

Opening Statement for the Oireachtas Committee on Disability Matters

Date: April 2024

About Inclusion Ireland

Established in 1961, Inclusion Ireland is a national, rights-based advocacy organisation that works to promote the rights of people with an intellectual disability.

We work towards the full inclusion of people with intellectual disabilities by supporting people to have their voices heard and advocating for rights under the United Nations Convention on the Rights of People with Disabilities (UNCRPD).

The vision of Inclusion Ireland is that of people with an intellectual disability living and participating in the community with equal rights as citizens, to live the life of their choice to their fullest potential. Inclusion Ireland's work is underpinned by the values of Respect, Inclusion, Equality, Voice and Choice.

Opening Statement



Hello, my name is Ellen Gavin. I am from Ballycumber in County Offaly.

My friend, Gary McCabe is from Clara, also in County Offaly. We are glad to be here today.

We are members of the Inclusion Ireland Midlands Conversation Group.



I will tell you about our Advocacy Group and Gary will tell you about the work we do in creating independent living and work in our communities to be inclusive.

I will tell you what our group is doing in the community.

We have met as a self advocacy group since 2018, the same year as Ireland approved the United Nations Convention on the Rights of Persons with Disabilities.



The CRPD is discussed at every one of our monthly meetings.

We are learning how our human rights are protected.

We are learning how to use our voices to speak out.

We are learning how to work locally and nationally with the Irish Government.



We use a one page chart on the articles to discuss how our rights are supported by the CRPD.





We use the stories of our own lives to discuss the how our rights are protected in the CRPD.



We have learned that our role as self advocates is protected under the CRPD.

Personally, as an advocate I have learned how to speak out.

I am a shy person, but in speaking out I can help myself and others to learn more about our rights.

Now I would like to hand over the microphone to my friend, Gary.



I will tell you about why

- the CRPD is important to us
- and about the work we do in creating independent living
- and work in our communities to be inclusive.

Groups and organisations ask to hear our voice and our choice.

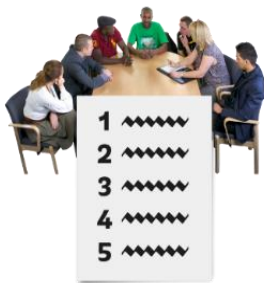


To name a few of our recent focus groups,

We have worked with Health Information and Quality Authority on easy access to their website.

We have worked with the Irish Banking Culture Board on Financial Inclusion.

We raise issues in the Midlands Conversation Group



We invite local County Councillors to speak about these issues. For example, one councillor came to a meeting to speak about housing in Offaly.

One of our members is on the Housing Disability Steering Group.



We have led Public Sector Duty training in Citizen's Information Service Offices.

We are involved each year in "Make Way Day" to work on accessibility in our towns.



We have presented to the Offaly County Council on disability awareness.

We have worked with the Offaly Disability Equality Network, a cross disability group, and Youth Council on disability awareness projects.



We have invited the community to join us for a meeting every year where we present on the CRPD. We ask people to pick the top three rights and then have a conversation about our choices.

To live independently we believe that the issues are:



- providing for the therapy needs of disabled children
- employment supports
- availability of transport
- access to housing
- access to health care
- personal assistant support to live our lives in the community
- personalised budgets
- easy to read information

For communities to be inclusive we need



- equal opportunities
- easy to read information
- supports that respect our learning
- access to sporting groups
- access to education
- access to political life
- that Ireland approves the Optional Protocol so we have the opportunity to complain if our rights are not respected



Things would be better in our lives if we had more choice in how we could get supports.

Having a service that could help us to manage a personal budget would give us more equality and more options.

Thank you for this opportunity to review our work with the CRPD. Thank you for having us to Leinster House to speak and for listening to our stories.

Thank you, too, for your ongoing attention to how the rights of people with disability are lived in Ireland.

**For further information, contact;
Guillaume Jacquinot Policy co-ordinator.
0860353888
guillaume@inclusionireland.ie**



Rialtas na hÉireann
Government of Ireland