



Malta 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 Malta, early childhood intervention services are coordinated by the Child Development Assessment Unit (CDAU) in the Ministry for Health, which makes a comprehensive multidisciplinary assessment, after which an intervention plan is adopted. These services are available for children from 0 to 16 years with disabilities including autism, developmental difficulties, learning difficulties, ADHD, cerebral palsy, head injuries, Down syndrome and other syndromes. The plan is then implemented by the Ministry for Education and Employment (MEDE) and a small number of NGOs. MEDE provides support to children (0-5 years) with developmental disabilities or delays and their families. The services offered by the CDAU and MEDE are financed by the government.

The main providers of early intervention services specifically for children with autism spectrum and related disorders, are profit and not-for profit NGOs¹ and private organisations, who also support children with behavioural and communication difficulties, ADHD, specific learning difficulties, sensorimotor dysfunction and other disabilities. Their services include: therapy (including behavioural, occupational and speech therapy); psychological and psychoeducational services; information and assistance; communication skills support; socialisation support; motor development; and support to parents and siblings. These services are financed by a combination of means: the government, subsidised and unsubsidised user fees, public donations, private sponsorships and fundraising.

All these services are provided at the national level².

Education Support

The main provider of education support in Malta is the Ministry for Education and Employment, which provides special education services (to people with disabilities aged 4 to 22), through 5 resource centres. The ministry also provides students with physical disabilities, complex communication needs and learning disabilities with an assessment service in the area of Assistive Technology and Augmentative and Alternative Communication. It also provides inclusive education support in mainstream schools including learning support educators (LSEs); learning support zones / nurture groups for students with behavioural problems; an autism spectrum support team; and support for hearing impaired and visually impaired students. These are all financed by the government.

NGOs complement these services through providing educational resources, and parent and client educational services (such as home and school visiting sessions) for students with learning difficulties. Other services include support for children and adults with dyslexia and dyscalculia and other learning difficulties with literacy and numeracy. These services are financed by a combination of means: the government, subsidised and non-subsidised user fees, public donations, private sponsorships and fundraising. The NGO Inspire also has a school outreach programme, financed by the Ministry for Education and Employment, which enables children with challenging behaviour to go to Inspire 2-3 times a week to work on their challenging behaviour for a period of time, after which the child continues mainstream schooling. The Disability Support Unit at the University of Malta, ACCESS, provides support for students with disabilities.

All these services are provided at the national level.

¹These NGOs range from larger ones to very small ones.

²'National level' means the services are provided for people with disabilities in both Malta and Gozo, the latter being the second largest island after Malta in the Maltese archipelago.

Employment Support

Employment support for people with disabilities in Malta is provided through Jobsplus, the government agency for employment, and by a public social partnership, The Lino Spiteri Foundation (LSF). Together, these two entities provide employment guidance, job coaching, on the job training or sheltered employment, depending on the need of the service user. Jobsplus also offers two schemes targeted at people with all types of disabilities: the Bridging The Gap Scheme (targeted at registered persons with disability who are registered as unemployed persons) supports people with disabilities in the transition period from unemployment to employment, where a person with a disability is placed with an employer for a work exposure period and receives 80% of the minimum wage from Jobsplus; and the Access to Employment Scheme (targeted at any person who is a registered disabled person under national law and is not in full-time employment) provides employment aid to enterprises to promote the recruitment of people with disabilities by receiving a subsidy for engaging disabled people. This scheme is co-financed by the European Social Fund, the Maltese government and the employers. Another support measure is that for employers hiring more than 20 employees, at least 2% of the workforce must be persons with disabilities; with employers failing to adhere to this legislation being requested to make an annual contribution for every person with disability they should be employing. Jobsplus is also currently offering pre-employment training to people with all kinds of disability, including social and employability skills, through EU funds. Job-coaching and follow-on services are also offered to people with disabilities to a small extent by the NGO Inspire.

Day Care

Day care services for people with all types of disabilities comprise 12 Day Centres around Malta and Gozo. These centres are managed by the government agency *Agenzija Sapport*, and are free to the service users, including transport and meals. The service users (aged 22 and over) spend their time by participating in activities such as card-making, pottery, food preparation, computer skills and literacy programmes, assisted by supporting staff. These services are accompanied by social work services provided by the same agency. *Fondazzjoni Nazareth*, a private foundation run by the residents' pensions, funds from the Ministry for Social Policy and public donations, also has a small day centre for the residents who live in their community homes. Another small day care centre for blind people, Spero, is run by a private entity but financed by public funds. These services are provided at the national level.

Living Support

The majority of living support services are provided by public agencies. Supported / independent living, that is, support provided within small and personalised apartments and houses where people with intellectual disabilities (and people who have both intellectual and physical disabilities) live, are provided by *Agenzija Sapport*, a government agency. Service users (aged 18 and over, who can continue residing there till the end of their lives; with new services users not being able to apply for these services if the person is over 60 years of age), are supported by staff in daily living activities, skills-teaching and community inclusion. The agency also offers community services, including socialising and intervention services, to people with intellectual and physical disabilities within the community. A financial package is also offered as a subsidy to persons with disabilities to select their own personal carer. It also offers Maltese sign language interpretation services for hearing-impaired individuals. These services are accompanied by social workers' services, who also support siblings of adults with disabilities. NGOs (such as Inspire and Equal Partners Foundation) also provide living support services to adults with intellectual disabilities and autism spectrum disorder through the provision of daily living and communication skills; and domestic and self-care activities in their own homes, in residential homes, and in the community. These are funded by a combination of funding schemes from the government, fundraising activities, private sponsorships, NGO funds and service user fees.

Other public entities provide support and training in information technology so that persons with disabilities are able to purchase and use the right technological equipment; and advice, information and training to help persons with physical disabilities and their families to choose the right type of wheelchairs; types of car modifications; and equipment. The

latter service is provided through a centre partly financed mainly by the European Regional Development Fund and the European Social Fund (with a small part funded by the government) at the Commission for the Rights of Persons with Disability (CRPD). The CRPD also offers a Special Identity Card (and recently, the EU Disability Card) to people with disabilities, enabling them to have priority for certain services and free / reduced tariffs for some services and activities; and benefits entitling people with severe and permanent mobility restrictions to have the vehicle in which they are travelling parked in public places reserved for persons with disabilities. The CRPD also vets building applications for buildings open to the public and of major use, to ensure that they are physically accessible to all; while the transport authority provides reserved parking benefits whereby severely physically disabled persons are granted a reserved parking space near their residence. Finally, the CRPD comprises an Equal Opportunities Compliance Unit which receives and investigates complaints about discrimination.

All these services are provided at the national level.

Long-Term Institutional Care and Respite Care

Long-term residence care and respite services are supplied mainly by charitable organisations, mostly the Catholic Church. The largest residence (consisting of 8 residences), *Id-Dar tal-Providenza* (DTP), is a church-founded home for persons with disabilities (aged between 14 and 80). All its residents (except for one residence which houses people with physical disabilities) are people with intellectual disabilities, many of whom have also other impairments. It is largely funded by benefactors, public donations and residents' pensions; however most of the services provided in their community homes are funded by the government. Other NGOs (including church organisations) provide residential care (and some respite services) for people with various disabilities (including intellectual and neurophysical disabilities) in community homes which are funded by a combination of government funds, NGO funds, user fees, public donations. *Agenzija Support*, the government agency, has one residence for children with disabilities. The one (non-profit) NGO which provides only respite services and also day breaks is The Foundation for Respite Care Services (*Dar il-Kaptan*). The service is highly subsidised and the foundation waives part or all the fees to those families who cannot afford it.

All these services are provided at the national level.

Leisure and Social-Life Support

Apart from the Day Care centres which also target people with disabilities' cultural and leisure lives, general leisure and social activities for people with disabilities are provided by different disabled people's organisations which fund their activities through fund-raising events, self-funding, or private donations. Other NGOs run programmes for adolescents and adults with autism and intellectual disabilities through support in leisure activities; supporting children in creative arts through the use of therapeutic media; multi-sensory theatres for people with disability of all ages; therapeutic horseback riding; and supporting children in sports and games using special equipment. These services are either funded by user fees or are incorporated in other programmes. *Id-Dar tal-Providenza* (DTP) offers religious services to its residents, computer services in individual rooms and in a computer laboratory (sponsored); a multi-sensorial room (partly financed by the Malta Community Chest Fund Foundation); an aqua therapy centre; and arts and crafts activities. Specialised organisations such as Opening Doors, an arts organisation for adults (over 18 years of age) with intellectual disability, has theatre, dance, and music groups and is funded by the Arts Council of Malta; while Special Olympics Malta, an NGO, provides opportunities for people with intellectual disabilities to participate in sport activities both locally and abroad. It is mainly funded through donations, sponsors and fundraising activities.

All these services are provided at the national level.

FUTURE TRENDS

The following are the major current projections in the SCSS sector in Malta:

- The government is planning the building of a community hub for people with disabilities. This will be a mixed use complex featuring residences, retail outlets, office space, workshops, a hostel, a therapy centre and a gym. This project, REACH, will be funded by EU funds and the government.
- The government plans to continue opening residences for people with disabilities.
- The Malta Communications Authority (MCA), a government entity, is planning the establishment of three Assistive Technology Centres in Malta and Gozo to assist people with physical, intellectual and sensory disabilities via Assistive Technology. These centres are financed by the European Regional Development Fund and are being implemented in partnership with the Parliamentary Secretary for Persons with Disability and Active Ageing, the Ministry for Education and Employment, the Foundation for Information Technology Accessibility, the Commission for the Rights of Persons with Disability, and *Agenzija Sapport*.

CONDUCTED INTERVIEWS

Agenzija Sapport Employee. January 2018.

Charlene Borg, Parent Relations Manager at Inspire. January 2018.

Elena Tanti Burlo', Vice-President & Director of Services at Equal Partners Foundation. January 2018.

Fred Bezzina, First Director of the Commission for the Rights of Persons with Disability. January 2018.



EMAIL COMMUNICATION

Anne-Marie Callus, Support Member of *Grupp Flimkien Naslu* Committee. January 2018.

Mark Spiteri, Senior Project Coordinator, Digital Inclusion at Malta Communications Authority. January 2018.

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