



### BUDGET 2012 HITS PEOPLE WITH DISABILITIES HARD

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Budget 2012 announced on the 5<sup>th</sup> and 6<sup>th</sup> December contained a number of cuts which will hit people with disabilities and their families very hard.

In addition to cuts outlined below, additional cuts are detailed in a Budget factsheet which you received with this newsletter.

**DISABILITY ALLOWANCE:** Minister Howlin's announcements regarding Disability Allowance (DA) provoked outrage at proposed cuts to DA for young adults aged 18-24, and raising the qualifying age for DA from 16 to 18. While both proposals are now paused and will be reviewed, these proposals have not been rolled back, only paused. The proposals were:

1. New claimants of Disability Allowance aged under 25 will have their payment reduced from €188 per week to €100 for people aged 18 to 21 and to €144 per week for people aged 22 to 24. This would have resulted in a crude cut of €4,576 a year for people aged 18 to 21, and €2,288 a year for people aged 22 to 24. The current number of people under 25 receiving Disability Allowance is 11,869 persons, almost 12% of all recipients of Disability Allowance. Government said this change would bring Disability Allowance in line with Jobseekers Allowance. Inclusion Ireland CEO Deirdre Carroll says such thinking shows a total lack of understanding of the support needs of people with a disability, disregards the additional costs associated with disability, and rolls back on the principle of recognition of disability as described under the Equal Status Act, 2000-2008. People with disabilities did not experience the boom period in the same way as people without a disability, as the proportion of workers with a disability remained relatively unchanged from 2003 to 2009, and stood at between 5 and 6% of the total workforce, as shown in an ESRI study published in 2011;
2. The Government also proposed raising the qualifying age for DA from 16 to 18, while also raising the qualifying age for Domiciliary Care Allowance (DCA) from 16 to 18. This would mean that instead of DA, people with a disability aged 16-18 would get DCA. This would mean a financial difference of €523.07 a month for those affected;

These proposals will now be referred to the Committee on Taxation and Reform. While it is welcome that the proposal has been paused, this cut could still go ahead. Also, the Government have not said if they will consult with people with disabilities and their families on these proposals. While Inclusion Ireland believes there is need for reform of Disability Allowance, this must include a cost of disability analysis. Any review must be done in consultation with people with disabilities and their families.

**CUTS & NEW CHARGES:** Minister of State with responsibility for disability, Kathleen Lynch TD, announced a 2% cut to disability services in 2012 but said "the precise level of savings required will vary...and will be determined within the context of HSE's service planning process". However, service providers are reporting potential cuts of 4.5 to 5%. If this is true, it will have serious implications for people using services. There is also concern that money assigned by central government for disability services is being used to deal with shortfalls in other areas of the HSE, such as acute hospitals. A number of services are now charging people in areas such as transport and respite. This is putting enormous pressure on people with disabilities and their families. If you have had your service cut back, or are now being asked to pay for a service, please email [info@inclusionireland.ie](mailto:info@inclusionireland.ie).

## CONFUSION AT AGENCY ARRANGEMENTS

Inclusion Ireland has received a growing number of queries from people with an intellectual disability and their family members over 'agency arrangements'. An agency arrangement is when a person's social welfare payment is collected and managed on their behalf. Concerns raised include people using a service being asked to 'sign' their Disability Allowance over to service providers who in turn control their money, and people being told that payments must be signed over as a condition of the person with a disability receiving a service. Inclusion Ireland raised this issue with the Department of Social Protection in a number of fora, including via Inclusion Ireland's recent Budget submission. If you are affected, or have a query on this issue, please contact Inclusion Ireland in confidence on 01 8559891.

## CITIZEN ADVOCACY

Under Inclusion Ireland's Genio funded Citizen Advocacy project, a number of volunteer advocates have received training and will shortly begin supporting adults in the Southside Intellectual Disability Service in Ballyboden. There is an accessible document in an easy to read format available from the Inclusion Ireland website, and anyone interested in finding out more information about the project should contact Sarah in Inclusion Ireland.

## NATIONAL HOUSING STRATEGY FOR PEOPLE WITH DISABILITIES

The *National Housing Strategy for People with a Disability 2011 – 2016*, was published in October by the Department of the Environment, Community and Local Government. The Strategy was developed over a number of years with the assistance of a National Advisory Group. Inclusion Ireland was represented on the Advisory Group by Communications and Information Manager Siobhán Kane. The strategy sets out a framework for the delivery of housing for people with a disability by moving away from institutionalised settings, towards mainstream community housing. It aims to do this through assessment of individual housing needs and providing appropriate tenancy, health and social care supports. The strategy will be implemented through nine strategic aims, each of which contains action points. Among the nine aims are:

- equality of access for people with a disability to a full range of housing options ;
- effective interagency cooperation;
- support people to live independently in their own homes and communities;
- moving people from congregated settings;
- consider good practice in the design, coordination and delivery of housing;
- facilitate people with a disability to access appropriate advice and information in respect of their housing needs;

A detailed implementation plan will be developed, and a committee will oversee ongoing progress on the strategy and will produce annual implementation progress reports which will be presented to the Cabinet Committee on Social Policy. Further details are available at [www.inclusionireland.ie](http://www.inclusionireland.ie) in the 'topics' section.

## DISABILITY POLICY REVIEW

As part of the Value for Money and Policy Review of the Disability sector, an Expert Reference Group on Disability Policy was established to look specifically at existing disability policy and whether it needs to be changed. The Expert Group produced a Report that proposes a significant reframing of disability services towards a model of individualised supports. A public consultation process on the Report was launched by Minister Kathleen Lynch TD in September, and closed in November. Inclusion Ireland put in a submission under this process. Ministers Kathleen Lynch and James Reilly will now examine the findings of the Report and the public consultation process, before they are put to Government for a final decision. See our website for more information.

## NEW BOOKLET ON ALTERNATIVE WAYS OF FUNDING SUPPORTS

The National Parents & Siblings Alliance published a new booklet in early December, that looks at how supports and services are currently provided for people with disabilities and if there alternative ways to fund services that will give people with disabilities and their family members more control. The booklet includes examples of how some families have changed how their supports are provided. See [www.npsa.ie](http://www.npsa.ie) for more information.

## INCLUSION IRELAND: CELEBRATING 50 YEARS

Inclusion Ireland thanks all our members and supporters for helping us to celebrate our 50<sup>th</sup> Anniversary in 2011. Events were held throughout 2011, but the Anniversary Celebrations culminated in a number of events in the past number of weeks, details of which are below.



**Presidential Candidates Forum on Disability:** Inclusion Ireland held a Forum with Presidential Candidates to hear their vision on how people with disabilities will be included in their Presidency if they were elected, in the Mansion House, Dublin. Miriam O'Callaghan of RTÉ who was a member of the 50<sup>th</sup> Anniversary organising committee, chaired the Forum. All Presidential candidates except Dana took part in the Forum. The successful candidate Michael D. Higgins was present. He emphasised the importance of Ireland ratifying the UN Convention on the Rights of Persons with Disabilities, and said he agreed with the need for independent inspections of services for people with a disability, saying it is a matter of basic rights.

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**Conference on the Law & People with an Intellectual Disability:** Inclusion Ireland held a conference on the 'Law and People with an Intellectual Disability' on 19<sup>th</sup> October, which was hosted by the Law Society of Ireland. Topics included the Mental Capacity Bill, the UN Convention on the Rights of Persons with Disabilities, Criminal Law (Sexual Offences) Act 1993 and childcare proceedings and parents with an intellectual disability. Speakers included Patricia T. Rickard-Clarke of the Law Reform Commission, Gerard Quinn of NUI Galway, Beverly Smith of the Cork Advocacy Group and barrister Teresa Blake. Attendees included people with disabilities, family members, legal professionals and people working in the disability sector.

**Self-Advocates Forum on Inclusion:** Inclusion Ireland's *Self-Advocates Forum on Inclusion*



took place on 29<sup>th</sup> November in UCD. 14 Self-Advocates spoke on the topic of 'What Inclusion Means to Me', having received several communications training sessions with communications specialist Ger Lally, who kindly volunteered her time. The speakers focussed on different elements of their lives, from work and education to relationships and the law. The event was chaired by Judge Kevin O'Higgins and the

event was sponsored by the O'Higgins family.

**Art & Poetry Competitions:** We had over 800 entries to the art and poetry competitions, which were launched in January. 49 art finalists were chosen and exhibited in November as part of the RDS Art Fair. The winners were announced at the exhibition launch which was attended by Taoiseach Enda Kenny TD and competition judge and artist, Guggi. Natasha Moloney won first prize, and Paul Clohessy and Mary B. Kelly were the runners-up. 19 poetry finalists were displayed in the National Library on the 30<sup>th</sup> November, at an event where the competition winners were announced. President Michael D. Higgins and competition judge and poet Theo Dorgan spoke at the event. David Cormican won the poetry competition. David very sadly passed away in the last number of weeks, and his award was collected by Claude Madec



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who facilitated the writing circle David was involved with. Sharon Murray came in second place, and James Ledwidge and Bernard Deering came in joint third place. Inclusion Ireland is very grateful to the competition judges, President Higgins and the Taoiseach for their support with these events. Above all, Inclusion Ireland would like to thank everyone who entered the competitions. All the poetry and art are available to view on the Inclusion Ireland website.

**Self-Advocates Ball:** A great night was had at the final event of the year, when a Self-Advocates Ball was held in the Royal Hospital Kilmainham on the 2<sup>nd</sup> December.

**Inclusion Ireland would like to thank everyone who supported all the events held throughout the Anniversary Year.** Special thanks goes to the 50<sup>th</sup> Anniversary Organising Committee, part-time events manager Anne-Louise Kelly, the judges of the art and poetry competitions, Ger Lally, the ball sub-committee, everyone who entered the art and poetry competitions, and everyone who attended the events. A big thank you also goes to the Iris O'Brien Foundation, for their kind sponsorship of the 50<sup>th</sup> Anniversary Year. Without their donation, the events would not have been possible. Further details of all events and pictures are available at [www.inclusionireland.ie](http://www.inclusionireland.ie).

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## SAD PASSING OF DAN ROGAN & SEAN RYAN

Inclusion Ireland was deeply saddened to learn of the deaths of two former Board Members, both of whom only resigned from the Board of Inclusion Ireland at AGM in April 2011. Sean Ryan was from Cork and was very active in promoting Self-Advocacy. He was one of two Self-Advocates who were appointed to the Board in 2008. Sean travelled around the country sharing his story and encouraging others to speak up. He set up a self advocacy group called Advocacy Cork, and travelled



to Brussels and Prague for meetings with the European Platform for Self-Advocates. Sean spoke at Inclusion Ireland's 2008 Self-Advocacy conference in Ballinasloe and said "there have been a lot of positive changes for people with disabilities but a lot more needs to happen". Sean will be sadly missed.



Dan Rogan was a tireless worker in Monaghan for better supports for people with an intellectual disability, and was involved in many areas, from negotiation with the various authorities to fundraising. As the father of someone with a disability, he worked with the Monaghan Parents and Friends Association to establish residential group homes for people with a disability, and was instrumental in setting up special classes at primary and secondary level in Monaghan town. Above all, Dan was a true gentleman and will be sorely missed by his family, and all at Inclusion Ireland who worked with him for many years.

## NATIONAL DISABILITY STRATEGY IMPLEMENTATION GROUP

Minister for Disability Kathleen Lynch TD established the National Disability Strategy Implementation Group in November. This group replaces the National Disability Strategy Stakeholder Monitoring Group. This new group has been established in line with the commitment in the Programme for Government to publish a "realistic implementation plan for the National Disability Strategy", and will be chaired by Minister Lynch. A separate group, the Disability Stakeholder Group, has been expanded and will now include individuals with a disability, in addition to the representative organisations who previously sat on the Group. New additions to the group include Paul Crilly from the Kilkenny based Self-Advocacy group Seasamh. Minister Lynch appointed National Disability Authority Director Siobhán Barron as the independent chair of the Group. Inclusion Ireland is represented on both groups by CEO Deirdre Carroll.

## PATRON OF INCLUSION IRELAND

Inclusion Ireland is delighted that President Michael D. Higgins has agreed to be the Patron of Inclusion Ireland. Mary McAleese was Patron of Inclusion Ireland for her two terms as President, and Mary Robinson and Patrick Hillery were Patrons before her. Inclusion Ireland looks forward to working with our new Patron during his term in office.

## DIARY DATE! AGM & ANNUAL CONFERENCE 2012

Housing is the theme of Inclusion Ireland's 2012 AGM & Annual Conference, which will be held on the 30<sup>th</sup> & 31<sup>st</sup> of March in Whites Hotel in Wexford. Issues covered at AGM will include facilitating people with disabilities moving from institutions to the community and what housing supports are, and should be available. There is a change of format to AGM this year, with the conference proceedings taking place on Friday afternoon (2pm-5pm), and continuing on Saturday morning (9am to 1pm). AGM will close at 1pm on Saturday. A dinner will take place on Friday night, but again there is a slight change to previous years and there will be no band playing after dinner. Further details will be available at [www.inclusionireland.ie](http://www.inclusionireland.ie) early in 2012.