



INCLUSION IRELAND

National Association for People with an Intellectual Disability

Pre-Budget Submission 2022

Invest in People with Intellectual Disabilities

June 2021

**This document is written in font 12 Verdana in line with Inclusion
Ireland plain English guidelines**

Key Messages

- People with intellectual disabilities and their families identified housing, the extra costs of disability and education as their most important issues for Budget 2022
- Article 24 of the UNCRPD places obligations on the Irish government to ensure that people with disabilities are not excluded from education on the basis of disability and can access education on an equal basis with others.
- Invest in teachers and the physical infrastructure to reduce maximum class sizes to less than 30 pupils and over time to less than 20 pupils per class.
- Review the EPSEN Act 2004 in line with the UNCRPD and commence it without further delay.

About Inclusion Ireland

Established in 1961, Inclusion Ireland is a national, rights based advocacy organisation that works to promote the rights of people with an intellectual disability.

The vision of Inclusion Ireland is that of people with an intellectual disability living and participating in the community with equal rights.

Inclusion Ireland's work is underpinned by the values of dignity, inclusion, social justice, democracy and autonomy and we use the United Nations Convention on the Rights of Persons with Disabilities (UNCRPD) to guide our work.

Introduction

Inclusion Ireland believes that persons with intellectual disabilities should live self-determined lives and Budget 2022 provides an opportunity to invest in people. Budget 2022 must be a platform to create a more equal & just society and to further develop pathways into a life in the community for people with intellectual disabilities.

In putting together this submission we consulted with people with intellectual disabilities and their families. We received 311 responses to a survey and found that one of the most prominent issues from that survey was education.

Our overall Pre-Budget submission identifies 4 key action areas informed by our consultations and the relevant UNCRPD Articles. These are to:

1. Provide accessible homes and supports so people can live in the community
2. Address poverty and the extra costs of disability
3. Invest in community inclusion
4. Support equality and participation

This submission for the Department of Education and Skills has a specific focus on education issues.

Invest in community inclusion

Education:

Article 24 of the UNCRPD places obligations on the Irish government to ensure that people with disabilities are not excluded from education on the basis of disability and can access education on an equal basis with others.

In recent years, the Department of Education and Skills (DES) has significantly increased the spending on special education. However, much of this additional spend is on segregated education and many children with disabilities continue to be excluded from mainstream education.

When asked about education in our Pre-Budget survey, the most important issue (20%) for the respondents is the general lack of places at schools for children with additional education needs. More investment is required to provide the appropriate supports so that children and young people with disabilities receive an inclusive education and are supported to reach their full potential.

Class sizes

Large class sizes are one of the biggest challenges facing teachers in supporting children with disabilities and are a key barrier to the delivery of inclusive education¹. Large classes of 30 pupils plus, leaves little space for the kind of differentiated strategies necessary to support the diversity

¹ ASTI finding in their survey <https://www.asti.ie/news/latest-news/lack-of-training-no-planning-time-largeclasses-key-challenges-to-inclusive-education>

of learning needs, leaving teachers feeling stressed that they were not doing their best for either SEN students or the class as a whole. The ratio must be reduced to ensure equality and a quality education system that serves all children.

EPSEN and Education Act

When enacted in 2004, the Education of Persons with Special Education Needs (EPSEN) Act 2004 represented a fundamental shift in how the needs of children with special education needs would be met. The Act provides for educational assessments and independent appeals. Under the Act it was envisioned that a child would have access to a statutory assessment of supports and an individual education plan.

Recommendations:

- Invest in teachers and physical infrastructure to reduce maximum class sizes to less than 30 pupils and over time to less than 20 pupils per class. All teachers need to be adequately trained to work with a spectrum of children with disabilities.
- Review the EPSEN Act 2004 in line with the UNCRPD and commence it without further delay.

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Rialtas na hÉireann
Government of Ireland

For further information, contact;

Julie Helen at 086 8373312/ julie@inclusionireland.ie