



Inclusion Ireland

The National Association for People
with an Intellectual Disability.

1,000 Voices

One Message:
Invest in Our Rights in 2026

Inclusion Ireland
Pre-Budget Submission 2026



A note from our CEO

Welcome to our pre-budget submission for Budget 2026.

We are pleased to put forward the concerns of our members and supporters, gathered from over 1,000 voices across Ireland.

The "1,000 Voices" theme was born from three comprehensive surveys conducted by Inclusion Ireland in June 2025. These surveys gathered direct input from families and supporters of children with intellectual disabilities, families and supporters of adults with intellectual disabilities, and adults with intellectual disabilities themselves. By collecting feedback from hundreds of individuals across these groups, we aimed to create a powerful and undeniable evidence base rooted in the lived experiences of the community we represent.

The message is clear; people with intellectual disabilities and their families have been ignored for too long. It's time to listen and it's time for change.

Our community are not concerned with short term fixes, we want long-term thinking and ambition from our leaders across education, health, housing and the cost of disability. Children and their families want meaningful support in the early years. Adults with disabilities want the same rights as every other citizen; to live a dignified life as part of the community.

Our vision is an inclusive Ireland where people with an intellectual disability are supported to live and participate as an equal member within the community. The only way to truly value our community and to address the very real human rights issues facing people in every country in Ireland is to listen to these 1,000 voices.

They are looking for hope, for recognition and for real and meaningful support from Government in Budget 2026.

Derval McDonagh
CEO, Inclusion Ireland

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Abbreviations and Acronyms Explained

AON – Assessment of Need

CDNT – Children’s Disability Network Teams

CRA – Children’s Rights Alliance

CSO – Central Statistics Office

DCDE – Department of Children, Disability, and Equality

DPO – Disabled Persons’ Organisation

EPSEN – Education for Persons with Special Educational Needs

ERSI – Economic and Social Research Institute

HSE – Health Service Executive

IHREC – Irish Human Rights and Equality Commission

KPI – Key Performance Indicator

MESL – Minimum Essential Standard of Living

NAS – National Advocacy Service

NCSE – National Council for Special Education

NDA – National Disability Authority

UNCRPD – United Nations Convention on the Rights of Persons with Disabilities

Introduction

Inclusion Ireland conducted a series of national surveys in June 2025 to inform our Pre-Budget Submission for Budget 2026. These surveys captured the lived experiences of people with intellectual disabilities and their families, highlighting persistent barriers to accessing essential services, supports, and entitlements.

Three separate surveys were developed: one for adults with intellectual disabilities, one for their family members and supporters, and one for parents of children under 18. We received over 1,000 responses in total, with participants across Ireland and the largest concentrations in counties Dublin, Cork, and Limerick. Each survey was widely promoted through Inclusion Ireland's networks, partner organisations, and social media.

The findings offer a clear and urgent picture of unmet need – spanning income inadequacy, delays in early intervention, inaccessible housing, and a lack of planning supports across the life course. They highlight significant gaps between lived reality and the State's obligations under the UN Convention on the Rights of Persons with Disabilities. They call for urgent action to deliver on key commitments set out in the Programme for Government, the Action Plan for Disability Services 2024–2026, and the National Housing Strategy for Disabled People 2022–2027.

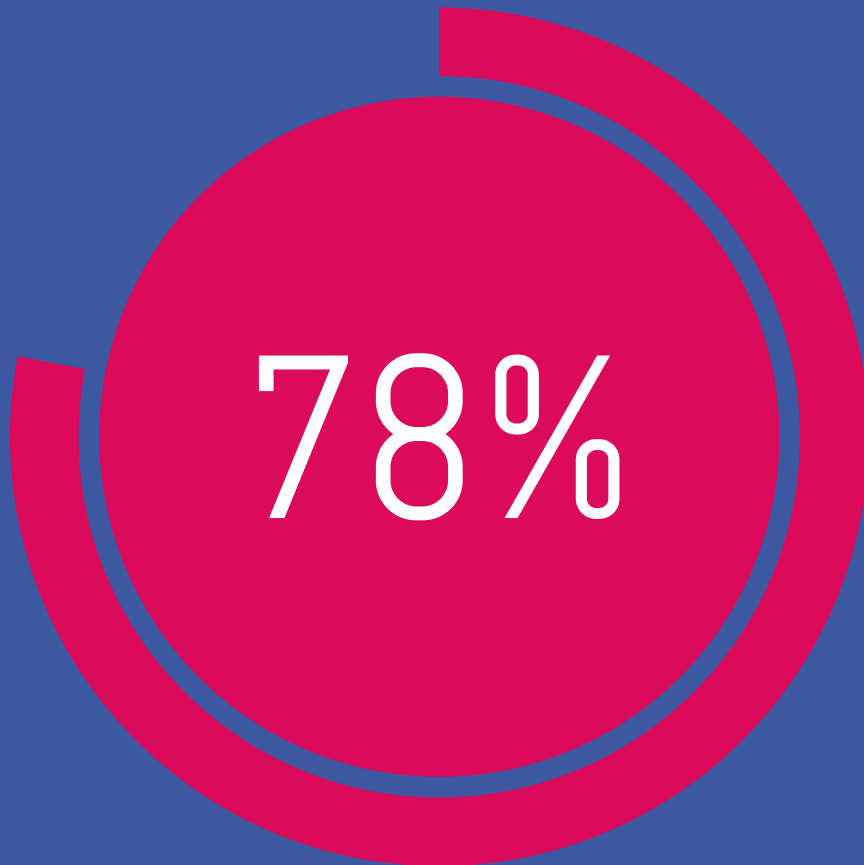
Executive Summary

- **66% of adults with an intellectual disability said their current social welfare supports don't meet their needs** – nearly 80% of families and supporters of both children and adults reported that private spending on therapies, transport, or basic supports had at least a moderate impact on their household budget.
- **53% of adults with an intellectual disability ranked “getting a home of my own” as a top concern** – yet only 10% had both the desire and a plan to move out. 44% wanted to leave the family home but lacked support. More than half found the housing application process “very difficult.”
- **Only 10% of families and supporters had a future housing or support plan in place** – 43% lacked access to the information they needed. Many expressed anxiety about what will happen when older carers are no longer able to provide support.
- **One in four families said their child received no early intervention** – long waiting lists and delays in access to therapies are commonplace, with support often dependent on diagnosis or crisis.
- **40% of families and supporters had never heard of personalised budgets** – this lack of visibility limits access to flexible, person-led support models that could promote greater autonomy and inclusion.



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of people don't believe that the
Government listens to their voices
in decisions made about the Budget



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Children and Families

Children's Disability Network Teams: Access and Delivery

Families expressed urgent concern about delays and inconsistencies in the provision of therapeutic supports through CDNTs. When asked what their top priority was regarding their child's support, 75% of respondents identified access to therapies such as speech and language or occupational therapy. A further 24% prioritised both therapies and access to an AON, while only 1% selected access to AON alone – indicating that access to frontline, practical support is overwhelmingly the most pressing concern. This may reflect that some families had already completed the AON process but are still left waiting indefinitely for follow-up services, highlighting persistent failures to translate assessments into meaningful intervention. Families do not want assessments for assessment's sake – they want timely, practical support that improves their child's daily life.



While statutory entitlements like AON remain a crucial gateway to support, these findings suggest that follow-up therapies are where families encounter the most persistent gaps. This may reflect a pattern where many families had already completed the AON process yet continue to face long waits for intervention – pointing to institutional gaps in follow-through. This aligns with concerns raised in our submission to the DCDE's Statement of Strategy 2025–2027¹ and echoes issues currently under review in the CDNT model evaluation process². While nearly a third (32%) of responses came from Dublin-based families, the challenges described – lengthy delays, communication breakdowns, and inconsistent follow-up – were widespread, cutting across both urban and rural areas.

¹ Inclusion Ireland (16th May 2025). Inclusion Ireland's Submission to the Department of Children, Disability, and Equality's Statement of Strategy 2025–2027 public consultation, pg.2

² National Disability Authority (February 2025). Review of the Children's Disability Network Teams Service Model – Overview, pgs.8–9, <https://nda.ie/transforming-disability-services/progressing-disability-services-for-children>

Without timely, multidisciplinary input, the educational development and inclusion of children with intellectual disabilities is jeopardised. Article 26 of the UNCRPD affirms the rights to supports that enable children to attain and maintain independence³. Realising this right requires robust investment in CDNT staffing, as well as a clear transformation in how teams are resourced, organised, and held accountable for delivery. Budget 2026 is a vital opportunity to begin that shift.

Practical and Accessible Information

Beyond access to therapies, families emphasised the need for clear, practical information to support their child's development. In the absence of timely and tailored guidance, respondents described significant uncertainty in understanding their child's needs and navigating everyday challenges.

Families reported significant gaps in access to the practical information needed to support their child's development at home. More than half of respondents (56%) said they did not have access to information in any of the areas listed, including communication (26%), fine motor skills (17%), sensory needs (20%), physical needs (21%), wellbeing (15%), and strengths-based development (16%). When asked what good support would look like, many families identified the need for clear, practical, and consistent information that could guide them in navigating their child's needs, especially in the absence of formal therapies or timely professional input.

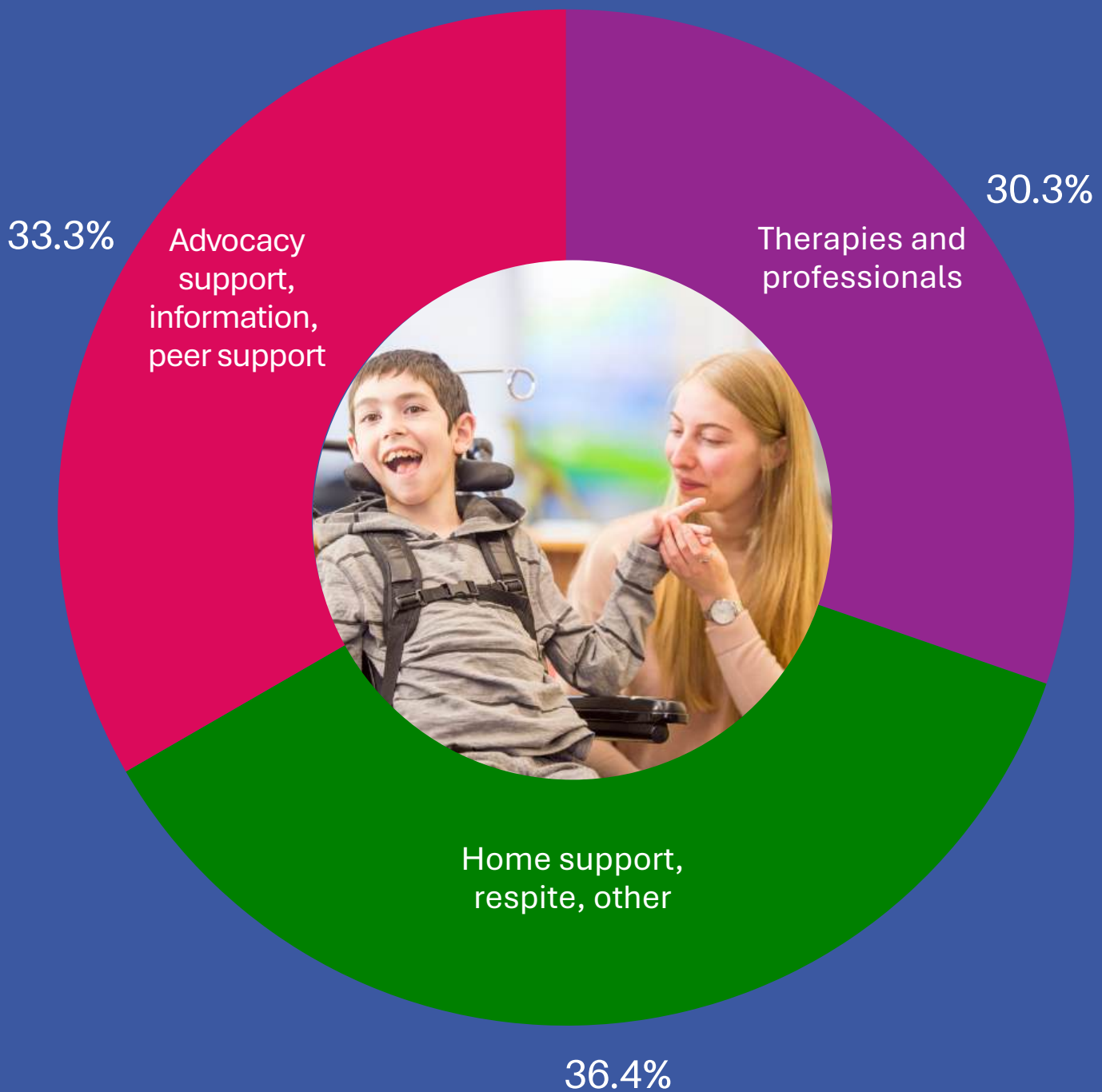
As one parent put it:

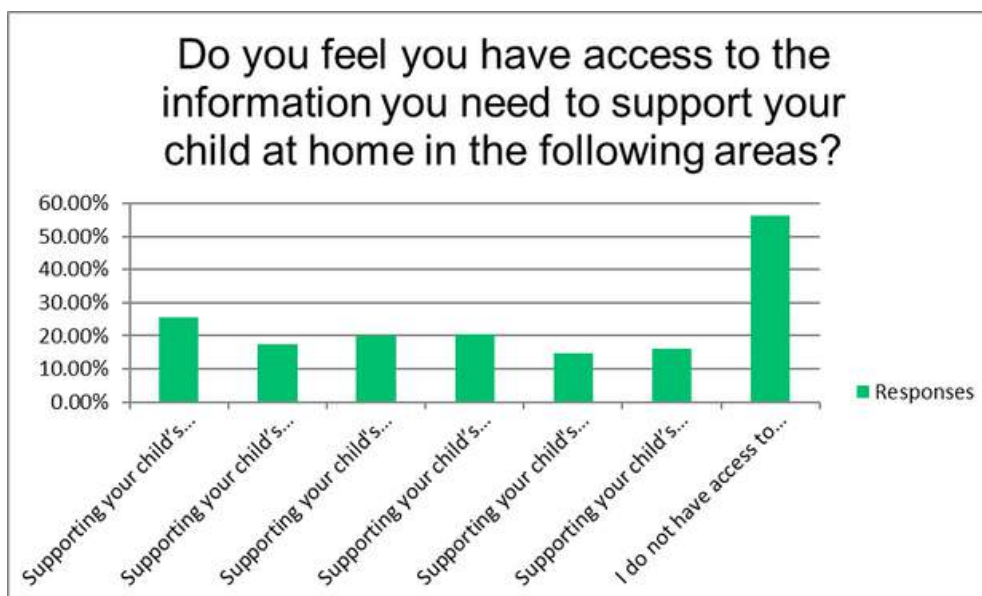
“The access to information I have is through social media. But as it is mostly generic information available it's hard to know how to help my son in particular ways and situations. It's constant guesswork. And without the help and guidance of a professional or someone with more experience it can be very difficult.”

³ United Nations (13th December 2006). Convention on the Rights of Persons with Disabilities, Article 26 – Habilitation and rehabilitation, <https://www.un.org/development/desa/disabilities/convention-on-the-rights-of-persons-with-disabilities/article-26-habilitation-and-rehabilitation.html>



What would good support look like for your child?





These findings point to a disconnect between the vision of coordinated, family-centred support set out in government policy and the reality experienced by families. The Programme for Government commits to providing accessible information for families of children with additional needs – including simplifying application processes, improving transitions between educational stages, and offering guidance on health and social supports⁴. Similarly, the HSE's Roadmap for Service Improvement 2023–2026 emphasises enhancing communication with families and embedding family-centred practices in the Progressing Disability Services programme⁵. Yet the data we have gathered suggests these commitments have yet to translate into meaningful improvements on the ground. In the absence of reliable public information, many parents resorted to informal sources – a pattern that underscores distrust in the responsiveness of State services.

Our findings also highlight a broader gap: children with intellectual disabilities lack access to independent advocacy when navigating fragmented services. Research we commissioned from the University of Galway found no statutory mechanism guaranteeing representative advocacy for disabled children⁶, leaving families without a clear route to raise concerns or influence care decisions. Establishing a national advocacy service would help address this gap and restore trust, while giving effect to children's rights under Article 12 of the UNCRPD⁷.

⁴ Department of the Taoiseach (23rd January 2025). Programme for Government 2025 – Securing Ireland's Future, pgs.62, 66, and 84, <https://assets.gov.ie/static/documents/programme-for-government-securing-irelands-future.pdf>

⁵ Children's Disability Network Team (24th October 2023). Roadmap for Service Improvement 2023 – 2026: Disability Services for Children and Young People, pgs.5 and 22–23, <https://www.hse.ie/eng/services/publications/disability/roadmap-for-service-improvement-2023-2026.pdf>

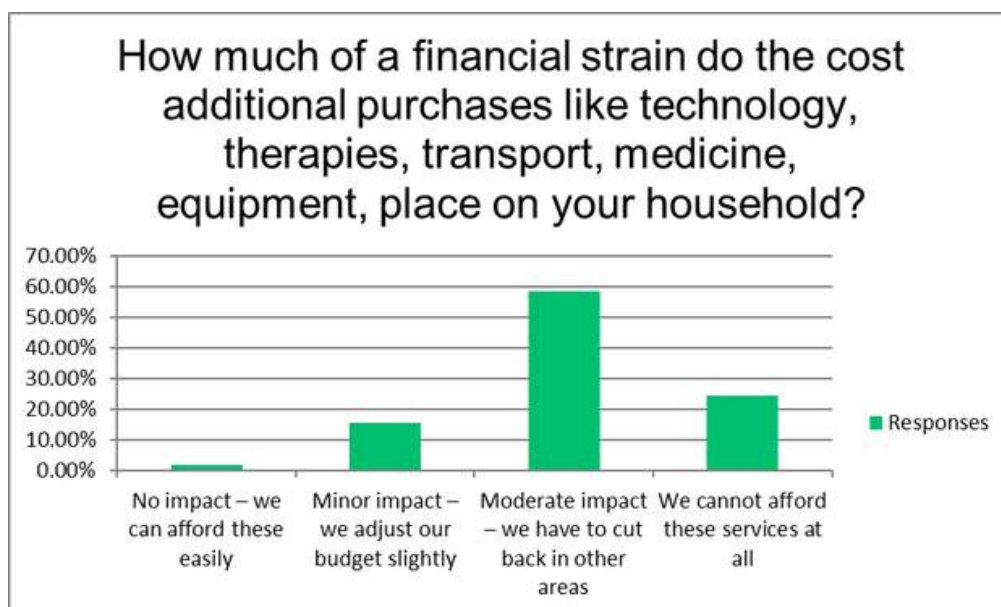
⁶ Burns, E, de Bhailís C, and Flynn, E (26th February 2025). Exploring the Need for a Representative Advocacy Service for Children with Intellectual Disabilities in Ireland, pg.1, <https://inclusionireland.ie/news-events/inclusion-ireland-calls-for-task-force-to-establish-advocacy-service-for-children-with-intellectual-disabilities/>

⁷ United Nations (13th December 2006). Convention on the Rights of Persons with Disabilities, Article 12 – Equal recognition before the law, <https://www.un.org/development/desa/disabilities/convention-on-the-rights-of-persons-with-disabilities/article-12-equal-recognition-before-the-law.html>

Addressing these glaring gaps in public information and access to advocacy must be a core priority for Budget 2026. Strengthening access to timely, tailored information – alongside early intervention and therapies – would not only empower families, but reinforce national policy goals by embedding practical, rights-based support at the point of need.

Cost and Access: Private Therapies and Inequity

Families reported that meeting their child’s needs placed sustained and often unsustainable pressure on household budgets. When asked about the financial impact of additional supports (such as transport, therapies, and assistive equipment), less than 2% reported no financial strain – whereas 59% said they had to cut back in other areas and nearly a quarter (24%) said they could not afford to pay for any services at all. These findings echo recent national research, including the Government-commissioned Cost of Disability report, which found that households with disabled children can face additional costs exceeding €14,000 annually⁸.



One parent captured the cumulative toll:

“I’m a single parent working full-time just to afford private therapies, consultants, and childcare . . . even if I can find someone who’ll take [my son] . . . There’s no support during school holidays . . . I am broken.”

⁸ Indecon International Research Economists (7th December 2021), The Cost of Disability in Ireland – Final Report, pg.75, <https://www.gov.ie/en/department-of-social-protection/publications/the-cost-of-disability-in-ireland-research-report/>

This aligns with Inclusion Ireland’s analysis of the Vincentian MESL data⁹, which showed families with disabled children falling significantly below adequacy thresholds¹⁰. A recent IHREC-ERSI report also identified elevated rates of material deprivation among households supporting children with additional needs¹¹. Research from the CRA further highlights that disabled children are overrepresented on public health waiting lists, and that their families face a heightened risk of consistent poverty where statutory services and supports fail to meet need¹².

The data reflects a deeper systemic issue: disabled children’s families are absorbing the financial burden of service gaps that should be publicly funded. Families who must fund essential supports out-of-pocket report not only financial hardship, but a profound sense of having been abandoned by the very systems meant to support them.

Budget 2026 must prioritise expanding access to early intervention, therapies, and community-based supports to reduce out-of-pocket costs. Social protection must also reflect the real cost of disability, as outlined in the Cost of Disability report. The Programme for Government pledges to progressively increase Domiciliary Care Allowance and Disability Payments¹³, and to establish a Children’s Therapies Grant Fund¹⁴ – yet these remain unrealised for many families. Fulfilling these commitments would alleviate household strain, ensure public investment reaches those most impacted by service deficits, and bring Ireland closer to delivering equitable, needs-led support for children with intellectual disabilities and their families.

“I (like a lot of parents I talk to) feel very under prepared. The support isn’t there, the training isn’t there. It’s as if once you have a child with additional needs people think you . . . have some sort of super power where automatically you know all this stuff - how to be a nurse, doctor, dentist, physio, O.T., etc, and also be a parent. I definitely missed out on that so if anyone has the manual, I’d really appreciate it.”

⁹ Inclusion Ireland (16th May 2025). Inclusion Ireland’s Submission to the Department of Children, Disability, and Equality’s Statement of Strategy 2025–2027 public consultation, pg.2

¹⁰ Thornton, R, Boylan H, and O’Carroll N (18th June 2024). MESL 2024, pg.3, <https://www.budgeting.ie/publications/mesl-2024/>

¹¹ Doorley, K, Kakoulidou, T and Simon, A (13th March 2025). Adjusting Estimates of Poverty for the Cost of Disability, pg.viii, <https://www.esri.ie/news/disabled-households-forced-to-spend-majority-of-disposable-income-on-disability>

¹² Children’s Rights Alliance (9th June 2025). Child Poverty Monitor 2025, pg.109, https://childrensrights.ie/wp-content/uploads/2025/06/ChildPovertyMonitor_2025.pdf

¹³ Department of the Taoiseach (23rd January 2025). Programme for Government 2025 – Securing Ireland’s Future, pg.100

¹⁴ Ibid, pg.45

Conclusion

Early years support lays the foundation for lifelong inclusion, yet families across Ireland continue to face a system characterised by delays, inconsistent provision, and inadequate coordination. Access to timely therapies, practical information, and advocacy are essential to realising a child's right to meaningful participation and development.

The Programme for Government recognises that families with disabled children face significant additional costs and unmet needs, while Article 7 of the UNCRPD affirms the State's obligation to ensure that children with disabilities enjoy all human rights and fundamental freedoms on an equal basis with others¹⁵.

Budget 2026 must begin closing these long-standing gaps – ensuring that families are no longer left to navigate early childhood without the coordinated, accessible supports their children need and deserve.

¹⁵ United Nations (13th December 2006). Convention on the Rights of Persons with Disabilities, Article 7 – Children with disabilities, <https://www.un.org/development/desa/disabilities/convention-on-the-rights-of-persons-with-disabilities/article-7-children-with-disabilities.html>



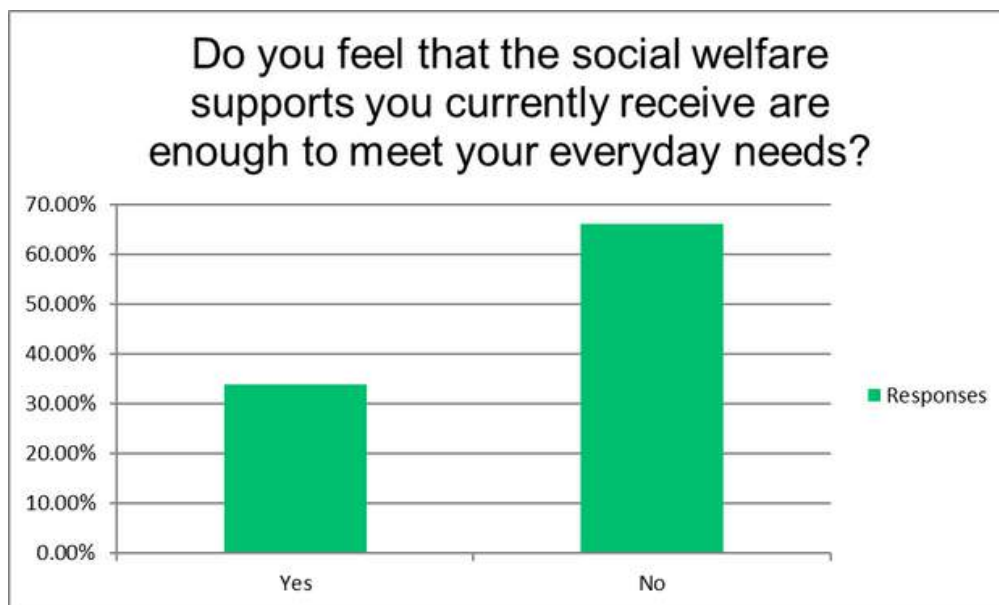
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Adults with an intellectual disability

Access to Financial and Welfare Supports

Adults with intellectual disabilities continue to face persistent financial pressures due to inadequate welfare, high out-of-pocket expenses relating to the cost of disability, and structural disincentives to work –including the risk of losing essential supports when taking up work and the lack of appropriate workplace accommodations. In our survey, two-thirds (66%) said their current social welfare entitlements do not meet their needs – a stark reflection of rising living costs, rigid eligibility rules, and widespread income insecurity.



This lived experience is supported by the Cost of Disability report, which highlights that disabled people face significant additional weekly expenses, ranging from €176 to €279¹⁶. For households where a person has significant support needs, these costs can reach up to 93% of disposable income¹⁷. Yet Disability Allowance remains below the €16,558 income threshold set by the CSO's latest poverty line¹⁸ – leaving people reliant on family or unable to meet basic living costs. This is particularly concerning given that people with intellectual disabilities experience some of the highest unemployment rates of any group of disabled people at 29%¹⁹, compared to Ireland's overall disability employment rate of 33%²⁰.

¹⁶ Indecon International Research Economists (7th December 2021), The Cost of Disability in Ireland – Final Report, pgs.106–107

¹⁷ Doorley, Karina, Kakoulidou, Theano and Simon, Agathe (13th March 2025). Adjusting Estimates of Poverty for the Cost of Disability, pg.16

¹⁸ Central Statistics Office (20th March 2025), 'Impact of Cost-of-Living Measures on Poverty and Income', <https://www.cso.ie/en/releasesandpublications/ep/p-silc/surveyonincomeandlivingconditionssilc2024/impactofcostoflivingmeasuresonpovertyandincome/>

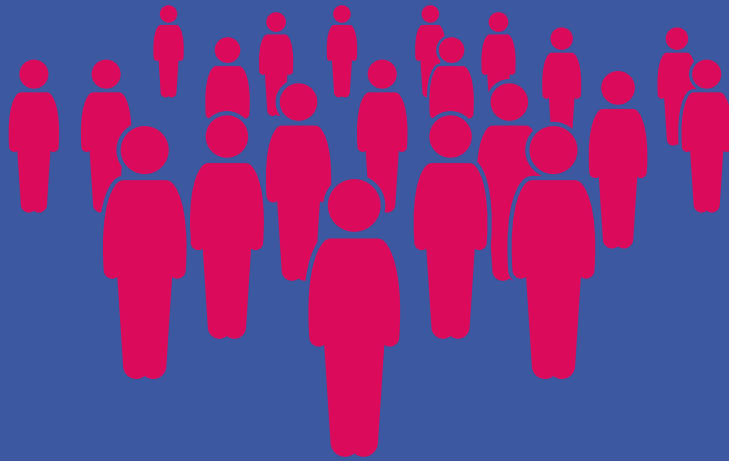
¹⁹ National Disability Authority (November 2024). Briefing Report for NDA Factsheet: Employment and Disability, pg.10, <https://nda.ie/uploads/publications/Factsheet-2024-employment-briefing>

²⁰ European Disability Forum (27th April 2023). Seventh Human Rights Report – The Right to Work: The employment situation of persons with disabilities in Europe, pg.30, https://www.edf-feph.org/content/uploads/2023/05/hr7_2023_press-accessible.pdf



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3 in 5

people said that better housing and support
would improve their lives.

Nearly 80% of surveyed families and supporters reported that private spending on therapies, transport, or basic supports had at least a moderate impact on their household budget. One respondent bluntly summarised their situation:

“As a single parent . . . I may have to give up work but can’t afford to – Carers [Allowance] is not enough to manage on.”

Families and supporters are often forced to fill service gaps at great personal cost. The current system implicitly relies on unpaid family care when formal supports fall short, increasing financial pressure and reducing workforce participation²¹. Adults with intellectual disabilities, meanwhile, continue to face obstacles to financial independence and secure income across the life course. The Programme for Government explicitly recognises the significant daily costs faced by disabled people and their families²², commits to progressively increasing Disability Payments and reforming anomalies in the means test²². These commitments must be honoured in Budget 2026, alongside tangible progress toward index-linking disability payments to the cost of living and addressing unmet need through targeted supports²³.

Budget 2026 must raise core disability payments above the poverty threshold, introduce a minimum €50 Cost of Disability payment, and eliminate means-test anomalies that penalise work – in line with Ireland’s obligations under Articles 19 (Independent Living) and 28 (Social Protection) of the UNCRPD.

²¹ Inclusion Ireland (16th May 2025). Inclusion Ireland Submission to the Department of Children, Disability, and Equality’s Statement of Strategy 2025 – 2027 public consultation, pg.5

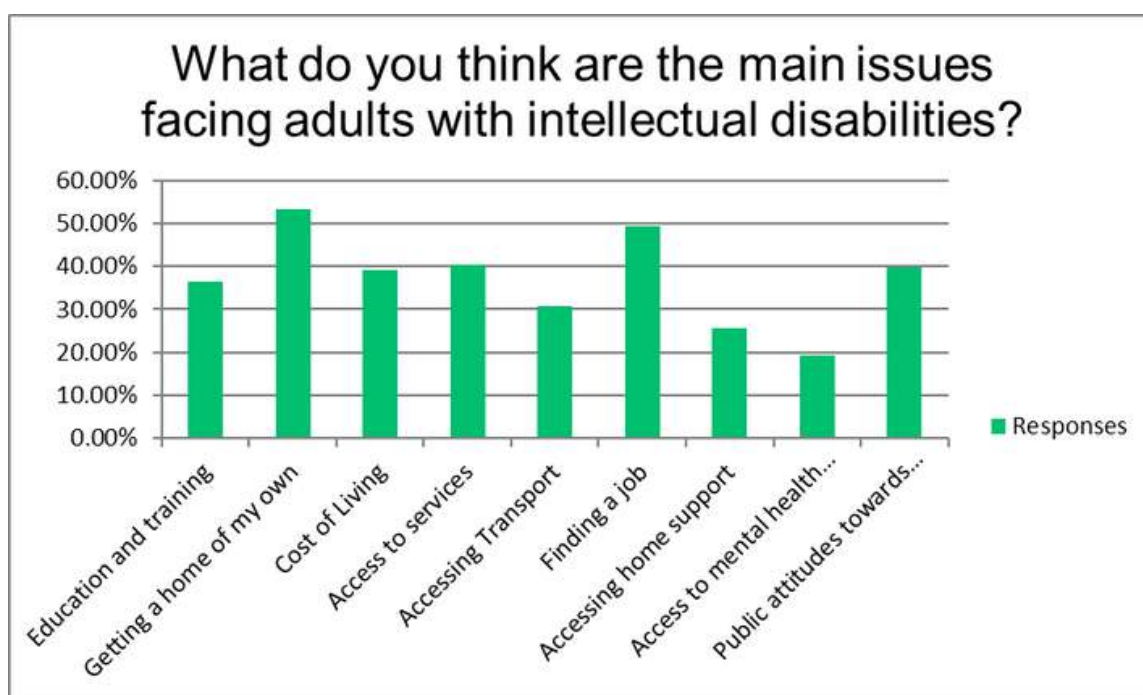
²² Department of the Taoiseach (23rd January 2025). Programme for Government 2025 – Securing Ireland’s Future, pg.100

²³ Disability Federation of Ireland (16th July 2024). No time to delay – Disability Rights in Budget 2025: Pre-Budget Submission 2025, pg.10, <https://www.disability-federation.ie/publications/dfi-pre-budget-submission-2025/>

Housing, Independence, and Community Living

Independent living is not about living alone or living without support. It is about having the freedom and support to make choices, and live life on your own terms. For adults with intellectual disabilities and their families, however, that right remains far from fully realised. In our national survey, over half (53%) of adults with an intellectual disability identified “getting a home of my own” as a top concern – more than the cost of living or access to services. For many, the pathway to independent living is unclear, delayed, or simply unavailable. One respondent shared a major concern of theirs was to:

***“Help me find a home and how to organise the housing list .
.. what happens to me when my mum dies[?] . . . she did
not put me on the housing list until I was 30!”***



Families and supporters echoed these anxieties. When asked what good support looks like, ‘support to leave the family home’ ranked highest across all categories. Yet only 10% said their relative had both the desire and a viable plan to move out. 44% wanted to move but lacked the support to do so, and over half (51%) of those who had applied for housing described the process as ‘very difficult.’ As one respondent put it, “*Getting a home [for the person I support] was relatively easy, accessing supports is very difficult.*”

But bricks and mortar alone are not enough. Independent living requires a foundation of support that is person-centred, consistent, and empowering. Respondents from both surveys described being denied home care hours or personal assistance or struggling to fund vital adaptations. Others said housing decisions were made without consultation, leaving people in unsuitable or isolating arrangements. Community-based day services were another major concern, with reports of long waiting lists, inflexible hours, and a lack of local options.

“I go to a day centre two days a week. I want to be there every day. There’s nothing else to do.”

These findings speak directly to the State’s obligations under Article 19, to ensure that all disabled people can live independently, with access to the supports they need and the freedom to make choices about their lives²⁴.

Despite the commitments set out in the National Housing Strategy for Disabled People – including a focus on interagency collaboration, accessible communities, and housing outcomes aligned with individual preference²⁵ – progress remains uneven. The Programme for Government similarly promises to support disabled people to live independently with dignity and access housing that meets their needs²⁶. Yet our findings suggest that these ambitions are not yet matched by on-the-ground delivery. Inclusion Ireland’s submission to the Housing Strategy’s review calls for outcome-focused KPIs, disaggregated data, and a shift away from placement-led systems to ones rooted in rights and choice²⁷.

Yet realising the right to independent living also requires meaningful choice and control over how supports are organised. Personalised budgets are one tool that can help people with intellectual disabilities live more autonomously. The Programme for Government²⁸,

²⁴ United Nations (13th December 2006). Convention on the Rights of Persons with Disabilities, Article 19 – Living independently and being included in the community, <https://www.un.org/development/desa/disabilities/convention-on-the-rights-of-persons-with-disabilities/article-19-living-independently-and-being-included-in-the-community.html>

²⁵ Department of Housing, Local Government, and Heritage (14th January 2022). National Housing Strategy for Disabled People 2022-2027 Implementation Plan, pgs.29, 38, and 60, <https://assets.gov.ie/static/documents/national-housing-strategy-for-disabled-people-2022-2027-implementation-plan.pdf>

²⁶ Department of the Taoiseach (23rd January 2025). Programme for Government 2025 – Securing Ireland's Future, pgs.92–94

²⁷ Inclusion Ireland (22nd May 2025). Feedback on the National Housing Strategy for Disabled People Implementation Plan 2022–2027 – submitted on behalf of Inclusion Ireland, pg.2

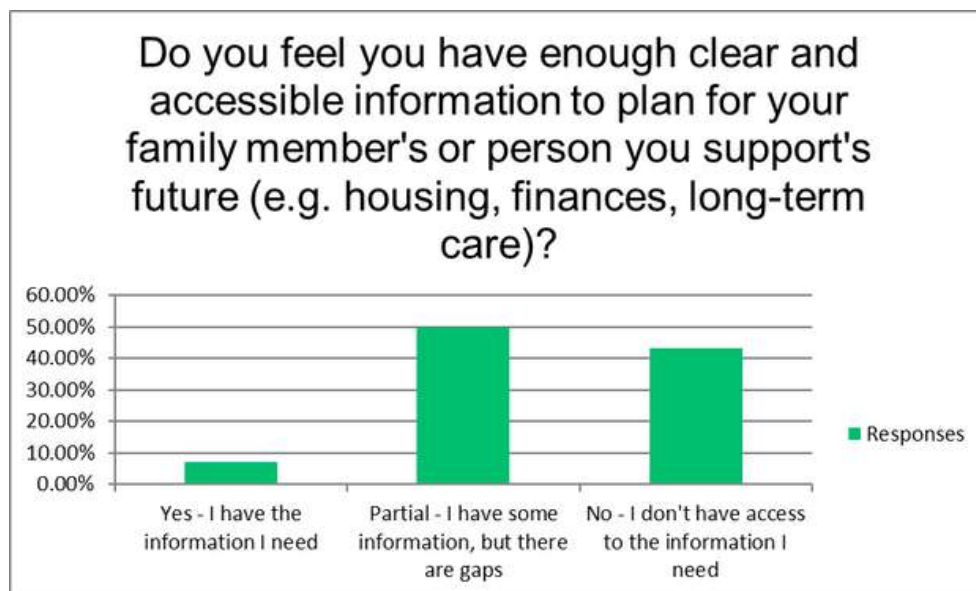
²⁸ Department of the Taoiseach (23rd January 2025). Programme for Government 2025 – Securing Ireland's Future, pgs.92–94

Action Plan for Disability Services 2024–2026²⁹, and the HSE’s National Service Plan 2025³⁰ all reaffirm commitments to expand personalised budgets as a person-led model of support. Yet while 61% of families and supporters we surveyed said they were aware of personalised budgets, the remaining 40% had never heard of them. This highlights a significant gap in visibility and awareness that risks limiting informed decision-making about support options.

Budget 2026 must act decisively: investing in supported living schemes, home adaptation grants, and flexible, person-led day services. The State must prioritise autonomy and choice, ensuring people with intellectual disabilities are supported to live lives of their own making.

Access to Information and Future Planning

Clear and accessible information is a prerequisite for exercising choice and control in life. Yet for many adults with intellectual disabilities and their families, that information is difficult to find, poorly communicated, or simply unavailable. From understanding entitlements to navigating housing, day services, and long-term care supports, families are left to scavenge and stitch together knowledge informally, often through word of mouth or social media. This creates confusion and delays and – more often than not – leaves people unsupported until a crisis occurs.



²⁹ Department of Children, Equality, Disability, Integration and Youth (14th December 2023), Action Plan for Disability Services 2024 – 2026, pgs.28–29, <https://assets.gov.ie/static/documents/action-plan-for-disability-services-2024-2026.pdf>

³⁰ Health Service Executive (6th January 2025). National Service Plan 2025, pgs.39–40, <https://about.hse.ie/publications/hse-national-service-plan-2025/>

The need for clarity and structured planning came through strongly in our surveys. Adults with intellectual disabilities raised concerns about what would happen when family support was no longer available. One respondent shared:

“I want to have a plan for when my parents aren’t there to care for me anymore. I want to remain in my own home then, but I will need support.”

Another added:

“Planning for the future with the [people] I grew up with, instead of separating after education, facilitate a home where they can move in together for their forever homes.”

Families and supporters echoed this sense of urgency. Over 43% said they do not have access to the information they need, while only 10% reported that their relative had a housing or support plan in place. A further 44% said their family member wanted to move out but could not do so because the necessary state supports were not in place. These figures represent a system-wide failure to support basic planning and continuity of care.

As one family member put it:

“It’s like a complete black hole with regard to how the system works and my son's entitlements... I have asked for social worker support for my son with HSE and that too was declined. It’s an absolute joke and insult to our young adults.”

The Disability Act 2005 places clear legal obligations on public bodies to ensure services and information are accessible to disabled people³¹. Similarly, the Programme for Government commits to providing every disabled person with the opportunity to live a full and independent life, including through access to information and service navigation³². These obligations are backed by the State's duties under UNCRPD Articles 21 (Access to Information) and 12 (Supported Decision-Making).

The Disability Capacity Review and the Action Plan for Disability Services 2024–2026 both acknowledge that future planning is chronically under-resourced^{33 34}. Budget 2026 must respond by investing in regional and online disability information hubs, expanding access to disability social work, and resourcing future planning supports that are coordinated, person-led, and grounded in rights.

Conclusion

Despite the ambition of the Programme for Government and the State's obligations under the UNCRPD, adults with intellectual disabilities and their families continue to face barriers to independent living and financial security. Budget 2026 offers a critical opportunity to realign policy with rights by funding practical supports: accessible housing, personalised services, clear information, and income adequacy. A rights-based approach demands more than rhetoric – it requires resourcing people to live with dignity, autonomy, and choice across the life course.

“More money for people living independently to pay bills and property tax and house insurance and food.” - adult with an intellectual disability.

³¹ Disability Act 2005, No.14 of 2005, ss. 25–28 (Ireland), <https://www.irishstatutebook.ie/eli/2005/act/14/enacted/en/html>

³² Department of the Taoiseach (23rd January 2025). Programme for Government 2025 – Securing Ireland's Future, pg.100

³³ Department of Health (15th July 2021), Disability Capacity Review to 2032 - A Review of Social Care Demand and Capacity Requirements to 2032, pgs.140–141, <https://assets.gov.ie/static/documents/disability-capacity-review-to-2032-a-review-of-social-care-demand-and-capacity-require.pdf>

³⁴ Department of Children, Equality, Disability, Integration and Youth (14th December 2023), Action Plan for Disability Services 2024 – 2026, pgs.40–48

Key Asks for Budget 2026

Tackle Disability Poverty and Out-of-Pocket Costs

- Raise the Disability Allowance, Domiciliary Care Allowance, and Carer's Allowance by at least €50 per week, with future increases indexed to inflation and benchmarked against the Vincentian Partnership's MESL to ensure adequacy over time.
- Abolish the means test for Carer's Allowance and invest in accessible, community-based short breaks (respite) and community-based supports like home support. Recognise the critical role families play by supporting them and building their resilience.
- Expand the Fuel Allowance scheme, recognising the disproportionately high energy needs of disabled people who rely on assistive technology, mobility supports, or 24-hour care.
- Develop a roadmap to implement the recommendations of the Cost of Disability Report, prioritising the introduction of targeted supports to address recurring out-of-pocket costs such as therapies, continence products, and communication aids.

Invest in Timely, Accessible Supports Across the Life Course

- Fund key priorities in the Action Plan for Disability Services 2024–2026, with a particular focus on personal assistance, independent living, and community-based supports aligned with Article 19 of the UNCRPD.
- 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 and deliver on the commitment to close congregated settings by 2030.
- Support at least 100 people to move out of nursing homes - this must include ringfenced funding for home adaptations, supported housing, and transitions from family care, aligned with the National Housing Strategy for Disabled People.
- Expand access to personalised budgets, ensuring people have flexible, individualised support through investment in application support, brokerage, and decision-making tools.
- Resource person-led day services and life-stage transitions, including urgent investment in CDNTs to reduce waiting times and ensure timely access to therapies, early intervention, and planning supports.

Advance Inclusive Education

- Reduce class sizes to the target 23:1 ratio and develop a cross-departmental strategy for inclusive education, ensuring every child with an intellectual disability receives the support they need to participate and thrive.
- Allocate €1 million for disability and human rights training, delivered by DPOs and advocacy groups, in line with Articles 8 and 24 of the UNCRPD.
- Expand the NCSE's Relate programme across all schools nationwide to build inclusive school communities and strengthen relationships with students of all ages with intellectual disabilities.
- Establish an independent complaints mechanism for schools, ensuring families can access timely redress and challenge exclusionary practice.

Guarantee Access to Information, Planning, and Advocacy

- Invest in local advocacy and information services, including Family Resource and Citizens Information Centres, to ensure people with intellectual disabilities and their families can navigate entitlements, service options, and legal rights at all life stages.
- Increase sustainable core funding for independent advocacy, with ringfenced investment for DPOs, peer-led organisations, and a statutory national advocacy service for disabled children.
- Develop and implement a national system of individual and future planning, with a clear delivery timeline and defined responsibility across the HSE and relevant Departments. This must include structured supports for future care planning, particularly for families of older carers and adults living at home long-term.
- Fund participation and capacity-building programmes for DPOs and local advocacy groups, enabling meaningful engagement in public decision-making through rights-awareness initiatives, accessible consultations, and co-design processes.
- Increase funding to the National Advocacy Service by €1million, with a focus on reducing waiting lists and reaching underrepresented groups.

Conclusion

Budget 2026 is an opportunity to meaningfully advance the rights and inclusion of people with intellectual disabilities. By investing in income adequacy, timely supports, inclusive education, and independent advocacy, the Government can begin to close long-standing gaps and deliver on its commitments under the UNCRPD. These actions are essential to realising the ambitions of the Programme for Government and ensuring that no one is left behind.

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