

Pre-Budget Submission 2027

"The least we can expect"

Introduction

Budget 2027 arrives at a moment of real consequence for disabled people in Ireland. The National Human Rights Strategy for Disabled People has been published, and Ireland is preparing for its first UN hearing on disability rights. Funding from Budget 2026 has begun to stabilise disability supports and services, and after decades of advocacy, a Cost of Disability payment is finally on the horizon. This is hard-won progress.

The Tánaiste himself said it plainly, in the Human Rights Strategy, that the least disabled people can expect is the same access to services and supports as everyone else. Budget 2027 is the first real test of whether Government will spread investment across all Departments, as a whole-of-government strategy requires.

Each pillar of the Human Rights Strategy will need to be allocated enough funding to deliver on its commitments. A joined-up approach across all Departments will also be essential to make progress. On top of that, the Cost of Disability is every Department's responsibility.

This submission includes the structural changes needed if the rights commitments made in 2025 are to become lived experience. Two of those changes cut across everything that follows.

Accessibility and Universal Design must be built in from the outset, in policy, procurement, infrastructure, transport and services, not bolted on afterwards. This helps to remove barriers before they are built, instead of costly retrofitting later.

Disabled Persons' Organisations (DPOs) must be properly funded. Article 4.3 of the UN CRPD requires the State to consult and involve disabled people's organisations in decisions that affect them. Consultation without resourcing is not partnership. DFI calls for multi-year core funding for DPOs, and fair remuneration for disabled people who provide their expertise in line with commitments under the National Human Rights Strategy for Disabled People.

None of this is radical. It is the least that disabled people should expect.

The moment we are in

Several key factors this year raise the stakes for disabled people, and for Budget 2027.

A strategy that demands delivery

The National Human Rights Strategy for Disabled People 2025–2030 (NHRSDP) makes ambitious commitments across inclusive learning and education, employment, independent living and active participation, health and wellbeing and transport and mobility. This is the first full year of the strategy's implementation.

Ireland's first UN CRPD hearing

It has been 20 years since the UN CRPD was adopted.

Ireland ratified the Convention in 2018 and now faces its first formal UN CRPD Committee hearing in 2027. Budget decisions will form part of Ireland's response.

A changing landscape

The Health Service Executive's new structures are bedding in, with Health Regions operational and their leadership teams in place.

A new Disability Unit sits in the Department of the Taoiseach. Ireland holds the EU Council Presidency from 1 July 2026.

The reality on the ground

Against policy ambition, the everyday reality remains stark. Many disabled people do not have access to services. Many live in deprivation and are disproportionately impacted by the cost-of-living crisis.

Voluntary organisations provide over two-thirds of disability services. But many face serious financial pressure that falls on them and impacts those they support.

“Access to the same services and supports as everyone else is the least that disabled people can expect.”

Tánaiste Simon Harris, National Human Rights Strategy for Disabled People, 2025



Our Budget priorities 2027

This submission emphasises key areas of Budget investment that will help to deliver the rights of disabled people. We lay out priorities across numerous government Departments, in the following sections:

- [Budget transparency and accessibility](#)
- [Disability services and organisations](#)
- [Mainstream healthcare access](#)
- [Cost of Disability, poverty and employment](#)
- [Community inclusion and transport](#)
- [Accessible and affordable housing](#)
- [Appendix: At-a-glance departmental summary.](#)



Budget transparency and accessibility

Cross-government · Meaning what you say. And saying it clearly.

We call on Government to:

Transparency

- Clearly state which allocations are needed to maintain existing supports and services, as opposed to genuinely new investment.
- Show exactly where disability funding is going, how it breaks down across departments, and across specialist service areas and within the sector.
- Explain how funding decisions are actually made, including how stakeholder input shapes them.
- Disability-proof all Budget decisions before announcement.

Accessibility

- Ensure that all Budget materials are accessible, including Irish Sign Language (ISL), braille, easy-to-read, plain English.
- Invest in deaf-led services and ISL interpretation across Government.



Disability services and organisations

The right to independent living

Lead: Department of Children, Disability and Equality

Budget 2027 can deliver real independent living in line with Article 19 of the UN CRPD, with the autonomy of disabled people at the heart of every measure.

Voluntary disability organisations provide over two-thirds of disability services on behalf of the State. However, many of these still remain at risk. Funding is needed that reflects the real cost of service delivery and puts an end to inconsistent and below-cost levels. This will ensure stable, high-quality services, provide long-term planning, and protect essential community supports for disabled people across the country. Alongside this, delivering the actions outlined in the Disability Capacity Review remains essential.

429,000 Disabled people are supported by DFI members each year.

We call on Government to:

- Provide funding to stabilise the base for organisations not included in the 2026 budget uplift. The majority of these are Section 39 funded organisations.
- Fund the full cost of pension auto-enrolment for disability community and voluntary organisations for 2026, 2027 and beyond.
- Fund organisation's operational, non-pay costs for 2027, such as IT infrastructure, and index linking rising energy costs to inflation.
- Maintain Workplace Relations Commission (WRC) pay alignment for Section 39 funded organisations and extend it across to other government schemes and grants.
- Introduce multi-annual funding across the sector to provide more certainty, further stabilise the base and enable greater sustainability.
- Provide dedicated funding for transport across specialist service areas, in particular within day service budgets, indexed to real costs, including vehicles, staffing and operating costs.
- Establish a central Assistive Technology (AT) coordination office and digital information hub at a cost of €2 million.
- Fund condition-specific organisations who provide specialist supports for people with life-long neurological conditions throughout the person's life.
- Continue to grow community neurorehabilitation, with a team in the South East.



Disability services and organisations (continued)

Demand for disability services continues to rise, and scaling supports are required to match it. Nearly four in five DFI members (79%) report more demand than before, driven mainly by greater awareness and the absence of other options. It is important that Budget 2027 speeds up the move away from inappropriate care settings and gives disabled people more choice and control over their own supports.

We call on Government to:

Expand supports in line with need

- Maintain the integrity of personal assistant services as a distinct disability-led service model, and invest in the service.
- Provide home support, including intensive home support packages, and integrated home care to support people out of inappropriate care settings, including nursing homes.
- Integrate multidisciplinary team supports across adult disability services, including day services.
- Deliver the targeted 222 multidisciplinary therapy posts in specialist adult therapy.
- Expand and fund personalised budgets nationally, resourcing the infrastructure in every region to ensure choice and control for disabled people.
- Fund quality residential places for people with high, unmet and complex support requirements.
- Reform school leaver funding and implement multi-annual capacity planning.
- Fund the expansion of adult respite capacity.
- Meet the capacity demand of New Directions implementation and disability day services places.



Mainstream healthcare access

Achieving health equity for disabled people · Lead: Department of Health.

Health policy programme design and implementation has created structural barriers to accessible and equitable health care for disabled people. These include an inaccessible built environment, financial, social, and communication barriers, amongst others.

Government has committed to ensure mainstream services are inclusive for disabled people, but much needs to be done to make this happen. Budget 2027 offers an opportunity to achieve this by mainstreaming health equity for disabled people across healthcare decisions and budget allocations.

"Most disabled people can be supported through mainstream services, simply by Government doing the work to ensure that everyday services are accessible." Tánaiste Simon Harris, NHRSDP 2025

We call on Government to:

- Fund the National Clinical Programme for People with Disabilities to develop a comprehensive disability equality training framework for all staff across the health and social care sector as outlined in the National Human Rights Strategy for Disabled People.
 - Allocate 7% of the overall health budget to mental health with the aim of incrementally reaching 10% by 2030 as per the Sláintecare commitment.
 - Meet the Programme for Government commitment to fund the implementation of the National Rare Disease Strategy.
 - Fund sustainable dedicated neurology services in regional hospitals and nationally to support specialist pathways for timely diagnosis and appropriate care.
- ➔ **Address the Cost of Disability within health services:**
- Fund a change in the eligibility criteria for the medical card, making it needs-tested not means-tested.
 - Reduce the €80 monthly cap under the Drugs Payment Scheme to €60 per family.
 - Stabilise the high costs of certain drugs to further address the cost of disability.



Cost of Disability, poverty and employment

The right to an adequate standard of living.

Lead: Department of Social Protection

Disabled people face extra costs of €11,046–€15,617 per year. Disability Allowance remains over €100 per week below the weekly poverty line. Removal of one-off supports in Budget 2026 caused net income losses of up to €1,264. Fuel price increases have added more strain.

Structural barriers to disabled people working have not been tackled. Addressing these issues requires funding for the employment pillar of the NHRSDP, a commitment to co-designing a payment and a three-year cross-Departmental Cost of Disability Action Plan.

Two in five people unable to work due to disability live in enforced deprivation. The at-risk-of-poverty rate would be 36.3% without one-off cost of living measures. (CSO SILC 2025)

We call on Government to address:

The Cost of Disability

- Introduce an emergency payment of, at minimum, €400 to address removal of the Disability Support Grant.
- Fund a recurring, universal, non-taxable Cost of Disability payment of €55 per week as an interim measure.

Poverty, income and means-testing

- Increase core social protection rates by minimum €15 (Minimum Essential Standard of Living (MESL) recommendation).
- Index welfare rates annually above the poverty line, factoring in Cost of Disability.
- Only a disabled person's income or means should be assessed, not their family member, partner, or anyone else they live with.

Employment

- Increase the Disability Allowance income disregard to €1,000.

Energy poverty

- Increase Fuel Allowance by €4 a week and retain the four-week increase. Implement DFI's other recommendations on Energy Poverty.



Community inclusion and transport

Enabling participation in everyday life ·

Lead: Department of Housing and Local Government, and Transport.

One of the key goals of the UN CRPD is to realise the right of disabled people to be part of their community. This does not just mean living in the community but being able to participate in community life on an equal basis with others. Accessibility is a core part of this and must be built into communities from the start.

The National Human Rights Strategy acknowledges the importance of community participation. Investment will be needed to deliver on its commitments to actions at local authority level, and to improve transport options for disabled people. DFI members consistently identify transport as a barrier to inclusion and participation, including access to services. Dedicated transport funding within service budgets remains a recurring ask across the federation. Action on energy poverty is also essential.

45%

of people unable to work due to disability felt downhearted or depressed at least some of the time in 2025, compared to 15.6% population average (CSO Wellbeing 2025).

We call on Government to:

- Fund a standardised new programme across all local authorities for disability-inclusive communities.
- Provide specific funding to deliver a dedicated, full-time Grade 7 Access Officer role in each local authority.
- Fund increased accessibility and frequency of Local Link transport in rural areas.
- Fund the extension of the parking badge to disability categories currently excluded.

→ Address the Cost of Disability in transport:

- Urgently establish a Transport Support Scheme as per Ombudsman's longstanding recommendation.
- Maintain the disabled driver's scheme until an inclusive review, and alternative model is co-designed and agreed.
- Increase funding for the Vehicle Adaptation Scheme to reach as many people as possible.
- Increase funding under the Wheelchair Accessible Vehicle Grant Scheme for taxis to meet high demand and grow the accessibility of the taxi fleet across the country.



Accessible and Affordable Housing

A fundamental right.

Leads: Department of Housing, Local Government and Heritage ·
Department of Climate, Energy and Environment ·

Disabled people have a right to choose where and with whom they live. However, several barriers remain which are preventing this. Despite having a dedicated National Housing Strategy for Disabled People, Ireland continues to fall short of its own targets in supporting people to move out of congregated settings, including nursing homes.

There is also a significant lack of Universal Design, 'UD Home + wheelchair-liveable' homes. To deliver the right to independent living, we must invest in disability housing, and coordinated supports.

6,526

Households had a disability related housing need in 2025, making up 10.5% of households on the list (Summary of Social Housing Assessments 2025).

We call on Government to:

- Fund Local Authority Disability Friendly Housing Technical Advisor positions to be dedicated, standalone roles.
- Ringfence a budget for all local authorities to incorporate and deliver specific, measurable targets for Universal Design (UD) Home and UD Home+ Wheelchair Liveable (not just wheelchair visitable) standards.
- Fund appropriate ceilings, achievable timeframes, and lifetime maintenance under the Capital Assistance Scheme (CAS) as an interim measure, pending urgent reform of the scheme.
- Increase funding for the Capital Advanced Leasing Facility (CALF) and enable this to be accessed for supported housing.
- **Address the Cost of Disability in housing:**
 - Increase funding for the Housing Adaptation Grant to reflect the real costs of adaptations and address ongoing issues with grant levels and means-testing.
 - Expand eligibility for the Warmer Homes Scheme for people with disabilities and consider prioritising those with a disability or health need.

Disability Federation of Ireland

DFI Pre-Budget 2027

At-a-glance

Asks by Department



Introduction

How to use this document

This document sets out DFI's pre-Budget 2027 asks organised by lead government department, to make it easier for relevant stakeholders and ministerial offices to identify the asks most pertinent to them. Each ask is colour-coded to show which department or departments hold responsibility for it. Where multiple colours appear against a single ask, this signals a cross-departmental commitment that will require coordination and shared accountability across government to deliver.

The need for a whole-of-government response

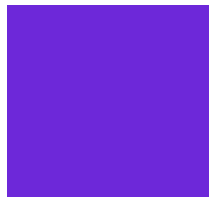
While organising our asks by department is a practical tool for engagement, it should not obscure a more fundamental point. The issues facing disabled people in Ireland do not respect departmental boundaries. Housing, health, transport, income adequacy, employment and community inclusion are deeply interconnected, and progress in one area is often contingent on action in another.

Addressing the structural barriers to inclusion and fulfilling Ireland's obligations under the UN CRPD requires a genuine whole-of-government response, with strong cross-departmental coordination, shared targets, and clear accountability. DFI calls on Government to treat this not as a series of isolated departmental asks, but as a coherent national commitment to the rights and inclusion of disabled people.

Department colour key

In the matrix slides, coloured dots show which department is responsible for each ask. Multiple dots on a row indicate a cross-departmental ask.

The Department of Public Expenditure, Infrastructure, Public Service Reform and Digitalisation is responsible for effective use and oversight of public services and resources and gives final sign-off to all public service budgetary allocations.



DCDE

Children, Disability and Equality



DSP

Social Protection



Health

Department of Health



Housing

Housing, Local Govt and Heritage



Transport

Department of Transport



Finance

Department of Finance



Env/CC

Environment, Climate and Comms



CommDev

Rural and Community Development and the Gaeltacht



DPE

DPEIPSRD

Public Expenditure, Infrastructure, Public Service Reform and Digitalisation

Budget transparency and accessibility

Cross-government — applies to all departmental budget announcements and communications

Ask	DCDE	DSP	Health	Housing	Transport	Finance	Env/CC	CommDev
Clearly state which allocations are needed to maintain existing supports and services, as opposed to genuinely new investment.	●	●	●	●	●	●	●	●
Show exactly where disability funding is going and how it breaks down across departments, and across specialist service areas and within the sector.	●	●	●	●	●	●	●	●
Explain how funding decisions are actually made, including how stakeholder input shapes them.	●	●	●	●	●	●	●	●
Disability-proof all Budget decisions before announcement.	●	●	●	●	●	●	●	●
Ensure that all Budget materials are accessible, including Irish Sign Language (ISL), braille, easy-to-read, plain English.	●	●	●	●	●	●	●	●
Invest in deaf-led services and ISL interpretation across Government.	●	●	●	●	●	●	●	●

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Disability services and organisations

Primary lead: Department of Children, Disability and Equality (DCDE)

Ask	DCDE	DSP	Health	Housing	Transport	Finance	Env/CC	CommDev
Provide funding to stabilise the base for organisations not included in the 2026 budget uplift. The majority of these are Section 39 funded organisations.	●							
Fund the full cost of pension auto-enrolment for disability community and voluntary organisations for 2026, 2027 and beyond.	●					●		
Fund organisation's operational, non-pay costs for 2027, such as IT infrastructure, and index linking rising energy costs to inflation.	●					●		
Maintain Workplace Relations Commission (WRC) pay alignment for Section 39 funded organisations and extend it across to other government schemes and grants.	●					●		●
Introduce multi-annual funding across the sector to provide more certainty, further stabilise the base and enable greater sustainability.	●							
Provide dedicated funding for transport across specialist service areas, in particular within day service budgets, indexed to real costs, including vehicles, staffing and operating costs.	●				●			
Establish a central Assistive Technology (AT) coordination office and digital information hub at a cost of €2 million.	●							
Fund condition-specific organisations who provide specialist supports for people with life-long neurological conditions throughout the person's life.	●		●					
Continue to grow community neurorehabilitation, with a team in the South East.	●		●					

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Disability services and organisations (continued)

Primary lead: Department of Children, Disability and Equality (DCDE)

Ask	DCDE	DSP	Health	Housing	Transport	Finance	Env/CC	CommDev
Maintain the integrity of personal assistant services as a distinct disability-led service model, and invest in the service.	•							
Provide home support, including intensive home support packages, and integrated home care to support people out of inappropriate care settings, including nursing homes.	•		•					
Integrate multidisciplinary team supports across adult disability services, including day services.	•		•					
Deliver the targeted 222 multidisciplinary therapy posts in specialist adult therapy.	•		•					
Expand and fund personalised budgets nationally, resourcing the infrastructure in every region to ensure choice and control for disabled people.	•							
Fund quality residential places for people with high, unmet and complex support requirements.	•							
Reform school leaver funding and implement multi-annual capacity planning.	•							
Fund the expansion of adult respite capacity.	•							
Meet the capacity demand of New Directions implementation and disability day services places.	•							

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Mainstream healthcare access

Primary lead: Department of Health

Ask	DCDE	DSP	Health	Housing	Transport	Finance	Env/CC	CommDev
Fund the National Clinical Programme for People with Disabilities to develop a comprehensive disability equality training framework for all staff across the health and social care sector as outlined in the National Human Rights Strategy for Disabled People.			●					
Allocate 7% of the overall health budget to mental health with the aim of incrementally reaching 10% by 2030 as per the Sláintecare commitment.			●					
Meet the Programme for Government commitment to fund the implementation of the National Rare Disease Strategy.			●					
Fund sustainable dedicated neurology services in regional hospitals and nationally to support specialist pathways for timely diagnosis and appropriate care.			●					
Reduce the €80 monthly cap under the Drugs Payment Scheme to €60 per family.			●					
Fund a change in the eligibility criteria for the medical card, making it needs-tested not means-tested.			●					
Stabilise the high costs of certain drugs to further address the cost of disability.			●					

The Department of Public Expenditure, Infrastructure, Public Service Reform and Digitalisation is responsible for effective use and oversight of public services and resources and gives final sign-off to all public service budgetary allocations.

Cost of Disability, poverty and employment

Primary lead: Department of Social Protection

Ask	DCDE	DSP	Health	Housing	Transport	Finance	Env/CC	CommDev
Introduce an emergency payment of, at minimum, €400 to address removal of the Disability Support Grant.		•						
Fund a recurring, universal, non-taxable Cost of Disability payment of €55 per week as an interim measure.		•						
Increase core social protection rates by minimum €15 (Minimum Essential Standard of Living (MESL) recommendation).		•						
Index welfare rates annually above the poverty line, factoring in Cost of Disability.		•						
Increase Fuel Allowance by €4 a week and retain the four-week increase. Implement DFI's other recommendations on Energy Poverty.		•					•	
Only a disabled person's income or means should be assessed, not their family member, partner, or anyone else they live with.		•						
Increase the Disability Allowance income disregard to €1,000.		•						
Increase Fuel Allowance by €4 a week and retain the four-week increase. Implement DFI's other recommendations on Energy Poverty		•						

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Community inclusion and transport

Primary lead: Department of Transport with significant crossover with Department of Housing, Local Government and Heritage

Ask	DCDE	DSP	Health	Housing	Transport	Finance	Env/CC	CommDev
Fund a standardised new programme across all local authorities for disability-inclusive communities.				●				
Provide specific funding to deliver a dedicated, full-time Grade 7 Access Officer role in each local authority.				●				
Fund increased accessibility and frequency of Local Link transport in rural areas.					●			●
Fund the extension of the parking badge to disability categories currently excluded.					●			
Urgently establish a Transport Support Scheme as per Ombudsman's longstanding recommendation.					●			
Maintain the disabled driver's scheme until an inclusive review, and alternative model is co-designed and agreed.					●	●		
Increase funding for the Vehicle Adaptation Scheme to reach as many people as possible.					●			
Increase funding under the Wheelchair Accessible Vehicle Grant Scheme for taxis to meet high demand and grow the accessibility of the taxi fleet across the country.					●			

The Department of Public Expenditure, Infrastructure, Public Service Reform and Digitalisation is responsible for effective use and oversight of public services and resources and gives final sign-off to all public service budgetary allocations.

Accessible and affordable housing

Primary lead: Department of Housing, Local Government and Heritage

Ask	DCDE	DSP	Health	Housing	Transport	Finance	Env/CC	CommDev
Ringfence a budget for all local authorities to incorporate and deliver specific, measurable targets for Universal Design (UD) Home and UD Home+ Wheelchair Liveable (not just wheelchair visitable).				●				
Fund appropriate ceilings, achievable timeframes, and lifetime maintenance under the Capital Assistance Scheme (CAS) as an interim measure, pending urgent reform of the scheme.				●				
Increase funding for the Capital Advanced Leasing Facility (CALF) and enable this to be accessed for supported housing.				●				
Increase funding for the Housing Adaptation Grant to reflect the real costs of adaptations and address ongoing issues with grant levels and means-testing.				●				
Expand eligibility for the Warmer Homes Scheme for people with disabilities and consider prioritising those with a disability or health need.				●			●	
Fund Local Authority Disability Friendly Housing Technical Advisor positions to be dedicated, standalone roles.				●				

The Department of Public Expenditure, Infrastructure, Public Service Reform and Digitalisation is responsible for effective use and oversight of public services and resources and gives final sign-off to all public service budgetary allocations.