



# National Housing Strategy for Disabled People 2022 - 2027



Riailtas na hÉireann  
Government of Ireland



# Disability Terminology

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Language is extremely important. There are many words and terms that are used to identify disability in Ireland and internationally and the way these words are understood differs across different groups. This was apparent during the consultation to support the development of this Strategy.

As part of the development of this new Strategy, disability terminology was considered. Input was received from a number of Disabled Persons Organisations (DPOs) and international good practice was also examined.

For some people, the term 'disabled people' is a source of pride, identity and recognition that disabling barriers exist within society and not within individuals. This approach is in line with the social model of disability. The social model of disability looks at how society is structured and how it disables people. It is not based on a person's impairment. It is about the barriers that exist in terms of attitudes, policy development, access or lack of supports, and how this can prevent people from participating in society as equals, with choice and control over their own lives.<sup>1</sup>

For others, the term 'people with a disability' or 'people with an intellectual disability' has the same meaning and is important to those who want to be recognised as a person before their disability. In keeping with the development process of the new Strategy, and ensuring that all groups are represented, this Strategy will take an inclusive approach to disability terminology.

This Strategy uses the term 'disabled people' in its title and for general use throughout the Strategy, the Implementation Plan and related documents. However, terms for specific groups of people, such as 'people with intellectual disabilities' and 'people with psychosocial disabilities or mental health difficulties', will also be used within the Strategy where appropriate. This is reflective of the collaborative approach to the development of the Strategy and in recognition of the need to be open to the evolving nature of language over time.

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1 See here: [Social model of disability | Disability charity Scope UK](#) for further information on the social model of disability

# Foreword

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## **Darragh O'Brien, TD, Minister for Housing, Local Government and Heritage**

**This new National Housing Strategy for Disabled People 2022-2027 sets our joint vision for the delivery of housing and support services for the next five years. Similar to our overarching housing plan, Housing for All, achieving the aims of this strategy can only happen with a cross-departmental approach, delivered in partnership and collaboration with other State actors and service providers.**

The overall aim of our new housing plan for Ireland is that everyone in the State should have access to a home to purchase or rent at an affordable price, built to a high standard and in the right place, offering a high quality of life. This aim applies to every person in our State regardless of their ability.

Our plan is to deliver more than 90,000 social homes to 2030, with a strong focus on increasing the number of new-build homes by rolling out the largest house building programme in the history of the State and getting Local Authorities and Approved Housing Bodies back building at scale. Our new Design Manual for Quality Housing includes a wide variety of types and sizes of houses, apartments, and duplexes. It provides guidance and examples of a range of housing options to better provide appropriate housing choices for persons with a disability who may have special housing needs. Clear, target driven Local Authority delivery action plans will set out how identified and projected need for housing for disabled people will be met.

I am also delighted that the key role of 'Housing and Disability Steering Groups' is reaffirmed as the most effective forum for the delivery of the outcomes of this Strategy at local level. These Steering Groups have been established in each local authority area. Housing for All strengthened their mandate and sought to further develop the interagency partnership built into their role. This Strategy maps out the pathway for the Steering Groups to refresh and renew their role and focus and will, I am sure, result in a better integrated and more strategic response to the needs of people with a disability at local level.

I look forward to working collaboratively with my Government colleagues and delivery partners across the sector in making the vision of this Strategy a reality.

## **Peter Burke, TD, Minister of State for Housing, Local Government and Heritage**

The preparation of this new National Housing Strategy for Disabled People 2022-2027 has been guided and strengthened by the lived experience of those with a disability and those caring for them. Drawing on the knowledge and insight of disabled people, their representative groups and those who work to provide services, it sees departments and agencies across Government set a vision to bring about the practical and lasting change that will make a material difference to housing and accommodation provision for disabled people right across our country.

A broad consultation process, conducted over the course of this last year, drew together inputs from experts, service providers and representatives and, most importantly, disabled people and their carers. I want to particularly acknowledge the assistance provided to the consultation work by the Disability Participation and Consultation Network (DPCN).

For those living with a disability, the co-ordination of suitable housing provision with the delivery of key health and social care supports is particularly important. Strengthening and supporting co-ordination frameworks was an important element of the first Strategy and effective collaboration, aligning housing and support services and the sharing of relevant information between agencies remains a particular focus of this new national housing strategy for disabled people.

I must acknowledge the key role that local authorities have played. As housing authorities, their role is pivotal in ensuring that the Strategy is implemented at local level where it matters for the citizen. Establishing the 31 Housing and Disability Steering Groups, chaired by the Director of Service for Housing, to plan for the housing needs of people with disabilities was an important strategic development. Under the framework of Housing for All and this Strategy, we are strengthening their mandate and further developing the interagency implementation partnership they provide.

Our goal is for Ireland to be a better place for disabled people to live in, to access the right kind of housing or accommodation, a place where people with disabilities have choices and are involved and consulted with on matters and decisions that affect their lives. It should be a country where people with disabilities are supported to live independently, participate fully in our society, and enjoy a quality of life on a par with the rest of the population. This Strategy sets our course for housing to play its part in achieving that.

## Anne Rabbitte TD, Minister for Disabilities

I warmly welcome the publication of the new National Housing Strategy for Disabled People 2022-2027 and commend all those who have been involved in its development. Housing that meets the needs of all our citizens is our firm commitment in government and I am pleased to see how the structure and themes of the Strategy will support us in that goal, and of the importance of Universal Design in the strategy.

In the almost ten years since the publication of the *Time to Move On from Congregated Settings* report, the phrase 'ordinary lives in ordinary places' has become one that we are all familiar with. Housing policy is critical to achieving that aim for all people with disabilities. I am pleased to be able to demonstrate our ongoing commitment to ensuring this aim by publishing this joint strategy in conjunction with the Minister for Housing, Local Government and Heritage, in my capacity as Minister for Disability in both the Department of Health and the Department of Children, Equality, Disability, Integration and Youth.

This Government is deeply committed to ensuring that people with disabilities are supported and encouraged to live independently. The coordination and alignment of housing provision with the delivery of health and social care supports is a central tenet of this Strategy. In this regard, the Department of Health and the Department of Housing, Local Government, and Heritage will pursue a collaborative, cross-sectoral approach that recognises the need to address the vital issue of creating housing choices for people with disabilities.

I note and appreciate that the Strategy opens addressing the very important issue of the use of language and that this discussion was informed by disabled people themselves. Listening to and consulting with disabled people is a vital element in the full implementation of the UN Convention on the Rights of Persons with Disabilities (UNCRPD).

I am encouraged that the new Disability Participation and Consultation Network (DPCN) was involved in both the consultation process and the National Advisory Group that drove the development of the Strategy. I established the DPCN to ensure that the voices of disabled people are involved in the development of policy and legislation. The DPCN is comprised of a wide range of members including representative organisations, disability organisations and individuals. The DPCN also assists in bringing the voice of Disabled Persons Organisations (DPOs) to the fore, which is a new development in how Government Departments and Agencies engage with disabled people. Their involvement will be replicated both at national and local level for the important implementation phase of the Strategy.

This Strategy builds on the wealth of data and analyses set out in the *Disability Capacity Review*, published by my Department earlier this year. We know that some 1,900 to 3,900 additional places for people with disabilities will be required to meet demographic demand and unmet need within the next ten years, over and above those homes required for people moving from congregated settings. We need to plan ahead to ensure that community-based models of residential care are available to people with disabilities when they want and need them.

This Strategy, combined with the forthcoming *Disability Services Action Plan 2022-2025*, will ensure the delivery of appropriate housing and health supports, which are fundamental in order to enable each disabled person to have a home in the community and enjoy life as an active citizen.

For many of us, moving into our own home is one of life's most important events, and it is essential that we ensure that people with disabilities are supported to make a successful transition to independent living. The Strategy acknowledges the importance of collaboration between local authorities, AHBs, and health and social services in providing these supports in an effective way. We all want to live full and meaningful lives on our own terms, and this Strategy is the first step in an ambitious programme of work that will see all stakeholders, ranging from Government Departments to people with disabilities themselves, come together in partnership towards that goal.

I look forward to receiving regular updates on the implementation of the Strategy and seeing how it contributes to our commitment under the UNCRPD to facilitate disabled people to live independently and as part of the community.

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# Executive Summary

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The National Housing Strategy for Disabled People 2022 – 2027 aims to build upon the work achieved through the previous National Housing Strategy for People with a Disability 2011-2016 (NHSPWD) (extended to 2021)).<sup>2</sup> This new Strategy has been developed by the Department of Housing, Local Government and Heritage (DHLGH) in association with the Department of Health (DoH) and the Department of Children, Equality, Disability, Integration and Youth (DCEDIY) under the guiding principles of Housing for All – A New Housing Plan for Ireland.<sup>3</sup> It documents the framework for the delivery of housing for disabled people through mainstream housing policy.

The National Housing Strategy for Disabled People 2022 – 2027 (NHSDP) sets out the vision for the cooperation and collaboration of Government departments, state agencies and others in delivering housing and the related supports for disabled people over the next five years.

## The Vision for the Strategy is:

*To facilitate disabled people to live independently with the appropriate choices and control over where, how and with whom they live, promoting their inclusion in the community.*

*To further enable equal access for disabled people to housing with integrated support services.*

Like the first National Housing Strategy for People with a Disability (NHSPWD), this Strategy will use the term “disability” in reference to four categories of disability, i.e., sensory disability, mental health difficulties, physical disability and intellectual disability. Psychosocial disabilities are also included when referring to mental health difficulties as this is in line with the social model of language. During the first year of the new Strategy, the process of working to strengthen the existing information of the housing needs within each category will commence. This will allow for the proper strategic planning that is required to increase delivery of housing with related supports for disabled people. This will also be inclusive of disabled people that do not identify with one of the specific categories above, such as those with a dual diagnosis or Autism.

## Overview of Themes

A comprehensive eight-month consultation period identified the areas that needed to be addressed to deliver the vision of the Strategy. These areas are set out as themes. Each theme has desired outcomes that when delivered will contribute to the overall vision.

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<sup>2</sup> Department of Housing, Local Government and Heritage, *National Housing Strategy for People with a Disability 2011-2016 (extended to 2021)*. Accessed November 2021: gov.ie - National Housing Strategy for People with a Disability 2011 – 2016 (www.gov.ie)

<sup>3</sup> Department of Housing, Local Government and Heritage, *Housing for All – a New Housing Plan for Ireland*. Accessed November 2021: gov.ie - Housing for All - a New Housing Plan for Ireland (www.gov.ie)

## **Theme 1 – Accessible Housing and Communities**

This theme focuses on the provision of accessible housing for disabled people, the promotion of accessible communities and universally designed homes. It is informed by the United Nations Convention on the Rights of Persons with Disabilities (UNCRPD) and, in particular, “Article 19 - Living independently and being included in the community” and “Article 9 – Accessibility” which aims “to enable disabled people to live independently ...and ensure disabled people have access, on an equal basis with others, to the physical environment.”

## **Theme 2 – Interagency Collaboration and the Provision of Supports**

This theme includes outcomes relating to the improvement of effective collaboration between local authorities and the HSE, better inter-departmental cooperation, aligning housing and support services and the sharing of relevant information between agencies.

This theme seeks to build on the work that has already been done during the NHSPWD 2011 to 2016 (extended to 2021) by strengthening the existing structures and by improving collaboration between all relevant agencies.

## **Theme 3 – Affordability of Housing**

This theme focuses on enabling access to affordable housing for disabled people. In keeping with Housing for All and, in particular, “Pathway 1 - Supporting Home Ownership and Increasing Affordability”, it is important that disabled people are included in the provision of affordable housing. This theme examines these issues and addresses the challenges disabled people may experience living in the private sector, in terms of home ownership and private renting.

## **Theme 4 – Communication and Access to Information**

This theme focuses on communication and access to information. The Strategy will continue to build on the information accessibility achievements of the previous Strategy such as the Housing Options documents, the Easy-to-Read Guide to Completing the Social Housing Application Form and the Moving in Checklist. The Strategy is cognisant of the fact that communication is a two-way process.

The Strategy will aim to ensure that disabled people are not disadvantaged in communicating their needs and in the communication they receive. This includes providing information in a range of accessible formats and using the various channels of communications disabled people prefer, while ensuring that adequate time and accessibility is made available to enable people to engage with local authorities and relevant agencies.

## **Theme 5 - Knowledge, Capacity, and Expertise**

This theme puts forward measures to increase awareness and understanding of disability and housing within the relevant organisations<sup>4</sup>. It also places an emphasis on increasing awareness regarding disabled people’s effective participation and inclusion in their communities. It includes outcomes relating to the building of knowledge and expertise within the housing sector on disability and building of knowledge and expertise within the health and social care sector on housing. It also acknowledges areas where cross-agency training is necessary, for example, the introduction and application of the Assisted Decision-Making (Capacity) Act 2015.<sup>5</sup>

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4 Relevant organisations here include local authorities, Approved Housing Bodies, the HSE and disability service providers

5 Department of Justice, *Assisted Decision-Making (Capacity) Act 2015*. Accessed November 2021: gov.ie - Assisted Decision-Making (Capacity) Act 2015 ([www.gov.ie](http://www.gov.ie))

## Theme 6 – Strategy Alignment

This theme places a focus on ensuring that all Government strategies and policies from a housing perspective promote the rights of disabled people, in line with the UNCRPD. This will ensure that the new National Housing Strategy for Disabled People 2022 – 2027 complements and supports other strategies related to disability, such as the Sharing the Vision and the Time to Move on From Congregated Settings Strategy for de-congregation, and the work, in line with the Programme for Government commitment, to make progress on the need for housing with relevant supports identified in the Disability Capacity Review to 2032.

This theme will also place a focus on aligning other strategies and policies, such as Housing for All, and the new Local Delivery Action Plans established under its framework, and the Public Sector Duty.

It is important that all strategies not only align but promote the inclusion and effective participation of disabled people in their implementation.



Figure 1: Timelines for Development of the National Housing Strategy for Disabled People 2022 - 2027

# Introduction

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Ireland is one of a few countries that has a specific strategy for housing for disabled people. The development of this second housing strategy specifically for disabled people demonstrates the Government's commitment to providing equal access to housing for all. The Strategy also outlines that no one Government department, agency or organisation can deliver on the vision of the Strategy. The delivery must be done in a coordinated and collaborative way, in line with the UNCRPD with disabled people at the centre.<sup>6</sup> Delivering on "Article 19 - Living independently and being included in the community", ensures disabled people have equal rights in accessing housing and equal rights to accessing supports necessary to enable them to live independently within the community.

The Strategy sets out how the Government will put in place the frameworks to ensure that the housing and care/support needs of disabled people are comprehensively addressed. Supporting this Strategy is a suite of documents, including an Easy-to-Read version and Audio version.

The overarching vision of the Strategy is to facilitate disabled people to live independently and be included in their communities. The development of the vision was driven by feedback from the first stage of the consultation.

The vision is supported by six themes that outline the areas where action is required in order to deliver the vision. Each theme has a set of desired outcomes that need to become a reality to support and deliver the vision of the Strategy. The themes and each of the desired outcomes have been developed as a result of the feedback from the consultation.

It was agreed during the refinement of the feedback from the two rounds of the consultation that living independently and being included in the communities was such a core requirement that additional general provisions over and above the Themes were required to ensure that the vision is delivered. Several general provisions have been included as part of this strategy.

The provisions will also ensure that this strategy aligns with Housing for All – A new Housing Plan for Ireland. Housing for All is a whole of Government ambitious plan to deliver a long-term sustainable housing system. The plan includes specific actions for housing for disabled people. Housing for All will be discussed in more detail in Section 4.1 of this document (Pg 21).

An Implementation Plan will be prepared and published by the end of the second quarter of 2022 containing the specific actions required to deliver the outcomes of each theme. However, this Strategy contains some initial actions that will be commenced ahead of the publication of the Implementation Plan. The inclusion of these actions shows the Government's intent to address the issues faced by disabled people accessing housing and provides a clear signal to the stakeholders that action is required immediately.

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6 United Nations Department of Economic and Social Affairs – Disability, *Convention on the Rights of Persons with Disabilities (UNCRPD)*. Accessed November 2021: Convention on the Rights of Persons with Disabilities – Articles | United Nations Enable



A man with a short haircut and a goatee, wearing a dark sweater, is seated in a wheelchair in a kitchen. He is holding a bundle of uncooked spaghetti in his hands. The kitchen has white tiled walls, a stainless steel range hood, and white cabinets. A small decorative tile with a blue and white pattern is visible on the wall. The man is looking towards the left of the frame. A large blue diagonal overlay covers the bottom half of the image, containing the text.

# Section 1

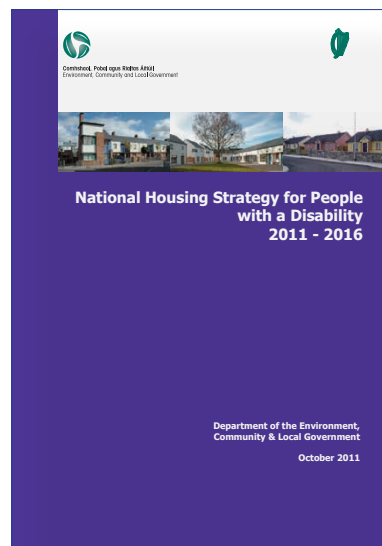
## What Has Been Done

This section of the Strategy will look at what progress has been made over the last decade or so to increase delivery of housing and related supports to disabled people. The section will review a number of policies and strategies that have been developed over this time and how they have helped to influence change and how this change has informed the development of this Strategy.

# Chapter 1: National Housing Strategy for People with a Disability 2011 to 2016 (extended to 2021)

The Strategy was a joint Strategy between the Department of Housing, Local Government and Heritage (DHLGH) and the Department of Health (DoH). The NHSPWD was published in 2011 with an Implementation Framework published in 2012. The documents set out nine Strategic Aims and multiple priority actions to deliver on the vision of the document, which was:

*To facilitate access, for people with disabilities, to the appropriate range of housing and related support services, delivered in an integrated and sustainable manner, which promotes equality of opportunity, individual choice and independent living.*



The NHSPWD was extended to 2020 under Rebuilding Ireland 2016 – 2021<sup>7</sup> as many of the aims were still relevant and not all elements of the aims had been achieved. The Strategy was further extended in 2020 to the end of 2021 due to the impact of Covid 19.

A review of the NHSPWD has been carried out by The Housing Agency which documents the deliverables during the lifetime of the Strategy. The Review also contains examples of good practice projects and initiatives that delivered housing with related supports for disabled people as part of the imagery throughout the document. The Review of the National Housing Strategy for People with a Disability 2011 to 2016 (extended to 2021) is published as part of the suite of documents that are accompanying this Strategy.

*“I think the interdepartmental NHSPWD (2011) has been the single greatest step to ending institutionalisation and mainstreaming independent living in Ireland. It takes a long time to change cultures and traditional ways of thinking and provides services. Initiatives which force the service providers and local authorities to work together should permeate the strategy.”*

*From Consultation Round 1*

The NHSPWD resulted in the establishment of structures at national and local levels that brought several stakeholders together to collaborate for the first time to deliver housing and related services for disabled people.

The structures included:

- The **Implementation Monitoring Group** was chaired by the Assistant Secretary General of the Department of Housing, Local Government and Heritage. The group produced annual reports during the lifetime of the Strategy that documented the progress made in the previous year.<sup>8</sup>

<sup>7</sup> Department of Housing, Local Government and Heritage, *Launch of Rebuilding Ireland – Action Plan for Housing and Homelessness*. Available here: [Launch of Rebuilding Ireland – Action Plan for Housing and Homelessness](#) | Department of Housing, Local Government and Heritage ([old.gov.ie](#))

<sup>8</sup> See here: [gov.ie - Housing for People with a Disability \(www.gov.ie\)](#) for further information on the reports



- The **Housing Subgroup** was established at national level to drive the implementation of the Strategy. The Housing Subgroup was chaired by The Housing Agency and was made up of representatives from the Department of Housing, Local Government and Heritage, the Department of Health, local authorities through the City and County Managers Association, the HSE both Mental Health and Disabilities, the Approved Housing Bodies (AHBs) through the Irish Council for Social Housing, the National Disability Authority and representatives from the disability organisations.
- A **Housing and Disability Steering Group** (HDSG) was established in each local authority area. These groups were chaired by the Director of Service for Housing in the local authority and consisted of HSE representatives along with representatives from AHBs and the disability sectors. Among the groups' responsibilities were the preparation of Local Strategic Plans (LSPs) that looked at how the actions in the national strategy could be implemented locally. The initial LSPs were completed in 2015 and 2016 with new LSPs prepared by many HDSGs early in 2021. Many of the new plans have targets for delivery of housing for disabled people over the next 5 years.

*“There have been some improvements for persons with disabilities through strategies in some areas, however this is not universal. Furthermore, housing strategies for people with a disability is very broad as the differences in needs for people with intellectual vs other disabilities is vast.”*

*From Consultation Round 1*

Chapter 11(pg. 71) of this document sets out the structures that will be put in place to deliver this new Strategy, reflecting the changes to ensure Disabled Persons Organisations are a central part of the structure and to strengthen the representative structures, avoiding duplication and ensuring accountability among all stakeholders.

## Data Collection

In 2017 The Housing Agency commenced the collection of data on the number of social housing allocations made to disabled people in the previous year. The collection commenced with the issuing of a template form for local authorities to complete, recording the number of allocations by disability category. Once submitted The Housing Agency collated the data. Some changes were made to the format of the collection over the period, which resulted in better data being captured in 2019 and 2020. Table 1 below sets out the allocations made in each of the years from 2016 to 2020.

Category	Number of Homes Allocated per year				
	2016	2017	2018	2019	2020
<b>Disability</b>					
<b>Physical</b>	682	833	761	1,231	1,038
<b>Sensory</b>	88	118	155	239	222
<b>Mental Health</b>	194	365	318	632	521
<b>Intellectual</b>	215	199	167	296	312
<b>Classification<sup>9</sup></b>	27	64	142	-	-
<b>Total</b>	1,206	1,579	1,543	2,398	2,093

**Table 1: Allocation by Disability Category<sup>9</sup>**

<sup>9</sup> Classification of need in this context is where the basis of need was other than disability, but a disability existed in the household.

Improving and strengthening of data collection and coordination will be central to this new Strategy and is discussed in more detail in Chapter 12 (pg. 74).

Overall, the delivery on the Priority Actions under the NHSPWD shows that good progress was made during its lifetime, but there is still more to do and some of the actions from the NHSPWD remain relevant and will be carried forward into this 2022 to 2027 Strategy, these include:

1. The Housing and Disability Steering Group structure to be maintained and strengthened over the lifetime of the new national Strategy.
2. Review and embed the National Guidelines for Assessment and Allocation Guidelines Process for Housing Provision in the practices of the local authorities through their Housing Allocation Policies/ Schemes of Letting Priorities.
3. The Local Strategic Plans should be reviewed in 2022 to take account of the aims and objectives of the new Strategy and any related actions.
4. The reporting on allocations and pipeline delivery should be done in line with the requirements of Housing for All and annual returns should continue to be made to The Housing Agency to ensure the focus on delivery is maintained.
5. The Housing Adaptation Grant Schemes have allowed many individuals and families remain in their homes. It is important that these grants are continuously reviewed to ensure that they remain fit for purpose, including the examination of the inclusion of grants for assistive technology to take advantage of the improvements in technology.
6. The Early Interventions Process training should be mainstreamed as part of the training programme and made available to local authorities and Approved Housing Bodies through The Housing Agency.
7. The Accessible Information Initiative should be continued and expanded to examine the most up to date and efficient means of communication.
8. The Mental Health Property Transfer Project should be included to ensure that the project is completed. A timeline to the middle of 2022 should be set for completion.
9. All appropriate agencies will continue to work towards completion of the decongregation programme.
10. Reflect and promote the housing recommendations in Sharing the Vision<sup>10</sup>.

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10 Department of Health, *Sharing the Vision: A Mental Health Policy for Everyone*. Accessed November 2021: gov.ie - Sharing the Vision: A Mental Health Policy for Everyone (www.gov.ie)

## Chapter 2: National Disability Inclusion Strategy

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The Government is committed to improving the lives of disabled people. The National Disability Inclusion Strategy 2017 -2021<sup>11</sup> (NDIS), now extended until the end of 2022, is the key framework for policy and action in this regard.

The NDIS takes a whole of Government approach to improving the lives of disabled people and creating the best possible opportunities for disabled people to fulfil their potential.

The NDIS Steering Group oversees the implementation of the Strategy. The group is chaired by the Minister of State with responsibility for Disability, Anne Rabbitte TD, and meets quarterly.

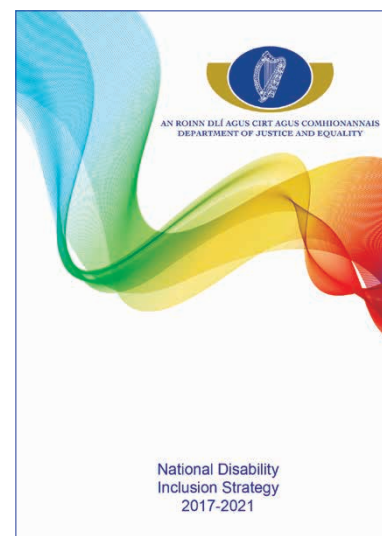
It includes representatives of Government Departments, the National Disability Authority, and members of the Disability Stakeholder Group (DSG). The DSG usually comprises twenty-four members, representing a crosscut of the sector, and includes an independent Chairperson.

Since the launch of the NDIS in 2017, there has been significant progress across a number of key areas of focus. The most notable milestone was the ratification by Government of the United Nations Convention on the Rights of Persons with Disabilities (UNCRPD) in March 2018. Other achievements include the publication of the Make Work Pay Report<sup>12</sup>, the enactment of the Irish Sign Language Act 2017<sup>13</sup> and a reduction in the number of disabled people living in congregated settings (see Chapter 4.3 pg. 24).

The NDIS is one of a number of key frameworks for policy and action to address the needs of persons with disabilities in Ireland and support effective progress in delivering on the obligations set out in the UNCRPD.<sup>14</sup>

A Mid-Term Review of the NDIS was published in March 2021.<sup>15</sup> The review set a framework for action on disability from March 2021 until the end of the lifetime of the Strategy. It involved a consultation process with disability stakeholders and with relevant departments and agencies.

This review confirmed that stakeholders want the emphasis of the framework for action to be on implementing existing commitments within the Strategy and on fulfilling obligations that arise from Ireland's ratification of the UNCRPD.



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11 Department of Children, Equality, Disability, Integration and Youth, *National Disability Inclusion Strategy (2017-2021)*. Accessed November 2021: gov.ie - National Disability Inclusion Strategy (2017-2021) (www.gov.ie)

12 Department of Social Protection, *Make Work Pay Report 2017*. Accessed: November 2021: gov.ie - Make Work Pay Report (www.gov.ie)

13 See: Irish Sign Language Act 2017 (irishstatutebook.ie)

14 Department of Children, Equality, Disability, Integration and Youth, *Comprehensive Employment Strategy for People with Disabilities 2019*. Accessed November 2021: gov.ie - Comprehensive Employment Strategy for People with Disabilities (www.gov.ie)

15 Department of Justice and Equality, *Mid-Term Review of the National Disability Strategy 2017-2021*. Accessed November 2021: Midterm-Review-of-the-National-Disability-Inclusion-Strategy-2017-2021[1].pdf (justice.ie)

The approach to the National Disability Inclusion Strategy since the Mid-Term Review was held, has been focused on the following strands:

- Raising awareness of the lived experience of people with disabilities;
- Strengthening rights including legislation following ratification of UNCRPD;
- Expanding into new areas – work regarding issues of intersectionality;
- Implementing the UNCRPD; and
- Improving services through better implementation and collaboration.

Links will be developed between the National Disability Inclusion Strategy, the Migrant Integration Strategy, the National Strategy for Women and Girls, the LGBTI+ Strategy and the National Traveller and Roma Strategy to consider barriers faced by Travellers and Roma with disabilities, by refugees and asylum seekers, by women, by transgender, lesbian, gay and intersex people with disabilities.

## Chapter 3: Progress on UNCRPD

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### Member State Report

Ireland ratified the UNCRPD in 2018 and has submitted its first State Report to the Committee on the Rights of Persons with Disabilities in November 2021.<sup>16</sup>



The Department of Children, Equality, Disability, Integration and Youth (DCEDIY) prepared a draft Report with the input of other departments, in December 2020. Several stakeholders were engaged in different strands of accessible public consultation over a four-month period by way of written submissions and online events. The newly established Disability Participation and Consultation Network (DPCN) was involved to ensure people with lived experience of disability had access to the consultation process.<sup>17</sup> A process was established to ensure children and young people were included in the consultation.

Following submission of the Initial State Report, Ireland awaits a date to appear before the UN Committee.

### Establishment of the Disability Participation and Consultation Network (DPCN)

The UNCRPD requires State parties to actively involve disabled people in policy development (Article 4.3). It is important that the experiences and perspectives of disabled people are integrated into the development of policies and programmes so that they meet their needs effectively.

The DCEDIY has funded the development of a Disability Participation and Consultation Network to build capacity within the disability community so that disabled people and their representative organisations can participate fully.<sup>18</sup> The Network was formed in late 2020 and has a total of one hundred and seventeen members. Members include disability organisations, disabled people's organisations, individuals with disabilities, family members and support groups. The wide and varied membership ensures a wide base of knowledge and experience but also comes with complexity for managing the network, building capacity, and managing expectations of members.

The Network has an organising member selected by an open process. Inclusion Ireland were selected for this position and are tasked with organisational and administrative duties for the Network and providing a single point of contact for the work it is involved in.

There are members who are grant funded to support their involvement in the Network and in engaging and providing supports to the wider membership. AsIAM, Mental Health Reform, Disability Federation Ireland and the Coalition of Disabled Persons Organisations (DPO Coalition) were the grant funded members.

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16 Department of Children, Equality, Disability, Integration and Youth, *Ireland's first report to the United Nations Committee on the Rights of Persons with Disabilities*. Accessed November 2021: gov.ie - Ireland's first report to the United Nations Committee on the Rights of Persons with Disabilities ([www.gov.ie](http://www.gov.ie))

17 Department of Justice and Equality, *The Disability Participation and Consultation Network*. Accessed November 2021: PowerPoint Presentation ([justice.ie](http://justice.ie))

18 Department of Children, Equality, Disability, Integration and Youth, *Launch of Disability Participation and Consultation Network*. Accessed November 2021: gov.ie - Launch of Disability Participation and Consultation Network ([www.gov.ie](http://www.gov.ie))

This Network is an important initiative that will help realise both the spirit and the substance of the UNCRPD in Ireland. It will provide a platform for disabled people to become actively involved in policy development that affect their lives.

*“Our young people with an intellectual disability have a right to have the dignity of supported living away from parents as per the UNCRPD charter. It is a human right. We know these things take time, but we are losing patience and getting older.”*

*From Consultation Round 1*

## **Commitment to Develop a UNCRPD Implementation Plan**

The Programme for Government which was published in 2020<sup>19</sup>, along with the Mid-Term Review of the National Disability Inclusion Strategy<sup>20</sup> of 2020, commits to establishing a UNCRPD Implementation Plan. This Plan will coordinate and monitor progress on implementing the UNCRPD across Government departments. The DCEDIY will play a lead role in coordinating this Implementation Plan, while Government departments will have responsibility for drafting their own plans to feed into the overall National Plan.

A consultation process will take place in early 2022. This will set out the key issues and questions on which stakeholders’ views will be sought, including the processes to be developed for engaging with Disabled Persons Organisations (DPOs). A draft implementation plan will be prepared and submitted to Government for approval by mid-2022.

## **Establishment of the Joint Oireachtas Committee on Disability Matters**

The UN has published a guidebook ‘Handbook for Parliamentarians on the Convention on the Rights of Persons with Disabilities’ that states that, *‘in addition to the specific monitoring instruments set up by the Convention, parliament, through its oversight function, plays a key role in ensuring respect for the human rights of persons with disabilities.’*<sup>21</sup>

It is noted that parliamentary monitoring is separate but complementary to the UNCRPD monitoring roles set out in the Convention. The establishment of the Joint Committee on Disability Matters (JCDM) is an important milestone in this regard.<sup>22</sup>

*“Article 19 of the UNCRPD to be fully implemented and monitored to ensure people with disabilities have a RIGHT to housing”*

*From Consultation Round 1*

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19 Department of Taoiseach, *Programme for Government: Our Shared Future*. Available here: gov.ie - Programme for Government: Our Shared Future (www.gov.ie)

20 Department of Justice and Equality, *Mid-Term Review of the National disability Inclusion Strategy 2017-2021*. Available here: Midterm-Review-of-the-National-Disability-Inclusion-Strategy-2017-2021[1].pdf (justice.ie)

21 United Nations Department of Economic and Social Affairs – Disability, *Handbook for Parliamentarians on the Rights of Persons with Disabilities*. Accessed November 2021: Handbook for Parliamentarians on the Convention on the Rights of Persons with Disabilities | United Nations Enable

22 Houses of Oireachtas, *Committee on Disability Matters*. Available here: Committee on Disability Matters – 33rd Dáil, 26th Seanad – Houses of the Oireachtas

# Chapter 4: Policy Context

## 4.1 Housing for All

Housing for All<sup>23</sup> (2021) is the Government's housing plan to 2030. The overall aim of the housing plan for Ireland is that everyone in the State should have access to a home to purchase or rent at an affordable price, built to a high standard and in the right place, offering a high quality of life. The plan's vision is to have a steady supply of housing in the correct locations with economic, social and environmental sustainability built into the system. It is estimated that there is a requirement for approximately 33,000 new homes each year to meet the need.

Housing for All provides four pathways to achieving its overarching objectives:

1. Supporting Homeownership and Increasing Affordability.
2. Eradicating Homelessness, Increasing Social Housing Delivery and Supporting Social Inclusion.
3. Increasing New Housing Supply.
4. Addressing Vacancy and Efficient Use of Existing Stock.

Each of the pathways contains a comprehensive suite of actions to achieve these Housing Policy Objectives.

**Pathway 2** - Eradicating Homelessness, Increasing Social Housing Delivery and Supporting Social Inclusion, contains the objective of improving equality of opportunity, individual choice and independent living for disabled people.

On page 67 of the plan, it states:

*'Delivering an appropriate range of housing types and related support services, in an integrated and sustainable manner, is critically important in order to promote equality of opportunity, individual choice and independent living for people with a disability.'*

In Section 2.4.2 (pg. 67) of Housing for All the National Housing Strategy for Disabled People is referred to as being:

*'a roadmap to facilitate access, for people with a disability, to a range of housing and related support services, delivered in an integrated and sustainable manner, and promoting equality of opportunity, individual choice and independent living.'*

The plan goes on to say:

*'Under the guiding principle of Housing for All and underpinned by the new Strategy, we must work to deliver appropriately designed and specified housing for people with a disability, in line with the vision and principles of universal design'*

Section 2.2.2 (pg. 60) states:

*'The Government will ensure that the ambition of Housing for All is translated into clear, target driven Local Authority Delivery Action Plans. Local authorities will be provided with multi-annual targets for social housing delivery over the lifetime of the Plan.'*



23 Department of Housing, Local Government and Heritage, *Housing for All – a New Housing Plan for Ireland*. Accessed November 2021: gov.ie - Housing for All - a New Housing Plan for Ireland (www.gov.ie)

The requirement for local authorities to include housing for disabled people in their Housing Delivery Action Plans will give a focus to the strategic planning for the identified need, while also taking cognisance of the forecasted need in the Department of Health’s Disability Capacity Review to 2032 (2021).<sup>24</sup> This review will be discussed in more detail later in this chapter.

Housing for All recognises the importance of the Housing and Disability Steering Groups but highlights the fact that they need to be strengthened, putting an onus on the groups to report on the implementation of all aspects of their Local Strategic Plans.

To deliver on these commitments, the Housing for All plan sets out six actions that are required to meet the outcomes set out in the plan. Each action has a timeline and a lead organisation. The actions are set out in Table 2.

Action	Detail	Timeframe	Lead Organisation
7.1	Deliver a new National Housing Strategy for People with a Disability (2022 – 2027) following stakeholder and public consultation and with a range of actions which will detail co-ordination and alignment of housing, health and community supports	Q4 2021	DHLGH, DoH
7.2	Local Authority Housing Delivery Action Plans will set out how dedicated social housing provision appropriate to the needs of people with a disability will be delivered matching the scale and extent of housing need identified for people with a disability	Q4 2021	LAs
7.3	Local authorities will consider the housing needs of people with a disability through the Housing Need and Demand Assessment Framework and feed that into their Housing Strategies as part of their Development Plan process	Ongoing	LAs
7.4	Review the range of housing grants available to assist with meeting specific housing needs, including the Housing Adaptation Grant for People with a Disability, and implement relevant changes	Q4 2021	DHLGH
7.5	Nominate Disability Friendly Housing Technical Advisors in each local authority	Q4 2021	LAs
7.6	Housing and Disability Steering Groups will report quarterly on the implementation of their local strategic plans regarding housing for people with a disability to the Chief Executive and the Strategic Policy Committee	Q1 2022	DHLGH, LAs

**Table 2: Housing for All Actions**

Each of the actions contained in Housing for All will be incorporated as key actions in the Implementation Plan for this Strategy. Special focus will be given to these actions in the annual report of the Housing Implementation Subgroup.

<sup>24</sup> Department of Health, *Disability Capacity Review to 2032 – A Review of Social Care Demand and Capacity Requirements to 2032*. Accessed November 2021: gov.ie - Disability Capacity Review to 2032 - A Review of Social Care Demand and Capacity Requirements to 2032 (www.gov.ie)



## 4.2 Time to Move on from Congregated Settings

In June 2011 the Report *Time to Move on from Congregated Settings – a Strategy for Community Inclusion*<sup>25</sup> was published. The report identified that in 2008 approximately 4,000 individuals with disabilities were living in congregated type settings, defined as “where ten or more people reside in a single living unit or are campus based”. The report was adopted as policy and implementation commenced in 2012. The overall aim of the policy was to move from a situation where people live isolated lives apart from any community and from families, with many experiencing institutional living conditions where they lack basic privacy and dignity, to a scenario where people live in their own homes and are facilitated to have opportunities to grow their lives and be connected in their communities.

A dedicated Time to Move On Subgroup was established to implement the initiatives which underpin and enable a new model for residential support in the mainstream community, where disabled people are supported to live ordinary lives in ordinary places. This subgroup drives the implementation of the policy, providing support and oversight at a national level and developing resources and building capacity on an ongoing basis. A number of funding streams have been put in place as enablers for this policy, including €100 million in capital funding allocated to the HSE over a six-year period from 2016-2021 specifically for the provision of housing in order to enable progress to be made in the decongregation of a number of priority sites. Additional once-off and ongoing revenue resources have also been invested.

*“Decongregation needs to be addressed with a sense of urgency”  
From Consultation Round 2*

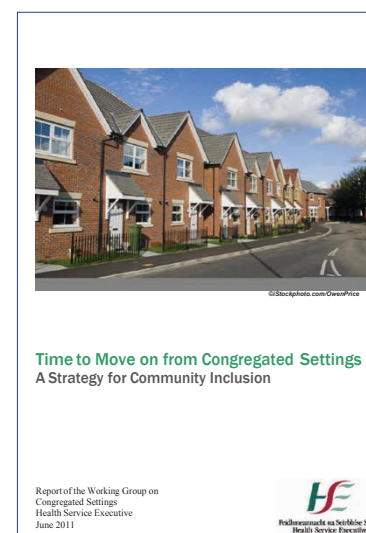
To date many of the resources and supports available have been focussed on enabling and driving the decongregation of the highest priority settings but work has also continued on an ongoing basis to oversee and drive progress in all other congregated settings. The measures taken have included:

- the targeted use of available capital funding,
- engaging with the housing sector to secure homes through mainstream and other developing housing options, and
- engaging with services to provide support and guidance to drive decongregation.

A wide range of tools, change and project management resources and capacity-building supports have been developed, that services can use to support them to navigate the process of decongregation.

For the people who are supported to transition from congregated settings, it is not simply the process of moving house, but a personal journey where they experience creating a home, exercising choice and can enjoy living as part of the community. Work is ongoing to gather evidence that demonstrates the impact on the quality of the lives, health and wellbeing of disabled people moving from congregated settings.

Over 1,000 people have moved into the community and work is continuing to support the 1,800 people remaining in the originally identified congregated settings to move to homes of their choice. In addition, the HSE has identified approximately 560 people living in congregated settings who were not recorded originally, these are settings that meet the definition of ten or more people living together, but which were omitted from the original report.<sup>26</sup>



25 HSE, *Time to Move on from Congregated Settings: A Strategy for Community Inclusion*. Available here: 1 (hse.ie)

26 The original Time to Move On report's figures were based on self-assessment, leading to some omissions, and did not cover intentional communities, condition-specific residential services or placements with private providers, leading to other omissions.

There are 19 congregated settings which have closed and now support residents entirely in the community and 13 congregated settings that have less than ten people remaining in the setting/campus. There are only 13 congregated settings with more than 50 residents remaining compared to 24 settings in 2012. In 2012 the largest congregated setting was home to 227 residents and the largest residential building was home to 112 people. Currently, the largest congregated setting has 138 residents, and the largest residential building has 28 residents.

*"I think it is crucial that no more people with disabilities are housed in congregate and group settings. Make a line in the sand and commit to not repeating old patterns"*

*From Consultation Round 1*

Finally, the 2019 Review Group Report "Supporting people with disabilities and significant residential support needs"<sup>27</sup>, recognised that there is a need for some highly specialist residential support services to be developed or retained to address the support needs of some people, in line with will and preference. As the number of congregated settings declines, progress should be made to identify how and where these support needs can be most appropriately met in line with policy.

### 4.3 Disability Capacity Review to 2032

The Department of Health's Disability Capacity Review to 2032 – A Review of Social Care Demand and Capacity Requirements up to 2032<sup>28</sup>, published in 2021, examined the need for additional care and support services to facilitate disabled people living independently in the community (and associated housing requirements) over the 2018 to 2032 period. The report estimated the need for community-based living with supports arising from changes forecast. These changes are:

- the size and age structure of the population with disabilities;
- the backlog of unmet need; and
- completing the closure of congregated settings, (residential institutions and campuses catering for ten or more residents on the same site).

The report also considered the need to provide alternative residential support options for disabled people inappropriately living in nursing homes but this could not be completed due to the absence of data.

#### a) Ordinary Homes in Ordinary Places

According to the report, the main model of disability residential care/support provision is now in supported housing in the community. Most are in community group homes where a number of disabled people live together, supported by staff, and some individuals live independently with support. While older group homes may have up to nine residents sharing, it is now policy that no more than four disabled people would share a home in any new housing and support packages.

#### b) Unit Cost of Housing

In shared housing with residential supports, the estimated capital cost per head is around €130,000<sup>29</sup>. This is based on the cost of building or purchasing/upgrading to provide a premises



<sup>27</sup> HSE, *Supporting people with disabilities and significant residential support needs - Report of the Time to Move on From Congregated Settings Review Group* (2019)

<sup>28</sup> Department of Health, *Disability Capacity Review to 2032 – A Review of Social Care Demand and Capacity Requirements to 2032* (2021). Accessed November 2021: gov.ie - Disability Capacity Review to 2032 - A Review of Social Care Demand and Capacity Requirements to 2032 (www.gov.ie)

<sup>29</sup> This figure is based on costs for provision of housing under the decongregation programme.

that accommodates people's needs, provides privacy for individual adults sharing a home, and meets regulatory standards, including the higher fire safety standards required for a group home. Generous space standards are required to provide for additional bathrooms, to address mobility needs, and to ensure accommodation for staff, as a result, the cost of housing provision is generally higher than for social housing.

### **c) Demographics**

As the report highlights, people with intellectual disabilities form about 90% of those in disability residential care. While the majority of people with intellectual disabilities currently live in the family home with their parents, there is a growing number of older adults whose ageing parents are no longer able to support them, with the number of people with intellectual disabilities aged 55 or over expected to increase by 25 percent by 2032. This will significantly impact the demand for support and/or residential care. The number of people with a physical or sensory disability is also forecast to rise. On demographics alone, the central demographic forecast would require approximately an additional 1,100 residential places by 2032, relative to 2017 provision.

### **d) Unmet Need**

The Disability Capacity Review also identified substantial levels of unmet need for residential care/support places. The impact of previous reductions in spending following the 2008 recession, a failure to keep pace with growth in the disability population, and a loss of residential care capacity to ensure regulatory compliance have all contributed to growing waiting lists for services. The proportion of people with intellectual disabilities in each age group who had a residential place at the end of 2017 (the date from which the report's analysis was based) was at the lowest level for a decade.

The Disability Capacity Review modelled a range of possible scenarios based on:

- Demographic change only.
- Demographic change plus unmet need.
- A range of possible values for key parameters.
- The scale of possible action on unmet need.

Scenarios costed range from minimum (only dealing with the most urgent needs), to intermediate, to pre-recession levels of residential provision.

### **e) Completion of Closure of Institutions and Other Congregated Residential Settings**

The report states that, in line with Government policy and compliance with Article 19 of the United Nations Convention on the Rights of Persons with Disabilities, there is a continuing programme to support those living in congregated disability settings to move to ordinary homes in the community. In addition to individuals who transfer to new housing, the report states that it is also necessary to ensure that the level of available accommodation with supports is maintained accounting for the number of deaths in congregated settings.

### **f) Changes since Completion of Disability Capacity Review Analysis**

Since the analysis for the Disability Capacity Review was carried out, based on end-2017 data, there has been a further reduction in services provided. Policy to date has focused on providing alternative homes for those who are physically moving out of a congregated setting, but not on restoring those places which have been suppressed due to deaths. This has resulted in a drop in overall service capacity. As a result, it is estimated the total amount of residential places will have fallen by around 240 from end 2017 to end 2021. The Disability Capacity Review had estimated that 100 additional places a year would also have been required in the intervening period for

demographic reasons. Taken together, these factors come to around 600 fewer places at end 2021 than would have been needed to maintain the level of service capacity in 2017, relative to the 2021 population.

### g) Immediate Urgent Needs

As of July 2021, the HSE estimates that 348 people have an immediate requirement for a residential place. It is estimated that over half have a primary carer aged over 60, a third have a primary carer aged over 70, and one in nine has a primary carer aged over 80. Whilst not every single person with a carer over the age of 70 has an immediate housing need (National Ability Supports System (NASS) identifies over 1,000 family carers over the age of 70), many of these people become the annual crisis admissions into residential support and drive a proportion of the unmet need identified in the Disability Capacity Review.

In order to drive the process of implementing the recommendations of the Disability Capacity Review to 2032, the Ministers have also published a Framework Action Plan setting out key priorities over the period to 2025.<sup>30</sup>

## 4.4 Sharing the Vision

'Sharing the Vision (2020)<sup>31</sup>' is Ireland's national mental health policy and is the successor to 'A Vision for Change'<sup>32</sup> (2006). It carries forward those elements of the original policy that still had relevance. It incorporates new recommendations as appropriate to enhance national policy, while simultaneously aligning with the ten-year vision for reform and transformation of Ireland's health and social care services encapsulated in the Sláintecare report.<sup>33</sup>

Sharing the Vision aims to enhance the provision of mental health services and supports across a broad range of services, from mental health promotion, prevention, and early intervention to acute and specialist mental health service delivery, during the period 2020-2030. The policy is cross-governmental in breadth and approach and is underpinned by human rights. The policy has a particular focus on Social Inclusion, with recommendations seeking to promote reasonable access for people with complex mental health difficulties across several areas including housing. It contains recommendations that tailored measures be in place in relevant government departments to ensure that individuals with psychosocial disabilities or mental health difficulties can avail of housing opportunities, without discrimination.



*"Needs to be more of a push on decongregation for mental health"*

*From Consultation Round 2*

Sharing the Vision sets as a policy goal that people with psychosocial disabilities or mental health difficulties require access to good-quality, secure and appropriate housing to facilitate and sustain their recovery. A lack of suitable housing as an alternative to institutional care can lead to an inefficient and expensive mental health system, with individuals receiving unsuitable care. Housing

30 Department of Health, *The Disability Framework Action Plan Working Group*. Available here: gov.ie - The Disability Framework Action Plan Working Group ([www.gov.ie](http://www.gov.ie))

31 Department of Health, *Sharing the Vision: A Mental Health Policy for Everyone*. Accessed November 2021: gov.ie - Sharing the Vision: A Mental Health Policy for Everyone ([www.gov.ie](http://www.gov.ie))

32 Department of Health, *A Vision for Change*. Accessed November 2021: gov.ie - A Vision for Change ([www.gov.ie](http://www.gov.ie))

33 Houses of the Oireachtas, *Committee on the Future of Healthcare*. Report available here: Committee on the Future of Healthcare (32nd Dáil) - 32nd Dáil, 25th Seanad - Houses of the Oireachtas

supports for people with mental health difficulties require effective collaboration between government departments, local authorities and other social housing providers. Apart from housing, there is also a need to ensure that those with complex mental health difficulties receive multi-disciplinary supports from health professionals and voluntary organisations to improve their quality of life. Individuals also require assistance to sustain tenancies and live independently. As a result, there must be effective liaison between mental health services and local authorities in the provision of social housing for individuals who require it. Central to this is ensuring that people with complex mental health difficulties have access to housing allocations and that particular needs concerning their living environment are properly addressed. Sharing the Vision recognises the need for advocacy in areas such as social welfare, housing or accessing other social entitlements or services.

*“Mental Health Tenancy Sustainment Officers play a key role in ensuring that people maintain consistent housing and do not relapse into residential mental health services/homelessness/homeless services”.*

*From Consultation Round 1*

Sharing the Vision recommends that local authorities should liaise with statutory mental health services to include the housing needs of people with complex psychosocial disabilities or mental health difficulties when developing their local housing plans.

Other recommendations include:

- The Department of Health and Department of Housing, Local Government and Heritage, in consultation with relevant stakeholders, should develop a joint protocol to guide the effective transition of individuals from HSE-supported accommodation to community living.
- In conjunction with supports provided by the HSE including Intensive Recovery Support teams, sustainable resourcing should be in place for tenancy-related/independent living supports for service users with complex psychosocial disabilities.
- The housing design guidelines published by the HSE and The Housing Agency<sup>34</sup> in 2016 to promote independent living and mental health recovery should be a reference point for all housing-related recommendations in Sharing the Vision.

## 4.5 Wasted Lives

The 2021 Ombudsman Report – Wasted Lives examined and considered the impact on people aged under 65 years of age living in nursing homes. This report is based on the finding from an investigation carried out by the Ombudsman. The report points out the very significant challenges in supporting people inappropriately living in nursing homes to transition back to the community and prevent this practice happening in the future. According to the report there are approximately 1,300 persons under the age of 65 years currently residing in nursing home settings.

The investigation involved an analysis of the issue under six thematic headings. The report provides findings and recommendations under each of the six themes.

1. State Funding and Personal Finances.
2. Informed Consent.



34 Áine O'Reilly, Emer Whelan, and Isoilde Dillon, *Design for Mental Health – Housing Design Guidelines*. Available here. [Design for Mental Health Housing-Design-Guidance-MAY-2017.pdf](https://www.housingagency.ie/design-guidance) (housingagency.ie)

3. Quality of Life.
4. Access to Services.
5. Navigating the System.
6. Policy and Human Rights.

The investigation found that Ireland still has progress to make in advancing from a medical model of disability to a social model, and that various changes need to be made to the system to facilitate a person-centred approach to care, and one which is in keeping with the United Nations Convention on the Rights of Persons with Disabilities (UNCRPD) and Ireland’s own strategic approach to disability.

## 4.6 Universal Design

As outlined in General Comment 5 of the UNCRPD, it is important that services and facilities in communities, including housing, are available in an accessible and adaptable way, and in line with universal design principles. According to the UNCRPD,

“Universal design” means the design of products, environments, programmes and services to be usable by all people, to the greatest extent possible, without the need for adaptation or specialised design.”

The Centre for Excellence in Universal Design at the National Disability Authority published a set of Universal Design (UD) Guidelines for Homes in Ireland (2015) which provides a tiered system described as<sup>35</sup>:

- UD Home: optimising flexibility, adaptability, and usability for everyone.
- UD Home+: providing for greater accommodation of people’s changing needs over time. UD Home+ includes guidelines to provide for wheelchair user dwellings.
- UD Home++: provides guidance and design tips to raise awareness and assist in one-off person-centred designed homes.

Universal Design Homes work well for everyone and look good. They are mainstream in aesthetics, not separate or distinct for special needs. They are designed to four key principles, these are:

1. Integrated into the neighbourhood.
2. Easy to approach, enter and move about in.
3. Easy to understand, use and manage.
4. Flexible, safe, cost effective and adaptable over time.

*“The ‘Benefits’ of Universal Design homes should be a priority, not the ‘cost’ of them”.*

*From Consultation Round 2*

*“Introduction to accessibility and universal design in housing, education and training for all stakeholders, architects, LA staff”*

*From Consultation Round 2*

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35 Centre for Excellence in Design at the National Disability Authority of Ireland, *Universal Design Guidelines for Homes in Ireland 2015*. Available here: [Universal Design Guidelines for Homes in Ireland | Centre for Excellence in Universal Design](#)



# Section 2

## Where We Are Now

This section outlines some of the statistics regarding disability in Ireland both from the Census and the National Ability Supports System (NASS). This data helps to set the context for this Strategy. This section also provides details of the research that was carried out to inform the development of and future actions under the Strategy. The section outlines the consultation undertaken prior to the development of the Strategy which along with the statistics and research has shaped the themes and outcomes of the Strategy.

# Chapter 5: Statistical Overview

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## 5.1 Disability in Ireland

In Ireland, the most common source of data on disability comes from the Central Statistics Office (CSO).<sup>36</sup> According to the latest Census of Population 2016, there were a total of 643,131 people who stated they had a disability. This accounts for 13.5% of the population. This means 1 in 7 of the population has a disability. This represents an 8% increase from the Census of Population 2011.

### Disability by Administrative Area

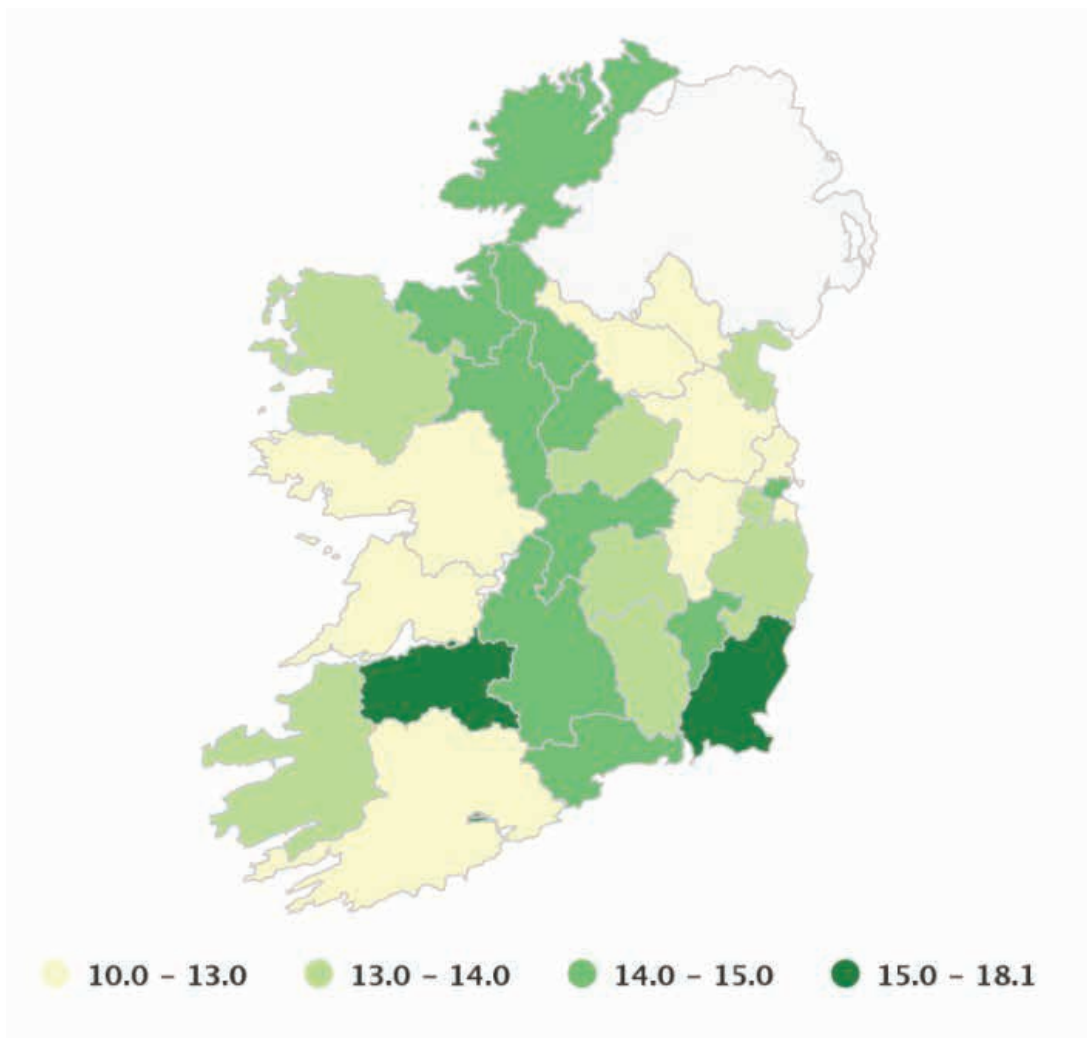


Figure 2: Percentage of Disabled People by Administrative County, 2016

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36 Central Statistics Office, *Census of Population 2016 – Profile 9 Health, Disability and Carers*. Available here: [Disability - CSO - Central Statistics Office](#)



### Disability by Gender

In 2016, 311,580 (48.4%) disabled people were male while 331,551 (51.6%) were female.

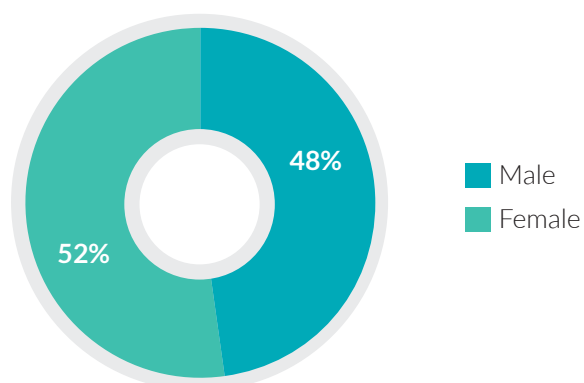


Figure 3: Gender Profile of Disabled People in Ireland

### Disability by Age

One in ten people in Ireland under the age of 45 are disabled and rising to over 20% by the age of 60.

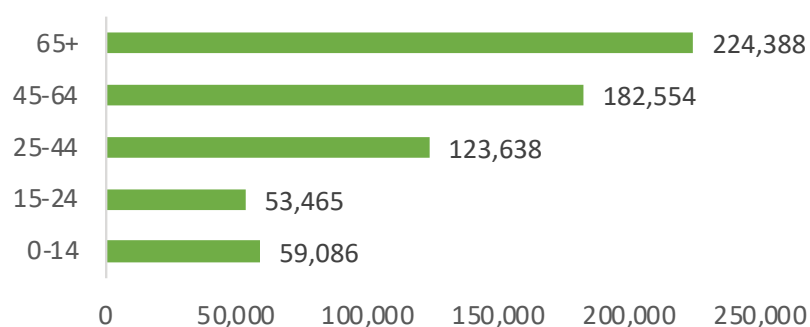


Figure 4: Age Profile of Disabled People in Ireland

### Housing and Disability<sup>37</sup>

In 2016, 92.9% of disabled people were living in private households. Of these;

- 68.8% lived in owner-occupied properties, broadly similar to the general population (69%),
- 12.4% rented from private landlords as opposed to 17.8% of the general population, and
- 13.4% of disabled people were renting a property from a local authority, compared to 8.4% of the general population.

19.3% of the total disabled population lived alone in private households as opposed to just 8.5% of the general population.

A total of 44,431 disabled people were enumerated in communal establishments (such as residential accommodation, nursing homes and hospitals).

37 National Disability Authority, *Housing and Disability Factsheet 2020*. Available here: PowerPoint Presentation (nda.ie)

## Poverty and Employment

In a recent Economic and Social Research Institute (ESRI) report, disabled people were found to be much more likely to experience poverty and social exclusion than those who do not have a disability<sup>38</sup>. The most recent analysis available shows that those most at risk of poverty in 2019 were those individuals who were not at work due to illness or disability (37.5%). This compares with an at risk of poverty rate of 4.6% for those that described their principal economic status as 'at work'<sup>39</sup>.

Over 18% of individuals who were not at work due to illness or disability live in consistent poverty, and 43% live in deprivation (see Glossary for definitions). These rates are 3 times higher than those for the general population in Ireland.

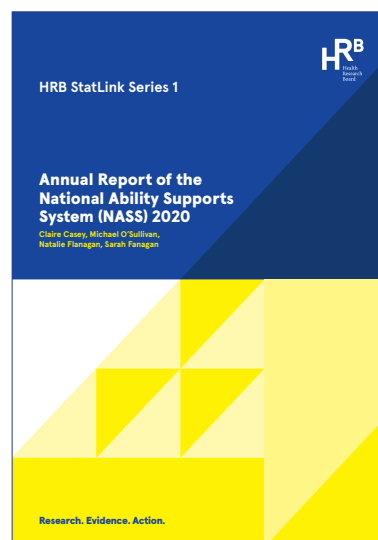
In 2016, the employment rate of disabled people was 36.5%, compared to the general population at 72.8%<sup>40</sup>.

## Homelessness

The 2016 census recorded 1,817 homeless persons with some form of disability in Ireland. The overall prevalence of disabled people among persons who were homeless on Census Night in 2016 was 27.1%. This represents a steep decline as compared to 2011 when this figure stood at 41.5%<sup>41</sup>, however, this is still a higher rate of homelessness than in the general population with 0.29% of disabled people classified as homeless compared to 0.14% of the general population.

## 5.2 Health Research Board - NASS database

National Ability Supports System (NASS) is a national database that records information about Health Service Executive (HSE) disability-funded services that are received or required as a result of an intellectual disability, developmental delay, physical, sensory, neurological, learning, speech and/or language disabilities or autism. Mental health as a type of disability<sup>42</sup> is also recorded on NASS where an individual is in receipt of a HSE disability funded service as opposed to HSE mental health funded services. The NASS database holds data including demographics, diagnostics, housing, and support needs which can be used to provide context for this Strategy. A total of 36,649 service users are included in the 2020 report.<sup>43</sup> As 2020 was the first full year of operation of this database, which coincided with the outbreak of the pandemic, NASS did not achieve fully comprehensive coverage of eligible service users, and some of the data received was incomplete. For example, data on housing tenure were only available for around half of those registered on the system. The data in this section illustrate patterns, but underestimate the full scale involved.



- 38 ESRI, *Identification of Skills Gaps Among Persons With Disabilities And Their Employment Prospects*. Available here: [Identification Of Skills Gaps Among Persons With Disabilities And Their Employment Prospects | ESRI](#)
- 39 Central Statistics Office, *Survey on Income and Living Conditions 2019*. Available here: [Survey on Income and Living Conditions \(SILC\) - CSO - Central Statistics Office](#)
- 40 Central Statistics Office, *Survey on Income and Living Conditions 2016*. Available here: [Survey on Income and Living Conditions 2016 - CSO - Central Statistics Office](#)
- 41 National Disability Authority, *NDA Factsheet 5: Where do Persons with Disabilities Live? 2020*. Available here: [NDA Factsheet 5: Housing | The National Disability Authority](#)
- 42 In this strategy the term disability encompasses mental health but in the HSE, disability and mental health are separate directorates.
- 43 Health Research Board, *Annual Report of the National Ability Supports System (NASS) 2020*. Available here: [NASS\\_2020\\_annual\\_report.pdf \(hrb.ie\)](#)

### 5.2.1 Age Profile

Demographic profile offers insight into future trends and needs for housing. For both sexes those in the 10-14 age group were the most represented. Proportionally large representation between 10-24 could indicate higher future demand. More males (21,694, 59%) than females (14,955, 41%) were registered on NASS. Over a third registered during the 2020 data collection period were aged under 18 years.

### 5.2.2 Living Accommodation

A total of 7,621 (21%) were living in residential settings which includes residential care facilities that are HSE disability-funded such as congregated settings, group homes and houses in the community as well as those that are not funded from the HSE disability budget such as nursing homes under the Fair Deal scheme or paid for privately.

A total of 9,371 (26%) service users were living in private accommodation that was owner occupied and 2,723 (7%) were living in rented accommodation. A total of 7,621 (21%) were residing in a residential setting and 70 service users (<1%) were residing in unstable accommodation. It is worth noting that details of living accommodation were unknown for 46%.

Of particular importance for housing is those renting on the open market, those in unstable accommodation, those in residential settings, and those living with family members. Information on residential settings encompasses congregated settings, group homes and houses in the community, as well as nursing homes.

### 5.2.3 Living Arrangements

A majority of individuals registered on NASS were residing with family members 23,058 (63%) and 1,704 (5%) individuals were living alone. The living arrangements of 3,814 (10%) individuals were not known. The remaining 22% described their living arrangements as living with non-family or living in a residential service.

### 5.2.4 Carers

For the purposes of NASS, a primary carer is defined as someone who has been identified as providing regular and sustained care and assistance. Primary carers can include a family member, friend or neighbour. For the purposes of NASS, primary carers do not include paid or volunteer carers organised by formal services, such as host families or foster families where the family is paid to care for the individuals.

Of those registered on NASS who do not live in a residential setting (28,606), 16,292 (57%) reported having a primary carer. Most of those with a primary carer lived with their primary carer (15,647, 96% of those who reported having a primary carer).

The majority, of primary carers 13,729, (84%) were parents and 1,005 (6%) were a spouse/partner. Primary carers were mostly aged between 18-59 years (9,889, 61%), and 1,942 (12%) were aged between 60 and 69 years. 1,282 (8%) were aged 70 years and over.

## Age of Primary Carers

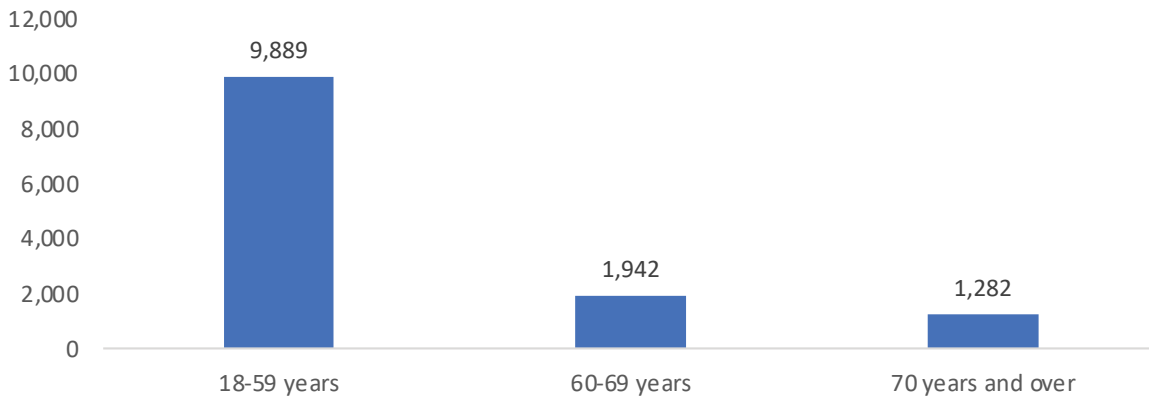


Figure 5: Age of Primary Carers

In terms of individuals' age, 7,837 (62%) of those aged 18 years or less had a primary carer, 57% (6,950) of those aged 19-54 years had a primary carer, and 42% (1,506) of individuals aged 55 years and over had a primary carer.

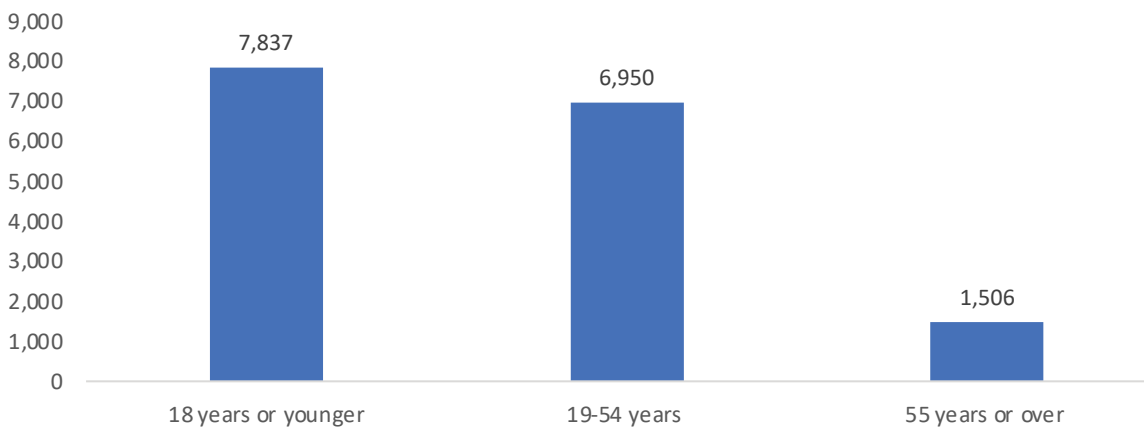
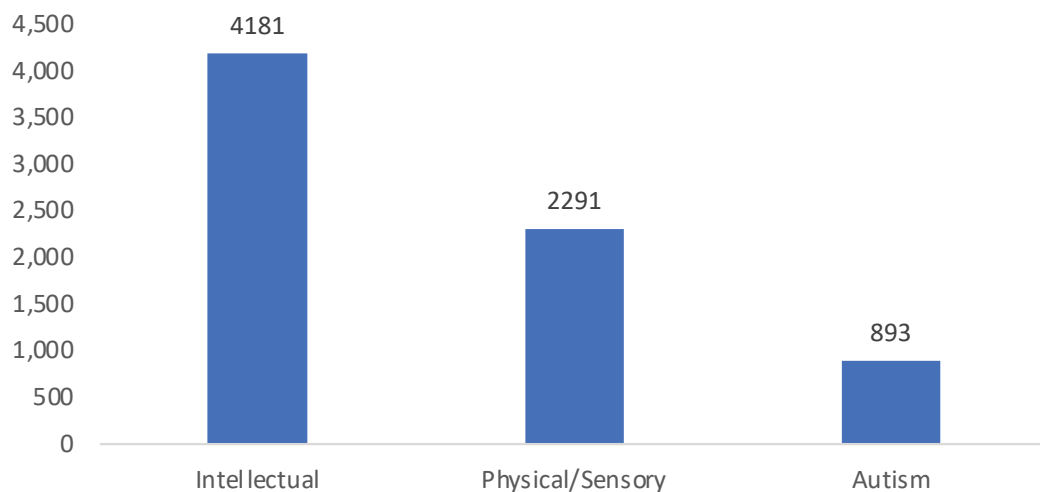


Figure 6: Age of People with Primary Carers

### 5.2.5 Services

Supports for daily living are services and supports that enable a disabled person to live more independently and participate more effectively in the community. In total, 6,235 (17%) of individuals registered on NASS were in receipt of at least one support for daily living in 2020. The most frequently accessed supports for daily living were home support 2,584 (7%) and community support (2,183, 6%). Overall, 4,181 (56%) of places offering supports for daily living were accessed by individuals whose primary disability was intellectual, 2,291 (31%) were accessed by those who had a physical and/or sensory disability and 893 (12%) were accessed by those who had autism.



**Figure 7: Supports for Daily Living Places by Disability Category**

A total of 800 support for daily living places are required now or within the next five years, of which home support is the most commonly required (251 places). This represents a 10% increase in home support places.

### 5.2.6 Assistive Technology

Assistive products have the potential to support independent living for disabled people. Assistive products refer to products that a person uses to support living with their disability. They include devices, equipment, instruments and software, specially produced or generally available. Only assistive products that are HSE disability-funded are recorded on NASS. In addition, people may receive assistive technology via primary care, or may purchase it privately. Assistive products were used by 2,575 (7%) people registered on NASS and 5,655 assistive products were used by these individuals.

The most commonly used product groups and products were:

- Assistive products for activities and participation relating to personal mobility and transportation (2,191).
- Assistive products for communication and information management (1,076).
- Furnishings and adaptations to homes (916).

Overall, 1,231 individuals had an unmet need for at least one assistive product, and 2,177 assistive products were reported as being required now or within the next five years.

*“Access to and support with Assistive Technology is needed. Maintaining these can also be very expensive to people who are dependent on Social Welfare as their main income”.*

*From Consultation Round 2*

*“People don’t have an income to provide the extra technologies to support independent living. There should be inclusion of this when supporting people for independent living”.*

*From Consultation Round 2*

## 5.3 Analysis of Households with a Disability Basis of Need for Social Housing

### 5.3.1 Introduction

The Summary of Social Housing Assessments (SSHA) is a statutory instruction to count the total number of households qualified for social housing support nationally on a particular date each year<sup>44</sup>. It is a point in time snapshot of each of the thirty-one local authority housing waiting lists.

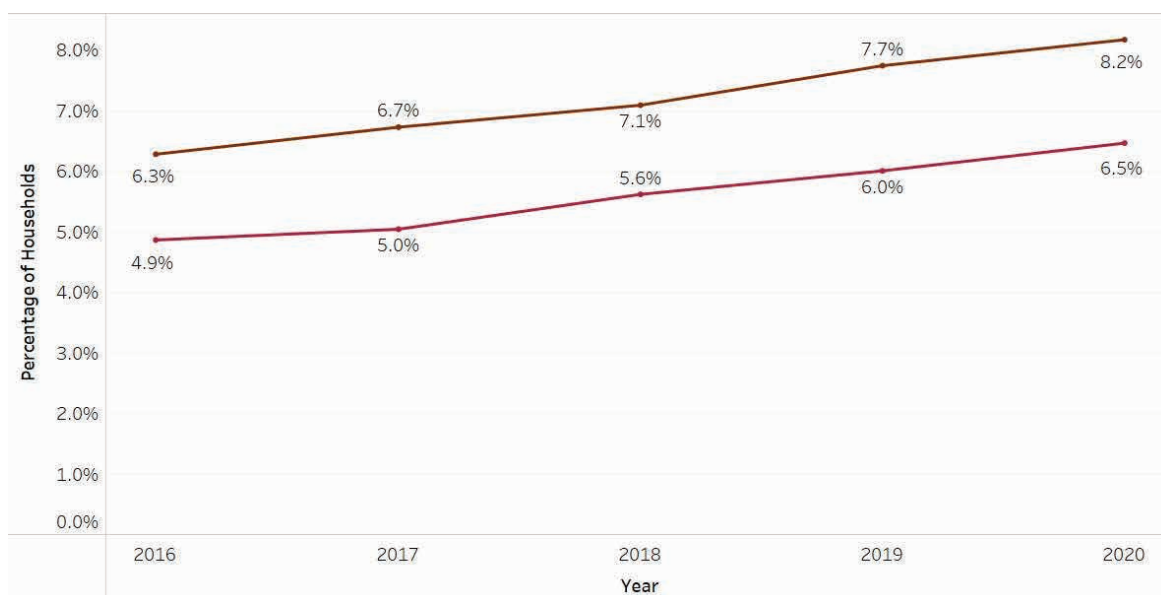
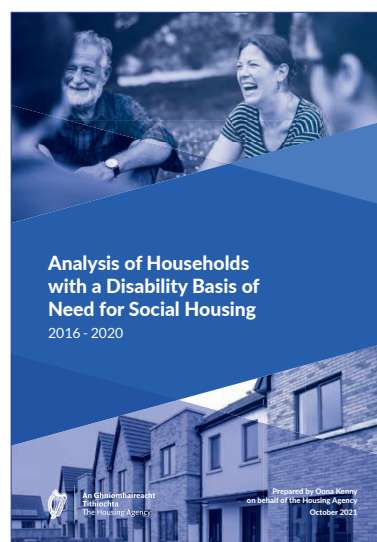
A household is deemed eligible for social housing if they satisfy the income eligibility criteria and can demonstrate that they do not have suitable alternative accommodation.

The social housing application form does not specifically ask whether applicants or household members of those applying for social housing, have a disability. However, households whose need for social housing is assessed as a disability or who require specific accommodation due to a disability are captured in the data under two fields, namely 'Basis of Need'<sup>45</sup> and 'Specific Accommodation Requirements'.

The source of all the information for the charts and tables in this section of the Strategy is the Summary of Social Housing Needs data. Additional Information is contained in the Analysis of Households with a Disability Basis of Need for Social Housing 2016 – 2020 which explains the data in more detail.

### 5.3.2 Households with a Disability

The number of households qualified for and in need of social housing has been declining year on year. In 2020, there were 61,880 households on the waiting list which is almost 10% less than the previous year (68,693) and a decline of almost a third since annual counting began in 2016 (91,600).



**Figure 8: Households with a disability need as a proportion of all households 2016-2020**

*Note: The same households may be recorded in Basis of Need and Accommodation Requirements*

<sup>44</sup> Further information can be found at gov.ie - Summary of Social Housing Assessments ([www.gov.ie](http://www.gov.ie))

<sup>45</sup> A need for social housing, sometimes referred to as the 'basis of need', is assigned to households based on information provided to the local authority.

Despite the falling counts across all households on the housing waiting list, there is less of a decline in the number of households who have a disability related need or who require specific accommodation due to a disability, this can be seen in Figure 9.

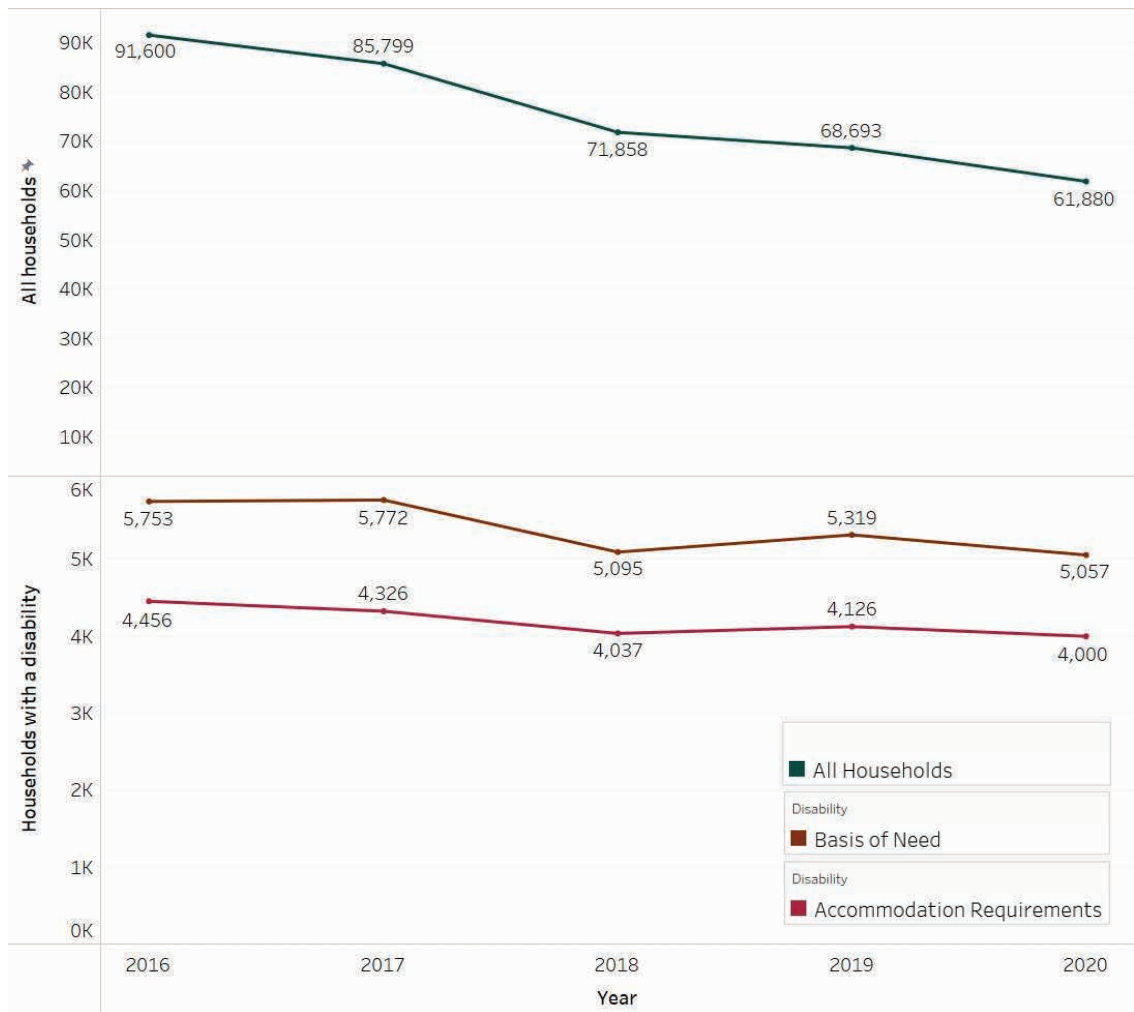


Figure 9: Count of All Households and Households With a Disability Need for Housing 2016-2020

### 5.3.3 Type of Disability Among Households With a Disability Need for Housing

Households may have disability as their main basis of need for social housing if their current accommodation is unsuitable due to a physical, sensory, mental health and/or intellectual disability. Figure 10 shows the proportion of households assessed as having a disability related basis of need by the specific type of disability, for each year.



**Figure 10: Type of Disability as a Proportion of All Households**

Note: proportions are based on those with a specific disability type as their main basis of need.

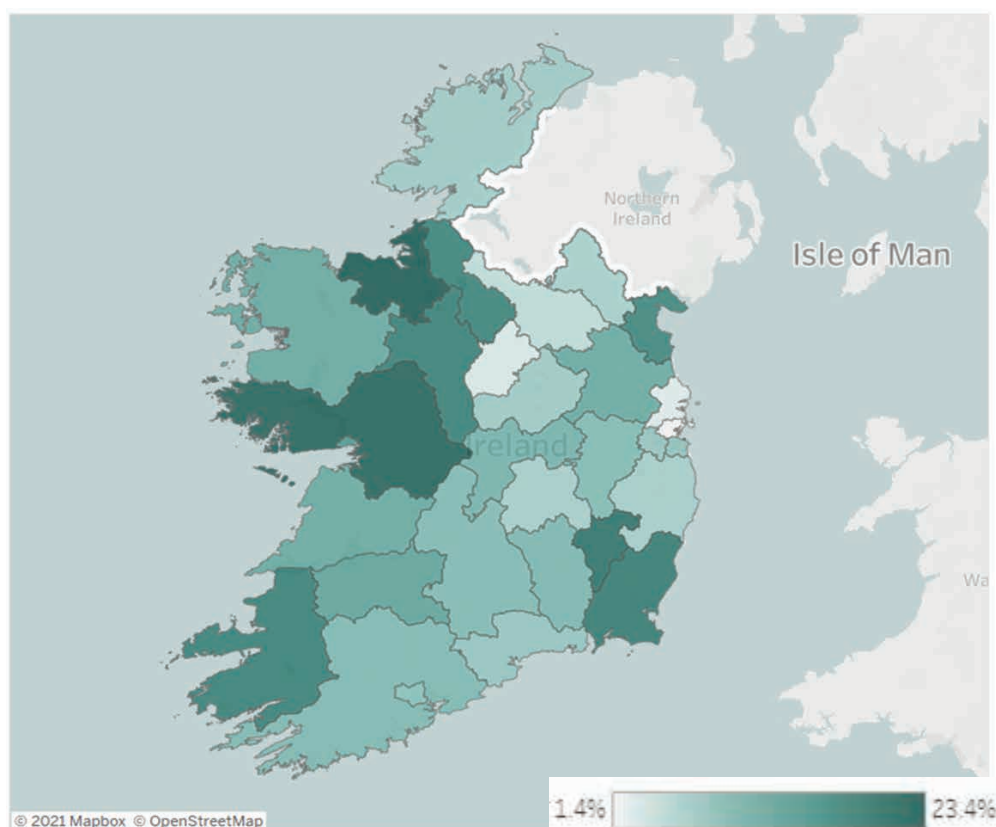
The proportion of households with intellectual disability and mental health difficulties rose from 1.7% to 2.6% and from 1.8% to 2.5% respectively, between 2016 and 2020. These are now the largest categories of disability type among households on the waiting list.

Until 2019, there were more applicants with a physical disability than any other type of disability and these proportions have remained relatively steady over the period, as have the proportions for those with a sensory disability which continues to represent less than 1% of all applicants.

### 5.3.4 Proportion of Households With a Disability Need by Local Authority

Figure 11 shows marked variation in the proportion of applicants with a disability related basis of need relative to the total number of households on the waiting list across different local authority areas in 2020.





**Figure 11: Proportion of Households With a Disability Need by Local Authority 2020**

*Note: Rates of households with a disability need range from 1.4% in lightest areas of the map to 23.4% in areas with the darkest shading of green.*

Basis of Need	2016	2017	2018	2019	2020
<b>Intellectual disability</b>	1.7%	1.8%	2.1%	2.3%	2.6%
<b>Mental health disability</b>	1.8%	2.0%	2.1%	2.3%	2.5%
<b>Physical disability</b>	2.3%	2.4%	2.4%	3.5%	2.4%
<b>Sensory disability</b>	0.4%	0.5%	0.5%	0.6%	0.6%
<b>Unspecified disability</b>	0.1%	0.1%	0.1%	0.1%	0.1%
<b>Total</b>	6.30%	6.70%	7.1%	7.7%	8.2%

**Table 3: National Proportions of Households With a Disability Basis of Need 2016 - 2020**

Table 3 shows the total proportion of households with a disability basis of need for housing nationally, for each year from 2016 to 2020 and the type of disability. The map shows that for example in 2020, the highest rate of disability need in Sligo County Council (23.4%) is driven by a high number of applicants with an intellectual disability (14.9%). This compares to a national rate of 2.6% of applicants with an intellectual disability. The area with the second highest rate of disability needs in 2020 is Galway County Council (22.2%) which reflects a high number of applicants with a mental health disability - 10.2% compared to the national rate of 2.5%.

### **5.3.5 Profile of Households With Disability Need**

The SSHA data is a series of cross section snapshots of the households on the housing waiting list at different points in time annually. Caution is required when comparing findings for households within different groups across years, as the same households may not appear at each point in time.

#### **a) Age of Main Applicant**

Households whose main basis of housing need is disability, tend to be older compared to all households on the waiting list across each point in time. While the median age has been increasing marginally over time for all applicants, from 37 years in 2016 to 39 years in 2020, it has remained relatively steady at between 43 and 44 years, for applicants with a disability related basis of need.

#### **b) Income Source for Main Applicant**

The majority (59.2%) of all qualified households whose main basis of housing need is disability are in receipt of social welfare only. However, proportions in this category are much higher for applicants with a disability related basis of need. On average, about 20% more applicants with a disability housing need have social welfare as their only income source and they are about 3 and a half times less likely to have an income source from employment.

#### **c) Household Composition of Main Applicant**

Single person households make up the largest household composition group among all those qualified for social housing. In 2020 this became the majority category, with 52% of all households on the waiting list comprising of one adult only. However, households with a single disabled person have been the majority category of composition for each year in the analysis period. For each year, there are between approximately 20% and 30% more single adult households among the group with a disability related basis of need compared to all qualified households.

#### **d) Current Tenure of Main Applicant**

Households with a disability related need for housing are less likely to live in private rented accommodation at the time of application compared with all households on the waiting list.

Three and a half to four times as many households with a disability need for housing are living in 'other' tenures at the time of their application compared with all qualified households. This category includes those living in institutions and other congregated settings.

# Chapter 6: Research on Models and Practices

As part of the development of the new Strategy two pieces of research were carried out. The first piece of research was on good practice models in other jurisdictions. The second piece of research was a qualitative assessment of the Housing and Disability Steering Groups.

## 6.1. Disability and Housing: Approaches in Other Jurisdictions

To inform the development of the new Strategy and future practice in Ireland, The Housing Agency carried out desk-based research to provide an overview of how housing for disabled people is approached in other jurisdictions.<sup>46</sup> The following five countries were selected: England, Canada, Australia, New Zealand and Sweden. These countries were chosen as they have policies on housing for disabled people and have ratified the UNCRPD. Details on each country were grouped under the following broad headings:

- Disability Governance and Key Stakeholders,
- Disability and the Population,
- Disability Legislation,
- Disability Strategies,
- Disability and Housing, and
- Examples.

The findings of the research, contained in *Disability and Housing: Approaches in Other Jurisdictions*, identified some schemes of interest and policies regarding home ownership and levels of grants that will require further investigation. The delivery of various options often involves the work of multiple actors. The examples highlight the fact that providing housing options for people with disabilities involves multiple approaches and thus a variety of schemes and models should be pursued.

A number of countries examine functionality, accessing, moving around and leaving the home as a basis for their decisions on modifications and adaptations.

Other areas of interest included:

- The approach in Quebec to an approved list system for adaptation grants.
- England's Disability Facilities Grants.
- The early interventions approach by the National Disability Insurance Scheme in Australia.
- The home modification approach in private rented accommodation in Australia.
- Enabling Good Lives in New Zealand.



46 The Housing Agency, *Disability and Housing: Approaches in Other Jurisdictions*. Forthcoming.

- The New Zealand Accessible Properties Affordable Rental Scheme.
- Sweden's Service Housing which sees people having their own apartment with shared services and permanent staff.

A further examination of the above schemes will be carried out and documented, the examination will also look at the operation of England's Disability Facilities Grants during the initial year of the new Strategy in order to feed into reviews of similar schemes in Ireland.

None of the countries researched have a specific housing strategy for disabled people similar to Ireland with many having disability strategies that make some reference to housing but not as comprehensive as the NHSPWD 2011 - 2016.

## 6.2 Collaborative Working in the Housing and Disability Steering Groups

One of the Strategic Aims of the previous strategy was to ensure that implementation was underpinned by a strong interagency framework, supported by national protocols to formalise collaborative relationships between the relevant agencies delivering services to disabled people. To achieve this, local authority-led Housing and Disability Steering Groups (HDSGs), were established in each local authority area, tasked with supporting the implementation of the Strategy at local level and providing an improved basis for planning and service delivery.

A qualitative assessment of the functioning of the HDSGs was carried out by an external researcher via an online survey.<sup>47</sup> This online survey was distributed to all HDSG members across all local authorities. This research aimed to take a comprehensive approach to identifying the links between the processes, interactions and interdependencies of the members of the HDSGs and the outcomes of the groups. The key questions the research sought to answer are:

1. Whether the Housing and Disability Steering Groups are working effectively and collaboratively.
2. Whether members of the Housing and Disability Steering Groups have experienced barriers preventing them from fully participating in the work of the groups.
3. Where there are issues with the operation of the group, whether members of the groups can identify changes that could address them.

Reminders were circulated but from a total of approximately 460 HDSG members only 177 responses were received, of which 99 were completed surveys representing a response rate of 21%. The low response rate to the qualitative assessment online survey is disappointing and should be examined by the groups themselves in 2022.

The research highlighted the difficulties that can arise during collaborative working. It states,

*"Huxham and Vangen (Huxham et al. 2000) identify a number of barriers to collaboration which together contribute to the potential for 'collaborative inertia'. Diversity of membership may result in difficulties in negotiating joint purpose; different organisational cultures or different professional languages may lead to communication difficulties or a difficulty developing joint modes of operating (Hibbert and Huxham 2005 p. 65); failure to identify and manage the perceived power imbalances may lead to or fail to correct trust issues between partners (Huxham et al. 2000)."*

As the establishment of the Housing and Disability Steering Groups in 2013 to 2015 was the first time that many of the stakeholders have worked together at this level, 'collaborative inertia' has been evident.

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<sup>47</sup> Sinéad Shannon, *National Housing Strategy for People with a Disability: Collaborative Working in the Housing and Disability Steering Groups*. Forthcoming.

Importantly however, according to the respondents, the two most important roles played by members of the Housing and Disability Steering Groups are:

1. To increase understanding of the needs of disabled people, and
2. To understand and plan for emerging need.

It is important that members see that there are benefits to the work of the groups and interestingly, the benefits most frequently mentioned are 'increased knowledge and skill' (81%) and 'better understanding of the perspectives of others' (75%).

The survey also found that achieving better relationships with other organisations and increasing access to information were the two more frequently mentioned benefits achieved through collaborating with others in the Housing and Disability Steering Groups; 79% of respondents stated that they had achieved these benefits while 73% said that they were better able to represent disabled people. Playing a role in the implementation of the National Strategy was a benefit mentioned by 74% of respondents while only 34% identified 'increased legitimacy as an organisation' as a benefit for their organisation. Access to resources was mentioned by fewer than half of all respondents (44%).

The findings of this research, contained in Collaborative working in the Housing and Disability Steering Groups, will be taken into consideration when developing the detailed actions regarding the Housing and Disability Steering Groups in the Implementation Plan by the second quarter of 2022.

# Chapter 7: Consultation

As part of the development of the new National Housing Strategy for Disabled People, it was crucial that any consultation process would be informed by the UNCRPD and be conducted in an accessible and participative way.

Consultation for the new Strategy was due to commence in 2020, but due to the impact of the Covid-19 pandemic the previous strategy was extended, and consultation on the new Strategy was deferred until 2021.

The Housing Agency was tasked with conducting an accessible and participative consultation process. Due to the nature of the pandemic, initial plans for in-person cross country consultations had to be reconsidered.

However, while in-person events would have been preferable, the pandemic did provide an opportunity for The Housing Agency to connect with people using different technologies and consult with a broad range of stakeholders.

The detail of the consultation process and feedback has been collated into a report that will be available on The Housing Agency’s website by the end of Q1 2022.

*“Better representation of people with disabilities is needed”  
From Consultation Round 1*



Figure 12: Contributors to the Development of the National Housing Strategy for Disabled People (2022 - 2027)

## 7.1 Round 1 Consultation

### 7.1.1 Background

The purpose of Round 1 of the consultation was to assist in getting as broad a view as possible as to what the issues were for disabled people accessing housing. The consultation consisted of three elements which included an online questionnaire, Housing and Disability Steering Group's Local Strategic Plans and organisation submissions.

### 7.1.2 Elements of Round 1 Consultation

#### Online Questionnaire

The aim of the questionnaire was to ascertain the effectiveness of the previous Strategy and to identify what should be brought forward into the new Strategy. To ensure the consultation was accessible for disabled people, The Housing Agency developed a number of formats.

There were three versions of the survey:

- an English version of the questionnaire,
- an Irish version of the questionnaire, and
- an Easy Read version.

An 'explainer' video was also made available, and the online versions of the questionnaires were enabled to allow the use of text-to-speech software. Each survey could be taken online or completed in print.

A total of 1,608 respondents undertook the survey.

*"Consult people with disabilities. We are the experts... nothing about us without us!"*

*From Consultation Round 1*

#### Local Strategic Plans

Each Housing and Disability Steering Group (HDSG) was requested to complete a Local Strategic Plan to feed into the Strategy development. 23 of the 31 HDSGs submitted plans by the requested date. The plans covered broad themes including awareness and promotion, stakeholder engagement, local aims and objectives, current and emerging housing need, housing delivery, supports (social and care), challenges, risks and opportunities. An analysis of the Local Strategic Plans was carried out on the submissions to identify the key themes and relevant issues at a local level.

#### Organisation Submissions

A number of stakeholders made submissions to The Housing Agency rather than completing the online questionnaire. An analysis of the submissions was carried out to identify the key themes and relevant issues within each disability category.

*"Just consider the needs of the individual"*

*From Consultation Round 1*

### 7.1.3. Findings of Round 1 Consultation

The survey asked respondents about their housing experience, awareness and knowledge of housing options and of the 2011-2016 Strategy and included demographic questions. It sought to ascertain awareness levels of the 2011-2016 Strategy, statutory housing options, interagency working and elicit views on independent living. Respondents were also asked to identify challenges and actions that they believed should be included in the new Strategy. The following infographic is a snapshot of some of the key findings of the consultation:

Respondents were asked to propose actions they would like to see included in the new strategy. The results included the following broad themes.

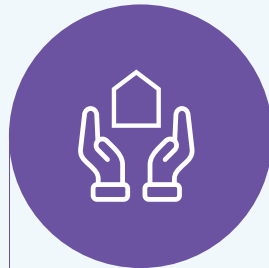
### Housing Application Process

Respondents called for streamlining and simplification of the application process for housing and support, the introduction of user-friendly application forms, support with submitting required documentation, the availability of designated contacts in every local authority to assist disabled people with applications.



### Funding

Respondents highlighted the need to access more funding to cover the cost of housing.



### Supports

Respondents highlighted the need for more supports when disabled people move into new homes.



### Housing Supply

Calls for increasing the supply of social housing and supported living accommodation.



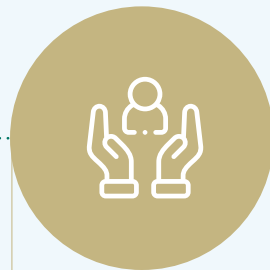
### Interagency Co-operation

Local authorities, the HSE, the DHLGH, AHBs and care providers, were urged to work more closely together. There were also calls to talk more to frontline managers and to strengthen links between architects and planners with occupational therapists.



### Mental Health Difficulties and Intellectual Disabilities

Respondents called for better plans to cater for the housing and care needs of people with “invisible” disabilities.



### Inclusion

The need for greater community involvement, inclusive neighbourhoods, modern residential community settings, community village-style developments, and education of the public in the needs and capabilities of disabled people were also highlighted.



### Calls to Action and Housing Rights

Respondents simply called for long-term planning and quicker action in the implementation of the strategy.

Figure 13: Broad Themes from Round 1 Consultation

## 7.2 Round 2 Consultation

### 7.2.1 Format

The purpose of Round 2 of the consultation was to explore in more detail the themes which evolved from Round 1 of the consultation and to develop key actions to assist in the delivery of the Strategy.

As part of the consultation process, the nine draft themes which were developed out of Round 1 were circulated to attendees ahead of the various consultations. An easy-to-read version of the draft themes was also circulated, along with an explainer video. These draft themes were:

- Accessible Housing and Living Independently in the Community
- Interagency Cooperation and Collaboration
- Increase Affordability
- Building Capacity, Knowledge and Expertise
- Access to Information
- Continue Decongregation
- Mental Health
- Data Collection
- Review and Monitoring

*“Good intentions are often lost in ‘process’. Budgets and other constraints are significant but it’s often not these that are the primary barriers to delivering services. Excessive bureaucracy, perverse logic and concerns about image are a big part of what hampers real outcomes on the ground. It’s like the intention ‘gets lost in translation’ from policy to practice.”*

*From Consultation Round 2*

The consultations consisted of multiple online focus groups with a range of stakeholders (85 people in total), and were structured as follows:

#### 1. Disability Participation and Consultation Network (DPCN) (35 people)

Two online focus group consultations were held with the DPCN. These focus groups were facilitated by the Network with 35 people attending across both events. Irish Sign Language interpreters were provided for the attendees. The draft themes were discussed in breakout rooms.

#### 2. Local Authorities, Approved Housing Bodies, the Irish Council for Social Housing and the HSE (35 people)

Two online focus group consultations were held with representatives of local authorities, Approved Housing Bodies, the Irish Council for Social Housing and the HSE. These focus groups had an external facilitator and breakout rooms were used for discussion on the nine draft themes.

#### 3. The National Federation of Voluntary Service Providers (15 people)

One online focus group was held with the members of the Federation, with 15 people attending. Each draft theme was discussed, and the consultation was facilitated by the Federation.

*“The lack of a pathway to supports and housing for a person who wishes to move out of the family home and live independently in the community”.*

*From Consultation Round 2*

## 7.2.2. Findings from Round 2 Consultation

Overall, there was broad consistency in the feedback regarding the main issues, challenges and potential solutions. While the feedback on the draft themes reinforced the general structure of the themes from Round 1, there was also some useful feedback on amending certain aspects, with suggestions on combining and separating some themes.

The following is a summary of the recurring issues that emerged in Round 2:



Figure 14: Round 2 Feedback

*"We need to link support services and housing together"*

*From Consultation Round 2*

The feedback from this round of consultation was then analysed to inform the development of the final themes, outcomes, and actions of the new Strategy. Following the analysis, the following amendments were made:

- The feedback was so strong on living independently, that this has become an overarching aspect of the Strategy.
- Communication was discussed so frequently that it was agreed it needed to be named.
- A theme for Strategy Alignment was introduced. This is to ensure the Strategy is aligned with Housing for All, National Disability Inclusion Strategy, UNCRPD Implementation Plan, Sharing the Vision and Time to Move on from Congregated Settings in particular, as well as any other cross Governmental strategies.

- The feedback on data collection suggested that this should be across all themes rather than a single standalone theme and that this should be a focus under Interagency Cooperation and Collaboration.
- It was proposed that a section for review and monitoring of the overall Strategy will be included in the body of the document.

The original nine themes were re-organised into six themes. These themes then formed the basis of the new Strategy. These are:

**Theme 1** – Accessible Housing and Communities

**Theme 2** – Interagency Collaboration and the Provision of Supports

**Theme 3** – Affordability of Housing

**Theme 4** – Communication and Access to Information

**Theme 5** – Knowledge, Capacity, and Expertise

**Theme 6** – Strategy Alignment


These themes will be discussed in more detail in Chapter 9 (pg. 55).

# Section 3

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## Where We Want to Get To

This section sets out how from a housing point of view the Strategy will help to deliver on the objectives of the UNCRPD. The principle of living independently and being included in the community underpins this Strategy and this section sets out the desired outcomes under each of the Strategy themes and what initial actions will be taken to commence this process.



Independence

# Chapter 8: The Strategy and the United Nations Convention on the Rights of Persons with Disabilities

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The UNCRPD is the international treaty which promotes, protects, and ensures the full and equal enjoyment of all human rights by disabled people.

The outcomes of the new national Strategy are and will continue to be informed by the relevant UNCRPD Articles, as well as the general principles of the UNCRPD and will promote the realisation of disabled people's rights.

The implementation of the new housing Strategy will be monitored through the lens of the UNCRPD.

The Articles of the Convention cover a wide range of areas including accessibility, independent living, education, health, work and employment. A number of articles have particular relevance within this Strategy. These are listed below in numerical order:

## Article 4.1 (f)<sup>48</sup>

This Article states 'To undertake or promote research and development of universally designed goods, services, equipment and facilities, as defined in article 2 of the present Convention, which should require the minimum possible adaptation and the least cost to meet the specific needs of a person with disabilities, to promote their availability and use, and to promote universal design in the development of standards and guidelines.'

### Statement of Intent

The Strategy will promote the purposes of Article 4(1)(f) through the inclusion of a Universal Design approach to housing.

## Article 4.3 - General Obligations

This Article states 'In the development and implementation of legislation and policies to implement the present Convention, and in other decision-making processes concerning issues relating to persons with disabilities, States Parties shall closely consult with and actively involve persons with disabilities, including children with disabilities, through their representative organisations.'

### Statement of Intent

The Strategy will promote the purposes of Article 4.3 through continued consultation and ensuring the effective participation of disabled people in decision-making, through local and national fora.

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48 UNCRPD, Article 4 – *General obligations*. Available here: [Article 4 – General obligations](#) | United Nations Enable

## Article 9 - Accessibility<sup>49</sup>

Article 9 states 'To enable persons with disabilities to live independently and participate fully in all aspects of life, States Parties shall take appropriate measures to ensure to persons with disabilities access, on an equal basis with others, to the physical environment, to transportation, to information and communications, including information and communications technologies and systems, and to other facilities and services open or provided to the public, both in urban and in rural areas.'

### Statement of Intent

The Strategy will promote the purposes of Article 9 through the increased provision of accessible homes in the right locations, accessible information and assistive technology, and building awareness of the need for accessible communities, thereby promoting people's participation in their communities.

## Article 19 - Living Independently and Being Included in the Community<sup>50</sup>

Article 19 Living independently and being included in the community, ensures disabled people have equal rights in accessing housing and equal rights to accessing supports necessary to allow them to live independently within the community. The Article states:

Parties to the present Convention recognise the equal right of all persons with disabilities to live in the community, with choices equal to others, and shall take effective and appropriate measures to facilitate full enjoyment by persons with disabilities of this right and their full inclusion and participation in the community, ensuring that:

- A. Persons with disabilities have the opportunity to choose their place of residence and where and with whom they live on an equal basis with others and are not obliged to live in a particular living arrangement.
- B. Persons with disabilities have access to a range of in-home, residential and other community support services, including personal assistance necessary to support living and inclusion in the community, and to prevent isolation or segregation from the community.

## UNCRPD General Comment 5 - Living Independently and Being Included in the Community<sup>51</sup>

*UNCRPD General Comment 5* was published in 2017 and aims to assist State parties in their implementation of Article 19 of the Convention. It relates primarily to the obligation to ensure every person's enjoyment of the right to live independently and be included in the community, and for individuals to have choice and control over where they live, supporting the person's will and preference.

### Statement of Intent

The Strategy will promote the purposes of Article 19 by ensuring that disabled people have equal access to housing and clearer pathways to accessing support services, promoting their inclusion in the community from a housing perspective.

49 UNCRPD, *Article 9 - Accessibility*. Available here: [Article 9 - Accessibility | United Nations Enable](#)

50 UNCRPD, *Article 19 - Living independently and being included in the community*. Available here: [Article 19 - Living independently and being included in the community | United Nations Enable](#)

51 UNCRPD, *General comment no. 5 (2017) on living independently and being included in the community*. Available here: [General comment no. 5 \(2017\) on living independently and being included in the community](#)

## Article 28 - Adequate Standard of Living and Social Protection<sup>52</sup>

This Article states:

1. 'States Parties recognise the right of persons with disabilities to an adequate standard of living for themselves and their families, including adequate food, clothing and housing, and to the continuous improvement of living conditions, and shall take appropriate steps to safeguard and promote the realisation of this right without discrimination on the basis of disability.
2. States Parties recognise the right of persons with disabilities to social protection and to the enjoyment of that right without discrimination on the basis of disability, and shall take appropriate steps to safeguard and promote the realisation of this right, including measures:
  - (d) To ensure access by persons with disabilities to public housing programmes;'

### Statement of Intent

The Strategy will promote the purposes of Article 28 by ensuring disabled people have equal access to public housing and providing pathways to affordable housing.

## Article 31 – Statistics and Data Collection<sup>53</sup>

This Article states:

1. 'States Parties undertake to collect appropriate information, including statistical and research data, to enable them to formulate and implement policies to give effect to the present Convention. The process of collecting and maintaining this information shall:
  - a) Comply with legally established safeguards, including legislation on data protection, to ensure confidentiality and respect for the privacy of persons with disabilities;
  - b) Comply with internationally accepted norms to protect human rights and fundamental freedoms and ethical principles in the collection and use of statistics.
2. The information collected in accordance with this article shall be disaggregated, as appropriate, and used to help assess the implementation of States Parties' obligations under the present Convention and to identify and address the barriers faced by persons with disabilities in exercising their rights.
3. States Parties shall assume responsibility for the dissemination of these statistics and ensure their accessibility to persons with disabilities and others.'

### Statement of Intent

The Strategy will promote the purposes of Article 31 by collecting data to inform and enable the efficient coordination of housing and housing related services, that will be easily accessed and regularly published.

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52 UNCRPD, *Article 28 – Adequate standard of living and social protection*. Available here: [Article 28 – Adequate standard of living and social protection](#) | United Nations Enable

53 UNCRPD, *Article 31 – Statistics and data collection*. Available here: [Article 31 – Statistics and data collection](#) | United Nations Enable



# Chapter 9: Vision and Themes

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## 9.1 Vision

Living independently and being included in the community encompasses a wide variety of elements. These include promoting disabled people's inclusion through areas such as transport, employment, community and social services, and housing. The Government's upcoming UNCRPD Implementation Plan will outline a cross government and department approach to implementing the Convention. One aspect of this will be Article 19 – Living independently and being included in the community, and this Strategy aims to complement and align with this work to ensure disabled people's rights are promoted, and people have access to housing.

### **The Vision for the Strategy is:**

*To facilitate disabled people to live independently with the appropriate choices and control over where, how and with whom they live, promoting their inclusion in the community.*

*To further enable equal access for disabled people to housing with integrated support services.*

## 9.2 Overarching Approach

The overarching vision of the Strategy, driven by the feedback to the consultation is to facilitate independent living. The themes below emerged as the feedback from the consultation process was carefully considered and refined. The themes take account of the outcomes needed to facilitate independent living. The Implementation Plan that will be prepared and published by the end of Q2 2022 will contain the detail of how the outcomes can be achieved and progress monitored. However, the Strategy contains some initial actions that will be commenced ahead of the publication of the Implementation Plan. The inclusion of such actions shows the Government's intent to address the issues faced by disabled people accessing housing and to provide a clear signal to the stakeholders that action is required immediately.

In addition to the themes, the following provisions will be made to address other issues raised during the consultation process and to align this Strategy clearly to Housing for All:

- Each local authority will nominate Disability-Friendly Housing Technical Advisors.
- Each local authority will nominate a representative from their Housing Departments to lead on the interagency collaboration.
- The HSE will nominate a housing coordinator in each Community Health Organisation (CHO) area for both Mental Health Services and Disability Services to lead on the interagency collaboration.
- The Housing Agency's role will be expanded to take a more proactive role in ensuring the delivery of the actions under the Strategy and to coordinate the interagency collaboration at regional and national level.
- The Housing Agency will be tasked with ensuring the smooth implementation of the Assisted Decision-Making Act<sup>54</sup> for the housing departments of local authorities and Approved Housing Bodies, including the preparation of guides and provision of training.

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54 Department of Justice, *Assisted Decision-Making (Capacity) Act 2015*. Accessed November 2021: gov.ie - Assisted Decision-Making (Capacity) Act 2015 (www.gov.ie)

Respondents were asked how more opportunities for independent living could be provided. The results included the following broad themes.

### Housing

'Build houses' and 'build more houses' were typical responses and the most frequently noted requirement for providing opportunities for independent living.



### Preparation for Independent Living

Respondents noted the right support at the right time was needed, across the lifespan from being cared for by family, to long-term care provided by the State.



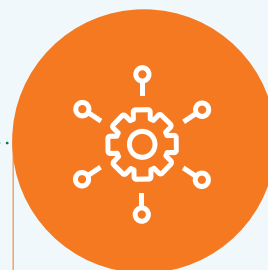
### Data and Research

Information and data to inform policy and decision making were noted as important by respondents.



### Strategy and Policy

A need for commitment by Government was noted by respondents, with action based on evidence and data built by disability providers outlining the needs of their clients.



### Interagency Co-operation

An important issue for respondents was that agencies would continue to develop a holistic approach to facilitate independent living and 'strengthen a separate pathway to identify and provide accessible social housing for disabled people' with 'integrated decision making and inclusion in planning for future of all people involved'.

## Communication, Respect and Empathy

Better, open and clear communication for carers of disabled people about options and information was identified. Understanding, listening, supporting, fairness, empathy and giving a sense of hope and belonging for disabled people were called for.



## Support

The need for support, with an emphasis on greatly increased levels of support, was stated by respondents as crucial to independent living, and with many linking the need for housing with the need for support.



## Organisational Models

Various organisational models were identified by respondents to delivery opportunities for independent living.



## Funding

Funding was identified as fundamental to achieving independent living.

Figure 15: Opportunities for Independent Living



Figure 16: Strategy Themes

## 9.3 Themes

### 9.3.1 Theme 1 – Accessible Housing and Communities



## Overview

This theme focuses on the provision of accessible housing for disabled people and the promotion of accessible communities and universally designed homes. It is informed by the UNCRPD and, in particular, Article 19 - Living independently and being included in the community and Article 9 – Accessibility which aims “to enable disabled people to live independently .....and ensure disabled people have access, on an equal basis with others, to the physical environment.” It is important that this theme aligns with Housing for All, in particular:

- **Pathway 2** – Eradicating Homelessness, Increasing Social Housing Delivery and Supporting Social Inclusion, and
- **Pathway 3** – Increasing New Housing Supply

This theme highlights the different needs that arise for disabled people when it comes to accessibility for their homes and their local communities (easy access to services, shops and public transport, as appropriate), and by ensuring there are targets for the delivery of accessible houses. This theme will also explore how we can better utilise Assistive Technology and ensure accessibility standards in housing developments.

*“All disabilities are different - accommodation needs of a visually impaired person, a physically disabled person and a person with sensory integration difficulties would all be very different.”*

*From Consultation Round 1*

## Theme 1 Outcomes

- There is an increase in the provision of accessible housing for disabled people by the setting of local, need-related targets for all social housing providers using a universal design approach, as appropriate.
- Disabled people are supported to avail of housing opportunities that arise through the increase in supports, both formal and informal.
- Communities and housing developments are more accessible for disabled people.
- Local authorities strategically plan for the housing needs of disabled people in their administrative area.
- Provision of housing and related supports, that is in line with UNCRPD principles, is supported through collaboration between the HSE and local authorities at both national and local level and appropriate funding.

*“Independent Living is wider than housing - the physical environment is key to enabling someone to live independently.”*

*From Consultation Round 1*

## Initial Workplan<sup>55</sup>

- Review Local Delivery Action Plans and with the benefit of new data and research, e.g. the Cost of Universal Design Review by the NDA to inform policy and practice, set appropriate targets for provision and allocation from 2023 onwards.
- For 2022, local authorities have set their targets in Local Strategic Plans including such targets as:

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55 The tasks set out under the Initial Workplan for each Theme will also form part of the Implementation Plan as not all will be completed in advance of the publication of the Plan

- 15% of all allocations of dwellings by a local authority being allocated to disabled people and appropriate health and social care being put in place to allow people to take up their housing opportunities.
  - 10% of new dwellings in all general social housing<sup>56</sup> developments of 10 dwellings or more being reserved for households qualified under a basis of need of disability.
  - 50% of the new pipeline delivery<sup>57</sup> being reserved for disabled people in each LA being wheelchair liveable i.e. meeting Centre for Excellence in Universal Design UD Home recommendations.
- These Local Strategic Plans will be reviewed during 2022 to take account of the outcomes and actions of the new Strategy and its Implementation Plan and to align with Local Delivery Action Plans and other actions from Housing for All.
  - Co-ordinated action between local authorities and the HSE to plan and deliver on housing targets for disabled people in the community (including decongregation) in line with the forthcoming Disability Services Action Plan 2022-2025.
  - Examine the possibility of the provision of a service in sourcing accommodation similar to that of the Place Finders in Homeless Services.
  - Include other actions in the Implementation Plan to address delivery of the outcomes under this theme.

*“You must look at housing and location and local services together. I may need a house with accessible shops nearby and other such issues locally like good paths in the local park or no steps to cross the Luas tracks, etc. so if the housing is not supported locally by improved services, then they would not work for me as I cannot JUST stay in my accessible house”*

*From Consultation Round 1*

### 9.3.2 Theme 2 – Interagency Collaboration and the Provision of Supports



56 General here means non-specialist housing provision (e.g. homeless provision) and social housing includes local authority and AHB provision

57 In general, to prevent obstacles/delay to social housing delivery by requiring scheme redesign, new pipeline delivery means new social housing schemes being submitted to the department for approval

*"We had quite a good experience... through the development of projects – we identify need or have open discussion through the disability strategy groups. In practice it's to know your counterpart and be available to them and they to you. It's local and being consistent in positions, and knowing who you are working with, and having the information and connections that can follow through".*

*From Consultation Round 2*

## Overview

This theme seeks to build on the work that has already been done by strengthening these structures and by improving collaboration between the relevant agencies.

This theme includes outcomes relating to the improvement of effective collaboration between local authorities and the HSE, better inter-departmental cooperation, aligning housing and support services and the sharing of relevant information between agencies.

*"Level of interagency cooperation, only words on a page unless there are actions attached".*

*From Consultation Round 2*

## Theme 2 Outcomes

- Disabled people have a clear pathway to accessing housing and support services.
- A regulatory landscape/framework is in place that best supports the delivery of housing for disabled people.
- Local authorities and the HSE work and collaborate efficiently, improving access to housing for disabled people.
- Local authorities, Approved Housing Bodies, the HSE and Service Providers work and collaborate efficiently, improving access to housing for disabled people, providing community-based residential care for disabled people, and working towards ending provision of residential care in institutional or congregated settings.
- The Assessment and Allocation Guidelines are embedded in the policies and procedures of the local authorities and the HSE.
- Coordination is improved and there is an increase of capital and revenue funding for housing and related supports.

*"Interagency cooperation: clear levels of accountability are needed which aren't there at the moment. It's not clear what agency is accountable. Who is taking the lead and we need very clear lines of communication".*

*From Consultation Round 2*

## Initial Workplan

- Each local authority's nominated representative from their Housing Departments will work closely with the HSE nominated housing coordinators in each CHO area for both Mental Health Services and Disability Services.
- Extend the Tenancy Sustainment Officer role nationally through the AHB sector to work with local authorities and Approved Housing Bodies to support people with psychosocial difficulties or mental health difficulties to sustain their tenancies and prevent homelessness.

- Examine existing models of housing and supports to inform the establishment of a number of pilot projects to determine the optimum way that housing and support can be aligned to best meet the needs of disabled people.
- Plan and deliver on housing targets for disabled people (including decongregation) in line with the forthcoming Disability Services Action Plan 2022-2025 through co-ordinated action between housing authorities and HSE.
- Examine the way the different regulatory frameworks interact with one another with a view to ensuring that they are not a barrier to the delivery of housing for disabled people.
- Examine peer support models nationally and internationally to develop structures to support people to live full lives within their communities.
- Review the National Assessment and Allocation Guidelines to update and strengthen the key messages and embed them in the policies and procedures of LAs and the HSE.
- Revisit Key Measure 2.3. from the NHSPWD 2011 to 2016 (extended to 2021) to formalise a framework for multiannual funding for the improvement of the coordination of capital and revenue funding for housing and related supports.
- Review and update the protocols developed under the previous Strategy by the relevant stakeholders to ensure that they are fit for purpose and to reiterate the commitment to the protocols.
- Include other actions in the Implementation Plan to address delivery of the outcomes under this theme.

*“Greater cooperation between departments when an application crosses several sectors. There needs to be better monitoring of cases and one department should take responsibility and the lead in the case and ensure all other parties complete their individual tasks”.*

*From Consultation Round 2*

### 9.3.3 Theme 3 – Affordability of Housing





*“Housing has become unaffordable for people with disabilities but even with housing support payments, houses are not accessible due to lack of supply.”*

*From Consultation Round 2*

## Overview

This theme focuses on enabling access to affordable housing for disabled people. In keeping with Housing for All and, in particular, Pathway 1- Supporting Home Ownership and Increasing Affordability, it is important that disabled people are included in the provision of affordable housing.

Disabled people in Ireland are a group that are at a high risk of poverty with a large percentage of disabled people living in poverty and experiencing deprivation. It is also well documented that there are high costs associated with having a disability in Ireland which the current system of disability supports does not sufficiently factor in.

This theme will examine these issues and address the challenges disabled people experience with the private sector, in terms of home ownership and private renting.

*“Many people with disabilities are living in poverty, how will they afford rent?”*

*From Consultation Round 2*

## Theme 3 Outcomes

- Disabled people have access to affordable housing schemes.
- Disabled people can afford to purchase a home or rent at an affordable price.
- Grant schemes funded by the various Government departments are fit for purpose and there is clarity on areas of responsibility including the use of technology.

## Initial Workplan

- Engage with the stakeholders to the Cost Rental Scheme and Affordable Housing Schemes<sup>58</sup> to explore the potential for target setting under each scheme as they are rolled out.
- Carry out additional studies of international good practice in the delivery of housing of different tenures for disabled people including schemes identified through the Disability and Housing: Approaches in Other Jurisdictions research.
- Review the Capital Assistance Scheme (CAS) to ensure that it is being operated to its full potential to deliver housing for disabled people.
- Examine the findings from the Cost of Disability research and how they relate to housing for disabled people.<sup>59</sup>
- Review the terms and conditions of the various grant schemes including a consultation phase.
- Include other actions in the Implementation Plan to address delivery of the outcomes under this theme.

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58 See: gov.ie - Housing for All - a New Housing Plan for Ireland ([www.gov.ie](http://www.gov.ie)) for further information on the Cost Rental Scheme, Affordable Housing Schemes and the Capital Assistance Scheme

59 Department of Social Protection, *The Cost of Disability in Ireland – Research Report*. Available here: gov.ie - The Cost of Disability in Ireland – Research Report ([www.gov.ie](http://www.gov.ie))

### 9.3.4 Theme 4 – Communication and Access to Information



*“There is a lot of information out there in ‘easy read’. There is more in easy read now than there was a year ago and that needs to continue.”*

*From Consultation Round 2*

#### Overview

This theme focuses on communication and the access to information. The Strategy will continue to build on the information/accessibility achievements of the previous Strategy.

The Strategy is cognisant of the fact that communication is a two-way process. Being able to communicate is important in every aspect of life.

The Strategy will aim to ensure disabled people are not disadvantaged in communicating their needs and in the communication they receive. This includes providing information in a range of preferred accessible formats.

#### Theme 4 Outcomes

- A proactive and consistent approach is taken by agencies in the provision of information which is coordinated by The Housing Agency.
- There is an increase in the communication between State Agencies and disabled people regarding their housing opportunities both from a housing and support perspective.
- People are supported to have the time and opportunity they need to engage with services and local authorities.
- Information is provided in accessible formats in the one location.
- Better sharing of data to produce more collated data.

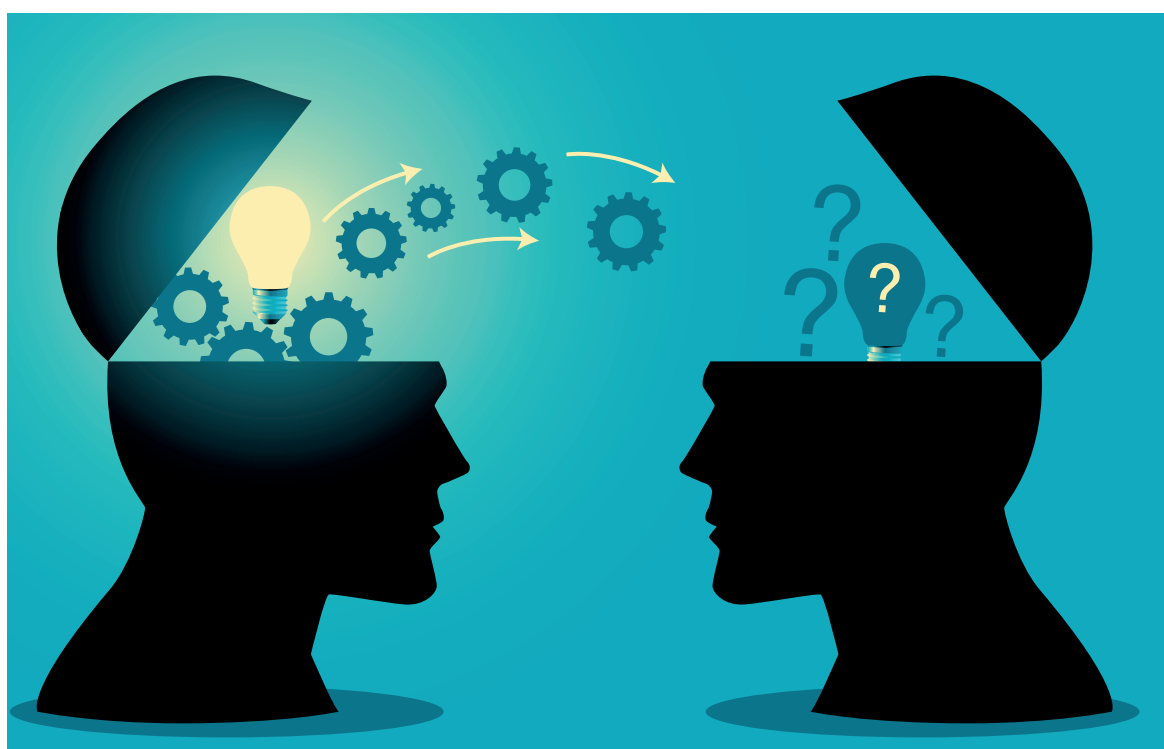
*“Provide information from HSE and Local Authorities together in the one place”*

*From Consultation Round 2*

## Initial Workplan

- Prepare and publish an Awareness Strategy to promote the Strategy by the end of Q2 2022 (The Housing Agency).
- Prepare and publish an Information and Communication Strategy by the end of Q3 2022 (The Housing Agency). This will set out how communication will be conducted at national and local level during the lifetime of the NHSDP.
- Build on [housingdesignforall.ie](https://housingdesignforall.ie)<sup>60</sup> by providing a one stop shop of information on housing and related matters which will be managed and updated on an ongoing basis.
- Expand the provision of accessible documentation to all accessible formats.
- Include other actions in the Implementation Plan to address delivery of the outcomes under this theme.

### 9.3.5 Theme 5 – Knowledge, Capacity, and Expertise



*“Having people with lived experience involved at meetings to enhance staff’s knowledge and understanding”*

*From Consultation Round 2*

## Overview

To optimise housing delivery and support services for disabled people, it is important to share information, to apply existing knowledge and to build upon the expertise within organisations. It is important to recognise that the capacity to deliver an inclusive service to disabled people requires human resources with dedicated staff as outlined in Theme 2. Theme 5 puts forward measures to increase awareness and understanding of disability and housing within the relevant organisations. It also places an emphasis on increasing awareness regarding disabled people effectively participating and being included in their communities.

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60 See here for further information: Home - Housing for All ([housingdesignforall.ie](https://housingdesignforall.ie))

It includes outcomes relating to the building of knowledge and expertise within the housing sector on disability and on the building of knowledge and expertise within the HSE on housing and disability. It also acknowledges areas where cross-agency training is necessary, for example, the introduction and application of the Assisted Decision-Making (Capacity) Act 2015 as well as ongoing training on the UNCRPD and public sector duty. Where appropriate and practical, training by disabled people will be included.

*‘Work on the bias that exists towards [disabled] people.’*

*From Consultation Round 1*

## **Theme 5 Outcomes**

- Local authorities, the HSE and Approved Housing Bodies have the knowledge base, expertise and capacity to provide services and relevant information to disabled people.
- Knowledge and expertise regarding disability issues are integrated into all relevant organisations.
- There is an understanding of each other’s roles among the various stakeholders which results in an improved service to disabled people.
- Local authority and Approved Housing Body staff implement the changes required to meet their obligations under the Assisted Decision-Making Act 2015.

*“More learning to be available to the people providing and building the properties”*

*From Consultation Round 1*

## **Initial Workplan**

- Design and deliver training sessions for stakeholders around all roles and responsibilities, creating a shared understanding of the role and responsibilities of each department and stakeholder (The Housing Agency).
- Prepare and deliver a training programme to local authority housing staff and staff from Approved Housing Bodies on process and procedural changes required to implement the Assisted Decision-Making Act 2015 (The Housing Agency).
- Include other actions in the Implementation Plan to address delivery of the outcomes under this theme.

*“Having the training and realise what would be suitable for disabled people - not just the house but also the right location – close to services, close to transport etc”.*

*From Consultation Round 2*

### 9.3.6 Theme 6 – Strategy Alignment



#### Overview

This theme places a focus on ensuring that all Government strategies and policies from a housing perspective promote the rights of disabled people, in line with the UNCRPD. This will ensure that the new National Housing Strategy for Disabled People 2022 – 2027 complements and supports other strategies related to disability, such as the Sharing the Vision and the Time to Move on From Congregated Settings Strategy for de-congregation, and the work, in line with the Programme for Government commitment, to make progress on the need for housing with relevant supports identified in the Disability Capacity Review to 2032.

This theme will also place a focus on aligning other strategies and policies, such as Housing for All, and the new Local Delivery Action Plans established under its framework, and the Public Sector Duty.<sup>61</sup>

It is important that all strategies not only align but promote the inclusion and effective participation of disabled people in their implementation.

#### Theme 6 Outcomes

- The Strategy is underpinned by Housing for All and the new Local Delivery Action Plans established under its framework.
- The Government strategies such as Sharing the Vision, A Time to Move on from Congregated Settings complement and feed into the new National Housing Strategy for Disabled People and associated Implementation Plan.
- The Implementation Plan for this Strategy will take cognisance of the Disability Capacity Review to 2032, and Wasted Lives.

61 Department of Public Expenditure and Reform, *Public Sector Equality and Human Rights Duty*. Accessed November 2021: gov.ie - Public Sector Equality and Human Rights Duty ([www.gov.ie](http://www.gov.ie))

- There is an alignment of strategies promoting the rights of disabled people so housing provision is not considered in a silo.

### **Initial Workplan**

- Undertake a mapping of the relevant policies to be considered and coordinated with this Strategy, to develop further actions for this theme as a start for 2022.
- Include actions in the Implementation Plan to address delivery of the outcomes under this theme.

A smiling woman with long brown hair is high-fiving a man whose back is to the camera. They are in an office environment with blurred background elements like plants and windows. A large blue diagonal overlay covers the bottom half of the image.

# Section 4

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## How We Will Get There

This section sets out the timeframe for the preparation and delivery of the detailed roadmap for the implementation of the Strategy, through the Implementation Plan, as well as setting out the national and local structures that will be tasked with the delivery. This section also highlights the importance of monitoring progress and the use of data to assist with the monitoring.

# Chapter 10: Implementation Plan

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Chapter 9 above outlines the outcomes that are required from the Strategy along with some of the initial actions that will be required to achieve these outcomes. It is important that a detailed Implementation Plan is prepared in a timely manner following the publication of the Strategy.

The Housing Agency will be tasked with preparing the Implementation Plan. The Department of Housing, Local Government and Heritage will lead a tri-departmental Working Group that will be responsible for signing off on the Implementation Plan. The Working Group will request the partners to the delivery of this Strategy to attend Group meetings on an ad hoc basis to obtain commitments from the partner organisations on the delivery of relevant actions. The Group may request additional information and clarity on any aspect of the plan. The Housing Agency will provide the administrative support to this Group.

The Implementation Plan will document the actions required to achieve each outcome under the various Themes. Each action will include the following detail:

- A clear description of the action and how the action will be monitored.
- The lead organisation responsible for the delivery of each action.
- The partners for the delivery of the action.
- The timeframe for the completion of the action.
- Inclusion of an interim target.

## 10.1 Midterm Review

A midterm review will be carried out commencing in the first quarter of 2024 with a view to having the review published by the end of Q2 of 2024. The review will take into consideration the data and information available at that time such as the Cost Assessment of Universal Design Housing and the Universal Design Cost Benefit Analysis and will be informed by any future relevant disability policies developed over the lifetime of the Strategy. The review will also consider whether it is appropriate to revise any of the deliverables or targets under the Strategy.

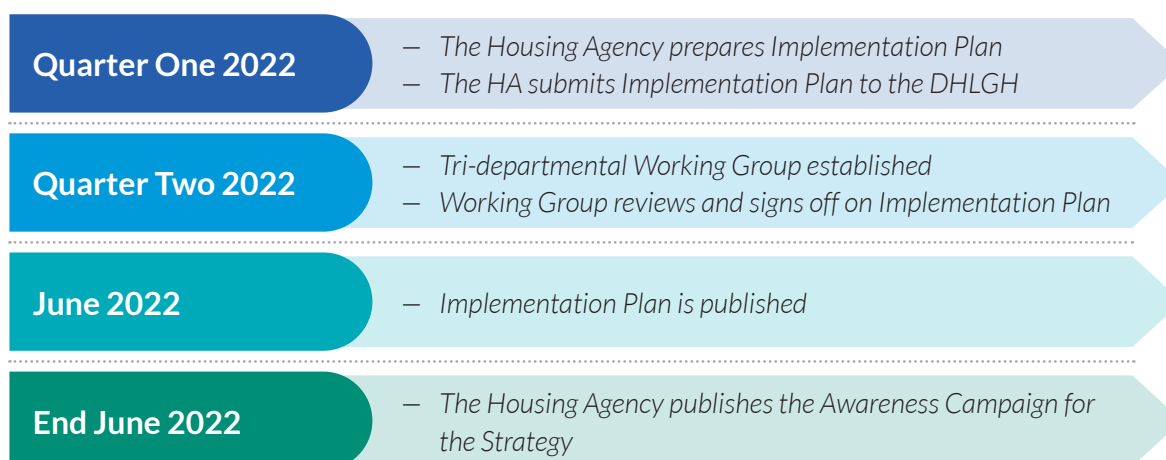


Figure 17: Timelines for Publication on Implementation Strategy



# Chapter 11: Implementation Structures

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Theme 2 highlights the importance of interagency cooperation and collaboration. While ad hoc cooperation and collaboration has been taking place for many years at local level, the structures established under the National Housing Strategy for People with a Disability 2011 to 2016 (extended to 2021) (set out in Chapter 2 (pg.17)) put the interagency cooperation on a formal footing. These structures at both national and local level demonstrated how such groups were in many instances an effective way to deliver on actions in the previous Strategy.

The NHSDP 2022 to 2027 seeks to build on the work that has been done in establishing these structures and to bring the work of the groups to the next level.

It is proposed that the following structures are established:

- National Implementation Subgroup.
- Housing and Disability Steering Groups.
- National Thematical Focus Groups.
- Regional Interagency Groups.
- Bi-monthly meetings of the dedicated disability personnel in local authorities.

## 11.1 National Implementation Subgroup

This group will be responsible for driving the implementation of the Strategy and the monitoring of progress. The Subgroup will meet bi-monthly with an additional special meeting annually to examine progress on each Theme. This group is an amalgamation of the existing structures at national level.

The bi-monthly meetings will be chaired by The Housing Agency with the special monitoring meeting chaired by the Assistant Secretary General of the Department of Housing, Local Government and Heritage.

The membership of the National Implementation Subgroup will be reviewed annually to ensure appropriate representation. The initial membership will consist of:

- Representatives of Disabled Persons Organisations.
- Representatives of Disability Umbrella Organisations.
- A representative from each of the following Government Departments: Department of Housing, Local Government and Heritage (DHLGH), the Department of Health (DoH) and the Department of Children, Equality, Disability, Integration and Youth (DCEDIY).
- Representatives from local authorities at Director of Services for Housing level nominated through the City and County Managers Association.
- A representative from the Irish Council for Social Housing.
- A representative from the HSE, both Mental Health and Disabilities.
- A representative from the National Disability Authority.

The agenda of the National Implementation Subgroup will be to drive the delivery of the actions under the Strategy. The subgroup will be responsible for trying to resolve issues escalated from local level through the Housing and Disability Steering Group chairs.

The Subgroup will prepare an annual report that will document the progress in the previous year on each Theme according to the targets and indicators set out in the Implementation Plan. An overall review of the Strategy will be carried out by the group no later than quarter two of 2028.

A new forum is being planned, to create a link between central Government and local authorities on the application of the UNCRPD at local authority level. The National Implementation Subgroup will establish the appropriate linkages to that forum in respect of housing when established.

## 11.2 Housing and Disability Steering Groups (HDSGs)

The National Housing Strategy for People with a Disability 2011 to 2016 (extended to 2021) called for the establishment of Housing and Disability Steering Groups in each local authority area. It was envisaged that the groups would allow for an integrated and strategic response to the needs of disabled people at local level.

This Strategy reaffirms the structure of the Housing and Disability Steering Group as the most effective forum for the delivery of the outcomes of the Strategy at local level. The membership of the existing HDSGs must be reviewed in quarter one of 2022 to ensure that the membership consists of the following:

- Director of Housing Services in the local authority (Chair).
- HSE Community Health Organisation Area Manager or equivalent.
- Dedicated Housing Representative for Disability Service HSE.
- Dedicated Housing Representative for Mental Health Service HSE.
- Representatives of Disabled Persons Organisations.
- Representatives of organisations for disabled people including service providers.
- Representatives of the Approved Housing Body sector.
- Representatives from the local authority, as appropriate.

Each Group will review and agree their terms of reference based on the requirements of Housing for All and this Strategy. The terms of reference for each Group will be submitted to the National Implementation Subgroup via The Housing Agency no later than the end of quarter two of 2022.

The Groups will be required to review and consult as appropriate on their Local Strategic Plan by the end of 2022 to ensure that it aligns with the Strategy and Housing for All.

Based on the survey findings<sup>62</sup> and issues raised during the consultation on the development of this Strategy, some of the issues that the HDSGs should examine in quarter one of 2022 are:

1. Establish clear goals which are agreed upon and which all members commit to achieving.
2. Meetings to be bi-monthly with a clear agenda, to increase shared responsibility and continuity, setting and achieving key objectives and a shared work plan.
3. Members of the Group must be at a senior level in their organisations.
4. Examine whether there is a need for interagency protocols to improve engagement, collaboration, and planning.

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5. A commitment from all members to increase their involvement in identifying issues and in finding collaborative solutions.

*“Through the disability steering groups, there is more awareness because we are collaborating with the disability sector”*

*From Consultation Round 2*

### **11.3 National Thematic Advisory Groups**

An individual focus group will be established in 2022 for each Theme for the lifetime of the Strategy. The Groups will advise the National Implementation Subgroup as required on the actions under the relevant Theme.

The membership of the groups will be drawn from people with lived experience, experts in the relevant areas and other interested parties. Each group should consist of no more than eight members. Membership will be reviewed on an annual basis to ensure that it remains relevant and fresh.

The Groups will be convened by The Housing Agency as required, as actions are progressed. The Housing Agency will provide administrative support to the groups.

### **11.4 Regional Interagency Groups**

Initially these Groups will be established based on the HSE CHO areas but will be aligned to any reorganisation of these areas over the lifetime of the Strategy.

The role of these Groups will be to bring together the local authority dedicated disability representatives and the HSE dedicated housing representatives for both Disability Services and Mental Health Services to allow for cooperation and collaboration at an operational level.

In addition, the Groups will:

- aim to bring consistency across their organisations, and
- evaluate any pilot structures or process progressed in their area.

The Groups will be facilitated by The Housing Agency, who will chair and provide administrative support to the Groups and will meet at least each quarter. A national forum of all the regional Groups will be held annually.

### **11.5 Bi-monthly Meetings of the Dedicated Disability Personnel in Local Authorities**

This Strategy requires a dedicated disability resource within the housing department of each local authority who will be responsible for the coordination of the interagency collaboration. The person will also be coordinator of the Housing and Disability Steering Groups. The Housing Agency will facilitate a bi-monthly meeting of the dedicated disability personnel in local authorities to try to ensure consistency of practice across local authorities including in the quarterly reporting to the LA Strategic Policy Committee and the National Implementation Subgroup. This Group will also act as a platform for problem solving or escalation of issues and will identify areas of policy or practice where training needs arise.

# Chapter 12: Monitoring and Data Collection

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## 12.1 Monitoring of Progress

The monitoring of the Strategy will be a crucial element of its success. The monitoring will take a number of forms and will be at a number of levels.

*“Local strategic plans should be consistent across local authorities and include measurable and deliverable targets, rather than be aspirational in nature.”*

*From Consultation Round 1*

### 12.1.1 National Level

At a national level the progress of strategy implementation will be formally monitored through the annual report of the National Implementation Subgroup. The report will provide a summary of the progress in the previous year and will be published no later than the end of Q1 each year. The report will also review each of the actions set out in the Implementation Plan and document progress in tabular form and will provide information on progress towards targets.

All stakeholders to the National Implementation Subgroup will be required, as appropriate, to provide an update for the annual report.

At a semi formal level, the National Implementation Subgroup will have a standing item on its agenda that will flag areas where there any barriers or challenges to progress.

The Housing Agency will collate the quarterly reports made to the Strategic Policy Committees by the Housing and Disability Steering Group into a national report for the National Implementation Subgroup and these reports will be published on The Housing Agency’s website until the new integrated disability website is completed.

### 12.1.2 Local Level

#### Report to the Strategic Policy Committee

Housing and Disability Steering Groups are required under Housing for All to report to their Strategic Policy Committee (SPC) on a quarterly basis on the progress of all aspects of their Local Strategic Plans. These reports will also be required to be submitted to The Housing Agency who will monitor, on behalf of the National Implementation Subgroup, any issues arising that could result in a lack of progress on delivery. The report to the SPC and The Housing Agency will include as a minimum the following:

- The number of allocations made to disabled people in the previous quarter by disability category, identifying allocations of wheelchair liveable dwellings.
- The number of allocations made to disabled people in the previous quarter by disability category as a percentage of the overall allocations in the quarter.
- The number of dwellings identified and reserved for disabled people in the local authority and Approved Housing Bodies pipeline of development.
- The number of wheelchair liveable dwellings identified and reserved in the local authority and Approved Housing Bodies pipeline of development as a percentage of the overall pipeline for delivery.

- Additional or new supports provided in the previous quarter to allow disabled people to take up the housing opportunities afforded to them.
- How the actual number of allocations, identified pipeline for delivery and supports compare against the targets set.
- Refusals or offers not taken up and reasons why.
- Any barriers to delivery in line with the actions set out in this Strategy and/or that of their Local Strategic Plan.

## 12.2 Data Collection

*“Share the data that’s appropriate in the best interest of the service user and the service user knowing what’s being shared”.*

*From Consultation Round 2*

The National Housing Strategy for People with a Disability 2011 – 2016 (extended to 2021) identified data collection as key to the effective delivery of increased housing opportunities for disabled people under Strategic Aim 8. It is important that when considering what data is to be collected that the purpose of its collection is clear. The data required should be collected to inform housing strategies for disabled people and to allow for the efficient planning, in a coordinated way, of housing to meet the need and to support effective and ongoing monitoring of delivery.

There have been many changes in the rules governing data collection and use since the last Strategy. This included the introduction of the General Data Protection Regulation (GDPR) by the European Union.<sup>63</sup> The GDPR is a complex Regulation that required significant changes in how member states gather, use and manage personal data. The GDPR’s primary aim is to enhance individuals’ control and rights over their personal data. It was adopted by the EU on the 14 April 2016 and became enforceable from 25 May 2018. Unless a data subject has provided informed consent to data processing for one or more purposes, personal data may not be processed unless there is at least one legal basis to do so. GDPR must be adhered to when gathering information.

As outlined at 12.1.1 (pg. 74) above, The Housing Agency will collate local information on delivery, and this will be used as appropriate as part of the data collection.

### Information Available

#### Housing Need

Local authorities gather information for the purpose of assessing applicants for Social Housing Support through the Social Housing Application Form that incorporates the Housing Medical/Disability Form (HMD Form 1).<sup>64</sup>

The information held is based on households whose need for social housing is assessed as a disability or who require specific accommodation due to a disability are captured in the data under two fields, namely ‘Basis of Need’ and ‘Specific Accommodation Requirements’. The Social Housing Application Form was changed in April 2021 to allow an applicant to identify their housing need as wheelchair liveable. Local authorities were requested to amend their computer systems to allow for this new information to be recorded.

63 See Citizens Information, *Overview of the General Data Protection Regulation (GDPR)* for further information. Available here: [Overview of the General Data Protection Regulation \(GDPR\)](https://www.citizensinformation.ie/en/your-rights/your-rights-in-the-workplace/your-rights-in-the-workplace-overview-of-the-general-data-protection-regulation-gdpr) (citizensinformation.ie)

64 See Citizens Information, *Applying for local authority/social housing* for further information. Available here: [Applying for local authority/social housing](https://www.citizensinformation.ie/en/your-rights/your-rights-in-the-workplace/your-rights-in-the-workplace-applying-for-local-authority-social-housing) (citizensinformation.ie)

The information is classed as the current identified need. This information is shared with the Local Government Management Agency (LGMA) and The Housing Agency under formal agreements for the purpose of the preparation of the annual Summary of Social Housing Assessment.

### **Disability Funded Services**

NASS is a national database that records information about Health Service Executive (HSE) disability-funded services that are received or required because of an intellectual disability, developmental delay, physical, sensory, neurological, learning, speech and/or language disabilities or autism. Mental health as a type of disability is also recorded on NASS where an individual is in receipt of a HSE disability-funded service.

The data collected includes some information on current accommodation but over one third of the records on the database show the current accommodation as unknown. The format of the data collected also results in some ambiguity. For example, where the current accommodation is stated as private accommodation owner occupier, it is not clear if the disabled person is the owner occupier.

### **Proposal**

The Housing Agency will engage with the various stakeholders in Q1 of 2022 to set out in detail the information that is currently held and where any linkages exist. Following this engagement, a scoping exercise will be carried out to identify the data gaps and a group will be established in Q2 of 2022 to investigate how these gaps can be met and any changes that may be needed to existing data collection processes. The group will consist of the Health Research Board, the Local Government Management Agency, representatives from local authorities where the LGMA do not support their computer system, HSE Mental Health Services and the Irish Council for Social Housing. The group will report by the end of Q4 2022. The report will also document the timeframe for the implementation of any changes required to processes and/or systems.

# Appendix 1: Membership of the National Advisory Group

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Department of Housing, Local Government and Heritage (chaired by)

County and City Management Association

Department of Children, Equality, Disability, Integration and Youth

Department of Health

Department of Rural and Community Development

Disability Federation of Ireland

Health Service Executive

Inclusion Ireland

Independent Living Movement Ireland

Irish Council for Social Housing

Mental Health Reform

National Disability Authority

National Federation of Voluntary Service Providers

The Housing Agency

The National Platform of Self Advocates

# Appendix 2: Glossary of Terms

AHB	Approved Housing Bodies.
Assisted Decision-Making (Capacity) Act 2015	This is the statutory framework to support decision-making by adults who have difficulty in making decisions without help.
At risk of poverty rate	The at risk of poverty rate is the share of persons with an equivalised income below a given percentage (usually 60%) of the national median income. The rate is calculated by ranking persons by equivalised income from smallest to largest and then extracting the median (middle) value. Anyone with an equivalised income of less than 60% of the national median is considered to be at risk of poverty.
CAS	Capital Assistance Scheme.
CHO	Community Healthcare Organisation.
Consistent poverty	<p>The consistent poverty measure counts those who are at risk of poverty and who are experiencing enforced deprivation (two or more types of deprivation from the below list).</p> <p>An individual is defined as being in 'consistent poverty' if they are:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• At risk of poverty according to the definition above, and</li> <li>• Are living in a household deprived of two or more of the eleven basic items listed below.</li> </ul>
CSO	Central Statistics Office.
DCEDIY	Department of Children, Equality, Disability, Integration and Youth.
DHLGH	Department of Housing, Local Government and Heritage.
Design for Mental Health	Guidelines for the promotion of independent living and mental health recovery.



Deprivation rate	<p>This measures the households that are considered to be marginalised or deprived because they cannot afford goods and services which are considered to be the norm for other people in society. The identification of these households is based on a set of 11 basic deprivation indicators:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>● Two pairs of strong shoes.</li> <li>● A warm waterproof overcoat.</li> <li>● New (not second-hand) clothes.</li> <li>● A meal with meat, chicken, fish (or vegetarian equivalent) every second day.</li> <li>● A roast joint or its equivalent once a week.</li> <li>● Home heating during the last year.</li> <li>● Fuel to keep the home adequately warm.</li> <li>● Presents for family or friends at least once a year.</li> <li>● Replacement for worn out furniture.</li> <li>● Drinks or a meal for family or friends once a month.</li> <li>● A morning, afternoon or evening of entertainment once a fortnight.</li> </ul> <p>Enforced deprivation is defined as not being able to afford to buy two or more of these 11 basic deprivation indicators.</p>
Disabled Persons Grants	These are a range of grants available to older people and disabled persons for making their home more suitable for them to live in.
DoH	Department of Health.
DPCN	Disability Participation and Consultation Network.
DPO	Disabled Persons Organisations.
DSG	Disability Stakeholders Group.
GDPR	General Data Protection Regulation.
HA	The Housing Agency.
HDSG	Housing and Disability Steering Group.
HMD1	Housing Medical/Disability Form 1.
HSE	Health Service Executive.
JCDM	Joint Committee on Disability Matters.

LA	Local authority.
LGBTI+	Lesbian, Gay, Bisexual, Transgender and Intersex.
LSP	Local Strategic Plan.
Mental Health Early Intervention Process	This ensures positive housing outcomes for social housing tenants and applicants experiencing mental health difficulties.
NASS	National Ability Supports System.
National Guidelines for Assessment and Allocation Process for Housing Provision for People with a Disability	This is designed to provide guidance to local authorities on the process for housing provision for all people with a disability whether living in an institution or as part of the community.
NDIS	National Disability Inclusion Strategy.
NDIS	National Disability Insurance Scheme.
NHSDP	National Housing Strategy for Disabled People 2022 – 2027.
NHSPWD	National Housing Strategy for People with a Disability (2011-2016).
NSAI	National Standards Authority of Ireland.
OT	Occupational Therapist.
Place Finders	The Place Finder Service assists homeless households in exiting emergency accommodation, primarily by sourcing suitable accommodation and by providing access to the payment of a deposit and up to two months advance rent, within the HAP limits, on the behalf of the HAP recipient.
SPC	Strategic Policy Committee.
SSHA	Summary of Social Housing Assessments.
UN	United Nations.
UD	Universal Design.
UNCRPD	United Nations Convention on the Rights of Persons with Disabilities.

# Appendix 3: References

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