



government in 1996. The work of the Commission was informed by the largest country-wide consultation exercise ever undertaken in Ireland, with people with disabilities, their families as well as other stakeholders. The recommendations of the Commission were accepted by the government and helped shape the change agenda for the next decade. The key new characteristics of policy regarding people with disabilities advocated by the Commission included the 'social model' understanding of disability, the mainstreaming of disability into all policy fields and a commitment to equality.

Developing and implementing such a transformative agenda created new research needs. The Commission report had included some recommendations which focussed on research and data collection. These research and data elements of the Commission's report were strongly influenced by the United Nations' Standard Rules on Equalisation of Opportunities for People with Disabilities (1993). Therefore, they included a recommendation that Ireland begin to conduct the type of regular National Disability Surveys which were already undertaken in many other developed countries. Furthermore, a new state agency, called the National Disability

as older people with chronic pain or children with moderate learning disabilities. Furthermore, the NDS questionnaire was designed using the ICF as a framework and this also had an impact on these results. However, it is not yet possible, to identify exactly what impact the ICF had as compared with, for example, disability focus or interviewer effect. The two reports on the NDS released by the CSO provide some reflections on the question of reported and estimated prevalence rates but further work is needed (CSO, 2008, 2010: 21-25 and 341- 4) [1,2].

Environmental factors relevant to policy

The NDS was conducted in the year following a major government initiative in relation to disability policy. Entitled the National Disability Strategy [5], the plan included new legislation and funding, along with a strong focus on mainstreaming disability policy across all government activities. To advance this mainstreaming agenda, six government departments were instructed to develop what were termed 'sectoral plans' for improv-

- unable to afford
- did not know who to contact

2. Work:

- 37% of respondents stated they were interested in working
- Aids and supports were often reported to be lacking
- 45% said the main support they needed was flexible

Competing interests

The authors declare that they have no competing interests.

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