

INCLUSION IRELAND

National Association for People with an Intellectual Disability

**Submission to the
Department of Housing,
Planning and Local
Government
On the establishment of an
Electoral Commission**

March 2019

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

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.

The vision of Inclusion Ireland is that of people with an intellectual disability living and participating in the community with equal rights.

Inclusion Ireland's work is underpinned by the values of dignity, inclusion, social justice, democracy and autonomy and we use the United Nations Convention on the Rights of Persons with Disabilities (UNCRPD) to guide our work.

About this Submission

Inclusion Ireland held a consultation with members of the Self-Advocacy Subcommittee of the Board.

This submission is about the proposal to set up an Electoral Commission and what people with intellectual disabilities feel about this.

Inclusion Ireland is moving towards complete accessibility of its work and this submission is in easy-to-read.

What is the system like for people with disabilities?



At the moment, Ireland has no independent organisation that looks after everything to do with elections.

There are barriers for people with disabilities if they want to run in an election and if they want to vote:

- There is a law called the Electoral Act 1992 that says people of 'unsound mind' cannot run for election



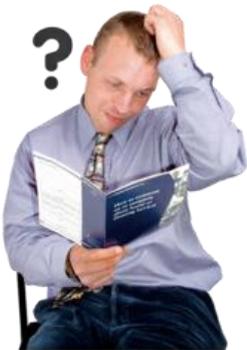
- It is hard to get accessible information on how to vote and what the difference is between local elections, national elections, European elections and referenda.

- Political parties don't make their information accessible.

People use language in debates and discussions that is difficult to understand.

This makes it hard to know what parties or people running for election stand for

- Political candidates don't seem to value people with disabilities as voters



- Registering to vote can be hard



- People's right to make decisions is often restricted so some people might not know they are even allowed to vote



- A person can bring a support person with them to vote but if it is a busy time at a polling station, the person in charge can refuse to allow this
- Polling stations are often not accessible to people

Our recommendations

Awareness raising

- Run a campaign to let people with disabilities know they have the right to vote and encourage them to vote



Education

- Provide training on disability rights and equality to officials and training on how they can support people with disabilities when voting
- Provide information on how to vote for people with disabilities.



The information should be available in accessible formats.



Access

- Provide accessible information on each election and referendum
- Ask political parties to provide accessible information on what they stand for



- Make sure polling stations are in places people can get to
- Make sure people who use wheelchairs can get into the polling station

Support



- Make sure the Electoral Commission and election officials know that people with intellectual disabilities might have a decision-making representative or co-decision maker.

This comes under the Assisted Decision-Making (Capacity) Act 2015.



- Make sure people can bring a support person with them to vote if they want to

For further information, contact;

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