



Ireland Fact Sheet on Social Care & Support Services Sector for Persons with Disabilities

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SUBSECTORS OF SOCIAL CARE & SUPPORT SERVICES AND THEIR CHARACTERISTICS

Early Childhood Intervention

In Ireland, early childhood services largely fall under three government departments: the Department of Children and Youth Affairs, the Department of Education and Skills, and the Department of Health. All pre-school children can avail themselves of health assessments from Child Development Teams located at Health Centres across the country, which may lead to referral to a developmental paediatrician or educational psychologist, followed by a statement of services they will receive. School-going children may be tested for free by the National Educational Psychological Service (NEPS). Schools are only allowed a limited number of assessments each year, so in practice, only students with very severe difficulties are likely to be seen through the school service. Assessments can also be accessed privately through organisations like Autism Ireland, the National Dyslexia Association and Eirim.

Early years services are offered through state agencies, non-profit NGOs and private organisations, some of which also receive state funding. These services include therapy (including behavioural, occupational and speech therapy); psychological supports; communication and social skills supports; educational supports; financial supports; information and guidance; and family support. Better Start Quality Development Service, an initiative of the Department of Children and Youth Affairs, provides early years services with expert educational advice, mentoring and support to enable a child with a disability to fully access the Early Childhood Care and Education scheme (ECCE)¹. In 2016, statutory supports to enable children with disabilities to fully participate in pre-school care and education were introduced to include: enhanced continuing professional development for early years practitioners; grants for equipment, appliances and minor alterations, increased capitation for certain complex cases, as well as access to therapeutic intervention. One component of the 2016 developments is the Access and Inclusion Model (AIM), a model of supports designed to ensure children with disabilities can access the universal ECCE scheme². As these targeted state-funded supports were only introduced in 2016, full implementation will take time as capacity is built across the sector. In the 2016/2017 academic year, 1,283 services (30% of all services providing ECCE) were supported under AIM (Better Start, 2018).

Education Support

Many of the educational services and supports for people with a disability are provided at a national, statutory level. Within the primary and secondary school systems, students with special educational needs may get help from learning support and resources teachers, which are allocated to all recognised schools. Students with care needs may receive support from a special needs assistant (SNA), and these supports are overseen by the National Council for Special Education (NCSE)³, who also provide resources for equipment or personal devices where necessary. The National Educational Psychological Service (NEPS)⁴, funded by the Department of Education and Skills, works with all primary and secondary schools providing psychological assessments and supports for students. Schools can also commission private assessments from NEPS, where there is insufficient provision under the public scheme. Students with specific disabilities may be exempt from part of the state examinations, and there are arrangements for reasonable accommodation for students with disabilities sitting state examinations (these are overseen by the State Examinations Commission⁵). Within higher education, some institutions reserve a number of places for people with disabilities, and most institutions have a Disability Liaison Officer or Access Officer. A special fund to support higher education students with disabilities is overseen by the Department of Education and Skills, while AHEAD⁶ is a voluntary organisation working to promote improved access to higher education

¹This scheme provides two years free pre-school care and education for children aged 3 to 5 years; take-up is almost universal.

²<http://aim.gov.ie/wp-content/uploads/2016/06/AIM-Information-Leaflet.pdf>

³<http://ncse.ie/>

⁴<https://www.education.ie/en/Schools-Colleges/Services/National-Educational-Psychological-Service-NEPS-NEPS-Home-Page.html>

⁵<https://www.examinations.ie/>

⁶<https://www.ahead.ie/>

for people with disabilities. Finally, the Department of Social and Family Affairs administers a Back to Education Allowance to support recipients of social welfare disability payments to return to education (Citizens Information Board, 2018b).

A range of private providers (some of which receive state support) offer educational supports to people with specific types of disabilities. Some of these organisations are registered under the code of good practice for good governance of community, voluntary and charitable organisations in Ireland, introduced in 2012. The following provides five examples of organisations offering educational supports:

- The Insight Centre⁷ – a private service offering child and adolescent assessment services, therapy services (occupation, speech and language) and workshops.
- The Dyslexia Association of Ireland⁸.
- Psychology Society of Ireland (register of psychologists).
- Eirim⁹ – private service offering educational psychologists to support children with learning disabilities.
- Autism Ireland¹⁰.

Employment Support

In 2015 the government launched a 10-year strategy to increase the number of people with disabilities in employment, the *Comprehensive Employment Strategy for People with Disabilities (2015-2024)*. The Strategy consists of six pillars: build skills, capacity and independence; build bridges and supports into work; make work pay; promote job retention and re-entry into work; promote coordinated and seamless support; and engage employers. It targets a 15% increase in employment of people with disabilities from 2011 to 2024. However, the current suite of individual interventions set out in the Strategy consist of many well-meaning activities and programmes and services that do not guarantee an increase in employment rates for people with disabilities (Disability Federation of Ireland, 2018). The government runs a number of schemes to encourage people with disabilities into work and incentivise employers to hire people with disabilities. These include the following programmes: wage subsidy scheme; employment retention grant scheme; supported employment programme; job interview interpreter grant; and workplace equipment/adaptation grant. The Back to Work Enterprise Allowance Scheme provides financial support to social welfare recipients (including people on certain disability payments) to set up a business. The Community Employment programme¹¹ helps long-term unemployed people, including those with a disability, to re-enter the active workforce by breaking their experience of unemployment through a return to work routine (Citizens Information Board, 2018a). The programme is sponsored by voluntary groups and not-for-profit organisations who receive financial support from the Department of Social Protection to assist with participant wages, supervisor grants, materials grants and specific skills training grants. There were over 22,000 participants in the programme in 2017¹².

The Ability Programme¹³ is funded by the Department of Employment Affairs and Social Protection and the European Social Fund. It supports young people with disabilities (15-29 years of age) to improve their employability through a range of person-centred supports. It provides funding for non-profit organisations to provide specialised vocational assessments; tailored training to promote the development of soft skills, confidence and independence; programmes to enable progression to further education, training and employment; and outreach, information, mentoring and pre-employment supports. In December 2017 organisations were invited to apply for funding (€200,000 to 750,000) for relevant projects (local, regional or national in scale); eligible organisations include community, voluntary and not-for-profit organisations, employer networks and networks of non-statutory bodies with a legal structure.

⁷<http://www.theinsightcentre.ie/>

⁸<http://www.dyslexia.ie/>

⁹<https://www.eirim.ie/about-us/>

¹⁰<https://autismireland.ie/>

¹¹<http://www.welfare.ie/en/Pages/Community-Employment-Programme-.aspx>

¹²<https://www.inou.ie/newsandupdates/newsletter/2017/04/20/community-employment-changes/>

¹³<https://www.pobal.ie/FundingProgrammes/Ability%20Programme/Pages/Ability%20Programme.aspx>

Day Care

Day services for persons with disabilities are largely overseen by the Health Service Executive (HSE, 2012), the organisation responsible for providing all of Ireland's public health services in hospitals and communities across the country. Much of the provision is guided by two frameworks *Time to Move on From Congregated Settings* (HSE, 2011) and *New Directions: Review of HSE Day Services and Implementation Plan 2012-2016* (HSE, 2012). A wide range of day services are available for people with physical and sensory disabilities, with learning disabilities and with mental health difficulties. The services include public health nurses, physiotherapy, occupational therapists, chiropody services, home help services, technical aids and respite care. In addition, day centres include centres that provide day activation, such as recreational, sport and leisure facilities, and specialised clinic facilities that provide a combination of medical and rehabilitation services. Day centres are provided on a variable basis throughout the country, some being provided directly by the HSE and others in conjunction with voluntary organisations. Day centres providing medical care are less widely available. Access to statutory day centres is by referral and the eligibility conditions vary from area to area¹⁴.

Living Support

People with a disability have additional living costs (Disability Federation of Ireland, 2016; Cullinan, Lyons and Nolan, 2014), including costs associated with health and therapy services, travel costs to access health and social services and heating bills. In recognition of this, a wide range of statutory living supports and benefits are available for people with a disability, many of which are detailed on www.nda.ie.

The Housing Adaptation Grant (HAG)¹⁵ assists people with disabilities to make changes to their home where they are having difficulty living in it. The scheme is administered at local authority level (regionally), with a maximum (means tested) grant of €30,000 available. In addition, the Mobility Aids Grants Scheme covers a suite of household works (rails, ramps, shower access, stair-lifts etc.) to address mobility problems, with a maximum (means-tested) grant of €6,000 available (The Housing Agency (a government agency), 2013). The Capital Assistance Scheme (CAS) is a key source of funding for the delivery of specialist social housing. The Minister for Housing, Planning and Local Government recently announced the provision of additional funding for approved housing bodies to provide independent living accommodation for people with special housing needs¹⁶.

The Department of Social and Family Affairs and the HSE operate a range of mobility support schemes for those with impaired mobility. These include a free travel pass (for public and some private transport services), and grants for adapting a vehicle. A motorised transport grant had been offered but was abolished; a mobility allowance was also available but is no longer in operation for new applicants (and is only being provided to those who already received it). There is a current level of unmet need for services such as personal assistants, home supports and community services, given that there has been no increased funding for these types of supports since 2008. In terms of the allocation of social housing, there is a list for people with disabilities to assist in allocations; however, time on the list determines access if a person is not on the medical priority list. Many local authorities also provide special housing units for people with disabilities. Individuals in receipt of means tested disability payments may also be eligible for rent supplements (Citizens Information Board, accessed 29 January 2018b). Centres for Independent Living, funded by the Health Service Executive, are independent organisations operating throughout Ireland, offering (partially or full-funded) services to enable people with disabilities to live fulfilled, independent and active lives within society. Some are governed by people with disabilities, and the focus is typically on personal assistance/home help services, and on broader empowerment of people with a disability to overcome environmental, educational and social barriers (Personal communication, Centre for Independent Living).

Non-governmental support is provided through a large number of organisations. The Housing Association for Integrated

¹⁴http://www.citizensinformation.ie/en/health/health_services/health_services_for_people_with_disabilities/day_centres.html

¹⁵<https://www.housing.gov.ie/housing/grantsfinancial-assistance/people-disability/housing-grants-people-disability>

¹⁶<https://www.housing.gov.ie/housing/rebuilding-ireland/people-disability/minister-murphy-invites-proposals-social-housing>

Living (HAIL), based in the Dublin area only, provides housing and individually tailored services to support those with mental health difficulties, to integrate and live independent lives in the community. Another example is the Multiple Sclerosis Society of Ireland¹⁷, a national services driven organisation providing timely, person-centred services including physical therapies, symptom management and information seminars.

Long-Term Institutional Care and Respite Care

Residential care for people with disabilities is available under both private and publicly funded institutions. A long-stay contribution is an affordable financial contribution towards the individual's maintenance and accommodation costs in certain HSE, or HSE-funded, residential settings. Underfunding of community services means that younger people with disabilities have been placed in nursing home settings. There are currently over 1,000 younger people with disabilities living in nursing homes across the country (Disability Federation of Ireland). Cheshire Ireland, a registered charity receiving state and private funding, provides a range of support services to people with both physical and neurological conditions in their homes, in residential centres, in supported accommodation and in standalone respite facilities. They provide services to people, often with very complex and high support needs, in 21 centres across the country.

Residential services for people with disabilities are required to meet certain standards, whether they are run by the Health Service Executive (HSE - state body) or by other public, private or voluntary bodies that are funded or assisted by the HSE. The Health Information and Quality Authority (HIQA¹⁸) is responsible for the registration and inspection of residential services for children and adults with disabilities. All designated centres for people with disabilities are required to register with HIQA. The National Standards for Residential Services for Children and Adults with Disabilities outline what is expected of a provider of services, covering the areas quality, safety, capacity and capability.

A range of statutory (HSE) and non-statutory organisations offer respite supports for families of people with a disability. HSE-funded care is provided at a number of locations around the country for people with different disabilities. The person being cared for may be admitted to a HSE nursing home for a period of two weeks. Longer stays may be possible in some circumstances. Alternative care with a family is sometimes available for children with disabilities. Sometimes, summer camp arrangements can be made for children with disabilities. The Domiciliary Care Allowance is provided to support parents to meet some of the additional costs that are incurred due to their child's disability. The National Home Sharing and Short Breaks Network¹⁹, a not-for-profit organisation, organise a range of short- and longer-term breaks where families host a child or an adult with an intellectual disability in their home. Cheeverstown is a voluntary organisation that provides a wide range of residential, respite and day services to almost 400 children and adults with an intellectual disability in various community locations in Dublin.

Leisure and Social-Life Support

Sport Ireland (2017) currently funds and works with a range of governmental, voluntary and community organisations providing and promoting opportunities for people with disabilities to take part in sport and physical activity. Included among these are:

- National Governing Bodies of Sport (NGBs) catering for people with disabilities (Deaf Sports Ireland, Irish Wheelchair Association, Special Olympics Ireland and Vision Sport Ireland).
- Local Sports Partnerships (LSPs), primarily through the work of the Sports Inclusion Disability Programme.
- CARA²⁰ advocates for the inclusion of people with disabilities in sport and physical activity, encourages a national vision while supporting local provision, and builds capacity through education and training programmes.
- Paralympics Ireland, the lead agency in the support of high performance athletes with disabilities.

¹⁷<http://www.ms-society.ie/>

¹⁸<https://www.hiqa.ie/>

¹⁹<http://nhsn.ie/>

²⁰<http://caracentre.ie/>

The National Advocacy Service²¹ is a national service funded by the Citizens Information Board (statutory body) that provides support to persons with disabilities to receive assistance with specific issues; to access their rights and entitlements; to have their voice heard when decisions are being made about their life; and to express their views and wishes in relation to quality of life issues. Overseen by a senior management team based in Dublin, a regional network of advocacy support workers and managers provides supports to persons with disabilities.

Enable Ireland²², a registered charity, provides services to children and adults across 14 of the Republic of Ireland's 26 counties, who have a physical, sensory, learning disability and/or developmental delay, a diagnosis of autistic spectrum disorder, or who present with several features of autistic spectrum disorder and require ongoing team based interventions. These include access to a paediatrician, therapy (occupational, speech and language), psychologists and social workers. For adults, services provided include personal assistants, advocacy development, supported employment, mainstream education and training, and support during transition to adulthood from children's services. RehabCare²³, also a registered charity, offers supported accommodation and independent living, home help and respite care services across Ireland, supporting 3,000 people annually.

FUTURE TRENDS

The UN Convention on the Rights of Persons with Disabilities is to be ratified in Ireland (announcement 30 January 2018)²⁴. Ireland is the only outstanding EU country to comply with the convention which seeks to promote, protect, and ensure the full and equal enjoyment of all human rights and fundamental freedoms by all persons with disabilities. This will require follow-up regulation to ensure Ireland is compliant with the legislation, and may well have implications for the nature of supports and services available for people with a disability.

Disability organisations, like the Disability Federation of Ireland and National Disability Authority, are increasingly focusing on strengthening the voice, impact and relevance of the disability movement in Ireland. This includes deepening the evidence base and building an evidence base on the lived experience of people with disabilities. This will help to ensure evidence-based policy-making going forward, and the development and expansion of services to meet the real needs of people with disabilities.

CONDUCTED INTERVIEWS

Communications Officer, Centre for Independent Living. January 2018.

Officer, Health Service Executive. January 2018.

²¹<http://www.inclusionireland.ie/sites/default/files/attach/basic-page/497/nas-general.pdf>

²²<http://www.enableireland.ie/>

²³<http://www.rehabcare.ie/>

²⁴<https://www.irishexaminer.com/ireland/ratification-of-un-convention-on-disabilities-a-key-moment-for-society-466505.html>

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