

# Inclusion Ireland 2025 Pre-Budget submission

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## About Inclusion Ireland

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

We work towards the full inclusion of people with intellectual disabilities by supporting people to have their voices heard and advocating for rights under the United Nations Convention on the Rights of People with Disabilities (UNCRPD).

The vision of Inclusion Ireland is that of people with an intellectual disability living and participating in the community with equal rights as citizens, to live the life of their choice to their fullest potential. Inclusion Ireland's work is underpinned by the values of Respect, Inclusion, Equality, Voice and Choice.

## Introduction

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Despite our repeated calls over the past years, European and national indicators show that poverty for disabled people and their families is increasing, access to essential services is deteriorating, the housing crisis remains, and the cost of disability has not been properly addressed. 64% of people with an intellectual disability said last year's Budget announcement didn't help or only helped a little. 71% of family members either said it did not change anything in the life of the person they support, or they were unsure if it changed anything in their lives.

Budget 2025 provides an opportunity to invest more in people's lives. In putting together this submission we consulted with 860 people with intellectual disabilities and their families.

For people with an intellectual disability, and for their family members these were their three top priorities:

- More money and income support
- More employment opportunities
- Better housing and support to live independently

## Income support

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### Context and members experience

The Green Paper this year constituted a missed opportunity to implement the Recommendations of the Cost of disability report. While it claimed to address the cost of disability issues with an increase of 20 to 40 euros per week (for the higher tiers), it only focused on the income payment. It completely overlooked the longstanding demand from organisations for the creation of a separate cost of disability payment.

The recent Survey on Income and Living conditions (SILC)<sup>1</sup> highlighted that while poverty decreased in Ireland, disabled people<sup>2</sup> are still the category who experience the highest level of poverty in Ireland:

- 27.3% are at risk of poverty compared to 25.5% for unemployed people or 16.6% of people fulfilling domestic tasks
- 44.7% live in deprivation compared to 37.8% for unemployed people or 21.6% for students.
- 16.5% live in consistent poverty compared to 9.4% for unemployed people or 6.9% of people fulfilling domestic tasks.

While SILC showed that 13.0% of people would have been at risk of poverty without cost-of-living measures in 2023 compared with 10.6% of people with cost-of-living measures, more needs to be done to support disabled people who are over-represented in the poverty rates as we have seen above. According to SILC the at risk of poverty threshold increased by 2.8% to €16,558 in SILC 2023. In other terms, it means 318 euros per week (291.50 in 2023) which is significantly above the rate of Disability Allowance that rose at 232 after last year increase of 12 euros by Budget 2024. The 12 euros increase last year did not match the inflation that raised by 26.5 euros the at risk of poverty threshold.

In last year Budget survey, 70% of the respondents highlighted that they had difficulties to pay for the bills. 56% of supporters said that this was a cause of stress and poor health in their household.

In the survey this year, respondents with an intellectual disability identify getting more money from the State as the most impactful (49%) equally with housing and support.

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<sup>1</sup> CSO statistical publication, 22 February 2023,

<sup>2</sup> Disabled the category are under the SILC category “unable to work due to long-standing health problems”

### **Quotes:**

“More money for people living at home with learning disabilities more money jobs for work experience”

“A complete re structure of social welfare, taxation and health care. A move away from charity model. Stop presuming I have family support. Stop drowning me in admin. Stop trapping me in poverty.”

“I think they should give disability people more money for living - Double disability allowance! It needs to be more than the €350 minimum that was the pandemic payment because being disabled is more expensive”

I know we got 12 more euros each week with a one off payment and a double week at Christmas. I still can't work more hours to make more money. If I do I will lose some of my allowance. I need a cost of disability payment because of the cost of living crisis. My disability will never disappear.

### **Our asks**

- Establish a permanent cost of disability payment of €50 per week for disabled people.
- Increase the rate of the disability allowance by €86 to match it with the poverty threshold (€318).

## **Employment and training**

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### **Context and members experience**

Some of the measures from Budget 2024 such as the reduction from 21 to 15 hours to become eligible were welcomed. Moreover, the ongoing reform on the Reasonable Accommodation Funds and the National Framework on National Strategic Framework for Lifelong Guidance are hopefully going to lead towards improvements for people with

However, many children and young people in special schools still do not have access to career guidance as there is no expectation for them to get a job afterwards.

In our Budget survey last year, only 50% of the respondents with an intellectual disability reported that they got help from the staff at school (formal or informal career guidance) to choose what they wanted to do after school while another half did not have access to this support.

Ireland has the one of the lowest rates of employment for disabled people (32.6%) and it gets even lower for people with intellectual disabilities (17%). At the European level according to Eurostat, Ireland has the lowest rate of

employment for disabled people. In comparison, the employment rate for those aged 15- 64 was 72.8% in Q1 2022.<sup>3</sup> Our community highlighted multiple barriers; financial, negative societal attitudes, environmental barriers, the education system and lack of opportunity. A substantial number of people are also still afraid to lose their benefits when taking up employment.

**Quotes:**

“I want to be able to get a job and work part time and get help in it”

“I have done loads of courses but can't get a job. It's even hard to get work experience.”

“For people who used to work and whose life changes... I don't know how many times I hear... Theres not a column for your circumstances”

**Our asks:**

- Invest further in the ability programme-increasing the numbers of job coaches available to people with an intellectual disability..
- Reduce the minimum hours required to qualify for the Wage Subsidy Scheme from 15 to 5 hours and from 6 months contract to shorter term contracts so more people can avail of it.
- Introduce a transition Period for new disabled workers so they can keep their full disability payments and all secondary benefits for a period of time (we recommend a minimum of 3 6 months) after entering into employment, regardless of the hours worked or the amount earned.

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<sup>3</sup> Census 2016 Reports, Central Statistics Office, available at <https://www.cso.ie/en/census/census2016reports/>

Also 21 European Disability Forum report 2023, p31 can be accessed here [https://www.edffeph.org/content/uploads/2023/05/hr7\\_2023\\_press-accessible.pdf](https://www.edffeph.org/content/uploads/2023/05/hr7_2023_press-accessible.pdf)

## Housing and Support

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Nearly 3500 people are living in congregated settings or nursing homes. Thousands are living with families.<sup>4</sup> This is why housing is the top priority every year for adults with intellectual disabilities and their families. Last year we found that only a third of people who wanted to move house were on a housing waiting list; reflective of the lack of support for people to live self-determined lives. Meanwhile there has been a dramatic decline in the provision of supported housing for disabled people (Irish Council for Social Housing report 2024).

### Our asks:

- Fully resource the Action Plan for Disability Services 2024-2026.
  - Support a minimum of 300 people to move out of their family home into a home of their own.
  - Support a minimum of 200 people to move out of institutional/congregated settings.
  - Support at least 100 people to move out of nursing homes.
  - Complete the evaluation of the pilot project on personalised budgets, and secure funding to ensure permanent access to it for disabled people. Increase the numbers of people availing of personalised budgets.
- Increase the number of personal assistance hours, home support, home care.
- Ringfence a portion of the social housing budget for people with an intellectual disability and provide disaggregated data on our progress by each local authority.

### Quotes:

“I want to have less people living in my house.”

“I move out Christmas. Into a lovely house. I was living in a big place with lots of others before. For years. Everyone should live in a nice home instead of a hospital.”

“Its vital housing allocations not dismiss those they consider housed -whose assessments are not even looked at”

“Massive demand for residential houses for adults whose parents are elderly and caring for them full time, lack of respite, individualised supports.”

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<sup>4</sup> 2279 people are still living in congregated settings according to HIQA Annual report 2022 and 1250 people under 65 are still living in nursing homes since the release of the Wasted Lives report.

“More homecare hours and easy access to essential support

Two people with an intellectual disability should be able to put in a housing application together.”

Having the right support to live in the community and to know your neighbors, make new friends.

Literally anything, there is no supports in my area at all... I haven't gotten any support since I left school last June and I'm struggling ALOT

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