



DISABILITY FEDERATION OF IRELAND

# **ACHIEVING INCLUSION**

## **INCOME & COMMUNITY SERVICES INFRASTRUCTURE**

**Pre-Budget Submission 2002**

*From commitment to delivery...*

"ensuring that everybody can feel the benefit of social partnership,.....for many people, poverty and social exclusion are still a stark reality"

—(Programme for Prosperity and Fairness, January 2000)

# Contents

<b>1. Summary</b>	<b>1</b>
<b>2. Setting the Context</b>	<b>2</b>
<ul style="list-style-type: none"><li>• Disentangling Poverty and Social Exclusion from Disability</li><li>• Government Policy</li><li>• Budget - Disability Proofing</li><li>• Health and Personal Social Services</li><li>• Supporting the Voluntary Disability Sector</li><li>• Community Services Infrastructure</li></ul>	
<b>3. Achieving Inclusion</b>	<b>9</b>
<b>3.1 Income Related</b>	
<ul style="list-style-type: none"><li>• Introduction</li><li>• Disability Allowance</li><li>• Variable Costs of Disability Payments Scheme</li><li>• Mobility Allowance</li><li>• Domiciliary Care Allowance</li><li>• Respite Care Grant</li><li>• Carers Allowance</li><li>• Carers Benefit Scheme</li></ul>	
<b>3.2 Community Services Infrastructure</b>	
<ul style="list-style-type: none"><li>• Introduction</li><li>• Community Services - Spatial Inequality</li><li>• National Anti-Poverty Strategy</li><li>• Personal Assistance Services</li><li>• Employment</li><li>• Housing - Disabled Person's Grant</li><li>• Transport</li><li>• Access</li><li>• Education</li><li>• Tax Relief for Donations to Charities</li></ul>	
<b>4. Conclusion</b>	<b>18</b>
<b>5. References</b>	<b>19</b>
<b>6. DFI National Council 2001</b>	<b>20</b>



102731

**The Women's Health Council**  
**Abbey Court**  
**Irish Life Centre**  
**DFI**  
**ACHIEVING INCLUSION**  
**Pre-Budget Submission 2002**  
 Tel: 353 01 8783777

## 1. Summary

For the past ten years Ireland has experienced continuous economic growth, yet people with disabilities and their families have experienced a growing level of poverty.

- In 1987 42% of all households headed by an ill/disabled person were living at or below the 60% poverty line, by 1997 this figure had reached 72% (compared to 16% of all households) (ESRI 1999).
- National rate of unemployment is 3.8% yet it is estimated that at least 70 % of people with a disability are unemployed (Combat Poverty Agency 1999).

The government must use this budget to disentangle the grip that poverty has over the everyday lives of people with disabilities and their families. By choosing not to help us tackle the problems faced by people with disabilities today, the government are creating even greater problems and challenges for us all tomorrow. The true cost of complacency today will be incalculable human and social loss.

The Current Programme for Government, "An Action Programme for the Millennium" states:

"We recognise that disability is one of the most important social issues facing Ireland today."

Why after over 10 years of continuous economic growth are disability and poverty inextricably linked? Why are people with disabilities and their families still marginalised within Irish society?

This government has succeeded in acknowledging our problems, but its solutions and actions have fallen far short of our expectations. DFI has in this document, outlined a structure for the government to deliver on its commitments. The government needs to tackle the social exclusion experienced by people with disabilities by improving income and associated benefits and by providing a comprehensive community services infrastructure.

The sooner our government starts to invest in people with disabilities the sooner Ireland will begin to benefit from a relatively untapped resource; the full participation of people with disabilities in Irish society.

34LR  
 11.4

# Summary Cont....

The following is a summary of the improvements that DFI are seeking in budget 2002.

## 1.1 Income Related

### **Disability Allowance**

- Increase Disability Allowance to the same rate as the Contributory Old Age Pension.
- Disability Allowance to be paid to a person, regardless of the income status of their marital partner.
- Disability Allowance to be paid to all those in institutional care (psychiatric hospitals, residential homes).

### **Cost of Disability Payment**

- Introduction of Variable Costs of Disability Payment Scheme.
- Variable Costs of Disability Payment to be discounted when assessing income for medical card and other such purposes.

### **Mobility Allowance**

- Increase Mobility Allowance to a weekly payment of £50.
- Increase the means test limit to the Average National Industrial Wage.
- Medical criteria for the allowance be brought into line with the Primary Medical Certificate.
- Elimination of the upper age of 66 years.

### **Domiciliary Care Allowance**

- An increase in the Domiciliary Care Allowance to reflect the actual cost of the care required.

### **Respite Care Grant**

- All carers should receive the grant.
- Grant should be increased to £1000.
- Payment should be in respect of each person cared-for.
- Qualifying date for the grant should be up to six weeks after the death of the cared-for person.

### **Carers Allowance**

Key Issues:

- Carers Allowance should be increased to the rate paid by the Health Boards to foster carers.
- Remove the means testing for full time carers
- Carers Allowance should be disregarded as an income when being assessed for medical cards, rent allowance etc.

## **Carers Benefit Scheme**

### **Key Issues:**

- The Carers Benefit should be increased to the rate paid by the Health Boards to foster carers.
- The payment of secondary benefits in recognition of the particular nature of the caring situation, all secondary benefits / supports as per the Carer's Allowance scheme.

## **1.2 Community Services Infrastructure**

### **Community Services - Spatial Inequality**

- All services to people with disabilities should be delivered uniformly throughout the country.
- A basic personal community service infrastructure to be put in place throughout the country on the basis of need.
- National twenty four hour, seven day per week, primary care services.
- Increase in the number of training places available in areas such as physiotherapy, occupational therapy etc.

#### **Mental Health**

- Political and professional recommitment to developing community based mental health services.
- Funding for capital development of community based mental health services.
- Development of a national Crisis Response Service.
- Development and funding for services for homeless people with mental illness.

### **National Anti-Poverty Strategy**

- Disability target for NAPS should be that the risk of consistent poverty among households headed by a person with a disability should be reduced to below 5% by 2004.

### **Personal Assistance Services**

- Nationwide provision of Personal Assistance Services.

### **Employment**

- A scheme similar to the Employment Support Scheme to be made available to those in receipt of Disability Allowance.
- Government identify and remove obstacles blocking people with disabilities entering the labour force.
- Work places must be accessible; all equipment needed by the individual be put into place along with mentoring, coaching and other supports so that they can operate to the maximum.

**Housing – Disabled Person's Grant**

- Disabled Person's Grant should be fully funded and available on the basis of need.

**Transport**

- An accelerated five-year programme to provide a comprehensive and accessible public transport service must be put in place.
- Vast improvement in the accessible taxi services throughout the country.

**Access**

- An accelerated five-year programme to ensure that all new developments are accessible as well as all areas being repaired renovated or upgraded.

**Tax Relief for Donations to Charities**

- Reduce the minimum donation threshold to 100 euros.
- Definition of "relevant donation" to cover donations of assets to eligible charities and approved bodies.

## 2. Setting the Context

### **Disentangling Poverty and Social Exclusion from Disability**

People with disabilities have one thing in common; regardless of whether they are young or old, male or female, and no matter what county in Ireland they live in, the likelihood that they and their families are currently living below the poverty line is far greater for them, than it is for the rest of Irish society.

People with disabilities and their families have grown frustrated with their continual slide further into poverty and social exclusion. Through Budget 2002 the Government must invest in people with disabilities and their families, and end their on-going social exclusion.

For the past ten years Ireland has experienced continuous economic growth, yet people with disabilities are still living in poverty. People with disabilities continue to experience social exclusion and are falling further behind the rest of Irish society. So too are their families and carers.

- 1987 42% of all households headed by an ill/disabled person were living at or below the 60% poverty line, by 1997 this figure had reached 72% (compared to 16% of all households) (ESRI 1999).
- National rate of unemployment is 3.8% yet it is estimated that at least 70 % of people with a disability are unemployed (Combat Poverty Agency 1999).
- No comprehensive scheme to cover the extra costs of having a disability.

Those who choose to ignore the demands of people with disabilities are causing this destructive relationship to strengthen. By choosing not to help us tackle the poverty faced by people with disabilities today, the government will be creating even greater problems and challenges for us all tomorrow. The true cost of complacency today will be incalculable human and social loss.

DFI are calling on the government, to use this budget to begin to disentangle the grip that poverty has over the everyday lives of people with disabilities and their families.

Ireland needs to benefit from a relatively untapped resource; the full participation of people with disabilities in Irish society.

## **Government Policy**

The current government has, since its inception, acknowledged the appalling position of people with disabilities in contemporary Irish society.

The current programme for Government, "An Action Programme for the Millennium" states:

"Fianna Fail and the Progressive Democrats in Government are committed to radical change to ensure that the needs and aspirations of people with disabilities, their families, carers and advocates are comprehensively addressed. We are committed to ensuring that disability is placed where it belongs, on the agenda of every government department and public body. Our policy is based on the core principles of promoting empowerment through appropriate, accessible and responsive services.

We recognise that disability is one of the most important social issues facing Ireland today."

The Taoiseach acknowledged in the Programme for Prosperity and Fairness (January 2000) that one of the main challenges of the programme was "ensuring that everybody can feel the benefit of social partnership, recognising that, for many people, poverty and social exclusion are still a stark reality". He gave his commitment that this would be met by "substantially increasing the resources allocated to social inclusion"

This government has succeeded in acknowledging our problems, but its solutions and actions have fallen far short of our expectations.

Why after over 10 years of continuous economic growth are disability and poverty inextricably linked? Why are people with disabilities and their families still marginalised within Irish society?

## **Budget - Disability Proofing**

Poverty and social exclusion are part of the day to day experience of people with disabilities and their families. People with disabilities come from all walks of life, are of all ages and come from all parts of the country. We keep people with disabilities in Ireland marginalised by not providing:

- Adequate education, training and employment opportunities
- Adequate income support
- A Costs of Disability Payment
- An accessible environment
- An accessible transport system
- A range of comprehensive community based services and supports.

The lives of people with disabilities are greatly affected by decisions made across all government departments. People with disabilities can be further marginalised by decisions made in individual government departments. The Government must carry out a disability audit of Budget 2002. Every aspect of the budget must be assessed to ensure that it will impact positively on the lives of people with disabilities.

### **Health and Personal Social Services**

When people talk of the health services they quickly think of hospitals and waiting lists for admission. Health services in Ireland cover a comprehensive range of activities from acute hospitals to meals on wheels.

People with disabilities, their families and carers, have an ongoing need for services and supports which for the most part are community based; personal assistance, in-home supports, aids and appliances, access to GP services, access to O.T., physiotherapy, speech and language therapy, rehabilitation programmes, day activity and respite etc.

These services by their nature are invisible to the wider community. Where they don't exist or where they are grossly inadequate, it never becomes a public or political issue similar to lack of access to hospital services.

The Minister for health Micheal Martin T.D. acknowledged in July that community based services for people with disabilities need to be greatly improved, he stated...."I was not at all surprised to find that community services and in particular services for older people and people with disabilities were top of the list for change."

A basic personal social service infrastructure does not exist across the country to support people with disabilities.

### **Supporting the Voluntary Disability Sector**

Voluntary disability organisations are more than just service providers. Their constant obsession with the provision of adequate funds, to provide much needed basic services, should not be confused with their wider role. They are often the first to create awareness of unmet needs and to research and implement community based solutions. They have proven their ability to articulate and develop responses, they influence the social climate and they actively involve members of the community. During the severe statutory cutbacks in the 80's, the sector was often the only service provider and/or advocate to support people with disabilities and their families. Voluntary disability organisations have been at the forefront of providing a social infrastructure to facilitate the inclusion of people with disabilities within Irish society.

The White Paper – “Supporting Voluntary Activity”, acknowledges the voluntary sector as being part of the fabric of Irish society. It recognises the role of the sector in policy development, the provision of services and advocacy. The White Paper also makes commitments to a range of voluntary sector supports in order to promote, sustain and develop voluntary effort.

Ireland has a vibrant voluntary disability sector. However, in order to underpin and secure the benefits that the voluntary sector brings to our society, it is necessary now to make a major investment to directly support the sector and to provide a more benign environment in which it can develop and thrive in partnership with the statutory sector.

The sector is more and more being called upon to participate with the statutory sector and this will continue given the shift to mainstreaming. Such participation must not be a token one, it must be supported and resourced if it is to be meaningful and useful. DFI acknowledges the start that has been made in this regard through funding commitments in the White Paper.

It is important to recognise that at a direct economic level, the voluntary sector is making a significant and growing contribution. It directly supports the Exchequer by providing employment through tax returns and the opportunity cost which would have been associated with people being in receipt of State unemployment payments. There continues to be the payment of significant amounts of VAT by all the organisations that are not in a position to reclaim it.

### **Community Services Infrastructure**

Disability is not a straightforward and clear issue, not only are there a wide range of disabilities, but their effects on each person maybe different. Initiatives and programmes must accommodate this difference and not presume that people with different disabilities will equally benefit. Services which assist people who are physically disabled may be of no assistance to people who have epilepsy, are deaf or who have a mental illness. There must be an understanding that different approaches and measures are very often needed for different disability groups, to ensure that developments are equitable and balanced. Bringing an end to the social exclusion experienced by people with disabilities, will involve providing a wide range of income and community based services infrastructure for people with disabilities

DFI, in consultation with its membership has compiled a list of accommodations that the government must include in Budget 2002. These accommodations will assist the government to achieve their own aim as stated in An Action Programme for the Millennium, that “the needs and the aspirations of people with disabilities, their families, carers and advocates are comprehensively addressed.”

# **3. Achieving Social Inclusion**

## **3.1 Income Related**

### **Introduction**

The following section details a wide range of improvements which need to be introduced in Budget 2002 to improve the incomes of people with disabilities and their carers.

### **Disability Allowance**

Disability Allowance is currently £85.50 per week. The Department of Finance estimate that inflation during 2001 was 5% and the Central Bank predict inflation will be around 4% in 2002. Disability Allowance is currently just 25% of the average National Industrial Wage.

DFI calls for Disability Allowance to become 50% of the Average National Industrial Wage. As a first step towards this goal, DFI demand that in the forthcoming budget, Disability Allowance is brought into line with the Contributory Old Age Pension.

In addition to improvements in the rate of Disability Allowance, DFI calls for a payment in relation to the extra costs incurred by people with disabilities.

Disability Allowance and Marriage: Disability Allowance should be paid to a person in his or her own right regardless of their partners' income.

Disability Allowance and Residential Care: A ruling in Budget 2000 enables those who are in receipt of DA prior to going into institutional care (psychiatric hospitals, residential homes) to continue receiving their payments while in care. However, the ruling did not affect those who were in care prior to Budget 2000. The discretionary payment of "pocket money" to these people is not acceptable, this situation, which it is estimated effects over 4000 people, is unfair and discriminatory. DFI calls for all people on disability allowance to continue receiving their entitlements while living in care.

Disability Allowance and Trust Funds: Many parents established Discretionary Trust Fund Schemes on behalf of their children with disabilities. Families are concerned that the income derived from these trust funds may lead to a reduction or loss of the individuals Disability Allowance and associated benefits. This issue needs to be clarified; it is suggested that an income disregard similar to that for people in rehabilitative employment would be appropriate.

DFI is seeking:

- Increase the Disability Allowance to the same rate as the Contributory Old Age Pension.
- Disability Allowance to be paid to a person, regardless of the income status of their marital partner.
- Disability Allowance to be paid to all those in institutional care (psychiatric hospitals, residential homes).

### **Variable Costs of Disability Payment Scheme**

It costs more to live if you have a disability. The following extract from a National Rehabilitation Board survey (1995) illustrates this cost:

- 57% had bought equipment, aids or furniture because of their disability, for example car controls, hearing aids, wheelchairs and special utensils.
- 53% spent more on heating, as a result of requiring heating throughout the day and possibly throughout the year.
- 43% spent more on clothes.
- 20% had to buy items relating to their disability at a cost of up to £30 each week, for example medication, special food and laundry.
- 17% had carried out adaptations to their homes.

A "Costs of Disability Payment" has been recommended by both the findings of the Commission on the Status of People with Disabilities and the National Economic and Social Forum Report No. 6.

The Report of the Commission on the Status of People with Disabilities calls for the introduction of "a Variable Costs of Disability Payment where services are not or cannot be provided".

The Commission report set out the areas of need that should be addressed namely:

- Equipment
- Mobility and communication (travel and telephone)
- Living costs (heating, food and clothes)
- Medical
- Care and assistance (including personal assistants)

The Variable Costs of Disability Payment should be discounted when assessing income for medical card and other purposes.

The financial burden of having a disability is causing people with disabilities and their families to fall further behind.

DFI is seeking:

- Introduction of Variable Costs of Disability Payment Scheme.
- Variable Costs of Disability Payment to be discounted when assessing income for medical card and other such purposes.

### **Mobility Allowance**

Ireland's inaccessible public transport system continues to cause many people with physical disabilities to be excluded. Approximately 90% of the CIE group of companies vehicles/rolling stock are inaccessible, yet during 1999 (the last available figures) the Department of Social Community and Family Affairs paid CIE companies £29.364m in fees for Free Travel Passes.

CIE does not have to pass an eligibility test to receive its money from the State, but people with disabilities do. To qualify for the Mobility Allowance, people with disabilities must pass through an age test, a means test and a medical test.

Mobility Allowance is a compensatory payment to people with disabilities for the lack of accessible transport. In 2000 only 3,200 people were deemed eligible for the allowance, at a cost to the State of £1.5m.

DFI is seeking:

- Increase Mobility Allowance to a weekly payment of £50.
- Increase the means test limit to the Average National Industrial Wage, and move towards phasing out the means test in the future.
- Medical criteria for the allowance to be brought into line with the Primary Medical Certificate.
- Elimination of the upper age of 66 years.

### **Domiciliary Care Allowance**

The Domiciliary Care Allowance which is currently £117 per month needs to be increased to an amount which reflects the actual cost of the care required for the individual child.

DFI is seeking:

- An increase in the Domiciliary Care Allowance to reflect the actual cost of the care required.

### **Respite Care Grant**

The Respite Care Grant needs to be improved to respond to the needs of the carer.

DFI is seeking:

- All carers should receive the grant.
- Grant should be increased to £1000.
- Payment should be in respect for each person cared-for.

- Qualifying date for the grant should be up to six weeks after the death of the cared-for person.

### **Carers Allowance**

Less than 1 in 6 carers receive a Carers Allowance, which is currently £88.50 per week.

DFI is seeking:

- Carers Allowance (CA) should be increased to the rate paid by the Health Boards to foster carers.
- Full allowance should be paid for each person cared for.
- Where 24 hour care is required, a second carer should be paid CA.
- Remove the means testing for full time carers
- For carers in receipt of a Social Payment, pay the full CA in a manner which ensures the Carer's dual roles are recognised, with no "offset loss" to the household income.
- Apply income disregard rules to main earner on FAS CE and SES's.
- Change the current 10 hours "out of home" limit to a flexible scheme to enable carers to avail of part-time education and employment.
- Extend the medical fees scheme to pay for medical reports when appealing refusal of the allowance on medical grounds.
- Provide credited pension contributions to all those in receipt of CA.
- Carers Allowance should be disregarded as an income when being assessed for medical cards, rent allowance etc.

### **Carers Benefit Scheme**

The Carers benefit scheme needs a range of improvements.

DFI is seeking:

- The Carers Benefit should be increased to the rate paid by the Health Boards to foster carers.
- The introduction of a Long-term Carers Benefit, for people who give up employment to provide care on a long-term basis.
- The payment of Carers Benefit to the spouse/partner where the spouse/partner will provide long-term care.
- The payment of secondary benefits in recognition of the particular nature of the caring situation, all secondary benefits / supports as per the Carer's Allowance scheme.

## 3.2 Community Services Infrastructure

### Introduction

There is broad agreement that Ireland needs to continue building a national economic infrastructure, to facilitate the continued growth of the economy. However, we also need to build a national community services infrastructure for people with disabilities and their families, to facilitate the growth of their inclusion.

### Community Services - Spatial Inequality

Regardless of the disability, it is still the case that the availability of a service can depend upon which county a person lives in. There is a gross spatial inequality in the provision of services to people with disabilities and their families in Ireland. A valuable service may be available in one county, but not in the neighbouring county.

The Programme for Prosperity and Fairness committed itself to providing a twenty four hour, seven day per week, primary care service. This service should be made available throughout the country immediately.

There is a great shortage of qualified staff to provide many of the community based care services to people with disabilities and their families. There are shortages in areas such as physiotherapy, occupational therapy, speech and language therapy, social work and counselling. The government must invest in training people today, to provide improved services in the future.

DFI is seeking:

- All services to people with disabilities should be delivered uniformly throughout the country.
- A basic community services infrastructure to be in place throughout the country on the basis of need.
- National twenty four hour, seven day per week, primary care services.
- Increase in the number of training places available in areas such as physiotherapy, occupational therapy etc.

Mental Health: Since "Planning for the Future" 1984, there has been an incremental move towards the provision of community based mental health services and a reduction in the number of people living in long-stay hospital care. However, in this budget the government needs to lead the way in demonstrating a recommitment towards the full development of community and home based mental health services. This recommitment requires not only funding, but the political and professional will to operate new models of mental health care.

Capital Development: The Inspector of Mental Hospitals Report (2000) highlighted that there are a significant number of people who are now residing in mental hospitals who are ready and able to live in a community based service. To facilitate moving these people into community based hostels and group homes resources will need to be redirected from the established institutions.

Crisis Response Services: There is a need, in a small but significant number of cases, to have available a crisis response service. This service should be available to people with severe mental illness who are residing in the community to get respite when they require it.

Homelessness: Current reports suggest that up to 30% of the homeless population have some form of mental illness. The problems facing people who are mentally ill and homeless are twofold. Firstly, they tend to go without treatment or rehabilitation services for their mental illness. Secondly, they tend to live in accommodation such as emergency hostels or sleeping rough, which is not appropriate to their needs and may even exacerbate their illness (DFI 1999). This matter needs to be dealt with at a national level, resources need to be allocated to the agencies that provide services to the homeless so that these agencies are able to identify and assist their clients with mental illness.

DFI is seeking:

- Political and professional recommitment to developing community based mental health services.
- Funding for capital development of community based mental health services.
- Development of a national Crisis Response Service.
- Development and funding for services for homeless people with mental illness.

### **National Anti-Poverty Strategy (NAPS)**

It is a great achievement for Irish society, that there have been improvements in the quality of life for those in the target groups of the original NAPS.

Unemployment has fallen to its lowest level in our nations' history.

DFI are pleased to see a review of NAPS being undertaken and in particular its extension into the health area. There is a well established correlation between disability, poverty and social exclusion. The 1997 ESRI Living in Ireland Survey (1999) indicated that 72 % of all households headed by a person with a disability were living at or below the 60 % poverty line.

The reviewed NAPS must acknowledge the link between poverty and disability and work to address its appalling effects. DFI welcomes the recent commitment by the Taoiseach to include people with disabilities as a target group in relation to poverty in the forthcoming NAPS. The disability target for

the NAPS should be that the risk of consistent poverty among households headed by a person with a disability should be reduced to below 5% by 2004.

DFI is seeking:

- Disability Target for NAPS should be that the risk of consistent poverty among households headed by a person with a disability should be reduced to below 5% by 2004.

### **Personal Assistance Services**

In line with the recommendations of "Towards an Independent Future" (1996) DFI supports the implementation of a range of personal assistance services which would be flexible, responsive and maximise the independence of people with disabilities. In many parts of the country services are highly dependent on FAS Community Employment Schemes. These services require core health funding.

DFI is seeking:

- Nationwide provision of Personal Assistance Services.

### **Employment**

Employment improves a persons' income, but it also improves a person's sense of self-worth. Ireland needs to harness the skills and talents of people with disabilities and include them as equal members of the labour force.

Equity in Employment Incentives: A significant inequity has emerged between employers availing of the Employment Support Scheme (ESS) and those availing of the Disability Allowance income disregard scheme.

ESS encourages people with disabilities to enter the workforce. The person with a disability receives a wage from their employer and thus is no-longer entitled to Disability Allowance. The scheme offers assistance to the employer to off-set any loss of productivity as a result of employing a person with a disability.

In contrast the employer recruiting staff through the Disability Allowance income disregard scheme receives no support for any loss of productivity as a result of employing a person with a disability. They can only pay a person a maximum of £75 per week and are thus limited in the number of hours the person can work.

The income disregard scheme is very attractive to those who are working towards entering the workforce and who have fears in relation to losing their entitlement to Disability Allowance; greater equity needs to be introduced between these two employment incentive programmes.

In-Work Supports: Society has moved from the view that people are trained for employment in training centres and then successfully move into employment. Training and work are not wholly separate. The concept of lifelong learning is now widely accepted as is the need for people to have further support, training and development while in the workplace. Such approaches are all the more relevant and useful to ensure that people with disabilities gain employment and continue to develop their skills while employed.

DFI is seeking:

- A scheme similar to ESS to be made available to those in receipt of Disability Allowance.
- Government identify and remove obstacles blocking people with disabilities entering the labour force.
- Work places must be accessible; all equipment needed by the individual to be put in place along with mentoring, coaching and other supports so that they can operate to the maximum.

### **Housing - Disabled Person's Grant**

This grant towards making alterations, or the provision of an extension, to a house has been in existence for almost thirty years. It is still funded on a discretionary basis – there is no right to the grant on the basis of need – and it only provides part funding. Each local authority operates the scheme in its area, which leads to differences in procedures, waiting times and the overall amount of funding available for the scheme.

DFI is seeking:

- Disabled Person's Grant should be fully funded and available on the basis of need.

### **Transport**

Lack of accessible public transport continues to be a major impediment to both the social and economic advancement of people with disabilities in Irish society. For many people with disabilities, the public transport system is inaccessible, thus the revenue currently given in their name by Department of Social Community and Family Affairs under the Free Travel Scheme to the CIE group of Companies is of little benefit to them. The Free Travel Scheme is a free subsidy to the CIE group of companies.

The continued non-availability of an accessible taxi service is totally unacceptable.

DFI is seeking:

- An accelerated five-year programme to provide a comprehensive and accessible public transport service must be put in place.
- Vast improvement in the accessible taxi services throughout the country.

## **Access**

Allied to transport is the issue of environmental access to streetscapes, public areas and public buildings for people with physical and sensory disabilities. Almost a decade after the introduction of access criteria to the building regulations, much of the built environment is still inaccessible. Unfortunately, many new and refurbished buildings are still not accessible.

DFI is seeking:

- An accelerated five-year programme to ensure that all new developments are accessible as well as all areas being repaired renovated or upgraded.

## **Education**

DFI supports the Government's commitment to implementing mainstreaming for people with disabilities. However the policy of mainstreaming in education will only succeed if it is properly resourced. All staff in schools affected by the policy, need to be given appropriate training and support. To facilitate their learning pupils with disabilities may often need specific supports. The government must fund the additional teaching and care supports that pupils with disabilities require. The transition to mainstreaming in education for people with disabilities will fail, if it is not adequately resourced.

DFI is seeking:

- Appropriate funding to resource the policy of mainstreaming in education.

## **Tax Relief for Donations to Charities**

DFI welcomes the new Scheme of Tax Relief for donations to Eligible Charities and Approved Bodies under the terms of Section 45, Finance Act 2001. DFI believe that the new scheme could be improved by firstly, reducing the minimum donation threshold to 100 euros, which would extend the current benefits to the majority of individual donors rather than restricting it to the better off. Secondly, DFI recommend that the definition of "relevant donation" to cover donations of assets, such as shares, securities, property and other investments, to eligible charities and approved bodies.

DFI is seeking:

- Reduce the minimum donation threshold to 100 euros.
- Definition of "relevant donation" to cover donations of assets to eligible charities and approved bodies.

## 4. Conclusion

Undoubtedly this government, more than any other previous administration, has started the process of acknowledging the position of people with disabilities in our society. In response to this process they have instigated a much welcomed policy of mainstreaming, to improve the position of people with disabilities in Irish society. However, this government must now acknowledge the harsh truth that during this time people with disabilities and their families have continued to experience a growing level of poverty and social exclusion. People with disabilities, their families and DFIs' member organisations, while witnessing significant improvements for society in general; have grown frustrated by the lack of improvements in the living standards of people with disabilities.

Mainstreaming does not begin and end with policy developments. Mainstreaming to succeed, must be resourced. The government must use budget 2002 to build on its commitments to people with disabilities.

DFI have in this document, outlined a structure for government to deliver on its commitments. The government needs to tackle the social exclusion experienced by people with disabilities by improving their income and associated benefits, and by providing a comprehensive community services infrastructure.

## 5. References

Monitoring Trends in Poverty, Report No. 140 ESRI (1999).

Facts and Figures in Poverty, Combat Poverty (1999)

An Action Programme for the Millennium, (June 1997).

Programme for Prosperity and Fairness. (2000).

Address by Micheal Martin TD Minister for Health and Children to the Health Strategy Forum (July 2001).

Supporting Voluntary Activity, Government White Paper (2000).

Cost of Disability Study No.1 NRB (1995)

A Strategy for Equality – Report of the Commission on the Status of People with Disabilities (1996).

Quality Delivery of Social Services, NESF Forum Report No.5 (1995).

Psychiatric Services – Planning for the Future Department of Health (1984)

The Inspector of Mental Hospitals Report (2000)

Mentally Ill and Homeless in Ireland: Facing the Reality, Finding the Solutions, DFI (1999).

Towards an Independent Future, Department of Health Report of the Review Group (1996).

DFI would like to thank all those organisations who contributed to DFI Pre-Budget Submission 2002.

**6. MEMBERS OF THE NATIONAL COUNCIL OF DISABILITY  
FEDERATION OF IRELAND – 2001**

ACTION FOR MOBILITY  
AHEAD  
ALZHEIMER SOCIETY OF IRELAND  
A.P.T.  
ARTHRITIS FOUNDATION OF IRELAND  
ASPERGER SYNDROME ASSOCIATION OF IRELAND (ASPIRE)  
ASTHMA SOCIETY OF IRELAND  
AWARE  
BIH HOUSING  
BRAINWAVE - THE IRISH EPILEPSY ASSOCIATION  
C.A.S.A. CARING & SHARING ASSOCIATION  
CENTRAL REMEDIAL CLINIC  
CHEEVERSTOWN HOUSE LTD  
CLASHGAMMA MILLS TRUST  
COPE FOUNDATION  
COUNTY ROSCOMMON SUPPORT GROUP OF PEOPLE WITH DISABILITIES  
COUNTY WICKLOW ASSOCIATION FOR THE MENTALLY HANDICAPPED  
CYSTIC FIBROSIS ASSOCIATION OF IRELAND  
D.E.B.R.A. IRELAND  
DISABLED DRIVERS ASSOCIATION  
DISABLED PEOPLE OF CLARE  
DOORWAY TO LIFE  
DOWN SYNDROME IRELAND  
DYSLEXIA ASSOCIATION OF IRELAND  
FESTINA LENTE FOUNDATION  
FIGHTING BLINDNESS  
FOCUS IRELAND  
FRIEDREICH'S ATAXIA SOCIETY OF IRELAND  
GALWAY COUNTY ASSOCIATION FOR MENTALLY HANDICAPPED CHILDREN  
HAIL HOUSING FOR INTEGRATED LIVING  
HEADWAY IRELAND – THE NATIONAL HEAD INJURIES ASSOCIATION  
HUNTINGTONS DISEASE ASSOCIATION OF IRELAND  
INDEPENDENT LIVING COMMUNITY SERVICES  
INHERITED DISORDERS ORGANISATION  
IRISH ASSOCIATION OF THE SOVEREIGN MILITARY ORDER OF MALTA  
IRISH ASSOCIATION FOR SPINA BIFIDA & HYDROCEPHALUS  
IRISH DEAF SOCIETY  
IRISH GUIDE DOGS FOR THE BLIND  
IRISH HAEMOPHILIA SOCIETY  
IRISH KIDNEY ASSOCIATION  
IRISH MOTOR NEURONE DISEASE ASSOCIATION  
IRISH RAYNAUD'S & SCLERODERMA SOCIETY  
IRISH SOCIETY FOR AUTISM  
IRISH WHEELCHAIR ASSOCIATION  
JACK AND JILL CHILDREN'S FOUNDATION  
KARE

LEITRIM ASSOCIATION OF PEOPLE WITH DISABILITIES  
MULTIPLE SCLEROSIS NORTH WEST THERAPY CENTRE  
MULTIPLE SCLEROSIS SOCIETY OF IRELAND  
MUSCULAR DYSTROPHY IRELAND  
NATIONAL ASSOCIATION FOR DEAF PEOPLE  
NATIONAL COUNCIL FOR THE BLIND OF IRELAND  
NATIONAL FEDERATION OF ARCH CLUBS  
NEUROFIBROMATOSIS ASSOCIATION OF IRELAND  
ORDER OF MALTA ENTERPRISES  
PARKINSON'S ASSOCIATION OF IRELAND  
POLIO FELLOWSHIP OF IRELAND  
POST POLIO SUPPORT GROUP  
REACH - IRELAND  
RIDING FOR THE DISABLED ASSOCIATION - IRELAND  
ROYAL HOSPITAL DONNYBROOK  
SCHIZOPHRENIA IRELAND  
SHANNON COMMUNITY WORKSHOPS LTD  
SOPHIA HOUSING ASSOCIATION LTD  
SPECIAL OLYMPICS IRELAND  
SPINAL INJURIES ACTION ASSOCIATION  
ST. GABRIEL'S SCHOOL & CENTRE  
ST. MARY'S HOSPITAL AND RESIDENTIAL SCHOOL  
SUNBEAM HOUSE SERVICES  
VANTASTIC  
VERGEMOUNT HOUSING FELLOWSHIP  
VOLUNTEER STROKE SCHEME  
WESTERN CARE ASSOCIATION  
WEST LIMERICK COMMUNITY WORKSHOP

DFI has on-going involvement with over 200 organisations and groups throughout the country, 74 of which currently comprise its national council.



**ADVOCATE FOR THE VOLUNTARY DISABILITY SECTOR**  
**SUPPORTING ORGANISATIONS TO ENABLE PEOPLE WITH DISABILITIES**

Disability Federation of Ireland is the national support mechanism for voluntary organisations, covering all areas of disability and disabling conditions:

- Hidden
- Intellectual
- Mental health
- Physical
- Sensory

DFI has on-going involvement with over 200 organisations and groups throughout the country, 74 of which currently comprise its national council.

DFI provides:

- Information
- Training and Support
- Organisation and Management Development
- Research and Policy Development
- Advocacy and Representation
- Networking

*Disability Federation of Ireland*

*2 Sandyford Office Park, Blackthorn Avenue, Dublin 18.*

*Tel: 01-295 9344/5. Fax: 01-2959346.*

*E-mail: [info@disability-federation.ie](mailto:info@disability-federation.ie) Web: <http://ireland.iol.ie/~dfi/>*