



An Roinn Coimirce Sóisialaí  
Department of Social Protection

**Make Work Pay  
for People with  
Disabilities:  
Recommendations 9(a),  
9(b) and 10.**

**Report on National  
Consultation.**



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# CONSULTATION PROCESS IN RELATION TO MAKE WORK PAY RECOMMENDATIONS 9 AND 10

Report on outcomes of national consultation process

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## PART 1: EXECUTIVE SUMMARY

This report describes a national consultation process undertaken by the Department of Employment Affairs and Social Protection (DEASP)<sup>1</sup> in 2017/18. It was undertaken along with disability stakeholders in relation to Recommendations 9 and 10 contained in the Make Work Pay (MWP) report. In line with the terms of reference of the process, the report contains the principal findings of the consultation process along with proposed next steps.

### 1.1 SUMMARY DESCRIPTION OF CONSULTATION PROCESS

**Part 2** describes the main features of the consultation process.

**What:** The MWP report (published April 2017) addressed the strategic priority of enhancing the employment participation of people with disabilities (PwD) through ensuring that the main barriers to “making work pay” are identified and addressed. The report made 24 recommendations including Recommendations 9 and 10, which focussed on realignment of the commencement age of the Disability Allowance (DA) payment (#9(a)) and on the principle of ‘early engagement’<sup>2</sup> to secure better work outcomes for PwD (#9(b) and #10).

**Why:** The consultation process was undertaken following a commitment by the Minister for Employment Affairs and Social Protection to consult widely. This commitment recognised that some MWP recommendations may be regarded as controversial and would benefit from seeking the views of PwD and their families before action was taken to implement them.

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<sup>1</sup> The name ‘Department of Employment Affairs and Social Protection (DEASP)’ – is used in this report for the department, as this was its name at the time of the consultation. In 2020 the department became the ‘Department of Social Protection’.

<sup>2</sup> The term “Early Intervention” was used in the Make Work Pay report as a shorthand for the principle that people with disabilities who wish to work can engage with appropriate support systems at the earliest opportunity. The SGF preferred to use the term “early engagement” as better reflecting this process.

**Who:** The consultative process was “co-created” by DEASP and a core group of disability stakeholders (the “Stakeholder Focus Group” - SFG) with the assistance of an external facilitator.

**How/When:** The consultation process took place over a 9-month period (Sept 2017 to June 2018) and consisted of three overlapping phases. Phase 1 (Planning and preparation - Sept 2017 to March 2018) was used to plan the national process, clarify the roles of various stakeholders (including the Stakeholder Focus Group) and the questions to be asked as part of a national process and to prepare materials in appropriate (accessible) formats. Phase 2 (National consultation process - March 2018 to April 2018) collected baseline data through three main methods (online questionnaires, regional seminars and written submissions). In particular, this phase identified a number of key principles that should underpin the approach to early engagement (for instance that it should remain voluntary and person focussed). In Phase 3 (consolidation of findings and identification of next steps - April 2018 to June 2018), the DEASP used the material gathered to draft a number of working documents. These consolidated the main findings from three channels and were revised by the Stakeholder Focus Group at a number of meetings. The Stakeholder Focus Group then identified ‘next steps’ in line with the terms of reference. These working documents in effect now comprise the bulk of this report (parts 3, 4 and 5).

## 1.2 SUMMARY FINDINGS AND CONCLUSIONS

**Part 3** summarises the main findings and next steps in relation to MWP Recommendation 9(a) (reconfiguration of DA payment). On the basis of the responses gathered from the regional fora and the questionnaire, the Stakeholder Focus Group considered that while around one half of respondents were in favour of reconfiguring the scheme in line with the MWP recommendation, there was also a significant minority (one quarter) against the proposal and showed a degree of polarisation of views around the proposal. The Stakeholder Focus Group recognised that the results of the online questionnaire must be interpreted cautiously as they were not comparable to a statistically representative survey. However, it considered that when taken together, a more coherent picture emerged.

The Stakeholder Focus Group noted that for many families, the current payments (whether Domiciliary Care Allowance (DCA) or DA) met costs associated with the disability (e.g. speech and language therapy, occupational therapy) rather than meeting income support needs. Based on an analysis of the qualitative feedback, the Stakeholder Focus Group considered that where a respondent rejected the MWP proposal on DA reconfiguration, this was most likely based on potential of loss of family income (which in turn depended on individual circumstances as the analysis showed that some families would gain financially while others would lose). The Stakeholder Focus Group considered that the following factors would make it more likely that the proposal would be rejected: (i) family income was lower, (ii) the type of disability fell into certain categories notably intellectual disability, and (iii) the disability was more severe.

On the basis of the views expressed and on the assurance that the proposal was not intended as a revenue reduction measure, the Stakeholder Focus Group considered that if implemented, the Government should make up for any loss of income for families and identified a number of alternative approaches to how this could be done:

- Building the need for an arrangement into a wider discussion and analysis of the cost of disability;
- Designing and introducing a transitional support payment for the years 16-18 which would achieve the broader MWP objective while maintaining continuity of income;
- Introducing a transitional arrangement for the DCA payment for the years 16-18 to address potential loss of income (in effect by raising DCA to a higher rate to take out the financial loss for that cohort).

The Stakeholder Focus Group did not see its role as identifying a preferred approach or undertaking technical work around costing these approaches. They did suggest that each approach be evaluated thoroughly.

**Part 4** summarises the main findings and next steps in relation to MWP Recommendation 9(b) and 10 (early engagement). The majority of views gathered

through the various channels broadly welcomed the principle of early engagement subject to a number of supporting actions including the following:

- Provide a clear sense of how early engagement will work in practice before its implementation;
- Develop the engagement model incrementally building on work being undertaken in the context of the Midlands Intreo pilot project on early engagement;
- Strengthen the verified capacity of the Intreo service to address the needs of persons with a disability;
- Ensure that the principle of voluntary engagement is maintained;
- Consult further with the disability sector in developing the early engagement model;
- Develop local networks and protocols for interagency working.

**Part 5** summarises a range of findings in relation to other issues that arose from the consultation process. These were relevant to the overall context in which better employment outcomes were sought even if they were not specifically related to MWP recommendations on DA reconfiguration and early engagement. These included for instance better joining-up of policies across government (especially with the health and education sectors) and having a more proactive information and communications campaign.

The Stakeholder Focus Group acknowledged that many of these issues were already included in existing government policy documents (e.g. Comprehensive Employment Strategy) and recommended that the structured interdepartmental committees, senior official groups and Cabinet sub-committees should be utilised to highlight that actions are interdependent and make the process accountable where there is lack of progress. In recognition of its role in providing employment supports and services for people with disabilities, the Stakeholder Focus Group considered that DEASP should use its position as an advocate in addressing blockages elsewhere in the system.



## **PART 2: DESCRIPTION OF CONSULTATION PROCESS**

### **2.1 PURPOSE OF REPORT**

The purpose of this report is to describe a consultation process undertaken by the Department of Employment Affairs and Social Protection (DEASP) along with a Stakeholder Focus Group over a period from September 2017 to June 2018. The process focussed on the Make Work Pay report and in particular Recommendations 9 and 10 which focussed on the principle of early engagement with persons with disabilities to improve employment outcomes and on reconfiguration of the Disability Allowance (DA) scheme to support this.

The report sets out the background, the approach adopted and the main results of the consultation process (findings and proposed next steps).

### **2.2 BACKGROUND: CES AND MWP REPORT**

The Make Work Pay report was published in April 2017. The report was compiled following a commitment in the Comprehensive Employment Strategy in order to better identify how people with disabilities could take up work. The report made many recommendations including that the Disability Allowance payment and other schemes should be reconfigured for new entrants aged 18 and over to ensure that their work ambitions could be explored systematically at an early age ('principle of early engagement').

Specifically, the report recommended the following:

- (9.) Reconfigure the Disability Allowance scheme for new entrants to give effect to the principle of early intervention, as follows:
  - (a) Support for 16-18-year-olds with significant support needs, which is currently paid by means of Disability Allowance, to be paid via Domiciliary Care Allowance up to 18 years of age;
  - (b) Explore possibilities for the reform of the structure of the Disability Allowance for those between the ages of 18-22 to focus on participation

in education, training and/or social inclusion according to individual capacity.

(10.) Apply the principle of early intervention across all illness and disability schemes, adapting existing schemes where necessary to give effect to this principle.

Following the publication of the report and recognition that some of the recommendations may be regarded as controversial, the Minister for Social Protection at that time, Leo Varadkar, T.D., indicated that the Government wanted to consult with persons with disabilities and their families in relation to some of the recommendations. Specifically, the Department of Employment Affairs and Social Protection's (DEASP) press release at the time of publication said the following:

*"The report highlights the importance of early intervention and making supports available at the earliest opportunity. One of its recommendations is to support young adults through education, training and social inclusion according to their capacity, and to change the qualifying age for disability allowance at 16. However, there is a legitimate expectation among parents and families that a child who currently receives domiciliary care allowance will qualify for disability allowance at age 16. Minister Varadkar has therefore ruled out making any change in this area unless it is supported by the disability sector. And he has invited parents and disability advocates to discuss the issue."*

The DEASP, following an initial consultation with its Disability Consultative Forum (DCF) in April 2017 on the recommendation and the type of consultation required, decided to seek the assistance of an external facilitator through a competitive process to ensure that the consultation process was as wide ranging as possible and included representation from a wide range of stakeholders. Following this process Kieran Murphy, Director of Whole Story, was appointed as facilitator. The DEASP established a Make Work Pay "Stakeholder Focus Group", drawn from around 30 persons with experience of disability issues to co-design and implement a wider national consultation process.

Details of the terms of reference of the Stakeholder Focus Group and its membership are set out in [Appendix A](#).

## 2.3 DESCRIPTION OF CONSULTATION PROCESS

With the assistance of the facilitator, the Stakeholder Focus Group and the DEASP “co-created” the consultation process to ensure that it was as inclusive and comprehensive as possible.

The “co-created” approach paid equal attention to a) the task of designing, preparing for and undertaking the consultation process and b) the process of creating a space for open and honest dialogue between the DEASP and the Stakeholder Focus Group, and between the members of the Stakeholder Focus Group. Attention was paid to building trust, openness and honesty in order to create the conditions to fully hear the different perspectives of all the participants and to have robust conversations about the important issues that needed to be explored and agreed. It was also important to ensure that all participants experienced the process as inclusive and that their contributions were acknowledged and valued. This approach took a considerable investment of time and energy from both the members of the Stakeholder Focus Group and the members of the DEASP.

The consultation process was designed to take place over three phases:

- Phase 1: Planning and preparation (Sept 2017 to March 2018)
- Phase 2: National consultation process (March 2018 to April 2018)
- Phase 3: Consolidation of findings and identification of next steps (April 2018 to June 2018)

### PHASE 1: PLANNING AND PREPARATION

Four meetings of the Stakeholder Focus Group took place between September 2017 and February 2018. Through a series of discussions (around the MWP recommendations, the implications that these would have for persons with disabilities and the best way to create a comprehensive and inclusive process) an approach to a broader consultation process was co-created.

This approach included the preparation of explanatory materials to explain the rationale behind the recommendations, to identify in broad terms the effects on people with disabilities and their families, and to identify the conditions under which these recommendations could receive broader acceptance.

Information documents were prepared to allow persons with disabilities and their families to provide an input to the process. The documents were produced in a range of accessible formats such as easy-read, braille, audio, video captioned and Irish Sign Language.

A series of regional consultation events were planned.

The preparation and publication online of two questionnaires in relation to persons' views on the MWP recommendations (one for Recommendation 9(a) and one for Recommendation 9(b)/10) was undertaken.

An explanatory letter was issued to all recipients of the DCA payment, some 35,000 families, inviting them to fill out the Questionnaire.

An announcement was placed in the national and regional press inviting written submissions from interested groups and parties.

A direct consultation event was planned with a number of young people with disabilities.

## PHASE 2: NATIONAL CONSULTATION

The then Minister for Employment Affairs and Social Protection Regina Doherty, TD, and the then Minister of State Finian McGrath, TD, launched the Consultation Process in Richmond Barracks on 7th March 2018.

Two questionnaires were developed, one for Recommendation 9(a), relating to the change in the age criterion for eligibility to DA and DCA, and the other for Recommendations 9(b) and 10, relating to the principle of early engagement.

The questionnaires were developed in-house (on Survey Monkey) and accessed through the Department's website. For those who could not access the internet, facilities were put in place for a paper copy to be sent out to participants to complete and return to the Department. Participants were also able to phone the Department and have their responses recorded.

Four regional seminars were held in Cork, Dublin, Sligo and Limerick during March and April 2018. Three took place over a morning. An evening event was held in Dublin. After introductions by a senior DEASP official, a member of the Stakeholder Focus Group made a brief presentation on the purpose of the consultation. Another DEASP official then gave two presentations setting out the rationale behind the MWP recommendations and those attending were then invited to complete, on a table-by-table basis with the assistance of a table facilitator and a note taker, a series of templates based on the questionnaires.

Written submissions to the consultation process were also invited by email contact and by notification in national newspapers.

The closing date for written submissions, and completed questionnaires, was Friday 6th April but this was extended by a week (13<sup>th</sup> April) to allow for the effects of a period of bad weather.

Efforts were made to arrange a consultation event with young persons in the age group 14-18 but while a number of contacts were made with potential groups, it was not possible to complete this process. A facilitated discussion did take place with a number of third level students with disabilities and the results of this are reflected in the report.

### PHASE 3: CONSOLIDATING FINDINGS AND IDENTIFYING NEXT STEPS

Two meetings of the Stakeholder Focus Group (23<sup>rd</sup> May and 6<sup>th</sup> June) were held to discuss and consolidate the findings and to agree next steps based on the terms of reference.

For the meeting of 23<sup>rd</sup> May, documents were prepared by DEASP from the three strands (written consultations, regional fora and online questionnaire) and discussed with the Stakeholder Focus Group on how the findings could be interpreted and a coherent overview shared. Two of these documents focussed on the two key themes of the consultation process (early engagement and DA reconfiguration) while the third focussed on other issues that had emerged as part of the consultation process as key enablers for implementation of the MWP recommendations. The Stakeholder Focus Group discussed the extent to which a coherent interpretation could come from the three strands and agreed to meet again to consolidate the findings and to identify next steps.

The Stakeholder Focus Group met again on June 6<sup>th</sup> to consider a number of 'consolidated findings' documents, to agree on findings and recommendations. The Stakeholder Focus Group built on this work to draw out key consolidated findings and to identify next steps in line with the terms of reference. These revised documents in effect represent the bulk of this final report (parts 3, 4 and 5).

In recognition of the fact that this report is a summary and represents only a part of the consultation results that lie behind each of the findings and conclusions, the Stakeholder Focus Group included both the questionnaire summary and a longer report on the regional events in Appendices. Note: Appendices B, C and D are on the gov.ie website and can be accessed by clicking on the following links - [Appendix B](#) (results of online questionnaire) and [Appendix C](#) (summary report of regional events). The consultation documents and material themselves are at [Appendix D](#).

## **PART 3: DA RECONFIGURATION (MWP #9A)**

### **3.1 FINDINGS FROM CONSULTATION STRANDS**

The following section represents a concentrated summary of the views expressed as part of the national consultation process through its various strands.

#### **3.1.1 FINDINGS FROM WRITTEN SUBMISSIONS**

Submissions, by and large, emphasised that many families used both Domiciliary Care Allowance and Disability Allowance to purchase essential and additional supports for the child with a disability, stressing that essential supports were often unavailable at critical developmental stages.

Many submissions identified, as a prerequisite to any change to the payment structure, the requirement for a risk assessment to find out how many families with a child with a disability are currently living in poverty and the impact on family income if Recommendation 9(a) of the Make Work Pay recommendations is introduced as outlined in the report.

Most submissions argued for an analysis of the additional financial costs faced by people with a disability and the introduction of an appropriate scheme to address these additional financial costs.

Some submissions argued that there is a lack of clarity around what secondary benefits such as travel, household benefits, living alone allowance would be available following the restructuring of payments, while emphasising that access to a medical card must be retained as part of any proposed change. One submission suggested that DEASP should publish a short fact sheet in multiple formats outlining the secondary benefits that may be retained and the “fast track” reapplication process.

One submission advocated that in relation to Recommendation 9(b) that the level of payment for younger people (18-22) should not be reduced in line with Jobseeker’s Allowance under any circumstances, and another that a “transitional support payment” scheme for young people with disabilities participating in further education and training or employment should be introduced. The rate of payment of such a

support should be at the equivalent of the DA payment rate and continue beyond 22 where appropriate.

Some submissions from individuals argued for a system that recognised that there are people with disabilities who would never work and that income supports for this cohort should not be reduced in any restructuring of payments.

### 3.1.2 FINDINGS FROM REGIONAL EVENTS

It is possible to draw the following conclusions from the feedback from the regional consultation process on reconfiguring Domiciliary Care Allowance and Disability Allowance:

- There are very mixed views about the proposal to reconfigure disability payments: while 53% either 'Agree' or 'Strongly Agree' with the proposal, 27% either 'Disagree' or 'Strongly Disagree'. A further 20% 'Don't know'.
- This diversity of views was also expressed in response to the question about the timing of the introduction of any changes where 37% did not agree with the proposal and opted for '*I don't. Do not make any changes to the current payments*'.
- There is a lot of support for the proposal to reconfigure Domiciliary Care Allowance and Disability Allowance. Many reasons were cited: 16 is too young for a person to receive what can be considered an adult payment; there may be negative implications for the young person themselves; it helps to keep the young person focused on training, education and employment and offers more control over finances to parents.
- However, there was also a lot of opposition to the proposal. The reasons cited included: loss of significant income to the household and loss of access to services and secondary benefits which are accessed through receipt of Disability Allowance.

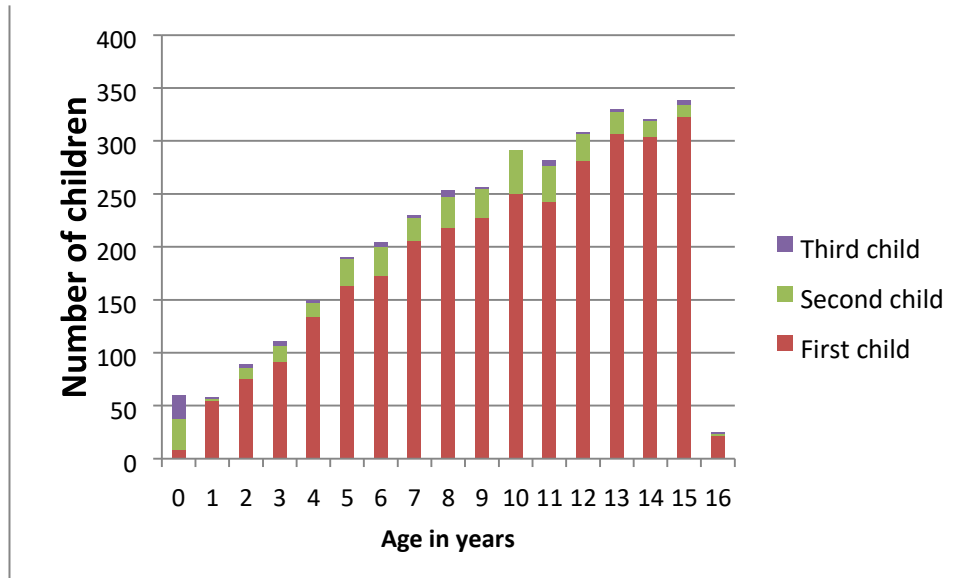


- A significant 'precondition' is that the process of early engagement needs to be fully operational and successfully established before any changes to disability payments are introduced.
- Any changes to disability payments need to be well notified in advance so that people with disabilities, their parents/guardians and service delivery organisations can understand the implications and prepare for the changes.
- While not specifically part of a regional event, the facilitator held a meeting with course participants of the Trinity Centre for People with Intellectual Disabilities course in Arts, Science and Inclusive Applied Practice in May 2018. The meeting addressed issues relevant to the consultation process.
- Participants described 16-18 years as an important period of transition for a person with a disability, from dependent childhood to independent adulthood. The receipt of DA at 16 made an important contribution to enabling this transition: for example - gave them access to free transport which gave them greater freedom to socialise with friends, access services, and access work opportunities and gave them an income which could be used to access services and supports which would otherwise be beyond their means. Therefore participants were not in support of the proposal to change the payment age of Disability Allowance from 16 to 18.

### 3.1.3 FINDINGS FROM QUESTIONNAIRES

**Q1:** There were 3,297 responses to the questionnaire of which only 82 (<3%) identified themselves as not being in receipt of DCA.

**Q2 (age of child):** The questionnaire asked about age of children in receipt of DCA. Responses covered 3,497 children (88% were first child, 11% second, 1% third). The age breakdown is shown in the following graph showing that response tended to reflect older children: 54% of children were 10 years or older.

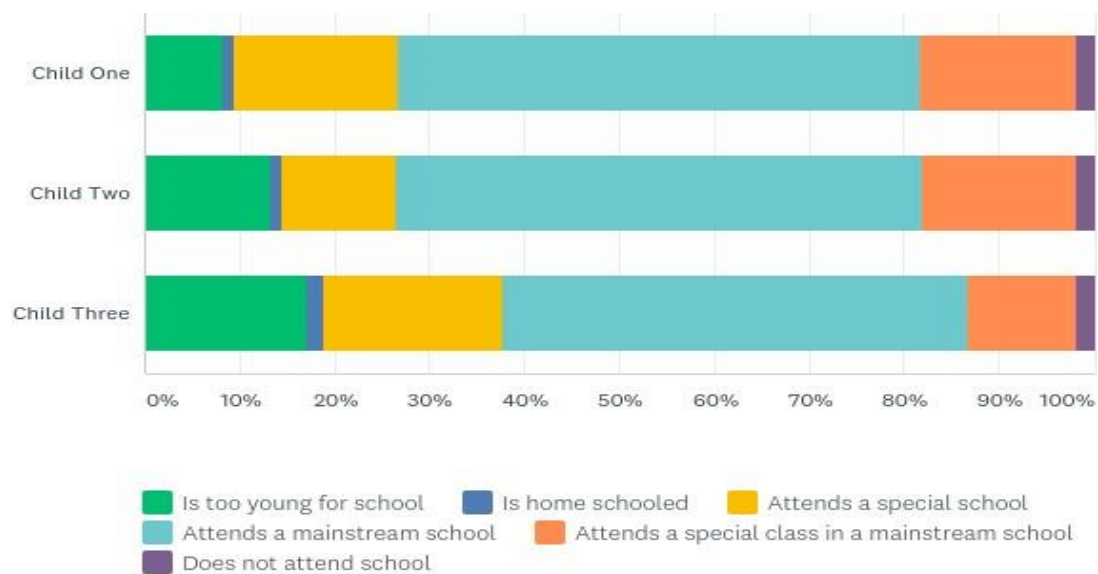


**Q3-5 (nature of disability for child 1, 2 and 3):** Table below summarises the main results. Firstly, it should be noted that the number of disability types reported is about twice the number of actual responses pointing to substantial instances of children with multiple disabilities increasing where there is a second and third child (as shown by ratio of reported to actual). Secondly, bearing this factor in mind, physical disabilities make up about 30% of total reported (vision, deafness, physical and chronic illness) compared to 60% for intellectual or cognitive disabilities.

Disability Type	First child	Second child	Third child	Total
Vision	101	13	3	2%
Deafness	133	19	2	2%
Intellectual	977	81	17	16%
Autism	1,557	212	28	26%
Learning	1,072	144	23	18%
Physical	968	119	15	16%
Mental Health	603	104	18	11%
Chronic illness	584	69	13	10%

<b>Total reported</b>	5,995	761	119	6,875
<b>Actual Respondents</b>	3,168	381	54	
<b>Report/Actual</b>	1.9	2.0	2.2	

**Q6 (education):** Results are summarised in the graph below. About half of children go to mainstream school, 18% go to special school and 17% go to a special class in mainstream school. Others are either too young for school or do not attend or are home schooled.



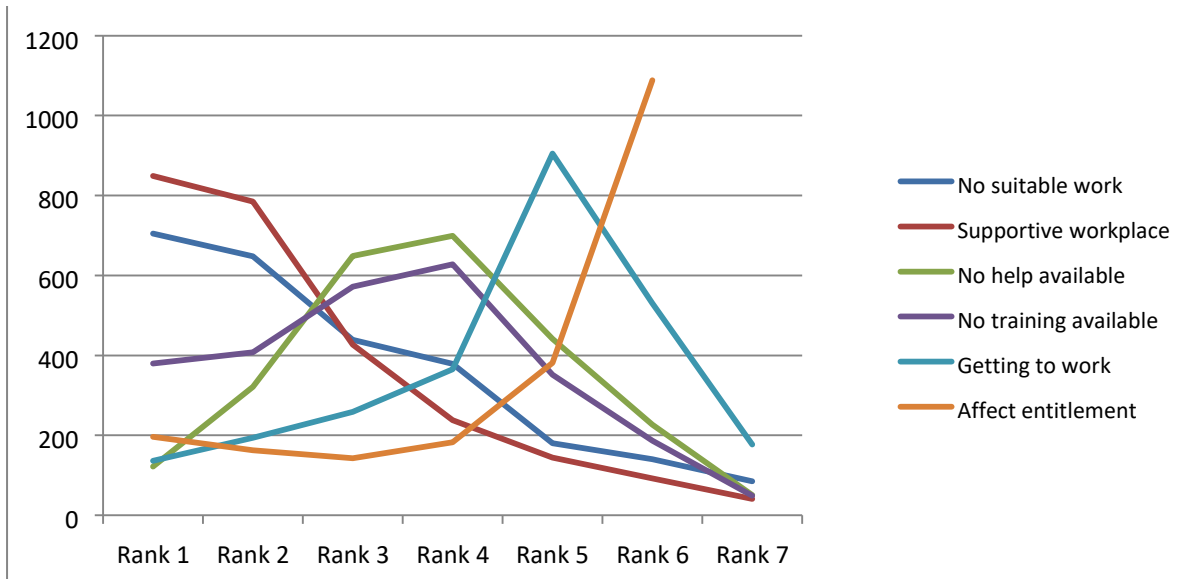
**Q7 (location type):** 39% of respondents live in city or large town, 27% in small town, 34% in rural areas.

**Q8 (degree of confidence in getting training/employment):** Results showed a great degree of uncertainty among parents/guardians with 34% “don’t knows” in relation to training and higher in relation to employment (44%). Of those that had a view, 42% were either confident or very confident of taking up training but only 23% for employment.

**Q9 (main concern about access to work):** Summary shown in figure below.

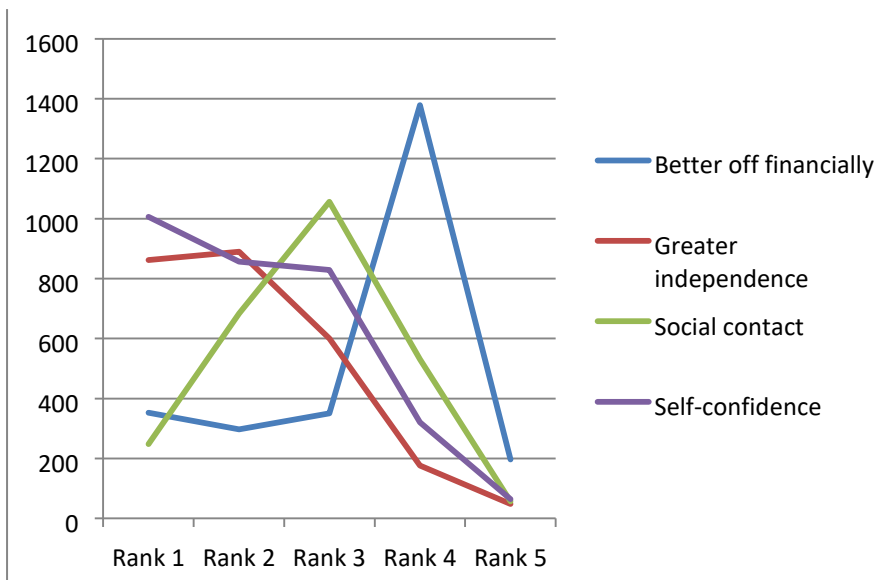
Availability of suitable work and workplaces were clearly identified as the most important factors. Availability of help in finding work or suitable training were important middle-ranking considerations as was getting to work. Concern about

affecting entitlements did not seem to give cause for concern as it was chosen increasingly as a low-ranking priority.



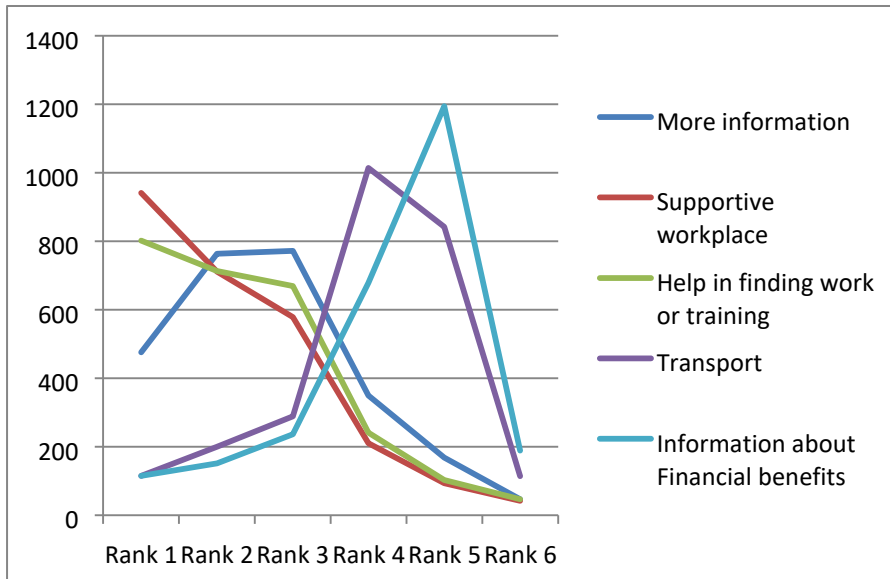
**Q10 (benefits of taking up work):** Summary in graph below. Self-

confidence/wellbeing and greater independence were seen most consistently as the main benefits. Social contact, and to a less extent, being better off financially was seen as second order benefits.



**Q11 (overcoming barriers to work):** Summary in graph below. Consistent with the answers to question 9 earlier, the need for more information about work opportunities, help in finding work and having a supportive workplace were most

important barriers to tackle. Difficulties in transport or lack of information about financial benefits were identified as considerably less significant.



**Q12 (View on MWP Recommendation 9):** 82% of respondents agreed or strongly agreed with the proposition that "The Make Work Pay report recommended that Domiciliary Care Allowance be paid to parents or guardians until the child is 18 years of age, and that the qualifying age for Disability Allowance would change from 16 to 18 years of age." However, 12% disagreed or strongly disagreed. Some comments for and against are provided below:

**AGAINST:**

*"We are against the proposed changes to the system. The fact that a child with a disability can leave school at 16 does not mean that most will and with lots of schools for disabilities catering for the kids until age 18, it is unlikely that many children with disabilities will opt out at age 16. Consideration must also be given to the fact many of these children will either be encouraged by their parents to remain on until age 18 and many of the children with an increased level of disability will not even be personally aware that they could leave school at 16 and will therefore continue by default and most probably because it is their parents wish that they do so. I do not know ANY parents of children with disabilities that would encourage their child to leave school early."*

*“My child will never work but will always need substantial occupational therapy and speech therapy both of which we have to pay privately even at 6 years old. Reducing his income would severely reduce the amount of assistance he has to help him function”*

*“It is not clear from the recommendation if the Domiciliary Care Allowance will be increased to the rate of Disability Allowance from 16 to 18 years of age. If the Domiciliary Care Allowance is increased to the same rate of payment as the Disability Allowance for these two years then I would see merit in it. However if the rates remain the same and at the current rates this will result in a difference of €6,322. This is a significant amount of money for any household to be without and would have a negative and detrimental effect and impact particularly on the person with the disability and also the family.”*

*“My family will receive €12,644 less if we agree to this change and will not get free travel until he is 18 years old. I will not be able to advocate for my child when applying for DA if he is 18 years old when making application.”*

*“I want my daughter to become as independent as possible and would like her to start receiving her disability allowance from age 16 so she will have her own bank account and also be able to look after her own money.”*

*“Absolutely not!!!! My child is suffering from a learning disability, severe emotional dysregulation, including Oppositional Defiant Disorder, ADHD, severe anxiety, and Autism. .... All parents would have to do in this case is to not apply for DA for their child until they turn 18 if that's how they feel. I think this is wrong and if the government are adamant in making changes, then there should be an option for parents to apply for DA for their child at 16 or choose to remain on DCA until 18. Change should not be forced on us. The option should be there for parents to choose.”*

*“I strongly disagree, as a "one size fits all" approach cannot be used for such a variance of disabilities. To give you an example, I know of a huge cohort of parents who are in receipt of DCA who are delighted with this proposal as they know that their children will not qualify for Disability Allowance as the only condition their child has is Type 1*

*diabetes. Their responses are going to totally distort parents' feelings on this. In our case, sadly, our daughter will more than likely never be able to work because of her medical condition, so to arbitrarily take away a valuable benefit for the two years between 16 and 18 seems rather amoral to say the least."*

FOR:

*"Parents of special needs kids. Need all the financial help they can get."*

*"I strongly agree because I think the parents or guardians would be better able to budget the money for the child until he/she was 18 years old."*

*"From what I've read my children wouldn't qualify for Disability Allowance and we would be left with nothing while they are still attending secondary school"*

UNSURE:

*"I don't think it should be a one-size-fits-all approach. This whole process is somewhat insulting as it take the disabled as a homogeneous group. I am dyslexic but have had a better than average life, held a great job, education and raising my family. I am 'disabled' but I am nothing like my child who is incapable of any speech, reading, following a story, or indicating any level of understanding. What I am getting at is the idea that a single 'handout' is appropriate to all who fall into the box labelled "disabled" is very unfair. Some people have obvious and pressing needs for substantial support. Others may very well do perfectly well with a little inclusion and support from those around them. My child is such. No amount of money given today will effect the future more than what she gets for free from us, the teachers in school and the wider community who go out of their way to ensure no one is left outside. As for the change at 16.... well, we are 8 years away from that so not able to say how it will effect us. I do know that many children do have greater and more costly needs as they grow older. Ask any parent and they will tell you that the late teen years are brutal. Some will benefit as their child develops and achieves more... but the losers in this case will*

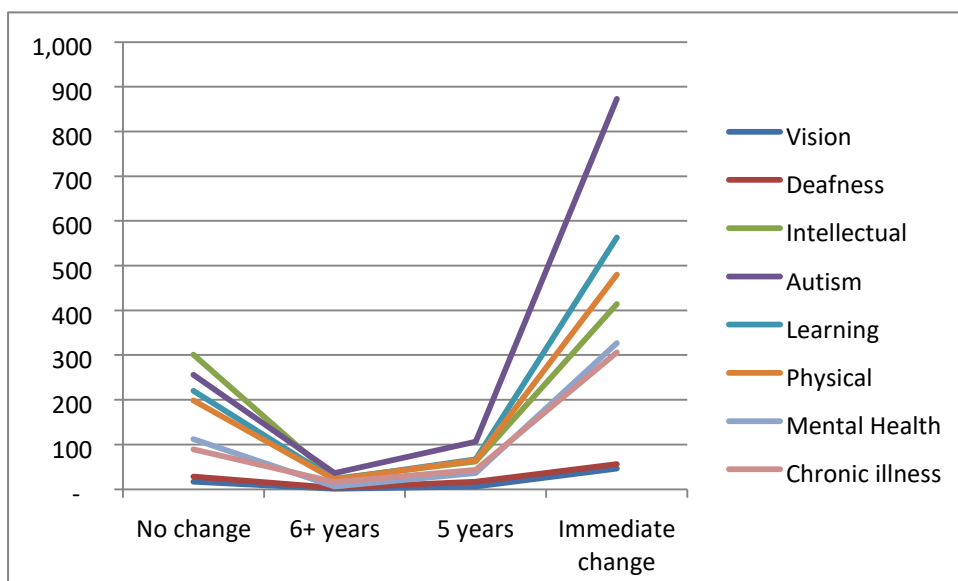
*be those more severely disabled who will remain, and increase their dependence on their family, should they still have one capable of supporting them. I would watch out for unexpected consequences from changes. While we should try to target help in a fairer way, we also must avoid pushing others beyond their ability to cope. Most will benefit from being encouraged to stay in school longer, but how many really wish to leave anyway. School is the highlight of my child's day and money means nothing to them. All it does is pays for a new computer or handheld that can be used for PECS, or buy the right type of clothes that doesn't itch... For our kids this will not improve their future, they want to go out... be it school, training or work... or even the park to feed the ducks. These kids just need the places to train and work to do, or at least some reason to get up."*

**Q13** (implementation of change): Almost one quarter (23%) of respondents didn't want to see any change in the current system. However 65% felt that the change should be introduced immediately. 12% felt that the change should be implemented but not for a period of time (5 years).

The results (and those from Q12) show a considerable degree of polarisation in responses to the question. To try to understand better the reasons for this, a number of cross-tabulations were undertaken. When Q12 results were cross-tabulated against Q3 (type of disability), it was found that those with an intellectual disability were most likely to disagree or strongly disagree (25% compared with 12% overall). This was also seen in Q13 where 38% of those with an intellectual disability said that they didn't want to see any changes compared with 23% overall. Having said this over 50% of those with an intellectual disability said that they wanted change immediately suggesting considerable variation among this classification.

This polarisation of results is illustrated in the following graph for each disability type. When the preferences are ordered from no change to immediate change, each disability type shows typically a "U" pattern – the deeper the "U" the greater the divergence in views.





### 3.1.4 CONSOLIDATED FINDINGS

While recognising that the results were not comparable to a statistically representative survey or referendum, the Stakeholder Focus Group considered on the basis of the responses gathered from the regional fora and the questionnaire, that there was a numerical majority in favour of reconfiguring the scheme but that there was also a significant minority against the move.

A rough breakdown is that while around one half were in favour, one quarter was against while another quarter didn't express a view. In any event, the consultation process showed a polarisation of views.

Based on the qualitative feedback, the group felt that opposition to the MWP proposal was most likely based on a potential loss of income and that a family's position on the change would most likely depend on their personal circumstances.

While the consultation process was not in a position to undertake a rigorous statistical analysis, the Stakeholder Focus Group felt that to the extent that (1) family income was lower (2) the type of disability fell into certain categories notably intellectual disability (3) the disability was more severe, respondents were more likely to be against the proposal.

However, this position might also be moderated by views as to whether the capacity of the 16-18-year-old was sufficient to make good decisions in relation to the

payment. In relation to this, a discussion with a number of young people with disabilities in third level education felt that the current situation should remain unchanged.

The Stakeholder Focus Group noted that for many families, the payments (whether DCA or DA) met costs associated for services associated with the disability (e.g. speech and language therapy, occupational therapy) and that applying an income support logic to the payment was not appropriate in many of these cases.

On the basis of the views expressed and on the assurance that the proposal was not intended as a revenue reduction measure, the Stakeholder Focus Group considered that if implemented, government should make up for loss of income for those families. The Stakeholder Focus Group identified a number of different approaches to how this could be done including the following:

- Building the need for an arrangement into a wider discussion and analysis of the cost of disability.
- Designing and introducing a transitional support payment for the years 16-18 which would achieve the broader MWP objective while maintaining continuity of income.
- Introducing a transitional arrangement for the DCA payment for the years 16-18 to address potential loss of income (in effect raise DCA to a higher rate to take out the financial loss for that cohort).

The Stakeholder Focus Group did not see its role to identify a preferred approach or undertake technical work around costing these approaches. They did suggest that each approach be evaluated against a number of headings to ensure the best approach was undertaken.

The Stakeholder Focus Group also noted calls in the consultation process for an assessment of risk of any change, including looking at unintended consequences with regard to secondary benefits.

More generally, the Stakeholder Focus Group considered the question of how the reconfiguration of the payment was linked with early engagement and employment.

In this context, they considered that rather than being an income support purely (assuming little income from employment), that disability payments would be better viewed and designed as in-work support payments.

### 3.2 NEXT STEPS – DA RECONFIGURATION

The Stakeholder Focus Group agreed that, while the consultation process identified a broad mandate for change, given the degree of polarisation of views, the Government should in the first instance undertake an impact assessment on the potential effect on families before making a decision in relation to the recommendation on DA reconfiguration, in terms of:

- Loss of income for different household types,
- Access to secondary benefits,
- The role of assisted decision making and how the recommendation impacts on DA recipients with reduced decision-making capacity regarding their financial affairs.

The Stakeholder Focus Group then reflected that the Government should consider approaches to avoiding potential losses for families and individuals with disabilities. These could include the three approaches identified earlier.

- Building the need for an arrangement into a wider discussion and analysis of the cost of disability. This analysis would include what proportion of the cost is (1) personally variable, (2) coverable by existing state supports (e.g. transport), and (3) coverable by a vouched cost system.
- Designing and introducing a transitional support payment for the years 16-18 which would achieve the broader MWP objective while maintaining continuity of income.
- Introducing a transitional arrangement for the DCA payment for the years 16-18 to address potential loss of income.

The Stakeholder Focus Group considered that for the identified options, the various pros and cons should be laid out clearly under various headings such as practicality of implementation, fairness, value for money, contribution to long-term outcomes etc.

The Government should address in its communications, the perception which was prevalent during the consultation that the proposed recommendation was a “cut” in resources for families (up to €10,000 per year in some cases) rather than a proposal about spending the same amount of money in a better way.

## **PART 4: EARLY ENGAGEMENT (MWP #9B AND 10)**

### **4.1 FINDINGS FROM CONSULTATION STRANDS**

The following section represents a summary of the views expressed as part of the national consultation process through its various strands.

As part of the preparatory phase the Stakeholder Focus Group agreed a set of six underlying principles underpinning early engagement and these were used extensively in the material provided to participants:

- i. **Engagement will be voluntary:** You can choose not to use the service if you think it is not right for you. This would not affect your entitlement to a payment.
- ii. **Engagement will encourage new recipients of disability income support payments to use the Intreo service and supports.** If you are awarded a disability income support payment for the first time, we will invite you to attend your local Intreo centre. Here you can discuss your work ambitions and what supports and services you might need to achieve them. The date when this will start has not yet been decided.
- iii. **Engagement will focus on your needs:** The process will look at how best to support your education, training and social inclusion needs according to your disability level. If you wish, you will be able to bring a family member or friend with you for support when meeting an Intreo adviser. The Intreo adviser would help you to develop a personal progression plan according to your capacity. The plan might include education or training, or it might look at other ways to help improve your long-term work prospects.
- iv. **Engagement will be effectively resourced:** Intreo service staff and supporting organisations will receive training in disability awareness and have access to information about suitable services and supports to help you find suitable employment. There would be regular reviews of progress towards your employment goals.

- v. **Engagement will be joined up:** There will be agreements between Intreo and other service providers to make sure that engagement is as seamless as possible. This will help you to achieve your employment ambitions.
- vi. **Engagement will address barriers to work faced by people with disabilities:** These may be barriers within the welfare system itself or in the wider workplace and society.

#### 4.1.1 FINDINGS FROM WRITTEN SUBMISSIONS

The majority of submissions welcomed the principle of early engagement but with a number of caveats including:

- Providing a clearer definition of what is meant by early engagement and how it will work in practice;
- Strengthening the capacity of the Intreo service to address the needs of persons with a disability and providing evidence of this;
- Ensuring that the principle of voluntary engagement is maintained.

One submission observed that the principle of voluntary engagement should be underpinned by legislation while another submission commented that a charter setting out the services that jobseekers with a disability can expect is a prerequisite for implementing the changes.

A number of submissions outlined the wider context of rights against which any decisions should be benchmarked, identifying Article 28 concerning the right to social protection and Article 27 concerning the right to work, of the United Nations Convention on the Rights of People with Disabilities (UNCRPD) and public sector duty requirements provided for by section 42 of the Irish Human Rights and Equality Commission Act, 2014, advocating that people for whom work is not an option should be supported to live life as they choose.

#### 4.1.2 FINDINGS FROM REGIONAL EVENTS

It is possible to draw some conclusions from the feedback from the regional consultation process on early engagement.

The 6 Principles capture what is required of and expected from a process of early engagement. While there was lots of feedback on the individual principles and there was difficulty in ranking them, there were no significant gaps identified in terms of an additional principle that needed to be added. In affirming the importance and validity of the 6 Principles, people with disabilities and their parents/guardians were drawing heavily on their experience of the absence of these principles in their lived experience and not just in relation to employment: services and supports do not accurately or adequately respond to their multiple and complex needs; they face significant and persistent barriers when trying to access services and supports which are inadequately resourced; and they experience a lack of 'joined-up' thinking and practice between the range of departments and agencies which impact on their lives.

The exercise of ranking the Principles identified that for the early engagement process to meet the expectations of people with disabilities and equally importantly, to have their confidence, the two most important elements are that it meet their needs and address the barriers to employment that they face.

There are high levels of support for an early engagement process for people with disabilities to be proactively engaged by the Department of Employment Affairs and Social Protection through its Intreo centres.

The shift in role for the DEASP with people with disabilities, from assessing and managing benefits to supporting and resourcing them to find work, is seen as a significant shift.

Many people are unaware of Intreo and the services it provides. There were also concerns expressed about whether or not staff in the Intreo centres are sufficiently skilled and experienced to work successfully with people with disabilities.

#### 4.1.3 FINDINGS FROM QUESTIONNAIRES

**Q1:** There were 2,145 total responses to the questionnaire. The majority of these (92%) said that they were a parent or family member of someone with a disability. 112 participants (about 5%) identified themselves as a person with a disability. Those with a disability were asked to complete questions 2-5.

**Q2:** Of those with a disability, 78 persons responded to the question about nature of disability with some choosing more than one category. The breakdown is shown in the following table in order of the most commonly defined disability types.

Answer Choices	Responses	
	A difficulty with pain, breathing, or any other chronic illness or condition	33%
A difficulty with learning, remembering or concentrating	24%	19
Blindness or a severe vision impairment	23%	18
A psychological, mental health or emotional difficulty	22%	17
Autism	21%	16
An intellectual disability	18%	14
A difficulty with basic physical activities, for example, washing, dressing, climbing stairs, going to the toilet	18%	14
Deafness or a severe hearing impairment	6%	5
	Answered	78
	Skipped	28

**Q3:** In relation to education, 40 (50%) had qualifications at certificate, diploma or degree level. 28 (35%) had junior or leaving cert; 10 (13%) had no formal qualifications.

**Q4:** Around one in four were in full-time, part-time or voluntary work. About one in five were looking for work. 23 persons (29%) were not looking for work at this time.

**Q5:** Of those not looking for work at this time, one in three was in education and 12 persons (15%) were in either day services or in rehabilitative training. Other respondents were asked to complete from question 6 on.

**Q6:** The lack of suitable work or of a supportive workplace were the top two factors identified as making it hard for a person with a disability to get work. However, the lack of help in getting a job or of suitable education or training courses was



also identified as significant. Transport concerns and concerns that entitlements might be affected were also identified as medium-level concerns.

**Q7:** The main benefits of taking up work were identified as greater independence, greater confidence and social contact with colleagues. Being better off financially and earning one's own income were also identified as important.

**Q8:** Support to provide a more supportive workplace and help in finding work were identified as the most important supports in overcoming barriers to work. More information about what work was available and information about the effect on benefits was also identified. Better transport facilities were also identified as a required support.

**Q9:** This question asked respondents to rank the six principles of early engagement (shown earlier). The presence of trained and experienced staff in the Intreo service was identified as the most important factor. Having a flexible person-centred approach and the establishment of contacts with other organisations were also identified as important.

**Q10:** The answer to this question shows that only 3% of respondents had used the Intreo service for help in finding work and found it useful. Almost 60% of respondents had not heard of Intreo.

**Q11:** Almost two-thirds of respondents (65%) agreed or strongly agreed with the proposition that early engagement could help achieve work ambitions. However, almost one in ten (9.8%) disagreed or strongly disagreed. This breakdown was also seen in the subset of respondents who identified as having a disability albeit with a higher proportion expressing reservations: 32 respondents (56%) agreed or strongly agreed; 10 respondents (18%) disagreed or strongly disagreed.

**Q12:** On the proposition that a person on a disability payment should receive an invitation to meet an adviser at their local Intreo service, 73% agreed or strongly agreed. However almost 12% did not agree or strongly disagreed. This breakdown was also seen in the subset of respondents who identified as having a

disability: 44 respondents (72%) agreed or strongly agreed; 7 respondents (12%) disagreed or strongly disagreed.

**Q13:** Of three services offered by the Intreo service (information about educational and training opportunities, about types of work opportunities or about support available), they were found to be equally important. This breakdown was also seen in the subset of respondents who identified as having a disability: 32 respondents (56%) agreed or strongly agreed; 10 respondents (18%) disagreed or strongly disagreed.

While not specifically part of the Regional fora, the facilitator held a meeting with course participants of the Trinity Centre for People with Intellectual Disabilities course in Arts, Science and Inclusive Applied Practice in May 2018. The meeting addressed issues relevant to the consultation process.

There was general agreement at that meeting that people with disabilities should be invited into an Intreo Centre to discuss their work ambitions and to get support in accessing suitable work. However, there was also a number of concerns expressed: would the staff in Intreo be sensitive to their disability and appreciate the complexities of their situation; the volume of sound, the ambience, the amount of activity and physical appearance of the offices might be very challenging for someone with autism; suspicion that although the meeting with Intreo is 'voluntary' that in some way it might be connected to their DA payment and if they declined the visit their payment would be at risk; a concern that if they took up paid employment and at a later date wanted to reapply for DA they would experience a delay and or a difficulty in getting back on DA and concerns about the loss of important secondary benefits e.g. medical card, free travel.

#### 4.1.4 CONSOLIDATED FINDINGS

The Stakeholder Focus Group validated the provisional findings but considered it important that implementing an early engagement approach should be accompanied by the following actions:

- Develop the capacity of the Intreo service particularly around training for Intreo staff in disability awareness and engagement.
- Enshrining clearly the principles in operational practice.
- Ensuring that a person-centred approach to engagement is achieved.
- Developing an information and communications strategy to support early engagement.
- Putting in place protocols with other service providers.

## 4.2 OTHER MWP RECOMMENDATIONS OF RELEVANCE

The Stakeholder Focus Group reviewed a range of other MWP recommendations that if implemented by DEASP would contribute to effective implementation of the early engagement process. These are shown in the following table.

No.	Text	Due date
11	Offer case officer support and other supports to people with disabilities through the Intreo service at the earliest possible opportunity, and work with them to develop a personal progression plan.	Q4-2018
13	Develop a basic ready reckoner to enable people with disabilities to calculate the likely net monetary value of taking up or going back to work. This would cover basic tax and welfare entitlements, and indicate whether the person would be eligible on income grounds for a Medical Card.	Q2-2018
14	Develop a proactive and ongoing strategy to communicate clear, simple and accurate information in a user-friendly way on what benefits people with disabilities will keep if they are in employment. This strategy should include the following steps:  Provide clear information on the website of the Department of Social Protection as the lead Department in this area, with cross-links to relevant information from other Departments (e.g. on Medical Card entitlement) and to <a href="http://www.citizensinformation.ie">www.citizensinformation.ie</a> . Include information on fast-track return to benefits. Develop dedicated information on <a href="http://www.citizensinformation.ie">www.citizensinformation.ie</a> and on the microsite <a href="http://www.gettingbacktowork.ie">www.gettingbacktowork.ie</a> around employment for people with disabilities and associated benefits that would be retained.	Q1-2019

No.	Text	Due date
	<p>Provide for the information to be available in accessible formats as required, such as Easy to Read, and a signed video with subtitles.</p> <p>Provide training for Citizens Information Centres in the operation of the Ready Reckoner, and how to build on this to provide a more personalised individual assessment of a wider range of benefits in more complex circumstances.</p> <p>Ensure front-line staff in Intreo Offices are trained to know how to access the relevant information, how to operate the Ready Reckoner, and how to refer a client to the local Citizens Information Centre for assistance with a more detailed financial and benefits assessment of complex circumstances.</p> <p>Agree formal referral paths from Intreo Offices to local Citizens Information Centres or the Citizens Information Phone Service.</p> <p>Develop information leaflets/messages targeted at people leaving long-term disability payments to enter a job.</p> <p>Develop some simple clear messaging around 'It pays to work'.</p>	
15	Extend inter-agency protocols, where relevant, to include referral of people with disabilities to authoritative sources of information and guidance on the financial and other aspects of employment.	Q1-2019
16	<p>Develop and strengthen the capacity of the Department of Social Protection Intreo Service to support people with disabilities to get and maintain employment by:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>- Designating Intreo as the first point of contact for people with disabilities interested in work.</li> <li>- Developing the Intreo Service as a welcoming and supportive environment for people with disabilities, with a personalised approach to each case.</li> <li>- Facilitating the attendance of a family member, friend or advocate to support the person with a disability throughout the engagement, if the person desires.</li> <li>- Training Intreo Service Case officers and other front-line staff to work with people with disabilities, to identify their needs, and support them to fulfil their employment ambitions, in accordance with their capacity.</li> <li>- Designating named case officers at Intreo Centres to support people with disabilities interested in taking up work.</li> <li>- Provision by the Intreo Service of a continuum of support to the person with Disability as they transition into work.</li> </ul>	Q1-2019
17	Develop a suite of protocols with the range of State-funded Disability Service Providers to work in partnership with Intreo offices to advance common objectives, and support people with disabilities to fulfil their employment ambitions, in accordance with their capacity.	Q1-2019
18	At local level, review and revise existing protocols and service level agreements with State service providers (including HSE offices, Education and Training Boards, EmployAbility, Local Enterprise	Q1-2019

No.	Text	Due date
	Offices, Local Employment Services, Job Clubs, Community Resource Centres) to reflect the opportunities now available at Intreo Offices.	
20	Formally proof all new schemes or reforms at design stage to minimise complexity, and ensure that a person with a disability, who is interested in work, is supported and is not financially disadvantaged by taking up employment.	Q2-2017

### 4.3 NEXT STEPS – EARLY ENGAGEMENT

The Stakeholder Focus Group in line with the consolidated findings and terms of reference identified a number of recommended next steps that would support the early engagement process:

- Intreo should be developed as the primary gateway to employment supports and service as part of a wider process of early engagement starting with the group identified in MWP Recommendation 9(b) but eventually extending to other groups over time (in line with MWP Recommendation 10).
- Intreo staff must receive appropriate disability training and develop competency in working with people with disabilities to include specialist training.
- The Intreo engagement model should be developed incrementally building on work being undertaken in the context of the Midlands pilot project on early engagement.
- DEASP/Intreo should develop an “early engagement” charter outlining what services a person with a disability can expect from an engagement with Intreo Case Officers.

The development of a model should be accompanied by the following steps:

- The early engagement approach must be person-centred and uniform across Intreo Centres with option to change Case Officer.

- DEASP should develop work experience/internships with employers. This approach will require expansion of labour demand which will in turn require further engagement with employers and business more generally.
- There should be continued consultation with the sector through the Disability Consultative Forum and other avenues in developing the model for early engagement.
- The DEASP/Intreo should seek to develop local networks and protocols for interagency working.

## **PART 5: OTHER ISSUES NAMED IN CONSULTATION**

### **5.1 CONTEXT**

As part of the consultation process around MWP Recommendations 9 and 10, a range of other issues were identified that, while not directly linked with the recommendations, were identified as part of the broader objective of improving employment outcomes for persons with a disability.

### **5.2 FINDINGS FROM CONSULTATION STRANDS**

The following section represents a summary of the views expressed as part of the national consultation process through its various strands.

#### **5.2.1 FINDINGS FROM WRITTEN SUBMISSIONS**

Some submissions raised a number of issues which while not specifically related to the MWP Recommendations 9 and 10, raised broader issues linked with improving overall social and employment outcomes for persons with a disability.

#### **ADEQUATE SUPPORTS AND SERVICES**

- The importance of retaining the medical card features as a critical issue in many submissions and a number of submissions call for the full implementation of Recommendation 1 of the Make Work Pay report before any changes are made to the structure of payments. Other requirements identified included ensuring access to day care services for those who wish to explore their employment ambitions and emphasised that the support of a personal assistant may be required in some instances.
- A focus on capacity and generating expectations in respect of people with disabilities was identified as an area where the educational sector, from early childhood through to third level, was identified as playing an important role. Some submissions identified the lack of career guidance particularly in special schools as a major impediment to promoting a culture of participation in work. One submission identified the need to explore a range of post school options;

not just HSE funded options; and advocated developing models of early engagement to be mainstreamed in Intreo offices.

- Submissions also pointed to the need for Solas and Education and Training Boards to develop courses at accessible levels for people with disabilities. Another submission stressed that the proposed changes cause further difficulties for children under 18 who have been excluded from school due to reasons of anxiety and who do not receive adequate hours of home tuition.
- Most submissions recognised the importance that transport played in ensuring that people with disabilities in rural areas who are unable to use public transport could access appropriate training, education and work opportunities.

#### ENHANCED ROLE FOR EMPLOYERS

- Some submissions addressed a requirement to ensure that work is meaningful for people with disabilities and called for a commitment to review current obligations around reasonable accommodation in the workplace before implementing any changes to engagement with 18 to 22 year old young people with disabilities.
- Other submissions suggested a more robust legislative requirement on employers to underpin reasonable accommodation and an employer's duty of care to an employee with a disability.

#### NEED FOR FURTHER RESEARCH

- Some submissions called for further research on the extent to which people with disabilities will be better off in work and called for the establishment of a Cost of Disability Commission to report on the extra cost of living with a disability including for young people aged 16-18.
- Another submission suggested that DEASP should collate data on the numbers of children on DCA and that DEASP should publish this data prior to making the proposed changes together with reviewing Disability Allowance including the application process.



## 5.2.2 FINDINGS FROM REGIONAL EVENTS

An emphasis was placed on the need for the Early Engagement process to be 'joined up', particularly in relation to the Departments of Health, Education and the HSE and its New Directions policy. Other issues named included: building the capacity of the staff in Intreo Centres to work with people with disabilities; ensuring that there is a budget in place to support and resource the process of Early Engagement and having sufficient job opportunities for people with disabilities.

The Early Engagement process should happen when:

- other supports are in place (supported employment, job experience etc.)
- The Department of Education must have created a transition-to-work plan for every young person and career guidance for young people is available.
- An infrastructure to support engagement is in place. All relevant supports/services are in place.
- There is a strategy for getting extra jobs/employment for PwD.

Too many agencies in Ireland are doing the same thing including Voluntary Charities and the HSE. Sometimes it ends up that nobody provides employment supports and people are then falling through the cracks. Agencies should join up and work together and avoid duplication of services.

There needs to be a proactive information and communications campaign well in advance of the introduction of any changes so that people with disabilities, their parents/guardians and service delivery organisations are fully aware of and understand the implications of the changes.

A concern was expressed about the potential to reverse the early engagement policy with comments such as ("If a decision is made on change that this cannot be undone by future government", "2 years is ideal – government changes every 4-5 years. So change of gov. could disrupt transition from one scheme to another".)

Further consultation is required before finalising the decision to introduce any changes to disability payments:

- More dialogue before making any decisions.
- If it's to change we need another step in the process – parents should be consulted around what training and supports children need to get them in employment.

There needs to be clarity about whether or not there will be continued access to secondary benefits, e.g. medical card, transport, which are currently available to DA recipients at 16, if DCA is to be paid until 18:

- People were interested here in how this would affect their medical card and other secondary benefits.
- Access to travel allowance etc., with DCA?

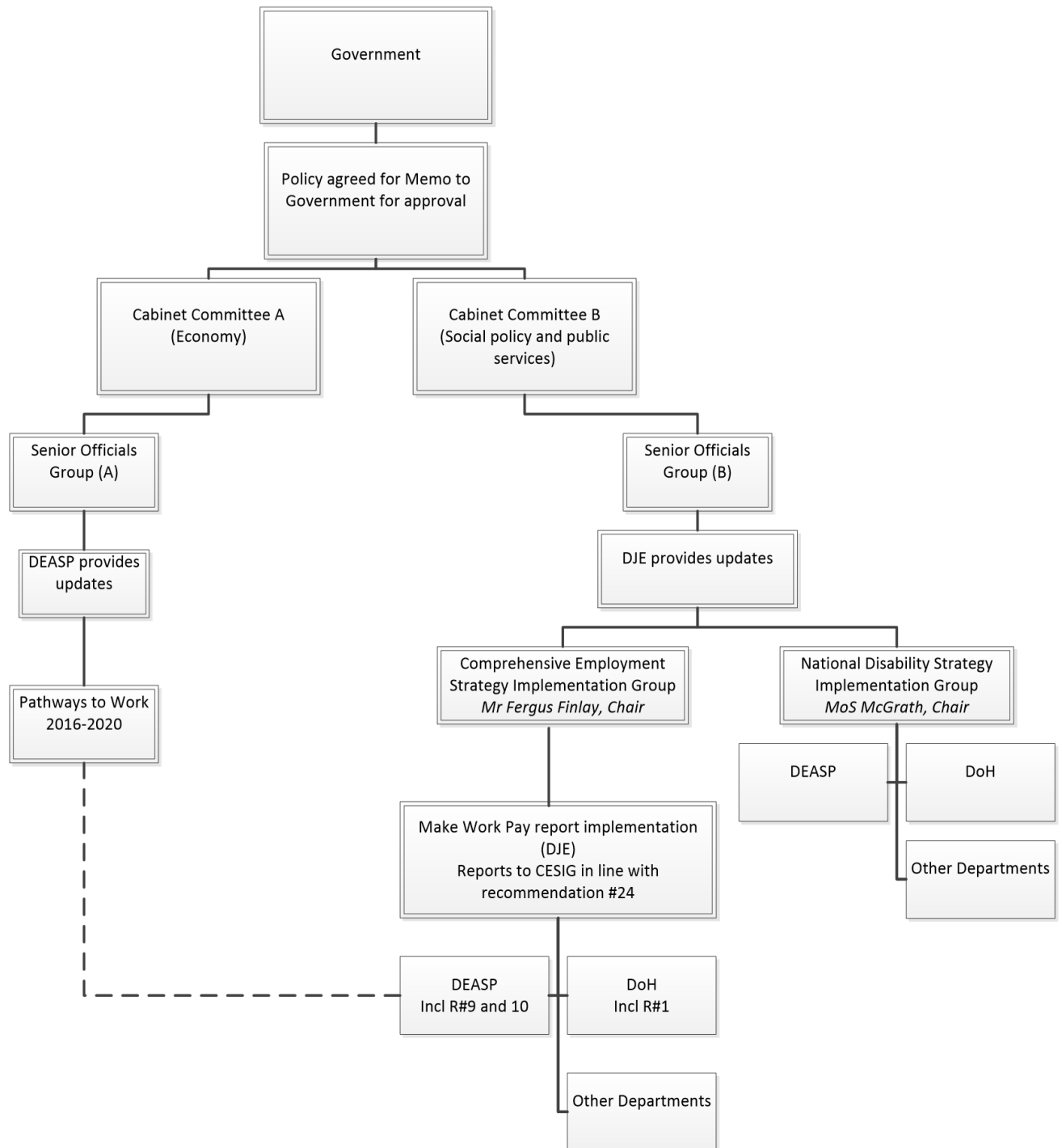
### 5.2.3 CONSOLIDATED FINDINGS

The Stakeholder Focus Group examined the provisional findings during its meeting of 6<sup>th</sup> June and concluded that:

- The other issues identified (beyond the immediate scope of early engagement and scheme reconfiguration) are important enablers of changes to these arrangements and should be addressed alongside proposed recommendations.
- While many of these are contained within NDIS, CES and MWP actions, there is a perception that these are not being delivered quickly enough and that there is a lack of focus on monitoring and implementation. In particular, the Stakeholder Focus Group considered that the slow progress in key areas of education and health service provision, will increase the risk that DEASP commitments under MWP and the CES will not be delivered.
- Existing cross-governmental mechanisms could be used to monitor effective implementation of actions, noting the specific groups, referencing their position on an organisational chart (see Figure 1 below which had been prepared by DEASP for an earlier meeting).

The Stakeholder Focus Group considered that the process of implementation would be facilitated by better communications at both the national level and also through local and regional channels.

**FIGURE 1: SUMMARY HIERARCHY OF REPORTING STRUCTURE - BETTER EMPLOYMENT OUTCOMES FOR PEOPLE WITH DISABILITIES**



### 5.3 MWP RECOMMENDATIONS OF RELEVANCE

The Stakeholder Focus Group also noted a range of actions contained in the MWP report which covered these wider issues

**TABLE 1: MWP RECOMMENDATIONS RELATED TO WIDER ISSUES IDENTIFIED DURING CONSULTATION**

No.	Text	Lead	Due date
1	Raise the Medical Card earnings disregard from its current level of €120 per week for people on Disability Allowance or on Partial Capacity Benefit associated with Invalidity Pension.	DoH/ HSE	Q4-2018
2a	Dispense with the requirement that work be of a 'rehabilitative nature' for Medical Card earnings disregard purposes.	DoH/ HSE	Q4-2017
3	Develop and bring forward proposals to address access to or affordability of necessary aids/appliances/assistive technology.	DJE	Q4-2018
5	Undertake a review of transport supports encompassing all Government funded transport and mobility schemes for people with disabilities, and to make proposals for development of a coordinated plan for such provision.	DJE	Q4-2017
6	The Transport Support Scheme currently being developed by the Department of Health should seek to avoid creating financial barriers for people with disabilities who will be eligible under that scheme and who wish to access employment supports or further their employment ambitions.	DoH	Q4-2017
7a	Put in place and promote a system for fast-track reinstatement of the Medical Card for people with disabilities who have lost it on return to work and have subsequently had to leave their job within one year.	DoH	Q1-2018
24	Incorporate an annual review of delivery of actions recommended in this Report and the outcomes achieved in the reviews of progress under the Comprehensive Employment Strategy for People with Disabilities 2015-2024.	DJE	Q4-2017

## 5.4 NEXT STEPS – RELEVANCE OF OTHER ACTIONS

The Stakeholder Focus Group reviewed next steps in the light of the consolidated findings above during its meeting on 6<sup>th</sup> June.

The Stakeholder Focus Group recommended that the structure of Senior Officials' Groups, interdepartmental committees and Cabinet sub committees should be utilised to highlight that actions are interdependent and where there is lack of progress to make the process accountable.

In recognition of its role in providing employment supports and services for people with disabilities, the Stakeholder Focus Group considered that DEASP should use its position as an advocate in addressing blockages elsewhere in the system.

## **APPENDIX A: STAKEHOLDER FOCUS GROUP – TERMS OF REFERENCE AND MEMBERSHIP**

### **TERMS OF REFERENCE**

- i. To develop, with the Department, a shared understanding of the possibilities of the principle of ‘early intervention’ for people with disabilities; an appreciation of the multiple and complex perspectives and challenges involved in advancing MWP Recommendations 9 and 10; and co-creating an approach to a wider consultation process with disability stakeholders.
- ii. To agree on the format of the wider consultation process; design the format of the consultation process to ensure that it is as inclusive as possible; and to consider the substance of MWP Recommendations 9 and 10 so as to develop material for dissemination and consideration by the wider stakeholder group.
- iii. To explore and consider the findings from the wider consultation process and agree a set of ‘next steps’ for the Department and other stakeholders for advancing the principle of ‘early intervention’.

## MEMBERSHIP

Name	Nominated by
Adam Harris	As I Am
Brendan Lennon	Deaf Hear
Brian Hayes	National Platform of Self-Advocates
Catherine Kelly	Walk
Christy Grogan	DEASP
Ciaran Diamond (replaced by Paul Hill)	DEASP
Dan Power	DEASP
Declan Tanham	EmployAbility service
Derval McDonagh	Cope Foundation
Gary Owens	Down Syndrome Ireland
Geraldine Graydon	AsFAn (Autism Spectrum Family Advocacy Network)
Gerard Byrne (replaced by Niamh Connolly)	National Council for the Blind of Ireland
Helen Faughnan (replaced by Simonetta Ryan)	DEASP
Joan Carthy	Irish Wheelchair Association
Joan O'Donnell	Disability Federation of Ireland
John Bohan	DEASP
John Dunne	Family Carers Ireland
Kate Mitchell	Mental Health Reform
Lorraine Dempsey	Special Needs Parents Association
Louise Carey	Headway
Marion E. Wilkinson	National Disability Authority
Mark O'Connor	Inclusion Ireland
Michael Gogarty	Independent Disability Consultant
Professor Michael Shevlin	School of Education, TCD
Michelle Conroy	DEASP
Ruth Gilhool	DCA Warriors
Teresa Mallon	St. John of God Services
Naoise Cunningham	-
Valerie Maher	One Family

During the consultation, one of the members of the Stakeholder Focus Group, Mr. Gerard Byrne nominated by NCBI, sadly passed away. The Stakeholder Focus Group wish to both acknowledge his contribution to the consultation process and to extend its sincerest sympathy to both Gerard's family and colleagues.

Note: Appendices B, C and D are on the gov.ie website and can be accessed by clicking on the links provided below.

**APPENDIX B: [RESULTS FROM ONLINE QUESTIONNAIRES](#)**

**APPENDIX C: [RESULTS FROM REGIONAL EVENTS](#)**

**APPENDIX D: [CONSULTATION DOCUMENTS](#)**