

Planning Inclusive Communities and Economic Crisis

John Dolan

Disability Federation of Ireland



Discussion

1. **Scope of "Service Provision"** in the Context of the UN Convention on the Rights of Persons with Disabilities (UNCRPD)?
2. How does the **UNCRPD change** things?
3. Service Provision in the **Context of Economic Threats**.
4. Strategic **Options for Service Providers** in the New Environment.
5. **Examples of Irish organisations** Working in the Mainstream.
6. Embracing **Article 4 of UNCRPD: Benefits** to Society and Disability Services.

1. Scope of “Service provision” in the context of the UNCRPD

- Shift from organisations working in their own silos as specialist service providers
→ **organisations serving people and helping to build inclusive communities.**
- Ratification of UNCRPD by the EU acknowledged that the rights enshrined in the Universal Declaration of Human Rights (**UDHR**) must be extended to people with disabilities.
- **Limitations** of pre-UNCRPD disability ‘service provision’ (E.R).
- Emphasis on protection and care rather than **rights and citizenship.**
- Shift in **culture** and **mind set.**



2. How does the UNCRPD change things?

- Recognises universal human rights, people with disabilities as part of the local community.
- Role of disability ‘service providers’:
 - Help create a **local infrastructure** that is inclusive of disabled people.
 - Act as **enablers** to support people with disabilities to use mainstream services.
 - Move from ‘protection/care’ model to a strong role in trying to **ensure full inclusion** in society.
 - Verbal commitments to the UNCRPD to be accompanied by **radical change** in how organisations work.
 - Cultural change.
 - “Service provider” → “**Being Of service**“, and doing it in partnership with disabled people and across a range of public services.



3. Service Provision in the Context of Economic Threats

- We need to challenge the idea that the 'economic crisis' threatens the realisation of the **vision, principles and rights** set out in the **UNCRPD**.
- Main threat is the inability of **organisations** and **States** to **adapt** how they operate and to make the **cultural change** that embraces the new vision for disabled people.
- **Corporate culture** (how we do things around here!) impacts on the service model being used.
- How can organisations (and the State) implement cultural change to successfully create an "**of service**" **model** in the new environment of the UNCRPD?
- Money/Funding in itself will **not** realise this vision.
- Organisations can contribute by **working with others** to ensure that people can have full lives in the community.

4. Strategic Options for Service Providers in the New Environment

- Small minority of people with disabilities in **congregated settings** or **day service placements**.
- Wider demographics of people with disabilities **live** their lives **in the community across the lifecycle** (children to older people).
- Focus is on de-institutionalisation (DI) but not enough time is spent thinking about the **new environment that we need to help create**.
- Specialised 'service providers' need to step into the space occupied by disability organisations who operate in the **mainstream** as a core part of their work.

5. Examples of Irish Organisations Working in the Mainstream



- Family Support Officers.
- Youth Support Officers.
- Footwear Centre.
- Youth and Respite Services.
- Advocacy and Lobbying.



- Community Resource Workers.
- Support Groups locally and On-Line Support Groups.
- Awareness Raising and Information Provision.
- Advocacy.
- Training (including self-management training).
- Irish Epilepsy Nursing Group.

5. Examples of Irish organisations working in the mainstream continued



- Information and Advice.
- Self-Management training.
- Funding research.
- Campaigning.



- Support and Counselling.
- Information and Advice.
- Parent and Professional Conferences.
- Campaigning.

These Organisations Work with the Following Mainstream Bodies:

- Local Health Offices and Health Staff e.g. social workers, speech and language therapists, public health nurses etc.
- Hospitals.
- Local Schools and Universities.
- Public Transport Operators.
- Training Centres.
- Work Support Offices.
- Social Welfare Offices.
- Members of Parliament/ Government Departments and Municipalities .

Common Qualities of these Mainstream Disability Organisations

- An "**of service**" model which is embedded in the community and embraces the concept of inclusion.
- Acting as '**connectors**' to local and national services.
- Supporting **wider cultural change** in the community by challenging discrimination and advocating on behalf of people with disabilities.
- **Pre-UNCRPD service providers will remain 'blockers' to the vision and rights set out in UNCRPD.**

6. Embracing Article 4 of UNCRPD: Benefits to Society and Disability Services.

- People are **recognised as** being **part of** their local **community**.
- Organisations that act as **connectors** to local services can challenge discrimination against people with disabilities.
- Organisations to act as **advocates** for people with disabilities.
- Organisations to enable **mainstream** public services to include people who just happen to be disabled.
- The UNCRPD bestowed **no new rights** on people with disabilities – but it does recognise or admit that the States in the UN did not see the UN Declaration on Human Rights as extending to people with disabilities.
- Public services will be able to routinely design services that are **person centred**, with the aid of disability organisations.

Conclusion

- In the post-UNCRPD environment "disability service providers" are **actors** in the space of the planning and delivery of mainstream public services.
- This new space (and the major cultural or head set change that underpins it) is likely to be contested.
- Will the 'New Europe' be designed and built on the inclusion of people with disabilities and those with disabling conditions? Or will we have to fight again to get retrofitting?
- How you as an organisation position yourself will determine the extent to which you can intervene and influence the future for people with disabilities.
- Organisations need to move from being 'organisational centric' to being 'community/society centric'.
- A major challenge for EASPD: to better configure itself to assist organisations to successfully make the transition.

