



## **Disability Federation of Ireland**

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

### **DFI NEWSLETTER OCTOBER 2011**

## **Government Being Put to the Test by the Disability Sector**

Together, as citizens, we are facing the first of three (or more) austerity budgets from Ireland's new Government. Budget 2012 will reveal what the fundamental values of this Government really are.

We in the disability sector appreciate that resources are tight, and that we all must work 'smarter', but we cannot accept that social justice priorities fly out the window when times get tough. What we cannot and will not accept is that people with disabilities, and the services on which they so greatly depend, are justified targets for budget cuts. When decision-making is driven by fire fighting alone, it destroys social investment and prospects for people with disabilities, even after Ireland eventually extricates itself from fiscal austerity.

DFI warmly welcomed the naming by this Government of disability, including mental health, as its social justice priority.

This commitment was reiterated in statements by the Taoiseach and the Tánaiste during the final debate of the election campaign, and in the comprehensive focus on fairness in the Programme for Government. Some eight months later, we call on Government to demonstrate its commitment to these values, of social justice and fairness for people with disabilities, in Budget 2012.

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DFI's Pre-Budget Submission outlines what action is required, in terms of protecting the income supports and services that people with disabilities need in the Budget, and publishing its Implementation Plan for the National Disability Strategy.

Last month, ten national voluntary organisations, including DFI, representing people across the range of disability and disabling conditions, issues a Joint Statement alerting Government to the issues at stake. The Statement is entitled 'Preventing Collapse of Ireland's Disability Strategy'. This is 'crunch' time for the new Government. Budget 2012 will be a test. It will test the commitment of Government to protect people with disabilities and other vulnerable groups from carrying the brunt of challenging budgetary decisions.

But it is not just up to Government. We too must, and will, play our part, in working hard to implement a plan to protect the National Disability Strategy, to ensure that, as we move out of recession, services for people with disabilities will have survived and will be ready to make strong progress in the growing economy.

**John Dolan**

**CEO**





## **BUDGET 2011**

### **Launch of DFI Pre-Budget Submission**

The Disability Federation of Ireland (DFI) will host a Pre-Budget Discussion Forum at the Mansion House on **Wednesday 5th October 2011 from 12.00 p.m. to 1.30 p.m.**, and we hope that you will be able to attend. We expect that DFI members, Party spokespersons, media representatives and other key stakeholders will be present on the day.

DFI's pre-Budget Submission is available posted on our website at [www.disability-federation.ie](http://www.disability-federation.ie).

DFI seeks to make disability a social justice priority for decision-makers across government, and to generate support for actions to sustain the NDS through these difficult times. There are three key messages to those responsible for Budget 2012:

1. Budget 2012 must at a minimum protect the existing benefit payments and public service entitlements of people with disabilities.
2. Budget 2012 needs to recognise that funding voluntary disability organisations is a sound investment, improving the lives of people with disabilities, strengthening communities and saving on hospital and other care costs
3. The Implementation Plan for the National Disability Strategy (NDS) must be published and incorporated into the Government's Public Service Reform, Comprehensive Review of Expenditure, Budget 2012 and subsequent budgets

Further information from Lilian Buchanan, [lilianbuchanan@disability-federation.ie](mailto:lilianbuchanan@disability-federation.ie)

## **Organisations Representing 800,000 People with Disabilities issue Joint Statement to Government**

Ten of the leading umbrella organisations in the Disability Sector met in Dublin on this Thursday 15<sup>th</sup> September in Buswell's Hotel, Dublin, to issue a joint statement of concern, regarding economic and service issues now confronting hundreds of thousands of people. The organisations involved are, Care Alliance Ireland, CIL Carmichael House, Disability Federation of Ireland, Genetic & Rare Disorders Organisation, Inclusion Ireland, Mental Health Reform, Neurological Alliance of Ireland, People with Disabilities in Ireland, The National Federation of Voluntary Bodies, The Not for Profit Business Association. The full text of the statement follows below:

### **Joint Statement: Preventing the Collapse of Ireland's Disability Strategy**

We the under-signed national voluntary disability organisations, representing the diversity of people with disabilities and disabling conditions including mental health, make this joint statement to Government regarding Budget 2012.

Disability is not a sectoral issue; it is a social issue. 18.5% of the Irish population have one or more disabilities, and the percentage is increasing as our population ages.

The Taoiseach, the Tánaiste and the Programme for Government have named people with disabilities including mental health as the Government's social justice priority. Yet the Government cannot tell what has been the impact of the recession on this historically disadvantaged group. The adverse effects have been obscured by the absence of clear lines of accountability and ineffective monitoring of outcomes for people with disabilities.

Those of us in the sector however are acutely aware of the effect of the cumulative reductions in essential income and service supports on people with disabilities that have occurred since the onset of the recession in 2008. It is our view that further pressure on people with disabilities would be unsustainable. We consider Ireland's National Disability Strategy to be on the point of collapse into empty promises.

We jointly call on the Government, through the Comprehensive Review Expenditure and Budget 2012, to deliver on its social justice priority, and ensure that "the quality of life of people with disabilities is enhanced" in Budget 2012. [*Programme for Government*, page 54]

Action by the Government is urgently needed to:



**1. Halt reductions in the income supports for people with disabilities dependent on benefits.**

People with disabilities are most likely to experience real poverty because on top of the recent cuts in benefit levels and new charges, they have to pay for extras required due to their disability.

**2. Maintain funding for the services needed by people with disabilities.**

Cutting the services required by people with disabilities not only undermines their lives, it also leads to a growing public burden in terms of hospital stays and expensive care costs

**3. Publish and Implement Plan for the National Disability Strategy and incorporate it into Budget decision-making by all Departments and public agencies.**

Ireland must plan for this long period of austerity in a manner that protects services and supports for people with disabilities and ensures that real progress is achievable when economic conditions ease.”

## **ORGANISATIONAL DEVELOPMENT**

### **Quality Management for the Community & Voluntary Sector**

#### **University of Limerick / DFI Accredited Course**

The University of Limerick’s (UL) Enterprise Research Centre in conjunction with the Disability Federation of Ireland (DFI) are working together in developing and piloting an accredited course entitled ‘An Introduction to Quality management for the Community & Voluntary Sector’, aimed at developing participants quality management knowledge. The programme consists of five days tuition staggered over eight weeks.

This programme aims to develop awareness in participants of the role of Quality Management in the development of an organisation, the management of change and the development of people and processes while keeping the service user at the forefront of the organisations activities.

Once successfully piloted, the course will be offered to those within the community & voluntary sector with a responsibility for governing, using or delivering service, coordinating activities, or with a role in the management of the organisation.

A further proposed element of the partnership project will be the development of a one-year Specialist Diploma, again to be accredited by UL.

UL's involvement is being headed-up by Professor of Quality and Applied Statistics, Eamonn Murphy.

For further information contact Michael Hennessy, Education Programme Manager, University of Limerick, E-mail: [Michael.hennessy@ul.ie](mailto:Michael.hennessy@ul.ie)

Telephone: 061-213037, or Dermot O'Donnell, DFI, contact details on p.

## **DFI PQASSO Update**

**September 2011**

DFI is currently implementing PQASSO, a Practical Quality Assurance Systems for Small Organisation. The PQAOSSO core group held its 9<sup>th</sup> meeting on the 1<sup>st</sup> of September 2011. The Quality areas currently being tackled by the group are Quality Areas 4 and 9.

### **Quality Area 4: User Centred Service: The Standard**

The organisation recognises and values its users and builds good relationships with them, Users are central to the design, delivery and review of services and activities. The organisation is focused on achieving better outcomes for users and represents their interests.

### **Quality Area 9: Communications & Promotion: The Standard**

The organisation communicates effectively with its users and other external stakeholders. It builds a visible profile in its wider community, and effectively promotes its services and activities. Information about the work of the organisation is shared and used to influence change.

#### **Level 1 (Indicators)**

1. User groups are clearly defined and targeted to prevent unfair discrimination or exclusion from services.



2. Service and activities are based on the identified needs of the organisation's users, including disadvantaged groups.
3. The organisation plans, promotes and delivers its services so that it is fully accessible to its users.
4. Personal information about individual users is recorded and held confidentially, meeting data protection requirements.
5. The organisation works closely with individual users to monitor their needs, identify desired outcomes and review progress.
6. Users are given detailed information about the organisations services and activities, and are encouraged to make appropriate choices.
7. User feedback is encouraged and recorded, and complaints are dealt with openly and promptly.

The next DFI PQASSO Team meeting will be held on Friday 7<sup>th</sup> October 2011.

If you have any question, or would like to comment, please email Dermot O'Donnell at [pqasso@disability-federation.ie](mailto:pqasso@disability-federation.ie)

## **Updates to Microsoft Software Donations**

**Good News!** Updates to Microsoft Software Donations offered to eligible charities in Ireland through ENCLUDEit Technology Donations Program.

Since 1998, Microsoft has donated more than € 2.8 billion worth of software to non-profits worldwide. Microsoft has recently announced an exciting update to its software donations program to make it even easier for Irish charities to get the Microsoft products they need, when they need them!

These updates include:

- Increasing the allotment of different Microsoft software products that can be requested by each charity from six to 10 titles, enabling charities to get the software they need such as Microsoft Windows 7, Microsoft Office 2010, Microsoft SharePoint 2010, etc.
- Adding three new categories of charities eligible for software donations

- Allowing charities to request a software donation through the ENCLUDEit Technology Donations Program when required instead of the previous limit of only one request per year.
- Offering charities an opportunity to avail of a Get Genuine offering so charities can ensure their existing computers are running genuine versions of Microsoft operating systems to help keep their software up-to-date and secure.
- Enabling charities to access Microsoft Donation Center, a new section of the ENCLUDEit Web site where organisations can review their donation history and identify products their organisation can request.

To learn how Microsoft technology solutions can support your work, visit [Microsoft NGO Connect](#).

The ENCLUDEit Technology Donation Programme is brought to Irish charities in partnership with Enclude, Microsoft and [TechSoup](#), a San Francisco-based non for profit organisation.

For more details on the donated products available under the ENCLUDEit programme, please follow this link: [www.encludeit.org](http://www.encludeit.org) or [contact us](#) directly. To register for the donation programme please go to [REGISTER](#)

## **HR & Employment Law Update**

The Disability Federation of Ireland, in conjunction with Adare Human Resource Management, has in place a support structure for member Organisations to avail of discounted Human Resource and Employment Law Support Services exclusively for DFI members. Each month in this Newsletter a specific HR issue will be addressed by Adare Human Resource Management

### **Notice of Termination**

#### **Is everyone entitled to notice?**

The entitlement to notice depends firstly on the contract of employment and secondly on the minimum entitlement laid down by the law. A contract may give an employee greater entitlement of notice than the statutory minimum but it cannot give an employee less. The Minimum Notice and Terms of Employment Acts, 1973 to 2005 only apply if you have 13 weeks service.

#### **What's the minimum?**



The minimum period of notice set down by the Minimum Notice and Terms of Employment Acts, 1973 to 2005 are as follows:

<b>Duration of Employment</b>	<b>Minimum Notice</b>
13 weeks to 2 years	1 week
2 years to 5 years	2 weeks
5 years to 10 years	4 weeks
10 years to 15 years	6 weeks
15 years or more	8 weeks

**What happens when the legal minimum differs from what is set out in the contract of employment?**

If an employee signs a contract with a specified notice period greater than the minimum under the Acts, they will be entitled to the longer notice period.

**Example –**

An employee has 1 year’s continuous service with their employer, so under The Minimum Notice and Terms of Employment Acts, 1973 to 2005, the legal minimum notice period due to this employee is 1 week. They have however signed a contract of employment and it states that they would give, and be provided with, 1 months notice. In the case of the termination of this employee’s contract, 1 months notice must be provided, and hence this is the notice that is due.

Any provision in a contract of employment for shorter periods of notice than the minimum periods stipulated in The Acts has no effect.

For further information on the HR Support Services provided click on the link below:

<http://www.disability-federation.ie/index.php?uniqueID=50>

## **Practical Tips for Developing Mindfulness at Work**

*by Maeve Halpin, Social and Organisational Psychologist.*

Workplace stress is on the increase, and “neurotic reaction to stress” has been identified as the 4<sup>th</sup> most disabling workplace injury (US Bureau of Labor Statistics). Mindfulness is a simple and effective practice that involves being in touch with, and aware of, the present moment, as well as taking a non-evaluative and non-judgemental approach to our inner experience. Benefits of mindfulness include improved concentration, better communications, greater clarity of mind, more resilience and adaptability, and greater peace of mind.

### ***Practicing Mindfulness***

***Learn to breathe:*** Deep breathing increases oxygen flow to the brain, and slows down the heart rate. This will allow you to feel more grounded and calm and to think more clearly. If feeling stressed, take a moment to close your eyes, remain still and breath slowly through the nose, allowing your abdomen to expand with each in-breath. Three such breaths are enough to get a break from stressful stimuli, allowing you to return to your work with greater ease.

***Become aware of the body:*** Westerners have been described as “walking heads”, so divorced are we from bodily sensations and the senses. Our minds are constantly busy, processing an increasingly vast amount of incoming information and dealing with complex environments. Learning to “be” in our bodies is not only a welcome relief from the constant mental chatter, but also connects us to a deeper wisdom, the “wise mind”. It can simply involve sitting quietly and becoming aware of our weight on the chair, our feet on the floor, and the gentle rise and fall of our breath. Practicing this for a few moments several times a day has been shown to increase alertness, and to decrease the level of stress hormones in the body. For a longer mindfulness practice to try at home, guided “body scan” meditations are available online, bringing the listener through a progressive relaxation of the body.

***Becoming aware of emotions:*** Mindfulness of emotions can give a certain distance from them, preventing us becoming swept along by irritation, resentment or anxiety. This may seem counter-intuitive, as attending to emotions might appear to magnify them. In practice, coming to recognise our habitual reactions to situations, and accepting them non-



judgementally, allows a space to open up where we can decide whether to act on them or not.

***Becoming aware of thoughts:*** We like to believe that we are the authors of our destinies, making rational decisions that are based on evidence. Becoming mindful of our thinking can actually reveal a random and scattered stream of consciousness that is anything but consciously controlled. Learning to observe thoughts as leaves floating on a stream, or clouds passing in a blue sky, means that we don't have to be so emotionally involved in, and identified with, our thinking. Thoughts are not facts, and do not have to determine our behaviour or feelings. Recognising the “weather patterns” of the mind as temporary and transient can lead to a more compassionate, less critical relationship with ourselves.

***Developing Conscious Living:*** Stressful, busy lives can cause us to feel we are living on auto-pilot, or on a treadmill with only brief periods of relaxation. Mindfulness practices can be built into everyday life, bringing a richer and more joyful experience to our lives. A “mindfulness bell” can be downloaded onto a computer or phone, bringing a gentle reminder to stop and breathe at regular intervals. Focussing on one thing at a time, rather than multi-tasking, allows us to experience the mundane at a deeper level. Standing in a queue or waiting at traffic lights can be an opportunity to breathe and observe. Moments of stillness enrich life, allowing us to live more fully in the present moment.

**©Maeve Halpin Sept 2011**

*Maeve Halpin is a practising counsellor and Social and Organisational Psychologist, with many years' experience in the Community and Voluntary sector, latterly as Chair of the Carmichael Centre for Voluntary Groups. In conjunction with Maeve, DFI have launched an External Supervision and Support Service for staff and Boards of DFI member groups.*

More information is available at <http://www.disability-federation.ie/index.php?uniqueID=215>

## **Policy Review of the Disability Services Programme**

The Department of Health has announced that the report of the Expert Group on Disability Policy, part of the value for money and policy review of the HSE's Disability Services Programme, will be released for consultation shortly. People with disabilities and the voluntary organisations working with them have an opportunity to respond, and underline what the priorities should be. For example they can highlight the importance of the HSE funding services and supports that enable people with disabilities to fulfil their potential and pursue meaningful lives. They can describe what kinds of supports are critical and they can point out how the HSE can facilitate people getting access to mainstream services and opportunities, whether these concern health or go beyond to services such as training and housing.

DFI will post on its website a link to the policy report and invitation for feedback when the Department makes them available.

## **HSE Performance Report July 2011**

The Health Service Executive (HSE) Performance Report (PR) provides an overall analysis of key performance data from Finance, HR, Hospital and Primary & Community Services. The activity data reported is based on Performance Activity and Key Performance Indicators outlined in the National Service Plan 2011.

The PR is used by the Performance Monitoring & Control committee (PMCC), the CEO and the HSE Board to monitor performance against planned activity, as outlined in the NSP, and to highlight areas for improvement. The PR also provides an update to the DoHC on the delivery of the NSP.

The HSE Performance Report for July 2011 was published on the 23<sup>rd</sup> September. The report highlights that the HSE will have a financial deficit of €458m at the end of 2011 unless significant corrective measures are put in place in the 2<sup>nd</sup> half of the year. The



report also reiterates the recruitment pause until the end of 2011 that was announced in August. Some of the other key points in the report include:

- Hospital deficits at the end of July are €139m.
- The number of children and adolescents offered first appointment with child and adolescent mental health services and seen within three months of referral dropped to 49%,
- Only 31.1% of assessments of need for children with disabilities have been completed within the timelines as provided for in the regulations

[www.hse.ie/eng/services/Publications/corporate/performance/performancereports/MonthlyPRs.html](http://www.hse.ie/eng/services/Publications/corporate/performance/performancereports/MonthlyPRs.html)

## Health Complaints

The Office of the Ombudsman has launched Healthcomplaints – a public service initiative to help members of the public understand where and how to complain about health and social care services.

Health complaints consists of a toolkit developed for people who use health and social care services in Ireland and for their families, care-givers, those who advocate on their behalf, and those who work in this sector. The toolkit is made up of:

- A guide for the public
- A leaflet
- A Poster
- The website – [www.healthcomplaints.ie](http://www.healthcomplaints.ie)

A staff training guide has also been developed to enable those working in health and social care to deal more effectively with complaints or concerns received, manage feedback and direct them appropriately. All of the materials are free to download from the website.

The Office of the Ombudsman is asking all agencies and organisations involved in the provision of health and social care to make these materials available to their employees, members, and to the public, where appropriate.

If you have any questions, or require any additional information, or copies of the materials, please contact Ed McDaid, 01 6395701, [Edmund\\_mcdaid@ombudsman.gov.ie](mailto:Edmund_mcdaid@ombudsman.gov.ie) .

## **Child Protection and Welfare Practice Handbook**

Minister for Children, Frances Fitzgerald, launched the HSE's Child Protection and Welfare Handbook in September. The handbook was developed by the National Office for Children and Family Services, HSE. The handbook, which is based on the protocols as set out in Children First Guidance 2011 and the collective wisdom and best practice of experts and front line staff, will support the vital work of social workers and other relevant practitioners in dealing with child protection and welfare cases.

The implementation of the guidelines in the Child Protection and Welfare Practice Handbook will standardise the nationwide implementation of Children First. Children First National Guidance 2011 promotes the protection of children from abuse and neglect. At the launch, Minister Fitzgerald said: "I welcome the publication of the Child Protection and Welfare Practice Handbook by the HSE. This handbook will be a valuable resource in ensuring a nationwide consistency-of-approach to the implementation of the Children First Guidance 2011 and to the enhanced delivery of children protection services generally.

The Minister stated that her Department "is finalising legislation to put the Children First Guidance on a statutory footing for the first time. This legislation will apply to all organisations and persons who work with or are in contact with children and will include statutory requirements to make reports, share information and cooperate with the HSE and An Garda Síochána where they are involved with a child about whom there are concerns'. The Child Protection and Welfare Practice Handbook will support the vital work of social workers and other relevant practitioners in dealing with child protection and welfare cases.

The publication can be found at

<http://www.hse.ie/eng/services/Publications/services/Children/WelfarePractice.pdf>.

## **NATIONAL DISABILITY STRATEGY / TOWARDS 2016**

### **Disability Stakeholders Group**

#### **Meeting with Minister for Disability & Mental Health**

The Disability Stakeholders Group (DSG), consisting of six national disability bodies – DFI, National Federation of Voluntary Bodies, Inclusion Ireland, People with Disabilities in



Ireland, Mental Health Reform, and Not for Profit Business Association – recently met the Minister, Kathleen Lynch T.D. to advocate for the prompt introduction of an implementation plan for the National Disability Strategy (NDS). The members explained that the Group intends to hold the Government to account on disability policy, and that they are ready to work in partnership with Government in seeking to ensure that services and supports are person centred, and focussed on maximising their contribution to and participation in society. The DSG underlined the urgency of having the NDS implementation plan in place in time to influence the Budget and the Comprehensive Spending Review.

The Minister stated that she was in regular communication with the Brendan Howlin, Minister for Public Expenditure and Reform, that the local authorities have a key role to play in progressing the implementation of the NDS, and that both the Department of Public Expenditure and Reform and the local authority sector would be an integral part of the NDS Stakeholders Monitoring Group (NDSSMG). She is putting proposals to the Cabinet Sub-Committee on Social Inclusion dealing with the monitoring structures and implementation plan.

For further information contact Lillian Buchanan, [lillianbuchanan@disability-federation.ie](mailto:lillianbuchanan@disability-federation.ie).

## **National Housing Strategy for People with Disabilities**

Willie Penrose T.D., Minister for Housing and Planning will launch the Strategy on 6 October. An implementation plan for the Strategy still has to be developed. The National Advisory Group, consisting of stakeholders including DFI, is likely to be involved in this work, as it was during the initial stages of drafting the Strategy.

### **National Social Housing Needs Assessment**

The Department of the Environment, Communities and Local Government published the assessment of households judged to be in need and waiting for social housing as of March 2011. The count has almost doubled since 2008, to 98,318.

However information about people with disabilities who have registered on their local authority list continues to be unsatisfactory. Only 1,315 were categorised as ‘disabled’ in 2011 compared with 1,155 in 2008. Doubtless some of the 2,266 classified as ‘elderly and the 9,548 in the ‘medial or compassionate reasons category were disabled, but there is no data on the nature of their needs.

These counts are of concern because they influence national and local authority planning on housing supply policies. Hopefully the recent introduction of the new standardised approach for local authorities processing applications and the impact of the IWA's 'Project Sign-up' will gradually improve the picture on the nature and extent of social housing need amongst people with disabilities.

## **Community & Voluntary Pillar**

### **Briefing for Oireachtas Members**

The C&V Pillar, within which DFI leads on disability, is holding a briefing for Oireachtas members on 19 October. The Pillar is preparing an analysis and proposal for the Government that would respect the need to reduce fiscal deficits while at the same time protecting Ireland's social fabric.

The Pillar points out that the Government's recovery plans have failed to meet their economic targets, and that a fundamental re-think is urgently needed. The Pillar reiterates the importance of rebalancing deficit reduction measures in favour of increased public revenue through the closure of tax-based incentives. It highlights the long term damage caused by eroding Ireland's social infrastructure to gain short term deficit relief.

The Pillar continues to meet senior officials in a number of Government Departments to review policies and their impact on vulnerable groups. At a meeting with housing officials in September Pillar members emphasised the importance of planning how the Government will close the gap between the rising level of housing need and the supply of appropriate housing available.

The tension between the applications for housing adaptation grant schemes and the funds available was one example of the issues covered. In this case the officials admitted that local authorities have to target the funds more strictly. DFI highlighted the plight of the increasing number of people with disabilities who need accessible housing or adaptations when funds to give supports are being cut back so severely. The targeting of grants means that households who need adaptations but cannot afford them will have to live in unsuitable accommodation.

For further information on DFI's work on the Community & Voluntary Pillar please contact Lillian Buchanan, [lillianbuchanan@disability-federation.ie](mailto:lillianbuchanan@disability-federation.ie)



## **Report: Social Portrait of People with Disabilities**

This report was jointly launched by the Economic and Social Research Institute (ESRI), the Department of Social Protection and the NDA. In addition to presentations by the Minister for Disability and Mental Health, Kathleen Lynch T.D., the authors, experts from the EU and OECD, John Dolan of DFI, and James McClean from PWDI, responded on behalf of people with disabilities and the voluntary organisations working with them.

Minister Joan Burton welcomed the report and highlighted her Department's central role in "remaking the welfare system" which she said reaffirms people's entitlements to participate. In this context she noted the importance of cross-agency working to get the right mix of supports and services. She mentioned the re-configuration of the Department and the establishment of the National Entitlements and Employment Service, pointing out that improved services to employers was a priority to ensure a better reception for job applicants with disabilities.

The Social Portrait mainly uses information from the CSO's *National Disability Survey* of 2006. It verifies statistically what people in the sector already know, describing the diversity amongst the disabled and the significant levels of disadvantage experienced. The findings covered many aspects of life including access to public transport and social venues, educational attainment, types of care received, attitudes and participation in the labour force.

Speaking at the event, John Dolan said that he wondered why there wasn't a lot more concern about the disinvestment in Ireland's social service infrastructure, including services for people with disabilities. He added that the evidence from the Portrait, such as the low levels of participation by people with disabilities and high poverty rates, underline the urgency of Government putting in place an implementation plan for the National Disability Strategy.

The Report can be downloaded from the Department's website, [www.welfare.ie](http://www.welfare.ie)

## **New Regulations for Disabled Parking Permits**

Changes to the regulations for disabled parking permits have been described by Minister for Transport, Leo Varadkar, as the most significant since the scheme commenced 12 years ago.

New medical guidelines in relation to qualification criteria for the disabled parking permit will be put in place, and there will be clear guidelines for doctors on eligibility criteria. In addition, a new credit-card style permit, designed to be more difficult to copy or forge to new permit holders, and existing permit holders will be issued with this card on renewal of their existing permit.

Changes will be made, too, to some car parking spaces to ensure that they are accessible to wheelchair users, and local authorities will have new powers to place time restrictions on disabled parking spaces. Designated pick-up and set-down locations for drivers carrying disabled passengers will also be provided.

Further information on the new regulations can be got from the Disabled Drivers' Association, <http://www.ddai.ie/>

## **TRAINING & EDUCATION**

### **Peer Mentoring Service**

#### **Greater Dublin Independent Living**

Greater Dublin (GDIL) launched its Independent Living Mentoring Project in May 2011. The service is aimed at linking people with disabilities who are having difficulties in their lives with other people with disabilities who have been through similar situations. It works to:

- To promote solidarity between people with disabilities, and
- To assist people to with disabilities to advocate for themselves and realise their potential to have a more independent life.



The service works on a one-to-one basis where the mentor shares his or her own experiences, difficulties and knowledge of independent living with others who are experiencing difficulties, and in so doing, to support them in their choices and decisions.

It is hoped that support can be provided to people with disabilities who:

- Are living in residential settings or in the family home, and who are planning to move to their own accommodation.
- Are already living independently and who are seeking support around issues such as, for example, managing personal assistants.
- Have any issue in the areas of applying for employment, arranging personal transport, planning holidays, applying for housing, social welfare, healthcare provision, or any other issues.

If you would like further information please contact Valerie or Sinead, [info@gdil.ie](mailto:info@gdil.ie)

## The Wheel Training Programme

The Wheel's [training calendar for Autumn 2011](#) has just been published on our website. Click to [browse through 40](#) different training and other special events on the topics of management, fundraising, leadership, communications & marketing and HR/employment law. (And remember, members of The Wheel receive an **average discount of 40%!**) Subscribe to the new weekly *Sector Connector* newsletter to receive key training updates from relevant trainers, including The Wheel. The newsletter will also feature helpful funding updates, sector-wide news and other resources - [click here to subscribe now](#).

## Events

### Conference: Genetic Discrimination

The Centre for Disability Law and Policy is co-hosting (in conjunction with the Burton Blatt Institute, Syracuse University, USA) a one-day conference entitled '**Genetic Discrimination - Transatlantic Perspectives on the Case for a European Level Legal Response**', which may be of interest to you and your colleagues. The conference is taking place at the National University of Ireland, Galway on Saturday, 19th November, 2011.

The purpose of this conference is to examine the case for a European level legal and policy

response to protect the privacy of genetic information and to prevent genetic discrimination, particularly in the employment and insurance contexts.

This conference will recount recent scientific advances that make genetic testing more and more accurate and more sophisticated (and which offers the prospect of being able to detect the onset of future disabilities). It looks at the ethical debate on how to balance competing rights and interests (the right to privacy of the individual and the 'need to know' of business and other interests). It examines the balance struck in the Genetic Information Non-discrimination Act (2008) in the US. Keeping in mind the technological advances (and its future orientation) the ethical context and the balance struck in the US legislation, it will examine the options for a European legal response possibly in the shape of a new non-discrimination (genetic information) Directive (or an amendment to existing Directives) and whether a sufficient case exists for such a response.

The conference is aimed at legal practitioners, medical practitioners, academics and researchers, NGOs and those involved in disability issues and practice. It is also aimed at those interested in medical testing generally as well as genetic testing specifically and the implications of these practices.

Further information at <http://www.nuigalway.ie/cdlp/events.html>. To register for this event please visit <http://www.conference.ie/Conferences/AddRegistration.asp?Conference=139>

For other enquiries and special requirements please contact: Róisín Fitzpatrick at 091 495888 / 087 6660634 / [info.cdlp@nuigalway.ie](mailto:info.cdlp@nuigalway.ie) or Aisling de Paor at 091 494017 / [aisling.depaor@nuigalway.ie](mailto:aisling.depaor@nuigalway.ie).

## **Irish Council for Social Housing**

### **National Social Housing Conference**

The Irish Council for Social Housing (ICSH) Biennial National Social Housing Conference is being held at a time of significant change in the social housing sector and the theme of this year's event, 'Housing Ireland 2020', highlights the need for all stakeholders to work towards social housing solutions for the next decade. Distinguished speakers will be examining housing issues and providing further solutions that will shape the way forward, and will include, the Minister for Housing and Planning, Willie Penrose, T.D, who will deliver an address.

For full listings and to book your place, download the conference brochure and booking form [here](#) and return it to the Irish Council for Social Housing, 50 Merrion Square East, Dublin 2. You can also email your bookings to [catherine@icsh.ie](mailto:catherine@icsh.ie) or fax it to 01 661834



# 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](mailto:info@iasbah.ie)

Acquired Brain Injury Ireland Newsletter, Tel 01 2804164  
email:[cbrack@abiireland.ie](mailto:cbrack@abiireland.ie)

[http://www.abiireland.ie/docs/ABII\\_Newsletter\\_Spring\\_2010.pdf](http://www.abiireland.ie/docs/ABII_Newsletter_Spring_2010.pdf)

Arthritis Ireland - Newsletter—Tel: 01 661 8188

E-mail: [info@arthritisireland.ie](mailto:info@arthritisireland.ie)

Aspire - Asperger Syndrome Association of Ireland. 01-8780027/9, E-mail:[admin@aspire-irl.org](mailto:admin@aspire-irl.org)

Asthma Society News - Tel: 01-8788511,  
E-mail:[office@asthmasociety.ie](mailto:office@asthmasociety.ie)

Brainstorm - Migraine Association of Ireland, Tel: 01-8064121,

E-mail: [info@migraine.ie](mailto:info@migraine.ie)

Brainwave - Quarterly Newsletter, Tel: 01 4557500, E-mail:  
[info@epilepsy.ie](mailto:info@epilepsy.ie)

Care Alliance Ireland - E-mail: [ndo@carealliance.ie](mailto:ndo@carealliance.ie)

Clár na nÓg - National Youth Council of Ireland Tel: 01-4784122  
E-mail: [info@nyci.ie](mailto:info@nyci.ie)

Cleft Lip and Palate Association of Ireland -  
[www.cleft.ie/newsletter/index.htm](http://www.cleft.ie/newsletter/index.htm), Tel: (01) 2848227,  
E-mail: [georginawade@cleft.ie](mailto:georginawade@cleft.ie)

Community Exchange Newsletter, E-mail: [info@activelink.ie](mailto:info@activelink.ie), Tel:  
+1 667 7326

Connect - Irish Motor Neuron Disease Association. E-mail:  
[info@imnda.ie](mailto:info@imnda.ie), Freefone 1800 403 403

Community Workers' Co-operative – Community Work News. E-mail:  
[info@cwci.ie](mailto:info@cwci.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](mailto:homeless@dublincity.ie)

Cumhacht - People with Disabilities in Ireland  
[http://www.pwdi.ie/news\\_events/newsletter/index.htm](http://www.pwdi.ie/news_events/newsletter/index.htm), E-mail:  
[info@pwdi.ie](mailto:info@pwdi.ie), Tel: 01-8721744

Debra Ireland Newsletter, Tel: 01 678 5044, E-mail:  
[info@debraireland.org](mailto:info@debraireland.org)

Down Syndrome Ireland - Tel: 01-8730999, E-mail:  
[info@downsyndrome.ie](mailto:info@downsyndrome.ie)

Enable Ireland - Newsletter—Tel: 1850 204 304 E-mail:  
[communications@enableireland.ie](mailto:communications@enableireland.ie)

Equality News - Tel: 01-4173333, E-mail: [info@equality.ie](mailto:info@equality.ie)

E-Info Deaf Source— E-mail: [info@irishdeafsociety.ie](mailto: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](mailto:info@feach.ie)

Fighting Blindness - Tel: 01 7093050, E-mail:  
[avril.daly@fightingblindness.ie](mailto:avril.daly@fightingblindness.ie)

Frontline of Learning Disability -Tel: 01-2862649. E-mail:  
[frontline@indigo.ie](mailto:frontline@indigo.ie)

GROWing - Information on Mental Health, Tel: 1890 474 474, E-mail:  
[info@grow.ie](mailto:info@grow.ie)

Guidelines - Irish Guide Dogs Association. Tel: 021 4878200 E-mail:  
[info@guidedogs.ie](mailto:info@guidedogs.ie)

Headway Ireland - National Association for Acquired Brain Injury -  
'Making Headway', Tel: 01-8102066, E-mail: [info@headway.ie](mailto:info@headway.ie)

Heart News: - Newsletter of Irish Heart Foundation. Tel:  
01 668 5001  
E-mail: [info@irishheart.ie](mailto:info@irishheart.ie).

Heartstrings - Newsletter of Heart Children Ireland,  
published quarterly,  
Tel: 1850 217017 E-mail: [heartchildren@eircom.net](mailto:heartchildren@eircom.net)

Heatwave - Irish Raynauds Scleroderma Society,  
E-mail: [info@irishraynauds.com](mailto:info@irishraynauds.com), Tel: 01 2020184

HOPE - Huntington's Disease Association of Ireland. Tel:  
01-872 1303, E-mail: [hdai@indigo.ie](mailto:hdai@indigo.ie)

Inclusion Ireland - Tel: 01 8559891, E-mail:  
[info@inclusionireland.ie](mailto:info@inclusionireland.ie)

Irish Deaf News - Irish Deaf Society. Minicom: 01-  
8601910; 01-8601878; E-mail: [info@irishdeafsociety.ie](mailto:info@irishdeafsociety.ie)

Irish Wheelchair Association - 'Spokeout', Tel: 01-8186  
400, E-mail: [Joanna.marsden@iwa.ie](mailto:Joanna.marsden@iwa.ie)

Kerry Network of People with Disabilities - Network News  
066-7180611, E-mail: [kerryPWDI@eircom.net](mailto:kerryPWDI@eircom.net)

MS News—Newsletter of MS Ireland. Tel: 01 6781600,  
E-mail: [info@ms-society.ie](mailto:info@ms-society.ie)

Muscular Dystrophy Ireland - MDI News Update Tel: 01-  
6236414, or 01- 6236415 E-mail: [info@mdi.ie](mailto:info@mdi.ie)

DeafHear.ie - Link Magazine - Tel: 01 8723800, E-mail:  
[info@deafhear.ie](mailto: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](mailto:press@ncbi.ie),  
[www.ncbi.ie](http://www.ncbi.ie)

Neuro News - Neurofibromatosis Association of Ireland,  
Tel: 01-8726338, E-mail: [nfaireland@eircom.net](mailto:nfaireland@eircom.net)

People First - Central Remedial Clinic Tel: 01-8057400  
E-mail: [vmmcutch@crc.ie](mailto:vmmcutch@crc.ie)

Post Polio Support Group - Newsletter, Tel: 071 64791  
E-mail: [newsletter@ppsg.ie](mailto:newsletter@ppsg.ie)

Poverty Today - Combat Poverty Agency. Tel:01-670  
6746

Rehab News -Tel: 01-2057200 E-mail:  
[dara.duffy@rehab.ie](mailto:dara.duffy@rehab.ie)

Simon News - Simon Community, Tel: 01-6711606 E-mail:  
[info@simoncommunity.com](mailto:info@simoncommunity.com)

Shine News - Schizophrenia Ireland, Tel: (0)1 8601620  
E-mail: [info@sirl.ie](mailto:info@sirl.ie)

Social Housing - Irish Council for Social Housing Tel: 01-  
6618334; E-mail: [info@icsh.ie](mailto:info@icsh.ie)

Sonas aPc – Tel (01) 2608138. [www.sonasapc.ie](http://www.sonasapc.ie).

Speaking up for Advocacy – Citizens Information Board  
Newsletter on advocacy. Tel: 01 6059035, E-mail:  
[mairide.woods@ciboard.ie](mailto:mairide.woods@ciboard.ie)

Volunteer Stroke Scheme News- Tel: 01-4559036.  
E-mail: [info@strokescheme.ie](mailto:info@strokescheme.ie)

Wheel E-Bulletin Tel:01- 454 8727,  
E-mail: [info@wheel.ie](mailto: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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**Representing the interests and expectations of people with disabilities to be fully included  
Comprising organisations that represent and support people with disabilities**

**New**

## **Regulations for Disabled Parking Permits**

Changes to the regulations for disabled parking permits have been described by Minister for Transport, Leo Varadkar, as the most significant since the scheme commenced 12 years ago.

New medical guidelines in relation to qualification criteria for the disabled parking permit will be put in place, and there will be clear guidelines for doctors on eligibility criteria. In addition, a new credit-card style permit, designed to be more difficult to copy or forge to new permit holders, and existing permit holders will be issued with this card on renewal of their existing permit.

Changes will be made, too, to some car parking spaces to ensure that they are accessible to wheelchair users, and local authorities will have new powers to place time restrictions on disabled parking spaces. Designated pick-up and set-down locations for drivers carrying disabled passengers will also be provided.

Further information on the new regulations can be got from the Disabled Drivers' Association, <http://www.ddai.ie/>

The Disability Federation of Ireland (DFI) represents the interests and the expectations of people with disabilities to be fully included in Irish society. It comprises organisations that represent and support people with disabilities and disabling conditions.

The vision of DFI is that Irish society is fully inclusive of people with disabilities and disabling conditions so that they can exercise their full civil, economic, social and human rights and that they are enabled to reach their full potential in life. DFI's mission is to act as an advocate for the full and equal inclusion of people with disabilities and disabling conditions in all aspects of their lives.

There are over 126 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
- Training and Support
- Networking
- Advocacy and Representation
- Research and Policy Development / Implementation
- Organisation and Management Development

DFI works on the basis that disability is a societal issue and so works with Government, and across the social and economic strands and interests of society.

For further information go to [www.disability-federation.ie](http://www.disability-federation.ie)

**Disability Federation of Ireland, Fumbally Court, Fumbally Lane, Dublin 8**

**Tel: 01-4547978, Fax: 01-4547981**

**email: [info@disability-federation.ie](mailto:info@disability-federation.ie) web: [www.disability-federation.ie](http://www.disability-federation.ie)**

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