

Ireland

Update for CAHDPH, 10 October 2016

National Disability Inclusion Strategy 2016 – 2020

The third phase in the consultation process that is taking place with a view to developing a new National Disability Inclusion Strategy was launched in July 2016. The new Strategy will replace the previous Disability Strategy Implementation Plan, and will take a whole-of-Government approach to disability issues, including setting out high-level objectives and detailed actions in areas of **education, employment, provision of public services, health, income support, and personal safety and autonomy.**

Phase 2 of the consultation process, which concluded in December 2015, included a round of regional consultation public meetings that focused on identifying high level objectives under each of the strategic themes agreed in Phase 1. Phase 3 will focus on identifying precise and measurable actions and timescales for achievement of each of the objectives that emerged from Phase 2. For this Phase, the Department of Justice and Equality is again seeking the input of stakeholders – disability organisations and service providers, individuals with a lived experience of disability, Government departments and agencies – into the agreement of these actions and timescales.

The public consultation meetings in this Phase will take place on the following dates:

- 13th October – Cork
- 17th October – Dublin
- 25th October – Tullamore

Following phase 3, a draft Strategy will be prepared with the assistance of the National Disability Strategy Steering Group for consideration by Government. It is envisaged that the new Strategy will be in place by end 2016.

Comprehensive Employment Strategy 2015 - 2024

The Department of Justice and Equality launched a Comprehensive Employment Strategy for People with Disabilities on Friday 2 October 2015. The Strategy sets out a **ten-year** approach to ensuring that people with disabilities, who are able to, and want to, work are supported and enabled to do so. People with disabilities are only half as likely to be in employment as others of working age.

The Strategy is underpinned by a **cross-government approach** that brings together actions by different Departments and State agencies in a concerted effort to address the barriers and challenges that impact on employment of people with disabilities.

In tandem with the actions assigned to these Departments and Agencies, the Strategy seeks to ensure there will be joined-up services and supports at local level to support individuals on their journey into and in employment.

The Strategy's six strategic priorities are:

- Build skills, capacity and independence
- Provide bridges and supports into work
- Make work pay
- Promote job retention and re-entry to work
- Provide coordinated and seamless support
- Engage employers

The implementation of the Strategy will be subject to regular monitoring, and there will be a review and renewal every three years.

The Government has already taken a number of key decisions as recommended in the Strategy including:

- The public service employment target of people with disabilities will be increased on a phased basis as set out in the Strategy from 3% to 6% over the life time of the Strategy;
- Special public service competitions for people with disabilities will be arranged and we will open up alternative recruitment channels for people with disabilities;
- The establishment of a national help line and disability information service launched on 2 January 2016 to provide expert guidance and peer support to employers in relation to the employment of staff with disabilities; and
- Establishment of an expert group to look at making work pay for people with disabilities, with a mandate to report by end-2016.

The Comprehensive Employment Strategy Implementation Group has met on five occasions to review progress in implementing the Strategy. It will publish its first annual report before the end of 2016.

Ratification of UN CRPD

On 21 October 2015, the previous Government published a roadmap to Ireland's ratification of the United Nations Convention on the Rights of Persons with Disabilities which outlines the considerable legislative changes to be undertaken to enable Ireland to ratify the Convention, along with the estimated deadline of end-2016 for ratification. The Roadmap to Ratification, which is available on my Department's website, sets out the substantial legislative agenda required for ratification.

Considerable progress has already been made to overcome barriers to Ireland's ratification. The Assisted Decision-Making (Capacity) Act 2015 was

signed into law on 30 December 2015 and is a comprehensive reform of the law on decision-making capacity. Phased commencement of the Act will begin before the end of the year, which will allow us to ratify the Convention. The Criminal Law (Sexual Offences) Bill 2015 was passed by the Seanad on 26 January this year. When enacted, the Bill will reform Section 5 of the Criminal Law (Sexual Offences) Act 1993 to facilitate the full participation in family life of persons with intellectual disabilities and the full expression of their human rights. Achieving the necessary balance between those rights and ensuring appropriate protection is crucial.

Work is also underway on drawing up an Equality/Disability (Miscellaneous Provisions) Bill to progress miscellaneous legislative amendments necessary to proceed to ratification. It is intended that the Bill will address issues such as the Convention's requirements in relation to reasonable accommodation and deprivation of liberty, as well as removing archaic references in existing legislation relating to mental health. The General Scheme of the Equality/Disability (Miscellaneous Provisions) Bill is available on the Department's website. Enactment is expected by the end of the year.

Individualised payments

A Task Force on Personalised Budgets was established on 20 September to deliver on the Programme for Government commitment to empower people with disabilities to live independent lives and to have greater choice and control over the services and supports they need to make that goal a reality.

The Task Force has two components, a Strategy Group and an Advisory and Consultative Group. People with a lived experience of disability will be represented on both Groups.