

4 Ministers – 4 Departments - 1 Message: Make People with a Disability a Priority for this Government

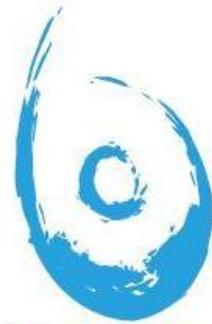


Irish Autism Action
Raising Standards



**Down
Syndrome
Ireland**

INCLUSION IRELAND



Why do people with a disability have to battle for the most basic supports?

When was the last time a Cabinet Minister made a statement on issues affecting people with a disability and their families?

Where is the Government commitment to treating people with a disability as equal citizens?

Are People with a Disability a Government Priority?

Numbers add up to NO!

763

Children waiting six months or more for an assessment of need under the Disability Act

€325

Cut to the annual respite care grant in 2012

€847

Cumulative annual reduction in Disability Allowance since 2008

15%

Reduction in resource teaching hours since 2011

1,900

The number of children awaiting assessment by a primary care occupational therapist

5%

Of adults in receipt of Disability Allowance on community employment schemes in 2012

34,617

People awaiting speech and language therapy

450,000

The number of home help hours cut in August 2012

121,353

pupils in a class of 30 or more

5%

Of adults with an intellectual disability in employment

200

Home Care Packages per month cut in 2012

20,000

People with an intellectual disability requiring a new or enhanced multidisciplinary support service between 2012 and 2016

Dear Taoiseach,

On behalf of over 150,000 people with an intellectual disability and/or autism, and their families, we call on your Government to start showing real commitment to supporting people with a disability.

450,000

The number of home help hours cut in August 2012

People with an intellectual disability and/or autism have been hit by an avalanche of accumulated cuts over the last five years. Longer waiting lists, reductions in services, and additional charges have increased significantly under your Government. Not all cuts make headlines – but a series of measures outlined in this submission are creating huge stress and strain and pushing people with a disability further away from their local communities and increasing their dependence on services.

Today, we are asking that you prove your Government's commitment to people with a disability.

People with a disability do not fit neatly into one Government Department. They are individuals with specific support needs and every Government Department has a part to play in delivering those supports.

Taoiseach, we can count on one hand the number of statements by senior Ministers where they address disability issues. You too have failed to show leadership in this area.

People with an intellectual disability and/or autism, and their families have faced cuts from every direction, and they are building into an avalanche. In this Budget, please lead your Government's commitment to supporting people with a disability by:

- **Ringfencing all budgets relating to people with a disability;**
- **Disability-proofing the Budget;**
- **Ensure engagement on disability at Senior Ministerial level;**

Yours sincerely,

Paddy Connolly, **Inclusion Ireland**
Pat Clarke, **Down Syndrome Ireland**
Kevin Whelan, **Irish Autism Action**

Introduction

Austerity is hitting people with a disability, parents of children with a disability and their families disproportionately. Essential income supports continue to be cut and frontline services have been reduced. People with a disability continue to be more likely than any other social group to be without employment and at risk of poverty and deprivation.

Waiting lists for essential assessment and therapies are having a devastating impact on children with a disability and their families. The numbers of special needs assistants has been capped, despite a boom in school enrolments. Essential health and personal services are curtailed due to the moratorium on public sector recruitment.

People with a disability and their families are now expected to co-fund their own essential public services. In addition, families are being forced to pay for expensive medical assessments from their reduced family income to qualify for public services.

An increasing preoccupation with 'diagnostic tests' to determine access to public services signals the re-exclusion of people with a disability and a return to the medical model of disability.

A recent study of EU member States, including Ireland, has shown that the economic crisis, as well as the political and social decisions taken as a result of it, is undermining the fundamental civil, political, social and economic rights of people with a disability.

5%

**Of adults with an
intellectual disability in
employment**

To Joan Burton, Minister for Social Protection:

People with a disability and their families are among the hardest hit. People with a disability are considerably more likely than any other social group to be unemployed and to experience extreme deprivation. A 2011 report published by the Department accepts that official measurements of poverty do not consider the extra costs of having a disability.

€325**Cut to the annual respite care grant in 2012**

1. Core social welfare payments to people with a disability and families have been targeted for cuts. People with a disability have less disposable income today than they had eight years ago – despite a steep rise in the cost of living.
2. The risk of people with a disability experiencing fuel poverty is well documented. However, cuts to fuel allowances have also been introduced at a time when energy providers have introduced price hikes. The department introduced €65 million in cuts to fuel, telephone, gas and electricity allowances in 2011. The fuel allowance season was reduced from 32 to 26 weeks in Budget 2013.
3. Official statistics show that over 2,000 people currently with no service will need respite care in the period 2012–2016. Parents are being forced to pay for respite care from their basic income. Despite this, the annual respite care grant to parents of children with essential care needs was cut by 25% in 2012.
4. The evidence that the cost of having a disability can place households at significant risk of poverty and deprivation is well documented.ⁱ People dependent on disability allowance have seen the payment cut from €204 in 2008 to €188 in 2013. This is a cut of €847 in their annual income.

5. Cuts to these payments are driving people with a disability to poverty and hardship. “A reason why people with a disability may be more likely to experience deprivation than people who are unemployed is due to the additional costs associated with the disability itself” (Department of Social Protection, 2011:28).
6. Only 21% of people with a disability of an age to work are actually at work compared with 50% of the general population.ⁱⁱ
7. The rate of adults with an intellectual disability of working age in employment is 5%.ⁱⁱⁱ
8. Many of the labour market activation programmes continue to be unavailable to people with a disability. This gives a false impression that people in receipt of disability allowance are unwilling or unable to work.

€847

Cumulative annual reduction in Disability Allowance since 2008

To Richard Bruton, Minister for Jobs and Innovation:

People with a disability have the right to the opportunity to earn a living by work freely chosen or accepted, in a labour market and a work environment that is open, inclusive and accessible.

1. Only five out of every hundred adults with an intellectual disability of working age, have employment in the open labour market.
2. The Government's Action Plan for Jobs contains no specific measures to improve the employment opportunities of people with a disability.
3. The exclusion of people with a disability from employment means that many are reliant on social welfare payments.
4. The strong work disincentives for people with disabilities arising from the extra cost of having a disability, continues to be ignored.

1%

**Of adults in receipt of Disability Allowance on
community employment schemes in 2012**

To Ruairi Quinn, Minister for Education and Skills:

Children with a disability have a right to an education. However, the failure of the government to implement in full the provisions of the Education for Children with Special Education Needs Act 2004, means that this remains an aspiration for children with a disability. Cuts to resources and increased class sizes are having a devastating impact on children with a disability.

15%
**Reduction in
 resource teaching
 hours since 2011**

1. The number of Special Needs Assistants (SNAs) has remained virtually unchanged since 2008 despite a huge increase in the numbers of children with a disability enrolling in mainstream and special schools. Resource reaching hours have been cut to 85% of pre-2011 levels.
2. The Department of Education has targeted families of two or more children with a disability by implementing cuts to the number of home-based tuition hours available to children with a disability under the 'July provision' scheme (40 hours for the family instead of per child).
3. Cuts to education supports to children with special education needs are compounded by increasing class sizes. This is preventing many children with a disability from reaching their potential and causing others to regress. There are 121,353 pupils in a class of 30 or more.^{iv}
4. The limited availability of educational psychological assessments means that some children are unable to access educational supports. Many parents are turning to charities for help in meeting the cost of assessments^v.

121,353
**Pupils in a class
 of 30 or more**

To James Reilly, Minister for Health:

The moratorium on recruitment in the HSE is having a huge impact on the lives of adults and children with a disability.

The key programme of reform of services to adults and children with a disability has stalled.

20,000

People with an intellectual disability requiring a new or enhanced multidisciplinary support service between 2012 and 2016

1. Frontline staff are not being replaced and waiting lists for services are growing. 34,617 people, mostly young children, are waiting for speech and language therapy. 6,500 are waiting longer than a year.

763

Children waiting six months or more for an assessment of need under the Disability Act

2. Under the Disability Act 2005, children are entitled to have their needs assessed within six months. 763 children had still not received their needs assessment despite waiting six months or more. 65 per cent were waiting nine months or more.^{vi}

3. The total number waiting for assessment by a primary care occupational therapist is 15,830. Of these, over 2,500 are waiting longer than 12 months, including 1,900 children.
4. In the absence of therapeutic and other supports, coupled with lengthening waiting lists, disability services are being privatised into family wallets, through private transport, co-funding of respite care, private services or simply exclusion from the mainstream of life in Irish society.
5. The recommendations of the Congregated Settings Report (to remove people from congregated, segregated institutions) cannot be implemented due to limited resources and the moratorium on staff recruitment.

34,617

People awaiting speech and language therapy

6. Community-based supports for people with a disability continue to be cut, including personal and home help assistance. A reduction of 450,000 home help hours was announced in August 2012. €1.7m was also cut from home care packages^{vii}.
7. Over 2,000 school-leavers with an intellectual disability will require day services between 2012 and 2016. In addition, 20,000 people with an intellectual disability require a new or enhanced multidisciplinary service between 2012 and 2016.^{viii}

1,900

The number of children awaiting assessment by a primary care occupational therapist

200

Home Care
Packages per
month cut in 2012

Taoiseach,

Why do people with a disability have to battle for the most basic supports?

When was the last time a Cabinet Minister made a statement on issues affecting people with a disability and their families?

Where is the Government commitment to treating people with a disability as equal citizens?

Prove your Government's commitment to people with a disability in Budget 2014:

- Ringfence all Budgets relating to People with a Disability;
- Disability-proof the Budget;
- Ensure Engagement on Disability at Senior Ministerial level;

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Additional materials: short document available with explanation of statistics in this document

ENDNOTES:

ⁱ "If we did take account of these additional costs, the poverty rate of people with a disability would be even higher than the current statistics suggest". Department of Social Protection, 2011: 28

ⁱⁱ Census 2011 Profile 8 Our Bill of Health - Health, Disability and Carers in Ireland

ⁱⁱⁱ Health Research Board, National Intellectual Disability Database Annual Report 2011

^{iv} Department of Education, Annual Statistics Report 2012-2013

^v <http://www.irishexaminer.com/ireland/hse-seeks-svp-help-caring-for-patients-241803.html>

^{vi} Irish Times, May 8, 2013)

^{vii} <http://www.hse.ie/eng/services/news/newsarchive/2012archive/aug2012/finances.html>

^{viii} HRB, National Intellectual Disability Database Annual Report 2011

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Make People with a Disability a Priority for this Government



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