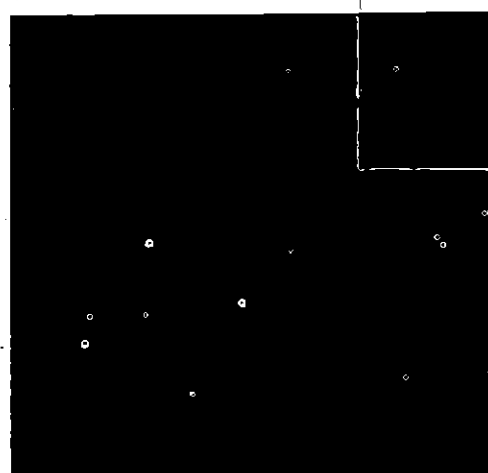


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The Council for the Status of People with Disabilities



Briefing Document

QMT

What is the Council for the Status of People with Disabilities?

In 1993 the Minister for Equality and Law Reform, Mr Mervyn Taylor T.D. established a Commission for the Status of People with Disabilities. Over the past two years the Commission have undertaken a detailed examination of all the issues which are relevant to the lives of people with disabilities. The Commission will report on their findings to Government in April 1996.

“We want to deliver a coherent and comprehensive equality strategy that will meet the expectations we have created in our 18 months dialogue with people with disabilities, carers and service providers”

1993

said Mr Justice Feergus Flood, Chairperson of the Commission.

Commission for the
Status of People with
Disabilities

1995

Ad-Hoc Establishment
Groups

1996

Provisional Council for
the Status of People
with Disabilities

Permanent
Council

Following on from the recommendations of the Commission the Minister has now set up a committee (the Ad-hoc Establishment Group) to put in place a Provisional or Interim Council for the Status of People with Disabilities:

It is intended that the permanent Council, when elected will be a permanent, independent structure, funded by Government, whose primary function will be as the national representative body for all people with disabilities.

Recognising the fact that disabled people are best served by representing themselves the majority of those on the Council will have a disability. Also represented will be parents, carers, advocates and organisations.

What are the Proposed Functions of the Council?

- Represent
- Advocate
- Equality
- Support
- Lobby
- Liaison

The Council will provide a representative structure for people with disabilities, through which they can have access to decision-making on all matters of concern to them.

The Council, as the national representative body of all people with disabilities, parents, partners, carers and advocates, will present a strong, unified and inclusive voice.

The Council will also aim to provide support for the development of self-advocacy, disability awareness and related programmes aimed at promoting equality.

How will the Council be Structured?

The Council will be structured from the bottom up with representatives being elected or nominated, initially, at County Network level. Local representation will ensure that the Council remains an effective and credible voice when speaking on issues of both national and local importance. There will be a total of thirty local committees which will be called County Networks.

Those elected at County level will be entitled to go forward for election by a Regional Conference to the National Council.



Who will the Council Represent?

- Vulnerable
- Marginalised
- Urban
- Rural
- Gender

The success of the Council will depend on its ability to be inclusive of all people with disabilities while at the same time maintaining a balance between the various disability groupings. Other considerations such as the urban/rural divide and gender balance are also important. Similarly, the Establishment Group are anxious to include participation by people who may have difficulty communicating, who may live in institutions, who cannot represent themselves or who may be excluded for economic reasons.

Achieving a Balanced Representation

Achieving a balance on the Council between different disability groups is important. Similarly, it is necessary to ensure that the majority of those on the Council are people with disabilities. For these reasons it is proposed to have three Panels.

Panel A
Individuals with
Disabilities

Panel A will be comprised solely of people with disabilities who will represent persons with physical, sensory, mental health and learning disabilities.

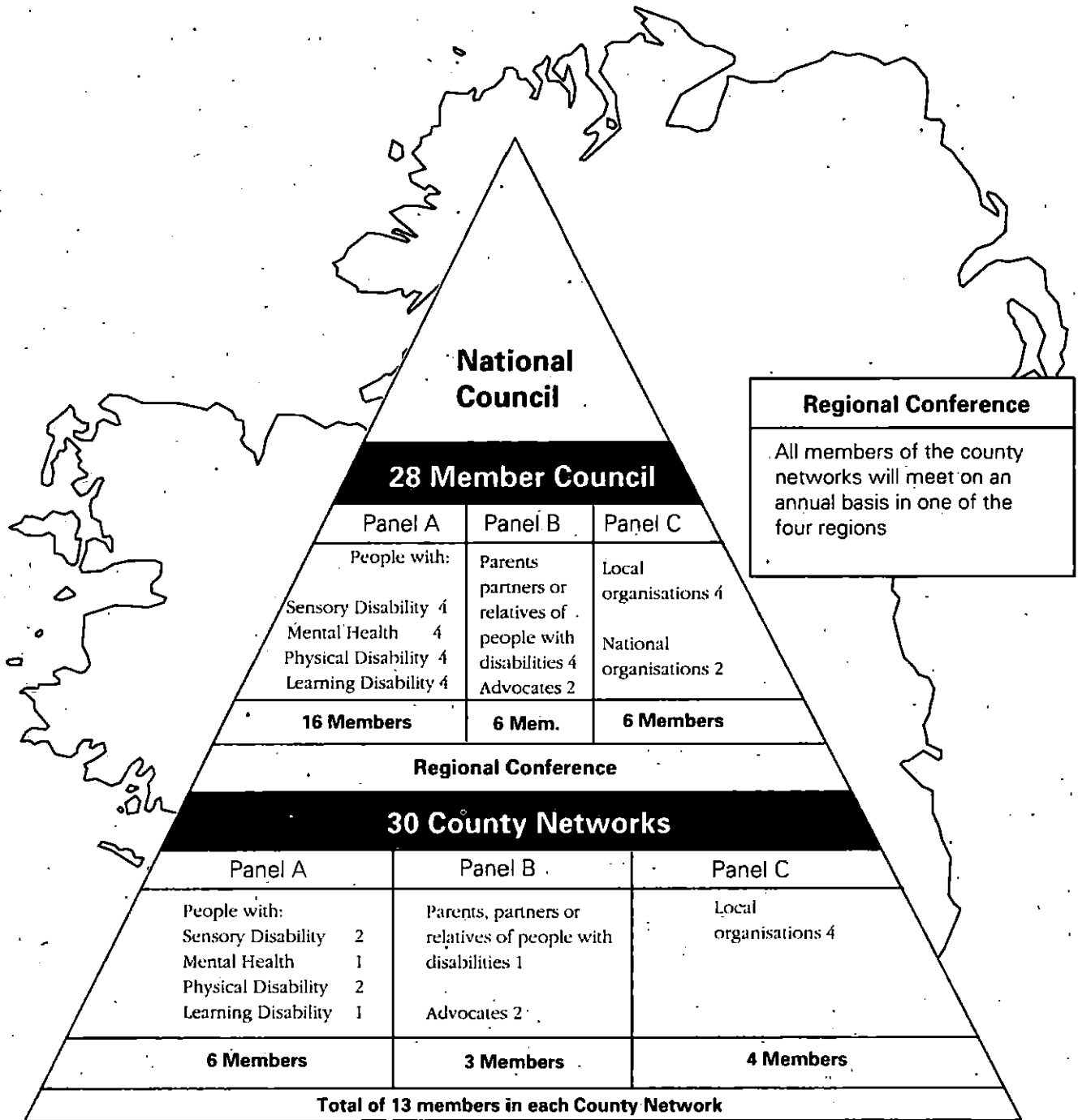
Panel B
Parents, partners,
relatives and advocates

Panel B is reserved for parents partners and relatives. Advocates are also included in this Panel.

Panel C
Organisations/
local groups

Panel C will be drawn from organisations of people with disabilities as distinct from that of service providers. Organisations who wish to be accredited to the Council must fulfil certain criteria. It is intended that these criteria will ensure that only organisations which are totally controlled by people with disabilities will have representation.

Council for the Status of People with Disabilities



Leinster	Dublin	Munster	Connaught/Ulster
Kildare Carlow Kilkenny Laois Longford Meath Offaly Westmeath Wexford Wicklow Louth	Dublin City Dunlaogire/ Rathdown Dublin South Fingal	Clare Cork City Cork County Kerry Limerick Waterford Tipperary	Galway Leitrim Mayo Roscommon Sligo Monaghan Donegal

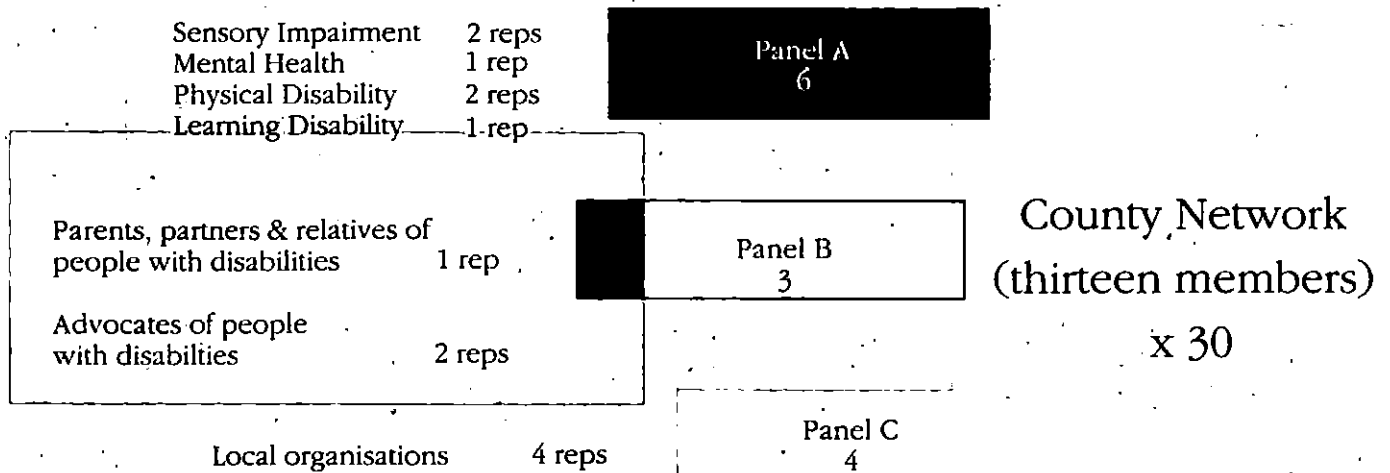
County Networks

The Provisional Council for the Status of People with Disabilities will contain 30 County networks (see diagram Page 3 and above). Each Network will have 13 members drawn from three Panels, Panel A, Panel B and Panel C.

Panel A will have six members - two members with sensory impairment, two members with physical disabilities, one member with mental health disability and one member with a learning disability.

Panel B will be comprised of three members - one member representing parents, carers and relatives and two members representing advocates of people with disabilities (See Glossary of Terms).

Panel C is reserved for local organisations of people with disabilities. Four people will represent local organisations on this Panel. To become accredited to the Council as an organisation of people with disabilities certain criteria will need to be met (see under Panel C).

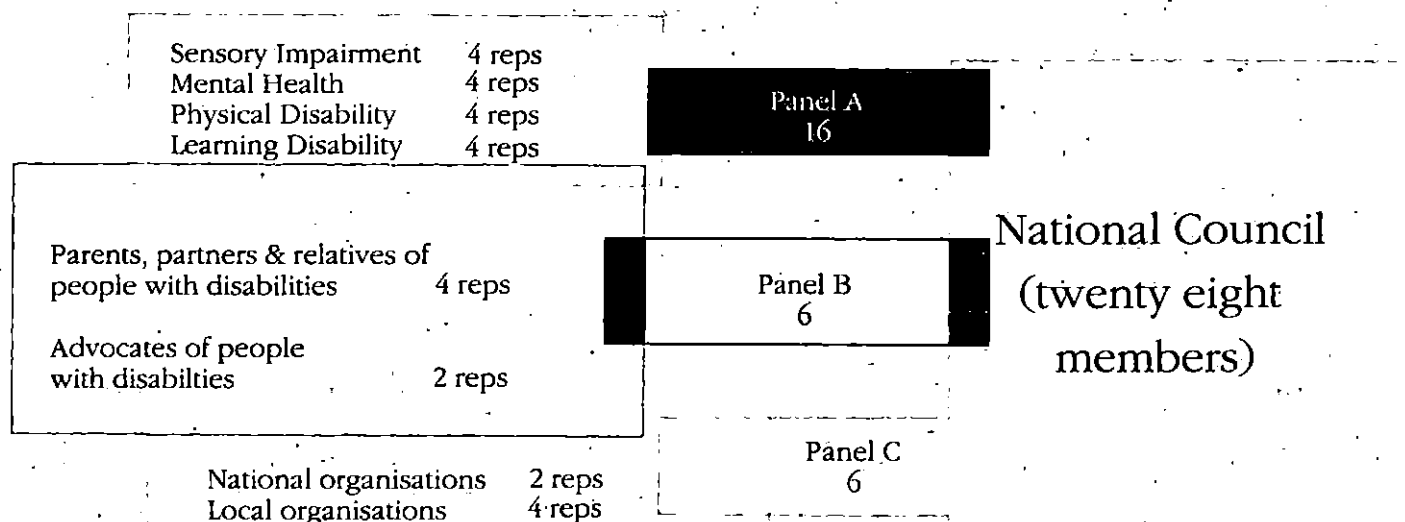


Regional Conference

All members of the thirty County Networks will meet in their regions on an annual basis (see map). The four regions are divided into:- Connaught/Ulster, Leinster, Dublin and Munster. There is no formal regional structure as such and the purpose of the Regional Conferences will be to improve the flow of information within the Council and provide a forum for debate. Elections to the National Council will take place through the Regional Conference. Regionalisation will help maintain a balanced geographic representation on the National Council.

National Council

The governing body of the Council for the Status of People with Disabilities will be the National Council which will have 28 members in total, again divided into three panels.



Panel A will comprise of 16 members equally representing sensory, mental health, physical and learning disabilities drawn from Panel A in each region.

Panel B will comprise of 6 members - 4 representing parents, partners and relatives of people with disabilities and 2 drawn from advocates at County level in each region.

Panel C of the National Council will be comprised of 6 people, 4 of whom will represent local organisations while 2 will represent National organisations. There are separate qualifying criteria for local and National organisations (see under Panel C).

Panel A - People with Disabilities

Who is entitled to vote?

Panel A is reserved solely for people with disabilities themselves. People who wish to register as voters on the electoral role should have a disability which comes within the definition set out in the Glossary of Terms and should be 18 years of age and over.

Names which are entered on the electoral role will be available to all local candidates who wish to canvass their support. Those who register as voters are expected to acknowledge their disability and to support the aims and objectives of the Council. Elections will take place by postal ballot.

Who Can stand for Election?

Candidates must be on the electoral role and thereby fulfil the same criteria as voters. Candidates must be nominated by others who are also registered voters and they should reside in the area in which they intend to stand for election. Candidates must specify the category in which they wish to stand for election and their disability should correspond to that category.

The categories in Panel A are:

Physical disability

Learning disability

Sensory disability

Mental Health

Six people with disabilities will be elected to each County Network. The candidates with the highest number of votes in each category will be deemed elected.

All elected members will be entitled to have a personal assistant to accompany them to meetings etc. In the case of members who have a mental health or learning disability, they may wish to have their assistant speak on their behalf.

Election to the National Council

Those who are successful in becoming elected to their County Networks can go forward for election to one of the sixteen positions reserved on the National Council for members of Panel A. The County Network representatives in each region will form the electorate. Each representative will have one vote per category. Elections will take place on a regional basis. The four regions will each elect four people. Candidates must nominate the category in which they wish to stand for election and their disability should match that category.

The categories are:

Physical disability

Learning disability

Sensory disability

Mental Health

Each region will elect one person from each category. In this way the balanced representation already achieved on the County Networks is retained on the National Council. The candidate with the highest number of votes in each category will be elected.

Panel B - Organised groups of Parents, Partners and Relatives of People with Disabilities and Advocates

Panel B is divided into two sub-panels:

B1 Parents, Partners and Relatives of People with Disabilities

B2 Advocates of people with disabilities

B1 Parents, Partners and Relatives

Participation on Panel B1 is for organised groups of parents, partners or relatives of people with disabilities. Such groups must be accredited to the Council for the Status of People with Disabilities:

Accreditation will be based on a number of factors including:

the aims and objectives of the organisation.

its period of time in existence.

number of members

number of meetings held

activities of the organisation

other information which may be required by the Establishment Group.

(Note: Groups of parents, partners and relatives of people with disabilities who have been active over the past year should apply for accreditation, even if all the criteria above are not currently being met.)

It is envisaged that the accredited groups in each County Network area will meet to decide who should represent them on the County Network. Where agreement proves difficult a system of rotating representation is an option.

A similar arrangement which will allow representatives of this group to go forward from County Network level to National Council is envisaged.

B2 Advocates

Advocates of people with mental health difficulties (including profound) and learning disabilities (including profound) are represented on Panel B2. As yet there is no agreed method of nominating or electing advocates at County Network or National Council levels. The term Advocate is defined in the Glossary of Terms.

Panel C - Organisations of People with Disabilities

Organisations or groups of people with disabilities will have representation on Panel C. Such groups or organisations must be accredited to the Council for the Status of People with Disabilities. Accreditation will be based on the criteria set out below.

It is envisaged that the accredited groups in each County Network area will meet to decide who should represent them on the County Network. Each county Network has four positions reserved for representatives of local organisations. Where there are more than four accredited organisations in any County Network area and agreement proves difficult a system of rotating representation is an option.

National organisations of people with disabilities who are accredited to the Council (see criteria) are also entitled to representation on the National Council. National organisations will meet and agree to nominate two people to serve on National Council. National organisations will have no representation at County Network level.

Criteria for Organisations in Panel C.

Organisations must provide written aims and objectives.

The group/organisation must be established for at least one year and show proof thereof.

Majority of members must be people with a disability.

Local organisations must have a minimum membership of twelve people and membership should be contained within individual counties.

National organisations must have a minimum membership of 200 spread over at least 12 Counties.

Organisations should be able to demonstrate that people with disabilities have effective control of decision making, and that they are employed at all levels in the organisations except personal assistants.

By virtue of their policies and work practices organisations must show a commitment to equal treatment of all people with disabilities.

Where more than twelve people live in a residential home, recognition will be given for group status.

(Note groups or organisations of people with disabilities who have been active over the past year should apply for accreditation. Even if all the criteria above are not met the Establishment Group are anxious to be inclusive of all organisations of people with disabilities.)

Glossary of Terms

1. Disability

The Establishment Group understands the term 'people with disabilities' to include children and adults who experience any restriction in their capacity to participate in economic, social, cultural or political life, on account of a physical, sensory or learning difficulty, or on account of a mental health difficulty.

2. Self-Advocacy

The act of making choices and decisions and of bringing about desired changes for oneself.

3. Advocate

A member of the community who volunteers to give independent voice to the needs and concerns of those unable to speak for themselves and thereby protect their interests.

4. Ad-Hoc Group

A group set up to achieve a specific purpose.

Briefing Document

This document is intended to outline how the proposed Provisional Council for the Status of People with Disabilities might be structured.

While the document contains a degree of detail it is not as yet complete.

Your views and comments on any aspect of the above would be very welcome.

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