



Summary

- Ensure that the ratification of the Convention on the Rights of Persons with a Disability (UNCRPD).
- Grant Medical Cards on basis on patient need not income.
- Extend the Disability Act 2005 to include all persons with a disability.
- Enact Part II of the Disability Rights Act to entitle people to an immediate needs assessment.
- Implement the Education of Persons with Special Education Needs Act (2004).
- Implement the Assisted Decision-Making Act (2015).
- Establish a Joint Oireachtas Disability Inclusion Committee.
- Introduce hate crime legislation to tackle crimes against the disabled.
- Implement the Citizens Information Act 2007.
- Establish a National Advocacy Authority to protect the rights of people with disabilities.
- Establish a National Respite Strategy to address ad hoc provision of respite care across Ireland.
- Increase the Disability Allowance by €20 weekly.
- Introduce a Disability Tax Credit of €1560 annually.
- Provide an emergency Wheelchair Provision Fund of €37 million.
- Reverse all cuts and increase the budget for disability services by €50m annually.
- Increase the budget for the Personal Assistant service by €7 million each year from 2016 -2019.
- Invest €50m in community support packages.
- Invest €30m in the Housing Adaptation Grant Scheme.
- Provide accessible housing for the almost 5,000 people with disabilities on social housing waiting lists.
- Ring fence 8%-15% of the HSE disability budget governed by service-level arrangements (SLAs) to individualised and community based models of supports
- Ring-fence €3m annually to address the lack of care centres providing intensive neurological rehabilitation
- Allocate 15% of the Fair Deal budget to providing nursing home and homecare services to under-35s.

Introduction

Disability is a major issue in Irish society. There are almost 600,000 people living with a disability or chronic illness. That's 13% of the population, or one in every eight people. People living with a disability are a substantial, but all too invisible section of our society. Being disabled is a social and economic issue, as much as an individual one. People Before Profit is dedicated to providing the environment in which all people, particularly those with



extra challenges, can reach their full potential. Regrettably, this is far from the case currently in Ireland.

A 1993 Commission on the Status of People with Disabilities noted that *“People with disabilities are the neglected citizens of Ireland...The picture that emerges is one of a society which excludes people with disabilities from almost every aspect of economic, social, political and cultural life. People with disabilities and their families made it clear that they want equality; they want to move from a reliance on charity towards establishing basic rights. They want, and are entitled to, equality and full participation as citizens.”*

Since 1993 nothing much has changed. In fact, as reported by the Disability Federation of Ireland, funding cuts in public services over recent years have disproportionately affected people with a lived experience of disability, many of whom were already surviving on disposable incomes below the poverty threshold.

On top of the planning and infrastructure obstacles that already existed, this hidden minority has felt the effects of austerity to an exceptional degree. Cuts in the areas of housing, healthcare, education, transport services, public employment and others have all disproportionately affected people with a disability. In other words, the situation for this community is getting worse, as their rights continue to be eroded.

This pattern reflects a broader trend in Irish political life that sees the chance to achieve full equality for persons with a disability thwarted by successive governments taking a ‘for-profit’ approach, instead of respecting the needs of the individuals and families affected. People are entitled to better.

Legislative Changes

It is the responsibility of the Irish State and the current government to provide full equality and all necessary supports for every person with a lived experience of disability in Ireland (including carers and families). The current Fine Gael-led government has dragged its heels ratifying and implementing **the UN Convention on the Rights of Persons with a Disability (UNCRPD)**. This UN Convention recently received cabinet approval but the full implementation is still far from achieved, making Ireland the last EU country to fully ratify.

People Before Profit stands in solidarity with disability rights activists, and calls for the complete ratification of the UNCRPD, along with all other relevant legislation - a process that should include as a rule the full and decisive oversight of people with a lived experience of disability. As a matter of urgency, the government must

- Ensure that the ratification of the UNCRPD and all other relevant legislation, involving oversight by persons with a lived experience of disability.



- Establish a Joint Oireachtas Disability Inclusion Committee.
- Extend the Disability Act 2005 to include all persons with a disability. Currently only children born after June 2002 can access an assessment of their health needs under the Disability Act 2005.
- Enact Part II of the Disability Rights Act to entitle people to an assessment, which in turn would begin to supply the data/proof that government agencies claim to lack currently.
- Commence and implement all other legislation, including the Education of Persons with Special Education Needs Acts (2004) and the Assisted Decision-Making Act (2015)
- Introduce hate crime. Legislation.
- Ensure the full commencement of the Citizens Information Act 2007 (which allows disability advocates to enter residential services and make enquires about vulnerable adults), and establish a National Advocacy Authority
- Establish a National Respite Strategy to address ad hoc provision of respite care across Ireland
- Extend the funding supports for people with disabilities in education to part time students
- Ensure that people with a disability make up at least 3% of the workforce at any one time

Social Changes

Beyond legislation we need a sea-change in how disability is viewed within Irish society. People with disabilities are no different than the general population - they want to live autonomous lives with the care and support needed to achieve this. One important step towards full rights for the disabled would be a *universal health service free at the point of delivery*, funded through progressive tax. This should be democratically planned by health workers and service users with an emphasis on prevention and social support. Carers also need much better support. Below we offer some important social policies that are currently needed.

- Provide people with disabilities with the right to choose the services which best meet their needs.



- Implement regulations that ensure all homes and public buildings are accessible and built in accordance with the needs of people throughout their lifespan.
- Protect the wages and conditions for social care workers.
- Offer full support for home carers, including proper provision for respite.
- Introduce workable schemes to replace the mobility and transport grants.
- Ensure publically owned and funded disability services and oppose privatisation as this will work against the social model and lead to the reintroduction of a medicalised system.
- Disability proof all schools to make sure as many children as possible can access education through mainstream channels. This includes autism proofing our schools and communities

Economic Changes

Moving to a rights based model obviously has economic implications. Indeed, one of the primary reasons that successive governments have so far refused to implement the UNCRPD is precisely because they also refuse to incur the extra costs associated. This is outrageous. Any society worthy of the name must provide services for all citizens to access. To move in this direction People Before Profit propose the following economic changes

- Increase Disability Allowance by €20 weekly.
- Introduce a Disability Tax Credit in the 2017 budget, similar to the Blind Persons Tax Credit (€1,650 in 2016)
- Provide an emergency Wheelchair Provision Fund of €37 million to support 15,000 mobility impaired people in Ireland
- Reverse all cuts (€160m, 2008-15) and increase the budget for disability services by €50m annually
- Increase the budget for the Personal Assistant service by €7 million each year from 2016 -2019
- Invest €50m in community support packages that allow a person with a disability / illness to remain living in their own home, if they so choose; (there was a reduction of €159.4 million between 2008 and 2015 in spending on disability health services alone)
- Invest €30m in the Housing Adaptation Grant scheme, and provide accessible housing for the almost 5,000 people with disabilities on social housing waiting lists



- Ring fence 8%-15% of the HSE disability budget governed by service-level arrangements (SLAs) to individualised and community based models of supports
- Ring-fence €3m annually to address the lack of care centres providing intensive neurological rehabilitation and therapy for survivors of severe Acquire Brain Injury
- Allocate 15% of the Fair Deal budget to providing nursing home and homecare services to under-35s
- Revise Carer's Allowance, so this is not means-tested; safe and reliable centres should be available to periodically host patients in order to facilitate full respite for carers
- Grant medical cards based on a person's medical needs, not on their income.