

South Dublin County Disability Advisory / Consultative Panel Review of 2012

1. Introduction and Context

This is a brief report and update regarding the third year of the South Dublin County Disability Advisory / Consultative Panel, which has been operational since January 2010.

The establishment of the Panel was a joint initiative of South Dublin County Council (SDCC) and the South Dublin County Development Board (SDCDB). It is a progression of the practice within the County to encourage high participation and feedback from disabled people during consultation events, such as those held for the development of the South Dublin County Council Disability Act Implementation Plan and the County Strategy.

The Panel has maintained an average of eight active members for the third year. Membership is voluntary and all members have a personal or professional interest in ensuring that facilities, services and activities that the County Council and the County Development Board deliver are designed to be accessible to the entire community. There is an incredible wealth of knowledge and personal experience within the Panel which provides an invaluable resource for the Council and SDCDB to draw upon.

This report is a summary of the activities of the Panel during 2012.

2. Activities for Year Three

At a meeting in December 2010, the Panel decided to continue to meet monthly (Jan-July last Thursday of each month, Sept-Dec first Thursday of each month) and operate a system of rotating Chair.

During 2012 the Panel held 6 meetings (reduced from 10 scheduled meetings due to budgetary constraints), and one National Housing Strategy for Disabled People event. Access supports were provided for two members so that they could participate fully in the Panel and one member participates in a virtual capacity.

Selina Bonnie, Disability Liaison/Access & Equality Officer, South Dublin County Council, and Anne Byrne, Administrative Officer, SDCDB continued to provide administrative and operational support throughout the year.

Key Achievements included:

National Housing Strategy for People with Disabilities 2011-2016' and its implementation plan Seminar held on 4th October, County Hall: The Panel invited stakeholders, including Council and County Development Board member agencies and Housing Associations to a briefing session in the Council Chamber, County Hall, during which there was a presentation by Theresa Donohue, Assistant Principal in the Social Inclusion Unit, Department of Environment, Community and Local Government who outlined the National Housing Strategy for People with Disabilities 2011-2016. Billy Coman, Director of Housing, Social and Community Development also made a presentation exploring the issue of Housing and disabled people in South Dublin County. The event was well attended and feedback has been very positive.

Promoting Universal Design: Submission made to the Newcastle Local Area Plan – Pre Draft Consultation highlighting the need for universal design and lifetime homes and safe access for people with visual impairments.

Operation, Procedure and Finance (O.P.& F.) Committee: A motion was passed by the Council’s O.P.& F. Committee on the 24th May 2012 which commended the Panel on its work to date on “improving accessibility within our county”. The motion (under the heading of Mayor’s Business), also thanked the Panel for their “cooperation with the Mayor’s office in lending assistance and providing information to enhance the work of the Mayor”.

Library Development Plan: the Panel met with Ian Stobbart, Senior Executive Librarian to discuss, and advise on the new Library Development Plan 2012- 2016. Panel members also provided advice on the catalogue regarding access for people who are hard of hearing or deaf.

Sport for All: Panel members advised on and proofed the draft Sport for All booklet which was produced by the Council’s Sports and Recreation Officers.

Volunteering Fair 2012: A workshop exploring the issue of disabled people volunteering was developed by the Panel and delivered during the Fair on the 19th April in the County Library.

South Dublin: An Age Friendly County: The Panel participated in a consultation event on the 29th March in Tallaght Leisure Centre.

During 2012 the following guests also gave individual presentations and engaged in discussion with the Panel regarding access issues:

- Anne Byrne, Administrative Officer, Community Services (County Development Board Secretariat) met with the Panel regarding the Volunteer Fair 2012 and the role of disabled people as volunteers;
- Sarah Campbell, Region 1 Advocate, National Advocacy Service made a presentation on the National Advocacy Service for Disabled People;
- Sinéad Dullaghan and Claire Goulding, from Deloitte met with the Panel to outline the Standard Bank Account initiative and to seek the Panels input on it.