



Disability Federation of Ireland

Input for Citizen's Assembly on Gender Equality and Caring

- Most family carers are women.
- Family caring places a greater burden on women, and has a huge impact on their lives – lost opportunities, have to leave work etc.
- Family carers also have to fight for their family members to get services – advocacy and campaigning as part of caring.
- Overreliance on family care since the end of the institution (which was necessary and a positive development). Families and carers are essentially stepping in to fill the vacuum caused by the lack of provision by the state.
- This has huge impacts for both the carers, and for people with disabilities who have to rely on family members instead of being able to live independently like those who do not have disabilities.
- But the UN CRPD talks about the rights of people with disabilities to have access to the most appropriate care and to independent living.
- We need change to support the rights and entitlements of people with disabilities and their carers.
- Some people with disabilities would prefer more formalised care or at least have the option (being leaders of their own service etc)
- There is common purpose but for different outcomes (greater independence).

What needs to change:

- The state has to stop relying on family carers to fill the gaps in its own provision and policy on disability.
- Increased care and support infrastructure, and addressing systemic issues that exclude people with disabilities from society.
- If society was universally designed and fully accessible – housing, transport, public spaces, AT, workplaces etc., then many people with disabilities would not need as much support from their families.
- Increased social protection support. The cost of disability is approx. €200 a week – families currently absorb the cost of caring, and they, and people with disabilities live in poverty as a result of this (37.7% at risk of poverty, compared to 12.8% of the general population) given there is not sufficient provision and support for on the cost of disability, and it is not acknowledged in means testing, disability allowance rates etc.
- Lack of respite, need for state supports to help people have a life outside of caring. Increased PA hours necessary and more spending in the community, where the vast majority of people with disabilities live.
- Stigma attached to disability needs to be addressed.