

DISABLED INEQUALITY

VOTE to end discrimination for people living with disability

Transport and Disability

Almost 50% of people living with a physical disability experience difficulty with going outside the home alone¹

The availability of accessible transport is essential for people with disabilities to engage in community life, education, and employment and it can have a significant impact on quality of life. People with disabilities consistently highlight the lack of accessible transport as a major barrier to inclusion within Irish society.²

More than 24% of people with disabilities lack access to private transport, the mode used most often by this group (as a passenger)³

The government's decision to discontinue essential transport subsidy schemes such as the Mobility Allowance and Motorised Transport Grants is particularly damaging. These grants are essential in supporting people with disabilities who require income supports to contribute towards their mobility needs. Although a new travel subsidy scheme was promised in 2013, its delivery is still nowhere in sight.

Due to the lack of access to private transport, people with disabilities are dependent on the public system for community access. However, there are many factors which seriously curtail the use of these services. People with a disability are much less likely to use public transport with only 24% using community trains and 35% availing of city buses.⁴

1 in 4 people with a disability do not use public transport for accessibility reasons⁵

Most rail and bus providers require 24 hours notice if wheelchair users plan to use their service. Lifts frequently out of order, coupled with staff shortages, results in people with

disabilities avoiding public transport rather than trying to cope with the numerous difficulties they have to encounter.⁶ This has a profound effect on the engagement of people with disabilities in everyday social activities.

Only 56% of Bus Éireann's coach fleet is deemed wheelchair accessible⁷

Inaccessibility of public transport is notable throughout the country, especially in rural areas. Bus stops, surrounding footpaths, and physical stations are frequently insurmountable, with accessible buses only available on a limited number of routes. The daily reality for many wheelchair users living in villages and towns across Ireland is that they are unable to get on a Bus Éireann or a private coach.

The lack of access to suitable public transport for people with disabilities forces them to make arrangements for private transport or attempt to find, and pay for, a taxi that is accessible.

As of April 2015 only 5% of licensed vehicles were accessible⁸

There are at present less accessible taxis available nationally than before the recession despite the fact that there are incentives for accessible vehicles. There has been anecdotal evidence of indirect refusal of services, veiled by meagre excuses such as no ramps or that drivers are busy on another call.

By age 60, 1 in 10 people will experience a physical disability, by age 80 this rises to 1 in 3⁹

Ireland has an ageing population. The social exclusion of people with disabilities will only get worse unless accessibility and transport issues are addressed.

¹ CSO (2006) National disability survey

² Murphy, K. Et al. (2007) The quality of life of older people with a disability in Ireland. NCAOP:99

³ Watson, D. & Nolan, B. (2011) A social portrait of people with disabilities in Ireland. ESRI

⁴ Ibid.

⁵ Ibid.

⁶ Ibid.

⁷ Paschal Donoghue TD replying to question by Gerry Adams TD on 17th Nov 2014

⁸ NTA (2015) Vehicle Licences county and category 20th September 2015

⁹ CSO (2013) Population and labour force projections 2016-2046

Transport for All

There is a need to develop an accessible integrated transport policy for people with disabilities to ensure they can fully participate in society. The role of the Department of Transport is critical, while the role of Local Government in the provision of integrated local transport solutions also needs to be examined.

The new Transport Subsidy Scheme must provide for people with disabilities' mobility needs

Previous transport schemes have been closed for over two years, with the HSE currently paying up to €208.50 per month to the 4,700 people previously in receipt of mobility allowance.¹⁰ The new Transport Subsidy scheme should be located in the context of the move towards an individualised supports system for people with disabilities. Budgetary allocation for transport and mobility assistance must be allocated to the individual rather than to service providers. It is imperative that The Health (Transport Support) Bill is included in Government's legislative programme for early 2016 in order to ensure the social inclusion of people with disabilities.

An Upgrading Scheme is urgently required to address the inaccessibility of public transport

Current services are not realistically fit for purpose, especially for wheelchair users and people with visual impairments. An upgrading scheme should include increasing the capacity for wheelchair passengers to access Dublin Bus as well as the provision of accessible bus stops and surrounding footpaths.

Additionally, a commitment for full access to current rail and bus services is required. This will require a unified approach amongst all local authorities to improve accessibility of bus stops.

An accessibility refurbishment programme is long overdue in many rail stations. These programmes must include the design and implementation of a suitable system for deployment of portable ramps that do not require 24 hours advance notice. This will

ensure that people with disabilities have equal access to public transportation and can access it when required.

Target of 60-70% of all Taxis to be accessible by 2017

All state and semi-state taxi contracts should only be awarded to companies that adhere to these accessibility targets within their fleet. Similarly, the Wheelchair Accessible Vehicle Grant Scheme awarded to taxi operators that purchase accessible vehicles should be retained and promoted to ensure an increase in accessible taxis nationwide.

Accessibility must feature as a central issue in any future privatisation plans

Government needs to seriously consider its relationship with taxi operators that refuse to provide accessible transport. Solutions to achieve better accessibility can be achieved through the abolition of government departmental contracts with services that are not completely accessible or making a concerted effort to be so.

Transport for All: Key Benefits

- ✓ A transport system that is adequate to meet the needs of an ageing population
- ✓ Reduced isolation and further involvement of people with disabilities in community life¹¹
- ✓ Availability of accessible transport has demonstrated an increased participation of people with disabling conditions in the workforce and in education¹²

¹⁰ Kathleen Lynch TD replying to question by Clare Daly TD, on 12th Nov 2015

¹¹ Murphy, K. Et al. (2007)The quality of life of older people with a disability in Ireland.NCAOP:99

¹² Jones, M.K (2008) Disability and the labour market: a review of the empirical evidence .Journal of economic studies