



**Irish Wheelchair Association's
Submission on the Draft State Report
Under the
United Nations Commission of the Rights of People with Disabilities Draft**

Irish Wheelchair Association (IWA) is Ireland's leading representative organisation and service provider for people with physical disabilities. We advocate for the needs of people with physical disabilities and provide services and support to over 20,000 members in their homes and communities throughout Ireland every year.

Our Vision:

Irish Wheelchair Association (IWA) has a vision of an Ireland where people with disabilities enjoy equal rights, choices and opportunities in how they live their lives, and where our country is a model worldwide for a truly inclusive society. We work with, and on behalf of, people with physical disabilities to drive positive change in Ireland through the influencing of public policy, the provision of quality services and enabling accessibility to all aspects of society.

Equality:

IWA believes in a fair and inclusive society. We work actively to ensure that every person with a physical disability in Ireland can achieve their right to an independent life, with **equal** access to opportunities, services and supports within their communities.

Services we provide:

- The largest of our services is the Assisted Living Service, which provides skilled home support through personal assistants, to people in their own homes and communities.
- Every year our 1,600 personal assistants provide over two million hours of support to help those with physical disabilities and other mobility impairments in their journeys towards independent living.
- We provide community centres, training facilities, social activities, and respite & holidays.
- We are an approved housing body providing 43 wheelchair accessible houses in 7 counties.
- Our accessible bus fleet of over 100 vehicles provides vital transport to our services for wheelchair users to our services.
- We are a leading provider of disabled parking permits for drivers with disabilities on behalf of the State.
- We advocate for the right of people with disabilities for equality, inclusion, and choice across all aspects of society.
- Our Access Guidelines set the standard for accessible design across the built environment and our access programme liaises and advises planners, builders, local authorities, and architects on accessible design.
- IWA Sport, is a National Governing Body for wheelchair sports and promotes sports, physical and recreational opportunities for people with disabilities.
- Our Ability Programme supports young jobseekers in building employment skills and confidence.
- People are central to everything we do with a focus on improving quality of life.

The ratification of the UNCRPD brought with it a legal basis for people with disabilities to have the right to live independently. This independence will only come when it is truly realised that people with disabilities have the same rights as everyone else across all aspects of life, such as equal access to transport, housing, education, and employment.

Until there is genuine consultation, political will, and the implementation of government policy, independence for people with disabilities will not be realised in Ireland.

Capturing the voices of our membership

As an organisation that advocates on behalf of people with disabilities and provides services to enable independent lives, we ensure our members voices are heard through many ongoing communications and engagement streams.

To capture their concerns, we use monthly information sessions, person-centred planning, and yearly surveys, which enable our members to inform us of the issues they are facing daily both at a regional and national level.

In this submission we will concentrate on five articles, which are the main issues that impact our members daily.

Article 9: Accessibility

Article 19: Living Independently

Article 20: Personal Mobility

Article 27: Employment

Article 30: Sport

Article 9 Accessibility

1. 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. These measures, which shall include the identification and elimination of obstacles and barriers to accessibility, shall apply to, inter alia:

(a) Buildings, roads, transportation and other indoor and outdoor facilities, including schools, housing, medical facilities and workplaces;

Accessible Buildings, services and public areas

State Response:

82. Part M (Access and Use) of Ireland's Building Regulations sets out the minimum statutory requirements for building accessibility, requiring adequate provision to be made for people to access and use a building, its facilities and environs. An accompanying Technical Guidance Document provides guidance on implementing Part M requirements.

IWA Response

The question of access for people with limited mobility and wheelchair users is the single biggest issue to impact on individual lives. Without good accessibility, the ability of people to live independently and to be treated as equal is severely affected. Indeed, access is more than a question of getting into a building or navigating a streetscape; it is about what it opens for a person with a disability.

The Irish Wheelchair Association believes that Part M does not provide adequate guidance on access to the built environment and to this end has developed [IWA Best Practice Access Guidelines](#). IWA seldom, if ever, sees the extension of design beyond Part M 2010 guidance to what would be considered Universal Design. In IWA's experience, for the most part and with few exceptions, designers tend to only comply with Building Regulation minimum requirements, which can result in many environments not being truly or fully accessible.

IWA recognises that many of our own recommendations go beyond the minimum requirements outlined in Irish Building Regulations and exceed many international standards. We can confidently and legitimately advocate for this because our guidelines reflect the first-hand experience of our members and aspire to create a built environment that accommodates all people.

The Technical Guidance Document that accompanies the Building Regulation Part M Access and Use, (2010) while promoting a Universal Design approach in the introduction to the document goes on to adopt a minimum design guidance approach throughout. While the design guidance in the Part M Access and Use, (2010) Technical Guidance Document has improved considerably since the 1992 and 2000 editions, the Building Regulations still need to incorporate significant design guidance improvements across all disability groups and within a range of different environments to truly deliver buildings, along with internal and external environments, that are fully accessible to everyone.

The aim of the IWA Best Practice Access Guidelines is that they will be used to inform plans in the development of new facilities and will be consulted when updating existing facilities. By following these guidelines, developers, local authorities, and individuals will be building to the highest possible standard, thereby supporting complete independent access to the built environment for all people.

For example, Part M of the Building Regulations only requires housing to be visitable for a wheelchair user, but not liveable. People who have a mobility impairment and who are or who may become full-time wheelchair users require appropriately designed and future-proofed housing that is located within mixed tenure sustainable housing developments, that are perceived to be safe, in locations of peoples' choosing, and situated near services, transport and family/friends.

Irish Wheelchair Association is calling on Government to hold a public consultation on Part M of the Building Regulations to raise accessibility standards for dwellings. To provide the full diversity of space and access requirements, as required by people with varying levels of limited mobility, IWA recommends that 7% of all houses should be built to be fully wheelchair accessible, while the remaining 90% of new houses should be designed and constructed so that they follow and apply Lifetime Adaptable design criteria. Detailed guidance on design criteria for wheelchair accessible housing can be viewed at Chapter 10, Irish Wheelchair Association Best Practice Access Guidelines.

Further shortcomings of Part M include a need for greater guidance on specific building types, (e.g. healthcare settings and residential care settings) for more emphasis on evacuation, and for more guidance on external environments. Part M Guidance for people with sensory and cognitive impairments is also extremely limited. IWA Best Practice Access Guidelines recommend the provision of Aids to Communication for people with visual impairment and people who are hearing impaired. IWA notes the current review that is taking part at Departmental level to incorporate provision for Changing Places into Part M.

In the absence of appropriate regulations for housing, for example, the requirements of people who use wheelchairs is often perceived as "additional" or "extra" space that is "not necessary" and this becomes a barrier for designers and funders resulting in a lack of housing delivery to meet the identified needs. Space is a requirement and not a luxury.

State Response

84. The OPW intends to collaborate with NDA/CEUD on a pilot to trial the implementation of the new European Standard ISEN 17161 (Design for All - Accessibility Following a Design for All Approach in Products, Goods and Services - Extending the Range of Users) in the design of its new office accommodation. It intends to use this trial to identify the needs of users to inform the design of a suite of wayfinding and building utilisation tools to help navigate the building and user experience.

IWA Response

The 4th Edition of IWA Best Practice Access Guidelines provide comprehensive design specifications for wheelchair accessible office environments, details of which can be found in Chapter 7. Irish Wheelchair Association recommends that OPW includes IWA in the trial implementation of the new European Standard ISEN 17161 (Design for All - Accessibility Following a Design for All Approach in Products, Goods and Services - Extending the Range of Users) in the design of its new office accommodation.

Transport

IWA Response

Irish Wheelchair Association welcomes the many developments in recent times the State has made working towards a public transport system that is accessible to people with disabilities. nevertheless, the State still has a lot more to do. Public transport within our cities has improved but Ireland is made up of many small towns and villages and very rural areas where people with disabilities have seen no changes. The lack of public transport options impedes people's ability to take up further education, employment and be involved in their community.

State response

90. The National Transport Authority (NTA) has statutory responsibility for promoting the development of an integrated, accessible public transport network. It has a Public Transport Accessibility Manager whose role includes establishing a formal engagement process with key disability representative groups to ensure that the needs of those with a disability are considered in all major public transport improvement plans.

IWA response

IWA welcomes the appointment of the NTA Public Transport Accessibility Manager with a user group set up in all Public Transport Company and a person with a disability on all transport company boards.

What we have not seen to date is a user group within NTA where all decisions are made in relation to planning and procurement. If there is a willingness to hear from people with disabilities it is of utmost importance that their voices are heard at the planning stages and not at the middle or end stage where they inevitably must fight for expensive retrofitting.

State response

104. Bus Connects Dublin is a major investment programme to overhaul the current bus system in Dublin through a 10-year programme to deliver a more efficient, reliable and better bus system. There have been public consultations with sign language interpreters and a quiet room available and specific meetings with disability focused NGOs and groups as part of the process. A series of public information events were also initiated in accessible formats.

IWA response

There have been many consultations in relation to Bus Connects projects. Unfortunately, people with disabilities do not feel they have been heard. There are many issues that have been highlighted in relation to this project such as transferring from one bus to another to reach your destination. At present there is only one designated space for a wheelchair user on any bus, which often means there is a wheelchair user already in the space or the space is taken up with buggies or luggage. Expecting people with disabilities to transfer numerous times on their journey at junctions where others are also transferring from other routes in bad weather, when there are no guarantees of available spaces, all adds up to making transport inaccessible.

Bus stop: (Island)

New bus stop designs are dangerous and favour cyclists. . Many people with disabilities are finding their streetscape is becoming more threatening and are becoming more isolated as the fear of being knocked over by a cyclist is very real. The shared space planning concept does not work for people with disabilities.

State Response

113. Dublin Bus manages a free Travel Assistance Scheme for customers over 18 with a disability. It provides assistance for customers who would like help in using and understanding the Dublin area public transport network so that they can travel independently with confidence.

IWA response

This is an excellent service for people with disabilities living in Dublin and implemented by a Dublin Bus Company. Unfortunately, this service is not replicated throughout the country. People need to carry out their training in their own localities and not in a training centre in Dublin, which mimics different situations. A centralised training centre does not work in this instance.

State Response

Taxi

110. Since 2010 the taxi regulatory framework requires that new taxi or hackney licences may only be granted for wheelchair accessible vehicles (WAVs). The WAV Grant Scheme, operating since 2014, provides grants for the acquisition, or conversion of suitable vehicles to operate as WAVs. The number of WAVs in the taxi fleet has increased from 4% in 2014 to over 15% currently. The NTA has published a register of wheelchair accessible vehicles in every county with the driver's phone number and email address on the Transport for Ireland's (TFI) website.

IWA Response

While the number of Wheelchair Accessible Vehicles (WAVs) on the road has risen to 14% it has not made an impact to the service received by people with disabilities. There are several issues within this area.

Exceptionally large contracts are awarded by the state on an annual basis to taxi operators. In the tendering process there is little weighting placed on accessibility. The Disability Act 2005 section 27 sets out the law on accessibility in relation to services which includes goods, supplied to a public body. In this instance the Government has not adhered to this regulation.

Drivers that avail of the grant scheme must attend training on securing a person in a wheelchair safely inside the vehicle. This training does not filter down to taxi drivers who rent these vehicles. This lack of training and monitoring leads to these taxis not being used for the purpose that fits the grant criteria.

Housing

State response

(83) Regulations require in the case of commercial buildings and apartment blocks that a Disability Access Certificate be obtained from the local building control authority confirming compliance with Part M requirements. It is an offence to occupy or use a building without having a valid certificate in place as required. Since the Building Regulations came into force in 1992, building and works have been subject to a Part M requirement.¹⁸

IWA response

People with disabilities on the Social Housing are waiting for suitable accommodation for up to 10 years. Over 8% of the housing waiting list comprises of people with disabilities (Summary of Social Housing Assessments 2020). Part M of the Building Regulations are not fit for purpose when planning and building homes. These regulations only force the developer to build houses or apartments that enables a person who is a wheelchair user to visit (visitable), but does not go far enough so that a wheelchair user can live in them.

“I have been on the housing list for over 10 years, all my friends have moved out of their parents homes a long time ago and I am still here with my elderly parents, it’s so demoralising”. (John 38 wheelchair user)

Article 19: Living independently and being included in the community

States Parties to this Convention recognize 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, including by 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;
- (c) Community services and facilities for the general population are available on an equal basis to persons with disabilities and are responsive to their needs.

HOUSING

State Response

241. Persons with disabilities are entitled to avail of the full range of community care services.

242. The relevant community care services, supported by General Medical Practitioners, may include a public health nurse, home help, personal assistance, psychological services, speech and language

therapy, occupational therapy, social work services and physiotherapy. The HSE provides a range of specialist disability services, including adult day services, respite, specialised seating and AT services, gait analysis, orthopaedics, adult rehabilitation consultants, feeding, eating, drinking and swallowing services.

IWA Response

All the services listed above are subject to long waiting lists with exception of Personal Assistant Services as a waiting list is not kept by the Health Service Executive. This service is resource led and not demand led, which leaves people with disabilities in a very vulnerable situation and at the mercy of department budgets. Many people who need this service are either not receiving it or are receiving a care package. A care package only enables the person to get out of bed in the morning and back to bed in the evening with no other assistance throughout the day to engage in education, employment, family, or community life. Specific funding for a demand-led service needs to be allocated and ring fenced, and the service must be a **right**.

“Lack of appropriate support services to assist people with disabilities to live alone. I have someone who helps me to get up in the morning and back at night and the latest I can stay up is 10pm, I am only 25 and missing out on so much”. (Luke, 25, service user)

Article 20: Personal Mobility

States Parties shall take effective measures to ensure personal mobility with the greatest possible independence for persons with disabilities, including by:

- (a) Facilitating the personal mobility of persons with disabilities in the manner and at the time of their choice, and at affordable cost;
- (b) Facilitating access by persons with disabilities to quality mobility aids, devices, assistive technologies and forms of live assistance and intermediaries, including by making them available at affordable cost;
- (c) Providing training in mobility skills to persons with disabilities and to specialist staff working with persons with disabilities;
- (d) Encouraging entities that produce mobility aids, devices and assistive technologies to take into account all aspects of mobility for persons with disabilities.

State response

248. The Disabled Drivers and Disabled Passengers Scheme provides a range of tax reliefs linked to the purchase and use of specially constructed or adapted vehicles by drivers and passengers with a disability.

IWA Response

The Disabled Drivers and Passengers Scheme does not reflect the developments in vehicle and adaptation technology and the ever-increasing costs of vehicle purchasing. This scheme should be reviewed considering the transition away from diesel and petrol vehicles to more eco-friendly vehicles, ensuring that the scheme for disabled drivers and passengers still provides a financial support and incentive for them to purchase a vehicle. The above scheme only caters for those who

can purchase a vehicle and therefore, the lack of a truly accessible transport system only emphasises the need for personal transport.

The Motorised Transport Grant and the Mobility Allowance scheme was suspended with no alternative replacement. These grants greatly assisted people with disabilities to purchase a vehicle when there is no alternative to the lack of public transport.

The lack of grant aid and increasing costs leaves this scheme not fit for purpose for many.

"I live in a rural part of the country and have no access to public transport; I cannot afford my own car which means I can't go to college or get a job. I am being left behind with no vision for the future I feel so trapped". (Deirdre, 29)

State Response

254. Aids and appliances are provided by the HSE to enable and support people to live at home, to facilitate hospital avoidance and to assist with early discharge from hospital. These products, which include beds, mattresses, wheelchairs, hoists, prostheses, dressings, and respiratory equipment, are prescribed by health professionals to eligible persons.

IWA Response

Many Aids and appliances are supplied to people with disabilities who are eligible for the medical card. There is a large cohort of people who are not eligible as their income does not meet the means testing criteria, so they must pay themselves. Aids and appliances such as wheelchairs, hoists etc are extremely expensive, which leave many people without the right equipment. People who have received these items through the medical card are subject to waiting lists and local budgets, which again results in them having to use ill-fitting equipment and very lengthy waiting times for repairs.

"I use a motorised wheelchair and the footplate broke; I was waiting for 2 months for it to be fixed. I was left using a manual wheelchair, which I could not manage, so I had to stay in my house all that time" (Derek, 52, wheelchair user and IWA member)

Article 27: Work and employment

1. States Parties recognize the right of persons with disabilities to work, on an equal basis with others; this includes the right to the opportunity to gain a living by work freely chosen or accepted in a labour market and work environment that is open, inclusive and accessible to persons with disabilities. States Parties shall safeguard and promote the realization of the right to work, including for those who acquire a disability during the course of employment, by taking appropriate steps, including through legislation, to, inter alia:

State Response

376. Part 5 of the Disability Act relates to the employment of persons with disabilities in the public sector. It sets an obligation that at least 3% of public sector employees should be persons with a disability. The Government has made a commitment to increase the percentage to 6% by 2024. The NDA monitors compliance with Part 5 of the Disability Act and publishes an annual report.

IWA Response

There is little evidence on the ground of this quota having a positive impact on people with a significant disability.

“I was successful in gaining employment in the public service but wanted part time, they only offered me full time, so I took a human rights case against them (I had a Masters in Human Rights which helped!) and won and I am now working part time for them, after they dragged their heels saying, “they couldn’t find anything for me”. (Laura, Ability Programme Participant)

State Response

385. The Wage Subsidy Scheme (WSS) provides financial incentives to private sector employers to employ jobseekers with disabilities. Financial supports available through this scheme are structured under three separate strands and employers can benefit under more than one strand simultaneously.

IWA Response

The Wage Subsidy Scheme needs a major review. This scheme is an incentive for an employer to hire someone with a disability. The person with a disability must prove they have a 20% deficit to that of their colleagues for the employer to be successful in claiming this. This can be seen as derogatory and ableist and a more person-centred approach needs to be found. The subsidy given to employers has not been increased in 20 years.

Support for employment initiatives such as the Ability Programme are welcome and positive as they have allowed tangible assistance to tackle these fundamental challenges head on. However, the absence of committed multi-year ongoing funding to maintain these initiatives compromises the potential to deliver effective change as the issues being encountered require significant time to be addressed. Irish Wheelchair Association recommends that a longer-term strategic approach to maintaining these programmes is essential to achieving the desired outcomes.

“I would like to see more programmes developed with the aim of getting people into paid employment that could also cater to educate employers”. (Amy, 33, Service User)

Article 28: Adequate standard of living and social protection

1. States Parties recognize 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 realization of this right without discrimination on the basis of disability.

2. States Parties recognize 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 realization of this right, including measures:

(a) To ensure equal access by persons with disabilities to clean water services, and to ensure access to appropriate and affordable services, devices and other assistance for disability-related needs;

(b) To ensure access by persons with disabilities, in particular women and girls with disabilities and older persons with disabilities, to social protection programmes and poverty reduction programmes;

(c) To ensure access by persons with disabilities and their families living in situations of poverty to assistance from the State with disability-related expenses, including adequate training, counselling, financial assistance and respite care;

(d) To ensure access by persons with disabilities to public housing programmes;

(e) To ensure equal access by persons with disabilities to retirement benefits and programmes.

State Response

237. The Housing Adaptation Grants for Older People and People with a Disability are for private homeowners and are 80% funded by the exchequer, with a 20% contribution from local authorities. There are three grant types available aimed at facilitating changes needed to make homes suitable for a person with a disability, or mental health difficulty, and, to enable people to remain living independently in their own homes. A new single application form is in plain English, certified by National Adult Literacy Association, for the scheme. The 'Housing Options for our Ageing Population' policy statement and Rebuilding Ireland initiative emphasise the commitment to streamlining the application process and ensuring that grants are more accessible to applicants.

IWA Response

Housing Adaptation Grant: The criterion for this grant is not fit for purpose. The maximum grant is €30,000, which is out of sync with current building costs, and the means testing criteria is also €30,000 taken from the previous year's earnings.

The means testing limits are set too low and should not include the income of all the occupants in the house

"I live with my aging parents who are on two state pensions and my brother also lives with my parents but is likely to move out next year. I need the extension to live with dignity, it's not for the benefit of my parents or brother. I either adapt the family home to meet my needs or I become homeless and apply to the Local Authority for a new home at greater cost".

The cost incurred for many people adapting their home varies greatly from widening doors for €1,000 to building an extension which could cost €60,000 which is above and beyond this ceiling e.g. a recent construction of a downstairs bedroom and ensuite following a tendering process cost €63,000. While the grant is very effective for small adaptations the criteria set **excludes** a large cohort of people who need to build extensions on to their homes. The criteria and approach therefore render this scheme ineffective and unusable for the vast majority of people it is supposed to support. Many people who sustain their injury end up in nursing homes or delayed discharge causing the state more money and excluding people from their right to live independently in a place of their choice which is covered under the UNCRPD

Housing Assistance Payment (HAP): due to the short fall in Part M of the Building Regulations there are no available wheelchair accessible houses/apartments in the private market. This lack of accessible housing leaves wheelchair users excluded from this scheme.

Article 30: Participation in cultural life, recreation, leisure, and sport

5. With a view to enabling persons with disabilities to participate on an equal basis with others in recreational, leisure and sporting activities, States Parties shall take appropriate measures:

- (a) To encourage and promote the participation, to the fullest extent possible, of persons with disabilities in mainstream sporting activities at all levels;
- (b) To ensure that persons with disabilities have an opportunity to organize, develop and participate in disability-specific sporting and recreational activities and, to this end, encourage the provision, on an equal basis with others, of appropriate instruction, training and resources;
- (c) To ensure that persons with disabilities have access to sporting, recreational and tourism venues;
- (d) To ensure that children with disabilities have equal access with other children to participation in play, recreation and leisure and sporting activities, including those activities in the school system; (e) To ensure that persons with disabilities have access to services from those involved in the organization of recreational, tourism, leisure and sporting activities

State response

426. The Government has published a National Sports Policy 2018-2027 which sets out a vision for Irish sport. 98 It highlights the lower participation of people with a disability in sports and, recognising the importance of sports for all, includes specific commitments to maximise participation for all.

IWA response

The Irish Sports Sector has benefitted from additional statutory funding in recent years namely from the Dormant Accounts fund which is specifically aimed at supporting disadvantaged groups and specifically disability sport in this context. Whilst welcomed, the nature of the Dormant Accounts fund is that there will be a specific lifetime to its availability. A more long-term sustainable model of funding is required to support the Irish Sports sector in Ireland to deliver programmes specifically aimed at catering for people with a disability.

Additional research is required to understand more specific information about the different types of disability sport in Ireland including participation levels, motivation levels, opportunities, socio economic impacts on people with intellectual, physical, and sensory disabilities.

State Response

427. The Sports Capital Programme (SCP) is the primary vehicle for Government support for the development of sports and physical recreation facilities and the purchase of non-personal sports equipment. 99 The most recent round of the SCP funding included a major focus on persons with disabilities. 45% of maximum marks for applicants were available only to projects from disadvantaged areas or those that were focused on persons with disabilities. It is also a condition that all gym equipment funded must be accessible.

IWA response

The Sports Capital programme is essential to support the provision of sports programmes for people with physical disabilities. Specifically, the funding has enabled IWA to ensure the provision of sports wheelchairs for our athletes which are both expensive and 'personal' in nature, whereas typically 'non-personal equipment' is specifically supported in the scheme. More and continued recognition must be given to the fact that people with physical disabilities require more support in terms of sports equipment such as sports wheelchairs, walking/running frames, athletics throwing frames, storage, and that this equipment is typically more expensive than 'mainstream' equipment for able-bodied athletes. Additionally, indoor, and outdoor facilities and infrastructure need continued

investment to ensure levels of accessibility are of the highest standards. This includes sports centres, gyms, public parks, greenways, playgrounds, and beaches.

State response

428. Sport Ireland, the authority tasked with the development of sport in Ireland, has a remit to promote participation in sport across all groups, including among persons with disabilities. Sport Ireland has published the 'Sport Ireland Policy on Participation in Sport by People with Disabilities' which is underpinned by Article 30.5.100

IWA response

The Irish sports sector has benefitted from additional statutory funding in recent years namely from the Dormant Accounts fund, which is specifically aimed at supporting disadvantaged groups and specifically disability sport in this context. Whilst welcomed, the nature of the Dormant Accounts fund is that there will be a specific lifetime to its availability. A more long-term sustainable commitment and model of funding is required to support the Irish sports sector in Ireland.

IWA contends that all funded Irish sporting bodies should each have a 'Policy on Participation in Sport by People with Disabilities' and should provide meaningful evidence of this across a range of areas including participation programmes, performance programmes and education and training.

State Response

429. Sport Ireland currently funds and works with a range of organisations providing and promoting opportunities for persons with disabilities. These include National Governing Bodies of Sport, Local Sports Partnerships, Paralympics Ireland and CARA, a national organisation which provides a collaborative platform to enhance sport and physical activity opportunities for persons with disabilities. In 2019, investment via Sport Ireland grants totalled €5,720,000.

IWA Response

For IWA to deliver a uniformed programme of activities that provide meaningful participation programmes at all levels throughout Ireland additional annual funding to the value of €500K (+50% annually is required). The impact of this funding would see new programmes established in approximately 1/3 of the counties in Ireland including, Roscommon, Mayo, Donegal, Monaghan, Cavan, Wicklow, Longford, and Offaly. Additionally, the performance programme would be adequately funded, which would allow our national teams in wheelchair basketball, wheelchair rugby, para powerlifting, and para athletics compete at the highest levels internationally i.e. European, World and Paralympic level. To provide context, there are currently no sustainable participation programmes delivered by IWA-Sport for people with physical disabilities in the counties listed and the international programme of competitions is funded by athlete levies by 90% annually.

State Response

430. The Mixed Ability Rugby Programme is an initiative which supports the growth of clubs that enable persons with disabilities and those without disabilities to play together in mixed teams at club level. An international tournament was scheduled for June 2020, with Ireland hosting. COVID-19 caused it to be deferred.

IWA Response

As per previous point

State Response

431. Sports Ireland and CARA, in conjunction with persons with disabilities, developed a Sport Inclusion Disability Charter in 2018. 101 It is a key action in the National Sports Policy and is the mechanism for 98 <https://assets.gov.ie/15979/04e0f52cee5f47ee9c01003cf559e98d.pdf> 99 More information here: <https://www.sportcapitalprogramme.ie/> 100 [https://www.sportireland.ie/sites/default/files/2019-12/sport-ireland-policy-on-participation-in-sport-by\[1\]people-with-disabilities.pdf](https://www.sportireland.ie/sites/default/files/2019-12/sport-ireland-policy-on-participation-in-sport-by[1]people-with-disabilities.pdf) 101 More information here: <https://caracentre.ie/sport-inclusion-disability-charter/58>

IWA Response

There is a significant programme of work and range of initiatives being delivered by all five organisations working in the Irish Disability Sport Sector in Ireland, namely Irish Wheelchair Association, Special Olympics Ireland, Vision Sport Ireland/NCBI, Paralympics Ireland and Cara. Many initiatives are delivered independently and many more are being delivered in collaboration and in partnership with mainstream National Governing Bodies and other organisations.

“I would love to be able to take part in sports to see if I am any good, I watch my friends picking different sports to try out and there is nothing for me, I feel so excluded”. (John 17 wheelchair user)