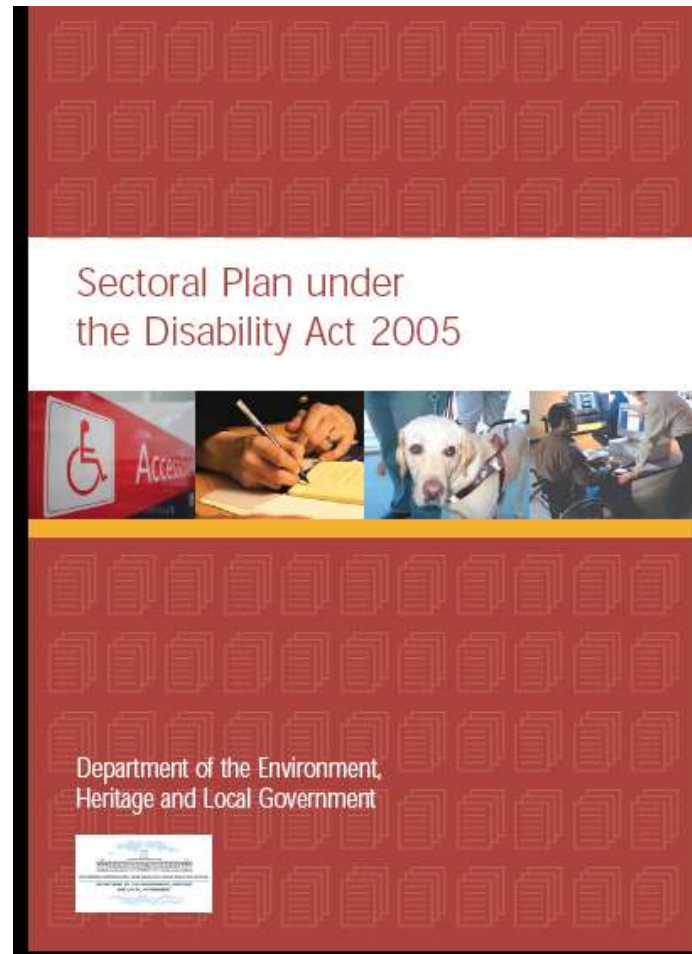


Department of Environment, Heritage & Local Government Sectoral Plan



Objectives of the Sectoral Plan

1. To promote universal access to public spaces, buildings and services owned and operated by local authorities and those owned and operated by the Department and bodies under the aegis of the Department
2. To promote universal access to new developments and heritage sites
3. To ensure access to information on local authority services for persons with disabilities and similar access to information on services provided by the Department and bodies under its aegis
4. To update standards set out in Part M (access for people with disabilities) of the national building regulations and provide for more effective enforcement of these standards
5. To promote and ensure participation by persons with disabilities in decision making

6. To ensure a high level of awareness among all staff in regards to the requirements of persons with disabilities
7. To encourage and facilitate access to appropriate housing and accommodation for persons with disabilities
8. To improve access of persons with disabilities to streets, pavements footpaths and street crossings and access from public roads to passenger transport vehicles through promoting an accessible barrier free pedestrian environment
9. To ensure co-operation and coordination in relation to cross-cutting issues under the National Disability Strategy between the Department, bodies under its aegis and local authorities with other Government Departments and public bodies
10. To promote coordination between service providers at local level; throughout the County and City Development Boards

Relevant sections covered

- Housing (pages 35-38)
- Private rented sector (pages 38)
- Housing options provided through local authorities (page 39)
- Assessment of housing need (page 39-41)
- Social and Affordable Housing (page 41-42)
- Social Inclusion (pages 44-45)
- Information (page 57)
- Disability awareness training (Page 57)

Housing

- Enable every household to have available and affordable dwelling of good quality suited to its needs in a good environment as possible at the tenure of its choice
- Local authorities...are required to take into account the need to ensure that a mixture of house types and sizes is developed to match the requirements of households...including people with disabilities
- It is recognised that people with disability often have fewer choices in terms on providing for their housing and accommodation needs.....sectoral plan is directed at improving the quality of choice available and at directing resources to areas of greatest priority
- These plans require local authorities to identify priority needs ...and then to develop a coherent and coordinated response across all their housing services
- A National Housing Strategy will be developed to support the provision of tailored housing and housing supports to people with disabilities including in particular having regard to adults with significant disabilities and those who experience mental illness
- Involved stakeholders e.g., HSE, DOH&C, social partners and NFVB (Paul Kenny St. Michaels House)

Housing Design Issues

- In so far as practicable the design should provide for flexibility in use accessibility and adaptabilityaim to ensure that dwellings can meet the changing needs associated with moderate mobility difficulties and normal frailty associated with old age. Elderly or moderately disabled persons who wish to remain independent in their own home should be able to do so

Private Rented Sector

- The Department will ensure that the appropriate supports are available to the Private Residential Tenancies Board so that in carrying out its functions generally issues relating to disability are understood and addressed

Housing Options Provided through Local Authorities

- In assessing application for housing accommodations authorities have been asked to ensure that applicants are made aware of the full range of housing options and to establish which option is the most appropriate and suitable response to an individuals need

Assessment of Housing Need

- Housing Authorities are required under the housing Act to undertake a statutory assessment of housing need in their own are
- Authorities must identify those whose need arises directly from disability
- In carrying out the assessment the authority must give notice to the HSE of their intention and are also required to give notice to voluntary or non-profit agencies engaged in provision of housing
- Authorities are advised to ask the HSE to provide as much information as possible on the housing needs of individuals with disabilities
- They are also advised to develop inter agency protocols to deal with liaison between housing authorities and the HSE on the assessment of housing need

- Proposed introduction of legislation that will result in a new means of assessing housing need to provide a better basis for policy development and service delivery to ensure all people can live with maximum independence in their community
- Where a public body has been notified of a possible need a member of staff of the body shall communicate with the person with disability for the purpose of facilitating or coordinating the provision of any services that it considers she is entitled to

- Under section 11 of 1988 Act Housing authorities may set aside for persons of a specific category including person with disabilities a proportion of dwellings becoming available for letting
- Specific strategies are required to meet the housing requirements of all those with special needs including persons with a disability. A protocol will be developed to assist in this regard to examine the role of Rental Accommodation scheme, affordable housing scheme and how they can support people with disabilities
- The Department shall continue to- through capital funding- to support a vibrant and cooperative housing sector

Time Frames

- Current local authority action plans for social and affordable housing run until end 2008. Subsequent action plans will reflect later developments
- National Housing Strategy developed and progressed by end 2009
- Initial protocols on individual housing needs and social housing supports to be in place by mid 2007 with a further protocol on strategic assessment of housing needs to be in place by 2009

- Best practice advice on housing design approaches based on universal access philosophy and flexibility in use accessibility and adaptability over the life of a dwelling will be provided by DEHLG currently in development and will be published by mid 2007
- Housing Miscellaneous Provisions Bill is currently being drafted to go to government in 2006
- Rationalisation of administrative and approval arrangements to endure the earliest possible delivery of suitable quality projects