

People with disabilities face significant challenges in finding a suitable home to live in

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A social policy report, published today, Tuesday 6 December 2022, by the Citizens Information Board (CIB) and the Disability Federation of Ireland (DFI), has found that people with disabilities face significant challenges when it comes to finding a suitable home to live in.

The new report entitled ***The Right Home: the Housing Needs of People with Disabilities*** was launched on behalf of CIB and DFI by Minister of State for Housing Peter Burke at an online event which was attended by a broad audience of disability organisations and disabled individuals, housing organisations, the National Disability Authority, the National Advocacy Service, Citizens Information Services, local government and statutory agencies, amongst others.

While acknowledging the severe housing crisis that Ireland has been experiencing, the report documents the disproportionate extent to which people with disabilities are failed by the system, and the range of challenges that they continue to experience in seeking to find a suitable home to live in.

Housing policy is critical to enabling disabled people to enjoy equality of opportunity, to exercise personal choice, to participate fully in society, and to live with independence.

The report highlights good practice components in addressing the housing needs of disabled people and says future strategy must have a rights-based perspective. Finally, the report outlines a framework for addressing the issues identified.

Main findings of the report:

- Accommodation provision for disabled people is a crucial component in ensuring their participation in society in a manner that respects their rights, offers opportunities and choices, and facilitates independence.
- The level and extent to which people with disabilities face challenges and difficulties in accessing accommodation is a major ongoing issue.
- The report identifies a considerable gap between the policy aspirations and the reality of implementation of the first National Housing Strategy for People with a Disability 2011-2016 (extended to 2021).
- Evidence points to a wide variation in performance and practice in the delivery of housing options and supports to disabled people over the past decade.
- For disabled people who wish to live independently, the co-ordination of suitable accommodation delivery with the provision of social care supports is essential. Such coordination has not always been evident. There is an ongoing need to strengthen collaboration and cooperation mechanisms at local and national level. Ensuring sufficient and simultaneous funding for accommodation and social and health support is also critical.

- Provision of social housing in Ireland has become increasingly dependent on the private rental sector in recent decades. This trend has created particular difficulties for disabled people.
- Many disabled people continue to face access and adaptation challenges. Much more needs to be done to mainstream a universal design approach, and lifetime-adaptable design principles, in housing policy. Disability organisations have also called for reform of the planning and building regulations.
- The publication of the National Housing Strategy for Disabled People 2022-2027 was a welcome development and reiteration of the Government's commitment. The implementation process of the new strategy at both local and national levels will be crucial. Adequate funding, effective collaboration, and robust management, oversight and reporting must all form integral components of implementation.
- This report stresses the need for a 'whole of government approach' on housing and disability. There is a need for leadership, resourcing, support and direction at national level. Effective collaboration and co-operation between all relevant departments and agencies will be necessary to deliver the promised targets, as well as robust management and monitoring of local delivery and practices. Sufficient funding will also be essential.

Commenting on the report **DFI's CEO John Dolan** said, "We know that Ireland is currently dealing with a major housing crisis, but it is clear from this report that Disability housing is a crisis within a crisis, with disabled people having even less options than others in a very difficult housing market. Similarly, while societal understanding of the needs and rights of disabled people has gradually improved, some assumptions persist that people with disabilities should be looked after by family or charities and, by implication, that they should remain dependent rather than become independent. This mindset has to change so that disabled people can access the same suite of housing options that are available to the general population – disability must be factored into all discussions and policy considerations on housing."

The **CIB's Chief Executive Fiona Coyne** welcomed the report saying, "We were delighted to commission this research and to collaborate again with the Disability Federation of Ireland to investigate the current situation for people with disabilities in accessing housing. This in-depth analysis has been borne out of the experience of our funded services, and of DFI's membership in supporting people who have a disability with their housing needs."

"The report is timely as it coincides with the publication of the second National Housing Strategy for Disabled People 2022 – 2027 earlier this year, and just prior to the publication of the Implementation Plan. It also marks 15 years since previous joint research by CIB and DFI was conducted on the housing and accommodation needs of people with disabilities."

Notes to Editors

- The report set out to explore, analyse and assess the experiences of disabled people in accessing accommodation, and to compare and contrast those experiences with the commitments made in national and local strategies and plans, and in social housing policy generally.

- The report was prepared by Dr Michael Browne with assistance from Gearoid Mac Eochaidh. There were important insights provided by the National Advocacy Service for People With Disabilities (NAS), DFI staff and DFI member organisations. NAS provided very valuable and useful anonymised illustrative case examples. The report was enhanced by inputs from the CIB social policy and research team.
- This new report also revisits similar research, undertaken by both organisations on the housing needs of people with disabilities - [The Right Living Space - Housing and Accommodation Needs of People with Disabilities](#) (CIB/DFI 2007). It analyses the available published data, and draws on reports and case materials from the National Advocacy Service for People with Disabilities (NAS), from DFI staff and member organisations and data from Citizens Information Services (CISs) relation to queries on housing needs.
- CIB and DFI are grateful to Yomi Ogunsanya, Polio Survivors Ireland and Brian Hogan, Acquired Brain Injury Ireland for sharing their lived experiences at the report launch.