



INCLUSION IRELAND

National Association for People with an Intellectual Disability



**An Roinn Tithíochta, Pleanála,
Pobail agus Rialtais Áitiúil**
Department of Housing, Planning,
Community and Local Government

Submission to the Department of Rural and Community Development

On Statement of Strategy 2017-2020

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**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

Inclusion Ireland welcomes the opportunity to contribute to the statement of Strategy 2017-2020 for the newly formed Department of Rural and Community Development. It is important that people with intellectual disabilities are considered in this strategy and that the issues that impact on the lives of people are reflected and dealt with effectively in the strategy.

The issues that will be explored in this submission include: The UN Convention on the Rights of Persons with Disabilities and the Congregated settings report, Public Sector Duty, Housing, Effective Participation and Consultation, Communication and Accessibility, and Transport. Recommendations will be provided in each of these areas.

3. UN Convention on the Rights of Persons with Disabilities and Congregated Settings Report

Article 19 Community Living of the UN Convention on the Rights of Persons with Disabilities (**UNCRPD**) requires States parties to recognise the equal right of all persons with disabilities to live in the community.

A recent comment by the CRPD Committee¹ said institutions create “isolation...lack of control...lack of choice...rigidity and a paternalistic approach”.

Today 2580² persons remain in residential institutions in Ireland in spite of their planned closure by 2018³. The Programme for Partnership targets a move of 1/3 of residents by 2021, a figure most likely to be reached by the deaths of residents. Ireland must accelerate their process of de-institutionalisation while ensuring that persons with disabilities receive individualised supports in the community.

Part of the decongregation process includes people having a right to choose where they live and who they live with, including rural areas. It is important that the Department should take this into consideration in their strategy and to find ways to support people with intellectual disabilities to choose the type of house or accommodation they reside in and where they reside.

The UNCRPD reaffirms the right of people with disabilities to health and social supports in the community, rather than segregated services. Ireland must commit to and resource a Personalised Budget system. In the UK, Direct Payments have improved independence, well-being and quality of life⁴ and the CRPD Committee has said that States parties should “ensure personalization of support, including personal budgets”. The Taskforce on Personalised Budgets will report at the end of the year, and these findings should be included in any strategy going forward.

4. Public Sector Duty

All public bodies must take proactive steps to actively promote equality, protect human rights and combat discrimination. This is provided for under Section 42 of the Irish Human Rights and Equality Commission Act,

¹Committee on the Rights of Persons with Disabilities Draft General Comment No. 5 (2017) Article 19: Living independently and being included in the community

² PQ 5585

³Time to Move on From Congregated Settings Report

⁴Pearson, (2006) *Direct Payments and Personalisation of Care*, Edinburgh, Dunedin Academic Press

2014. The Department of Rural and Community Development as part of work on a strategy should carry out an assessment of all human rights and equality issues relating to its functions as part of its strategy statement. The strategy should then include measures to ensure that human rights and equality considerations are integral to all work carried out and that all barriers to equality and the promotion of human rights are removed.

5. Effective Participation at Local, Regional and National Level

It is vital that people with disabilities are included in all decision making processes that impact their lives from the early stages. It is not just a matter of holding an open consultation, but of really including people with disabilities in all aspects of the policy planning, development and implementation processes. This is particularly important when a new Government Department is working on a strategy. Currently, participation in decision making for people with disabilities and their families is minimal at best.

Working Group 3 of the Transforming Lives programme (set up to implement the recommendations of the Value for Money and Policy Review of Disability Services in Ireland), will shortly present its plan, entitled 'Ordinary Lives in Ordinary Places' – a plan for effective participation in decision making for people with disabilities and families. The plan will help support the emergence of decision making fora for people with disabilities and families and will support them to participate in decision making at local, regional and national levels.

The recommendations of Transforming Lives, Working Group 3 on supporting effective participation should be taken into consideration by the Department of Rural and Community Development when creating strategy. This should include looking at structures of Public Participation Networks and similar fora to support decision making into the future.

6. Communication and Accessibility

As part of effective participation, accessible buildings and venues are paramount. Equally important for people with intellectual disabilities is accessible information. Information created by the Department of Rural

and Community Development should be available in a variety of formats as a matter of course. This should include plain English, Easy to Read information, audio and video formats for all significant publications and updates. Having accessible information will support people to participate fully in the work of the Department

7. Transport

Rural transport is a significant issue for people with intellectual disabilities who often have to rely on public transport to get to where they need to be. This should be a priority for the department to ensure that transport is not only available but accessible and reliable too. Inclusion Ireland welcomes the recent announcement of the development of Local Link. It is important now that the monitoring and continued development of such schemes is undertaken so the services are effective and user friendly.

All transport services should have very good accessibility for people with different types of disability. This means making more bus routes, especially in rural areas. It also means making sure there are accessible ramps and spaces on busses and trains. This recommendation is supported by a recent report by the National Platform of Self-Advocates. They highlighted how transport services need to work together to provide a service where people with disabilities can travel safely and in comfort.

8. Key Recommendations

- Consider the UN Convention on the Rights of Persons with Disabilities and the Congregated Settings report in supporting people with Intellectual Disabilities to assert choice and control over where they live, including the choice to live in rural areas
- Ensure that supports and amenities exist in rural areas to assist people to assert choice and control over their lives and to enjoy full community inclusion.
- Carry out an assessment of Public Sector Duty with regard to equality and human rights in all work on the strategy and the work of the Department in general.
- Include the Recommendations of Ordinary Lives in Ordinary Places; A Plan for Effective Participation for People with Disabilities and Families in the Strategy once published.

- Make sure all publications and updates by the Department are published in accessible formats including at a minimum in Plain English; and Easy to Read, audio and video
- Monitor and develop rural transport schemes so that they are reliable, effective, accessible, safe and user friendly