

Local Elections Manifesto 2024

In this manifesto we have laid out the key issues that have been highlighted by the people who use our services, and recommendations on actions that you can take to address these issues.



Our Key Issues

- Inclusion & Participation in Local Government
- Housing & Independent Living
- Transport & Mobility
- Accessibility
- Arts & Leisure
- Employment & Social Protection
- Health
- Training & Education
- Support for Section 39 Organisations providing disability services

Inclusion and Participation in Local Government (Article 29, UNCRPD)

People with disabilities are underrepresented in their Local Government. As a local representative, you can play your part to rectify this in the following way:

- Map people with disabilities in the local area so as to better plan supports and services, and to ensure that they serve people with disabilities equally alongside other citizens.
- Ensure that your local authority has a dedicated Disability Consultative Committee comprising people with disabilities and those who support them. This committee should:
 - Review the Local Authority's Disability and Inclusion Strategy to ensure local implementation of rights enshrined in the UN Convention on the Rights of People with Disabilities.
 - Disability proof all decisions and actions taken by the Council.
- Ensure that your party or group provides supports to encourage people with disabilities to come forward to run for election.



Housing and Independent Living (Article 19, UNCRPD)

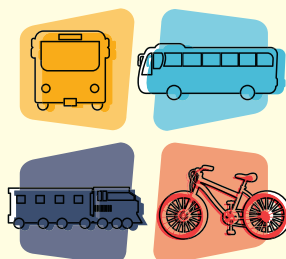
Access to suitable and affordable housing is vital in meeting the primary needs of people with disabilities, so they can live lives of their choosing. You can pledge to address these issues by working to:

- Secure funding to ensure full and timely implementation of the Disability Housing Strategy.
- Ensure that a minimum standard of Universal Design ++ is applied to all new housing developments
- Seek an increase in housing adaptation grants to keep them in line with current construction costs.
- Ensure timely processing of approval for capital funding for Approved Housing Bodies (AHB) providing accommodation for people with disabilities.
- Ensure proper provision is made for housing those ageing with a disability.



Transport & Mobility (Article 20, UNCRPD)

The people who use our services have identified the lack of suitable, accessible public transport as a significant problem that hinders their independence. You can make public transport more accessible and reliable by ensuring that:

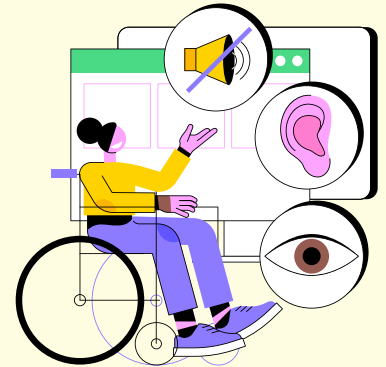


- People with disabilities can get to and from their chosen destination (in urban and rural areas), independently on public transport that is accessible to them.
- Daycare services throughout the country have access to free transport.
- Disabled people and local disability organisations are consulted when introducing new traffic management schemes.

Accessibility (Article 9, UNCRPD)

Accessibility is a precondition for an inclusive society and must be a part of all aspects of planning and development. Specific actions Local Authorities can take are:

- Conduct an audit of your local area to establish how accessible street environments are for people with disabilities and consulting with a wide range of disabled people and disability organisations when making changes to the built environment.
- Support good practice and universal design principles in public and private infrastructure and in creating accessible outdoor recreation spaces across your local area including parks, greenways, playgrounds, town centres, Slí na Sláinte walkways, and beaches.
- Develop initiatives to raise awareness among the public of the problems people with a disability permit face when disabled parking bays are illegally used, and also to encourage owners of private car parks to implement measures to prevent misuse of such parking bays
- Ensure a number of Changing Places facilities for people with Disabilities are provided at central points across the local authority area.
- Provide Disability Awareness Training to staff, contractors and volunteers to deliver high-quality and accessible services.



Arts & Leisure (Article 30, UNRPD)

Everyone should have access to arts, culture, sports and the great outdoors. Persons with disabilities should have the opportunity to develop their creative, artistic and intellectual potential. To make this happen you can:

- Increase opportunities for disabled children and their families, tackle barriers and enable the enjoyment of play for every child,
- Involve local people with disabilities to identify their Universal Design and accessibility needs in the creation, planning, delivery and evaluation of cultural initiatives.
- Expand the number of arts and leisure venues – libraries, museums, pools, gyms, parks, playgrounds and green spaces and other venues that are universally designed.
- Provide funding for local authorities to make leisure activities (pools, gyms etc.) available free of charge or at greatly discounted rates for people with disabilities.



Health and Disability Services (Article 25, UNCRPD)

On top of the extra costs of disability, disabled people are faced with hidden or unexpected healthcare costs. Local Authorities have representation on HSE Health Forums who can act to:

- Demand Government ratifies the Optional Protocol of UNCRPD.
- Invest in expanding mental health services in the community.
- Provide capital funding for children's and respite services.
- Ensure services are in place for adults with disabilities turning 18.
- Seek better provision of primary healthcare facilities in your area.
- Seek the elimination of hidden healthcare costs (e.g. blood tests, dental charges, prescriptions).
- Reduce waiting lists for community based therapy services.
- Increase personal assistants hours.



Employment and Social Protection (Articles 27 & 28, UNCRPD)

According to Eurostat the employment rate of people with disabilities in Ireland continues to be the lowest in the EU at 32.6%. Local Authorities can take action to address this issue:

- Lead by example – ensuring that government and public bodies meet and surpass the revised 6% target for employment of people with disabilities by 2025.
- Seek an increase in the use of Social Clauses by public authorities in their supply chains.
- Insist your Council uses Article 20 of the EU Public Procurement Directive, in its own procurement practices. Article 20 provides for reserved contracts for organisations employing people with disabilities/disadvantage.
- Strengthen support from Local Enterprise Offices to Social Enterprises that employ people with disabilities.
- Support the further expansion of Individual Placement Services (IPS)
- Carry out local employer education events to increase disability awareness
- Support Rehab's proposals for reform of the Wage Subsidy Scheme, including restoring the link to the National Minimum Wage and use of WSS for Work Ready Programme.
- Champion the introduction of assistive technology passports for people with disabilities.
- Support a Cost of Disability Payment as recommended by the Indecon Report (2021).



Training and Education (Article 24, UNCRPD)

The National Learning Network (NLN), Rehab's education division, provides personalised education, training and development opportunities for people with disabilities or people requiring additional supports to access education and training courses leading to employment. NLN is partly funded through SOLAS and the ETBs, however, it is facing significant challenges. As Local Authorities elect 12 members to each ETB, Councillors can play a pivotal role in supporting NLN. We are asking all elected members of Local Authorities, and particularly those who are members of the local ETB, to:



- Visit their local National Learning Network to meet our staff and students.
- Highlight the fact that the outdated capitation funding model has not increased in thirteen years since 2011.
- Use their representation on the ETBs to support a funding model for purpose in 2024.
- Support our call for capital funding for NLN Centres.

Support Section 39 Organisations Providing Disability Services

Section 39 organisations providing vital disability services are facing serious challenges. Local Authority members could support their local disability services through insisting that the government provide for:

- A dedicated funding stream to support the recommendations of the Report of the 2019 Independent Review Group.
- Multi-annual funding for disability organisations delivering vital services on behalf of the HSE and the State.
- Ongoing implementation of WRC agreement and for pay parity with S38s and HSE in line with most recent Public Sector Pay Agreement 2024-2026.

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