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**Disability Federation of Ireland**

An Advocate for the Voluntary Disability Sector

Supporting Organisations to Enable People with Disabilities

## LOCAL GOVERNMENT REFORM NEWSLETTER SPECIAL

## June 2013

**Local Government Reform is also our Business**

“Putting People First” published in October 2012 by the Minister for Environment, Community and Local Government (DoECLG) sets out the government’s strategy for the reform of local government. It represents a fundamental shift in the way that local government will operate in Ireland for the foreseeable future. Key decisions that were previously made centrally will be made locally, affecting funding and other resource allocations. Among many other reforms a new local structure entitled the Socio Economic Committee, (SEC) will be established, which will have oversight and administration of many local development funding streams. A five year City and County Local Community Development Plan will be developed by the SEC. All local statutory agencies with a local development function will be represented on the SEC (including the HSE) as well as local elected officials, and local authority personnel. “Community interests” will also be represented but the way in which this will be decided, and who this refers to has not yet been defined. The deadline for completion of the reform process coincides with the local elections in June 2014, and the new structures will operate from that point onwards. It is important at this stage to consider the impact of these changes on the disability sector.

Since the National Disability Strategy (NDS) was announced in 2005, DFI has drawn attention to the evolving links between the local implementation of the NDS and local government decision-making structures and the impact these have on the lives of people with disabilities. DFI established a dedicated team to work on the local implementation of the NDS, and dedicated a conference: ‘Count Me In: Including People with a Disability in Local Government Structures and Services’ in 2009. The team continues to be actively engaged in delivering capacity building workshops with the broader community sector, the disability sector, umbrella organisations and support agencies across the country.

It is very important that people with disabilities and member organisations become more actively involved in the new local government structures. This can be achieved through representation on the new local structures and the formation of links with other community and voluntary sector organisations and agencies. If we do not engage in this process, the needs of people with disabilities will most likely not be visible in the new five year Local and Community Development plans. Key areas to be alert to are the allocation of housing, transport, children’s services, as well as available funding to voluntary disability organisations.

A key question to ask is how people with disabilities gain or are affected by the reforms in the context of mainstreaming of public services? We have dedicated this Newsletter to the issue of local government reform, as we are concerned about people with disabilities future role in local structures.

If you have any questions or would like clarification on any of the points raised in this article please feel free to contact: PJ Cleere at 086 3811064 or pjcleere@disability-federation.ie

SUMMARY OF LOCAL COVERNMENT REFORMS

**The Following Summarises the Reforms**

* Two elements of Local Government jurisdiction in each County (1) County Council (2) Municipal Districts (Exception Dublin Cork and Galway
* All 80 Town councils being abolished with effect from local elections in 2014
* 114 Local Authorities reduced to 31 City and County Councils
* City and County Councils in Tipperary, Limerick and Waterford will be merged
* 1,627 Councillors reduced to 950\*\* ( approx.one councillor per every 4,830 voters)
* One single plan per City and County
* One unified rating system within each county
* Property Tax will be used to fund Local Authorities and Councils and will be allowed to set the rate ( 2015-16)
* Irish Water – LAs agent until 2015 –then exit from water management
* Socio Economic Committees will be established in each County- responsibility for planning and oversight of all local and community development programmes
* 15 members- Local government , L Authority , Local ‘Community interests’ and State Agencies
* 5 year City/County Local & Community Development Plan will encompass all state funded local and community development initiatives
* At national level an Inter Departmental Group (IDG) will be established to ensure the state agencies with local development functions work together locally and nationally and ensure Buy-in from relevant govt depts.
* County Development Boards & SIMs will continue to the end of 2013
* Community & Voluntary Foras will remain in place
* Alignment of Local Government and Local Development Agencies (FRCs, Volunteer Centres, Partnerships, CCCs, etc.)\*
* County Managers will be renamed as CEOs reporting to the elected members

\*There are 512 different agencies in total referred to on page 41 of the “Final Report of the Local Government /Local Development Alignment Steering Group” DECLG March 2012

(Published October 31. 2012)

Sources: DECLG (2012) ‘Putting People First’, ‘Final Report of the Local Government /Local Development Alignment Steering Group’ DECLG March 2012 (Published October 31. 2012)

WHAT WILL IT ALL MEAN LOCALLY?

**What will Local Government Reform Mean Locally?**

Local Government Reform is in its infancy and more detailed decisions have yet to be made by the DoECLG. However, it is possible at this stage to identify the main effects of these reforms as follows:

1. There will be fewer local authorities and power will be concentrated at county level.

2. There will be fewer locally elected representatives after the local government elections in June 2014 (almost half the present number).

3. Locally elected representatives will have greater decision-making powers in areas such as local development funding, business rates, property tax (after 2015) and in other key areas of our lives.

4. The Socio Economic Committee (SEC) will have oversight and administration of the funding and resources of the local development agencies who will be ‘aligned’ to local government. This in effect means that the SEC will have a strong decision making remit with regard to how local development agencies spend their resources including decisions to fund projects/actions.

5. We estimate that there will be approximately five seats in total for both local authority representation and representation from ‘community interests’. A number of seats will be allocated to statutory agencies with a local development function, as well as for locally elected representatives.

6. The DoECLG is undertaking a national review of the Community and Voluntary Fora to identify their future role in the new structures. A national review of voluntary activity and resourcing is also underway. These reviews will not be completed until the end of 2013.

7. The Interdepartmental Group (IDG) is not only working to ensure that government departments work together to create a whole of government approach at national and local levels. The IDG is also developing a National Community Development Policy. This will determine the direction of community development in local government for the foreseeable future.

8. People with disabilities and service providers

WHAT ARE THE ISSUES FOR THE DISABILITY SECTOR?

**Issues for the Voluntary Disability Sector**

1. Community representation seats have been defined as representing ‘community interests’. There is no clarity at this time about where these community representatives will be drawn from, or how they will be selected. It is important to emphasise that the ‘Community Interests’ representatives in the SECs have a mandate from their local communities, and that a feedback mechanism is firmly in place to communicate decisions being considered/taken at the SEC.
2. It is equally important that support is available to community based representatives to enable them to participate equally in complex decision making.
3. It is critical that the issues and needs for people with disabilities are included in all local development plans. This is especially crucial in the development of the new 5 year City & County Local Community Development Plan which the SEC will be responsible for.
4. Effective feedback mechanisms must be firmly in place to communicate decisions being considered / taken at the SEC which may directly affect the lives of people with disabilities and other people in the community.
5. Voluntary disability agencies must be active participants with the SEC in the development of the 5 year City and County Local Development Plan. Community services and supports as well as other supports provided by voluntary disability organisations must be visible in the 5 year plan. Organisations’ strategic and operational plans must be set within Local Government Development plans. If this is not achieved the work which voluntary disability agencies carry out locally with and for people with disabilities will not be accounted for in local development planning and service which could benefit service users will not necessarily be taken account of in local government funding and resourcing.
6. There needs to be clarity with regard to how decisions made at SEC level regarding local development, and local development resourcing will link with plans and resourcing by the HSE and other statutory agencies for voluntary disability agencies. Since the HSE and other statutory agencies will be members of the SEC the question remains as to how local government plans and funding will link effectively with plans developed individually by the statutory agencies. It is the role of the IDG to ensure that statutory agencies work well together towards a whole of government approach to local government, but it is unclear how the resourcing by the various departments for agencies such as the disability service providers will operate at local level in the new system.
7. The Fore Runner SECs are being established before there is clarity as to how communities will be represented. This is an issue for the whole C&V sector including the voluntary disability sector. Since clarity in this area will not be forthcoming until closer to the end of 2013, the fore runner SECs will already be making decisions and working towards the development of new structures before effective community representation is in place. The fore runner SECs also have a role to play in laying the groundwork for the other SECs yet to be established.

THE RESPONSE OF THE DISABILITY FEDERATION OF IRELAND

**The DFI Response**

As far back as 2005, DFI anticipated the future importance of local government structures to effect positive change in the lives of people with disabilities. Any national policy or strategy seeking to improve the lives of people is only as effective as its ability to change the lives of individuals where they live, work and socialise.

DFI welcomed The National Disability Strategy (NDS) as a vehicle of positive change for people with disabilities and has been a key participant in monitoring and implementation structures since it was established.

DFI immediately set up an internal team to explore how the principles of the NDS could be transferred to local implementation, effecting positive impact on the lives of people with disabilities in their own communities.

While Local Government reform to the extent envisaged by ‘Putting People First’ was not yet on the horizon, DFI anticipated that the reforms which took place from 1998 were moving Local Government towards stronger roles and responsibilities for local decision making.

DFI has subsequently been working with Local Government structures across the country well before 2005 and has been actively participating on City and County Development Boards, Social Inclusion Measures Groups, Community & Voluntary Fora and other Local Government structures for many years. Over the years DFI has established many connections in the broader C&V sector, in Local Government and with a wide variety of mainstream agencies and service providers.

THE POLICY IMPACT

**Policy**

DFI has identified the links between national policies relating to the HSE, Social protection

Notes: add in work with Pillar other umbrellas, NCF,CCMA, Com rep workshops, local government reform workshops congregated settings, national housing strategy,

Add in what DFI is doing re a manifesto for local government

A conference including academic links and UK disability organisations experiences

## NEWSLETTERS

## For information please contact the relevant organisation directly

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: kerrypwdi@eircom.net

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

Muscular Dystrophy Ireland - MDI News Update Tel: 01-6236414, or 01- 6236415E-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](http://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: vmmcutch@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](http://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

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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/ABII_Newsletter_Spring_2010.pdf>

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 Freefone 1800 403 403

Community Workers’ Co-operative – Community Work News. E-mail: info@cwc.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.ieTel: 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.ieTel: +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

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**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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## Disability Federation of Ireland Logo.

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 130 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)

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