



DISABILITY FEDERATION  
OF IRELAND



**Inclusion Ireland**  
The National Association for People  
with an Intellectual Disability.



National Federation of  
Voluntary Service Providers  
Supporting people with intellectual disability (CLG)



**National Disability  
Services Association**  
Equality through Quality



**Mental  
Health  
Reform**

The Oireachtas Disability Group (ODG) was formed in 2017 and is comprised of six national leadership, civil society and umbrella bodies from across the broad spectrum of Ireland's disability movement.

# Oireachtas Disability Group (ODG) Pre-Budget 2026 Submission

We present to you the urgent priorities for disabled people that are needed to make rights real in Budget 2026.

Fully resource the new National Human Rights Strategy for Disabled People and fully fund the Action Plan for Disability Services 2024-2026

## PRIORITY 1 | Improve supports and housing so that disabled people can live independent lives

People are unable to fully realise their rights under Article 19 of the United Nations Convention on the Rights of Persons with Disabilities (UNCRPD) to live in the community with proper supports. Ireland's housing crisis further limits disabled people, whose housing options remain more restricted than those of the general population. Housing and supported living are often provided only in emergencies, leaving many in congregated settings, nursing homes, or with ageing family carers, without planned residential support or access to housing with PA services. To meet its obligations under the UNCRPD, the State must:

### Independent Living



- **Increase personal assistance hours** by at least 270,000, and home support/care hours by 40,000.
- **Add 250 multidisciplinary therapy posts** for children and adults.
- **Ringfence funding to develop a national AT infrastructure/ecosystem** to ensure that the significant benefits available from innovation can be harnessed to support disabled people.

**32.5%**

people unable to work due to long-standing health problems are at risk of poverty

**19%**

are in consistent poverty

**>2,000**

people are living in congregated settings

**1,242**

people under 65 are living in nursing homes

**2,065**

people live with primary carers over the age of 70

### Housing



- **Prioritise housing for 460 people** to move from family homes, congregated settings, and nursing homes into the community.
- **Fund the implementation of the Housing Strategy for Disabled People 2022-2027.**
- **Align the Housing Adaptation grant limits** to reflect current building costs.
- **Remove barriers to the functioning of the Capital Assistance Scheme**, including ceilings and timeframes, to better meet needs.

## PRIORITY 2 | Take action to reduce the prevalence of poverty, exclusion and unemployment

Disabled people face significantly higher rates of poverty and exclusion than the rest of the population. 38.5% of people unable to work due to long-standing health problems experience material deprivation, with 'at risk of poverty' and 'consistent poverty' rates at 32.5% and 19%, respectively - far above the general population (11.5% and 5% respectively). 40% of Irish households have at least one disabled member and bear an additional weekly cost of disability ranging from €488-€555, consuming 52-59% of their disposable income. Urgent, targeted budget measures are needed to address this inequality.

**40%**  
of Irish households have at least one disabled member

Labour market exclusion for disabled people is complex. There are structural barriers which exclude people from employment, including the lack of joined up supports and access to reasonable accommodations that are open, inclusive, and accessible to persons with disabilities. Furthermore, 49.3% of people with disabilities aged 15 years or over are employed, compared to 70.8% of people without disabilities.

To progress these commitments, the State must:

### Provide Social Protection Supports



- **Fund a Cost of Disability Payment** of a minimum of €55 weekly. The Programme for Government commits to such a payment and to develop a mechanism to incrementally increase the payment.
- **Raise core social welfare rates** to €318 and **index link to a benchmark**, ideally the *Minimum Essential Standard of Living*.
- **Expand the Fuel Allowance** to all people on a disability-related social protection payment and **extend the heating season** to 32 weeks to address higher, disability-related energy usage.

### Tackle Structural Employment Barriers



- Assess medical card **eligibility based on need**, not income; provide unlimited validity for the Free Travel Pass scheme for those who take up employment.
- Support disabled people transitioning to employment through **temporary retention of their Disability Allowance**, with increased income thresholds and means testing of the disabled person's income solely.
- **Link Wage Subsidy Scheme (WSS)** to increases in the National Minimum Wage (NMW) and **restore the WSS** from the current low of 46% to 70% of the NMW.

## PRIORITY 3 | Support Disabled Persons' Organisations (DPOs)

**To meet its obligations under the UNCRPD, Ireland must support the establishment and capacity-building of DPOs at all levels.**

DPOs are vital in amplifying the collective voice of disabled people to ensure inclusive policies that support independent living. Article 4.3 of the UNCRPD recognises DPOs' mandate to represent disabled people and contribute a more inclusive society. DPOs could and should be involved at every stage of the policy process: from creation and design to implementation and monitoring of national disability strategies and disability relevant policies.

This level of involvement requires DPOs to participate through extensive representation and engagement at all levels of the political sphere. Additionally, they should have the capacity to facilitate disability equality training and awareness-raising initiatives. Ireland must support the establishment and capacity-building of DPOs at all levels by **providing adequate and sustainable multi-annual funding to DPOs** to support their work in the above activity and on all matters affecting disabled people.

## PRIORITY 4 |

### Support for children and their families

Disabled children and their families need investment in Budget 2026.

#### At home



- **Increase access to personalised budgets** for children and families.
- **Improve access to home support/personal assistance** and other child and family centred supports within the home and community.

#### At school



- **Reduce classroom sizes** in our schools to within the EU average.
- Further roll out the provision of in school **therapy supports in ALL schools**.
- **Invest in further education opportunities** for teachers and SNAs in supporting inclusive practices in schools.

#### Integrated care



- Deliver on the promise to **Invest in CAMHS-ID mental health teams**.

## PRIORITY 5 |

### Support for organisations' providing disability services, advocacy, and advice

The community and voluntary sector play a vital role in partnership with the State, supporting and empowering thousands. However, chronic underfunding is failing to meet the cost of existing services, rising operational expenses, and growing demand. This is having a direct impact on disabled people - resulting in unmet needs, longer wait times, and reduced access to essential supports and early intervention.

- The recent WRC pay deal was welcomed but further work is required to **resolve the core issue of pay parity** by aligning salaries for staff delivering essential services with HSE pay scales.
- **Inject substantial, short-term resources** into service providers to tackle the immediate sustainability crisis.
- **Introduce a sustainable, multi-annual funding model** for disability and mental health services that reflects the true cost of delivering high-quality support to disabled people.

# The Budgetary Process



Recent budget announcements have lacked transparency and accessibility, leaving disabled people, their families, and the services that support them without clarity on disability-related allocations. Once again, we call for a clear, accessible, and disaggregated budget announcement that outlines specific funding for disability services and supports.

**To ensure budget announcements are meaningful and inclusive, we call for:**

- **Clear and accessible communication** that explains how budget measures will impact people's lives.
- **Transparency** in allocations, including clear comparisons with the previous year and identification of baseline figures.
- **Plain language** definition of "Existing Levels of Service", along with a clear indication of its share within the overall budget.
- **Clear distinction** between funding allocated for maintaining existing service levels and funding for new service developments.
- **Detailed breakdowns of allocations** for key support areas—such as Personal Assistance hours, residential support places, and school leaver placements—to ensure accountability and accessibility.

## Enabling a Disability-Proofed Budget

**In addition to our Budget priorities, we request that Government prioritise the following Disability Actions:**

- Fully resource the forthcoming National Human Rights Strategy for Disabled People and support its implementation with concrete targets and a cross-departmental approach to the Strategy's implementation.
- Prioritise the commencement and implementation of the Bill to reform the Mental Health Act, 2001.
- Fully implement and resource the extensive framework of existing plans/policies:
  - Action Plan for Disability Services 2024–2026
  - Housing Strategy for Disabled People 2022–2027
  - Cost of Disability Report 2021
  - The Wasted Lives Report 2021
  - Sharing the Vision - A Mental Health Policy for Everyone 2020
  - Time to Move on from Congregated Settings 2011

# Ireland's Obligations under the United Nations Convention on the Rights of People with a Disability (UNCRPD)

Since ratifying the UNCRPD in 2018, Ireland, through its political representatives, has a duty to progressively realise the rights of disabled people under the Convention and national equality law. The State submitted its progress report in 2021 and will receive the first list of issues from the UN Committee in September 2025, forming the basis of the State's appearance before the Committee. In this context, Budget 2026 must reflect and prioritise the following UNCRPD obligations:

## Article 7

### Children with Disabilities:

States Parties shall take all necessary measures to ensure the full enjoyment by children with disabilities of all human rights and fundamental freedoms on an equal basis with other children.

## Article 9

### Accessibility:

States Parties shall take appropriate measures to ensure to persons with disabilities access, on an equal basis with others, to the physical environment, to transportation, to information and communications, including information and communications

## Article 27

### Work and employment:

States Parties recognize the right of persons with disabilities to work, on an equal basis with others; this includes the right to the opportunity to gain a living by work freely chosen or accepted in a labour market and work environment that is open, inclusive and accessible to persons with disabilities.

## Article 28

### Adequate standard of living and social protection:

States Parties recognize the right of persons with disabilities to an adequate standard of living for themselves and their families, including adequate food, clothing and housing, and to the continuous improvement of living conditions

## Article 19

### Living independently and being included in the community:

States Parties to the present Convention recognize the equal right of all persons with disabilities to live in the community, with choices equal to others, and shall take effective and appropriate measures to facilitate full enjoyment by persons with disabilities of this right and their full inclusion and participation in the community.

## Article 29

### Participation in political and public life:

States Parties shall guarantee to persons with disabilities political rights and the opportunity to enjoy them on an equal basis with others

## UNCRPD & Sustainable Development Goals

We recognise the synergies between the Sustainable Development Goals (SDGs) and UNCRPD. Both are pivotal frameworks aimed at fostering a more equitable and inclusive world, sharing a common vision of "leaving no one behind". We emphasise the need to ensure a just transition that is fair and accessible and builds a more inclusive and equitable future for all. While all SDGs are relevant, seven of the SDGs are of particular importance to people with disabilities:



# #DisabilityBudget2026

## Contact Us

The organisations comprising the Oireachtas Disability Group (ODG) have come together jointly to advocate on behalf of people with disabilities, their families, disability community groups, and service providers on matters of key importance relating to disability, supporting an equality agenda in line with the UNCRPD.

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