

National Disability Authority



# A Matter of Rights

Strategic Plan 2001 - 2003

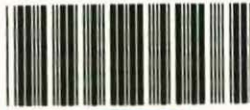


NATIONAL DISABILITY AUTHORITY  
ÚDARÁS NAISIÚNTA MÍCHUMAIS

**A Matter of Rights**, the NDA's Strategic Plan 2001-2003, is available in standard print, in Braille, in large print, on tape, on computer disk and on the NDA website ([www.nda.ie](http://www.nda.ie)). A summary version for people with learning disabilities is also available.

The NDA would like to thank the Forum of People with Disabilities, People with Disabilities Ireland and the people with disabilities who made a significant contribution to the publication of this document.

Design: Red Dog



# Foreword

In the Ireland of today, over 350,000 people have a disability. People of all ages, from all walks of life in some way experience difficulties in their daily living. These difficulties are very often unnecessarily exacerbated by the society in which we live.

From a late start and poor historical record, Ireland now ranks high on any list of nations considered progressive and innovative in the disability field. The Report of the Commission on the Status of People with Disabilities, and the positive reactions of all political parties to it, marked a watershed in Irish disability policy. It set a new framework of reference – a rights-based approach.

However, the acknowledgement of the rights of all people with disabilities to participate fully in society is recent and society is only beginning to catch up. Justifiable expectations of equal access for all often exceed a less than perfect reality.

Changes are taking place for the better but their development is a slow process. Some signs are obvious: buildings and transportation are still inaccessible to people with disabilities. Education, employment, public services, religious services, recreation and other normal everyday activities are denied, made unnecessarily difficult or are often available only in segregated circumstances. These are the more obvious manifestations of our historical neglect. Less visible, yet more difficult to counter, is the fear and ignorance of the unknown that often pervades the public perception of disability. An emphasis in the past on charity has influenced this attitude and hindered widespread recognition of the contribution and potential of people with disabilities.

For the National Disability Authority the challenge is clear. The rights of people with disabilities have been acknowledged and must now be universally applied. Ireland possesses the knowledge and skills to embrace this challenge and to remove all of the barriers, physical and attitudinal, which exclude people with disabilities from full participation in our communities.

This is our first Strategic Plan and it is on this Plan and how successfully we implement it that we will be judged. If this Plan is to mean anything our actions must result in real tangible benefits and we the Authority believe that the most important judges of this will be people with disabilities, their families, advocates and carers.

I would like to thank all of those who responded to the Authority's invitation to contribute their thoughts and suggestions to the development of our first Strategic Plan. Your input, together with that of my fellow members of the Authority and our dedicated staff, has significantly shaped this Plan. This represents the first step in a wider, on-going consultative process, which the Authority is determined to lead. It is our belief that by involving all stakeholders in the shaping of policy, practices and programmes we will move with confidence towards a truly inclusive society.

Angela Kerins  
Chairperson  
May 2001



# Introduction

This is the first Strategic Plan of the National Disability Authority since its establishment on 12 June 2000 under the National Disability Authority Act 1999. The Authority is required, under its founding legislation, to prepare a three year strategic plan “**as soon as practicable after the establishment day**” and to submit it to the Minister for Justice, Equality and Law Reform for approval.

The 1996 Report of the Commission on the Status of People with Disabilities, which recommended the establishment of a National Disability Authority, followed what was certainly the most comprehensive consultative process ever conducted in the disability field in Ireland. The Commission’s report and the progress to date in implementing its recommendations provided invaluable input to the planning process.

The Authority publicly invited submissions from interested organisations and individuals. The invitation welcomed, in particular, comments/suggestions which addressed:

- the core values or beliefs which should be reflected in the Authority’s work
- the Authority’s key objectives
- actions which the Authority should take to achieve its key objectives
- the framework which the Authority should develop to monitor progress

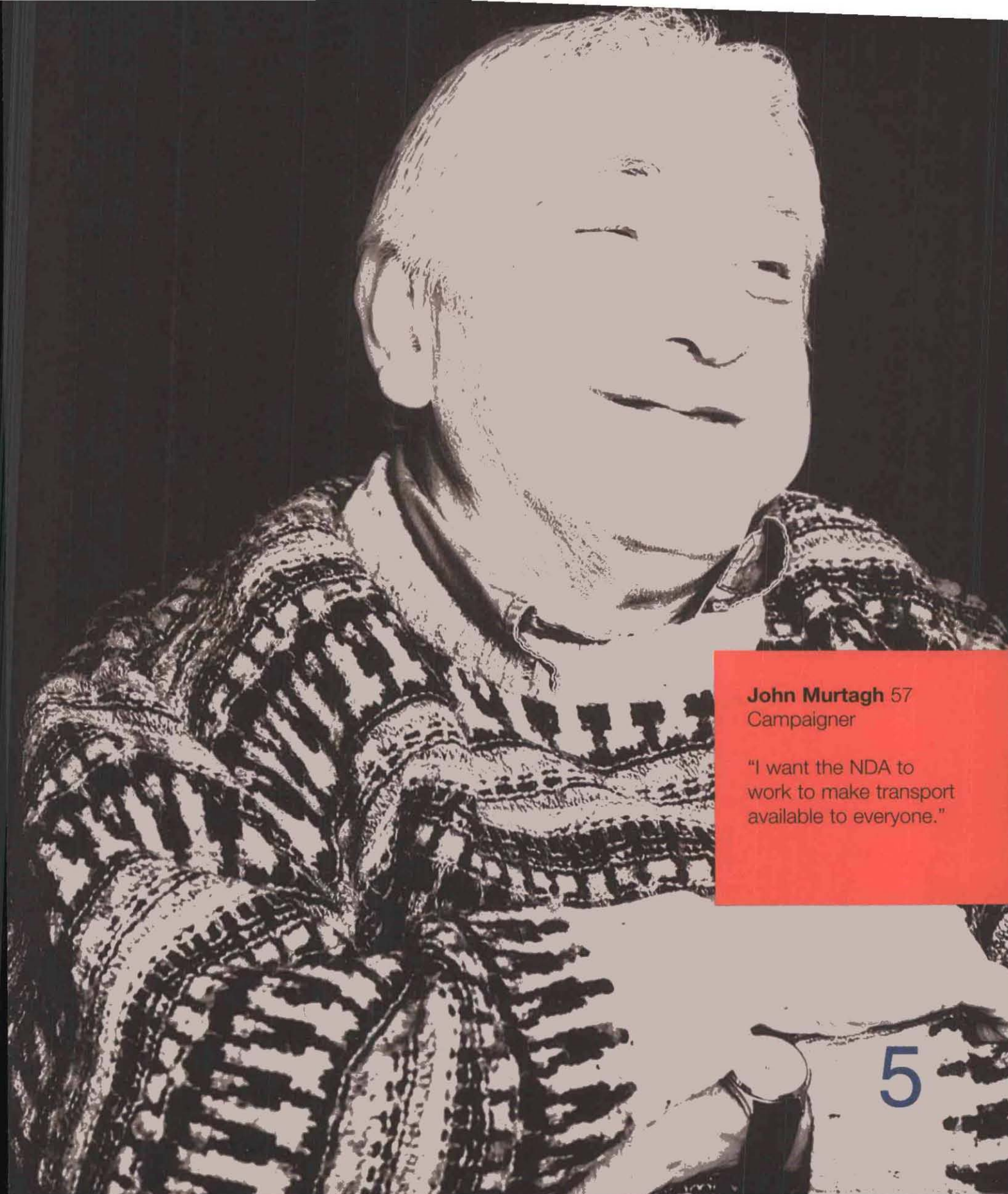
Submissions were received from a wide range of stakeholders, including people with disabilities, parents and carers, and organisations, both public and private. The largest number of submissions came from voluntary organisations working in the disability field. The Authority carefully considered all the submissions and the Strategic Plan reflects many of the valuable ideas received.

Inevitably, some of the excellent suggestions and recommendations received are not reflected in this Plan. This is not because they are not valuable and worthwhile but simply because the Authority had to make often difficult choices about priorities and likely resource availability.

The timescale for the Plan's development did not allow for more widespread consultation. The Authority intends to work closely with mainstream and specialist agencies and to operate on as broad a consultative basis as possible, through advisory committees, working groups and other mechanisms. This should greatly assist in both monitoring the implementation of this Plan and in developing future strategies.

The National Disability Authority is a small organisation. The disability community has high expectations of it, not all of which may be realisable. In responding to these expectations, the Authority intends to impact positively on the lives of people with disabilities and to account for itself openly and honestly on an ongoing basis against the objectives set out in this Plan.





**John Murtagh 57**  
Campaigner

"I want the NDA to work to make transport available to everyone."

# External Environment

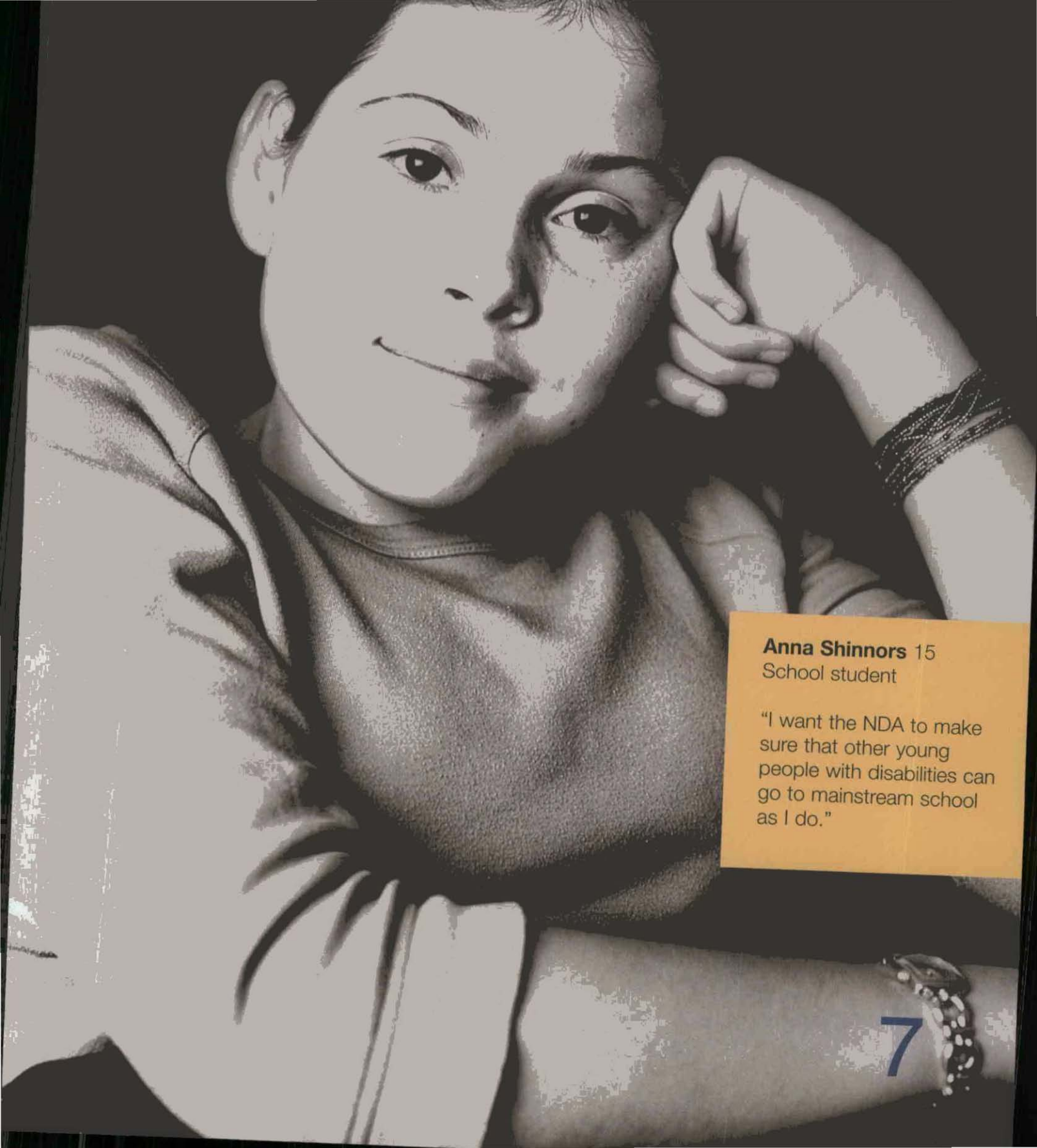
The movement towards a more inclusive society in Ireland is expected to gather further momentum over the term of this Plan. Changes in the age profile of the population mean that progressively more people will have a direct or indirect experience of disability, giving disabled and non-disabled people a mutual interest in ensuring change.

Developments at home, including the promised introduction of a Disabilities Bill and the establishment of a Human Rights Commission, will be matched by developments abroad such as the new EU Directive outlawing discrimination in the workplace on a number of grounds including disability, and the move, initiated by Ireland, towards a United Nations Convention on the Rights of People with Disabilities.

There has never been a more opportune time for building on the positive social change which Ireland has enjoyed in recent years. However, a downturn in the economy might have adverse effects on employment or in widening the gap between rich and poor leading to a slowdown in the momentum of creating a more inclusive society.

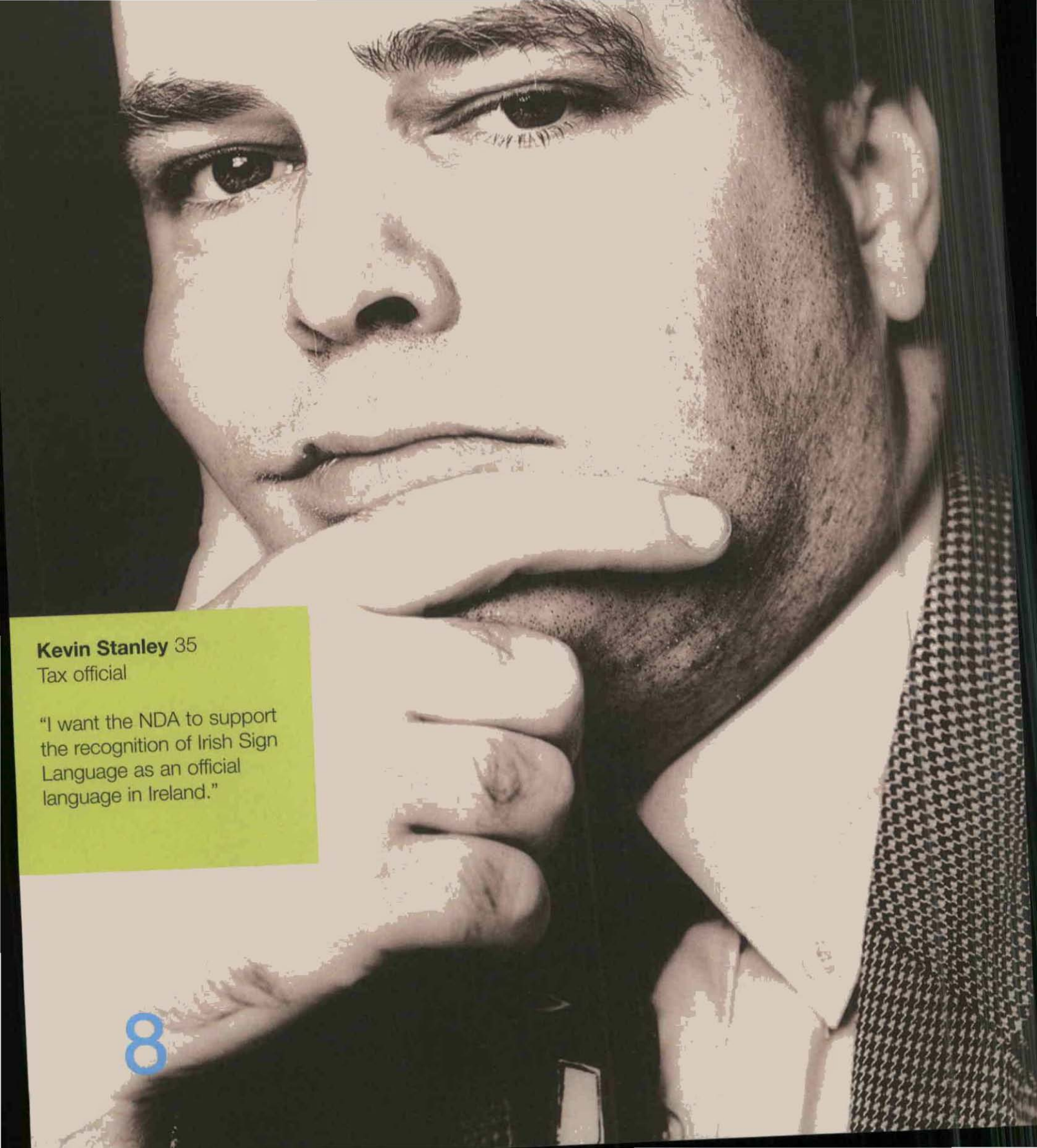
The Authority is determined to use the Plan period to strengthen the foundation already laid on which future significant progress towards a fully inclusive society can be assured.





**Anna Shinnors 15**  
School student

"I want the NDA to make sure that other young people with disabilities can go to mainstream school as I do."



**Kevin Stanley 35**

Tax official

"I want the NDA to support the recognition of Irish Sign Language as an official language in Ireland."



# First Strategic Plan

As the first Strategic Plan for the National Disability Authority, this Plan sets out the Authority's purpose in terms of its mission and vision for the future together with the core values which will guide the work of the Authority for the next three years. The purpose of strategic planning is to allow the Authority to determine and achieve a number of key objectives within its statutory remit while continuously and proactively adapting to meet the demands of a changing environment. This Plan sets out:

- priority areas, for the next three years, where the Authority intends to concentrate its efforts and
- specific objectives, which will be used to prioritise actions, allocate resources and provide a basis to review and measure progress.

Many of the objectives outlined in this Plan will involve the development for the first time of performance indicators/outcomes by which progress can be monitored and evaluated. In addition, detailed action plans will be developed that set out clearly how and when specific objectives will be achieved.

The publication and dissemination of this Plan marks the initial stage in an ongoing process of strategic planning. It reflects current demands and challenges and a realistic set of priorities and objectives that can be achieved over the next three years.



# Vision

When it reported four years ago, the Commission on the Status of People with Disabilities noted that “public attitudes towards disability are still based on charity rather than on rights, and the odds are stacked against people with disabilities at almost every turn. Whether their status is looked at in terms of economics, information, education, mobility or housing they are seen to be treated as second-class citizens”.

The Commission’s report, and the reactions of all political parties to it, proved to be a watershed in Irish disability policy. It set a new framework of reference – a rights-based approach.

The shift to this rights-based approach is reflected in the way disability has now been mainstreamed in the State’s main legislative weapons against discrimination – the Employment Equality Act, 1998 and the Equal Status Act, 2000. In operational terms, it is seen in the mainstreaming of a range of programmes and services, including training and employment, information and advocacy and in the establishment of new institutional structures - in particular, the National Disability Authority. The Government’s commitment to introduce an over-arching Disabilities Bill is a further vital element in an overall strategy to create a genuinely inclusive society open to all.



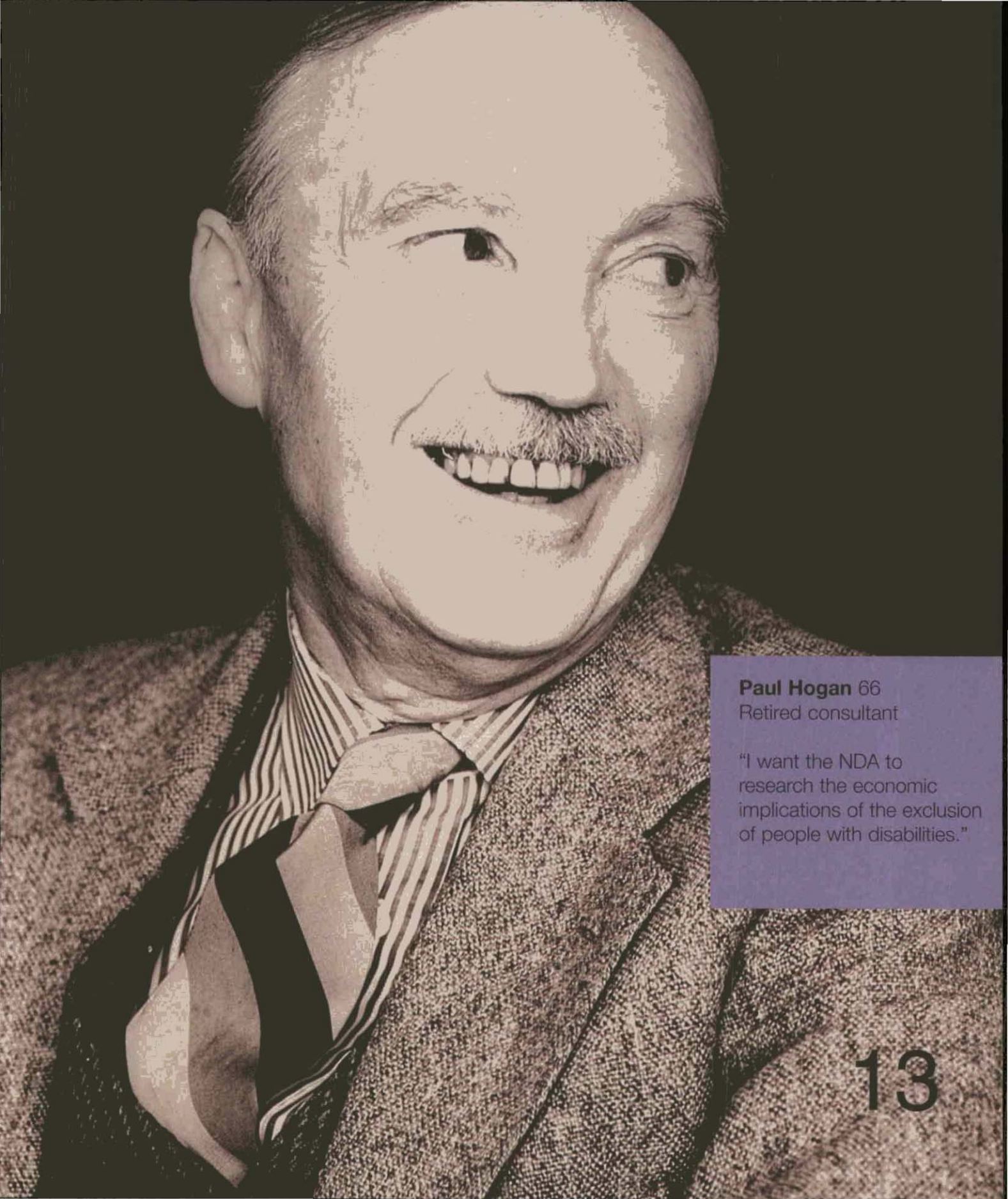
**Deirdre Spain 25**  
Hotel worker

"I want the NDA to make sure that I have the right to live the way I want, not the way everybody thinks I should."

The National Disability Authority dedicates itself to strive for the creation of a society in which people with disabilities have the right and the opportunity to:


- influence and shape public policy at all levels
- develop and fully use their abilities, talents and skills
- live, learn and work in environments appropriate to their needs
- live as independently as possible
  - in the least restrictive environment
  - through the use of personal assistance, and other community supports, where necessary
  - making full use of technology and other supports
- enjoy equality and full participation
- make informed choices on issues
- participate in, and receive support from, national and international organisations which effectively represent their interests
- have systems of support sufficient to ensure a reasonable standard of living in the community of their choice.





**Paul Hogan 66**  
Retired consultant

"I want the NDA to research the economic implications of the exclusion of people with disabilities."

A black and white portrait of an elderly woman, Beatrice Reid, with short, dark, wavy hair. She is smiling slightly and looking towards the camera. She is wearing a dark, textured top and a necklace made of large, dark, round beads. The background is dark and out of focus.

**Beatrice Reid 77**  
Author

"I want the NDA to ensure that we people with disabilities can fulfil our duties as citizens."



# Mission

The National Disability Authority will, on behalf of the State, promote and help to secure the rights of people with disabilities. The Authority will achieve this

- by influencing public policy and legislation
- by working to ensure that services to people with disabilities are of the highest standards and quality.

Specifically the National Disability Authority will:

- develop, co-ordinate and advise on policy
- promote equality, participation and inclusion
- advise on and monitor the implementation of standards for programmes and services
- prepare codes of practice
- undertake and commission research
- collect and disseminate information.

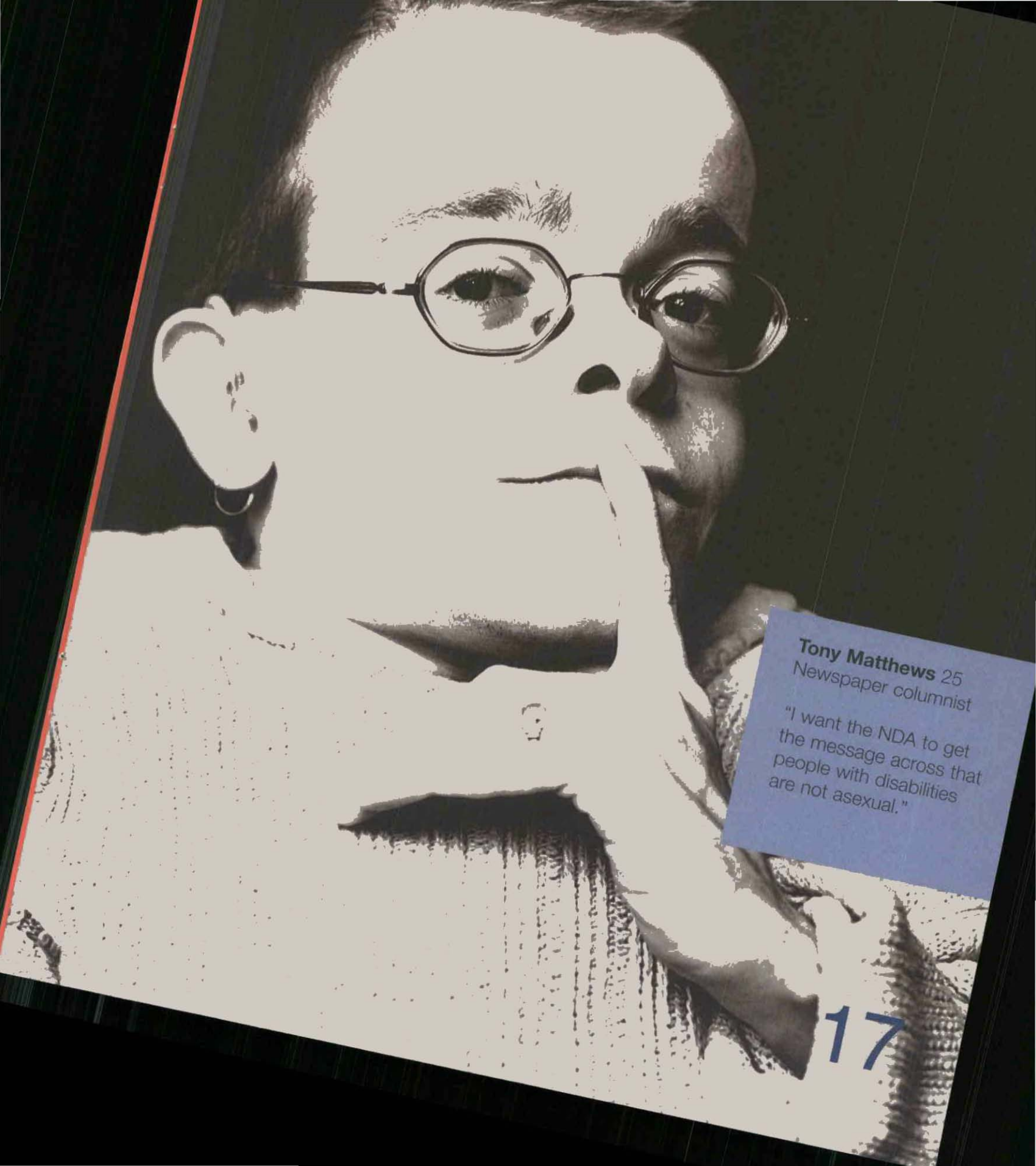


# Core Values

The following core values or beliefs will be reflected in the work of the National Disability Authority and will guide the way in which it will achieve its mission:

**A Rights-based Approach** The National Disability Authority will proactively adopt a civil and human rights perspective in the development of policy and practice for people with disabilities. Grounded in the social model of disability and the principles of equality, participation and choice put forward by the Commission on the Status of People with Disabilities, this rights-based approach will seek to:

- ensure that the needs and rights of people with disabilities are enshrined in all aspects of Irish life
- promote the empowerment of people with disabilities and their participation in decisions that affect their lives
- underpin the promotion of an inclusive vision among all constituencies in Irish society.



**Tony Matthews** 25  
Newspaper columnist

"I want the NDA to get  
the message across that  
people with disabilities  
are not asexual."

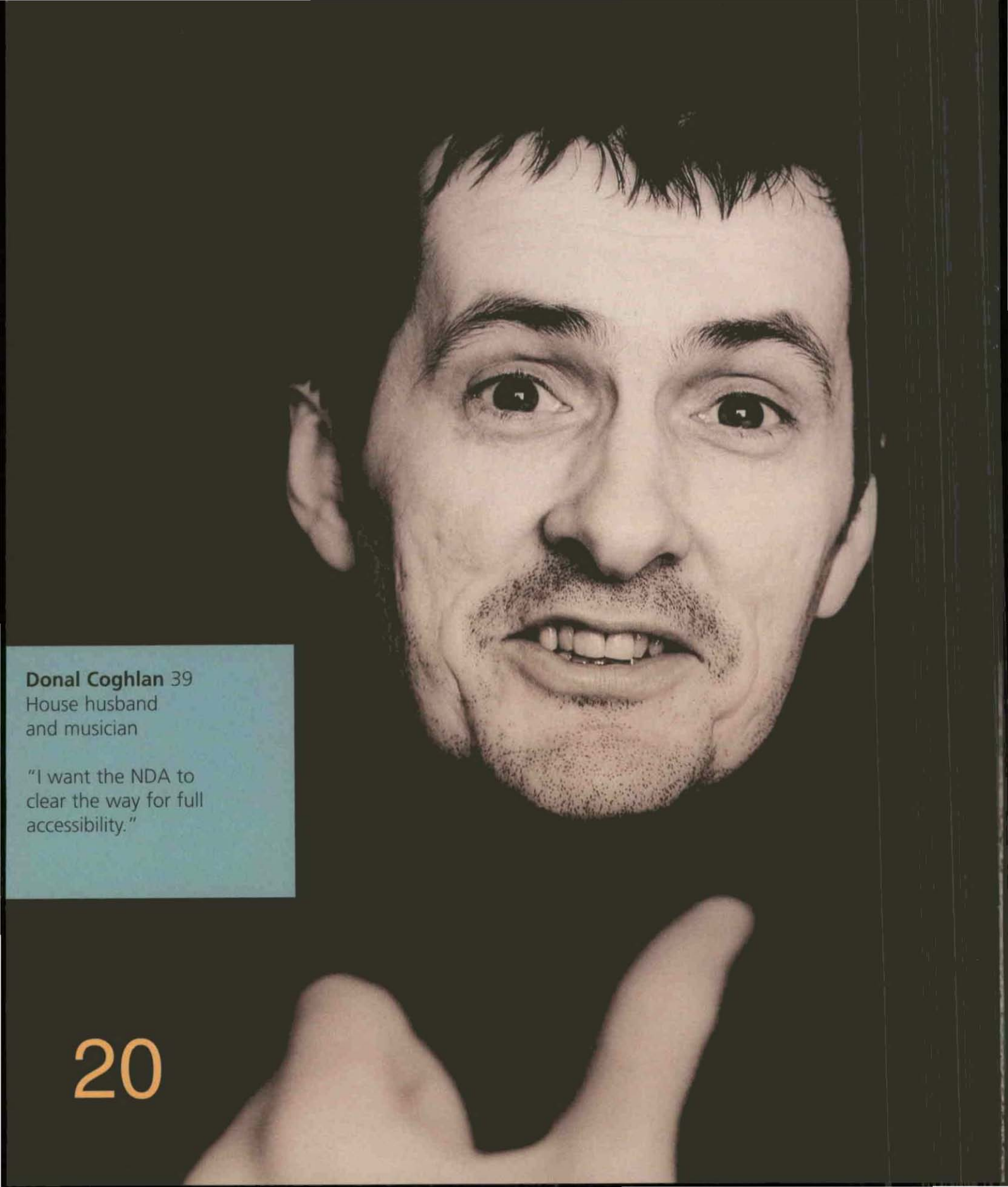
**Working Together** The National Disability Authority will undertake to work strategically with people with disabilities and other key stakeholders to deliver on its mission. In particular, the Authority will:

- consult with key stakeholders in identifying the needs of people with disabilities and issues of concern to them
- seek to influence existing partnerships and establish new partnerships, where necessary, as a basis for effecting change
- establish strategic working groups on key policy issues with significant representation from people with disabilities/advocates
- provide opportunities for key decision and policy makers to actively listen to people with disabilities, their advocates and their representative organisations
- encourage collaborative partnerships with people with disabilities, their advocates and potential advocates and community development/capacity-building approaches and networking
- be an authoritative voice commenting on disability issues and a catalyst for action
- establish positive relationships and ongoing co-operation with other bodies, including the Equality Authority and the Office of the Director of Equality Investigations.



**Quality Services** The National Disability Authority is committed to the sustained development and continuous improvement of high quality services for people with disabilities in Ireland. This quality focus will require the Authority in consultation with key stakeholders to:

- promote client-focussed and client-led service planning and services
- identify and ensure best practice standards in design, delivery and monitoring of services
- take appropriate action where services are inadequate
- incorporate quality of life impact indicators and the right to exercise choice
- pursue maximum appropriate inclusion in mainstream services
- adopt quality principles and practices in relation to how it delivers on its mission and objectives.



**Donal Coghlan 39**

House husband  
and musician

"I want the NDA to  
clear the way for full  
accessibility."

# Strategic Priorities

## 2001-2003

The National Disability Authority has focussed on four strategic priorities through which it will deliver its mission over the next three years. These priorities are to:

1. **Develop policies that promote the equal status of people with disabilities**

The Authority will provide a central focus to the development of forward-looking national strategies to promote the equal status of people with disabilities. A key consideration in developing strategies will be the need to mainstream disability issues effectively, taking account of the particular realities that people with disabilities face over their lifetime.

The development of such strategies will include policy proposals for Government and other stakeholders; disability proofing tools to ensure inclusive policies and programmes, ongoing research; and statistics for more effective planning and delivery of services.



2. **Guide and monitor implementation of the programme to make public services accessible to people with disabilities within five years**

The Authority will, in accordance with the commitment contained in the Programme for Prosperity and Fairness, issue guidelines in accordance with international norms to facilitate effective action and acceptable standards and will award an accessibility symbol to compliant public offices. The Authority will work with the Department of Justice, Equality and Law Reform to monitor, guide and audit progress towards the achievement of this commitment.

3. **Influence attitudes in Irish society**

The Authority will identify and develop public awareness of disability issues and attitudes towards people with disabilities and mobilise support within Irish society for inclusive policies and practices. The Authority will inform the public on the positive aspects of disability and address prejudice and lack of knowledge. Disability Equality/Awareness Training is an important tool in raising awareness and influencing attitudes. The Authority will have a key role in developing and monitoring standards for the delivery of Disability Equality/Awareness Training.

4. **Assure best practice in services for people with disabilities**

The Authority will identify and agree processes for establishing clear and enforceable standards in the provision of services for people with disabilities. The Authority will promote and advise on best practice, establish codes of practice and, with the involvement of people with disabilities, evaluate the quality of service delivery and report on service standards to the Minister.

In this context, the Authority will provide a national and central focus for outcome-based quality frameworks and best practices in the delivery and monitoring of services for people with disabilities. A key feature in any such measures will be the central role for individual service users in the design, delivery and monitoring of services.

### **STRATEGIC PRIORITY 1:**

#### **DEVELOP POLICIES THAT PROMOTE THE EQUAL STATUS OF PEOPLE WITH DISABILITIES**

This strategic priority will be achieved through the following objectives:

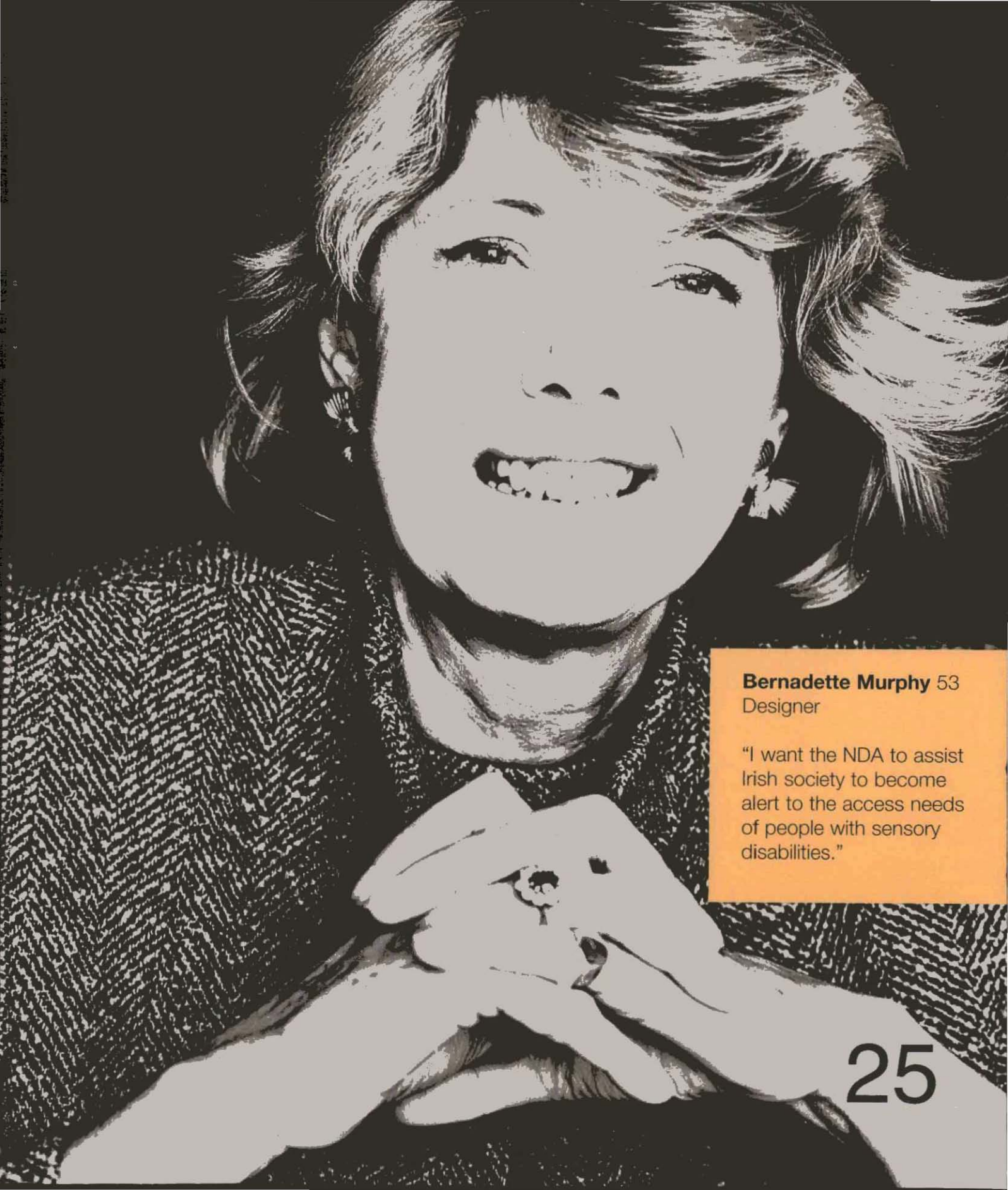
**Objective 1:** To advise the Minister for Justice, Equality and Law Reform in co-ordinating and developing policy relating to people with disabilities

**Objective 2:** To monitor the impact of all relevant existing legislation, in particular, laws on mental health and education, and to influence the drafting of future legislation, including the forthcoming Disabilities Bill, to ensure equality measures for people with disabilities and to underpin the potential for positive action in all key areas of social and economic participation.

**Objective 3:** To review and monitor Ireland's compliance with international disability rights instruments.

**Objective 4:** To engage with Government Departments to agree a target-based approach, including appropriate timescales and impact indicators, for implementing change in key strategic areas of public policy. The Authority will prioritise education, health and cross-cutting inter-Departmental issues such as income adequacy and transport.





**Bernadette Murphy 53**  
Designer

"I want the NDA to assist Irish society to become alert to the access needs of people with sensory disabilities."

Objective 5: To develop and promote disability proofing guidelines and tools to ensure that mainstream programmes and public policy initiatives effectively include people with disabilities.

Objective 6: To develop baseline quantitative and qualitative data to inform and underpin the planning and development of policy and services for people with disabilities in Ireland. This will involve working with other agencies to identify and agree what information and appropriate statistics need to be gathered to present the most up to date picture of disabled people's experience of participation in all aspects of Irish life.

Objective 7: To develop protocols for effectively including people with disabilities in all aspects of research that affect them.

Objective 8: To set up systems for the effective dissemination of disability research.

## **STRATEGIC PRIORITY 2:**

GUIDE AND MONITOR IMPLEMENTATION OF THE PROGRAMME TO MAKE PUBLIC SERVICES ACCESSIBLE TO PEOPLE WITH DISABILITIES WITHIN FIVE YEARS

This strategic priority will be achieved through the following objectives:

**Objective 1:** To issue guidelines, in accordance with international norms, to assist Government Departments and their agencies.

**Objective 2:** To work with the Department of Justice, Equality and Law Reform to monitor, guide and audit progress.

**Objective 3:** To award an accessibility symbol to compliant public offices.



**STRATEGIC PRIORITY 3:**  
**INFLUENCE ATTITUDES IN IRISH SOCIETY**

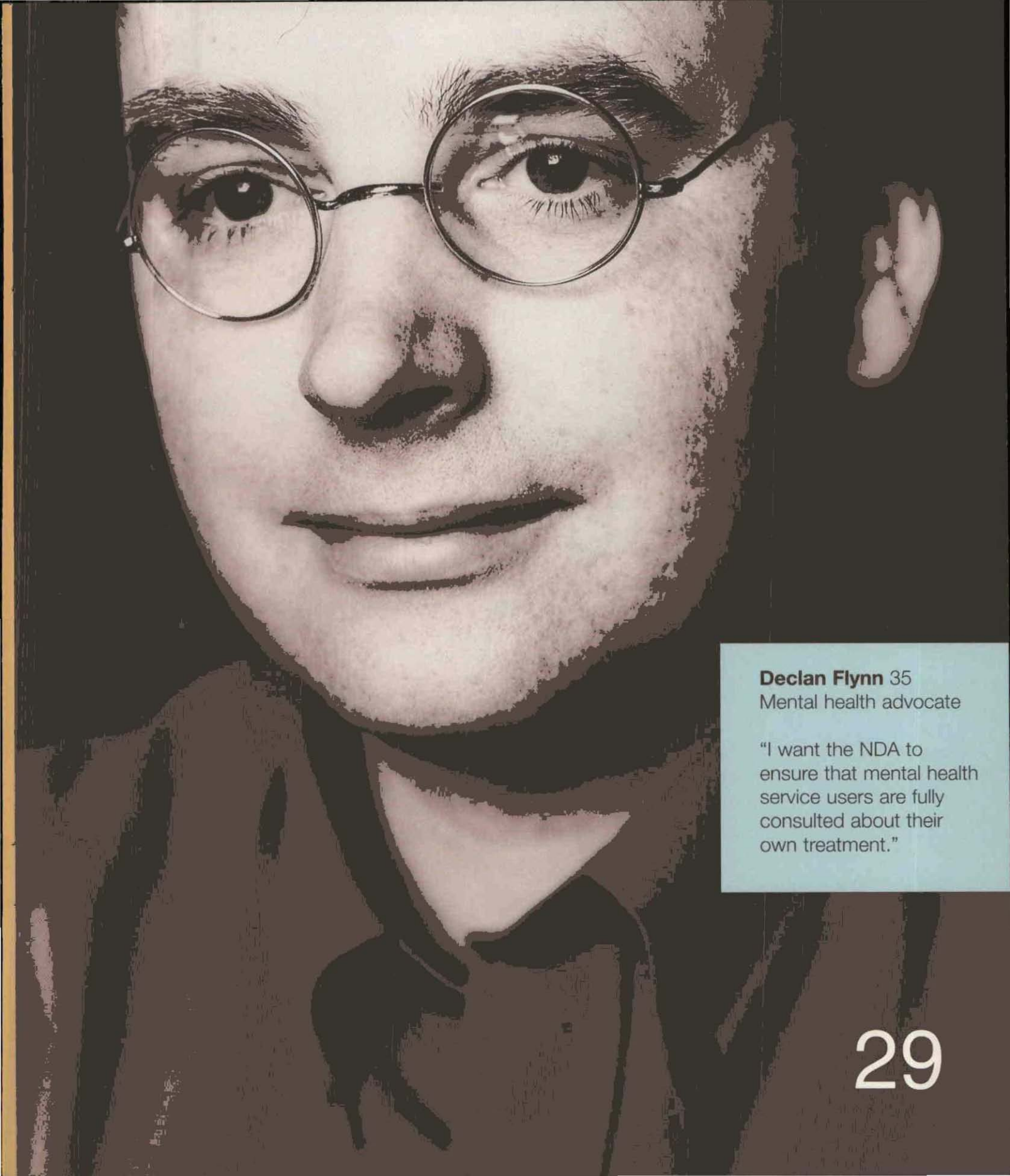
This strategic priority will be achieved through the following objectives.

**Objective 1:** To undertake benchmark surveys on perceptions of and attitudes towards people with disabilities as a basis for monitoring change

**Objective 2:** To develop a communications and media strategy for public education and awareness regarding people with disabilities and their rights.

**Objective 3:** To develop a Code of Practice on Disability Equality/Awareness Training.

**Objective 4:** To promote and develop mechanisms for the inclusion of disability awareness in the curricula of all education and training institutions and in continuing education and development for the professions.



**Declan Flynn 35**  
Mental health advocate

"I want the NDA to ensure that mental health service users are fully consulted about their own treatment."

#### **STRATEGIC PRIORITY 4:**

#### **ASSURE BEST PRACTICE IN SERVICES FOR PEOPLE WITH DISABILITIES**

This strategic priority will be achieved through the following objectives:

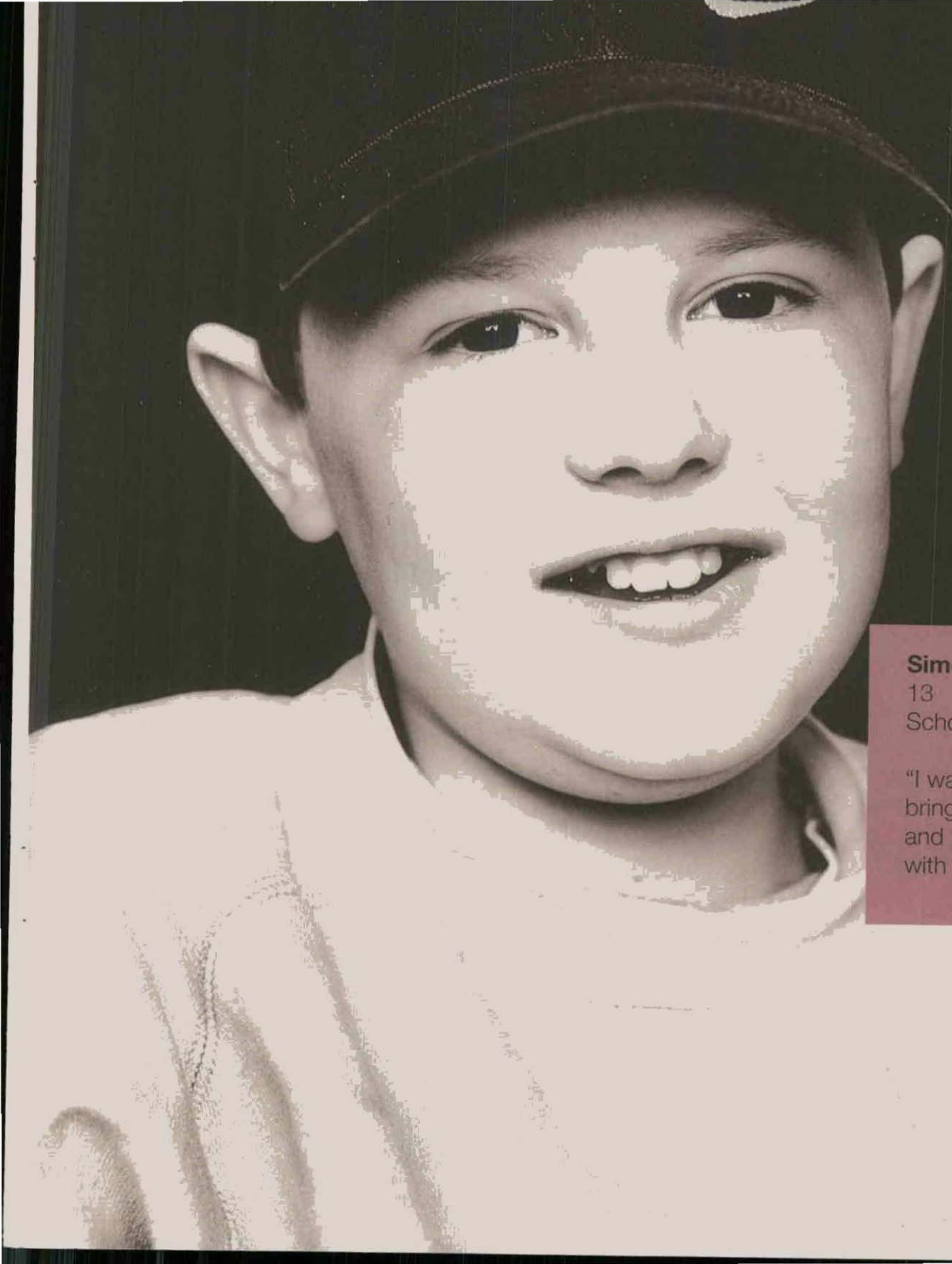
**Objective 1:** To prioritise, in consultation with key stakeholders, service areas requiring a statutory Code of Practice and which will be produced by 2003.

**Objective 2:** To establish and agree a process for monitoring the implementation of standards and codes of practice in programmes and services.

**Objective 3:** To recognise the achievement of good standards and quality in the provision of programmes and services through the provision of awards.

**Objective 4:** To identify programmes and services for people with disabilities which require to be provided but are not being provided or are inadequately provided and take appropriate action, including recommending the review, reduction or withdrawal of public monies provided for that purpose.





**Simon Jameson**

13

School student

"I want the NDA to help to bring about more activities and places I can go to with my friends."

# Sustaining the momentum

For any plan to be successful a framework must be put in place to ensure that the momentum that produced the plan is sustained and that objectives are being achieved and implemented. The National Disability Authority is committed to openness and will account for itself on an ongoing basis against the priorities and objectives in this Plan.

As a new organisation, the Authority is in a strong position to incorporate best practices in management and organisation development from the outset, in order to achieve its mission and objectives. In line with ongoing national initiatives to improve public services and accountability, the Authority will integrate the objectives set out in this Plan with individual and team performances and monitor both accordingly.

The effective implementation of this Plan is wholly dependent on having committed and experienced staff, proactive human resource development and the necessary financial resources.

The Annual Report will be a key mechanism for the external monitoring of progress. New demands, challenges and opportunities constantly arise and priorities may need to change. The development of monitoring and regular review processes involving key stakeholders will be an essential part of ensuring that the National Disability Authority remains focussed, relevant and effective.



**Dinah Dodrill 48**  
Activist

"I want the NDA to ensure that I am no longer excluded from the services, accommodation and resources of Ballymun, where I live."





## National Disability Authority

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