EMBARGO UNTIL MONDAY 21ST SEPTEMBER 1030am

**DISABILITY ORGANISATIONS CALL ON FOR GOVERNMENT**

**TO INVEST IN PEOPLE WITH DISABILITIES**

**Monday 21st September 2015** – Today, nine national voluntary disability organisations, representing the diversity of people with disabilities and their families, came together to encourage the Government to invest in people with disabilities in Budget 2016.

The Disability Federation of Ireland, Care Alliance Ireland, Genetic and Rare Disorders Organisation, Inclusion Ireland, Center for Independent Living, Not for Profit Business Association, the Federation of Voluntary Bodies, Mental Health Reform and the Neurological Alliance of Ireland stated in a joint statement that Ireland’s social infrastructure is not adequate to support the needs of people with disabilities, and that more investment is needed to ensure that people with disabilities live as active citizens in their own communities.

Michael McCabe, Chairperson of the Center of Independent Living said "It is extremely disappointing that we are here again today calling on the Government to finally live up to their responsibilities. As an organisation we have been fighting for human rights for people with disabilities for over twenty-three years and yet in the past week we have had to hold a public 72-hour protest to highlight the lack of significant progress made. CIL present's this document today as our vision for real change. When we meet the Taoiseach again in three months time we expect significant commitments to have been made and 2016 becoming the year that Independent Living is a reality for us all".

John Dolan, CEO of the Disability Federation of Ireland stated “People with disabilities need to have an adequate income that supports them to live with dignity in accordance with their human rights. People with disabilities can experience extra costs of living of up to €276 per week. We are therefore calling on Government to introduce an increase of €20 to Disability Allowance as an interim measure to offset some of the additional costs of disability.”

Zoë Hughes, Policy and Research Officer with Care Alliance Ireland added "Family Carers support people with disabilities to live well in their communities. Now is the time to fully restore the Respite Care grant- a critical support for thousands of families- which would give expression to the Government’s view of Family Carers as being ‘Partners in Care’"

Shari McDaid, Director of Mental Health Reform said "The Government has an opportunity with the next Budget to ensure that people with mental health difficulties get the supports they need to recover and live a full life in the community, by providing  good quality accessible mental health services, housing, education and employment supports."

Paddy Connolly, CEO of Inclusion Ireland added “HIQA reports have shown us that life for thousands of persons with a disability in residential support remains unfulfilled, demeaning and sometimes brutal. This Government has failed to deliver two key promises in the Programme for Government – new assisted decision-making legislation and a system of individualised funding which would put power into the hands of the consumer and remove it from the institutions that continuously fail HIQA inspections. The upcoming budget will see the Government being remembered for delivering something tangible for persons with a disability or it will see the Government being remembered for being indifferent to the rights of persons with a disability.”

Mags Rogers, Development Manager with the Neurological Alliance of Ireland spoke about funding for neurological organisations. "The decision to remove SSNO funding to ALL the neurological charities that were in receipt of this funding threatens vital services for the 700,000 Irish people with neurological conditions already faced with one of the most underdeveloped neurological care services in Europe".

Anne Lawlor, Information and Development Officer at Genetic and Rare Disorders Organisation said “Rare diseases, a significant cause of physical, sensory and intellectual disabilities affect an estimated 300,000 people in Ireland - their challenges cannot be underestimated. GRDO call for implementation of the Rare Disease Plan which would bring certainty to the development of services and care for patients and their carers.”

The organisations state that if Government wants to have a legacy for people with disabilities, it needs to be clearly and tangibly demonstrated in Budget 2016.

**ENDS**

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