


ELECTION 2011



SECURING *our* FUTURE

An estimated 750,000 people in Ireland have a disability, or mental health need, amounting to 18.5% of the population. Together with their families, they constitute a significant proportion of voters in the forthcoming national election. People with disabilities want to live independently and to participate in their community – just like others already do. This means creating an environment in Ireland that enables their participation. Ireland has national strategies in place that reflect this goal. What we need now is a Government determined to carry the strategies through and advance toward our shared goal, despite the economic challenges. Otherwise people with disabilities will continue to experience the harsh consequences of exclusion and become further excluded.



DISABILITY FEDERATION OF IRELAND

1.

The actions of the new Government will decide whether this movement to freedom and participation for people with disabilities will succeed or be lost. According to surveys by the Central Statistics Office:

- 41% of 18-64 year olds with disabilities are at work compared with 71% of others in the same age group;
- 38% of working age adults who are unable to work due to illness / disability are at risk of poverty;
- 17% of people with disabilities aged 25-29 years attained a third level educational qualification versus 29% of others in the same age category;
- 36% of people with disabilities are aged 65 or older.

The Disability Federation of Ireland (DFI) is seeking the following commitments:

A Programme for Government that has threaded through it actions supporting people with disabilities as equal citizens.

The next Government must implement, on an urgent basis, a practical plan for advancing the National Disability Strategy in partnership with other key stakeholders. Initiatives, including the Value for Money Review of the HSE's Disability Services Programme, the National Housing Strategy, the Comprehensive Employment Strategy for People with Disabilities and disability-proofing of public policy measures, need to be actively managed, with time frames for putting them into operation. Irish society has set out on a journey towards a better future for all its citizens, and it must keep focus and not lose sight of the ultimate goal of full and equal participation for disabled people.

If you were a teenager who is visually or hearing impaired, wouldn't you want the school curriculum and materials that enable you to keep up with the rest of the class?



2.

Ensure access for people with disabilities by protecting benefit payments and public services on which they depend.

Many people with disabilities incur extra costs just to be able to do ordinary things, and the next Government needs to recognise this in setting benefit levels. People with disabilities also rely on both disability-specific health and other services and on public services available to the general public such as transport and recreation facilities. The number of people with disabilities and the level of support need is growing. Disability-proofing budgetary measures is essential to avoid undermining the accessibility of these services. Otherwise people will be precluded from such basic opportunities as meeting up with friends or improving their education.

If you developed a disability such as multiple sclerosis or a mental health need, wouldn't you want to keep your job by adopting flexible hours, home working and office aids?

3.

Support self-determination of people with disabilities by building their capacity and that of their families and the voluntary disability organisations who work with them.

Exercising self determination requires confidence, self knowledge and information about the opportunities available. For a group that has long been largely confined to 'special needs' services, changing to become participants in mainstream society requires support. Voluntary organisations who understand the effects of the disability and know the person can facilitate access to the services and opportunities that person seeks. But this role of disability organisations needs to be recognised and appreciated by the Government.

If you couldn't dress or cook for yourself, wouldn't you want a Personal Assistant so that you could continue to live in your own home and be part of the community, instead of having to live in a hospital or nursing home?



DISABILITY FEDERATION OF IRELAND

The Disability Federation of Ireland (DFI) is the national support organisation for 127 voluntary disability organisations that provide services to people with diverse disabilities and conditions. DFI works to ensure that Irish society is fully inclusive of people with disabilities so that they can exercise fully their civil, social and human rights.

DFI works to ensure that Irish society is fully inclusive of people with disabilities and disabling conditions, hidden, intellectual, neurological, mental health, physical, and sensory, so that they can exercise fully their civil, social and human rights. In pursuit of this vision, DFI

- Acts as an advocate for the voluntary disability sector
- Supports organisations to further enable people with disabilities

There are over 127 organisations within membership or as associates of DFI. DFI also works with a growing number of organisations and groups around the country that have a significant disability interest, mainly from the statutory and voluntary sectors. DFI provides:

- Information
- Networking
- Research and Policy Development
- Training and Support
- Advocacy and Representation
- Organisation and Management Development

DFI also supports the broader voluntary and disability sector through its representation of the disability strand with the Community and Voluntary Pillar of the Social Partnership process and other fora at regional, national and European levels. DFI is recognised as a representative on disability issues to a broad range of local, national and regional fora, including the Health Service Executive.

For further information go to www.disability-federation.ie
A full list of DFI member organisations is available on the website.

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