Irish Wheelchair Association™

2027 Pre-Budget Submission

Together we are One IWA

Our Values:

Courage

Equality

Integrity

Excellence

Fun

Openness

Visionary

2027

Pre-Budget Submission

Heat or Eat
Heat or Eat
No Delay, No Dela

Irish Wheelchair

Irish Wheelchair Association™

Irish Wheelchair Association (IWA) is Ireland's leading representative organisation and service provider for people with physical disabilities.

People are at the heart of everything we do, and we work with and on behalf of our membership to drive positive change, empowering and supporting them to live the life they choose.

2027 Pre-Budget Submission

Our Work at a Glance

In 2025, Irish Wheelchair Association continued to deliver essential services and life-changing supports to people with physical disabilities across Ireland.

We are proud to share the impact of our work through the following key achievements.

Assisted Living Services

delivered in homes across
26 counties
in Ireland

65
full-time, part-time and outreach Community Centres

Community Centre Services

provided **87,080 days** of community services through our **65 locations, 48 Community Centres** and **17 Outreach Centres**

Daily Transport Services

supporting our centres through a fleet of
142 accessible buses

Irish Wheelchair Association SPORT

supported
19
IWA-Sport Clubs

1,879
Driving Lessons
for people with disabilities

Approved Housing Body

managing **51 wheelchair liveable, affordable homes**

Irish Wheelchair Association™

2027 Pre-Budget Submission

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Introduction

Irish Wheelchair Association Pre-Budget Submission 2027

People with disabilities continue to experience disproportionately high levels of poverty, exclusion, and financial hardship in Ireland. Irish Wheelchair Association prepared this Pre-Budget submission through consultation with people with disabilities across the country. Using our collective voice, we are calling on Government to listen, act, and deliver meaningful investment in areas critical to our community.

Disability has become an increasingly visible issue in national conversations, Government commitments, and policy frameworks. However, for many people with disabilities, the reality on the ground has not changed. Year after year, IWA's Pre-Budget submissions have highlighted the recurring unresolved issues like inadequate income support, rising energy costs, inaccessible housing and transport, underfunded disability services, and the ongoing financial burden associated with disability.

While Budget 2026 included a significant headline increase of €3.8 billion in disability service funding, the sector was starting from such a historically low and under-resourced base that services remain fundamentally underfunded, with unmet need, staffing shortages, waiting lists, and inadequate community supports continuing across the country.

However, while government has stated that the disability sector were the winners in last year's budget, this investment does not reach all people with disabilities and does not change the poverty that many people with disabilities are experiencing now. It does not remove the daily additional costs of disability, nor does it address the immediate financial pressure caused by continued energy costs, transport costs, housing barriers, care-related costs, and the cumulative burden of living with a disability in Ireland.

For the past number of budgets, the Government acknowledged the additional costs associated with disability through targeted once-off measures. Budget 2026 marked a significant shift away from these temporary supports, with no adequate replacement measure introduced despite continuing inflationary pressures and rising disability-related costs. People with disabilities are now effectively being asked to wait until Budget 2027 for the introduction of a permanent Cost of Disability Payment, despite many households already being in financial crisis.

People with disabilities continue to face impossible choices between heating and eating, attending medical appointments, or paying bills, remaining socially connected or preserving basic necessities. The cost-of-living crises continue to trap many people with disabilities in sustained financial pressure due to the ongoing and unavoidable cost of living and the extra cost of disability.

Irish Wheelchair Association welcomes the work being carried out on the Cost of Disability Payment, which is expected to be introduced in Budget 2027. However, people with disabilities cannot wait until next year for relief while costs continue to rise today; many households are already at breaking point.

Although this submission focuses on Budget 2027, the Government must recognise the reality currently facing people with disabilities and immediately introduce an Emergency Cost of Disability Payment to support people through continued energy inflation, rising daily living costs, and the cumulative financial impact of disability. This payment should operate as a bridge towards, and not a substitute for, the permanent Cost of Disability Payment.

"Make sure our community does not have to continue to make choices between heating and eating."
– **Sharon, Co. Wexford**

"The pressure never stops. Disability costs don't pause when the bills rise."
– John, Co. Meath

"People with disabilities should not have to fight every year simply to survive."
– Darren, Co. Offaly

Irish Wheelchair Association is calling on Government to demonstrate that its commitments to disability equality are backed by meaningful action and resourcing.

Budget 2027 must include:

- Emergency Disability Payment prior to Budget 2027
- Introduction of a permanent Cost of Disability Payment
- Indexation of disability supports in line with inflation and energy costs
- Full resourcing and implementation of the National Human Rights Strategy for people with disabilities
- Increased investment in accessible housing, transport, personal assistance services, and community supports

The Government now has an opportunity to move beyond commitments on paper and deliver practical, measurable change. People with disabilities cannot continue to absorb the financial burden of policy delays.

Our members are calling on Government, and specifically the Department of Public Expenditure, Infrastructure, Public Service Reform and Digitalisation, to fully finance the disability rights, anti-poverty, and independent living commitments it has already made under the UNCRPD, the Human Rights Strategy for Disabled People, the Disability Capacity Review, and the Roadmap for Social Inclusion, and to ensure that people with disabilities are no longer left behind, forced into poverty, or expected to carry the disproportionate burden of rising living costs alone. Disability poverty is not inevitable; it is the result of policy choices.

Social Protection and Cost of Disability

Article 28 of the UN Convention on the Rights of Persons with Disabilities (UNCRPD) establishes the right to an adequate standard of living and social protection. It mandates that countries ensure equal access to food, clothing, housing, clean water, and continuous improvement in living conditions, as well as providing support for disability-related expenses.

Irish Wheelchair Association welcomes the Department of Social Protection's efforts in engaging with recent open submissions regarding the Cost of Disability, and the decision to convene a Strategic Focus Summit on this crucial issue. A Cost of Disability Payment is a necessary structural correction to inequality and is essential to ensuring dignity, participation, and fairness in Irish society. The evidence presented in our recent Cost of Disability Payment submission shows that disability-related costs are structural and persistent. Without intervention, individuals will continue to experience financial strain, reduced independence, and social exclusion.

More than one in four people who are unable to work due to disability and long-standing health issues are at risk of poverty (CSO, SLIC 2025) This means that potentially over a quarter of people in this category are regularly forced to choose between heating their homes and putting food on the table.

The Programme for Government states that there will be an introduction of a Permanent Annual Cost of Disability Support Payment with a view to increasing this payment. Clarification of the decision-making process, eligibility, payment level, and implementation timeline are needed immediately.

This Government must uphold its commitment to progressively increasing weekly disability payments. It is important that this increase is immediate and aligned with inflation.

In Budget 2026, IWA welcomed the increases to the Fuel Allowance and Domiciliary Care Allowance, as well as measures aimed at supporting people with disabilities to enter employment. However, in the continued absence of a dedicated Cost of Disability payment, it must be recognised that the additional costs associated with disability do not disappear when a person gains employment. People with disabilities entering or returning to work should be able to retain essential supports and secondary benefits, including Fuel Allowance, without fear of financial loss or increased hardship. Current measures still fail to address the immediate and structural financial pressures experienced by people with disabilities living below, or dangerously close to, the poverty line.

"I skip meals so I can keep the heating on because my condition gets worse in the cold."
– Mary, Galway

Level of Poverty Facing People with Disabilities

The current Disability Allowance Payment in Ireland does not meet the minimum income level required to protect people from being at risk of poverty and exclusion. At present, Disability Allowance stands at €254 per week, meaning that people with disabilities receive approximately €112.30 less than the recommended €366.30 minimum income standard per adult. As Social Justice Ireland notes, "€366.30 is an income per adult equivalent figure". This means that it is the minimum weekly disposable income, after taxes and including all benefits, that an adult needs to receive to be outside of poverty.

The estimated annual Cost of Disability identified by the Indecon Report 2021 has significantly increased when adjusted for inflation, placing even greater pressure on households already at risk of poverty.

11.7% of people with disabilities are at risk of poverty. UNCRPD Article 28 clarifies the need to stop poverty for people with disabilities by ensuring access by people with disabilities to social protection and poverty reduction programmes. According to the latest report from the Irish Human Rights and Equality Commission and the Economic and Social Research Institute, (Adjusting Estimates of Poverty for the Cost of Disability) the poverty gap is measured by assessing how far, on average, the incomes of those living in poverty fall below the poverty line.

When the average estimated cost of disability is deducted from the disposable income of people living in households affected by disability, the At Risk of Poverty rate increases to between 65% and 76%. Households with a member who has severe limitations can use up to 93% of disposable income directly on the cost of disability.

The imbalance is clear. The risk of considerable financial distress and poverty is a reality for households with a person with a disability.

UNCRPD Article 28 – Adequate standard of living and social protection requires that people with disabilities have access to appropriate and affordable services, devices, and other assistance for disability-related needs. It also requires 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.

Irish Wheelchair Association calls on Government to

- Introduce an immediate Emergency Disability Payment of €400 before Budget 2027 as a bridge to the permanent scheme. Eligibility must explicitly include people over 65, recognising that disability-related costs do not disappear and may increase with age. This closes a major policy gap affecting older adults with disabilities.
- Introduce a €55 per week Cost of Disability Payment establishing a foundation for further development of this payment over the lifetime of the current Government.
  Any new proposed Cost of Disability Payment should be available through an extra payment on top of existing payment, a standalone payment for those outside welfare systems, a tax credit for workers, and periodic lump sums for major costs such as equipment, energy spikes, and seasonal pressures. This reflects the real spending patterns identified in lived-experience evidence.
- Immediately increase the weekly Disability Allowance payment by a significantly greater amount than the disappointing €10 increase provided in Budget 2026. At present a basic disability payment is €254 per week, meaning that people with disabilities receive approximately €112.30 less than the recommended €366.30 minimum income standard per adult. As Social Justice Ireland notes, "€366.30 is an income per adult equivalent figure".
  Any increase must meaningfully bridge the widening gap between the current Disability Allowance rate and the poverty threshold, providing an immediate rights-based safeguard against deepening poverty, inequality, and social exclusion for people with disabilities.
- Increase the winter fuel allowance to 52 weeks a year for those with permanent physical disabilities.

As per UNCRPD Article 4, Government must continue to commit to robust consultation on disability reform, including individuals with disabilities, Disabled People's Organisations, and disability organisations from the first stages and throughout the policy process.

Sectoral Funding

The voluntary sector provides approximately two-thirds of disability services on behalf of the State. These services are intended to enable people with disabilities to live independently, further their education, participate in their communities, and avail of much-needed respite for themselves and their families who often find themselves acting as carers.

However, there is an insufficient level of service available and insufficient capacity within the existing system to support the real needs of people with disabilities. This insufficient capacity relates both to individuals who receive a service that is inadequate to meet their needs and to individuals who are unable to access a service due to insufficient service levels.

Several reports, including the Department of Health commissioned Report of the Independent Review Group established to examine the role of voluntary organisations in publicly funded health and personal social services, and the HSE Corporate Plan, identify the need for multi-annual investment and reform of the disability sector. The Disability Capacity Review to 2032 gives us the estimated need and cost to provide essential services, some of which have not received any additional funding since 2008.

If the commitment set out in the Programme for Government is fully realised and adequately funded, it has the potential to provide long-overdue financial stability for voluntary disability organisations, many of which were previously identified by the HSE as financially unsustainable. Budget 2026 identified the requirement to put services on a sustainable footing while recognising the increase in the cost-of-service provision and pay-cost pressure on service providers' sustainability and significant funding was secured to address this issue. Some organisations received sustainability funding in 2026. In 2027 it is essential that the balance of organisations, particularly in the Section 39 agencies, also be put on a sound financial footing, with the funding for services delivered on behalf of the State covering the full economic cost of delivering those services. This must be urgently addressed, particularly in the context of pay pressures, pension auto-enrolment, insurance increases, compliance obligations, regulatory requirements, and increased demand.

"Services cannot continue to run on goodwill alone. Staff and organisations are stretched beyond capacity." – **Alan, Dublin**

UNCRPD Article 19 – Living independently and being included in the community states that people with disabilities have the right to live in the community with 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.

Irish Wheelchair Association calls on Government to:

- Invest money to resource the 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, indexed linked for inflation, for disability organisations delivering vital services on behalf of the Health Service Executive and the State.
- Ensure there is an impact assessment of the 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, including pension auto-enrolment and HIQA regulations.
- Provide funding to address legacy funding deficits and to fund the full economic cost of delivering services.

Personal Assistant Services

The Disability Capacity Review Action Plan recognised that Personal Assistant (PA) services are not home help or care packages, but essential supports that enable people with disabilities to live independently and participate fully in society. However, the plan was published without sufficient resources to meet existing demand.

There is an urgent need not only for increased funding, but for pay parity across Section 39 organisations to recruit and retain staff. In a changing environment for service delivery, it is critical that the philosophy of Independent Living is protected and prioritised.

"PA hours are used to get me up and to bed, but as a person, I'm much more than that."
– IWA Member

Without adequate PA services, many people with disabilities remain isolated, dependent on ageing family members, trapped in unsafe environments, or unable to access work, education, and community life. In some cases, inadequate support can lead to unnecessary admission to nursing homes.

Article 19 of the UNCRPD states that disabled people must have access to personal assistance and community supports necessary to live independently and avoid isolation or segregation.

Irish Wheelchair Association calls on Government to:

- Fund pay parity across Section 39 organisations.
- Provide long-term, sustainable funding for PA services.
- Invest fully in the Disability Services Plan.
- Progress the Personalised Budget Pilot.

Housing

One of the core values promoted by Irish Wheelchair Association is independence; the aspiration and belief that people 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. Housing is key to realising this right.

Accessible housing remains one of the clearest examples of where policy commitments have failed to translate into measurable delivery.

In 2020, 35% of people who identified disability need as their main criterion for applying for social housing were waiting seven years or more. The Summary of Social Housing Assessments 2023, under the category of "main need for social housing support", saw an increase in physical disability of 8.4% compared to the previous year.

People with disabilities cannot access their rights under Article 19 of the UNCRPD to live independently in their communities. With a major lack of wheelchair-livable houses being built and a grant scheme that is not fit for purpose, people with disabilities are left with no choice but to live in extremely inappropriate settings such as nursing homes, institutional care, or in their own homes with no access to bathrooms and showering facilities.

"I don't want to live in a nursing home. I just want a home I can actually get into and use safely."
– IWA Member

The Irish Government is denying people with disabilities their right to equal opportunities when it comes to housing under three Articles in the United Nations Convention on the Rights of Persons with Disabilities.

Article 19 of the UNCRPD recognises the equal rights of all people with disabilities to live independently and be included in the community, with the freedom to choose and control their lives.

Article 28 on the Adequate Standard of Living and Social Protection includes the right to access housing programmes.

Irish Wheelchair Association calls on Government to:

- To review Husing Adaptation Grant and make it non means tested and in line with building costs.
- The Department of Housing, Local Government and Heritage must mandate that all Local Authorities incorporate specific, measurable targets for UD+ home (Wheelchair Accessible Liveable Standard) within their Housing Local Action Plans, with a formal oversight mechanism to monitor delivery and ringfence budget to implement.
- Provide oversight and ringfenced funding for Universal Design and wheelchair accessible housing delivery.
- Increase investment in assistive and digital technologies that support independent living.

Transport

Ireland is still living with the legacy of a society that was designed without people with disabilities in mind. Transport is a key element of society and, for people with physical disabilities, essential to realising their rights and independence. Many people with disabilities are left isolated in their own homes due to the lack of accessible transport.

Irish Wheelchair Association welcomes efforts that have been made to improve accessibility across public transport, including mandatory WAV requirements, the design of new DART carriages and works being carried out to make stations more accessible. However, the reality is that these efforts in isolation are extremely far from a solution.

The Irish public transport system continues to exclude people with disabilities every single day. Across bus, rail, air, taxi and active travel infrastructure, accessibility is inconsistent, unreliable, and at times unsafe. The overall picture is one of fragmentation, tokenism, weak enforcement, and lack of accountability. People with disabilities continue to experience discrimination by design — not because solutions are unavailable, but because they remain optional.

Ireland has no consistently enforceable mandatory accessibility requirements for transport infrastructure, design, or construction. The Department of Transport, the National Transport Authority and Local Authorities continue to rely too heavily on guidance rather than enforceable standards. Accessibility in Ireland's transport infrastructure continues to rely on non-binding guidance rather than mandatory enforceable standards, resulting in inconsistent implementation and ongoing exclusion.

There is a need for mandatory standards which are negotiated with people with disabilities and upheld by sanctions and fines to protect the rights of people with disabilities under the UNCRPD General Comment on Accessibility.

"Accessible transport should not depend on luck, location, or whether staff decide to help you that day." **– John, Dublin**

UNCRPD Article 9 on Accessibility requires States Parties to take appropriate measures to ensure persons with disabilities have access, on an equal basis with others, to the physical environment, transportation, information, and communication, to enable persons with disabilities to live independently and participate fully in all aspects of life.

With the introduction of BusConnects and CycleConnects, navigating transport infrastructure has become more dangerous for many people with disabilities. Many active travel and shared-space schemes have made public spaces more dangerous for wheelchair users, older people, and people with vision impairments. In the same way infrastructure projects in Ireland are designed to meet environmental regulations and health and safety regulations, we need accessibility regulations for public transport and public spaces.

The Motorised Transport Grant and the Mobility Allowance were abolished in 2013 on the promise that they would be replaced with new legislation and a fairer, more equitable scheme. This has not happened and has placed an unmanageable financial burden on a section of civil society which is already one of the most socio-economically disadvantaged.

Irish Wheelchair Association calls on Government to:

- Ensure the retention of the Disabled Drivers and Passengers Scheme and other supports so that people can afford to buy an adapted car and continue to live and work independently.
- Reintroduce the Mobility Allowance and Motorised Transport Grants or introduce schemes to support people with disabilities with the additional costs of disability in relation to transport.
- Ensure the Wheelchair Accessible Vehicle Taxi Grant Scheme is retained and continue to implement measures to reach the target of a fully accessible taxi fleet.
- Fund the Travel Assistance Scheme as a nationwide scheme that responds to the needs of people with disabilities in their own locality, enabling people to build their confidence when using public transport.

"I live in a rural area and have no real access to transport, which stops me from being independent. My education and opportunities for employment are non-existent. If I had a grant towards buying a car, my future would look very different." – **IWA Member**

Community Centres

IWA operates in 65 locations across the country through a mixture of community centres and outreach locations. Centres offer a wide range of programmes and activities for our members, with emphasis on the promotion of community engagement and active citizenship. Through a person-centred approach, services play a fundamental role in supporting members in achieving personal goals and objectives. To ensure delivery of services, IWA centres rely heavily on the operation of DEASP-funded Community Employment Schemes (CE schemes).

In recent years IWA has experienced depleted CE schemes, reduced numbers available for recruitment and a lack of suitability for health-care-related positions. CE recruitment remains a significant challenge to frontline service delivery. IWA continues to proactively engage with the HSE in all Community Health Organisation areas, identifying the issue and potential impact on service delivery within a Service Continuance Risk context.

IWA has an allocation of 292 Community Employment placements for 2025. In March 2025, there were 221 placements with 71 vacancies, reflecting a vacancy level of 25%.

Recruitment and retention are an issue for Community Supports, as with Assisted Living Services, with pay parity being the biggest issue.

IWA's dependency on CE schemes and the declining number of participants available could have an impact on our ability to deliver services.

Transport costs are unfunded from the HSE, including buses provided without revenue allocation for drivers, fuel or maintenance costs.

"Our local centre is often the only place where people feel connected, included, and seen."
– IWA Member

UNCRPD Article 19 on Living independently and Being included in the Community, states that people with disabilities have the right to access 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.

Irish Wheelchair Association calls on Government to:

- Allocate 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

Full participation in community life is a fundamental right, yet people with disabilities continue to face systemic exclusion due to a lack of accessible infrastructure and services. Barriers such as unfit footpaths, inadequate public transport, the misuse of disabled parking spaces, and inaccessible local amenities like shops and banks do more than hinder movement – they prevent a genuine sense of belonging.

Consistent with the Social Model of Disability, it is not an individual's impairment that excludes them from education, employment, and social life, but rather the persistent physical and attitudinal barriers within our society.

Article 9 of the United Nations Convention on the Rights of Persons with Disabilities, the State has a clear obligation to ensure the right to live independently and participate fully in all aspects of life. This requires the identification and elimination of obstacles to accessibility across:

- Public infrastructure: roads, footpaths, and transportation systems.
- Buildings and facilities: schools, housing, medical facilities, and workplaces.
- Information and services: ensuring digital and physical services are usable by all.

"Accessibility is not a luxury. It determines whether we can participate in society at all."
– IWA Member

Irish Wheelchair Association calls on Government to:

- Provide ring-fenced funding to resource a full-time Access and Inclusion Officer within every Local Authority.
- Allocate a specific Access Fund for Local Authorities to repair non-compliant footpaths and improve town-centre accessibility.
- Prioritise the recruitment of individuals with lived experience of disability to ensure policies are grounded in reality.

Sport

The annual Irish Sports Monitor continues to demonstrate a persistent and unacceptable participation gap between people with disabilities and non-disabled individuals. Despite policy commitments, progress in closing this gap remains slow.

IWA-Sport is committed to driving increased participation in line with the ambitions set out in the National Sports Policy, the Sports Action Plan 2024–2027, and the inclusion commitments in the 2025 Programme for Government. However, delivery on these ambitions now requires decisive and sustained Government action.

The Programme for Government includes clear commitments to strengthen investment in the sports sector and to provide ringfenced funding for disability sport. These commitments must now be realised in full and on a multi-annual basis. Short-term or fragmented funding approaches will not deliver the systemic change required to address entrenched inequalities in access and participation.

While recent increases in core funding and the use of Dormant Accounts funding are acknowledged, they fall short of what is required to sustain and grow disability sport. These funding streams do not keep pace with rising organisational costs, including national pay agreements, PRSI increases, pension auto-enrolment, and escalating compliance costs across legal, IT, GDPR and insurance.

In addition, the delivery of disability sport involves significantly higher and unavoidable costs, including care assistants, specialist coaching and support personnel, accessible transport, and adapted equipment. These structural costs are compounded by the additional cost of disability, estimated at €488–€555 per week (ESRI, 2025), which continues to act as a direct barrier to participation.

Without targeted and sustained investment, the State will continue to fall short of its commitments under **Article 30 of the UN Convention on the Rights of Persons with Disabilities (UNCRPD)**. Unequal access to sport remains a lived reality for many children and adults with physical disabilities, particularly in areas where provision is limited or non-existent.

UNCRPD Article 30 on Participation in cultural life, recreation, leisure and sport with a view to enabling persons with disabilities to take part on an equal basis with others in recreational, leisure and sporting activities, states parties shall take appropriate measures.

Irish Wheelchair Association calls on Government to:

- Deliver in full the €2.4 million ringfenced in the Programme for Government for disability sport-focused National Governing Bodies, on a guaranteed multi- annual basis.
- Increase core funding to IWA-Sport to address critical staffing capacity, retention challenges and the need for specialist expertise.
- Establish a sustainable funding model that reflects real delivery costs, including pension auto-enrolment and inflationary pressures.
- Transition reliance on Dormant Accounts funding into stable baseline Exchequer funding to ensure continuity and long-term planning.
- Provide dedicated, sustained investment in the IWA-Sport performance pathway to ensure Irish athletes with disabilities can prepare for and compete at major international championships on an equal footing.
- Resource National Governing Bodies and Local Sports Partnerships to deliver coordinated, pathway-focused Para sport programmes nationwide, eliminating geographic inequities in access.

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2027 Pre-Budget Submission

Summary

Irish Wheelchair Association prepared this Pre-Budget 2027 Summary following consultation with people with disabilities across Ireland.

People with disabilities continue to experience disproportionately high levels of poverty, exclusion, inaccessible services, and the ongoing financial burden associated with disability.

Despite increased public discussion around disability rights, many people with disabilities continue to face impossible choices between heating and eating, paying for transport, attending medical appointments, remaining socially connected, or preserving basic necessities.

Budget 2027 must move beyond commitments on paper and deliver practical, measurable change. Irish Wheelchair Association calls on Government to fully resource disability equality, independent living, accessibility, and anti-poverty measures in line with Ireland's obligations under the United Nations Convention on the Rights of Persons with Disabilities (UNCRPD).

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

Social Protection and Cost of Disability

UNCRPD Articles: Article 28 – Adequate Standard of Living and Social Protection; Article 4 – Consultation and Participation.

Irish Wheelchair Association calls on Government to:

- Introduce an immediate Emergency Disability Payment of €400 prior to Budget 2027 as a bridge to a permanent Cost of Disability Payment.
- Introduce a €55 per week Cost of Disability Payment as the foundation of a long-term scheme.
- Increase Disability Allowance rates significantly to close the gap between current payments and the minimum income required to avoid poverty.
- Ensure people with disabilities who enter employment retain essential secondary supports.
- Increase the Fuel Allowance to 52 weeks per year for people with permanent physical disabilities.
- Ensure disability policy reform is co-designed with people with disabilities and Disabled People's Organisations.

Sectoral Funding

UNCRPD Article: Article 19 – Living Independently and Being Included in the Community.

Irish Wheelchair Association calls on Government to:

- Provide multi-annual, inflation-linked funding for disability organisations delivering services on behalf of the State.
- Fund full pay restoration and parity for Section 39 organisations.
- Resource the Disability Capacity Review Action Plan.
- Provide funding to address pension auto-enrolment, regulatory compliance, insurance, and increased service demand.
- Address legacy funding deficits and ensure services are financially sustainable.

Personal Assistant Services

UNCRPD Article: Article 19 – Living Independently and Being Included in the Community

Irish Wheelchair Association calls on Government to:

- Provide sustainable long-term funding for Personal Assistant services.
- Fund pay parity across Section 39 organisations to recruit and retain staff.
- Fully resource the Disability Services Plan.
- Progress the Personalised Budget Pilot.
- Recognise that Personal Assistant services are essential independent living supports, not home help services.

Housing

UNCRPD Articles: Article 19 – Living Independently and Being Included in the Community; **Article 28** – Adequate Standard of Living and Social Protection.

Irish Wheelchair Association calls on Government to:

- Review the Housing Adaptation Grant and align funding with actual building costs.
- Make the Housing Adaptation Grant non-means-tested.
- Require Local Authorities to implement measurable wheelchair-livable housing targets.
- Provide oversight and ringfenced funding for Universal Design and accessible housing delivery.
- Increase investment in assistive and digital technologies that support independent living.

Irish Wheelchair Association™

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Transport

UNCRPD Article: Article 9 – Accessibility

Irish Wheelchair Association calls on Government to:

- Retain the Disabled Drivers and Passengers Scheme so people can continue to afford adapted vehicles.
- Reintroduce the Mobility Allowance and Motorised Transport Grant, or replace them with equivalent supports.
- Roll out the Travel Assistance Scheme nationwide.
- Introduce enforceable accessibility standards for public transport and public infrastructure.
- Continue measures to achieve a fully accessible taxi fleet.

Community Centres

UNCRPD Article: Article 19 – Living Independently and Being Included in the Community.

Irish Wheelchair Association calls on Government to:

- Provide multi-annual funding for day and community support services.
- Replace reliance on Community Employment Schemes with core funding.
- Provide funding to Section 39 organisations to achieve pay parity and retain staff.
- Support transport and operational costs associated with community services.

Access

UNCRPD Article: Article 9 – Accessibility

Irish Wheelchair Association calls on Government to:

- Provide ringfenced funding for a full-time Access and Inclusion Officer in every Local Authority.
- Establish an Access Fund to improve inaccessible footpaths and town infrastructure.
- Prioritise the involvement of people with lived experience of disability in accessibility planning and decision-making.

Sport

UNCRPD Article: Article 30 – Participation in Cultural Life, Recreation, Leisure and Sport

Irish Wheelchair Association calls on Government to:

- Deliver in full the €2.4 million ringfenced in the Programme for Government for disability sport-focused National Governing Bodies, on a guaranteed multi-annual basis.
- Provide sustainable multi-annual funding for disability sport organisations.
- Increase core funding to IWA-Sport to support staffing and programme delivery.
- Ensure funding reflects real delivery costs, including transport, support staff, insurance, and pension auto-enrolment.
- Provide long-term investment in performance pathways for athletes with disabilities.
- Support National Governing Bodies and Local Sports Partnerships to deliver accessible Para sport programmes nationwide.

People with disabilities cannot continue to absorb the financial burden of policy delays.

Disability poverty is not inevitable; it is the result of policy choices.

Budget 2027 must deliver meaningful action to ensure equality, dignity, accessibility, and independent living for people with disabilities across Ireland.

Irish Wheelchair Association™

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