



Disability Federation of Ireland

2005: The Year in Review

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INTRODUCTION

Chairperson's Report

The year under review will be remembered for the enactment of the Disability Act 2005. The Act, as part of the wider National Disability Strategy, is affecting positive change which is impacting on public policy and service provision. This process will no doubt be slow and frustrating. The reforms that mainstreaming requires will not come soon enough for many disabled people.

DFI continued to operate in a strategic and focused way throughout the year, given its broad disability remit and having regard to the mainstreaming agenda. I want to briefly focus on a few areas, namely the National Disability Strategy, population health, Social Partnership, health service reform and capacity building in organisations.

Since the publication of the Disability Bill with the announcement of the National Disability Strategy in September 2004, DFI has given strong and committed leadership and has worked consistently to ensure that the measures being proposed would fully enable people with disabilities to be 'Equal Citizens' in our State. We sought to have a statutory duty placed on each Government department to plan and design public services so as to ordinarily include people with disabilities. DFI was successful in getting a commitment from Government that all legislative and policy matters coming to Government will be disability proofed. This commitment was achieved through the sustained effort of DFI.

Our Discussion Paper, *'Disability and Population Health'* (2005), and the associated Conference, brought into focus the need to consider the provision of the necessary specialist personal social services within the context of the general health and wellbeing status of people with disabilities and disabling conditions. This is a critical debate in the context of mainstreaming and health service reform, and one which DFI is also promoting through the Department of Health and Children's strategic review of health services for people with disabilities.

The past year should have seen our preparation for Social Partnership renegotiation culminate in the negotiation process. Nevertheless, DFI worked up its positions and had them endorsed by the National Council. DFI is conscious of the importance of the National Disability Strategy in relation to Social Partnership, and through our participation in the Community and Voluntary Pillar we have, no doubt, influenced the NESC analysis of the challenges facing Ireland in implementing the National Disability Strategy.

Over the past number of years we have worked to deepen and expand the capacity of organisations in our sector by providing, or ensuring the provision of, supports to their administration, management and governance functions. To coincide with our 2005 AGM we held a Seminar, *'Challenging Times'*, which was addressed by Minister Eamon O'Cuiv, T.D., Minister for Community, Rural and Gaeltacht Affairs. We also held advisory, briefing and training sessions for organisations throughout the year. We have continued to prepare for charity legislation and regulatory reform and to seek resources for organisational capacity building within the sector. We are conscious of the strong relationship between the effectiveness of governance and management systems and the quality and appropriateness of activities and services undertaken by organisations. In this regard our Strategic Plan has also committed us to reviewing our own governance system, and work has commenced in this regard.

In my last report, I expressed concerns in relation to the approach of the NDA to the voluntary disability sector. It is only right that I should now note that DFI no longer has such concerns and we look forward to a strong and effective working relationship between both organisations.

I wish to thank my fellow board members for their role in guiding the work of the Federation throughout the year. Each of us on the board acts in a voluntary capacity, bringing sector-wide experience and perspective to the role. I would like to mention in particular my fellow officers, Marie Lynch, Vice Chairperson, and Geraldine Clare, Honorary Treasurer, for their particular support and work.

During the year a number of Board members retired, namely, David Burke, Focus Ireland, Eithne Frost, Irish Motor Neurone Disease Association, and Bernie Murphy,

Headway Ireland. I wish to thank them for their service and support. I welcome also new members to the Board during the year, Donal Danagher, Tipperary CIL, and Paul Ledwidge, St Michael's House.

Many other people throughout the membership of DFI work on a regular basis to provide voluntary service to the Federation's mission. They too are to be acknowledged and thanked. I specifically want to note the work which our representatives across the Physical and Sensory Co-Ordinating Committees have done on behalf of the wider membership.

Finally, I would like to thank our Chief Executive, John Dolan, and staff members, for their continued dedication to ensuring that the objectives of the Disability Federation of Ireland are achieved.

John Saunders
Chairperson

Chief Executive Officer's Overview

It is important to reflect on the year under review, but it is also very useful to view matters over a five or ten year perspective. Taking either timeframe, there have been significant changes for DFI. Internally, we moved, and extended our office capacity, and significantly increased our staffing levels. Externally, we have played a key role in the Disability Legislation Consultation Group (DLCCG), Social Partnership, the Health Service Reform Programme, and capacity building for the sector.

In a word, mainstreaming, as articulated through the National Disability Strategy, has provided the context around which we have had to refocus our thinking and reprioritise our work.

There are challenges, in this new context, for DFI, and also for our membership. We are challenged to question the assumptions of our past ways of working, and as to how we relate to the wider environment. Similarly, Government, public services and private sector provision are also challenged by mainstreaming. Yet, our sector cannot afford to assume that mainstreaming will effectively take hold. As we need to advocate strongly for mainstreaming, we also must ensure that we are working and operating in the true spirit of mainstreaming. What we do, and how we do it, will also have to change. As never before, our ability as organisations to plan strategically, to work in partnership and to ensure that our activities and services are of a high quality, will be vital.

While this is a major shift and challenge for us, we have, as a sector, a long tradition of providing services to, and advocating for, people with disabilities on the basis of their dignity and human rights. We must work hard to bring these values to full effect across the whole of society. That is a major shift for society, but equally for us, because up to now our influence for change was constrained in the margins.

And what has all of that to do with the past year? At one level, everything, because 2005 was a year in which we continued to better understand and make plans for that future full of possibility. It is important at this point to State that as a sector we have a major capacity to determine how well we will seize that possibility.

You will read in the Chairperson's Report and elsewhere in this Review of the major areas of work across DFI in the past year. Areas such as influencing the development of the National Disability Strategy, Social Partnership participation, health service reform, and capacity building for our sector. These are the key instruments now available to us to revolutionise the way in which this State enables the full participation of its disabled members over the next decade. The year under review was very significant in determining how we will proceed with that project.

In conclusion, it is important to acknowledge the work and effort of a number of distinct groups within DFI. The National Council and board provide our governance and management, and, within that context, the staff team work to further the objectives of DFI. Members of the Council and board all operate on a voluntary basis. Board members, who meet on a monthly basis, are often called upon to give additional time and expertise. For this I am grateful. Board officers have specific roles and responsibilities. In particular, I wish to pay tribute to John Saunders, Chairperson, for his sustained work throughout the year and his advice and support to me as CEO. As his term of office comes to an end, I wish to say a special word of thanks to him for his commitment to, and support of, the work of DFI. We also have other volunteers who represent DFI's interests on a range of working groups and committees. They too play an important role on behalf of our membership.

The success of DFI is due to its team, staff and volunteers (Council, board and others). Their cooperation and work has greatly assisted the management team and myself throughout the year.

John Dolan
Chief Executive Officer

VISION AND MISSION

The 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, and supports organisations to further enable people with disabilities.

DFI is the national support mechanism for voluntary organisations in Ireland, covering all areas of disability and disabling conditions (hidden, intellectual, mental health, physical, sensory and emotional disability). At the end of the year in review, DFI represented and supported over one hundred and fifty voluntary disability organisations and groups of which seventy-two comprise the National Council, and twenty-nine of which are Associate Members.

Allied to this, we work with and support 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, organisational and management development, research and policy development, advocacy, representation and networking to voluntary organisations which will enable them to deliver the best possible range of services to people with disabilities. DFI also supports the broad voluntary disability sector through its representation of the disability interest within the community and voluntary pillar of the Social Partnership process as well as through a range of other fora and structures.

The four strategic objectives, outlined in our Strategic Plan 2004 – 2010, as adopted by the National Council, provide the guidance and basis for all our work. All activity outlined in this review revolves around these objectives:

- To influence and contribute to Government policy in respect of people with disabilities.

- To support individual member organisations in accordance with their own defined needs arising from the diversity of both their service users and the supports and services provided.
- To develop and consolidate a national platform which will articulate the views and perspectives of the disability sector in Ireland.
- In order to maximise its potential in respect of these three objectives, DFI will engage in capacity building and organisational development.

THE YEAR IN REVIEW

Building a National Platform

DFI continued to articulate the views and perspectives of the voluntary disability sector in Ireland and worked to ensure that organisations operate in an environment which understands and respects their voluntary role in society and which enables their optimum participation. We have continued to develop partnerships and alliances amongst the disability sector, the broad community and voluntary sector and beyond. Our participation on the DLCG and in the Social Partnership process is central to this.

A wide range of organisations and representative structures operate at local and regional levels, including the Community Platforms, Strategic Policy Committees and Social Inclusion Measures groups. DFI works with these groups and organisations to ensure that the regional issues of the disability sector are adequately represented. DFI actively supports representatives on many of these Committees, offering them a feedback mechanism to the disability organisations in the local area.

Examples of such work at a national level relate to the National Disability Strategy, Social Partnership, the health service reform programme and the annual budget process. We have consistently raised the importance of mainstreaming in all of this work. A key seminal piece of work in this regard has been the 'Mainstreaming for Me' project, which commenced in April 2005 and is funded by the Dormant Accounts Fund. It is a follow-on to previous projects organised by DFI, specifically, 'The Road to Mainstreaming' (2000 – 2001), and 'Living in the Mainstream' (2003). This project was designed to capture the current experiences of people with disabilities when accessing public services, and to gain an understanding regarding changes that have occurred since Government announced the strategy to ensure that all public services are designed and delivered to be inclusive of people with disabilities. The activities of the project were designed to encourage and facilitate an ongoing sharing and respectful dialogue between service users / members and mainstream services providers, such as the HSE, FÁS, Comhairle, and local authorities, in order to gain a greater understanding of the ongoing changes and awareness needed to make the mainstreaming policy fully effective.

This project is being independently evaluated and it is anticipated that the project will continue to feed into DFI's work in relation to influencing the development of the Sectoral plans and the implementation of the National Disability Strategy.

We point to the Government commitment to disability proofing of cabinet procedures, the growing understanding of the importance of a population health approach to people with disabilities and the increasing awareness of the importance of a cost of disability payment as evidence of our growing impact on behalf of the broad voluntary disability movement.

It is important to keep in mind that people with a recognised disability may acquire another disability or disabling condition during their lifetime. There must, therefore, be a particular emphasis across disabilities. Throughout the year DFI's engagement in this area has focused around:

- Developing the capacity of the voluntary disability sector
- Liaison and networking
- Disability and employment
- Disability and ageing / older people
- Strategic review of health services for people with disabilities
- Housing and accommodation
- Population health
- Cost of disability payment and income support

Furthermore, we are conscious of the work of a number of umbrella groups within the disability sector and, through our Social Partnership and NESF work we continued to offer engagement through our External Linkage and Feedback Network to a number of organisations, namely, The National Federation of Voluntary Bodies Providing Services to People with Intellectual Disabilities, Inclusion Ireland, Not for Profit Business Association and People with Disabilities in Ireland.

Policy Development

DFI recognises the vital importance of its continued contribution to the development of policies that support the work of the sector. Given the ongoing pressure on all voluntary organisations in the sector to ensure that people with disabilities and their families have access to appropriate services, and because many organisations have been at the forefront of developing and funding services, it is sometimes easily assumed that the sector is simply a collection of service providers. Our member organisations are and always have been the first advocate for people with disabilities and their families. DFI works to identify the interconnectedness between policy and operational issues. A central aim is that DFI members will better understand and contribute to socio-economic policy development.

DFI has continued to develop and promote policy and change while acting as an advocate for the sector at local, regional, national and European levels. Some of the organisations, groups and structures through which this was promoted in 2005 are listed further on.

The Government policy of mainstreaming services for people with disabilities and the implementation of the National Disability Strategy were overarching issues in relation to our policy work in 2005.

Much of DFI's policy work is based around the avenues through which we progress our policy issues, whether they are through the Budget Campaign, Social Partnership, or engagement with national and local government. In terms of policy development, obvious areas of major focus were the National Disability Strategy, in particular the Sectoral plans, the Disability Act, and Social Partnership. Other priorities were the continuing Health Service Reform programme, the Budget Campaign and the work which we instigated in relation to disability and population health, which culminated in a National Conference in October.

DFI has continued to support the implementation of the National Physical and Sensory Disability Database across its membership. As part of a complementary approach, DFI promoted the need for an epidemiological approach to the information deficit across the disability spectrum.

The Department of Health and Children Working Group on Funding of Voluntary Physical and Sensory Disability Organisations Providing Health and Personal Social Services was set up in June 2000 to consider and make recommendations on the funding of voluntary organisations providing health and personal services to people with physical and sensory disabilities. DFI has worked closely with the Not for Profit Business Association to complete the task, and we are concerned that the group did not meet throughout the year.

The following is a list of the major areas that we sought to progress in 2005.

- Infrastructure of care
- “Adults with Significant Disabilities”
- Housing and accommodation for people with disabilities
- Mental health
- Community employment mainstreaming
- Income supports for people with disabilities
- Cost of disability
- Resourcing voluntary disability organisations
- Children as carers
- Health information deficit for people with disabilities
- Strategic Review of health services for people with disabilities
- Population health
- Education
- Older people
- Employment

DFI has built and consolidated relationships with key personnel in strategic roles within Government departments, Health Service Executive and local authorities, other statutory agencies, members of the Oireachtas and the broad community and voluntary sector.

National Disability Strategy

DFI has always been to the forefront of the campaign to introduce legislation for people with disabilities in Ireland. The National Disability Strategy (NDS) was launched in September 2004, and consisted of the Disability Bill, six outline sectoral plans, Comhairle Amendment Bill, and a multi-annual funding package. In July 2005 the Disability Bill was enacted.

Throughout 2005 DFI and its member organisations put significant work into seeking to have the Bill conform to the agreed DLCG position as set out in *Equal Citizens*. In particular DFI campaigned to have a statutory duty on each Government department to include the needs of people with disabilities in their policies and services. Although we did not get this recognised in the legislation, we were successful in getting Government commitment to the amending of Cabinet procedures to ensure that all policy and legislation is disability proofed in the future.¹ DFI continues to work through the Oireachtas and Department of the Taoiseach to ensure that, across Government, mechanisms and procedures are put in place to ensure that the NDS is fully implemented.

Preliminary work was completed in relation to formulating our submission to the six sectoral plans and the Comhairle Amendment Bill. We have also assisted organisations to respond to opportunities presented by multi-annual funding.

Towards the end of 2005 the “NESC Strategy 2006” was published, and, in addressing the NDS it Stated:

“The Council believes, however, that the institutional arrangements to deliver on the NDS are still not fully established and that clarification is needed on the division of labour that will ensure the effective vertical and horizontal integration of the organisations and bodies who must jointly deliver it.”

The NESC Strategy is a welcome vindication from Government and the Social Partners of the major changes needed at senior policy making levels to ensure the

¹ Commitment made by the Taoiseach to the DLCG at a meeting on 25th May 2005

implementation of the NDS, and DFI, through its Social Partnership participation, has worked to influence this better understanding of the key policy and structural changes needed.

Social Partnership

DFI represents the disability interest in the Community and Voluntary Pillar in relation to the Social Partnership process and continued in 2005, to work towards the implementation of “Sustaining Progress”. Over the last year, DFI has been an active member of the Social Partnership process.

DFI has provided briefings, submissions and papers on an ongoing basis throughout the year to the Pillar, Department of the Taoiseach, the various line Departments and has generally succeeded in progressing the disability agenda within the process. We operated both internal and external linkage and feedback networks to involve DFI member organisations and the wider disability sector in the process.

DFI developed an overall approach in relation to negotiations for a new Social Partnership Agreement, which was agreed by the the National Council at a meeting in October. That approach focused on:

- i) Issues which are specifically disability related.
- ii) Issues which are wider than disability but within which disability is embedded, in that they have a pillar or inter pillar context.
- iii) Getting processes and policies agreed to and implemented, i.e. whole of government, crosscutting, mainstreaming, partnership approach, engagement.

Specific disability issues which we have focused on are as follows:

- Implementing the National Disability Strategy
- Infrastructure of Care: including

- “Adults with Significant Disabilities”
 - Accommodation for people who experience mental illness
 - Children as carers
 - Community employment
- Health
 - Housing and accommodation: including
 - “Adults with Significant Disabilities”
 - Accommodation for people who experience mental illness
 - Disabled Persons Housing Grant
 - Income supports and cost of disability
 - Information deficit
 - Resourcing voluntary disability organisations

The “NESC Strategy: 2006” sets out a shared view and understanding by Government and the Social Partners in the context of negotiation of a new agreement. DFI participated in and contributed to the NESC Report through our membership of the Community and Voluntary Pillar. This Report strongly acknowledges that significant whole of Government changes need to take place, i.e. crosscutting approaches to planning and implementation, and deepening information management systems.

Budget 2006 Campaign

DFI continued to build on our previous Budget campaigns and we focused on three core issues:

- Income
- Infrastructure of care
- Funding for voluntary organisations

In our Pre-Budget Submission “Funding the National Disability Strategy” we characterised Budget 2006 as an important indicator of the Government’s ongoing commitment to addressing the needs of people with disabilities. This is particularly in the light of the focus on, and the increased funding for, people with disabilities and disability services in Budget 2005. The Submission called for an investment of €445m in 2006, including capital of €135m.

Our approach was that the previous years Budget was just a first step in dealing with the significant unmet needs which deny many people with disabilities basic services and prevent them from participating in and contributing to Irish society. Indeed this was an analysis with which the Government concurred, as Stated by the Minister for Finance, Brian Cowen in his Budget 2005 speech , when he Stated,

“I want to make it clear that other disability services will also continue to be dealt with as a normal part of the annual estimates process and will receive extra funding going forward as overall budgetary circumstances permit”.

Representatives from political parties spoke at the launch of the Submission in the Mansion House on 13th October. DFI used the occasion to put the focus on outcomes to be achieved and not simply on restating the amount of funding going into disability.

DFI’s response to Budget 2006 was that it was below expectations, creating a concern that Budget 2005 was a one year wonder rather than the first installment of a long term and sustained investment package. In response to this concern, the Minister confirmed his ongoing commitment to the resourcing of the sector.

We welcomed the extra €41m for disability services announced in the annual estimates and this was in addition to the €59m for 2006 which was already committed to as part of the multi annual funding package announced last year. DFI warmly welcomed the increase of €17 per week in the Disability Allowance and the other lowest social welfare payments, such as respite, carers’ and fuel allowances. We are also pleased that the Government has followed through on its commitments in the National Anti-Poverty Strategy to benchmark these social welfare rates to 30% of the

average industrial wage by 2007. We expect that this commitment will be fully completed in Budget 2007. However we were disappointed that the Government did not take any initiative to introduce, even in an initial targeted manner, the Cost of Disability Payment. This issue has been on the agenda for almost a decade since the publication of the report of the Commission on the Status of People with Disabilities in 1996.

Population Health

During 2005 we undertook a campaign to focus on the critical importance of a population health approach to the health and wellbeing of people with disabilities.

We produced a discussion paper on disability and population health which outlined our position regarding the population health approach to health policy and promotion in relation to people with disabilities. It developed key determinants for the disability sector and made recommendations for policy development. We successfully engaged member organisations in the development of this work, and they have contributed significantly to our better understanding as to how we can promote and sustain the health of people with disabilities.

Our two day National Conference was held in October on the theme of “Disability and Population Health”. The aim of the conference was to further explore the issues for the disability sector in the context of the population health approach to healthcare provision within the reformed health system.

The conference was timely given the ongoing strategic review underway in the Department of Health and Children, which is committed to reviewing health and personal social services for people with disabilities, and so focusing beyond specialist disability services alone. It was also relevant given the recent establishment of the Population Health Directorate in the HSE, and the work to commence the assessment of health needs, as set out in the Disability Act 2005. A central aim of the conference was to set priorities for the development and expansion of population health initiatives for the benefit of people with disabilities, their families and carers.

The Conference also facilitated networking and relationship building among delegates and presenters from both the voluntary and statutory sectors.

Through this work DFI has given leadership and provided an important focus, within the context of the National Disability Strategy and the Health Service Reform Programme, to ensure that the overall health needs of people with disabilities are actively considered.

Health Service Reform

DFI continued to engage with the Department of Health and Children and the Health Service Executive in the course of the year in an attempt to get to grips with understanding the likely implications for members of the new health structures. Engagement with the Health Service Executive was difficult in the early part of the year as many key positions had not been filled. Regular meetings took place between DFI and key senior people in the Department of Health and Children and the Health Service Executive, however, due to delays in appointing staff, many of the practical issues concerning member organisations, such as operational and funding relationships, and engagement mechanisms are still not resolved. In this regard, we have continued to work with the Department of Health and Children and the Health Service Executive to ensure that our members' best interests are served through the reform programme. DFI will continue to challenge the Health Service Executive on simplifying processes and on the issues of concern to members.

Department of Health and Children Strategic Review of Health Services for People with Disabilities

Under the *Care – Children, People with Disabilities and Older People* Special Initiative, *Sustaining Progress* commits the Department of Health and Children to a strategic review of services to people with disabilities. Throughout 2005, DFI participated in a number of the specialist study groups formed under the review process including;

- Respite care
- Older people and disability
- Adults with Significant Disabilities,

- The protection of vulnerable people
- Information and database
- Mainstreaming

Throughout this activity, which included developing and presenting submissions to the groups, we have continued to focus on a number of key issues, namely, mainstreaming policies, protecting and sustaining the general health of people with disabilities, and the need to ensure that mental health is fully included.

National Economic and Social Forum

DFI has represented the disability interest in NESF since the Forum's inception in 1993. DFI participates on the management committee of the NESF, as a representative of the Community and Voluntary Strand. DFI has participated on the NESF Project Team, *Care for Older People*, and otherwise contributed to the other reports produced by the Forum during the year, namely 'Creating a More Inclusive Labour Market' and 'Early Childhood Care and Education.' DFI also participated in the NAPS Social Inclusion Forum in January 2005.

DFI Working Groups

DFI facilitated inter-organisational work in a number of areas during the year, namely, housing, mental health and 'adults with significant disabilities'.

Housing: During the year DFI worked on developing the issues outlined in its contribution to the NESC housing report "Housing in Ireland: Performance and Policy" (2004). A key issue which was raised within this by DFI is the need for the development of an overarching cohesive national strategy. Critical to DFI's housing work has been its housing sub-group. Members continue to play an integral part in the development of policy submissions such as our submission to review of the Government homeless strategy, the development of our housing group position paper and the DFI Pre Budget Campaign 2006 around housing.

Mental Health: The mental health group has continued to meet to discuss key legislative changes and issues. Our approach to mental health expanded during 2005

not least because of the growing need to reflect the diversity of organisations that have mental health within their remit. DFI continued to inform organisations on the work of the Expert Group on Mental Health and to update them on the current structure of mental health service provision and policy. This was done through a number of information meetings which sought to bring as wide a group as possible together with particular emphasis on small groups working with mental health issues on a daily basis but not necessarily their expertise or core work.

‘Adults with Significant Disabilities’: DFI has campaigned for increased funding for ‘Adults with Significant Disabilities’ over the past four years. In 2005 we began working with organisations that provide services to this group in order to develop a collective response to the challenges that multi-annual funding presents for both service providers and the HSE, and to campaign for an increase in funding for these services in upcoming Budgets. The group also focused on positioning this work within the context of relevant policy opportunities, such as Social Partnership, budget campaign and the Disability Act 2005.

National Advisory Group of CIL: DFI continues to work with the National Advisory Group (NAG) of CIL. The work of NAG commenced in 2003 when a decision was made to re-integrate ILCS planning and development functions into the activities and roles of CIL Dublin. The role of NAG members is to advise and guide planning and implementation functions for CILs. Throughout the year DFI continued to support the work of this group in regard to identifying funding applications, teambuilding, rolling out the NAG strategy and working with the membership of the group. The group comprises key stakeholders from the statutory and disability sectors, including the Department of Social and Family Affairs, DFI, Comhairle, FÁS, PwDI, the Forum of People with Disabilities, and the CILs themselves.

European Association of Service Providers for Persons with Disabilities

DFI is a member of The European Association of Service Providers for Persons with Disabilities (EASPD), and continued its representation on its board during 2005. Through EASPD we connect with and seek to influence the Europe wide context. Over the past year we have focused on the Working Time Directive and Services of General Interest across the European Community. DFI was involved in various EASPD

activities during the year, including attendance at general assembly, board, and social policy working group meetings.

DFI has continued to contribute to public policy through various fora

- Comhairle
- ICTU Disability Liaison Committee,
- Disability Legislation Consultation Group (DLCG)
- Commission for Taxi Regulation
- Irish Council for Social housing
- NAPS
- Disability Consultative Groups with Government Departments / Agencies
- DSFA and Equality Authority Disability Consultative Forums
- Health Service Executive Regional Physical and Sensory Disability Co-ordinating Committees
- National Physical and Sensory Disability Database Committee
- Department of Health and Children Working Group on the Funding of Voluntary Organisations Providing Services to People with Physical and Sensory Disabilities
- *Workway* – Joint ICTU / IBEC initiative
- Community and Voluntary Pillar of Social Partnership
- National Economic and Social Forum (NESF)
- National Economic and Social Council (NESC)
- National Disability Authority (NDA)
- Equality Authority
- The Wheel
- Irish Charities Tax Reform Group (ICTRG)
- Disability Legal Resource
- Citizens Information Centre boards
- Regional Support Agencies
- Community Development programmes
- Partnership Boards
- Education for Persons with Special Educational Needs Act
- Barcelona Declaration

- County Development Boards and Local Government structures
 - Disability Clusters
 - Community and Voluntary Fora
 - Social Inclusion Measures committees
 - Strategic Policy Committees

- HSE Consultative Group on Care for Older People
- Department of Health and Children National Health Strategy Consultative Forum
- Rural Development Forum
- National Employment Strategy (NES)
- Various FÁS policy groups
- Centre for Early Childcare Education and Development (CECDE)
- An Bord Altranais Prescribing Committee

Supporting Organisations

DFI has continued its support work to organisations throughout 2005 at national, regional and local levels. The impact of the closer relationship that DFI has developed with its members has reinforced the need for ongoing supports across a range of developmental, planning and strategic issues. These issues could be classed as internal to organisations. In addition, member organisations need to be advised, informed and facilitated in their understanding of the implications of the emerging and changing external environment, noting in particular the health reform programme, the National Disability Strategy, Social Partnership, and legislation and regulatory reform.

Notwithstanding the general demands and pressures on the governance structures of voluntary disability organisations, the Government, statutory bodies, funding agencies and the proposed charities regulator need to recognise that critical supports are required for organisations to flourish and develop in the emerging environment. DFI has continued to make the case for resources to support the capacity of voluntary disability organisations.

In this regard DFI has also been working closely with other organisations and agencies such as The Wheel, Comhairle, Carmichael Centre, ICTRG, and BoardMatch to maximise the value of work being done in the area of board support, management development, tax issues, staff training and regulatory reform. The thrust of DFI's engagement has been to ensure that scarce resources are maximised and best value is leveraged across a range of initiatives, and to seek to avoid duplication.

We were successful in an application for end of year funding from the Department of Community, Rural and Gaeltacht Affairs to run a project entitled "Chairs as Effective Leaders" over the course of 2006.

During 2005, DFI commenced developing a closer working relationship with key decision makers in our member organisations. Disability organisations have been assisted more fully to understand how State and other resources can be deployed to better support their organisational needs. A number of areas were given particular

attention, namely, organisational development, representation, understanding the policy context, platforms and training.

Organisational Development

We have continued to assist disability organisations to identify their own organisational development needs. We have worked with statutory and community and voluntary agencies to provide appropriate responses to the developmental needs identified by disability organisations. We have given support directly to organisations and have also liaised with other agencies to deliver the necessary supports. The issues that have been addressed include strategic planning, health and safety policies, childcare policies, recruitment, and committee skills.

There was ongoing individual work with organisations across the regions in the areas of board mediation issues, board and organisational strategy, planning, managing people and finances, linking organisations and demonstrating the collective and individual benefits of collaboration.

Representation

There are a wide range of representative structures at local and regional level. These include the Community Platforms, Strategic Policy Committees, Social Inclusion Measures Groups, Barcelona Committees, County Development Boards, Local Authorities, Partnership Companies, Community Support Agencies, Family Resource Centres and Community Development Projects. We have worked to ensure that the disability sector is adequately represented within these structures and we have supported representatives from our organisations on many local and regional committees, offering them a feedback mechanism to the wider disability sector.

DFI is also represented on each of the ten Health Service Executive Regional Physical and Sensory Co-ordinating Committees which provide a mechanism for the development of services and for the setting of priorities at regional level. We continued to service and support over eighty organisations to participate in the work of the committees. Throughout 2005 DFI continued to influence the ongoing review of the coordinating structure. The key issue here is what new arrangements will be put in place given the Health Act 2004 and the reform programme.

Understanding the Policy Context

We have worked to identify the interconnectedness between policy issues and the day to day issues that arise for disability organisations by actively gathering information which feeds into policy work, and by acting as a conduit for the dissemination of information on policy developments to the disability sector. This involves assisting disability organisations to understand the implications of changes in Government policy and how they will effect their own organisation and those they represent.

Platforms

Platform meetings are regularly held around the regions where we meet with representatives from disability organisations. The Platforms enable us to provide organisations with the most up to date information on the issues that affect them now and into the future. Platform meetings also provide a space for organisations to meet, network and share views on topics of concern, and they also support organisations in exploring avenues of collaboration. The Platforms continued to be a major source of assistance and support to organisations throughout the year. A range of issues were covered at meetings including:

- Advising and supporting organisations in relation to Health Service Reform.
- Information and analysis of the National Disability Strategy.
- Creating links and relationships between statutory agencies and local authorities.
- Identifying local organisational development supports.
- Communication and involvement with emerging organisations.
- National Physical and Sensory Disability Database.
- FÁS – Employment for People with Disabilities.
- Supported Employment for People with Disabilities.
- The Disability Act.
- Mental health.
- DFI Budget Campaign.
- Advocacy and Representation.
- BoardMatch.
- Quality Development and Standards.

Briefing and Training

A range of briefing and training sessions and activity events were carried out throughout 2005 on a number of topics and areas including:

- Health, Safety & Welfare at Work Act 2005
- Children First (Child Protection Policies)
- Comhairle – Comhairle Amendment Bill & Advocacy, and information provision
- The professionalisation of the community and voluntary sector
- Accountancy for community and voluntary organisations
- Strategic Planning
- Human Resources.
- Education for Persons with Special Education Needs Act 2004 – Role of Special Education Needs Organisers (SENO)
- National Disability Strategy
- Support and Training for Boards of Management
- Funding Opportunities
- County Childcare Committees in South East area - Integration of pre-school children into mainstream childcare settings
- Fly your Kite Day – South East area. Presentations of plans and overview of various voluntary disability organisations to the statutory agencies
- Community political participation seminar in association with Tullamore Wider Options support agency.

The above were organised in conjunction with a range of other agencies, namely, Disability and Equality Specialist Support Service (DESSA), Health Service Executive (HSE), Association of Chartered Certified Accountants (ACCA), Health and Safety Authority (HSA), EMS and Associates, Adare Human Resource Management and the National Council for Special Education (NCSE).

Collaborative Projects

There was further collaborative work involving member organisations around specific innovative projects. Examples include the development of a prioritisation system for provision of personal assistant and home support services, involving DFI, HSE-

Western Area, service users and service providers and the MOSAIC project in Mayo, which also aims to offer shared office and meeting space.

Challenging Times Conference

DFI hosted a conference on the implications of company law reform, regulation and legislation called “Challenging Times” on the 17th May 2005 in Chief O’Neill’s Hotel in Smithfield. There were speakers from The Wheel, Law Reform Commission, UK Charities Commission, Voluntary and Community Unit Regulator in Northern Ireland, Office of Director of Corporate Enforcement and BoardMatch. The conference was launched by Minister Eamon O’Cuiv, Department of Community Rural and Gaeltacht Affairs who commended DFI on advancing the very important issues facing the sector.

DFI Newsletter and Information Service

The DFI Newsletter continues to be produced monthly and has a circulation in excess of 1,300 copies. It is an important contact and reference point for organisations, both voluntary and statutory, and across all kinds of disabilities, making it easier for each to know what the other is doing, helping to identify resources and increasing collaboration.

Information services provided by DFI continue to be a key support to organisations. DFI services ongoing queries from organisations and groups and these queries often lead to other information supports being provided. This service also supports the broad community and voluntary sector and the statutory sector. Information gathered by DFI is also crucial in planning and guiding future work. DFI produces policy related materials and instruments and prepares focused reports and submissions.

DFI Capacity Building

Significant work took place in this area during the year which was an achievement given other priorities. The main areas can be summarised as follows:

- Developed a three-year operational plan (2005 – 2007), consistent with the Strategic Plan
- Commenced of a human resource equality review
- Commenced development of staff handbook
- Introduced computerised systems in relation to accounts
- Undertook and completed review of ICT needs and secured funding for ICT Manager post.
- Conducted staff training in time management
- Reviewed filing systems

DFI: THE ORGANISATION

Board, Membership, including National Council Member Organisations

BOARD

John Saunders *Chairperson*
Schizophrenia Ireland

Ann-Marie Flanagan *Vice-Chairperson (to May 2005)*
Disabled People of Clare

Geraldine Clare *Honorary Treasurer*
AWARE

Marie Lynch *Vice Chairperson (from May 2005)*
Irish Wheelchair Association

Nick Killian
Irish Association for Spina Bifida and Hydrocephalus

Joe T Mooney
Muscular Dystrophy Ireland

Mike Glynn *(co-opted October 2004, Elected May 2005)*
Brainwave

Niall Keane
National Association for Deaf People

Eithne Frost (Co-opted) *(to April 2005)*
Irish Motor Neurone Disease Association

David Burke *(to April 2005)*
Focus Ireland

Desmond Kenny
National Council for the Blind of Ireland

Bernie Murphy *(to August 2005)*
Headway Ireland

Paul Ledwidge *(co-opted July 2005)*
St. Michaels House

Donal Danagher *(from May 2005)*
Tipperary CIL

NATIONAL COUNCIL MEMBER ORGANISATIONS

Action for Mobility

AHEAD

Alzheimer Society of Ireland

APT

Arthritis Ireland

ASPIRE

Asthma Society of Ireland

Aware

BIH Housing Association (Irl) Ltd

Brainwave – The Irish Epilepsy Association

BRI

CASA – Caring and Sharing Association

Center for Independent Living

Central Remedial Clinic

Centre for Independent Living Mayo

Centre for Independent Living Tipperary

Cheeverstown House

COPE Foundation

Co Roscommon Support Group for People with Disabilities

Cystic Fibrosis Association of Ireland

DEBRA Ireland

Disabled Drivers Association

Disabled People of Clare

Doorway to Life

Down Syndrome Ireland

Dyslexia Association of Ireland

Enable Ireland

Fighting Blindness

Focus Ireland

Freidreich's Ataxia Society of Ireland

Genetic and Inherited Disorders Association

HAIL Housing Association for Integrated Living

Headway Ireland

Huntington's Disease Association of Ireland

Irish Association for Spina Bifida and Hydrocephalus

Irish Deaf Society

Irish Guide Dogs for the Blind

Irish Haemophilia Society

Irish Kidney Association

Irish Motor Neurone Disease Association

Irish Raynauds and Scleroderma Society

Irish Society for Autism

Irish Wheelchair Association

The Jack and Jill Children's Foundation

KARE

Leitrim Association of People with Disabilities

Multiple Sclerosis Society of Ireland

Muscular Dystrophy Ireland

National Association for Deaf People

National Council for the Blind of Ireland

National Federation of Arch Clubs

Neurofibromatosis Association of Ireland

North West MS Therapy Centre

Parkinson's Association of Ireland

Post Polio Support Group

Reach Ireland

Rehab Group

Royal Hospital Donnybrook

Schizophrenia Ireland

Shannon Community Workshops

Sophia Housing Association Ltd

Special Olympics Ireland

Spinal Injuries Ireland

St Catherine's Association

St Gabriel's School and Centre

St Mary's Hospital and Residential School

St Michael's House

Vantastic

Vergemount Housing Fellowship

Walkinstown Association

Western Care Association

West Limerick Community Workshop

ASSOCIATE MEMBER ORGANISATIONS

Ann Sullivan Centre

Arklow Disability Action Group

Bodywhys

CARE Local

Centre for Independent Living Blanchardstown

Centre for Independent Living Carlow

Centre for Independent Living Cork

Centre for Independent Living Dublin 7
 Centre for Independent Living Galway
 Centre for Independent Living Offaly
 Centre for Independent Living Sligo
 Centre for Independent Living Waterford
 Centre for Independent Living Wexford
 Cheshire Ireland
 Children in Hospital Ireland
 Cork Accessible Transport
 Diabetes Federation of Ireland Southern Regional Office
 Dyspraxia Association of Ireland
 Féach
 Fibromyalgia Support Group (Midlands)
 Galway County Association for Mentally Handicapped Children
 Heart Children Ireland
 Lucan Disability Action Group
 Migraine Association of Ireland
 Myasthenia Gravis Association
 Noinin Support for Autism
 Out and About Association
 Peacehaven Trust
 Peter Bradley Foundation

DFI Welcomed New Members in 2005

| | |
|-------------------------------------|----------------------------|
| *Arklow Disability Action Group | *CARE Local |
| *Centre for Independent Living Cork | *Cork Accessible Transport |
| *Heart Children Ireland | |
| * Associate Members | |

STAFF

MANAGEMENT TEAM

John Dolan
Chief Executive Officer

Kieran Loughran
Director, Management Resource Service

Aisling Walsh
Senior Executive Officer – Policy and Research

Allen Dunne
Senior Executive Officer – Operational

REGIONAL SUPPORT OFFICERS

Michael Corbett
Western Area

James Doorley
*North Eastern Area
(to December, 2005)*

Maria Fox
Midland Area

Toni Gleeson
Mid Western Area

Joanne McCarthy
East Coast Area

Martin Naughton
Northern Area

Anthony Carrick
South Western Area

Alison Ryan
Southern Area

P.J. Cleere
South Eastern Area

Marcus Hufsky
North Western Area

Cathy McGrath
RSO Assistant

ADMINISTRATION SUPPORT TEAM

Aaron Browne

Jacinta Dixon

Mary Redmond

Alison Ryan

Noreen Woods

ACKNOWLEDGEMENTS

DFI would like to acknowledge those who, in a voluntary capacity, represented our interests on various national Committees and Groups during 2005

COMMITTEES AND GROUPS – GENERAL

- **An Bord Altranais Prescribing Committee for Nurses and Midwives** – Collette Hempenstall (Cheeverstown House)
- **Dormant Accounts Disbursement Board** – Gerry Ryan (Formerly General Secretary, Inclusion Ireland (namhi), representing the voluntary disability sector)
- **Eastern Region Provider Forum** – Joan Bradley (Post Polio Support Group)
- **Working Group on the Funding of Voluntary Physical and Sensory Disability Organisations Providing Health and Personal Social Services** – The voluntary sector has five representatives on the Working Group: Eithne Frost (Irish Motor Neurone Disease Association), Clodagh O'Brien (Not for Profit Business Association), Des Kenny (National Council for the Blind of Ireland), Mark Blake-Knox (Cheshire Ireland)
- **CSO National Disability Survey Consultative Group Sub-Group on Intellectual / Developmental and Mental Health Difficulties** – Margaret Webb (Eve Limited)
- **Workway** – Ronnie Conlon (Irish Wheelchair Association), Paul Fagan (CIL Donegal), Mary Grandfield (Kerry CIC), Adrian Stewart (National Learning Network)
- **Department of Health and Children Strategic Review of Disability Services – Study Groups**
 - **Assessment, Early Intervention and Pre-School** - Jonathan Irwin (Jack and Jill Foundation)
 - **Access to Mental Health Services** - John Saunders (Schizophrenia Ireland), Margaret Webb (Eve Holdings)
 - **Disabilities and Older People** - Maurice O'Connell (Alzheimer Society) Robin Webster (Age Action Ireland)
 - **Protecting Vulnerable People** Nick Killian (Irish Association for Spina Bifida and Hydrocephalus)
 - **Families and Carers of People with Disabilities** - Enda Egan (Carers Association)

HEALTH SERVICE EXECUTIVE (HSE) REGIONAL PHYSICAL AND SENSORY DISABILITY CO-ORDINATING COMMITTEES

NORTH EAST AREA

James Doorley, *DFI*
 Noreen O'Donnell, *Brainwave – The Irish Epilepsy Association*
 Rex Lee, *North Meath Partnership*
 Irene Hamill, *Headway Ireland, Alternate* (To February 2005)

SOUTH EAST AREA

PJ Cleere, *DFI*
 Katie Hourigan, *MS Society of Ireland*
 Donal Danagher, *Tipperary CIL* (From January 2005)
 Nan Sibbald, *CIL Carlow, Alternate*

MIDLAND AREA

Maria Fox, *DFI*
 Margaret Bassett, *Brainwave – The Irish Epilepsy Association*
 Carmel Walsh, *Alzheimer Society of Ireland, Alternate* (from May 2005)

MID WEST AREA

Toni Gleeson, *DFI*
 Anna Kelly, *Brainwave – The Irish Epilepsy Association*
 Anne Marie Flanagan, *Disabled People of Clare*
 Gretta Allen, *MS Society Mid West (Alternate)*

WESTERN AREA

Michael Corbett, *DFI*
 Coleen Mullanney, *Irish Society for Spina Bifida and Hydrocephalus*
 Rebecca Leavey, *Brainwave - The Irish Epilepsy Association,*

NORTH WEST AREA

Marcus Hufsky, *DFI*
 Agnes Mooney, *Brainwave* (From February 2005)
 Rosaleen Kielty, *Leitrim Association of People with Disabilities* (From February 2005)
 Brian Crummy, *Disabled Drivers Association, Alternate* (From February 2005)

SOUTHERN AREA

Alison Ryan, *DFI*
 Carmel Coughlan, *MS Society*
 Una Barry, *Brainwave – The Irish Epilepsy Association*
 Trudy Renshaw, *Muscular Dystrophy Ireland Alternate*

East Coast Area**Joanne McCarthy, DFI****Ava Battles, Brainwave – The Irish Epilepsy Association** (From September 2005)**Barbara Flynn Friedrich Ataxia** (From November 2005)**Eithne Diamond, Muscular Dystrophy Ireland** (to October 2005)**Katie Power MDI, Alternate** (from November 2005)**Jennifer Reilly, MS Ireland Alternate** (to October 2005)**Northern Area****Martin Naughton, DFI****Joe T Mooney, Muscular Dystrophy Ireland****Karen Holmes, PPSG****Bernie Murphy, Headway Ireland** (To June 2005)**Sean Kinsella, MS Society, Alternate****South Western Area****Anthony Carrick, DFI****Nick Killian, Irish Association for Spina Bifida and Hydrocephalus****Joan Bradley, Post Polio Support Group****Michael Kavanagh, Peter Bradley Foundation,** (From November 2005)

We wish to acknowledge the following bodies for their co-operation and work with DFI during the year.

- *Age Action Ireland*
- *An Bord Altranais*
- *Anti-Poverty Networks*
- *Pobal and Partnership Companies*
- *Interim Health Service Executive*
- *Barnardos, The Children's Research Centre*
- *Carers Association*
- *Carmichael Centre for Voluntary Groups*
- *Centre for Early Childhood Development (cecde)*
- *Childrens' Rights Alliance*
- *Comhairle*
- *Congress Centres Network*
- *CORI Justice Commission*

- *Crisis Pregnancy Agency*
- *Dáil and Seanad Éireann*
- *Department of Community, Rural and Gaeltacht Affairs*
- *Department of Health and Children*
- *Department of Justice, Equality and Law Reform*
- *Department of Social and Family Affairs*
- *Department of Education and Science*
- *Department of the Taoiseach*
- *Disability Action (N.I.)*
- *Disability Legislation Consultation Group (DLCG)*
- *Disability Equality Specialist Support Agency (DESSA)*
- *Dormant Accounts Disbursement Board*
- *European Association of Service Providers to People with Disabilities (EASPD)*
- *FÁS*
- *Federation of Voluntary Bodies Providing Services to People with Intellectual Disability*
- *Health Service Executive*
- *Irish Council for Social Housing*
- *Irish National Organisation for the Unemployed (INOUE)*
- *Irish Rural Link*
- *Irish Senior Citizens Parliament*
- *Inclusion Ireland (formerly namhi)*
- *National Association of Building Co-Operatives*
- *National Disability Authority*
- *National Economic and Social Council (NESC)*
- *National Economic and Social Forum (NESF)*
- *National Rehabilitation Hospital*
- *National Women's Council of Ireland*
- *National Youth Council of Ireland*

- *North / South Health Services Partnership*
- *Not for Profit Business Association*
- *People with Disabilities in Ireland Ltd*
- *Pavee Point*
- *Rural Development Forum*
- *Society of St Vincent de Paul*
- *The Wheel*
- *Vocational Education Committees*
- *Institute for Design and Disability*
- *Udarás Na Gaeltacht*
- *Western Development Commission*
- *County and City Development Boards*

DFI is a member of the following organisations

- *Irish Council for Social Housing (ICSH)*
- *European Association of Service Providers to People with Disabilities (EASPD)*
- *Irish Charity Tax Research Group (ICTRG)*
- *The Wheel*

CONTACT DETAILS

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EASTERN REGION

Regional Support Officers for the Eastern area are based in the National Office

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**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 disability 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 72 comprise its National Council, and 30 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 with the Community and Voluntary pillar of the Social Partnership process, as a social partner at the National Economic and Social Forum, HSE Co-Ordinating Committees and other fora at regional, national and European level.

Disability Federation of Ireland

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