



INCLUSION IRELAND

National Association for People with an Intellectual Disability

Pre-Budget Submission 2019

Department of Education & Skills

August 2018

**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.

Public Sector Duty

In the most recent strategy statement, the Department of Education & Skills notes its obligations under Section 42 of the Irish Human Rights and Equality Commission Act, 2014 and states that ensuring access to an equitable system is a driving force throughout the Department's work.

Inclusion Ireland would encourage the Department to ensure that all decisions made for Budget 2019 are in line with this duty by being proactive in promoting equality; ensuring human rights are realised and eliminating discrimination.

About this Submission

Inclusion Ireland held consultations in Cork, Tullamore & Sligo as well as an on-line survey with respondents from all 4 provinces of Ireland. People with a disability, their family members and people who work in disability services all took time to complete the survey.

Inclusion Ireland is moving towards complete accessibility of its work and this document contains an easy to read summary at the start.

Easy to read summary

The Department of Education is a very important government department.



The Department of Education looks after the Education of Children and Adults in Ireland
This submission is asking the Department to look at 5 things for the Budget in 2019.



What is the Budget?

The Budget is the Government plan of how money will be spent for the coming year.

Inclusion Ireland is asking the Department to look at 6 areas



1. Make class sizes smaller

Make sure that no children are in any classes bigger than 30 children.



2. Seclusion and Restraint in School

Make sure children are not left out of school or restrained because of their disabilities



3. Supports in early years' settings

Support young children with disabilities in pre-school



4. Further and Higher Education

Make more options for students with disabilities in further and Higher education



5. Sexual Education

Put a plan in so students with intellectual disabilities have sexual education in special schools.



6. Career Guidance

Give access to a quality career guidance service with trained staff to all people with disabilities before they leave school.

Introduction

'A Programme for a Partnership Government' states that "education is the key to giving every child an equal opportunity in life. No child should be left behind in economic recovery and we should use our strengthening economy to become a leader in the provision of world-class education and skills." Educational opportunities are a crucial part of development and especially so for people with intellectual disabilities at all stages of life beginning at early years, right through to lifelong learning.

Children and young people with disabilities experience many barriers to education. Supports are required at primary, secondary and third level to ensure that young people with disabilities receive an inclusive education and are supported to reach their full potential.

Through our advocacy work, Inclusion Ireland is aware that education for children with intellectual disabilities is not always a smooth process with access to supports and class sizes impacting on the full enjoyment of children with disabilities. Age – appropriate education, particularly in the area of sexual education also poses a problem particularly in special schools.

Further and Higher education opportunities enable people with intellectual disabilities to achieve and participate in society and these are not always accessible to students with disabilities.

In order to progress education equality for people with intellectual disabilities, there are some key areas that need attention in budget 2019.

- 1. Class Sizes**
- 2. Seclusion and Restraint in Schools**
- 3. Early school years and supports**
- 4. Further and Higher Education**
- 5. Sexual Education**
- 6. Career Guidance**

1. Class Sizes

16% of people with an intellectual disability finished school at primary level (compared to 5% of the general population) highlighting both the importance of that education and the need to do more to ensure progression.

According to the Annual Statistical Report of the Department of Education in the 2017-2018 school year there was 119,243 primary school pupils in class sizes of 30+, this represents a small increase on the previous year and means that no progress is being made¹.

More than one in five children are in a class of 30 or more pupils, with 7,858 in a class of between 35-39 pupils and 82 were in a class of 40+.

Large class sizes are a significant obstacle to effective teaching and learning² and make it difficult for pupils with special educational needs both educationally and socially. The ratio must be reduced to ensure equality and a quality education system that serves all children.

What people said in our consultation about Class Sizes

Class sizes are definitely an issue... noise being most difficult for many children...

Class sizes definitely need to be addressed.. with increasing shared SNA in lieu of 1:1 , there needs to be reduced ratios in classrooms..

Class sizes too big so there is lack of help for children with disabilities.

Inclusion Ireland asks for Budget 2019, related to class sizes are:

1. Reduce the pupil: teacher ratio overall.
2. Invest in the recruitment of teachers and SNA's so that no child is in a class of more than 30 pupils.
3. Capital investment to ensure sufficient classrooms in order to keep ratios in classrooms down.

¹ 118, 326 in 2017/18

² NDA research 2004

2. Seclusion and Restraint in Schools

A soon to be published report by Inclusion Ireland will highlight the harmful use of restraint practices and seclusion in schools. These practices mainly affect children with a disability and present a risk of physical and psychological harm to children.

The inaction of the Department of Education and Skills (DES) and other stakeholders (such as Tusla) in addressing the issue comes in spite of the Department being asked to issue guidelines to schools as far back as 2012, again in 2016 and yet again in 2018 by the National Council for Special Education (NCSE).

The NCSE recent policy advice on the review of the special needs assistant scheme proposes regional teams that include health therapy professionals and behavioural support specialists for schools. Any school that has an issue around challenging behaviour must have access to these proposed supports and Child and Adolescent Mental Health Services without any delay.

Inclusion Ireland welcomes the pilot project to provide speech therapy and occupational therapy in schools. This will provide much needed therapy support that will allow children the greatest developmental opportunity possible.

Inclusion Ireland asks for Budget 2019, related to restraint & seclusion are:

1. The Department should establish and fund an independent working group to examine the use of restraint and seclusion without delay.
2. The working group should commission research to discover the extent of the use of restraint and seclusion, recommend an inspection structure, publish guidelines, recommend and deliver training for crisis situations and publish a restraint reduction strategy for schools.
3. The NCSE recommendation on regional specialist teams of health therapists and behavioural professionals must be funded and established without delay. Budgetary provision must be made to upscale the pilot project of therapy supports in school.
4. Where a school is having difficulty with the behaviour of a student they must have immediate access to therapeutic or mental health supports as a matter of urgency.

5. Schools staff must receive training in positive behaviour strategies and dealing with crisis situations as they arise. Such training must become mandatory over time.

3. Supports in early childhood care and education

The Access and Inclusion Model (AIM), the programme to support young children with a disability to access the Early Childhood Care and Education (ECCE) scheme, has worked well. Children are supported to access the ECCE through generic supports, or for a child who has complex needs through individualised supports such as a support worker. However, these supports are only available to a child attending the limited ECCE scheme i.e. 15 hours per week and for a total of 38 weeks per year over two years. For the rest of their early year's engagement, the child will have no supports in place unless privately funded.

A NCSE pilot project on the provision of therapeutic inputs in early year's settings and schools involving the delivery of on site occupational and speech therapy in 75 pre-schools³ is welcome as early intervention has been shown to be highly effective for children with a disability, especially when delivered in preschool settings. Money should be ring-fenced for roll-out in all early-years setting.

What people said in our consultation about early childhood care and education:

"As an early year's educator ...it would be great if children with additional needs could access supports to allow them to participate ...like their peers without parents having to pay ...for a SNA/tutor to support their child"

Inclusion Ireland asks for Budget 2019, related to supports in early childhood care and education:

³ <http://ncse.ie/wp-content/uploads/2018/05/In-school-therapy-service-launch-statement-for-upload.pdf>

1. Extend the AIM supports to all early year's settings in addition to ECCE.
2. Ring-fence funding to roll out the pilot therapy project in all early years' settings.

4. Higher and Further Education

Very few people with an intellectual disability access higher education in Ireland and of those who are registered on the National Intellectual Disability Database only 71 are in third level education.

One of the main barriers for people with a disability accessing mainstream further education and training is a lack of accessible programs at levels lower than QQI level 3, which closes off a progression partway for many students or diverts people towards specialist training providers.

The fund for students with disabilities and the SUSI grant scheme are only available to people attending courses thought at QQI level 5 and above. This rules out participants on course such Certificate in Contemporary Living run in Trinity College Dublin from supports their peers may avail of in other courses such as a personal assistant, assistive technology, note taking and transport.

Courses such as the Certificate in Contemporary Living do not attract funding from the Department and other initiatives, such as the Inclusive Learning Initiative in NUI Maynooth have ceased due to funding issues.

What people said in our consultation higher and further education:

"I had no choice whenever I left school only to go to a day centre where I could work for very low pay. Little or no choice and little or no pay"

"Individuals with high support needs cannot attend courses because the support they need in class is not provided".

"I am in third level education and find it hard to get accessible documents in college and have to fight for them. It makes it harder to get my grades in college.

The government needs to give us more opportunities in education, even if we are older".

"The government should not assume that we just want to do education with other people with disabilities we want to do it with others too"

Inclusion Ireland asks for Budget 2019, related to supports in early childhood care and education:

1. Develop courses in mainstream institutions at QQI level 3 that have a progression route to further training or employment.
2. Funding must be made available to support higher education initiatives such as the Certificate in Contemporary Living and Inclusive Learning Initiative.
3. Perform a review of the supports available to students with a disability including eligibility for the fund for students with disabilities and the SUSI grant scheme.

5. Sexual Education

Many people with an intellectual disability attend 'special schools'⁴ until they are 18 which is at primary education level meaning, like other areas of the curriculum, do not receive RSE or SPHE beyond a primary level. The Curriculum guide for Primary schools (which include those Special Schools) has a heavy focus on personal care skills and relationships rather than sexuality itself.

The development of a specific curriculum for people with intellectual disability that is accessible, age appropriate and deals with sexuality and contraception should be considered for use in special schools.

In mainstream schools, a review of approaches to sex education for all learners including people with intellectual disabilities is needed including learning techniques such as the use of easy to read materials and methodologies which engage people.

⁴ some 16% of people with intellectual disabilities finished school at primary level (compared to 5% of the general population).

What people said in our consultation sexual education:

"Train teachers yearly. Most are mortified talking to us".

"supports with education for people with disabilities in a easy read format and specific supportive guidelines to help inform individuals with disabilities to have a sex education"

"This is non existent, essential, available to neurotypical peers, and is yet another major failing of our children".

"This is very important as our children are more vulnerable. But they should also be educated to live and have sexual lives similar to their peers. This is a human right that our children and young adults are being denied."

"All we were told was: "you'll find out later yourself".

Inclusion Ireland asks for Budget 2019, related to sexual education:

1. Develop a curriculum on Relationships and Sexual Education for students in special schools.
2. Skills training on learning techniques relating to sexual education.

6. Career Guidance

Traditionally, it has been assumed that most young people with disabilities would transfer to the HSE for services at 18 years of age. One result of this thinking is the lack of any career guidance in special schools.

There is a lack of progression to further education and training or employment of people with intellectual disabilities. Quality information through career guidance is one support to address this trend and is recognised as such in the National Disability Inclusion Strategy and Comprehensive Employment strategy.

Quality career guidance should provide details on the following career options (among others):

- Employment options and supports such as Intreo and Employability.
- Further Education options through the Education and Training Boards with focus on entry level courses at QQI level 3 if required.
- Adult Education Guidance services.
- Higher education and the various entry and support options.
- HSE funded rehabilitative training and day services.

Inclusion Ireland asks for Budget 2019 relating to career guidance are:

1. All young people with a disability including those who attend special schools should have access to a quality career guidance service with appropriately trained staff.
2. The career guidance available to young people with a disability should be individualised and assist the young person to develop a career pathway in life.
3. Career guidance should offer the full range of progression options and must not assume that a person with a disability will automatically transfer into a HSE funded day service.

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