

# Participation Matters: How to include people with disabilities in public decision making



Údarás Náisiúnta Míchumais  
National Disability Authority



This is an Easy to Read version

# What is this information about?



This information is about a report and guidelines.

These were put out in September 2022.



The report is called Participation Matters.

It says how to include people with disabilities in public decision making.



The National Disability Authority, or NDA, put this report and guidelines together.



We talked with Disabled Persons'

Organisations, the disability community, and people from government departments and local authorities.



The guidelines are for people working in government departments, public bodies and local authorities.

These people are known as public officials.



The guidelines will help them to support people with disabilities to give their views and take part in decision making.



This is an important part of the United Nations Convention on the Rights of Persons with Disabilities, or UNCRPD.



There are four parts to the guidelines called sections.

This report will explain the information in each section.

# Section 1: Quick Guides



Section 1 tells you about important laws, policies, and ideas.

It is important that people know about these before they talk with people with disabilities and their organisations.

# United Nations Convention on the Rights of Persons with Disabilities



In 2018, Ireland agreed to put the UNCRPD into action, and protect the rights of people with disabilities.



The Government must make sure that people with disabilities are included in decision making.



The UNCRPD says that people with disabilities should have a say when laws and policies are put together.



They should help to check if these laws and policies are put into action.

# Disabled Persons' Organisations



Disabled Persons' Organisations are also known as DPOs.

These organisations stand up for people with disabilities.



The members of these organisations are people with disabilities.



People with disabilities lead and manage these organisations too.



These organisations are fully behind the ideas and rights in the UNCRPD.

# What is Disability?



There are many different ways to explain disability under Irish law.



The social model of disability says that barriers in society and in the environment stop people with disabilities from taking part.

We need to take away these barriers.



Barriers are things like buildings that people cannot get into or use, information that people cannot understand, or bad attitudes towards people with disabilities.



# What is Participation?



Participation means taking part.

There are many different ways to take part.



People can take part in decisions about themselves, for example, about the health, education or social care they receive.



People can take part in decisions that affect people as a group, for example, laws or policies for Ireland.

This is known as public participation.



These guidelines are about public participation.



# What is Universal Design?



Universal Design means designing things, places and services so everyone can use them.



It does not matter what your age, size, ability or disability.



All participation and consultation plans should think about Universal Design from the start.



This means making sure that as many people as possible can take part.

# What is Irish Sign Language?



Irish Sign Language is also known as ISL.



ISL is a separate language to English or Irish.  
It is not a signed version of these.



The Irish Sign Language Act 2017 says that  
ISL users have the right to use ISL.



Public organisations must make sure that  
people who communicate with ISL can use  
their services.

For example, make sure a person can have  
an interpreter if they need one.

## Section 2: Getting people with disabilities involved



Section 2 explains how you should involve people with disabilities in consultations and decision making.

A consultation is when you ask people to give their views and ideas.

# Getting people with disabilities involved



There are lots of good things about including people with disabilities in public decision making.



It helps public officials to follow laws and policies.



It makes the Government listen more to the rights of people with disabilities.



It builds up trust and relationships.



All public consultations must be accessible so people with disabilities can take part in the same way as all other citizens.



DPOs must be consulted when decisions are being made about things that are important to people with disabilities.

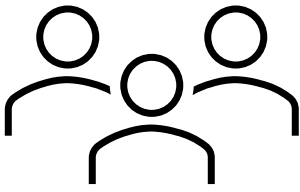


They should be contacted and involved from an early stage.

There should be timelines to suit DPOs and support them to take part.



Organisations of family members of people with disabilities, and organisations for children and young people with disabilities can be included like a DPO.

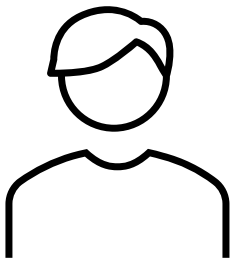


Other organisations might also take part but they should not take the place of DPOs. For example, disability service providers.



The NDA gives advice to the Government on disability policies.

The Government still needs to talk to DPOs even if they are talking to the NDA.



Individuals with a disability can take part in public consultations if they wish.

They might have important experience or information to share.



Organisations still need to consult with DPOs even if they are talking with different individuals with disabilities.

## Section 3: Participation in practice



Section 3 has information for public officials about different ways to involve people with disabilities so they can give their views.



# Making sure everyone can take part in a meaningful way



Every participation process will look different, but they should always be:



**Genuine** - this means the organisation should really want to carry out a consultation that everyone can be part of.



**Timely** – this means people must be given plenty of time to take part and consider their views.



**Accessible** – this means everyone should be able to take part.



**Ongoing** – this means it is not a once-off event, and there will be follow up with the people that take part.



**Transparent** – this is about giving people feedback on how their views were used. The results of the consultation must be made available, for example, in a report.



If these rules are not followed, there can be tokenism.



Tokenism is when an organisation wants to look like it has talked with people with disabilities but has not done this the right way.

# Stages of a participation process



The first stages of the process are planning. These stages look at areas such as management support, staffing, money, skills, and learning needs.



The next stage is where the consultation takes place.

This could be a meeting with people with disabilities.

It could be a survey to ask people what they think



It is important to think about ways to carry out the consultation and make it accessible.



It is very important to come back to people and tell them how their views were listened to.



The information gathered during the consultation should be studied.

This stage is called the analysis.



The next stage is for public officials to take action on the advice from the consultation.

They should say if the advice cannot be followed and why.



The evaluation stage checks if the consultation worked well, and looks at ways to improve it in the future.

This is called an evaluation.



People with disabilities can be part of the monitoring stage.

This is where you would check to see if laws and policies are being put into action.

The results of the participation process should be shared in accessible ways.

Everyone should get this information at the same time.

## Section 4: Good practice for including people with disabilities



Section 4 lists good things that public officials should do to include people with disabilities.

# The language and words we use



The language we use to talk about disability is important.



Some people prefer to use the words “person with a disability”.

Others prefer the words “disabled person”.



If you are not sure, it is always best to ask the person.



Each person has their own identity.

Identity is what makes one person or group different from others.





Many people do not identify as disabled.

For example,

- older people with an impairment
- people with hidden disabilities, such as mental health difficulties
- members of the Deaf community.



Members of the Deaf community who use Irish Sign Language identify as a group with their own language and culture.



There are also deaf and hard-of-hearing people who do not use ISL, who may or may not identify as disabled.

# Guidelines for Chairs and facilitators



The guidelines give advice for people running and leading meetings, workshops and events.



These guidelines say how to create an environment that everyone can take part in.



The advice is for both in-person and online meetings and events.



There is advice about including people with different types of disabilities.  
Each person may have different needs, and they should always be asked what they need.



The main report has checklists for public officials.

It also has contact information for DPOs.



This Easy to Read report is from the National Disability Authority.



Ace Communication helped to put together this report.

Experts by Experience helped with this information.