



DISABILITY FEDERATION OF IRELAND

Rights Commitments Action!

Pre-Budget Submission 2005

"This Budget truly represents a chance for the Government to demonstrate its commitment to vindicate the rights of people with disabilities as pledged and promised in the Programme for Government. In short, it is a moment of truth and time for Rights, Commitments and Action!"

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Summary of Recommendations

Budget 2005

Income

- Introduce a Cost of Disability Payment of €40 a week for people with disabilities currently in receipt of a means tested social welfare payment. This to be extended to all people with disabilities in subsequent two Budgets.
- Disability Allowance to be increased by €14 to €148.80 and to €182.70 over the subsequent two Budgets as per NAPS review commitment.
- Disability Allowance to be paid to all those in residential care.

Community Employment

- Government to commence mainstreaming of services provided through community employment to people with disabilities by allocating €17.5m. A further €17.5m per annum in the subsequent two Budgets.

Accommodation for People who Experience Mental Illness

- Government to invest €11m to provide a range of appropriate supports and training for all those who are long-stay in mental hospitals, and a further €11m per annum in the subsequent two Budgets.
- Government to invest in order to provide a range of accommodation options including crisis, respite, and supported residential accommodation.

Adults with Significant Disabilities

- Government to invest €50m in services and accommodation for adults with significant disabilities and a further €50m per annum in the subsequent two Budgets.

Disabled Persons' Housing Grant

- Government to increase the overall allocation to the Disabled Persons Housing Grant (DPG) by €35m and amend the grant scheme so that local authorities can recoup the full cost of DPG from central exchequer funds.
- Government to amend the DPG scheme to empower local authorities to fund 100% of the actual cost of work, in the subsequent two budgets.

Children as Carers

- Government to invest an additional €20m in services such as personal assistance, care attendants and home help so that people with disabilities are no longer dependent on their children for their basic everyday care. And a further €20m per annum in next two Budgets.
- Government should undertake a detailed study on children as carers.

Funding for Voluntary Disability Organisations

- Government to provide additional core funding of €5m to build the capacity of the voluntary disability sector. Government to provide a further additional investment of €5m per annum in the subsequent two Budgets.

1. Introduction

In their agreed Programme following the 2002 General Election the re-elected Government stated, *“It is the opportunity to build a fair society of equal opportunity and of sustained prosperity on an island at peace with itself. We aim to be an inclusive society but there are those who still remain left out. It is a responsibility we will work with all our ability and all our energy to discharge with integrity.”*¹

“Budget 2005 is a moment of truth and represents an opportunity for this Government to fulfil its commitments to people with disabilities and build the fair and inclusive society we all aspire to. To achieve this we need not only increased investment in this Budget, but a commitment to an enhanced and sustained investment throughout the rest of the lifetime of this Government”

Two years into their renewed mandate the Government has a great deal to do to deliver on the pledge to build a fair society and to meet their commitments to people with disabilities. Indeed two years later, people with disabilities and their families remain on the margins. For some people with disabilities services and supports have declined due to cutbacks and a lack of Government action in a number of key policy areas. The waiting lists for the Disabled Persons Housing Grant scheme have grown; there has been a reduction in the services provided by community employment, and a slow down in the development of basic health and personal social services. This Government to date has also failed to address income support for people with disabilities.

The consequential sense of disappointment and frustration is heightened against an economic background, which indicates that Ireland is now among the top ten wealthiest countries in the world². We acknowledge that the Government managed the global economic downturn well over the past few years. What is important now for people with disabilities is that having experienced more than their fair share of economic pain for decades is that they begin to share some of the

economic gain. Many people with disabilities are still living in poverty or at a high risk of living in poverty³. Ireland also falls well behind other developed countries in terms of investment in healthcare and social services. Spending on public health services accounted for just 4.9% of national wealth, which places Ireland 23rd out of the top 25 wealthiest countries⁴.

This Government must take bold measures now if it wants to build the inclusive and caring society it aspired to in the agreed Programme following the last election. Therefore this budget presents an opportunity for the Government with three years left in its term to make a real difference in the lives of people with disabilities. Budget 2005 must signal a new beginning, where decisions long delayed must be taken and actions and investment long overdue must be implemented. However Budget 2005 is but the first step. DFI believes that this Government must commit to an enhanced and sustained investment programme over the next three Budgets in order to advance its stated objectives and to keep faith with its commitments to people with disabilities.

The decisions announced on Budget day alone are not isolated or unrelated to other policy or legislative measures and actions taken by the Government. Decisions taken in Budget 2005 should complement other initiatives and developments, which impact upon the lives of people with disabilities. In that context we welcome the publication of the Disability Bill. Increased investment in income supports and community services for people with disabilities will be vital in achieving the full implementation of the legislation and in underpinning the rights based approach. People with disabilities now want the vindication of rights they already hold and this can only be achieved through an inclusive and supportive society.

In summary, Budget 2005 is a moment of truth and represents an opportunity for this Government to fulfil its commitments to people with disabilities and build the fair and inclusive society we all aspire to. To achieve this we need not only increased investment in this Budget, but a commitment to an enhanced and sustained investment throughout the rest of the lifetime of this Government.

¹. An Agreed Programme for Government Between Fianna Fáil and The Progressive Democrats, 4 June 2002. Department of the Taoiseach. Foreword ². Human Development Report, UNDP July 2004. ³. Report of the Working Group on the Review of the Illness and Disability Payment, Department of Social and Family Affairs 2003. ⁴. Human Development Report UNDP July 2004.

2. Income

Cost of Disability Payment

People with disabilities incur many extra but ordinary costs as a result of their disability and therefore DFI calls on the Government to introduce a Cost of Disability Payment scheme in Budget 2005. Having examined the issue both the Commission on the Status of People with Disabilities⁵ and the National Economic and Social Forum⁶ have recommended this payment. The Commission Report sets out the areas in which people with disabilities incur extra costs and to which this payment would contribute.

- Equipment
- Mobility and Communications (travel and telephone)
- Living Costs (heating, food and clothing)
- Medical
- Care and Assistance (including personal assistants)

As a result of a commitment in the Programme for Prosperity and Fairness, an interdepartmental working group was set up in 2000 to examine the feasibility of introducing a Cost of Disability Payment Scheme. As part of this process the National Disability Authority also commissioned and recently published research into this issue. The findings of this research “*Disability and the Cost of Living*” is based on international evidence and suggests that the extra cost of living imposed by a disability is approximately €40 per week.

“A Cost of Disability Payment in line with the recommendation of the Commission on the Status of People with Disabilities, and the NESF and NDA reports would not only alleviate the problem of deprivation and poverty, but address issues such as equality and participation”

The need for action is also evident from a recent Department of Social and Family Affairs Report⁸, which showed that 66.5% of people with disabilities or those who are long-term ill fall below the 60% level of medium income, with 22.5% experiencing basic deprivation. DFI is aware that while the Government is considering the

results of these reports, people with disabilities continue to live in poverty.

A Cost of Disability Payment in line with the recommendation of the Commission on the Status of People with Disabilities, and the NESF and NDA reports would not only alleviate the problem of deprivation and poverty, but address issues such as equality and participation. We believe that all people with disabilities should receive this payment by the end of this Government's term of office. However as a first step towards this, in Budget 2005 the Government should introduce a Cost of Disability Payment of €40 a week for people with disabilities currently in receipt of a social welfare means tested payment.

DFI Recommends

- In Budget 2005, Government to introduce a Cost of Disability Payment of €40 a week for people with disabilities currently in receipt of a means tested social welfare payment. This payment to be extended to all people with disabilities in the subsequent two Budgets.

Disability Allowance

Disability Allowance (DA) is paid to people with disabilities who are unable to work. Unfortunately the levels of unemployment among people with disabilities remains high. While the national unemployment rate is currently 4.2% (CSO 2004) it is estimated that 70% of people with disabilities are unemployed (Combat Poverty Agency 1998). Government needs to undertake proactive measures to facilitate the transition of people with disabilities from social welfare into training and employment.

Unemployment, poverty and disability remain inextricably linked in Ireland. To tackle this will involve improving the income supports available. DA is currently only €134.80 per week, while the average industrial wage is €558.69 (CSO 2004).

“To meet its NAPs commitment the Government must increase DA by €47.90 to €182.70 over the next three Budgets. Therefore DA should be increased by €14 to €148.80 in Budget 2005”.

⁵. Report of the Commission on the Status of People with Disabilities, A Strategy for Equality, Ch.6, Income and Disability 6.12. ⁶. “Income Maintenance Strategies” Report No 5 NESF 1994. ⁷. A review of international findings in Disability and the Cost of Living (2004) suggests the extra cost of disability for people with mild disabilities should be no more than €40 per week, and for people with severe disabilities no less than €40. ⁸. Report of the Working Group on the Review of the Illness and Disability Payment, Department of Social and Family Affairs 2003.

In the review of the National Anti Poverty Strategy (NAPS) the Government committed itself to “achieve a rate of €150 in 2002 terms for the lowest rates of social welfare to be met by 2007”⁹ which is equivalent to 30% of gross average industrial earnings for the lowest social welfare payments. To meet its NAPS commitment the Government must increase DA by €47.90 to €182.70 over the next three Budgets¹⁰. Therefore DA should be increased by €14 to €148.80 in Budget 2005.

Finally, but most urgently, we call on Government to pay Disability Allowance to all those in residential care and end the ongoing discrimination towards those who entered residential care prior to 1999 and who are currently deemed ineligible for DA.

DFI Recommends

- In Budget 2005 Disability Allowance to be increased by €14 to €148.80 and to €182.70 over the subsequent two Budgets in line with the commitment in the NAPS review.
- In Budget 2005 Disability Allowance to be paid to all those in residential care.

3. Community Services

Properly resourced community services are essential for people with disabilities to enable them to live with dignity and independence in their community. However community services are still grossly under-funded and underdeveloped. DFI warmly welcomed the Government's policy decision to mainstream services for people with disabilities across all government departments and agencies. However for mainstreaming to become a reality a significant and sustained investment in community services is required.

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Properly resourced community services also facilitate people to lead healthier, more fulfilling lives and allow them to participate and contribute as full and equal citizens in society. A significant and sustained investment by the State in community services would not only provide long term benefits for the individual, but for the

whole community and society. Such an analysis is consistent with the concept of Population Health, which is taking centre stage, internationally and nationally in the strategic development of health and social care services. The cost of the investment in community services will be offset by the positive impact it will have on individuals, their families and society as a whole.

Community Employment

In its Programme for Government this Coalition said “We are committed to building service provision and legislative frameworks which enable people with disabilities to fulfil their potential and make a full contribution to the economic and social life of our country.”¹¹

To date this Government has failed to advance this commitment in the area of Community Employment (CE). Indeed after fifteen years of unprecedented growth and development in our country, CE schemes remain one of the main mechanisms for the delivery of services for people with disabilities. Instead of CE being complimentary to a well-funded and structured service for people with disabilities, CE workers are now one of the primary providers of services.

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CE puts considerable strain and pressure on the service users and on the organisations providing services. They lose highly experienced, well-trained and committed staff on an ongoing basis when their time on CE expires. The voluntary organisations providing services have to repeatedly induct new participants, who in turn have to acquire skills and experience and most importantly develop relationships with service users.

Three years ago the current Government proposed to mainstream all health related support services provided through CE. The Health Boards and organisations providing services prepared and submitted a report¹² in preparation for the transfer of these posts from the Department of Enterprise, Trade and Employment to the Department of Health and Children. However to date the Government has failed to provide the resources to implement this commitment and mainstream these posts.

9. “Building an Inclusive Society” National Anti-Poverty Review, February 2002. 10. CORI Justice Commission, Socio-Economic Review 2004. http://www.cori.ie/justice/soc_issues/index.htm 11. An Agreed Programme for Government Between Fianna Fáil and The Progressive Democrats, 4 June 2002. Department of the Taoiseach. Page 28. 12. See the Health Board Executives (HEBE) Report to Health Board CEOs

As a result three years later approximately 3,600 CE workers currently provide health related support services to well over 6,000 people with disabilities and others.

In the review of its Programme in August 2004 the Government repeated this commitment *“this Government is committed to provide the necessary support services to enable people with disabilities to achieve their potential. The ongoing development of these services will remain one of our priorities”*¹³. DFI calls on the Government to begin the mainstreaming of services for people with disabilities in Budget 2005.

DFI Recommends

- In Budget 2005 the Government commences the mainstreaming of services provided through CE schemes to people with disabilities by allocating €17.5m¹⁴. A further €17.5m per annum should be allocated in the subsequent two Budgets.

Accommodation for People who Experience Mental Illness

The inexcusable lack of community-based accommodation is resulting in people who experience mental illness living long-term in mental health hospitals. People who experience mental illness require a range of accommodation options including crisis, respite, and supported residential accommodation. Having access to a range of accommodation would enable people who experience mental illness to live in the community and decrease their need to stay long-term in hospital.

“The inexcusable lack of community-based accommodation is resulting in people who experience mental illness living long-term in mental health hospitals”

The Report *“Activities of Irish Psychiatric Services 2002”* identified that there were 2,219 people resident in psychiatric hospitals for over a year, 1,537 of these were resident for more than five years. In relation to this issue the Inspector of Mental Hospitals Report for Year Ending 2002 states that *“other major frustrations encountered during the year included the lack of provision by local housing authorities of housing for the mentally ill and the associated difficulty of procuring community*

accommodation in the private sector because of support and cost factors. As a result, many in-patients had to remain in hospital unnecessarily.”

The Government has acknowledged this issue by announcing a plan to build community based accommodation for people who experience mental illness by selling 200 acres of land at 14 mental hospitals. DFI welcomes this development and calls for a three year investment programme of an additional €15,000 per capita to be invested in providing supports and training to enable people who experience mental illness to live as independently as possible.

DFI Recommends

- In Budget 2005, Government invests €11m¹⁵ to provide a range of appropriate supports and training for people who are long-stay in mental hospitals, and €11m per annum in two subsequent Budgets.
- Government to invest in order to provide a range of accommodation options including crisis, respite, and supported residential accommodation. Accommodation to offer people rehabilitation and empowerment towards recovery.

Adults with Significant Disabilities (Young Chronic Sick)

In the Programme for Government the Coalition partners stated they would *“complete the programme of expansion of appropriate care places for people with disabilities”*¹⁶ This commitment must be advanced in Budget 2005 and is of particular urgency for adults with significant disabilities. This group formally referred to, as “young chronic sick” are a cohort of people aged between 18 and 65 who have either been born with or acquired a significant disability. This group includes many with a progressive neurological condition and many who have an acquired brain injury. The lack of appropriate accommodation for this group in the community means that many of them end up living in acute hospitals and nursing homes for the elderly. This situation is wholly inappropriate and a vast waste of resources. A substantial number of adults with significant disabilities living in the community are living with their families, who experience enormous pressure due to the limited support available to them. The Department of Health and Children have identified 914 people nationally¹⁷ who are awaiting appropriate accommodation.

¹³. Government Progress Report on the Implementation of An Agreed Programme for Government, August 2004, Page 99. ¹⁴. As per figures from HeBe report, taking current investment by FAS in CE and inflation and benchmarking costs into account this would cost €52.5m over the next 3 years or €17.5m per annum. This funding is in addition to the current spending by the Department of Enterprise, Trade and Employment on health related CE schemes. ¹⁵. €15,000 per person per year is equivalent to the East Coast Area Health Board, Day Placement cost. €15,000 x 2,219 people in long stay in mental hospital = €33,285,000 (€11,095,000 per year over 3 years) ¹⁶. An Agreed Programme for Government Between Fianna Fáil and The Progressive Democrats, 4 June 2002. Department of the Taoiseach. Page 23. ¹⁷. Dáil Debate March 5th 2003.

“A substantial number of adults with significant disabilities living in the community are living with their families, who experience enormous pressure due to the limited support available to them. The Department of Health and Children have identified 914 people nationally who are awaiting appropriate accommodation”

The experience of this group is one of inadequate specialist, residential, respite and day services. Community services essential for supported living continue to be inadequate. The Bacon Report¹⁸ highlighted the critical shortage of therapy and allied care staff in the community. A further constraint exists in relation to psychological services and 'challenging behaviour' programmes, which are generally not standardised or comprehensive, and in some areas, are not available. Accommodating the needs of this group requires a level of expertise that is not always available to every agency.

The costs for providing services to any one of the people described here is individual to the person and his or her needs. However reports for various Health Boards and organisations providing services estimate that costs vary from €50,000 for basic community supports to €250,000 for a full service for a person with one to one needs or challenging behaviour. In the National Health Strategy¹⁹ the Government also committed itself to a “*Programme of investment*” to enhance “*Home support services, respite care, day care places, residential care including additional places for people with chronic conditions, other multi-disciplinary support services and Aids and Appliances*”.

We are now calling on the Government to implement their commitments in both the Programme for Government and the National Health Strategy to adults with significant disabilities in this Budget and the subsequent two Budgets. DFI believes that the Government must invest at least €50m²⁰ per annum over the next three years to address the needs of adults with significant disabilities.

DFI Recommends

- In Budget 2005 Government to invest €50m in services and accommodation for adults with significant disabilities and a further €50m per annum in the subsequent two budgets.

Disabled Persons Housing Grant

To date successive Governments have failed to adequately address the housing needs of people with disabilities. As a result many people with disabilities are trapped in inaccessible, unsuitable and potentially dangerous homes. Adaptations are therefore not lifestyle choices but basic necessities. The Commission on the Status of People with Disabilities also acknowledged the importance of housing when it stated that “*housing provides much more than shelter in modern society: it is the base from which people participate in society and can reflect as well as dictate their level of participation*”.²¹

The lack of action in relation to the housing needs of people with disabilities is reflected in the DPG waiting lists, which continue to grow in many local authority areas. The DPG scheme lacks uniformity and as a result Local Authorities are using different criteria for assessment. Also at present Local Authorities can only recoup 67% of the grant from the Department of the Environment, Heritage and Local Government and have to source 33% from their own resources. Due to a lack of resources, some Local Authorities are having difficulty in funding all the applications they receive for this grant. The resultant waiting lists in some Local Authorities are delaying urgent adaptations and causing unnecessary hardship for people with disabilities. To overcome these problems, DFI calls on the Government not only to introduce a uniform national scheme but also to fund local authorities for the full cost of the grant.

“To date successive Governments have failed to adequately address the housing needs of people with disabilities. As a result many people with disabilities are trapped in inaccessible, unsuitable and potentially dangerous homes”

At present the scheme only pays at the very most 90% of the cost of the adaptations, up to a maximum amount of €20,320. In light of the real cost of building work, and the fact that many people with disabilities are living in poverty, the current provisions of the grant scheme are totally inadequate. We are calling on the Government to cover 100% of the costs of the adaptations.

18. Current and Future Supply and Demand Conditions in the Labour Market for Certain Professional Therapists, Department of Health and Children, 2001. 19. National Health Strategy, Quality and Fairness - A Health System for You, Department of Health and Children 2001. 20. Reports from various Health Boards and services providers estimate that costs vary from €50,000 for basic community supports to €250,000 for a full service. 21. Report of the Commission on the Status of People with Disabilities, A Strategy for Equality, Ch.12, Housing and Accommodation 12.1

In 2003 the Government undertook and completed a national review of the DPG scheme. However as of September 2004 the Government has not published this review. DFI calls on the Government to publish this important review immediately and introduce common national criteria and ensure that the scheme is implemented uniformly across the country.

DFI Recommends

- In Budget 2005, Government to increase the overall allocation to DPG by €35m to €100m and amend the grant scheme so that Local Authorities can recoup the full cost of DPG from central exchequer funds
- Government to increase the allocation and amend the DPG scheme to empower Local Authorities to fund 100% of the actual cost of approved building work for adaptations in the subsequent two Budgets.

Children as Carers

The position and plight of carers in Ireland has long been ignored and unrecognised. In recent years some limited progress has been made in acknowledging the invaluable role and offering some support to adult carers. However to date the State has failed to acknowledge or address the phenomenon of children acting as either full or part time carers for parents and or siblings. As a result of inadequate funding for community and support services, people with disabilities often have no option but to rely on their children for basic care needs. Many children under the age of 18, some as young as 7, are carrying out, often on a regular basis significant caring tasks and are assuming a level of responsibility more normally associated with adulthood. These tasks include:

- Children giving general care such as assisting with mobility and dispensing medication.
- Children performing a range of intimate care tasks such as toileting and bathing.
- Children undertaking a range of domestic tasks and trying to provide emotional support.

Children are liable to suffer physically, emotionally, socially and educationally as a result of the burden of caring for a parent and or sibling with a disability. It is clear that the lack of State action on this issue is in contravention of the UN Convention on the Rights of the Child, which Ireland has signed and ratified²². The Convention states that the child has the right to rest and to engage in leisure, play

and recreational activities and to participate in cultural and artistic activities (Article 31) and that the State has an obligation to protect children from engaging in work that constitutes a threat to their health, education or development (Article 32).

“As a result of inadequate funding for community and support services, people with disabilities often have no option but to rely on their children for basic care needs”

At present there are no definitive statistics on the number of child carers in Ireland. We do know from the last Census that 2,996 young people between the ages of 15 and 17 were caring for a family member.²³ Using comparable studies in the UK²⁴ and the 2002 census figure it would indicate that there are up to 10,000 child carers in Ireland. However until the Government undertakes a proper analysis and study we will not know the true extent of children as carers.

DFI want to promote a solution that acknowledges the rights of the child, without undermining the rights of the person with the disability. Therefore the Government must adopt a holistic approach to this issue, which addresses the needs of the child and the needs of the person with a disability.

DFI Recommends

- In Budget 2005, Government to invest an additional €20m in services such as personal assistance, care attendants and home help so that people with disabilities are no longer dependent on their children for their basic everyday care. A further €20m per annum should be invested in the subsequent two Budgets.
- In Budget 2005, Government should undertake a comprehensive and detailed study and analysis to ascertain the true extent and needs of children as carers in Ireland.

Funding for Voluntary Disability Organisations

Voluntary disability organisations continue to be the primary providers of a range of services and supports for people with disabilities. Voluntary disability organisations work directly with people with disabilities to support them

²². UN Convention on the Rights of the Child, UN General Assembly 1989. Ireland signed the Convention on the Rights of the Child on 30 September 1990 and ratified it, without reservation, on 21 September 1992. ²³. Page 10 “Caring before their Time” A review of literature on young carers, Gilligan and Halpenny, Barnardos and Childrens Research Centre, Trinity College, Dublin. September 2004.

²⁴. One study in the UK indicated that about 1.4% of children and young people between the ages of 5 and 15 provided informal care. If we were to accept that roughly 1.4% of children between these ages in Ireland were carers (as compared to 4.8% for the population as a whole) that would indicate that about 7,000 children between the ages of 5 and 14 were child carers

to gain their primary health and social needs, to support them and their family members to live with disability, and generally to build the capacity of each individual to achieve his or her optimum standard of life. They operate at a grassroots level, tackling local disability issues through the support of individuals and groups in their own area. They are also working to promote and build the capacity of individuals to self-advocate. They are therefore more than about the provision of services and supports, they are key to building a more inclusive society and in providing a sector of society with a voice to articulate their views and visions. As the White Paper “Supporting Voluntary Activity” states *“An active Community and Voluntary sector contributes to a democratic, pluralist society, provides opportunities for the development of decentralised and participative structures and fosters a climate in which the quality of life can be enhanced for all”*.²⁵

“The voluntary disability sector represents extraordinary value for money for the State given the high standard of professional delivery of a diversity of services and supports, which they continue to undertake”

DFI acknowledges that in recent years the State has increased the levels of financial support to the voluntary disability sector and has begun to enter into real dialogue and partnerships, however, much remains to be done. Additionally if the State recognises as it does in the White Paper that the voluntary sector is about more than the provision of services, then funding streams should reflect that position. Therefore as well as funding being provided for services and specialist projects, the State should also provide direct core funding to build the capacity of the voluntary disability sector.

The voluntary disability sector represents extraordinary value for money for the State given the high standard of professional delivery of a diversity of services and supports, which they continue to undertake. However the persistent under-funding of voluntary disability organisations places unnecessary and extra burden on staff and the organisations as a whole. The State must also address the manner in which it funds voluntary disability organisations, especially the systems and procedures it applies which hinder rather than help the

organisations to provide the services and supports that are badly required.

DFI Recommends

- In Budget 2005 Government to provide additional core funding of €5m to build the capacity of the voluntary disability organisations. Government to provide a further additional investment of €5m per annum, in the subsequent two Budgets.

4. Conclusion

People with disabilities require sufficient income and properly resourced community services to participate as full and equal citizens in Irish society. Ireland is no longer a poor country where people with disabilities and other marginalised groups should expect or have to accept second best. The performance of the Irish economy over the past decade and its underlying strength as confirmed by the recent Government Economic Review²⁶ indicate that the resources are available. The key question now for this Government is whether it has the political will to deliver on its election promises to people with disabilities.

“When our duty is done and our mandate is complete, we pledge that five years from now we will have a country transformed from the country we found ten years before. That is our mandate and that is our pledge”.²⁷

To date this Government is far from fulfilling its pledge to people with disabilities. The last two years has undoubtedly been a frustrating and disappointing period for people with disabilities. For all those working to ensure that the needs, rights and aspirations of people with disabilities are addressed in a comprehensive manner this period has been a lost opportunity. The upcoming budget will be very significant, since it can signal the start of a three-year significant and sustained programme of investment in income support and community services for people with disabilities. This Budget truly represents a chance for the Government to demonstrate its commitment to vindicate the rights of people with disabilities as pledged and promised in the Programme for Government. In short it is a moment of truth and time for Rights, Commitments and Action!

²⁵. A White Paper on a Framework for Supporting Voluntary Activity and for Developing the Relationship between the State and the Community and Voluntary Sector, “Supporting Voluntary Activity” Page 32 Section 1.4 ²⁶. Economic Review and Outlook 2004, Department of Finance, August 2004. The outlook forecast that GNP would grow by 4.2% in 2004. ²⁷. Extract from Foreword to “An Agreed Programme for Government Between Fianna Fáil and The Progressive Democrats, June 2002.

5. DFI - National Council and Associate Membership 2004

Action for Mobility	DEBRA Ireland	Migraine Association of Ireland*
AHEAD	Diabetes Federation of Ireland Southern Regional Office*	Multiple Sclerosis Society of Ireland
Alzheimer Society of Ireland	Disabled Drivers Association	Muscular Dystrophy Ireland
Anne Sullivan Centre*	Disabled People of Clare	Myasthenia Gravis Association*
APT	Doorway to Life	National Association for Deaf People
Arthritis Foundation of Ireland	Dyslexia Association of Ireland	National Council for the Blind of Ireland
ASPIRE	Dyspraxia Association of Ireland*	National Federation of Arch Clubs
Asthma Society of Ireland	Enable Ireland	Neurofibromatosis Association of Ireland
AWARE	Féach*	Noinin Support for Autism*
BIH Housing Association	Fibromyalgia Support Group (Midlands)*	North West MS Therapy Centre
Bodywhys*	Fighting Blindness	Out and About Association*
Brainwave	Focus Ireland	Parkinsons Association of Ireland
Caring and Sharing Association	Footsteps, Down Syndrome Ireland	Peacehaven Trust*
Center for Independent Living Carmichael House	Freidreich's Ataxia Society of Ireland	Peter Bradley Foundation*
Central Remedial Clinic	Galway County Association for Mentally Handicapped Children*	Post Polio Support Group
Centre for Independent Living Blanchardstown*	Genetic & Inherited Disorders Association	Reach Ireland
Centre for Independent Living Carlow*	HAIL Housing Association	Rehab Group
Centre for Independent Living Dublin 7*	Headway Ireland	Royal Hospital Donnybrook
Centre for Independent Living Galway*	Huntington's Disease Association of Ireland	Schizophrenia Ireland
Centre for Independent Living Mayo	Irish Association for Spina Bifida and Hydrocephalus	Shannon Community Workshops
Centre for Independent Living Offaly*	Irish Deaf Society	Sophia Housing Association
Centre for Independent Living Sligo*	Irish Guide Dogs Association	Special Olympics Ireland
Centre for Independent Living Tipperary	Irish Haemophilia Society	Spinal Injuries Action Association
Centre for Independent Living Waterford*	Irish Kidney Association	St. Gabriel's School and Centre
Centre for Independent Living Wexford*	Irish Motor Neurone Disease Association	St. Mary's Hospital & Residential School
Children in Hospital Ireland*	Irish Raynaud's & Scleroderma Society	St. Michael's House
Cheeverstown House	Irish Society for Autism	Vantastic
Cheshire Ireland*	Irish Wheelchair Association	Vergemount Housing Fellowship
COPE Foundation	Jack and Jill Foundation	Walkinstown Association for People with Disabilities
Co. Roscommon Support Group of People with Disabilities	KARE	West Limerick Community Workshop
Co. Wicklow Association for the Mentally Handicapped	Leitrim Association of People with Disabilities	Western Care Association
Cystic Fibrosis Association of Ireland	Lucan Disability Action Group*	

* Associate Members.



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

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

- Hidden
- Intellectual
- Mental Health
- Physical
- Sensory
- Emotional

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

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

DFI represents and supports over 150 voluntary disability organisations and groups of which 71 comprise its National Council, and 24 of which are Associate Members. Allied to this, it works with and supports over 200 organisations and groups around the country that have a significant and growing disability interest, mainly coming from the statutory and voluntary sectors. DFI provides:

- Information
- Training and Support
- Organisation and Management Development
- Research and Policy Development
- Advocacy and Representation
- Networking

DFI also supports the broader voluntary and disability sector through its representation of the disability strand within the Community and Voluntary pillar of the Social Partnership process, as a social partner on the National Economic and Social Forum, Health Board Co-Ordinating Committees and other fora at regional, national and European level.

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