

Green Party Disability Policy Document



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1.0 Introduction

Different abilities are a natural part of the human condition; some people may experience it from birth while others acquire as part of life's journey. It is likely that as people live longer, the numbers of people acquiring a disability will continue to rise. Therefore policies need to move away from treating disability as a 'sector' and towards compassionate, innovative, inclusive initiatives that support citizens of all abilities to live life as fully as possible. Similarly inclusion of different ability must be embraced by all Government departments and public bodies or we will continue to disadvantage our citizens and waste precious resources. Persons with disabilities are a valued and valuable cohort within our society- public policy and funding must operate more effectively to support them.

2.0 Summary and Key Points

This policy is based on the following principles

- People of all abilities should be treated with dignity and respect- all the people of our nation have a right to a decent home, good healthcare and a suitable education
- All services and supports should be provided on a person-centred basis with a core emphasis on adopting a whole life-course approach. Choice and individual care for the service user and their family must be at the heart of all care
- Resource allocation and service design should be guided by evidence-based approaches where equality of access to treatment, rehabilitation and support is prioritized
- We believe all policies around supporting persons with disabilities should prioritise prevention and early intervention

Some of the key policy points put forth in this document include:

- The Green Party proposes an increase of 22 euro for persons in receipt of any disability allowance from the state
- We urge the government to consider Community Respite Centres linked to Primary Care providers that can provide more appropriate holistic and medical care to those persons and families with profound needs on an individual basis both for short term and long terms needs
- the provision of a teaching assistant with training in special needs care and education to every junior primary class nationwide (Junior Infants, Senior Infants and First Class) to ensure that children awaiting a diagnosis are not disenfranchised

3.0 Services and the State

As part of our commitment to choice for persons with disabilities and their families we believe that health and social service agencies should support individuals in identifying opportunities in their local areas and in their daily life for autonomy and independence as part of a broader understanding of mobility for community participation¹ In Kirchner et al., (2008) study, 53% of guide dog users and 46% of long cane users reported that they found the attitudes of the public a barrier to physical activity²

- We support the use of service brokers to help those within the community identify the most suitable services and therapies for their needs
- We support an education programme to address this public perception of persons with varying abilities
- We support the introduction of legislation to improve the portrayal of and participation by persons with disabilities in mainstream media. National broadcaster, include other media outlets in employer schemes as condition of license

3.1 The Rights of Persons with Disabilities

In March 2007 Ireland signed the United Nations Convention on the Rights of People with Disabilities (UNCRPD) but unfortunately we have still not ratified this major international treaty. We welcome the ratification of this treaty and the inclusion of the Optional Protocol along with a review of government conduct in delaying ratification for such an extended period.

The Green Party calls on the Irish government to ensure that all aspects of the progressive EU Accessibility Act are implemented throughout Irish law, industry and social services. The Law Reform Commission Consultation Paper on Sexual Offences and Capacity to Consent 2011 must be reviewed in the context of its impact on rights based disability policy.³

3.2 State Provision for Persons with Disabilities

132,000 people with disabilities were living in consistent poverty in 2015. In that year the consistent poverty rate rose from 14% to 22% for people with disabilities.

- The Green Party proposes an increase of 22 euro for persons in receipt of any disability allowance from the state

1 Mr Cobb, S. National Mobility Study: Executive Summary, 2012, Trinity College, pg 29

2 Mr Cobb, S. National Mobility Study: Executive Summary, 2012, Trinity College, pg 36

3 Inclusion Ireland's submission on Report on Disability Review, pg 6

- We advocate a system whereby the current annual Carer's Support Grant is upwardly linked to inflation and adjusted accordingly.
- We call on the government to undertake a review on the cost of living with a disability with a particular consideration on whether VAT and other forms of taxation impact persons with disabilities disproportionately.
- We call on the government to facilitate and support persons who are in the process of applying for disability services and to ensure that it is as clear and accessible as possible

3.3 Healthcare Provision

We believe that our nation's healthcare system is a fundamental and important point of contact between the state and those dealing with disability. We also recognise that health services are often not tailored to the long term and chronic requirements of patients where disability is a factor. As a result it is imperative that the HSE seek to create a dynamic and caring suite of services for patients and service users so that access to care can be optimised and the limited funds of our health system may benefit the largest possible cohort of people.

As with the provision of wider disability services the Green Party believes that healthcare for those with disabilities should move towards a system of individualised care plans with a system of care planning or budgeting facilitated by healthcare service brokers provided to users free of charge by the HSE. The Green Party/Comhaontas Glas supports the 'Assisted Decision-making Bill'⁴ and its extension to those with disabilities in order to provide individuals with greater autonomy over decisions pertaining to them. We support a system of care which can adapt to include carer's and family members in the decision making process and care plans where appropriate.

The Green Party proposes the following measures in addressing healthcare provision for persons with disabilities:

- We propose a scheme of registration for those with chronic health requirements whereby prescription charges can be reduced or set aside⁵
- We call for a full review of the Long Term Illness scheme and a consideration of new areas

⁴ Assisted Decision-making (capacity) Bill 2013, Available: <http://www.oireachtas.ie/documents/bills28/bills/2013/8313/b8313d.pdf>

⁵ http://www.nai.ie/assets/40/105407DE-A2A8-425F-AAAC6236A593E1F6_document/Oireachtas_Committee_On_the_Future_of_Healthcare-1.pdf

for inclusion in the scheme including Mental Health

- We support the use of Primary Care Networks as a means of facilitating access to services by persons with disabilities
- We call for an urgent review and increase in staffing levels within the HSE, particularly in therapy service areas that impact of many persons with disability including Occupational Therapy, Speech and Language Specialists, Physiotherapy and mental health professionals. We also call on this government to meet the staffing levels set out by A Vision for Change.
- We call for the implementation and adherence to the existing Disability Act which places a statutory obligation on the Health Service Executive to begin an assessment for disability within 3 months and complete the assessment within another 3 months. These targets are currently not being met and only refer to those born after 2002. The Disability Act must be amended to include all residents within the state.

There is a need to move from the one-size-fits-all model to one that caters to the individual needs of a person with a disability. The concept of individualised supports has been around for nearly two decades and operates in the UK, Northern Ireland, the USA and Canada.⁶ The process of reforming our disability services to date has been characterised as a ‘slow and tentative drift’, with agencies at many different stages of this journey. Similarly reports and reviews of disability services in Ireland paint a consistent picture of poor or non-existent implementation by voluntary and statutory bodies of changes required by successive reports over several decades.⁷

There are various ways of implementing individualised supports based on need, such as direct payments to an individual or his/her family, a payment to an independent broker who will administer the payment for a percentage fee and assist the person with accessing services, or at its simplest, the clear attachment of a sum of money for each individual in a transparent manner.

We support the proposal by Inclusion Ireland to run a number of pilot projects in each HSE region that test different models of resource allocation.

Non-profit organizations play a unique and unparalleled role in the provision of providing health and personal social services in this state. Accountability and representation in voluntary

6 Inclusion Ireland’s submission on Report on Disability Review, pg 5

7 Trinity College & HRB, Moving Ahead Policy Review, 2014, pg 31

organisations must be uniform, transparent and robust. International trends suggest that when services are provided by voluntary organisations, equity and universal entitlement, features that should be inherent in a public service, may be problematic; and that interdependence between the state and the voluntary sector has led to pervasive blurring of boundaries and problems with accountability of individual voluntary agencies.⁸ Quality of Disability Services Service Level Agreements (SLAs) are critical to guiding the relationship between the state as commissioner of services and the bodies providing them.⁹

- The Green Party proposes that the state as represented by the HSE should move towards full administration of the majority of services and healthcare for persons with disabilities into the future.
- If the HSE cannot implement agreed protocols regarding the funding of outcome-based services the Green Party supports the creation and resourcing of a state agency to push forward the reforms.
- The Green Party/Comhaontas Glas supports the 'Assisted Decision-making Bill'¹⁰ and its extension to those with disabilities in order to provide such individuals with greater autonomy over decisions pertaining to them.
- PHN should not be relied on for the repeat provision of medical supplies to families, carers and persons with chronic conditions or profound disabilities. The Green Party proposes an online system of repeat access.
- Each person with a chronic condition or disability is entitled to a home check on request as a catalyst to the provision of suitable equipment for safe housing conditions
- We call for an urgent review of the private provision of Home Care to people with additional needs. We call on the government to increase the standard entitlement per hour, to run and administer the scheme as a public service and to ensure all service providers are adequately trained and compensated.

3.4 Disability Services

Day Services

Day services for adults with disabilities are provided by a large number of voluntary organisations and by the HSE for over 25,000 people. In 2008, 81 organisations provided services to 25,302

8 Kramer, R., (1994): 'Voluntary Agencies and the Contract Culture: "Dream or Nightmare?"', *Social Service Review*, March

9 Trinity College & HRB, *Moving Ahead Policy Review*, 2014, pg 32

10 Assisted Decision-making (capacity) Bill 2013, Available: <http://www.oireachtas.ie/documents/bills28/bills/2013/8313/b8313d.pdf>

service users in 817 locations.¹¹ Voluntary organisations are the main providers, offering services in 573 locations.

The voluntary sector provides about 90% of services to people with intellectual disabilities.¹² There is a wide variability in the use of essential tools such as individualised planning and quality assurance systems.¹³ With the exception of rehabilitative training, there are no nationally agreed or clear definitions of service activity¹⁴ and day services for those over 65 show lack of opportunities for progression, as a result of which many people remain in services that do not address their changing needs as they move through the life cycle.¹⁵

Only 1% of day service users have a diagnosis of autism. This tiny percentage reflects the relative newness of the capacity to diagnose autism as a distinct disability. As a result, adults with autism are included with other disability groups.¹⁶

- We call for an immediate review and subsequent provision of suitable day services for both children and adults who are diagnosed with autism. We also include children who are under consideration of diagnosis in those who are eligible to use these services
- The Green Party proposes a review of new models for care, such as the ‘village model’, which spreads a range of services across a number of nearby towns and villages, offering service users options in different locations along with opportunities for community inclusion. Users of the service indicate particular concerns about the weakness of the links between day services and employment¹⁷
- We propose a new structure for guidance and referral to day services. Current services are not fully optimised while service users are unclear about how to access services. Self-referral may not be accepted and people may be referred without knowing what the service is or having a choice about whether to attend or not. These referral processes may not be person-centred and may be based on the referrer’s limited knowledge of options and limited awareness of person centred planning.¹⁸
- The Green Party supports a funding model for day services that is based on need rather

11 New Directions: Review of HSE Day Services and Implementation Plan 2012 – 2016, Feb 2012, pg 13

12 New Directions: Review of HSE Day Services and Implementation Plan 2012 – 2016, Feb 2012, pg 40

13 New Directions: Review of HSE Day Services and Implementation Plan 2012 – 2016, Feb 2012, pg 13

14 New Directions: Review of HSE Day Services and Implementation Plan 2012 – 2016, Feb 2012, pg 36

15 New Directions: Review of HSE Day Services and Implementation Plan 2012 – 2016, Feb 2012, pg 13

16 New Directions: Review of HSE Day Services and Implementation Plan 2012 – 2016, Feb 2012, pg 41

17 New Directions: Review of HSE Day Services and Implementation Plan 2012 – 2016, Feb 2012, pg 56

18 New Directions: Review of HSE Day Services and Implementation Plan 2012 – 2016, Feb 2012, pg 57

than numbers and one which is standardized across the country.

Advocacy Services

Under the provisions of the National Disability Strategy and the Citizens Information Act 2007, responsibility for the development and delivery of advocacy services rests with the Citizens Information Board, which currently operates a programme of pilot advocacy approaches. Unfortunately a pause in the roll out of this service is currently in place.¹⁹

- The Green Party proposes the creation of an independent advocacy service for participants in daycare and residential services.
- All government staff in service provider roles throughout all departments should be trained on how best to support individuals with disabilities that use their service and all government publications should be written in plain English, wherever possible. Similarly all government website should be designed to ensure ease of access for individuals with disabilities.
- All government and healthcare buildings within the state must be fully accessible and considerate of the needs of persons with disabilities. All waiting rooms and care settings must provide adequate space and resources for service user needs

The Green Party supports the changing of adult day services, where they equip recipients to:

- make choices and plans to support personal goals;
- have influence over the decisions which affect their lives;
- achieve personal goals and aspirations;
- and be active, independent members of their community and society²⁰

4.0 Community

4.1 Housing

The Green Party believes that every resident in the state of Ireland has a right to decent and affordable housing. We also recognise that, as with many other spheres of our society, the provision of housing to those living with disability is currently underfunded, ill managed and insufficiently planned into the future to fulfil existing needs. We believe that access to housing is a primary route towards integration into communities and failure in this area is amongst the most

19 New Directions: Review of HSE Day Services and Implementation Plan 2012 – 2016, Feb 2012, pg 119

20 New Directions: Review of HSE Day Services and Implementation Plan 2012 – 2016, Feb 2012, pg 14

serious ways in which we do not adequately provide for persons with disabilities and their families. We are also very aware that over 1000 people with disabilities under the age of 65 are living inappropriately in nursing homes for older people.

The Green Party places choice at the centre of our housing policy for persons living with disabilities. Following a periodic review of the Irish Government by the UN Committee in Geneva in 2002, the Department of Health established a policy initiative in relation to people living in institutions, and adopted a programme to transfer people with an intellectual disability or autism from psychiatric hospitals and other inappropriate settings such as de-designated units and other large HSE residential centres. However, nearly ten years later, the 2011 Report on Congregated Settings found that over the period 1999-2008, reported admissions to congregated settings (692), had exceeded the number transferred to the community.²¹ Currently 4,000 people still live in congregated settings²²

The Green Party supports the findings on congregated settings however we are committed to a policy where all housing options are possible in circumstances where the best practice for service users and their families are at the heart of the decision making process. We recognise that congregated settings can be a beneficial avenue in the care of conditions such as dementia and that the broad spectrum of disability from profound to minor requires a spectrum of care options. We support an overall move towards self-directed living supports and services in the community. We also note that in many cases individuals living in residential services are without the protection of independent inspection or standards and this needs to be remedied urgently.²³

We propose the following measures to address housing for persons with disabilities:

- We call for the specific inclusion of the needs of people with disabilities in future housing policies, plus research and data collection on disability to better inform future planning policy to include the provision of at least 12% accessible housing to all projects receiving public money or any tax incentives. On a practical level we need a data register of accessible properties across all housing tenures. This measure would require the provision of wheelchair accessible units with adequate, accessible sanitary facilities.
- Currently the processing time for the Housing Adaption Grant is very lengthy. The Green

21 Inclusion Ireland's submission on Report on Disability Review, pg 3

22 Inclusion Ireland's submission on Report on Disability Review, pg 4

23 Inclusion Ireland's submission on Report on Disability Review, pg 6

Party supports a review of this process in order to shorten the processing time. The private rented sector can suit some people with disabilities but access is difficult.

We support the expansion of the Capital Assistance Scheme, CAS both in funding and in facilitating developers to access the funds (Almost half the available fund for CAS were not drawn down in 2016)

- In accordance with our housing and homelessness policy we call for independent inspections for all new buildings, funded through the commencement notice process, to ensure effective enforcement of Part M of the Building
- We call on the government to increase funding to HAG to 2010 levels of 80m. We call for an increase to the upper level of HAG from 30,000 to 50,000. The Housing Adaptation Grant, HAG, assists people with disabilities and older persons to make changes to their home where they are having difficulty living in it because of its layout. Considering the current housing crisis it is imperative that persons with disabilities are supported to stay in current housing and adapt it to their needs.
- We support the call for housing authorities to put a framework in place to ensure that applicants for social housing supports are provided with information regarding the implications of disclosure of a mental health disability, in the context of the effective assessment of housing support needs and appropriate prioritization²⁴
- As part of our commitment to choice and considering the significant number of young persons with disabilities currently residing in elderly care or nursing homes we urge the government to consider Community Respite Centres linked to Primary Care providers that can provide more appropriate holistic and medical care to those persons and families with profound needs on an individual basis both for short term and long terms needs

Public Buildings

The Green Party proposes the creation of a subsidy scheme to encourage retrofitting of accessibility into existing buildings. The Green Party supports efforts to bring Part B Fire Safety of the Building Regulations, which is currently under review, in line with the Irish Wheelchair Association's Best Practice Access Guidelines 2014.

4.2 Employment

²⁴ DOE, National Housing Strategy for People with a Disability 2011 - 2016

The Green Party believes in facilitating persons with disabilities to engage with employment services on an equal footing with the fully able where this is their choice. Currently people with disabilities are not listed on the live register and as a result are unable to avail of the various employment initiatives on offer. We see no reason why this discrimination should exist and support the immediate extension of all work initiatives to people with disabilities capable of taking up employment. Similarly Intreo offices and services should be fully accessible with adequately trained staff with the time to work effectively with disabled jobseekers and their support personnel.

Under Part 5 of the Act, 3% of jobs in public service bodies (local authorities, civil service, the Health Service Executive and so on) are reserved for people with disabilities.²⁵ According to the CSP the percentage of the population with disabilities is 13%²⁶ We believe that this 3% does not fulfill the state's responsibility to show leadership in offering persons with disabilities employment. We call on the government to double this requirement to 6% and to implement a scheme of active engagement between stakeholder employers such as local authorities and representative bodies within the disabled community to identify barriers to employment and avenues to increasing participation on an ongoing basis.

The Green Party advocates a policy of facilitating persons with disabilities into employment in a manner that addresses issues for those already in employment, those seeking to return to work and those who may be experiencing temporary difficulties that could force them out of the workforce.

- We recognise that there are many barriers to returning to work for those with disability including the possible loss of existing supports including the provision of a medical card. We propose to allow those with a recognised disability retain their medical card for a period of 5 years without means testing, to be reviewed by the HSE at the end of this period where appropriate.
- We advocate offering financial incentives to employers that employ individuals with disabilities. This financial incentive would need to reflect the cost of any material modifications to the workplace or work practices required to support the new employee/s

25 http://www.citizensinformation.ie/en/employment/employment_and_disability/working_with_a_disability.html , accessed 20/11/15

26 <http://www.cso.ie/en/newsandevents/pressreleases/2012pressreleases/pressreleasencensus2011profile8ourbillofhealth/> accessed 20/11/15

as well the inclusion for members of the workforce and in particular management to engage with diversity and disability training. We propose a scheme of 'Employment Supports' to operate on an ongoing basis to all persons with disabilities who are returning to work and their employers. This scheme would include an expansion of the current Retention Grant and the Workplace Adaptation Grant. The Employer Disability Information Service should have a role in supporting employers to identify and access specialist assessment services to adapt ongoing employment roles for persons with disabilities

- We propose a system whereby employers can access further funds to support employees in transport to and from business locations where this may be achieved by public services. If public transport is unavailable we propose access to the following measures: adaptations to your vehicle so you can get to work; taxi fares to work or a support worker if you can't use public transport; a support worker or job coach to help you in your workplace
- We propose a suite of services to provide post-employment planning to persons with disabilities. These services would include access to ongoing professional development to support the retention of skills, access to retraining services and vocational rehabilitation services where appropriate.
- We propose a review of tax credits afforded to those in employment who are experiencing disability to account for the increased cost to the individual
- We advocate a replacement of the Partial Capacity Benefit that provides a responsive system to account for individual circumstance

Sheltered / Supported Employment

We concur with the view outlined in the New Directions report that the HSE should no longer be involved in providing sheltered or supported employment and should engage with the Department of Jobs, Enterprise and Innovation about transferring responsibility for these services to DJEI. It is imperative that the HSE, the Department of Health and the Department of Jobs, Enterprise and Innovation collaborate to make sure that, in the short term, the transition follows the principles of person-centeredness and that, in the longer term, there are clear pathways to facilitate seamless transfer between HSE funded supports and the services of the Department of Jobs, Enterprise and Innovation.

There is also a need to make sure there is legal clarity about the employment status of people

currently in HSE supports or programmes and those involved in such programmes are helped to progress from sheltered and supported employment to open employment where possible.

4.3 Education

Primary Education

The Green Party recognises that for a wide variety of disabilities the primary school system is the first and primary point of access for recognition of a child's condition and provision of services. We concur with the NSCE's call²⁷ for the full implementation of The Education for Persons with Special Educational Needs Act 2004 (EPSEN Act), including the statutory requirement for education plans for students with special educational needs. Additionally we support the call for current guidelines on classroom interventions for un-accessed children to be made into obligations.

While we recognise and welcome recent changes to the provision of Special Needs Assistance in mainstream primary schooling we call for a further review of the resourcing of SNA's for preschool settings so that more children with special educational needs attend childcare close to their home or parents' workplace.

We also call for the following measures:

- the provision of a teaching assistant with training in special needs care and education to every junior primary class nationwide (Junior Infants, Senior Infants and First Class) to ensure that children awaiting a diagnosis are not disenfranchised
- the instigation of a maximum cap of 6 weeks wait for the provision of new technologies to students with special needs where those technologies have been identified as required by the student and suitable by the resource team
- the provision of a guidance standard to each primary school on facilitating the participation of children with special needs in physical education and extra curricular activities
- we recognise that a failure to commence the Education of Persons with Special Educational Needs (EPSEN) Act 2004 has led to additional pressure being brought to bear on the Disability Act. Children are being assessed to get vital educational supports that should be identified by assessments under the EPSEN Act and we call on the government to implement it as a matter of urgency
- Funding and support for the continued professional development of Special Needs

27 NSCE: Supporting Children with Special Educational Needs in Schools

Assistants

- All course content and learning materials should be available in fully accessible formats

Second Level Education

Persons with disabilities are more than three times more likely to have completed no higher than primary level education than their counterparts in the general population. (13.7% compared with 4.2%). Factors that affect this rate include timely access to services and technology, suitable mental health support and adequate provision for differing needs in completing exams. We propose the following measures to support persons in secondary education:

- All applications for additional support should be completed and give timely notice of appeal prior to the commencement of the school year
- All resource allocations to schools should be fair and transparent and where resource allocation decisions are pending resources should be made available to students during the interim
- We propose to introduce a target of no more than 6 weeks between the identification of need and the provision of equipment or technology to a person with disability
- We call on the government to provide suitable and easily accessed mental health support to persons with disabilities in the education system
- We propose that all students with disabilities may request a review from an occupational therapist or suitably qualified professional on how to access and optimise physical education in a mainstream environment
- We propose that every person with disabilities in education receive an increased entitlement to career guidance support which would include, in conjunction with standard guidance, enhanced pathways to access courses for university and apprenticeships
- Some studies have noted that special school staff provided a strong supportive and accepting environment for SEN, which likely facilitated the pupils' general lack of pressure and enhanced learning motivation and engagement.²⁸ The Green Party supports a review of the Department of Education's prioritising of mainstream education over education in special schools for children with disabilities.
- All course content and learning materials should be available in fully accessible formats

Third Level Education

28 http://ncse.ie/wp-content/uploads/2014/10/Transitions_23_03_13.pdf, pg 61

- We support the publication of a comprehensive strategy for equity of access to further education and training (FET) for people with disabilities.
- We call for the extension of funding supports for people with disabilities in education to part-time students.
- We propose a guided audit of current state funding to third level institutions
- We propose that all learning materials used in third level settings are fully accessible to persons with disabilities
- All students over the age of 18 within a third level educational institute may engage an advocate to support them in accessing and optimising the services available
- The Green Party calls for the introduction of non-means tested maintenance grants in addition to SUSI for students with physical disabilities

4.4 Public Transport

Our Transport policy confirms our commitment to making public transport in urban and rural areas fully accessible to people with disabilities. This will require upgrading of both our vehicles and the access points to them, i.e. bus stops, bus and train stations.²⁹

- A fleet of public transport vehicles that are 100% accessible to all users (currently less than 75%)
- An immediate end to the 24 hours notice to travel requirement on some forms of public transport
- An increase in space for wheelchair users and a system of ongoing upgrades to toilet facilities on board vehicles and at stations;
- Automatic ramps so wheelchair users could board independently;
- The creation of a fine system for public and licensed service providers where persons with disabilities have not been facilitated or have been discriminated against in accessing transport
- The nationwide provision of a standard, clear and appropriately sited signposting system for wheelchair accessible routes
- The nationwide provision of a standard, clear and appropriately sited signposting system for braille users
- Additionally all new transport subsidy schemes should provide for people with mobility needs.

²⁹ Sectoral Plan for Accessible Transport - Transport Access for All, DoT, Aug 2013

- The inclusion of specific services for people with disabilities who live in rural settings in current and future budgets and transport policies.
- We propose an end to unmaned train and bus stations. Assistance should always be available

Private Transport

Currently only 5% of the Nations taxi fleet is accessible. We support transport subsidy schemes to provide for people with mobility needs and actions to ensure that a sufficient quota of the national taxi pool is fully accessible and available to people with disabilities. We also believe that the government should lead the way by ensuring that state and semi-state taxi contracts are only awarded to companies with accessible taxis in their fleet.

Private Cars

- We propose that access to specialist mobility vehicles is open to all persons who fulfill the relevant physical criteria regardless of age
- We propose that increases to motor tax or carbon levies are not imposed on any person in receipt of a disability allowance
- We propose the imposition of four penalty points for those found to be illegally parking in disabled parking bays or illegally using a blue parking badge. We call on local authorities to ensure proper enforcement of parking rules and regulations to maintain consistant access for the disabled community to dedicated disabled parking bays.

Mobility and the Public Realm

The Green Party supports the creation of urban and rural environments that are accessible to all, that encourage free movement and that promote the most sustainable methods of transport. Fundamental to this principle is the development of pedestrian routes, public spaces and ammenties that allow all citizens to inhabit our country's built environment based on preference rather than neccessity. A significant percentage of the disabled community that suffer mobility impairment do not require physical aids, such as a wheelchairs or canes, but require streetscapes and surfaces that are well designed and legible.³⁰ Disabilities such as visual impairment, reduced cognitive functions and cardiorespiratory fitness can contribute to rendering common issues, such as

30 Iezzoni LI, McCarthy EP, Davis RB, Siebens H. Mobility Difficulties Are Not Only a Problem of Old Age. *Journal of General Internal Medicine*. 2001;16(4):235-243. doi:10.1046/j.1525-1497.2001.016004235.x

uneven paving or inconsiderate parking, major barriers to free movement.³¹ We believe that currently our urban design strategies to improve disabled access within the pedestrian realm are under funded, irregular in execution and insufficiently maintained and enforced.³²

- The Green Party proposes that best practice international standards for urban pedestrian mobility and the ongoing process by which they may be put in place be recognised formally in all regulatory and legislative instruments. We advocate for this design process be respectful of all stakeholders and disability groups who have a variety of needs that may sometimes be contradictory
- We propose the creation of a specialist role within each existing local authority to optimise the street and civic environment for the benefit of persons with disabilities. We also propose that this role would include engagement across departments and address issues such as the obstruction to streets caused by poor traffic enforcement and insufficiently regulated private waste collection.

5.0 The Rights of Family Carers

The number of Carers in Ireland is estimated at 360,000³³. It is estimated that family carers contribute up to 10Bn in care services to the economy each year. Carers struggle, with very little effective help, to provide high-quality care on an ongoing basis within the home. Studies have shown that Carers urgently need

- Recognition
- Financial help
- Practical help
- Access to information
- Training in specific areas of caring
- Emotional support
- Respite breaks, including short-time relief care and night sitting

Many studies show that Carers pay a high price for their caring, in physical psychological and financial terms. It is also estimated that a third of Carers eventually themselves become a financial

31 Rosenberg DE, Huang DL, Simonovich SD, Belza B. Outdoor Built Environment Barriers and Facilitators to Activity among Midlife and Older Adults with Mobility Disabilities. *The Gerontologist*. 2013;53(2):268-279. doi:10.1093/geront/gns119.

32 Grey T., Siddal E. Shared Space, Shared Surfaces and Home Zones from a Universal Design Approach for the Urban Environment in Ireland. National Disability Authority. 2012

33 Central Statistics Office, 'CSO Releases Irish Health Survey Results'. <http://bit.ly/2sJOsYT>

drain on our health service because of illnesses developed as a result of the toll that long-term caring takes on their health

We recognise that, just as persons with disabilities are individuals who should be able to adapt services to their needs, carers also should be considered as a spectrum of individuals who require a range of services and options if their needs are to be adequately serviced by the state. As a result the Green Party proposes the following measures:

- The provision of support services, which would have a strong input from the Carers themselves to ensure that the most appropriate services and supports are put in place. This input must be at local level as these needs differ from area to area. We propose a Community Development model should be used as a basis to develop the provision of support services and to develop strategies to deliver support and other services for Carers.
- The introduction of a further education scheme specifically focused on providing carers both with knowledge that may aid in a caring role and courses that may prepare them to return to work at some time in the future.
- We propose an entitlement for full time carers to 360 credits free long distance learning under the internationally recognised Credit Accumulation and Transfer Scheme for recognised and accredited third level institutions
- We propose an alternative entitlement to free at the point of use, third level qualifications at an Irish educational institute to be provided where a carer wishes to undertake Healthcare based training that is of use in their caring capacity. Each carer would be entitled to 360 CATS under this scheme.
- We propose that where suitable healthcare qualifications have been attained the state must recognise a carer as an employed healthcare professional with full employment rights within their current role
- Considering their immense contribution to the state and the savings accrued as a result (current estimates are 1.1 billion annually) we call for carers to receive a full pension entitlement
- The Green Party supports the call from the Care Alliance for a fully funded Phase II of the National Carers Strategy to be formulated and published in the coming year. We also call for the National Disability Strategy and the National Carers Strategy to be reviewed in conjunction for areas of overlap and/or contradiction as a matter of urgency.

- While we welcome the governments review of the Home Care Package service we urge immediate action in increasing the provision of hours provided to families back to 2008 levels while we await the findings of the review.
- We call for the adequate provision of respite care places and staff in a flexible manner for families dealing with disability. We also reiterate our commitment to the provision of a statutory right to adequate levels of respite care for all Irish residents. The Disability Policy Review reports a rigidity of current respite services and the need for reform.³⁴ The ongoing failure to introduce the new HIQA standards (2009) for all children in out -of-home settings is noted in the report, and must be addressed without delay.³⁵
- We recommend the inclusion of Carers in the National Partnership Process

34 Disability Policy Review

35 Inclusion Ireland's submission on Report on Disability Review, pg 6

