



Inclusion Ireland

The National Association for People
with an Intellectual Disability.

The right to justice and participation:

Lessons from the Farrelly Commission



What the Report is About



Rialtas na hÉireann
Government of Ireland



The **Farrelly Commission** was a **public inquiry** set up by the Government.

A **public inquiry** is when the Government asks a group of people to review something.

It is also called a **Commission of Investigation**. It is named after the person leading it, who is usually a lawyer.



A **lawyer** is someone who knows a lot about the law. A lawyer can help people with legal problems.



The **Farrelly Commission** was led by a lawyer called Marjorie Farrelly and looked at the case of a woman called **Grace**.

Grace lived in care for many years where she was not kept safe and some people said she was abused.



The Commission was meant to find out what went wrong.

It asked a lot of people about Grace and wrote its final report in **April 2025**.



Many people were unhappy with how the Commission worked. They felt the process was not fair or inclusive.

Inclusion Ireland asked families, disabled people, and experts what they thought.



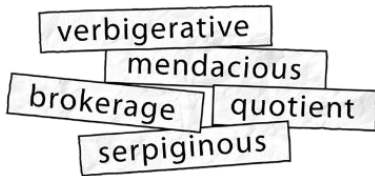
This Easy-to-Read report shares what those people told us.

The aim is to make sure future commissions are better.



Disabled people must always be listened to, included, and have their rights respected.

What went wrong?



People told us that the Commission was too hard for disabled people to take part in.

It used complex legal rules and was very formal. This made it unfriendly and confusing for some disabled people and their families.



Families and survivors were not told in advance when the report was published.

There were no accessible versions like Easy-to -Read, plain English, or audio.



Some people said that they wished the Commission spent more time listening to survivors and finding out the truth.

They felt that institutions were still being protected rather than people.



An **institution** was a place where disabled people were sent to live away from their families for long periods.

Most institutions like these have closed now, but many disabled people still do not live in places and communities of their choice.



TUSLA

An Ghníomhaireacht um
Leanaí agus an Teaghlach
Child and Family Agency

‘Institutions’ can also mean **formal organisations with power and have strict rules.**

Examples of these kinds of institutions would be the **Health Service Executive** or **Tusla**.

How did this make people feel?



Many people said they felt left out, ignored, and let down by the Commission.

Survivors and families felt powerless and hurt. Some said the process caused more pain instead of healing.



They felt the Commission care more about rules and institutions, and not about survivors.



People were upset that the final report was shared in a way that felt to them cold and uncaring.

Some only heard about it from the news, not from the Commission itself.



One family member said: ***“We have carried this pain for 30 years. The Commission did not give us answers. This is not acceptable. Ireland must do better.”***

What people told us in their own words



“ . . . Grace should be supported to make a complaint . . . about the abuse she endured, the State’s . . . failures to protect her, and the failings of the Commission.”



“Future inquiries of this nature should operate on an immediate assumption that all [people] can and must participate.”



**Public Sector
Equality and
Human Rights
Duty**

“Commissions should be . . . subject to the Public Sector Equality and Human Rights Duty.”



“None of those consulted were given advance notice or briefings, and no accessible formats.”

What needs to change



Commissions must be inclusive from the start. Disabled people should always be able to take part with the right support.

This can include Easy-to-Read, interpreters, or communication partners.

Reports must always be shared in accessible formats like Easy-to-Read, plain English, audio, or braille.

Families and survivors should be given clear information in advance.

Commission staff must use trauma-informed practice.

This means being respectful, careful, and supportive of people who have been hurt.

Commissions must be about listening to survivors and finding the truth, not protecting institutions.

What should the law do?



Disabled people have the right to justice and the right to a good life with the supports they need.



A right is something that everyone should have, no matter who they are.

Rights help you:

- Be safe.
- Be treated fairly.

Make choices about your own life.



Ireland has signed the **United Nations Convention on the Rights of Persons with Disabilities.**

It is called the **'UNCRPD'** for short.



**Disability
Act 2005**



**Equality
Acts 2000 -
2018**

These rules say that **disabled people must have equal access to justice and the right to be heard.**

These rules are part of Irish law.



However, the law in Ireland does not guarantee that disabled people can take part in inquiries.

There is also no **adult safeguarding law** to protect people from abuse.



Safeguarding means protecting people from abuse. This is important for people who may need support to access their rights, like some people with intellectual disabilities.



**Adult
Safeguarding
Bill**

New laws are needed to:

- Make sure all future commissions include disabled people.
- Give a legal right to communication supports and Easy-to-Read information.
- Create strong safeguarding rules to keep adults safe.

Other changes we need now



There are other important things the Government should do now that do not need new laws. These are:

- Commission staff should get training in **disability rights** and how to support survivors.
- Commissions should be **co-designed with survivors and Disabled People's Organisations**.
- Each commission should have an **independent panel** to make sure it is fair.
- Reports must be shared in **accessible formats** and survivors told before the media.
- Commissions must provide **support workers** to disabled people, like **intermediaries** or **communication partners**, so everyone can take part.

An **intermediary** is a person who helps people to talk and understand what is going on during a commission.

This is very important for a person who cannot speak or has trouble communicating.

How to get in touch



You may have some questions about what's in this document.

If you would like to:

- Learn more about this guide.
- Share your story.
- Get support to speak up.
- Ask questions about the Farrelly Commission or its report.



[Email Inclusion Ireland by clicking here](#)



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