

PRE-BUDGET SUBMISSION 2026 SUMMARY

Our Pre-Budget Submission

Irish Wheelchair Association prepared our Pre-Budget Submission document through extensive consultation of approximately 700 people with disabilities throughout Ireland. Using this collective voice, we call on the Government to hear our voices and make provisions in areas critical to our community in the upcoming budget.

Disability has been an integral part of the General Election campaign which has continued into the programme for government. Budget 26 will be an opportunity for the Government to step up and prove that people with disabilities are a priority for them. IWA's Pre-budget submissions have focused on unresolved issues year in, year out.

For too long people with disabilities have lived in poverty and with the impact of the extreme rise in the cost of living on top of the cost of disability people are being forced to make choices on whether they eat or keep warm. In the last few years, we have seen our winters become more severe with no long-term strategy from government to alleviate the pressure.

COST OF DISABILITY

Commitments in the Programme for Government: Securing Ireland's Future

'We will use the recent research into the cost of disability to individuals and families to properly inform the direction of future policy.'

RECOMMENDATIONS

- The Indecon Report (Nov 2021) is now out of date and does not reflect the reality of life with a Disability in 2025. We recommend a co-designed policy-making approach to ensure that policy reflects the lived experience of people with disabilities.
- Disability payment rates need to be increased to reflect the cost of living. We recommend an increase from the current €244 to €322 at minimum. Given the lack of employment opportunities for people with disabilities these payments should reflect a living wage.
- Establish a realistic cost of disability payment in this year's Budget, and ensure that this figure is standard, regardless of a person's employment status or social welfare payments.
- Increase the winter fuel allowance to 52 weeks a year, for those with permanent physical disabilities.

SECTORAL FUNDING

Commitments in the Programme for Government: Securing Ireland's Future

'Increase investment in disability and capital infrastructure for the sector. Develop a multi-annual approach for disability services, linked to productivity, staff levels, and the delivery of services.'

RECOMMENDATIONS

- Invest money to resource Action Plan for the Disability Capacity Review.
- Provide funding for full pay restoration for Section 39 organisations and return to alignment with HSE pay scales.
- Provide multi-annual funding for Disability organisations delivering vital services on behalf of the Health Service Executive and the State.
- Provide a dedicated funding stream to support the recommendations of the Report of the Independent Review Group.
- Ensure there is an impact assessment of costs of delivering services and supports reflecting new legislation, compliance and regulatory requirements, to ensure the cost is encompassed within funding provided to deliver services, e.g. to include a provision for pension auto enrolments, HIQA regulations.
- Provide funding to address legacy funding deficits.

PERSONAL ASSISTANT SERVICES

Commitments in the Programme for Government: Securing Ireland's Future

'Consider measures to attract and retain staff in the disability sector. We will also develop a new workforce plan to address immediate staffing shortages and longer-term needs. Work with the voluntary sector through industrial relations mechanisms and other processes to progress pay issues that affect the delivery of disability services and the long-term viability of organisations within the sector.'

RECOMMENDATIONS

- Provide funding to section 39 organisations to achieve pay parity across the sector to enable service providers to recruit and retain staff.
- Provide alignment to future framework agreements in relation to funding of service.
- Develop a sustainable sectoral workforce plan.
- Provide a sustainable model of funding, including a provision for pension auto enrolment.
- Invest and resource the Disability Services Plan.
- Progression of the Personalised Budget Pilot.

HOUSING

Commitments in the Programme for Government: Securing Ireland's Future Implement the revised Housing Adaptation Grant limits and eligibility criteria.

RECOMMENDATIONS

- Despite the recent review of the Housing Adaptation grants and the increase from €30,000 to €40,000 we are calling for this to be further increased to

"Make sure our community does not have to continue to make choices between heating and eating."

We have a new Programme for Government, and the soon to be launched National Disability Strategy. We call on the government to implement and properly resource these reports, so they do not become more documents with no action plan or funding.

There needs to be a strong commitment by this Government to:

- Implement a "Cost of Disability Payment" based on inflation figures
- Resource the National Disability Inclusion Strategy
- Resource the National Disability Plan to 2032

Our members are calling on you, our government and specifically the Department of Public Expenditure, National Development Plan Delivery and Reform, to finance the promises made in the Programme for Government and to implement and resource your government reports appropriately so that people with disabilities, no longer have to live in adverse poverty and can contribute and belong in their communities.

"Make this budget the turning point for people with disabilities, give us choice not charity".

make it in line with current building costs. Some of our members have been quoted up to €160,000 to build on an extension for an accessible bathroom and bedroom. There needs to be increased funding to Local Authorities for the Housing Adaptation Grant to facilitate larger adaptations such as more ensuite accessible bedrooms and other adaptations in line with building costs.

- Digital and assistive technology enhances the independence of people with disabilities. The lack of funding for the installation and maintenance of assistive and digital technology is an issue that needs to be reviewed as most of our tenants are on disability allowance and cannot afford to service or keep their equipment. Likewise Irish Wheelchair Association, as a landlord who received Capital Assistance payment and who charges economic rent, cannot afford to maintain these devices.

TRANSPORT

Commitments in the Programme for Government: Securing Ireland's Future

Progress the review of the Disabled Drivers Scheme.

RECOMMENDATIONS

- Immediately progress the review of the Disabled Drivers and Passengers Scheme and other supports so that people can afford to buy an adapted car. The Motorised Transport Grant and the Mobility Allowance were ended in 2007 with the promise of new legislation and a replacement of a fairer scheme, this has not happened.
- The Travel Assistance Scheme needs to be rolled out as a nationwide scheme that responds to the needs of people with disabilities in their own locality thus enabling people to build their confidence when using public transport.

COMMUNITY CENTRES

Commitments in the Programme for Government: Securing Ireland's Future

'Increase investment in disability and capital infrastructure for the sector. Develop a multi-annual approach for disability services, linked to productivity, staff levels, and the delivery of services.'

RECOMMENDATIONS

- Appropriate multi annual funding to sustain day services and to plan for expanding need in the future.
- Change the allocation of funding from Community Employment Schemes to Core funding.
- Provide funding to section 39 organisations to achieve pay parity across the sector to enable service providers to recruit and retain staff.

ACCESS

RECOMMENDATIONS

- Resource a full-time Access Officers in every county council– ideally, people with the lived experience of disability.

SPORTS

Commitments in the Programme for Government: Securing Ireland's Future

The Government has allocated increased funding for sport in 2025, including €2.4 million specifically for supporting disability sport focused National Governing Bodies.

RECOMMENDATIONS

- Funding to be made available from the €2.4 million ringfenced in the Programme for Government for supporting disability sport focused National Governing Bodies.
- Increase core funding to IWA-Sport for more HR resourcing and retention.
- Provide a sustainable model of funding, including a provision for pension auto enrolment.
- Increase core funding to IWA-Sport for programme investment and sustain Dormant Account funding.
- Provide funding the IWA Sport performance programme to support our national teams to prepare for and compete at major Championships.
- Invest and resource NGBs and LSPs to fund sustainable, pathway focused, Para Sport programmes.