

## **Inclusion Ireland – Tender for Research Services**

**Title:** *Access to Justice and Participation: How nonspeaking people with intellectual disabilities should have their voices heard and their rights upheld.*

---

### **1. Background**

Inclusion Ireland is a national advocacy organisation working to promote the rights of people with intellectual disabilities. We are committed to ensuring that all people's communication styles and preferences are respected and that people can have their voices heard in the development of policy, systems, and society.

Nonspeaking people—those who do not use speech to communicate or who cannot rely on speech to communicate—are routinely excluded from participatory processes in Ireland. This is particularly true for those who are nonspeaking and also intellectually disabled. Their experiences, perspectives, and rights are often invisible in policy and practice. This exclusion is especially harmful within the judicial system, healthcare, education, housing, and broader societal contexts where decisions are made without their meaningful participation.

The findings of the Grace Report highlight the consequences of nonspeaking individuals not having their voices heard.

We must learn how to receive and understand the communication of nonspeaking people - not as a technical skill, but as a matter of human rights, dignity, and justice.

When we invite nonspeaking individuals to take part in this research, we are not just asking for participation - we are recognising the deep value, wisdom, and the transformative effect listening to the participants can have on society. Inclusion Ireland is committed to making sure that nonspeaking people's contributions lead to real change, and that decision-makers, policymakers, and the wider public absorb this learning.

---

### **2. Purpose of the Research**

The primary aim of this research is to document and amplify the experiences of nonspeaking people in Ireland in order to:

- Highlight the systemic barriers nonspeaking people face across key areas including justice, health, housing, education.

- Demonstrate the ways in which nonspeaking individuals are excluded from consultation and decision-making processes.
- Identify the human rights risks and harms that arise when systems fail to recognise, understand, or include nonspeaking individuals in communication and decision-making.
- Recommend pathways for inclusive practices that value the diverse ways people communicate. Recommend tools and processes that work for people.
- Recognise and elevate the unique insights that nonspeaking and minimally speaking individuals bring - including how they reshape our understanding of communication, connection, and inclusion.
- Provide practical, actionable guidance and tools for key sectors - including policy makers, legal decision-makers, healthcare providers, education professionals, recreation, housing, and transport services - to support the meaningful inclusion of nonspeaking people.
- Provide a tool to Influence the thinking and actions of stakeholders such as the Department of Health, the Department of Education, the Department of Children, Disability, Equality(DCDE) and Department of Justice, and others shaping Irish society.

---

### **3. Scope of Work**

The successful researcher or research team will:

- Engage directly with nonspeaking individuals and their nominated supporters where relevant, using highly individualised, respectful, and trusted approaches to communication. A minimum of seven participants should be engaged with across the lifespan.
- Co-create the research methodology in partnership with nonspeaking participants. The first stage of the research must involve consultation with individual participants to determine how *they* wish to participate and communicate. This ensures the methodology is not pre-defined but shaped collaboratively in a way that supports safety, dignity, and empowerment.

Examples may include:

- Meeting participants in their own homes or other familiar, low-stress environments.
- Involving trusted communication partners (e.g. family, key workers, allies) as central supports.

- Using or adapting communication tools (e.g. AAC) chosen by each participant.
  - Ensure that participant engagement materials and outreach clearly communicate the value of nonspeaking people as teachers and leaders in this work - not as subjects of research, but as central contributors shaping its outcome.
  - Ensure the research environment and promotion strategies are trauma-informed and safe, particularly acknowledging that nonspeaking people may have experienced exclusion, marginalisation, or invalidation in the past.
  - Collect qualitative data through one-to-one, person-centred engagements that allow for deep, authentic storytelling.
  - Identify and analyse systemic gaps and risks to human rights, including how the absence of accessible communication strategies in legal, healthcare, housing, educational, and policymaking systems can lead to rights being overlooked or denied.
  - Develop clear, cross-sector recommendations and a practical guide with attainable actions for:
    - Policy makers and government departments (Health, Education, Inclusion, etc.)
    - Legal and judicial systems
    - Healthcare providers
    - Educators and school leaders
    - Local authorities, transport providers, and housing services
    - Community and recreational settings
  - Produce a final research report that is accessible, rights-based, and suitable for dissemination to a wide audience, including government stakeholders.
- 

#### **4. Deliverables**

- Inception report including a flexible and adaptive methodology plan co-designed with participants.
- International literature and policy review including examples of other jurisdictions where nonspeaking people with intellectual disabilities are included in participatory processes.

- Mid-project progress summary, including participant feedback on the process.
  - Final research report with:
    - Executive summary
    - Plain English and Easy Read and video version
    - Rights-based analysis
    - Practical guide and sector-specific recommendations for:
      - Government departments (Health, Education, DCEDIY)
      - Legal and healthcare professionals
      - Educators
      - Transport, recreation, and housing stakeholders
  - Presentation of findings to Inclusion Ireland and relevant stakeholder audiences.
- 

## 5. Timeline

The research is expected to begin in **February 2026** and conclude within **6 months**, with flexibility to ensure meaningful and ethical engagement with all participants. Milestones will be confirmed during the contracting phase.

---

## 6. Budget

A maximum budget of **20,000** is available for this project, inclusive of VAT and all costs (including travel, communication supports, accessible materials, etc.).

---

## 7. Expertise Required

Applicants should demonstrate:

- Proven experience in inclusive, participatory research methodologies, especially with nonspeaking or marginalised populations.
- Strong understanding of disability rights, communication diversity, and trauma-informed research practice.
- Experience working one-to-one with nonspeaking individuals using customised communication supports.
- A commitment to co-design and deep listening.

- A strong track record of producing research that informs policy and practice.
- 

## 8. Submission Requirements

Interested applicants must submit:

- A detailed proposal (max 10 pages) including:
  - Proposed approach and methodology
  - Strategies for participant engagement and safety
  - Ethical considerations and safeguarding plans
  - Project timeline
  - Budget breakdown
- CVs of all team members involved.
- Two examples of relevant previous work.
- Two references.

Submissions should be sent by 18/1/26 to **info@inclusionireland.ie** with the subject line: *Tender Submission – Access to justice and participation research*

---

## 9. Evaluation Criteria

Proposals will be evaluated based on:

- Methodological inclusivity and co-design approach
  - Relevance of experience and understanding of nonspeaking communities
  - Ethical depth and trauma-informed practice
  - Value for money
  - Overall alignment with Inclusion Ireland's vision and values
- 

## 10. Contact for Queries

For questions or clarifications, please contact **Derval McDonagh** before **19/12/25** at **derval@inclusionireland.ie**



**Inclusion Ireland**

The National Association for People  
with an Intellectual Disability.