

# DFI's Advocacy Work in Ireland

Lessons for International Work



# What is DFI?

- Disability Federation of Ireland is an umbrella body that represents over 120 different disability organisations throughout Ireland
- DFI works to create a fairer and more equal society for people with disabilities in Ireland
- DFI carries out its work on the local, national, European, and international level



## **DFI's vision**

An Ireland where people with disabilities are participating fully in all aspects of society.



## **DFI's mission**

DFI is a federation of member organisations working with people with disabilities to implement the UN CRPD and ensure their equal participation in society.



## **Four-year goal**

Member organisations are actively involved in DFI, working to implement the UN CRPD and to achieve the equal participation of people with disabilities in society.

# What is DFI's international work?

- DFI is Ireland's member of the European Disability Forum (EDF) and a member of the European Association of Service Providers to People with Disabilities (EASPD)
- DFI has also lobbied on the European level, engaging with MEPs, and attending European level disability events
- DFI has attended the Conference of State Parties (COSPP) for the UN CRPD, and has made submissions to the UN on issues in Ireland

# What kinds of issues does DFI work on?

- Poverty and Employment
- Housing
- UN CRPD

# Poverty and Employment

- Ireland has one of the highest rates of poverty among people with disabilities in the EU. According to the most recent EU SILC data, Ireland has the highest percentage of people with disabilities at risk of poverty in Western Europe (37.8%) . This is one of the highest percentages in the EU, almost 10% higher than the EU average.
- Having a disability costs money: A recent INDECON report for the Department of Social Protection concluded that disabled people live with extra costs that “vary from €9,600 - €12,300 per year for people with severe disabilities to €8,700 - €10,000 per year for those with limited disabilities”
- The basic annual means tested income provided by Disability Allowance is €10,816.
- Ireland also has one of the lowest rates of employment of people with disabilities in the EU at around 30%, 20 points below the EU average of 50%

# DFI's Work on Poverty and Employment

- DFI has worked to raise awareness of the cost of disability
- DSP Disability Consultative Forum x 3, CV Pillar Bilateral
- Pre Budget submission and Forum
- Oireachtas, including JoC on Gender Equality presentation (June)
- Poverty and policy networks
- Submissions: NRRP, Reasonable Accommodation Fund, Roadmap for Social Protection
- Meeting with EU Commission - September

# Housing

- The broader housing crisis in Ireland has had a disproportionate impact on people with disabilities
- 5,057 people with disabilities are currently on the housing list
- Many people have been on the housing lists for 5 to 10 years
- 2,914 people live in congregated settings
- Over 1,300 people under 65 are inappropriately housed in nursing homes



# DFI's Work on Housing

- Feedback to Dept of Housing/Housing Agency on request to inform implementation plan and related processes
- Recent engagement with Dept of Housing and Housing Agency querying status of implementation plan and monitoring structures
- Submission to Housing Adaptation Grant Review
- Dept of Housing Disability Consultative Committee x2
- Participation in IWA Part M Campaign
- Joint report with Citizen's Information on housing and disability- launch Dec 6th
- Oireachtas engagement

# UN CRPD

- Ireland ratified the UN CRPD in Spring of 2018 – the last state in the EU to do so
- Ireland has not yet ratified the Optional Protocol
- Ireland is in the process of implementing the UN CRPD
- Assisted Decision-Making (Capacity) Act 2015
- Disability (Miscellaneous Provisions) Bill 2016

# DFI's Work on the UN CRPD

- Inputs to Oireachtas on relevant areas where requested
- Participation in DSG and NDISSG (John Dolan, CEO)
- Training for local authorities on the UN CRPD
- Work with EASPD and EDF
- Including the UN CRPD in our advocacy work
- Application to IHREC to work on the Public Sector Duty
- DPCN
- Joined a group advocating for the referendums proposed by the Citizen's Assembly on Gender Equality

# DFI's Advocacy Wins

- Employment – the “Make Work Pay” report, changes to law such as allowing people to retain their free transport card
- Poverty – the Cost of Disability Commission, the cost of disability payment in the 2023 budget
- Housing – The Housing Strategy for Disabled People 2022-2027 is more ambitious than previous attempts to address the housing crisis among people with disabilities

# Lessons for international organisations

- Ireland is grappling with many of the same problems that international organisations might find in their own work, such as poverty, employment and housing
- Domestic and international organisations can learn from each other on how to approach these issues
- DFI has had some success in raising particular issues with the government, but this can be a years long process before any action is seen

Thank you!