Submission on Departmental Statements of Strategy
Department of Transport, Tourism and Sport,

August 2016
Introduction
The “Programme for Partnership Government” sets out a range of commitments relating to the implementation of the United Nations Convention on the Rights of (Persons with Disabilities, (UN CRPD). These are centred on ratification of the Convention by the end of this year. Over the past two decades critical pieces of social infrastructure have been put in place. These include anti-discrimination legislation, EPSEN Act, 2004, Disability Act 2005 and development of implementation plans for the National Disability Strategy (NDS).

The NDS and the UN CRPD are built on mainstreaming and maximising full participation. For that reason it needs to be strongly referenced as a key high level consideration of the Department to ensure a constant focus within the planning, implementation, monitoring and evaluation functions of the Department. In simple terms it is the policy of Government, as expressed through the concept of mainstreaming, that people with disabilities are a core part of the public to be served by a Department in relation to its remit. Implicit in this will be the need for strong lateral working within the Department and equally with other departments and organisations in keeping with the person centred/life cycle approach.

Embedding disability perspective
Given the policy objective of people with disabilities being full citizens of Ireland, it is imperative that the Statement strongly incorporates the disability perspective. The Statement needs to mention disability related commitments in a way that drives the Business Plan, the staff training programme, the operation and focus of organisations within its aegis so that the diverse needs and capabilities of people with disabilities are respected through being addressed in the work of the Department.

Disability inclusion within the Statement of Strategy
Section 5. (1) (a) of the Public Service Management Act 1997 states that each statement shall "comprise the key objectives, outputs and related strategies (including use of resources) of the Department of State"

Within that context it is useful to note the following, in particular:

• that the implementation of the UN CRPD and the National Disability Strategy as they relate to the remit of the Department, along with the relevant commitments in the "Programme for Partnership Government" represent key outcomes for the Department to achieve,

• that the required resources be made available,
• that people with disabilities and their families are ordinarily part of the public that the Department is mandated to serve,

• that being disability inclusive in your planning and operation also means that your whole operation becomes more finely tuned as a person/family centred organisation,

• that better outcomes for people are achieved and consequently better value for public funding,

• that following ratification of the UN CRPD Departments will have to give account to the UN in relation to the Convention,

• that proofing of policy and legislation for Cabinet consideration will become more important,

• that there are economic and social costs at a societal level related to disability,

• that inter departmental work is critical and

• adopting a thoughtful and comprehensive approach at departmental level also provides the template and "authority" to successfully migrate this approach to organisations under your remit.

Furthermore
It is not acceptable that a policy measure or legislation would advance, as has often been the case in the past, in a way where it does not provide for, or include, people with disabilities or makes their participation more difficult. At another level it constitutes poor values for money in that remedial measures will be required.

Public service reform is concerned with effectively serving members of the public in a way that meets their needs to maximise their participation and at the same time provide best value for money.

It is recognised that further investment is also needed to fully support people with disabilities. The programme to implement the UN CRPD can lead and support the public service reform programme. This is so because disability comes randomly and at a time and intensity of it's choosing. It seriously impacts on families as well as the individual.

Peoples' lives are affected across a range of domains and consequently a variety of public services are required to respond. Ireland has a challenge to ensure that public services are person focused and are competent and prepared to respond in an early, effective and coordinated way.

Disability is not a private and family impact issue alone. We can see the UN CRPD implementation as the creation of an infrastructure of response and support,
underwritten by the State, to dampen and negate the effects of disability and to maximise participation. Only the State can have the ambition to provide that infrastructure. The development of the Statement of Strategy for this Department has a critical part to play in responding to the key commitment to disability inclusion in the programme for government.

Disability too often hollows out and undermines the capacity of the person and their family to participate both economically and socially. An obvious example is the impact that caring responsibilities have on employment participation. There are economic and social costs, at a societal level, beyond those experienced by the person and family.

Disability and chronic conditions are set to increase as people live longer, disability is therefore a societal issue. It can and will impact on every person/family at some point. The NDS and UN CRPD are our opportunity to comprehensively plan the response to something that we know will continue to happen and that will be poorly, inefficiently and ineffectively responded to unless we plan it at a whole of government level.

What we don't know is equally critical. We don't know, who, where, when and the impact and nature of the disability. The current challenge is to take account of these facts and to fashion a plan, as an integral part of the work of the Department, while working closely with other departments to fashion an effective response mechanism that progressively works for people with disabilities and their families. DFI conservatively estimates that 56,000 people will become disabled over the next year. Amongst these are people that you are currently serving. Will your department and its agencies be able to continue to serve them?

The development of the Statements of Strategy are a critical way, given the key commitment of Government, to effectively plan the response of the State and to programmatically ensure that the services and supports get provided.

Disability Federation of Ireland
Fumbally Court, Fumbally Lane, Dublin 8
Tel: 01-4547978 Fax: 01-4547981
Email: info@disability-federation.ie Web: www.disability-federation.ie