



INCLUSION IRELAND

National Association for People with an Intellectual Disability

Pre-Budget Submission 2019

Department of Transport

July 2018

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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 Transport notes its obligations under the Irish Human Rights and Equality Commission Act, 2014.

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.

Of importance in fulfilling its public sector duty, the Department of Transport must do more to create a transport system that is accessible to people with disabilities in urban and rural areas across Ireland.

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, family members and people who work in disability 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



An Roinn Iompair
Turasóireachta agus Spóirt
Department of Transport,
Tourism and Sport

The Department of Transport, Tourism and Sport is a very important government department.

The Department looks after transport services all across Ireland.

This submission is asking the Department to look at 4 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 3 areas



1. Accessible transport

We are asking the Department to make sure that buses, trains, taxis and trams are accessible to people with disabilities in cities, towns and villages across Ireland.



2. Personal budgets

We are asking for the Department to start work on how it will support people with disabilities to use a personal budget

Introduction

In the Programme for Partnership Government, there is a commitment to:

- Invest to make public transport services more accessible for people with disabilities
- Examine how to improve rural transport in recognition of the value and benefit that rural transport brings, especially to people experiencing social isolation,
- Examine transport service provision for young persons with disabilities to ensure that the service is fit for purpose and consistent with their needs.
- Introduce a provision whereby taxi companies who wish to bid for state contracts must ensure that a minimum of 10% of their fleet is wheelchair accessible

The Programme for Partnership Government also commits to eliminating discrimination on the nine grounds, equality of opportunity, and removing barriers which impact on access to services, education, work or healthcare.

Inclusion Ireland believes that persons with disabilities should live self-determined lives and Budget 2019 provides an opportunity to create a more equal & just society and to develop pathways into a life in the community for people with a disability.

Inclusion Ireland has identified 2 areas of reform for Budget 2019 that fall within the remit of the Department of Transport:

Budget 2019

1. Accessible transport
2. Personal budgets

1. Accessible transport

Article 9 of the United Nations Convention on the Rights of Persons with Disabilities (UNCRPD) places an obligation on States Parties to ensure persons with disabilities can access transport in urban and rural areas on an equal basis with others. The UNCRPD requires states parties to take measures to identify and eliminate barriers to accessible transport.

Accessible transport is a key requirement for people with disabilities in order to live independently and participate fully in all aspects of life.

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.

Ireland must ensure that the barriers that persons with different types of disabilities experience in accessing transport are removed.

Accessibility features

There are a range of commitments to accessible transport in government policy.

A Programme for Partnership Government committed to invest in making public transport services accessible for people with disabilities, including the provision of audio announcements on train and bus services, increased wheelchair access to bus and train stations and bus fleet enhancement. These commitments are repeated in the National Development Plan.

In addition, the National Disability Inclusion Strategy sets out a range of commitments with the aim of ensuring that "persons with disabilities can get to and from their chosen destination independently (without driving a car) in transport that is accessible to them"². These include:

- Improve the accessibility and availability of inter-city buses
- Improve the accessibility and availability of train and bus stations
- Make transport information accessible

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

² Department of Justice and Equality (2017). National Disability Inclusion Strategy, 2016-2021, p.43

- Prioritise the maintenance, management and monitoring of systems and services which make transport accessible

During Inclusion Ireland consultations on Budget 2019, issues frequently raised include: information such as timetables not being in accessible formats and inaccurate display or lack of audio systems. Unstaffed bus and train stations are also a significant barrier to people with intellectual disabilities travelling independently.

In addition, people speak regularly of not being able to rely on accessibility features and this presents a challenge. A key issue is maintenance where, for example, lifts can be poorly maintained.

As well as the commitments outlined in the Programme for Government and the NDIS, the Comprehensive Employment Strategy (Action 2.12), aims to develop the passenger assistance scheme where an assistant supports people to use public transport and plan journeys on Dublin Bus, Luas and DART. The scheme aims to give disabled people the confidence to use public transport and supported over 1000 individuals in 2016.

Furthermore, the Department of Transport must ensure that changes proposed as part of the redesign of Dublin bus services do not reduce accessibility further for people with intellectual disabilities. Accessible information must be made available to support people with intellectual disabilities to understand the changes to routes and to manage transitions between routes.

One standard for all transport providers

Where public transport is poor, unavailable or inaccessible, people are reliant on private services. At Inclusion Ireland consultations, people spoke of private bus companies not accepting the free travel pass, or private services on public routes prioritising non-free travel customers. Such experiences raise concern regarding different standards of reasonable accommodation between public and private services and the ability of private operators to deliver an equal and accessible service.

UNCRPD Article 9 (b) places an obligation on the Government to 'ensure that private entities that offer facilities and services which are open or provided to the public take into account all aspects of accessibility for persons with disabilities'.

In addition to compliance with the UNCRPD, the Department of Transport, Tourism and Sport and the National Transport Authority (NTA) are

compelled by the Public Sector Duty to ensure that licensing processes are rigorous in how they police private operators so as to enable equal universal access.

Rural transport

The availability and accessibility of rural transport is a significant issue for people with intellectual disabilities as the absence of an accessible service leads to an increased isolation and a sense of being cut off from services and community supports.

The draft Sectoral Plan for Accessible Transport for 2018 commits relevant departments and agencies to 'ensure that accessibility is a core criterion in the development of local and rural integrated transport services'. A target set by the NTA is achieving a fully accessible fleet by 2020 for the Rural Transport Programme (Local Link services). While services are open to the general public, older people and people with disabilities have traditionally formed the core customer base of the Programme.

The NTA's first strategic plan for the Local Link Rural Transport Programme (2018-2022) outlines key actions relating to 'Access for All'. These include accessibility requirements to be specified in service contracts; analysis of accessibility levels across all contracted operators following a retendering of existing rural services; and ensuring feedback from disability representative groups and key stakeholders is used to inform a best practice approach to accessibility in the Rural Transport Programme.

What people said in our consultation about accessible transport:

"More transport would be great as there are a lot more people with disabilities. The transport drivers need to know how to deal with people with different disabilities. A lot of them don't know how to deal with people".

"Make regular, clear, public announcements for trains"

"Make transport more accessible for large wheelchairs as they do not facilitate the size of these on public buses. More wheelchair taxi services too. There should be inclusion for all"

"Advance notice for DART and rail should not be required"

"Bad experience of trying to use trains but lifts being out of order or having to wait a very long time for someone to come with a key to operate the lift. Not good enough. Irish rail need to ensure all lifts are maintained and in working order"

"We live rurally so there is no transport other than private cars"

"Transport is very bad, trains and buses. If I want to go on a train I have to book it in advance and once my (booked) seat was taken and the person wouldn't give it up"

Inclusion Ireland asks for Budget 2019, related to accessible transport are:

1. Invest resources to ensure the NTA target of full accessibility by 2020 can be achieved
2. Further develop and extend the Passenger Assistance scheme nationwide,
3. Extend the Passenger Assistance scheme, ensuring it is rolled out in rural areas in conjunction with the Local Link Rural Transport Programme.
4. Ensure changes implemented as part of the redesign of Dublin bus services do not reduce accessibility for people with intellectual disabilities
5. Implement tendering arrangements to ensure public and private operators deliver an equal and accessible service, in compliance with UNCRPD obligations
6. Resource the Local Link Rural Transport Programme to ensure actions are fully implemented and within the required timeframes and in consultation with people with disabilities

2. Personal budgets

The National Disability Inclusion Strategy commits to reviewing transport supports “to determine the type of cross departmental transportation options that will best help people with a range of disabilities to get to work, and implementation of the most viable proposals”.

The recent publication of the report of the Task Force on Personalised Budgets provides an opportunity for the Department of Transport to progress the implementation of this commitment.

Though the initial roll out of personal budgets focuses on services funded by the HSE, there is a need for a whole of government approach to personal budgets so that people can use a personal budget to meet needs that are not covered by HSE-funded health and social care services. transport being one of these key needs. Transport emerged as one of these key issues throughout the work of the Task Force³.

In Budget 2019, the Department of Transport, as well as other key government departments, should develop a unit to co-ordinate its department’s personal budget responsibilities.

Inclusion Ireland asks for Budget 2019 related to personal budgets are:

1. Set up a unit to coordinate personal budgets within the Department of Transport

Conclusion

The Department of Transport is a key player in supporting people with intellectual disabilities to live independent lives in their communities. Available, accessible and affordable transport is a key enabler of inclusion in all aspects of life, including work, education and cultural and social life.

³ Department of Health (2018). Towards Personalised Budgets for People with a Disability in Ireland. Report of the Task Force on Personalised Budgets. <https://health.gov.ie/wp-content/uploads/2018/07/Task-Force-Report.pdf>

There are clear areas in which the Department can improve on its support for people with disabilities. These include investing in accessibility features and ensuring these are maintained, ensuring private and public providers are operating to the same high standard and ensuring the availability and accessibility of rural transport.

As a key step in ensuring budgetary decisions are equality proofed, Inclusion Ireland encourages the Department to carry out an assessment of human rights and equality issues relevant to its functions, services and employment policies as committed to in its Strategic Plan.

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