



INCLUSION IRELAND WELCOMES DISABILITY COMMITMENTS IN PROGRAMME FOR GOVERNMENT

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Inclusion Ireland welcomes disability related promises in the Programme for Government agreed in early March by Fine Gael and Labour. The *Government for National Recovery 2011-2016* commits to introduce statutory standards and inspection of disability services and a new implementation plan for the National Disability Strategy. Other promises include funding towards a “personal budget model so that people with disabilities or their families have the flexibility to make choices that suit their needs best”. The Programme also commits to modern capacity law, which will replace the Lunacy Act of 1871, and individual education plans for children with disabilities. All of these commitments are very welcome and are issues Inclusion Ireland raised repeatedly in the past. In advance of the election, Inclusion Ireland published and distributed election leaflets with six key priorities and held a press event. The Programme for Government directly references five of the six priorities set out in the election leaflet. One priority not mentioned is the closure of large institutions where over 4,000 people with disabilities live. While Inclusion Ireland welcomes commitments made by Fine Gael and Labour, a timeframe for implementation is needed to ensure all commitments are fulfilled.

The new Cabinet was announced in March 2011. Kathleen Lynch TD is the new Minister of State with responsibility for Disability, Equality and Mental Health. As Labour’s former Disability Spokesperson, Minister Lynch has attended all Inclusion Ireland AGMs for the past four years and many other events, including a press conference with Amnesty Ireland in March 2010 on the need for modern capacity law. Minister Lynch, who is a TD for Cork North Central, also spoke at Inclusion Ireland’s 2008 Self-Advocacy Conference.

The new Minister for Health is Fine Gael TD James Reilly; Minister for Justice is Fine Gael TD Alan Shatter; and the Minister for Children is Fine Gael’s Frances Fitzgerald TD. Inclusion Ireland has written to all of the above Ministers to congratulate them on their new appointments, and to seek meetings with them as soon as possible on the pressing issues under their new portfolios.

REPORT BY THE EUROPEAN COMMITTEE FOR THE PREVENTION OF TORTURE AND INHUMAN OR DEGRADING TREATMENT OR PUNISHMENT

In February 2011, a Report was published by the European Committee for the Prevention of Torture and Inhuman or Degrading Treatment or Punishment (CPT), which visited Ireland from 25 January to 5 February 2010. While the majority of the report deals with prisons and psychiatric institutions, there is a section that deals with St. Josephs’ Intellectual Disability Service in Portrane. The CPT highlighted that there are no “safeguards” such as standards in place for people living in disability services. It also mentioned the need to open the ‘Knocknamann’ bungalows which were finally opened in mid-2010. Also in the Report, the CPT calls on the Government to urgently update Ireland’s capacity law, an issue Inclusion Ireland has been raising for many years.

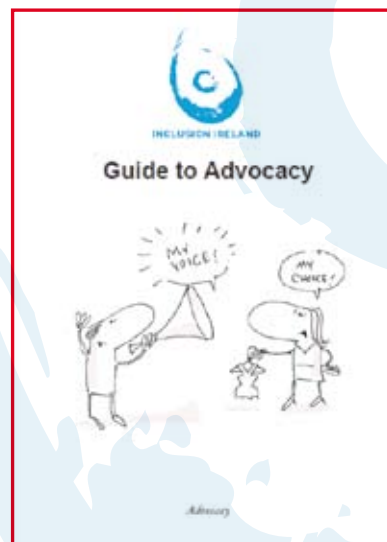
AGM 2011: Inclusion Ireland’s 2011 AGM & Annual Conference will be held in Galway on 15th & 16th April! Call us on 01-8559891 or go to www.inclusionireland.ie for more information! We look forward to seeing you there!

SPECIAL INTEREST GROUP: PARENTING AND INTELLECTUAL DISABILITY

Parents with an intellectual disability are more likely to have their children removed from their care than other parents. Inclusion Ireland's advocacy casework has seen a significant increase in the number of parents contacting us for our support in child care proceedings. We would like to find out why this is happening and what the factors are behind it. To help us in this regard, we will bring expertise together by establishing a special interest group comprised of parents with intellectual disabilities (those who have been involved in proceedings); and representation from academia, psychology, social work, law and research. The group will determine its own terms of reference and objectives. It is anticipated that the group will meet in Dublin every six weeks initially. The group will devise its own terms of reference and will also identify the areas for investigation. The first meeting of the group will take place shortly. Inclusion Ireland has had a great response to the group. If you are interested in participating please contact Jim Winters, Inclusion Ireland Advocacy Officer at jim@inclusionireland.ie or phone 01 8559891.

ADVOCACY UPDATE - GUIDE TO ADVOCACY

2010 was an eventful year in respect of the development and provision of advocacy for persons with disabilities. The new National Advocacy Service (NAS) is now up and running and was formally launched in March 2011. It aims to provide independent, representative advocacy services for people with disabilities. It is managed by the Citizens Information Services and supported by the Citizens Information Board. Inclusion Ireland will continue to provide its own representative advocacy service to people with an intellectual disability. To support Inclusion Ireland's advocacy work, a number of advocacy publications have been produced. A copy of the 'Guide to Advocacy' is included with this newsletter. The guide explains how representative advocacy works and how you can get an Inclusion Ireland Advocate. Inclusion Ireland has also produced policies, a code of practice for advocates and an advocacy plan. All of the advocacy publications are now available on the Inclusion Ireland website. Inclusion Ireland would like to acknowledge the contribution of the Inclusion Ireland Advocacy Committee to the development of our advocacy services and supports. The committee has now ended its term and a new committee will be established after the Inclusion Ireland AGM in April. The committee was very helpful and supportive over the years.



CITIZEN ADVOCACY

Inclusion Ireland had an information and training evening in March for people who volunteered to become Citizen Advocates. The evening was the first evening for people who had responded to Inclusion Ireland's call for interested parties. Citizen Advocates are volunteers from the community who want to build a relationship with a person with an intellectual disability to support them to access and avail of their rights. The programme is being carried out in South County Dublin initially. Further training days and evenings are planned, so if you are interested in applying, or for further information contact citizen@inclusionireland.ie.

PRESIDENT MCALEESE LAUNCHES 50TH ANNIVERSARY CELEBRATIONS

President Mary McAleese launched Inclusion Ireland's 50th Year Celebrations on 20th January in the National Library, Dublin. President McAleese is the Patron of Inclusion Ireland, as were all Irish Presidents before her since Eamon De Valera. President McAleese spoke about the pioneering work of the founders of Inclusion Ireland in her speech. In addition to the President, Self-Advocate Stephen McDermott and Inclusion Ireland Chairperson Frieda Finlay, also spoke at the launch. Stephen said:



“People with intellectual disabilities have fought very hard for their rights over the last 50 years. Inclusion Ireland has supported us to do this...In 1961 when Inclusion Ireland started, people with intellectual disabilities were pushed into institutions. 50 years later, a growing number are living independently. Inclusion Ireland's 50th Anniversary Celebrations will end in December. But our fight for inclusion will continue long after that.”

Inclusion Ireland Chairperson Frieda Finlay said: “It was the pioneering spirit of the founding members in 1961 that saw the need for change and set up NAMHI. 50 years on, that spirit remains, and Inclusion Ireland is determined not to rest easy until rights, independence, dignity and equality is achieved for people with intellectual disabilities.”



President McAleese met with attendees at the launch, who included Inclusion Ireland members and delegates from other organisations. Kathleen Gittens and Paul Crilly from the Kilkenny



based Self-Advocacy group Seasamh presented President McAleese with a small gift on behalf of Inclusion Ireland, to thank her for launching Inclusion Ireland's celebrations. Inclusion Ireland will hold a number of events throughout 2011 to celebrate this important Anniversary (see below for details on art and poetry competitions). Members will be updated throughout the Year on other events.

INCLUSION IRELAND LAUNCH ART & POETRY COMPETITIONS

2011 is Inclusion Ireland's 50th Anniversary. As part of this Anniversary, Inclusion Ireland is running an Art Competition and a Poetry Competition. The poet Nuala Ni Dhomhnaill and the Literary Editor of *The Irish Times* Caroline Walsh have agreed to judge the poetry competition, and the artist Guggi has agreed to judge the art competition. Another judge will soon be announced for the art competition. Approximately 30 pieces of art and poetry will be selected to be exhibited at a national venue later in the year. The closing date for entries is the 30th June 2011. More information is available at www.inclusionireland.ie/2011competitions.asp. On the right is 'Downtown Bangkok' by Geraldine McEvoy and Mary Francis Leahy, which is the winning Irish entry from a 2003 European art competition.



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CARERS QUESTION ON CENSUS

The 'Carers Count Campaign' is highlighting Question 22 on Census 2011 to ensure good, well-informed policies in care - especially in support of family carers - into the future. Inclusion Ireland is a member of the Carers Count Campaign which also includes Age Action, Alzheimer Society Ireland, Care Alliance Ireland, the Carers' Association, Caring for Carers Ireland, Crosscare, Cúram, Disability Federation Ireland, and the Irish Senior Citizens' Parliament. To join or support the campaign, please contact withcare@eircom.net for more information, or see www.census.ie.

SEANAD ELECTION

Inclusion Ireland is a nominating body to Seanad Éireann on the Administrative Panel, as are a number of other non-profit organisations. Inclusion Ireland was invited to put forward a nomination to the Panel, in March 2011. There will be seven people elected from the Administrative Panel to Seanad Éireann. Nominees put forward from the Administrative Panel are voted on by Members of the incoming Dáil; Members of the outgoing Seanad; and Members of City and County Councils. Inclusion Ireland nominated Mary Moran, the parent of a child with an intellectual disability, from Louth. Ms. Moran was a General Election candidate for the Labour Party, and she polled 4,500 first preference votes and almost 7,000 votes in total in the Louth constituency. Her application to Inclusion Ireland for a nomination was endorsed by Inclusion Ireland member organisation, the Special Needs Active Parents, which are based in the Northeast. Ms. Moran is a teacher at St. Vincent's secondary school in Dundalk, and was Chairperson of the Parent's Council from 2001-2011 at St. Mary's Special School, Drumcar, Co. Louth, which her son Cillian (aged 13) attends. Some of Ms. Moran's key campaigning issues are the need for standards and inspection in disability services; the need for modern capacity law; and individualised funding. National University of Ireland graduates can vote for nominees to the National University of Ireland (NUI) Panel and Trinity graduates can vote for the Trinity College Dublin (TCD) Panel. There are three candidates to these Panels, who are standing on a rights and disability platform: Donncha O'Connell and Linda O'Shea for the NUI Panel and Rosaleen McDonagh for the TCD Panel. Mr. O'Connell is a Lecturer at NUI Galway and Ms. O'Shea is solicitor and disability rights activist. Ms. McDonagh is a playwright and campaigner on disability and Traveller's rights.

VOTING WORKSHOPS

Inclusion Ireland held two successful voting workshops in February 2011, in the fortnight leading up to the General Election. Over 60 people with an intellectual disability attended the workshops and participated in learning and discussion about the Irish political system, voting, election issues and how the government is formed. Participants got the opportunity to vote in a mock-election and practiced filling in a ballot paper. The mock election on both days was to elect 'Ireland's favourite person' and the slightly controversial results saw Bono elected at Workshop 1 and Keith Duffy elected at Workshop 2. There was more serious discussion of the big election issues for the people who attended. Participants raised issues like employment, as some people had recently lost their jobs, transport issues, in particular rural areas transport and taxis, and community issues such as crime, vandalism and the poor condition of roads. Overall, there was great anticipation among participants, the majority of whom had indicated an intention to vote in the election just passed.