidelines are available directly from Enterprise Ireland's 13 Irish offices.

See www.enterprise-ireland.com/Contact/IrishOffices for contact details of your nearest Enterprise Ireland regional office. Completed applications must be marked "CEC Application" and returned to: Enterprise Ireland Entrepreneurship and Regions Division, 500 Atlantic Avenue, Westpark, Shannon, Co. Clare by **1pm on Friday 29th August 2008**.

TRAINING

The Wheel

CEO Breakfast Briefing: "It's Tough at the Top" 17th June, Mercer Hotel, Dublin 2

The position of a CEO in the community and voluntary sector can be a lonely and pressurised one. This stimulating breakfast briefing addresses some of the most significant issues that face CEOs today.

- Do you ever feel isolated at work?
- Do you ever feel burn out approaching?
- Can you work effectively with your Board or is it a constant struggle?

Hear Sheila Cahill share some of the insight gained over her twenty years experience working in the community and voluntary sector. This breakfast briefing is being held on the 19th June, in the Mercer Hotel, Dublin 2 from 7:45am to 9:15am with registration from 7:30am.

For further information please contact The Wheel, Irish Social Finance Centre, 10 Grattan Crescent, Inchicore, Dublin 8, Ireland. Tel 01-454 8727, Fax 01-454 8679, Email: register@whell.ie, Web: www.wheel.ie.

Stronger Leaders 2008-2009 Leadership Development Programme

Stronger Leaders Now Accepting Applications!

Stronger Leaders is a groundbreaking professional development programme specifically tailored to equip the leaders community and voluntary organisations in Ireland with the knowledge and skills required to guide their organisations through this period of legislative, social and economic change.

The programme has been developed based on researched conducted by The Wheel in 2005 , and will be delivered by the Carmichael Centre for Voluntary Groups , which has vast experience and knowledge in the area of training and development for the community and voluntary sector.

Along with its own staff, the Carmichael Centre has identified and commissioned expert training consultants who have the skills, knowledge and experience to make this innovative leadership development programme meaningful and beneficial for leaders of community and voluntary organisations.

Intended for Chief Executives, or persons in equivalent positions (e.g. Administrators, Directors, Coordinators and Managers) in community and voluntary organisations, the course offers leaders and their organisations an invaluable opportunity for growth and development.

The closing date for receipt of applications is 11 July 2008.

The Stronger Leaders Programme is delivered in two and three day blocks (a total of 12 days).The workshops are scheduled over a period of six months, a feature designed to enable participants to apply their acquired skills in the workplace. The programme commences and concludes with a residential three-day module. Programme 1 starts 7, 8 & 9 October. For further details of the dates of the course contact The Wheel.

For further information please contact The Wheel, Irish Social Finance Centre, 10 Grattan Crescent, Inchicore, Dublin 8, Ireland. Tel 01-454 8727, Fax 01-454 8679,
Email:register@whell.ie, Web: www.wheel.ie

GENERAL NEWS

National Carers Week June 9th -15th 2008

Care Alliance Ireland along with 12 Regional and National Organisations is delighted to announce the Second National Carers Week. Dozens of events for Family Carers are taking place nationally. The objective is to raise awareness about the vital role played by Ireland's 161,000 Family Carers and to give recognition to their work. For a list of events and partner organisations see www.carersweek.ie. Voluntary organisations are encouraged to support this week by attending local events. For further information e-mail admin@carersweek.ie or call Care Alliance Ireland on 01 874 7776.

Disability & International Development Week

5th -11th June 2008.

The week is being organised by the Dóchas Disability and International Development Working Group – a coalition of national and international NGOs working or interested in the field of disability and development. Working together with a shared mission and common objectives, the group aims to advance the debate around disability and development, and to work towards the inclusion of disability as a key component of development planning, funding and delivery.

DFI is one of the member organisations of Dóchas Disability and International Development Working Group.

The week will include a launch seminar by Dr Maurice Manning, Chair of the Irish Human Rights Commission, a panel discussion in relation to Making Development Inclusive led by International Service Ireland, and networking and linkage workshops.

For more information contact rcoleman@sightsaver.ie or aleavy@is-ireland.ie and check the Dóchas website at www.dochas.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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