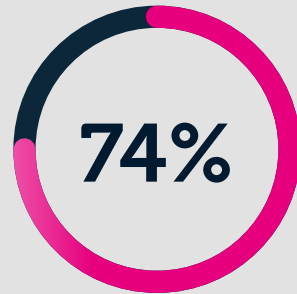


45%

face barriers
in education



want a
complete
reformation
of education

27%

suffer restraint
at school

35%

experience
seclusion at
school

68%

find school
rules hard

54%

of adults with an
intellectual disability
had a hard time or an
ok time at school

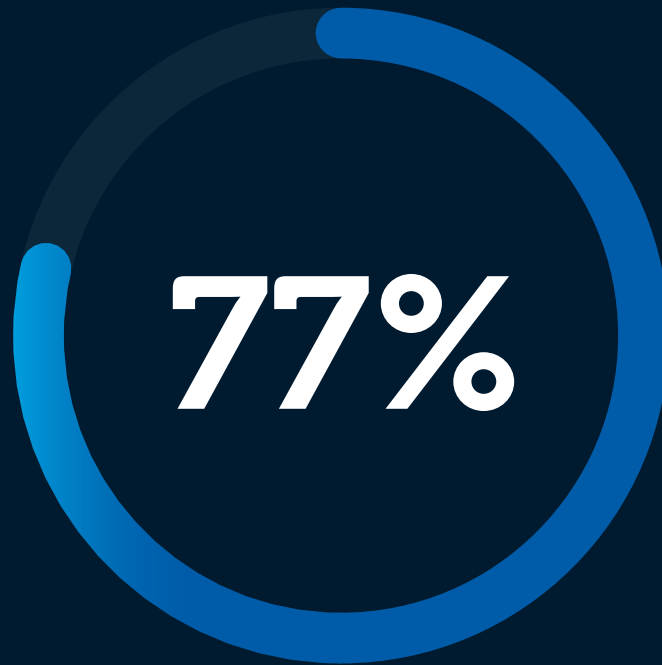
54%

believe schools
don't have the
resources

56%

are punished
for not
following a rule

Make children
with intellectual disabilities
matter



77% of families told us last year's Budget delivered no difference - we need our political leaders to stand up for inclusion and stand up for children, making Budget 2025 an inclusive education budget!

Our Vision

We are working relentlessly towards a time when all children get the support they need to go to their local school with their brothers, sisters and friends.

We want children with intellectual disabilities to leave school feeling accepted, included and with hope for their future like every other child in this state.

We will not rest until our schools, our society, our policy makers recognise the value of inclusion and belonging for all our children.

We will continue to show that diversity in our schools is a strength that needs investment, not a problem to be fixed.

We know you share this vision with us, and we invite you to commit to making children with intellectual disabilities matter in Budget 2025.

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CEO Address

Derval McDonagh

Welcome to Inclusion Ireland's pre-budget 2025 submission. As the national advocacy organisation supporting people with an intellectual disability, we want to take this opportunity to highlight to legislators and decision makers the real lived experience of people across the country as we work together towards a more inclusive Ireland.



We consulted with 860 people as we prepared our Budget submission. We heard from people with an intellectual disability and their family members about the issues facing them and the solutions available to Government to make a fairer and more equal society.

This year at Inclusion Ireland, we have focused our efforts primarily on building a better education system for all children, hence why we have given this pre-budget submission the title "Make Children with Intellectual Disabilities Matter". We fully believe that inclusive communities have their roots in inclusive education and our efforts as a society have got to start there. We work relentlessly for a time when all children get to go to their local school with their siblings and peers, with the support they need to thrive and flourish. Moreover, the UN Committee on Economic, Social and Cultural Rights which released its Concluding Observations about Ireland in 2024 recommended prioritising "inclusive education in... mainstream schools for all children with disabilities".

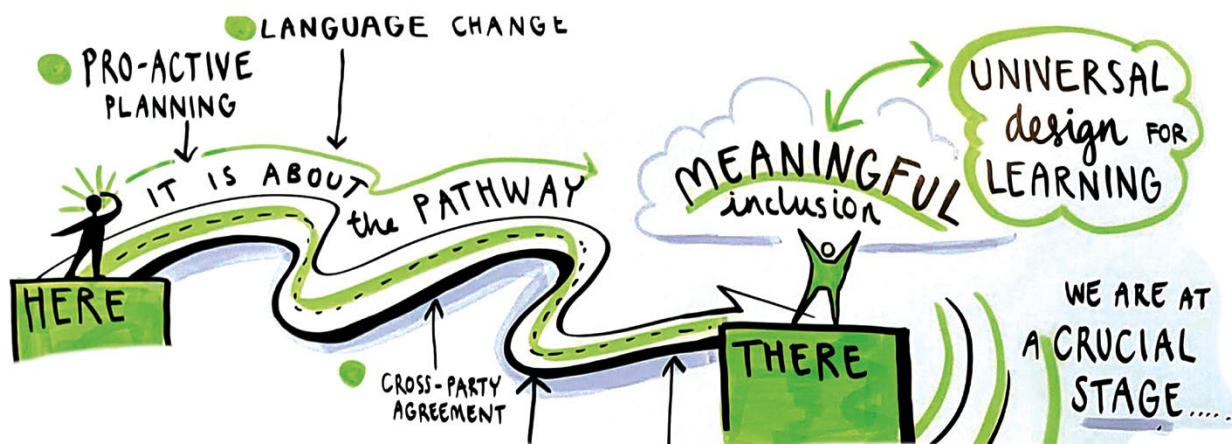
Investing in inclusion in the early years is not just the right thing for Government to do but can also help alleviate some of the barriers people with an intellectual disability tell us they face later on in life; low employment rates, living in poverty, limited independent living options.

With 77% of families telling us that last year's Budget delivered no difference to the barriers experienced by children at school, it's really important that Budget 2025 makes children with an intellectual disability matter. Investing in children has never been more important. We need to take a strategic approach in looking at our long-term vision. Are we committed to building communities where everyone belongs, is valued and accepted? Are we committed to disabled people having the same rights and expectations as non-disabled people?

The surest way to build better communities is to build better school experiences for children. This is why our call-to-action is to ask our representatives to focus on inclusive education in Budget 2025 and begin to build a better Ireland for people with intellectual disabilities and their families.



Derval McDonagh
CEO, Inclusion Ireland

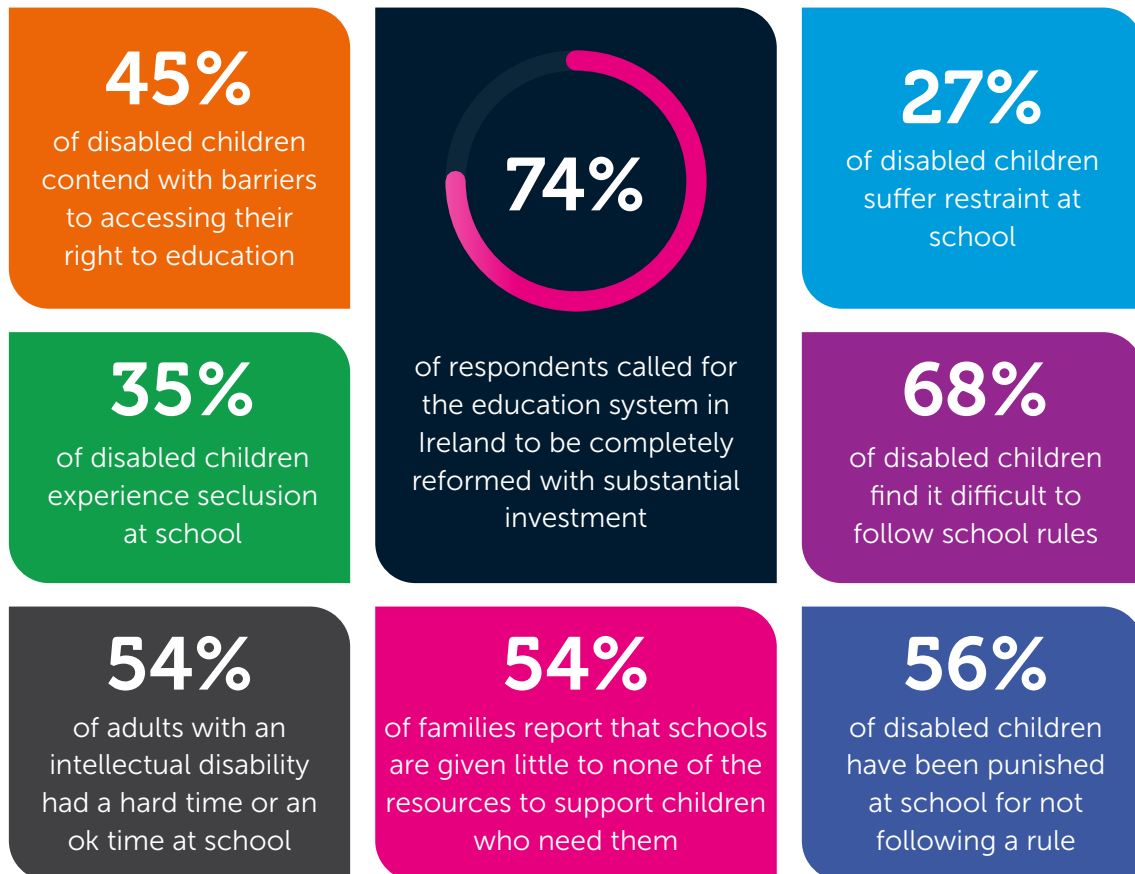


The real story of children in school: facts from our surveys

What is going on in schools at the moment?

This year Inclusion Ireland carried out multiple surveys, listening to children and their families, so that we could fully tell the story of children's experience in school. The results were stark and paint a picture of children struggling in our schools to get the support they need, with families fighting to get access to what should be basic rights for their child. We know that T.D.s and Senators hear these stories every day too - it is beyond time to address them meaningfully in Budget 2025.

Ultimately, we all want our children to leave school feeling good about themselves, confident, unique, and ready to achieve their dreams and potential. An inclusive education will give them that chance, but only if the right resources in the right places are allocated and a whole of Government, collaborative approach is taken. This approach must involve children as the most important stakeholder.



Quotes from families

My daughter... was lifted by her arms and legs by the teacher and SNA into a sensory room and told she wasn't allowed leave. She was bruised from this.

My son was restrained and secluded on numerous occasions in primary school, by teachers, SNA's and sports coach's. A teacher physically removed his hands from his ears twice when overstimulated with noise.

My child is struggling socially and "emotionally" and "feeling left out".

Useful resources on inclusive education



You can read the report on our website by clicking here



You can read the report on the NCSE website by clicking here

What are children and families saying needs to change?

Training school professionals in disability and difference.

Therapists in schools.

More Special Needs Assistants.

More Special Educational Teacher support.

Everything a special school delivers made available in mainstream.

Better post-school options.

Listening to children and their families, what are our key asks for Budget 2025?

It is clear that some of the biggest barriers children face are societal and cultural. Each progressive budget should take another step further on the road to more inclusion for children. We need our political leaders to stand up for inclusion and stand up for children, making Budget 2025 an inclusive education budget.

- 1. Allocate a specific budget to develop a six-year (a primary or secondary school life) inclusive education strategic plan which is Government led, has cross Government support, and with the voices of disabled children, disabled persons organisations and advocacy organisations at the centre.**

The Government has chosen to do this recently with other initiatives such as the Autism strategy. Investing in a strategic plan now will mean that we can move away from reactive, short-term decision making and plan for a more inclusive society.

The Strategic plan should focus on committing to:

- Better planning for school places.
- Better training for teachers at undergraduate and postgraduate level, and for experienced teachers.
- Reviewing the current model of education for disabled children and making recommendations for future development.
- Developing a model for disaggregated data on the experience of disabled children in school - currently there is no data available on outcomes for children.
- Realising the vision in the NCSE Inclusive Education Paper, published in 2024.

2. Budget 2025: invest resources towards the development of an inclusive model of education.

- Invest in rights and relationship-based teacher training, on prevention of seclusion and restraint and supporting children to thrive and flourish in school.
- Reduce class sizes in line with the EU average. A reduction did not happen in Budget 2024 and needs to be a priority for Budget 2025.
- Increase Special Needs Assistant's and Special Education Teachers in local schools.
- Significantly invest in the further roll out of the National Council for Special Education in-school pilot of therapeutic supports for disabled children (School Inclusion Model).
- Invest in more inclusive, accessible school buildings and spaces. All new buildings should be designed with every child's access requirement in mind.

3. Invest in specialist supports for children who are falling through the cracks. Develop CAMHS - intellectual disability teams to support children's mental health and well-being before crisis point.

Despite our repeated calls over the past years, European and national indicators show that poverty for disabled people and their families is increasing, access to essential services is deteriorating, the housing crisis remains, and the cost of disability has not been properly addressed. 64% of people with an intellectual disability said last year's Budget measures didn't help or only helped a little.

Budget 2025 provides an opportunity to invest more in people's lives.

For people with an intellectual disability, and for their family members their three top priorities for Budget 2025 are:

- Better housing and support to live independently
- More money and income supports
- More employment opportunities

Quotes from people with a disability relating to employment

**I have done loads of courses but can't get a job.
It's even hard to get work experience.**

**If I get a pay rise I lose a lot of important benefits,
travel and medical expenses can cost a lot.**

**Sometimes when you say you have a
disability there is no further engagement.**

More Employment Opportunities

Ireland has the one of the lowest rates¹ of employment for disabled people (32.6%) and it gets even lower for people with intellectual disabilities (17%). In comparison, the employment rate for those aged 15- 64 was 72.8% in Q1 2022. At the European level according to Eurostat, Ireland has the lowest rate of employment for disabled people. Our community highlighted multiple barriers to employment; financial, negative societal attitudes, environmental barriers, the education system and lack of opportunity. A substantial number of people are also still afraid to lose their benefits when taking up employment.

Budget 2025 Employment asks

- Invest further in the Ability programme; increase the numbers of job coaches available to people with intellectual disabilities.
- Reduce the minimum hours required to qualify for the Wage Subsidy Scheme from 15 to five hours, and from six months contract to shorter term contracts.
- Introduce a transition period of three to six months for new disabled workers to keep their full disability payments after entering employment.



You can read the Census 2016 results by clicking here.



You can read the full European disability forum report clicking here.



¹ Census 2016 Reports, Central Statistics Office, available by [clicking here](#). Also European Disability Forum report 2023, page 31 can be read [here](#).

More money and income supports

The recent Survey on Income and Living conditions (SILC)² highlights that disabled people³ still experience the highest level of poverty in Ireland. According to the SILC the 'at-risk of poverty' threshold is €16,558. Disability allowance is significantly lower than this. People with an intellectual disability and their families urgently want this to be addressed. They also want a permanent, weekly payment which addresses the real cost of disability as set out in the Indecon report 2021.

Budget 2025 Income Support asks:

- Establish a permanent cost of disability payment of €50 per week for disabled people.
- So people are not living in poverty we need to increase the rate of the disability allowance by €86 per week to match the poverty threshold of €318.



You can read the Survey on
Income and Living conditions
(SILC) by clicking [here](#).



² CSO statistical publication, 22 February 2023 - [click here](#).

³ Disabled people are under the SILC category "unable to work due to long-standing health problems."

Better housing and support to live independently

Nearly 3,500 people (HIQA Annual report 2022, Wasted Lives report) are living in congregated settings or nursing homes. Thousands are living with families. This is why housing is the top priority every year for adults with intellectual disabilities and their families. Last year we found that only a third of people who wanted to move house were on a housing waiting list; reflective of the lack of support for people to live self-determined lives. Meanwhile there has been a dramatic decline in the provision of supported housing for disabled people (Irish Council for Social Housing report 2024).

Budget 2025 Housing asks:

- Fully resource the Action Plan for Disability Services 2024-2026.
- Support a minimum of 300 people to move out of their family home into a home of their own.
- Support a minimum of 200 people to move out of institutional/congregated settings.
- Support at least 100 people to move out of nursing homes.
- Complete the evaluation of the pilot project on personalised budgets, and secure funding to ensure permanent access to it for disabled people. Increase the numbers of people availing of personalised budgets.
- Increase the number of personal assistance hours, home support, home care.
- Ringfence a portion of the social housing budget for people with an intellectual disability and provide disaggregated data on our progress by each local authority.

Quotes from people with a disability relating to housing

I move out Christmas. Into a lovely house. I was living in a big place with lots of others before. For years. Everyone should live in a nice home instead of a hospital.

Literally anything, there is no supports in my area at all... I haven't gotten any support since I left school last June and I'm struggling A LOT.



RTE Report - Nearly 1,300 under 65s in nursing homes due to lack of services - [to read click here](#).



Unit C2, The Steelworks, Foley Street, Dublin 1, DO1 HV25
+353 1 855 9891
info@inclusionireland.ie

InclusionIreland.ie