



**An Roinn Leanaí, Comhionannais,
Míchumais, Lánpháirtíochta agus Óige**
Department of Children, Equality,
Disability, Integration and Youth



Údarás Náisiúnta Míchumais
National Disability Authority

National Disability Strategy call for written submissions

Please answer the questions below and submit to nda-events@nda.ie by **Friday 02 February 2024**. We ask that you please adhere to the word counts provided. An A4 page with single spaced text font 12 is between 400 and 500 words.

You can also post your submission to:

NDS Consultation,

National Disability Authority,

25 Clyde Road,

Dublin 4.

About you

Please respond to one of the options below.

I am responding as:

- A representative of a Disabled Persons Organisation
If yes, please specify your name and the name of the organisation:
- A representative of another disability organisation
If yes, please specify your name and the name of the organisation:
- An individual with a disability
If yes, please provide your name (your name will not be included in the consultation summary):
- An individual who is a carer
If yes, please provide your name (your name will not be included in the consultation summary):
- Other
Please specify:

Cork Chamber of Commerce

Questions

The vision of the United Nations Convention on the Rights of Persons with Disabilities (UNCRPD), which Ireland has ratified, is that disabled people can exercise their human rights like everyone else in society and have an equal opportunity to live their lives with dignity, respect, and equality.

- **Question 1:** What changes do you see as important to ensure that disabled people in Ireland are fully included in society in line with the vision of the UNCRPD? (Maximum 500 words)

Based on feedback from some of our members there are areas of clear deficiency that need to be addressed including: education, employment and health.

Recommendations based on member feedback:

- Develop and implement inclusive education policies that ensure children with disabilities have equal access to quality education.
- Provide necessary support services to facilitate the full participation of students with disabilities in mainstream schools. For example, where required, provide Irish Sign Language (ISL) in class support.
- Promote inclusive hiring practices and workplace accommodations to enable disabled individuals to participate fully in the workforce. For example, inclusive interviewing methods and contractual flexibility especially for those on Disability Allowance.
- Concrete examples of the barriers people face need to be demonstrated. The public need to be made aware of the UNCRPD and the rights of people with disabilities to live a full and equal life.
- Workplaces must ensure that everyone is treated equally and not judged by their appearance or disability.
- Interdepartmental policies in the public and voluntary sectors still lack integration, especially in the realms of education and health for children, and housing/home supports for adults. A more joined up approach is needed.
- The strategy should be supported by a substantial increase in university slots for clinical, therapy, and healthcare programs at both the undergraduate and postgraduate levels, along with corresponding targets.
- **Question 2:** What needs to happen for these changes to be achieved? (Maximum 500 words)

Several adjustments and practical measures could be implemented to ensure the complete inclusion of disabled individuals in Irish society. Based on member feedback it would be beneficial to address areas such as funding, support structures for employers and employees, the development of more inclusive policies and the monitoring of the employment quota.

Recommendations based on member feedback:

- A promotional programme through the media highlighting the 'true stories' of people with disabilities and the barriers they face in the workplace. This can also include positive stories from employers to encourage more employers to have an open and diverse recruitment process.
- Much progress can be made through CSR and D&I in companies, ensuring it is meaningful and complimentary to the PWD.
- Changes must take place in the recruitment and on-boarding processes and job contracts. At present many automatically exclude people who may have learning difficulties or a reading impairment.
- Adverts calling out discrimination and stigma would be very worthwhile. Involve business leaders, unions and small firms' associations as mentors or champions.
- The government needs to invest in a comprehensive supported employment service for all people with disabilities across the country.
- Additional job coaches are required to support people transitioning into employment.
- Best practice must be encouraged by setting specific guidelines for all supporting organisations and made available across the country.
- The lack of IT skills needs to be tackled to enable people to upskill and to take up remote working opportunities.
- It must be recognised as we move to a more digital world, this excludes a large amount of the population. Easy read options and accessible information needs to be mandatory.
- A centralised portal should be developed for employers to access information on what supports are available and for employees to disclose their disabilities and request reasonable accommodations, ensuring employees feel comfortable in disclosing their disabilities.
- The Reasonable Accommodation fund has four grant schemes under it. There has been a low take up of the scheme due to lots of bureaucracy and red tape. Merging the schemes, streamlining the processes and reducing the red tape would increase take up.
- A coordinated support structure for entrepreneurs is needed. While they offer an excellent service, Local Enterprise Offices are the only support at the moment.
- The UK has a fund for people with disabilities to run for elections to cover supports, helping to make process more accessible and inclusive. A specific organisation or one attached to the electoral commission that supports this would be welcome.
- Better monitoring and auditing of the employment quota of people with disabilities.

- Multi-annual financial projections based on actual case costings for services such as to community living, accessible day, respite, education/training and employment services.
 - Allocate sufficient financial resources to support the implementation of disability-inclusive policies and programs.
- Long term funding needs to be provided to the disability sector to develop bespoke on the ground supports reaching people in rural Ireland.
- Recognition of the equitable status requirement of the voluntary sector requires an equal funding base in order to ensure and protect long-term sustainability.
- A review of real time PDS provision in the life of the strategy is essential to provide effective person-centred children's services.
- Equip educators, healthcare professionals, and employers with the tools to create inclusive environments.
- Develop and implement policies that support inclusive education, including the provision of necessary resources and training for teachers.
- Transport- review the provision of accessible buses trains and taxis particularly in rural areas to enable PWD access training and education.

- **Question 3:** What would a successfully implemented strategy look like? For example, how do you think life should have improved for disabled people in Ireland at the end of a five-year strategy?*(Maximum 500 words)

The successful implementation of this strategy would lead to a society that is demonstrably more inclusive, accessible, and supportive, enabling disabled individuals to actively participate and prosper. As a result of such a strategy, the quality of life for disabled individuals in Ireland would see significant improvements as outlined below based on member feedback.

Recommendations based on member feedback:

- Increased enrolment and participation of disabled students in mainstream schools, supported by inclusive education policies.
- Improved accessibility in educational institutions, including accessible facilities and assistive technologies and measures in place to retain students, such as counselling, chat groups and forums catering for people with a disability.
- Higher rates of employment among disabled individuals, reflecting inclusive hiring practices and workplace accommodations.

- Public accessible transport and personal assistant services remain the key to independent/semi-independent living.
- Establishing annual targets and outcomes for increasing employment among PWD ensures transparency in assessing progress. Involving all stakeholders, with a focus on placing the PWD at the centre of the process, fosters inclusivity in the workplace. By aligning the application process with individual needs, this approach will increase overall inclusiveness, thereby facilitating the entry of more individuals into the workforce.
- Address the benefits trap of the medical card and the allowed hours of work.
- Have a clear policy within the public service in terms of equal recruitment and address in the access issues to the recruitment process.
- Maximise people's skills and potential by creating roles that fit people's capabilities.
- Build in flexibilities in terms of contracts and roles to include more people.
- Address the fall off in second level education where young people with disabilities are lacking supports and services.
- Address the shortage of support staff for students in 3rd level education.
- Address the lack of applications from PWD in apprenticeships.
- Provide more support to graduates with disabilities leaving college. Set up a job placement service with ongoing monitoring and support to bridge the gaps in the transition and settling into employment. Follow up for two years.