



BUDGET MUST NOT TARGET VULNERABLE FOR EASY SAVINGS

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The announcement by Disability Minister John Moloney on 1st July, that the promised €50 million to fund new developments will go ahead as planned in 2008, was a great relief for parents of people with disabilities and service providers. This money will fund much needed new residential, day and respite services and additional therapy supports for pre-school children and children with autism. There has been increasing pressure on the HSE Budget in recent months. The HSE is obligated under the Health Act 2004 to remain within its Budget and strong warnings have gone out from Government that no overruns will be tolerated. Unfortunately, Disability Services come under the HSE. One way of saving money was to delay the allocation of the €50 million for new disability services until the last possible minute keeping the unspent money to offset the inevitable overruns of the budget at the end of the year. It made no difference that the money was earmarked for disability services because within the HSE there is no distinction between acute hospital services and community care.

Once it became clear that the promised investment in disability services in 2008 was not about to happen, families and service providers became alarmed. A number of parents contacted Inclusion Ireland for help. Parents of school leavers were told that there would be no place for their child leaving school in September. Parents who had young people finishing three year rehabilitative training programmes were told that there was no money for them to access a long term day service place. A great deal of pressure was brought to bear on public representatives as the impact of the funding shortfalls was continuously highlighted. As a result, a reprieve was granted. Though the HSE has still managed to save €17million of the promised €50million for this year because the start date for many new services has now been delayed.

This uncertainty naturally leads families of people with disabilities to question what will happen next year? Will they be faced with the same scenario? Will service providers be left in situations where they are unable to plan for future needs as they were over ten years ago? The Minister for Health has stated that cuts to the value of €144 million are being sought from the HSE this year, despite the fact that the HSE is running nearly €300 million over Budget. The HSE says that the final tranche of the multi-annual investment programme will be secured for 2009 and that all new developments for 2008 will be delivered. This is good news but there are growing concerns about the lack of an arrangement or plan to fund any new developments after 2009.

The picture painted is very gloomy. However, it could be argued that some positives may emerge from the current economic downturn. Service providers will have to look deep into their organisation and examine their current spending in order to become more efficient and more effective in terms of giving extra value to their service users. Greater financial transparency will follow which will be welcomed by all. The HSE may embrace new ways of funding services such as individualised payments. Innovative and flexible services moving away from the traditional ways of doing things will be encouraged. A great deal of investment has gone into disability services in the last five years and with the Government's Disability Strategy the issues have been placed firmly on the political agenda. The early Budget this year must not target people with a disability and vulnerable people for easy savings.

Inclusion Ireland recently launched two new books, 'Making Decisions about Money' and 'Making Medical Decisions'. Pictured right are Eddie Hobbs and Jean Wright, both of whom spoke at the launch of the 'Making Decisions about Money' book. See inside for more details.



BUDGET 2009

As Budget day has been moved to the 14th of October, Inclusion Ireland will issue a short news-letter at the end of October, informing members of changes announced as part of Budget 2009. Inclusion Ireland, the Federation of Voluntary Bodies and the National Parents and Siblings Alliance will jointly launch their pre-Budget submissions at 11am on the 8th of October, in the Alexander Hotel, Dublin. Any interested individuals or organisations are welcome to attend. Please contact the Inclusion Ireland office if you wish to attend.

OPEN CONSULTATION ON DRAFT STANDARDS

Inclusion Ireland has welcomed the launch of the Health Information and Quality Authority (HIQA) consultation on the Draft National Quality Standards: Residential Services for People with Disabilities. Open consultation was launched on the 16th of September. The standards are due to be introduced in early 2009. A National Quality Standards Group was established in 2007 to advise HIQA in drawing up national quality standards for designated centres for people with a disability. Inclusion Ireland was represented on this group by CEO Deirdre Carroll and Board Member Frieda Finlay. In a recent attitudes poll commissioned by Inclusion Ireland, 95 per cent of those polled agreed that national standards should be in place in all residential centres and group houses where a service is provided. Deirdre Carroll says "If we are to ensure that people with an intellectual disability are to have a decent quality of life in an environment where we can ensure they are safe and protected, then standards are vital. Consultation on standards was first initiated 6 years ago, but still no standards are in place. Inclusion Ireland has been calling for the introduction of national standards and inspection of residential centres and community homes for children and adults with disabilities since the mid-1990s. We welcome this consultation period and look forward to the implementation of standards in early 2009."

The consultation document is available in a number of accessible formats, and the public are asked to give their comments on the document. Comments and feedback can be submitted online. Full details can be found at <http://www.higa.ie>

NEW ATTITUDES POLL

A national attitudes poll recently commissioned by Inclusion Ireland found that a majority feel people with an intellectual disability are treated worse than others in society. The poll, which involved 1,000 adults, was conducted in March 2007 by Behaviour and Attitudes Marketing Research. It showed that 63 per cent of those polled believe people with an intellectual disability are treated worse than others in society. Participants were questioned on a range of issues, and results show that the public have very positive attitudes towards people with an intellectual disability. A massive majority feel that people with an intellectual disability have a contribution to make to society, and also feel strongly about the rights of people with a disability, particularly in relation to an individual's right to work and to access services. 98 per cent of those polled said people with an intellectual disability should be given the opportunity to live as normal a life as possible. 97 per cent said they should be given the opportunity to work, and 95 per cent felt that people with an intellectual disability have a contribution to make to society. Participants in the poll were asked questions across a range of issues, including the right to access services. 97 per cent said people with an intellectual disability should have the right to health and education services as recommended by an independent assessment of need; 88 per cent said that children should be able to attend their local primary schools; and 86 per cent said they should be able to attend their local secondary schools.

LEONIE LUNNY RETIRES AS CHIEF EXECUTIVE OF CIB

Leonie Lunny has recently retired as Chief Executive of the Citizens Information Board (CIB). Leonie has been Chief Executive of the CIB since it was first formed as Comhairle in 2000. Under the leadership of Leonie Lunny, the CIB have been very supportive of advocacy work for people with a disability in Ireland. 47 advocacy projects have been established since 2005 with the support of CIB, including two in Inclusion Ireland.

SELF-ADVOCACY CONFERENCE 2008

The Inclusion Ireland 2008 Self-Advocacy conference took place on the 18th and 19th June in the Carlton Shearwater Plaza Hotel in Ballinasloe, Co. Galway. It was the fourth annual Inclusion Ireland Self-Advocacy conference. The conference was a lively event, with fantastic speakers and great audience participation. The majority of speakers were people with an intellectual disability and they encouraged delegates to support each other and stand up for their rights. Minister of State with Responsibility for Disability and Mental Health John Moloney TD spoke at the conference and said the government must act as advocates for the rights of people with an intellectual disability. He also said people with a disability should not suffer as a result of health cuts. Galway woman Marie Wolfe spoke about the need “to believe in each other’s rights” and said “disabled people have the same rights as anyone else...We need supporters not to see us as disabled people, but to see us as people first.” Paul Alford said “Self-Advocacy is about speaking up for your rights and letting people know what you need. Its not about bullying people. Its not about being angry. Its about knowing your point and making your point at the time.” Phil Davey spoke about the need for people with disabilities to support each other: “People with disabilities at times share the same experiences. We come across the same barriers, understand how it feels and the best way to overcome them.”

Donal Toolin chaired the conference on both days. Other speakers were Labour Disability Spokesperson Kathleen Lynch; Corkman Seán Ryan; Martin Doher, Paul Dunne, John Flannery, Padraic McDonagh, Ann Mahon, Marie Wolfe and Jina McNamara from the Brothers of Charity group ‘Research into Action’; and David Toomey and Padraic Maher from Western Care. Andrew Doyle, who is Chair of the European Platform of Self-Advocates and travelled from Scotland for the event, gave a very moving presentation about his own journey to independence, including pictures from his recent wedding. To close the conference, an open forum discussion was held with Deirdre Carroll, CEO of Inclusion Ireland; Pat Reen from Prosper Fingal; Breda Crehan Roche from Ability West; and Andrew Doyle all taking part. Aside from speakers, there were also workshops on drama, independent living, relaxation and supported decision making. The conference closed on both days with samba drummers from the Cope Foundation in Cork, who gave a rousing performance as they marched through the seating area.

Marie Wolfe and Seán Ryan, two of the self-advocates who spoke at the conference have been co-opted onto the Inclusion Ireland Board. They attended their first Inclusion Ireland Board meeting in September.



Clockwise from left are samba drummers from the Cope Foundation in Cork; Donal Toolin and Paul Alford; Minister John Moloney; the Wish Wall; and Inclusion Ireland CEO Deirdre Carroll with new Board Members Marie Wolfe and Seán Ryan



GOOD LUCK MICK!

Inclusion Ireland Advocacy Officer Mick Corrigan is moving on from Inclusion Ireland to take up a position with the Irish Congress of Trade Unions. Inclusion Ireland wishes Mick well in his future career.

NEW INCLUSION IRELAND ADVOCACY PAPER

Inclusion Ireland Advocacy Officer Gerald MacCann presented a paper on "The Effects of Advocacy on the Lives of Persons with an Intellectual Disability" at an international research conference in August. The paper is available at www.inclusionireland.ie/publications.asp or from the office.

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ATTENTION PARENTS GROUPS

We are currently developing a section on our website that will provide information on local parent groups. If you would like information on your group to be made available please forward the following by post or email: a brief description of what the group does; where and when meetings take place; the areas the group covers; and a contact name and number for anyone looking to join.

NEW BOOKS LAUNCHED:

MAKING MEDICAL DECISIONS AND MAKING DECISIONS ABOUT MONEY

Inclusion Ireland launched two news books in August and September. *Making Medical Decisions* is a guide for parents and families of people with an intellectual disability, and *Making Decisions about Money* is a guide for people with an intellectual disability to issues such as using an ATM, budgeting etc. Both publications are available from Inclusion Ireland and are free of charge.

Pictured below are images from the two launches, clockwise from the left are: Dr. Mark Hamilton at the Making Medical Decisions launch; William Shorten, Inclusion Ireland Chairperson, Dr. Mark Hamilton, Deirdre Carroll, Inclusion Ireland CEO and Sarah Lennon, Inclusion Ireland Training and Development Officer and author of both books; Sarah Lennon and self-advocate Jean Wright; Eddie Hobbs; and William Shorten with Mary O'Dea, Consumer Director at the Financial Regulator.

