



INCLUSION IRELAND

National Association for People with an Intellectual Disability

Pre-Budget Submission 2018

**Department of Transport,
Tourism & Sport**

August 2017

This document is written in font 12 Verdana in line with Inclusion Ireland plain English guidelines.

1. About Inclusion Ireland

Established in 1961, Inclusion Ireland is a national, rights based advocacy organisation that works to promote the rights of people with an intellectual disability.

Inclusion Ireland uses a human rights-based approach to its work. This recognises persons with an intellectual disability as rights holders with entitlements, and corresponding duty bearers and their obligations. Inclusion Ireland seeks to strengthen the capacities of persons with an intellectual disability to make their claims and of duty bearers to meet their obligations.

The vision of Inclusion Ireland is that of people with an intellectual disability living and participating in the community with equal rights as citizens, to live the life of their choice to their fullest potential. Inclusion Ireland's work is underpinned by the values of dignity, inclusion, social justice, democracy and autonomy.

2. Introduction

The Programme for Partnership Government commits to:

- Eliminate any persisting discrimination on the nine grounds,
- Develop the process of budget and policy proofing as a means of advancing equality, reducing poverty and strengthening economic and social rights,
- Equality of opportunity,
- Supporting persons with disabilities in maximising their potential,
- Removing barriers which impact on access to services, education, work or healthcare,
- Introducing personalised budgets to provide an individual with more control in accessing services greater independence and choice,
- Targeted improvements in welfare,
- Move persons with disabilities out of congregated settings to enable them live independently and be included in the community.

Inclusion Ireland believes that persons with disabilities should live self-determined lives and Budget 2018 provides an opportunity to reform traditional services and systems, to create a more equal & just society, to encourage participation and decision-making, and to develop pathways into a life in the community.

2.1 Public Sector Duty

Government Departments are required to have regard to the public sector duty in all activities as provided for by Section 42 of the Irish Human Rights and Equality Commission Act, 2014.

Inclusion Ireland would encourage the Departments to ensure that all decisions made for Budget 2018 are in line with this duty by being proactive in promoting equality, ensuring human rights are realised and eliminating discrimination. The most recent strategy statement by the Department commits to addressing its commitments under the Irish Human Rights and Equality Commission Act 2014, including initial assessment of human rights and equality issues relevant to its functions.

Of importance in fulfilling its public sector duty, more must be done to improve the accessibility of services and information. Information should be a minimum of Plain English and ideally in easy-to-read and other accessible formats.

2.2 Consultation

In preparing our pre-budget submission, Inclusion Ireland conducted regional focus groups across Ireland, in Cork, Donegal, Sligo and Tullamore as well as an on-line survey. Men and women with disabilities, family supporters and people employed in disability-related services took part.

3. Priorities for Budget 2018

3.1 Transport

Access to public and private transport is essential so people can access education and employment and take a full part in economic, social, cultural and community life.

One of the issues facing many persons with mobility issues are the extra costs associated with transport, particularly in rural areas.

Recent figures indicate that more than one in four persons with disabilities do not use public transport due to accessibility reasons; nearly half of Bus Éireann's fleet is not deemed accessible and only 5% of licensed vehicles

were deemed accessible in 2015¹. 24% of all disabled people living in private households did not own a car in April 2011 compared with 18% of persons generally².

Private transport is a significant extra cost for households with a disability and the decision in 2013 to close the Mobility Allowance and Motorised Transport Grant Scheme to new applicants has placed people at an even greater risk of social exclusion. Plans for a new Transport Support Scheme were announced shortly after this but have not been put in place to date.

The Department of Health is progressing the Health (Transport Support) Bill which will replace the discontinued Motorised Transport Scheme³. This will 'provide for a scheme to make individual payments as a contribution towards transport costs to persons with severe disabilities on a low income who cannot access public transport'. The Bill is listed for priority legislation in the Government's 2017 spring/summer session.

A Programme for a Partnership Government states it will 'examine transport service provision for young persons with disabilities to ensure that the service is fit for purpose and consistent with their needs'.

The National Disability Inclusion Strategy commits to improving the 'accessibility and availability of public transport, especially inter-city buses and rural transport and accessibility of train and bus stations'.

Additionally, the Strategy commits to prioritizing 'the maintenance, management and monitoring of systems and services which make transport accessible.'

The maintenance of lifts and other accessibility structures is of significant concern. Through our advocacy work Inclusion Ireland has seen that there is often poor up-keep of these features with some lifts reported as being out of service for up to a year. It is not enough to make a structure accessible, that accessibility must be sustained for transport to promote inclusion.

¹ Disable Inequality (2016). Transport and Disability Factsheet.

² CSO. Census 2011.

³ Questions on Promised Legislation (Continued) Thursday, 23 February 2017 (Minister F McGrath)

During Inclusion Ireland Consultation for Budget 2018, we received the following feedback on transport

"Reinstatement of the mobility grant. This had left families in desperate financial distress and has left many disabled people in rural areas without transport."

"More bus routes for people living in rural areas. More frequent buses in towns. Community life is essential for good mental health and social interaction."

"The trains ramps can be very dangerous, its wearying & time consuming arranging access. Transport is by no means EQUAL. Carrying disabled people out of their wheelchairs onto Bus Eireann buses (Letterkenny) is obscene and dangerous in the 21st century."

Inclusion Ireland asks for Budget 2018 on transport

- Increase capital expenditure on accessible bus fleet nationwide,
- Increase and ring-fence a fund for the upkeep and maintenance of existing accessibility features,
- Introduce a scheme to replace the Motorised Transport Scheme.

3.2 Changing Places

In Ireland today, many of our citizens are actively excluded from our towns, cities and our communities through a lack of fully accessible toilet facilities. Standard disabled toilets do not meet the needs of all persons with disabilities. Carers are currently being forced to change their loved ones on bathroom floors because adequate facilities are not available in public places.

Changing Places facilities include both a hoist and a height-adjustable changing bench. They have been designed to put health, safety and dignity concerns of the person with a disability and the carer to the fore.

The Changing Places campaign was established in the UK in 2007 and they recently marked the 1,000th facility, including installations in Northern Ireland. These facilities include facilities in tourist centres,

airports and sporting arenas. The provision of these facilities has proved a life-changer for thousands of families in the UK.

As it currently stands, there are only four fully accessible toilet facilities in Ireland including at Dublin Airport, Trinity College Dublin, Áras an Uachtaráin and The Lime Tree Theatre in Limerick.

The National Disability Inclusion Strategy commits to develop a code of practice for accessible public areas of public sector buildings. This code of practice should include a commitment to Changing Places.

During Inclusion Ireland Consultation for Budget 2018, we received the following feedback on Changing Places

"A basic human right. I have friends who do not go out as there is no public changing place. Otherwise they must debase themselves by using the bathroom floor."

"Anything new which is possible for the public to use should have to (install a Changing Place). It's basic dignity, not too much to ask for."

"This is important as everyone should be able to use the toilet when needed."

"In Sligo we as parents have not one place to change our children and have to use the toilet floor to do it. How degrading and unsanitary for our children."

"(Needed) especially in public facilities/schools etc. as once again this can be a barrier for participation in programmes and events."

"(When) shopping in Tesco, I know that if a toilet is required it will be a crisis and I will have to abandon the trolley and go home."

Inclusion Ireland asks for Budget 2018 on Changing Places

- In order to make Ireland the most accessible destination, installation of fully accessible Changing Places toilets in key travel and tourist destinations is crucial,
- Local authorities should be provided with ring fenced funding to install Changing Places in public buildings with key holders having access to same,
- Public funds should also be used to provide Changing Places in universities, libraries, airports, train and bus stations etc. and at strategic locations,
- Private sector organisations, businesses or clubs should be entitled to qualify for tax relief e.g. VAT relief etc.,
- A one-off grant should be available for the installation costs/ building costs for a changing places toilet.

For further information, contact:

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