



Strategy 2003-2006

CHAIRMAN'S MESSAGE



I am delighted to present this, our first strategic plan for PwDI.

I would like to acknowledge and thank everyone who contributed to the document, no matter how big or small the contribution. I can honestly say that it is a true reflection of the direction the membership of our organisation wish to take over the next few years.

I believe the goals covered in the document are achievable and, with everyone's continuous dedication and hard work, we can accomplish what we have set out to do.

I wish to say a special word of thanks to Mr Bob Perry for all his listening powers, patience and commitment because without him this document would not be in front of us now.

Nigel Brander
Chairman

PwDI NATIONAL BOARD MEMBERS

Carlow	Nancy Smyth
Cavan	Ricky Walsh
Clare	Lotti McClure
Cork City	Donie O'Leary
Cork County	Vacant
Donegal	James McClean
Dublin City	Anne Harrington
Dublin Dún Laoghaire	Gerry Ellis
Dublin South	Thomas Byrne
Fingal	Vacant
Galway	Marian Nolan
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Wicklow	Elaine Cahill

FOREWORD



This is the first strategic plan for PwDI, which was initiated in July 2002 to support the provision of supporting and enabling networks to provide a voice for all people with disabilities. In developing this strategy, PwDI consulted with its core members, National Board and other stakeholders. Individual interviews, group meetings and written submissions all contributed to the process and I wish to thank everyone who contributed. I acknowledge the enthusiastic commitment of individual members and staff in contributing to the development of the strategy document.

The aim of this plan is to provide and focus attention on the means of providing:

- A coherent voice for all the people with disabilities in Ireland
- Facilitation of the expression of the issues of concern of people with disabilities
- Promotion of the activities of PwDI and its members
- Critical information and support to the networks
- Facilitate the training of Network members so they have the tools to positively affect change in their counties.
- Full accessibility for people with disabilities and for other sections of Irish society who are disadvantaged.

National Office is committed to the full implementation of this plan which will depend on PwDI receiving the necessary support and resources. I am looking forward to fully implementing the recommendations in this document. Support of all our members will be needed in this effort if we are to fulfil the expectations we have for ourselves.

Michael Ringrose
Chief Executive
March 2003

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1. INTRODUCTION

This first strategy plan has been developed over several months with extensive consultation with members, network committees and many National Board members. These consultations and responses were incorporated into the framework of the strategy document.

PwDI owes a debt of gratitude for its existence and guidance to the **“Report of the Commission on the Status of People with Disabilities”**. The 402 recommendations are the foundation of our mission, goals and objectives. It is this organisations aim to see the full implementation of all the recommendations of that historic report.

The overall objectives that PwDI will always strive to achieve are listed out in its Memorandum of Association. This document is not meant to replace or augment them but to focus on a few that we feel we can achieve with our limited resources over the next four years.

In a recent study conducted by the National Disability Authority, more than three out of five people agreed that society disables people by creating barriers¹. Those barriers are both physical and mental. PwDI was created to coordinate the removal of those barriers. We can only accomplish this task if we collaborate with others in constructive and meaningful dialogue. We must educate the policy makers and the public on the difficulties experienced by our members.

In Ireland today, myths and prejudice still exist concerning people with disabilities, often manifesting themselves in intolerance, discrimination and in some cases abuse. Even though we have made strides in employment and education, discrimination still prevails.

“The primary purpose of PwDI, I think, is to give independence and more control of their lives to people with disabilities. It is understood that people with disabilities know best what they need. The election of PwDI representatives gives the disabled people independence and control. Too often things have been done for people with disabilities and not by people with disabilities.”

PwDI Member

¹ “Public Attitudes Toward People with Disabilities in Ireland” National Disability Authority, October 2001

“PwDI is about empowering people with disabilities to take control of their lives. Promoting the civil, social, economic, political, cultural and recreational rights of people with disabilities.”

PwDI member

“I expect Networks to be an active organisation which will involve itself in all matters concerning people with disabilities. It must be fully up-to-date on all matters of local government and health boards. It must highlight all problems facing people with disabilities in its catchment area. Work with all disability groups, get them involved with our organisation, let them know we are all together when it comes to problems facing disabled people. Meet with all those who make decisions and express your views on all the issues effecting people with disabilities”

PwDI Member

1.1 WHAT IS PwDI?

People with Disabilities in Ireland (PwDI) is a national organisation that was created to provide an effective, representative structure through which all people with disabilities, their parents, partners, relatives, carers and organisations of people with disabilities can participate in and influence decision-making which impacts on the lives and opportunities of people with disabilities.

1.2 HOW IS PwDI STRUCTURED?

We are structured in the “bottom up” approach. Simply spoken, we are an organisation founded on the democratic principal that all members will have an equal say in the organisation and its direction. Members form network committees in each county, nominate board representatives and employ a national office to carry out policy enacted by the national board.

PwDI Structure

Members: Members of PwDI are the strength of the organisation. The bottom up approach allows the organisation to stay true to the people it serves. They elect network officers and Board members. The members are the company’s greatest resource. The voicing of their issues and concerns is of the greatest importance in the formulation of board policy. The knowledge base, the delivery and the dissemination of information are the keys to keeping our members informed of policy.

Responsibilities:

- To work with their networks to achieve the goals and objectives of the organisation.
- To attend meetings when possible and to support each other and the efforts of the networks.
- To ensure that the network is inclusive and represents all people with disabilities in their county.

Network Committee: Network level is where the organisational policy and training is delivered. Network coordinates their activities with the National Office. Local networks ensure that PwDI reflects the voices of their members when speaking on disability issues at national and local level.

Responsibilities:

- To keep all members informed of all relevant communication from the Board and National Office.
- To coordinate activities for their members in the county or catchment area.
- To organise and mobilise people with disabilities in their county.

- To promote and encourage participation in the network.
- To help each other access necessary information and resources.
- To ensure that committee meetings are open and transparent for all members to participate in and conduct in conformance to the Memorandum of the Association.
- To promote the rights and entitlements of all people with disabilities.
- To lobby at local level for a voice in the formulation of policies that effect their members.
- To assist in the development of network membership.
- To contribute to the formulation of policy. This ensures that PwDI can truly represent the interest and concerns of its members

National Board: The National Board consists of 30 members representing each network. The Board is charged with the overall policy making decisions.

Responsibilities:

- To attend board meetings and report to their networks all relevant information
- To create, discuss and endorse policy for the National Office to execute
- To review national policy and legislation for impact and respond
- To provide leadership and cohesiveness on disability issues
- To facilitate the unity with other disability organisations
- To assist in the promotion and development of PwDI and its representative base.

National Office: The National Office's main role is to support the 30 networks within Ireland and to implement National Board endorsed policy.

Responsibilities:

- To promote awareness to lobby and negotiate with statutory bodies on behalf of its members.
- To help establish good strong local representation.
- Ensuring relevant information is passed on to the networks in reasonable time.
- To communicate effectively with its members.
- To support and train the networks.
- To promote PwDI and protect corporate identity.
- To coordinate nation-wide objectives and goals.
- To coordinate the development of PwDI's representative base.

1.3 PwDI PRIORITY AREAS

- **Lobby**

- ◆ Ensure all disability policy and legislation has been positively influenced by PwDI
- ◆ Establish recognition for the Rights of people with disabilities
- ◆ Track issues that effect people with disabilities
- ◆ Coordinate national and local disability issues
- ◆ Secure access rights
- ◆ Advocate for increased resources for people with disabilities

- **Communication**

- ◆ Develop better communication between networks, board and national office
- ◆ Be an informed and effective voice for people with disabilities
- ◆ Provide access to information for members on their rights and entitlements
- ◆ Ensure people can communicate using their chosen method

- **Training/Education/Employment**

- ◆ Ensure the provision of training to members to lobby confidently
- ◆ Facilitate access to educational opportunities
- ◆ Facilitate access to employment opportunities
- ◆ Educate members about their rights

- **Research**

- ◆ Collaborate on appropriate research projects
- ◆ Identify best practices on disability issues from national and international organisations
- ◆ Analyse existing data and research for independent conclusions
- ◆ Promote research on the economic and social implications of a disability for the individual, family, and community

- **Promotions/Membership**

- ◆ Promote the organisation and its objectives
- ◆ Enhance the image and awareness of PwDI
- ◆ Enlist the support and contributions of individuals, their parents, and carers

2. THE CONTEXT

2.1 EXTERNAL

The external context in which PwDI has developed this strategy document:

- The initial version of the Disability Bill was disappointing to all people with disabilities
- Projected reduction in public spending will be a heavier burden on people with disabilities whose cost of living is increased due to their disability
- The needs of people with disabilities are greater and the resources allocated are not deemed to be sufficient
- Rural depopulation continues, people with disabilities in country areas are finding it harder to acquire the resources needed to achieve a decent quality of life
- Government has committed itself to providing a fully inclusive information society
- Freedom of Information legislation has allowed organisations like PwDI to hold government departments more accountable
- Carers are still financially penalised if they work additional hours to supplement their income
- Most public places and buildings in the country are inaccessible for people with disabilities
- Public transportation throughout the country is woefully inadequate with regards to access for people with disabilities
- The National Disability Authority has begun to research the primary issues of concerns to people with disabilities

2.2 INTERNAL

The internal context in which PwDI has developed this strategy document:

- PwDI has 30 network areas throughout the country.
- A programme for skill enhancement and capacity building for Board members and Network officers.
- Was selected as a nominating body for Seanad Eireann.
- The launching of a quarterly newsletter, *Cumhacht*, has provided information to all PwDI members.
- PwDI is now represented on several influential policy making groups including:
 - ✦ NDA Legislative Consultative Forum
 - ✦ Barcelona Steering Group
 - ✦ NDA Standards Advisory Committee
 - ✦ IBEC/ICTU Workway Project
 - ✦ FAS Advisory Group
 - ✦ Equality Authority Issues Group
 - ✦ Comhairle
 - ✦ Comhar
- PwDI has an acute awareness of the necessity to chart a clear course of direction that will guide its future activities and commitment of resources

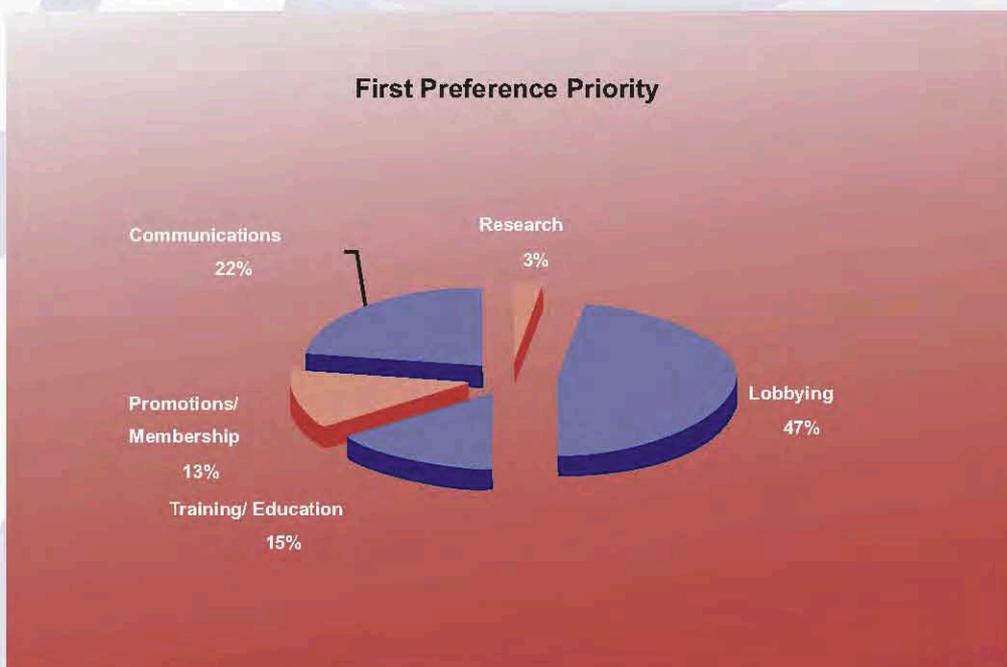
2.3 WHAT DOES THIS ANALYSIS MEAN FOR PwDI?

Several issues are raised through this analysis. Our priorities will need to answer the following questions:

- How will we influence disability related policy issues?
- How will we effectively communicate with each other?

- Can we arrange access to meaningful training for our members and others?
- Do we have the critical data and information to inform the context of our policies?
- Does the public know who we are and what we do?
- How do we create an atmosphere that is tolerant and accepting?
- How do we inform our members of issues and how they can affect those issues?

Areas of 1st preference priority*



*Survey from January 2002, "Questionnaire for Strategy Document"

3. STRATEGY

3.1 OVERVIEW

The following are the strategy areas and objectives PwDI will focus on over the next four years:

Lobbying

Communications

Training/Education/Employment

Research

Promotions/Membership

Priority Area: Lobby

Objective	Actions	Performance Indicators
To get approved a rights based disability bill	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Work with policy makers to ensure our concerns are incorporated 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> A rights based disability bill is approved and enforceable
To gain increases in disability pension and other allowances	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Lobby TD's and others on the real cost of disability 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Increase in disability pension and other allowances
To gain access to public places for people with disabilities	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Work with statutory bodies and local councils to acquire access to public buildings and transport 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> New buildings are required to be designed for access for people with disabilities
Increase access to housing, education and employment	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Work with statutory bodies and local councils to ensure current laws are being enforced and additional resources are added for people with disabilities 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Increase in the number of housing units for people with disabilities Greater access to mainstream education is achieved More people with disabilities gain meaningful employment

Priority Area: Communication

Objective	Actions	Performance Indicators
Design protocols for the handling and streamlining of information and its dissemination to networks and members	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Develop a set of rules on what information is handled, where it is handled and who handles it 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> A process implemented that works in practice as well as theory
Establish a website for information, communication and on-line forums	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Collaborate with existing providers to give all members the ability to gain access to a PwDI web site 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> A user friendly site is designed for people with disabilities
Facilitate regional meetings	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> National Office coordinates regional meeting 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Meaningful regional meetings are held, ideas and best practices are exchanged.

Priority Area: Training/Education

Objective	Actions	Performance Indicators
Educate the policy makers	<ul style="list-style-type: none">Brief all government departments on issues for people with disabilities	<ul style="list-style-type: none">Departmental knowledge of issues increasePositive responses to inquiries and requests
Coordinate training for members	<ul style="list-style-type: none">Coordinate the design and delivery of quality training modules for all networks	<ul style="list-style-type: none">Members require less assistance from national office
Foster Change	<ul style="list-style-type: none">Members work with youth in the community to help positively mould the child's attitude towards disability	<ul style="list-style-type: none">More acceptance, tolerance and understanding from children

Priority Area: Research

Objective	Actions	Performance Indicators
Collaborate on research projects	<ul style="list-style-type: none">Initiate and collaborate research	<ul style="list-style-type: none">Critical part of design and implementation of current research
Gather best practices	<ul style="list-style-type: none">Look to other successful countries for programmes and approaches to complex issues	<ul style="list-style-type: none">Design of best practice guide for networks
Promote new research in areas of economic and social aspects of disabilities	<ul style="list-style-type: none">Lobby for NDA to research these areas	<ul style="list-style-type: none">New direction in disability research is undertaken in the areas of social and economic implications

Priority Area: Promotions/Membership

Objective	Actions	Performance Indicators
Promote the organisation	<ul style="list-style-type: none">National campaign	<ul style="list-style-type: none">Increased referrals to PwDIIncrease in membership
Enhance image and awareness of PwDI	<ul style="list-style-type: none">In concert with national campaign, provide resources to networks	<ul style="list-style-type: none">Develop and enhance the services to current members
Enlist the support and contributions of individuals, their parents, and carers	<ul style="list-style-type: none">In concert with national campaign, provide resources to networks to pursue new members	<ul style="list-style-type: none">Increase the number of members and enhance the services to current members

4. IMPLEMENTATION OF STRATEGY

To accomplish our objectives, PwDI will initially need to do the following:

- Secure additional resources and competencies
- Collaborate with existing organisations that share our objectives and goals
- Reconfigure the staff and structure at national office to ensure effective and efficient services to networks and board
- Implement a Quality Management System that will allow PwDI to effectively communicate roles, remits and responsibilities and to measure outputs

5. MONITORING & STRATEGY

- Assign responsibility and accountability for each of the objectives listed
- Assign resources to each objective and monitor and report bi-monthly
- Conduct an independent assessment each year on progress to date

NOTES



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