

Submissions for Statement of Strategy 2024 – 2026

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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.

We work towards the full inclusion of people with intellectual disabilities by supporting people to have their voices heard and advocating for rights under the United Nations Convention on the Rights of People with Disabilities (UNCRPD).

The vision of Inclusion Ireland is that of people with an intellectual disability living and participating in the community with equal rights as citizens, to live the life of their choice to their fullest potential. Inclusion Ireland's work is underpinned by the values of Respect, Inclusion, Equality, Voice and Choice.

Key messages

- Ireland under article 19 of the UN Convention on the Rights of Persons with Disabilities (UNCRPD) has a duty to provide housing and support to enable people to live and participate in the community.
- Nearly 3,500 people (HIQA Annual report 2022, Wasted Lives report) are still living in congregated settings or inadequately in nursing homes while they are under 65. Thousands are living with families waiting for protracted periods of time for social housing.
- HIQA Annual report 2023 released last month showed a significant drop in the number of people moved from congregated settings to the community from 140 in 2022 to just 23 in 2023.
- There has been a dramatic decline in the provision of supported housing for disabled people according to the Irish Council for Social Housing.
- There is a general concern about the lack of concrete progress regarding the implementation of the National Housing Strategy for Disabled People 2022-2027.

International obligations

The UN Convention on the Rights of Persons with Disabilities (UNCRPD) in its article 19 states that State Parties shall take effective and appropriate measures to facilitate full enjoyment by persons with disabilities of the right to live in the community, with choices equal to others and their full inclusion and participation in the community.

This article highlights that States need to ensure that “Persons with disabilities have access to a range of in-home, residential and other community support services, including personal assistance necessary to support living and inclusion in the community, and to prevent isolation or segregation from the community;”. Additionally, article 19 strongly emphasises the importance of people having the opportunity to choose where and with whom they live and not being obliged to live in a particular living arrangement.

Concerns

Current situation: between inadequate housing and lack of suitable options

Despite our international obligations as well as commitment under the Time to move on from Congregated Settings which set the initial goal to support everyone out of institutions by 2018, 2256 people were still living in congregated setting at the end of 2023 (HIQA Annual report 2023) as well as 1200 people under 65 living in nursing homes.

Thousands of people are living with families and amongst them 1,965 people live with primary carers over the age of 70 (471 of these are over the age of 80).¹

In our Budget survey last year, only about a third of people who said they wanted to move house were actually on a housing waiting list. Nearly half of those on the housing list had been on it for more than 5 years including nearly 20% of people who are waiting over 10 years.²

Lack of significant investment to address housing and support needs

The Disability Capacity Review released in 2021 highlighted the substantial investments needed to both meet the current unmet needs in terms of services and personal assistance as well as the demographic changes. However, no Budget announcement since the release of this report showed a real commitment to follow its recommendations.

To compound this, the process of moving people from “congregated” settings has even slowed down. According to the 2023 HIQA Annual report released last

¹ Fedvol, pre-budget submission 2024

² See Inclusion Ireland Budget 2024 [Inclusion Ireland's Budget Submission 2024](#)

month, there was a sharp decrease in the number of people supported to move from congregated/ institutional settings; from 140 people in 2022 to just 23 people in 2023.

It has been noted that the delivery of supported housing for disabled people and older people considerably reduced over the last number of years. In this regard, the Irish Council for Social Housing³ report 2024 highlighted that in the past, 50 per cent of delivery from housing associations was allocated to supported housing and 50 per cent to “general needs”. Today, it is about 80:20 in favour of general housing. There is an urgent need to rebalance that ratio.⁴

Difficulties in the implementation of the relevant strategies

The National Housing Strategy for Disabled People 2022-2027 was promising and developed in close collaboration with civil society. As a result of a genuinely inclusive consultation, it inspired hope for many organisations working for and with disabled people. However, two years later, many of these aspirations and hopes haven’t been fulfilled due to a number of factors.

Firstly, the release of the implementation plan was delayed by more than a year, which significantly impacted on many of the ambitious goals initially set and left many organisations and individuals frustrated. It gave many disabled people the impression that housing was not a priority for the Government.

Secondly, the implementation plan contains 27 Outcomes with 107 Actions. A number of the actions are shared by a number of stakeholders. This complex structure makes it really hard to have a sense of the progress made due to the difficulty to gather clear data in a comprehensive report. The current difficulties to put together the first annual report on the implementation plan highlight this obstacle. This complexity to represent progress is in sharp contrast with simpler and straightforward indicators mentioned above that indicate a regression in access to housing for disabled people.

Thirdly and finally, the implementation plan is relying on the local authorities and their Housing Disability Steering Groups for its success but too many are dysfunctional, not using the same standards, not meeting on a regular basis (sometimes not meeting at all). Moreover, local authorities often lack resources to support disabled people to participate in the Housing Disability Steering group, so the onus is on Disabled People Organisations (DPOs) and service providers to make it happen.

³ Irish Council for Social Housing report 2024

⁴ The Irish Times, 24th of April 2024, [Elderly and people with disabilities at risk of becoming social housing ‘underclass’ – The Irish Times](#)

Recommendations

- Emphasise the UNCRPD in the next Statement of Strategy as well as Ireland's obligations under it.
- Make the percentage of social housing delivered explicitly for disabled people an indicator in the new Statement of Strategy 2024-2026 under key Objective 2. Ensure the publication of disaggregated data for housing delivered to each group of disabled people.
- 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.
- Emphasise the importance of joined up thinking across health, social care and housing. Develop a one stop shop structure so that people can apply for housing and the necessary health and social care supports to live in that house at the same time. Without this mechanism, people with intellectual disabilities will continue to fall through the cracks.
- Keep tracking the increased delivery of Housing Adaptation Grants for disabled people and older people under key Objective 9 of the Statement.
- Add the following mentions under the part on Public Sector Human Rights and Equality Duty
 - Staff from the Department at national and local level should be trained on the UNCRPD and the Assisted Decision-Making Act, so they can communicate in an adequate, respectful and understandable manner with disabled people. (1st point on accessibility and reasonable accommodation).
 - Fund adequately local authorities to have accessibility officer/ disability coordinator throughout all the counties so they can access housing services and participate in groups such as the Housing Disability Steering Groups.

Conclusions

While many ambitions have been set to address the housing crisis faced by disabled people, amongst many others, the progress is not materialising. We need the next Statement to commit to ensure that progress is made in key areas for disabled people, including people with an intellectual disability who we represent. Additional and specific indicators are needed to measure clearly the progress made in housing delivery for disabled people. The Statement should clearly highlight the important of Ireland's commitment to the UNCRPD.

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