

Oireachtas Disability Group

Pre-Budget Submission 2024

The Oireachtas Disability Group is comprised of Disabled Persons' Organisations, organisations representing service providers and advocacy organisations:



We have come together to develop a submission to ensure that the rights and needs of disabled people are understood by all elected representatives during the preparations for Budget 2024.

Together, in this submission we present the urgent priorities that we have agreed are central to disabled people being able to access their rights under the UN Convention on the Rights of Persons with Disabilities (UNCRPD).

Priorities for Budget 2024:

1. Cost of Disability

- The Government's *Cost of Disability* Report indicates that being disabled costs a person between €9,000 and €13,000 extra per year (not including inflation and the rises in the cost of living).
- Ireland ranks lowest in the EU for both its disability employment rate and disability employment gap.
- People unable to work due to disability have the highest consistent poverty rates of all economic groupings at 19.7% or one in five people.
- The payment made in Budget 2023, and the Minister's acknowledgement of the ongoing nature of the cost of disability were very welcome.
- We are calling on Government to provide ongoing cost of disability funding in Budget 2024 to address the inequality identified in the *Cost of Disability* report.

2. Housing and Supports for Disabled People

- People with disabilities need housing, and access to supports to enable them to live independently as full citizens in the community - as is their fundamental right under Article 19 of the UNCRPD.
- A spectrum of supports is required depending on individual need - including personal assistance hours, residential support, transportation, adaptations, and tenancy sustainment supports.
- Adults with disabilities have the right to live at home in the community with appropriate supports (and not in congregated settings or with their parents unless mutually chosen).
- Without the required supports, however, more than 2,000 people are still living in congregated settings and more than 1500 are living with family carers in their 70s and 80s.
- 1,250 people under the age of 65 years are living in nursing homes, with many still entering due to a lack of appropriate alternative options.
- The Disability Capacity Review stated that an indicative package to improve PA provision would cost €30 million and that this was likely an **underestimation** of need. Budget 2023 did not come close to addressing the scale of need, providing 70,000 additional hours at a cost of €1.9 million.
- The Disability Capacity Review identified **90 additional** residential places/support packages are required yearly just to meet emerging *demographic need*. It noted a distressing level of existing *unmet need* for up to 2400 people that requires urgent resourcing in addition to the yearly demographic need. However, Budget 2023 provided just **43 support packages**.
- We are calling on Government to invest significantly in housing and the required supports, as outlined in the *Disability Capacity Review* and the *Housing Strategy for Disabled People*. Any additional funding should be allocated to options that are human rights compliant and support people to have choice and control over their lives as per Article 19 of the UNCRPD.
- To enable access to housing, it is essential that an amendment to Part M of the Building regulations must include UD++ Wheelchair livable accommodation.

3. Enabling Budget Decisions to Work for Disabled People

What is needed to support and enable the budget measures to work for citizens with disabilities?

- **A Clear and Accessible Budget Announcement:** Last years Budget Day announcements were not understandable for disabled people, their families and services. Disabled people had to wait until April 2023 to learn the full budget allocation through the HSE Service Plan 2023.
- Some National Clinical Programmes (e.g. a number of NCPs in Mental Health) received no additional funding for 2023 but this was not apparent until Quarter 2.
- Adequate, ongoing and sustainable funding is required for Disabled Persons' Organisations to meet the obligations under the UNCRPD for consultation on all matters affecting disabled people.
- Progress urgent recruitment and retention measures for disability and mental health services as has been done with the Older Persons' Strategic Workforce Advisory Group (SWAG) report
- Address the urgent Section 39 Pay Parity issues which are threatening the sustainability of disability support services.

Publish and deliver on Action Plans

Unpublished:

- Disability Capacity Review Action Plan - *due Q2 2022*
- National Housing Strategy for Disabled People Implementation Plan - *due Q2 2022*
- Roadmap for Progressing Disability Services (PDS) – *was in development in June 2022*
- UNCRPD Implementation Plan – *no publication date has been announced*
- Cost of Disability Action Plan – *no publication date has been announced*
- Review of the Reasonable Accommodation Fund (RAF) – *delays in publication*

4. Time to Deliver on Promises made in the Programme for Government

- **To make a difference:** *“Ever since Ireland ratified the UN Convention on the Rights of Persons with Disabilities, we have signalled to those with a disability that we are now serious about making a difference – a difference that will make things better.” (p.77 – Programme for Government)*
- **To improve living standards:** *“The ambition of this Government is to provide each citizen with accessible and affordable health care, housing, education, childcare and disability services, as well as a living wage, upskilling, and a dignified retirement... Policy decisions throughout the course of the Government will consistently seek to improve living standards” (p.74)*
- **To improve services:** *“...improve the services available through better implementation and by working together across Government in a better way. We want to empower and give those with a disability the ability to choose the supports that most meet their needs.” (p.77)*
- **To improve outcomes:** *“...improve outcomes for those who are struggling on low incomes, struggling with caring responsibilities, having to raise their families alone, or living with a disability.” (p.75)*
- **To ratify the Optional Protocol:** *“Ratify the Optional Protocol to the UNCRPD after the first reporting cycle”. (p.78)*

Ireland's Obligations under the UNCRPD

- **Article 7 – Children with Disabilities:** State 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:** State 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 technologies and systems, and to other facilities and services open or provided to the public
- **Article 19 – Living independently and being included as part of the community:** State Parties recognize the equal right of all persons with disabilities to live in the community, with choices equal to others
- **Article 28 – Adequate standard of living and social protection:** State 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 29 – Participation in political and public life:** State Parties shall guarantee to persons with disabilities political rights and the opportunity to enjoy them on an equal basis with others

Contact Details

If you would like to discuss any of the topics raised in this paper please contact us:

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