



March 2023

## **AsIAM Submission to the Department of Education on Proposed Reforms on the Education of Persons with Special Education Needs (EPSEN) Act 2004**

### **About AsIAM**

We are Ireland's National Autism Charity, rooted in our rights as autistic people. We are leaders of a movement to transform society so that it works for autistic people and their families. We are autistic led. We represent, connect, co-ordinate, and unify the autism community in Ireland. We work to empower autistic people to reach their full potential. We build partnerships for change. We support society to be fully accepting of and accessible to every autistic person.

We are guided by and grounded in our living values. We commit to being: Inclusive, Rights-Based & Empathetic.

Our vision is for Ireland to be a country where every Autistic person is accepted 'As They Are' - Equal, Valued & Respected.

Our purpose is to advocate for an inclusive society for autistic people that is accessible, accepting and affirming. We work to support the autistic community and our families to fully engage in Irish life and build the capacity of society to facilitate true inclusion.

## Introduction

AsIAM welcomes the opportunity to engage with the Department of Education in their review of the Education for Persons with Special Education Needs (EPSEN) Act 2004. Education is a core pillar of our work throughout the organisation, and AsIAM frequently engages with the Department of Education, Ministers and their officials, families, and stakeholders within the education system on issues facing Autistic pupils and their families. This engagement with key stakeholders, culminated in our [Green Paper for EPSEN](#), which we published in 2021.

Considering the Government's obligations under Article 42 of the Constitution and our international obligations under Articles 28 & 29 of the UN Convention on the Rights of the Child, and Article 24 of the UN Convention on the Rights of Persons with Disabilities and General Comment 4 therein, this review is a very timely and welcome opportunity to ensure that much-needed reforms address the myriad of issues that many pupils and families experience throughout the system. When read in conjunction with other proposed reforms to the education system, such as the reforms to the Primary School Curriculum and to the Senior Cycle, this is an opportunity to realise a more holistic vision for our education system that every pupil can access an education that meets their needs in their local community, and that nobody is excluded from their local school on the grounds of their diagnosis or support needs.

This submission will set out below what is working within the education system, the structural and accessibility issues which significantly impact Autistic people and families' experiences at school, and the reforms which AsIAM believes are necessary to ensure that students can be educated in inclusive environments in line with our international obligations and that schools and teachers are supported to realise this vision for inclusive education for every pupil in their community.

## **What works well within the education system for Autistic pupils and children with additional educational needs in Ireland**

Whilst there are significant issues within the EPSEN Act and around how education is provided to pupils with disabilities, it would be remiss of us to not acknowledge and welcome that changes to education practices over the last two decades in Ireland have made the right to access an education more accessible to many Autistic people and disabled people across Irish society. The EPSEN Act was envisaged as a progressive piece of legislation which established a 'special education' system, and which put the education of cohorts within the disabled community on a statutory footing. The Act's vision was for children to receive an education in their school which meets their needs and to give children with disabilities and additional educational support needs access to social and academic supports. It also allowed families of pupils whose difference or disability meant that they needed to access additional support at school to be consulted by school boards of management on their child's education. The aims of the Act at its inception were well intentioned, at its heart EPSEN set out to create a system that was more inclusive than was previously in place.

The Act has had a significant impact in raising expectations for Autistic people and families in Ireland. Whilst its potential has not been fully realised, and there is still a lot of segregation and exclusion that happens across the school system, it is a mark of the progress that Ireland has made over the last 20 years with its education system that more people receive some form of education, particularly among people who would have been placed in institutions and other care settings had they received an autism diagnosis beforehand.

Whilst we acknowledge the positive changes that have come in over the last 20 years for members of the Autistic community, unfortunately many of the issues highlighted in our earlier Green Paper remain unaddressed. There is still a significant cohort of Autistic people who are not receiving an education that meets their needs, and who face significant barriers to accessing school places. As such, much of the transformative potential of EPSEN in practice remains unfulfilled for pupils and families on the ground.

In the Green Paper, barrister William Quill sets EPSEN within its legal and political context and outlines how sections of the Act not being commenced have placed the Act under legal scrutiny from the Courts, as well as highlighting a myriad of issues facing pupils and families seeking to be supported to vindicate their Constitutional right to an education. An example of this highlighted in the Green Paper is where Sections of the Act not being commenced have led to schools not being able to make direct referrals to the National Council for Special Education to request supports, or resources to get the necessary support following an application by a family for an Assessment of Need, if the Assessment identifies that the pupil needs to access additional supports at their school. Considering the scale of the barriers faced by Autistic people and families, non-commencement of significant sections of the EPSEN Act has led to dysfunction in how supports are provided across the education system and justified distrust among pupils and families looking for the supports they need from the State. From these experiences gleaned both from AsIAM's engagement with the community and from families highlighting their experiences in the public domain, substantive change is needed to make inclusion the norm within our education system, and for Government to take a more expansive and ambitious approach to reforming our education system. Over the course of 20 years, change has come for some, but not all as critical sections of the Act have yet to be commenced and if we are to strive for a system that encompasses 'All' in the spirit of the UNCRPD (United Nations Convention on the Rights of Persons with Disabilities), this change must happen and support must be there for every pupil, irrespective of their circumstances or support needs.

Our understanding of autism as a society has increased in recent years, as parts of the EPSEN Act have been put into practice. The increased access to individualised support and special schools, autism classes and mainstream schools has led to some Autistic people receiving greater opportunities, but this does not go far enough to fully vindicate our community's right to access an education. Education supports and school places are often applied in a piecemeal fashion, and how they are allocated can look very different depending on where an Autistic person or a family live in Ireland. This reactive approach

leaves families having to engage in grassroots advocacy or having to take legal action to secure places, SNAs and teachers for their children. An example of this was the enactment of the Education (Provision in Respect of Children with Special Educational Needs) Act 2022 which gave additional powers to the NCSE and the Minister of State for Special Education and Inclusion order schools to open an autism class where such circumstances were necessary, was welcome.

Moreover, these access issues are perpetuated by the lack of a coherent overall vision and funding within the Department and across the education system for either providing accessible school places or access to needed supports for children in mainstream schools with additional educational support needs. Families' experiences can also depend on their relationship with their Special Educational Needs Organiser (SENO) and the SENOs' willingness to work with families on facilitating the supports they request for their loved one. Our engagement as part of the Community Support team with families seems to suggest that there are very mixed reactions with how this process works.

There needs to be greater progress towards vindicating the rights of Autistic students and of pupils with additional educational support needs and to bring our education system into line with the standards set out by the United Nations Convention on the Rights of Persons with Disabilities (UNCRPD), and planning for this transition to happen should ensure that no pupil who needs supports is left behind.

## **Issues with the EPSEN Act in Supporting Autistic Children and Young People's Education in Practice**

Since the EPSEN Act was passed in 2004, our thinking around education has changed a great deal, particularly as Ireland has ratified the UNCRPD in 2018. This change has particularly happened in recent years as academic research and teaching pedagogies are beginning to embrace a rights-based, Social Model approach to accessing and realising our education rights, and what this means for pupils who need extra support to access their education.

Considering Ireland's obligations under Article 24 of the UNCRPD and General Comment 4, AsIAM recognises that inclusive education is a cornerstone to building a more inclusive society where everyone can reach their potential. A vision for what AsIAM believes an inclusive education should look like is for children to go to school together, for schools to see the value of inclusion and participation and to be accessible, flexible, and inclusive to every child in the community. Schools should also have the resources, training, staffing and environments they need to realise this vision for inclusion on the ground. This includes the use of Universal Design for Learning and blended learning so that educational barriers are removed and that as many children can go to local schools in their community; that they receive the education they need, and the curriculum is built around their needs, which supports and encourages people to pursue their interests. It should also give pupils the opportunity to access individualised supports outside of the classroom if they need it without being separated from their peers or community, and for accessible career guidance and clear pathways to further and higher education, apprenticeships or employment if they wish to pursue these options when finishing school. This overall vision was set out in General Comment 4 where Neurodivergent students and Disabled students with the following differences should have access to the following supports:

- Students with communication differences, including non-speaking students and gestalt communicators, should have the opportunity to learn and communicate through the forms of communication most intuitive to them. This includes

Augmentative and Alternative Communication (AAC), sign language (including adapted forms like Lámh), tablets or computers with text-to-speech, Assistive Technology and other communication supports;<sup>1</sup>

- Students with social interaction or sensory processing differences should have a structured learning or classroom environment with accommodations around classroom organisation and group work;<sup>2</sup>
- Students with high support needs should have access to “concrete, observable/visual and easy-read teaching and learning materials within a safe, quiet and structured learning environment, targeting capacities that will best prepare student(sic) for independent living and vocational contexts. States parties should invest in inclusive interactive classrooms using alternative instructional strategies and assessment methods.”<sup>3</sup>

There are differences between what the UNCRPD and EPSEN say about education, and our laws around education have not been updated to reflect this shift in thinking from special education to inclusive education. This shift has been a recent development in the years since EPSEN has been adopted by the State and is set out by the Convention and by General Comment 4. General Comment 4 identifies the key barriers to realising an accessible and inclusive education on the ground, many of which are pressing issues that pupils and families experience in the Irish education system, including failure to adopt a human rights model of disability, persistent discrimination, lack of knowledge about the advantages of inclusive education, lack of appropriate data, lack of political will, inappropriate funding systems, failure of reasonable accommodation and the lack of legal remedies.<sup>4</sup>

For example, as Shivaun Quinlivan points out in her chapter in our EPSEN Green Paper, putting Article 24 of the UNCRPD into practice means that the Department of Education

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<sup>1</sup> General Comment 4 – Article 24 United Nations Convention on the Rights of Persons with Disabilities, p. 12.

<sup>2</sup> General Comment 4 – Article 24 United Nations Convention on the Rights of Persons with Disabilities, p. 12.

<sup>3</sup> General Comment 4 – Article 24 United Nations Convention on the Rights of Persons with Disabilities, p. 12.

<sup>4</sup> General Comment 4 – Article 24 United Nations Convention on the Rights of Persons with Disabilities, p. 12.

cannot have a default position that a diagnosis of autism with additional education needs means that a pupil will receive an autism class in a mainstream school or a place in a special school. This is a marked change to what we see in practice through our engagement with the community - a "charity", paternalistic approach often permeates many aspects of our education system where stakeholders are seen as "gatekeepers", not facilitators, and where education is not treated as a right that every child can access in real terms. This is leaving many families with Autistic children having to fight for their constitutional right to an education that is accessible, and which meets their needs, and with few options to compel schools to include their child if their rights are not vindicated. Crucially, Article 24 of the Convention addresses the right to education of persons with disabilities, and as Shivaun Quinlivan highlights in our Green Paper, it emphasises the fact that the right to education does not stop at 18, and that needing reasonable accommodations or individualised supports, such as access to therapists or SNAs, should not exclude people from the mainstream education system. It also explicitly states that people should not be excluded from their local school "on the basis of disability". This is unfortunately the reality for many Autistic people attending school today, where suspensions, expulsions and reduced timetables are often used by schools as disciplinary measures to react to situations where students are distressed or traumatised by school policies and practices and classroom environments.

Moreover, families often must travel long distances outside of their local community, sometimes up to 1.5-2 hours' drive each way and past several local schools, to access a school place. There is also little support for teachers and SNAs to access training, little guidance or policies for special schools on how to support children at school and on which practices are inclusive and comply with our human rights obligations. This leaves pupils at risk of being exposed to harmful practices such as the use of seclusion and restraint, to reduced timetables, for codes of behaviour to emphasise compliance over acceptance and support, and for suspensions and expulsions to be a common experience for Autistic pupils when they are distressed. Schools often must go through significant bureaucratic processes to access additional supports.



## Procedural issues with commenced sections with the EPSEN Act

### Use of Outdated Language on Disability throughout the Act

The Ombudsman for Children makes a salient point in referring to the sense of exclusion that many disabled people experience using outdated language rooted in the Medical Model to describe disability throughout the Act, and how it can be a barrier to full participation, equality and inclusion.<sup>5</sup> The UN Convention recognises that “disability is an evolving concept and that disability results from the interaction between persons with impairments and attitudinal and environmental barriers that hinders their full and effective participation in society on an equal basis with others”.<sup>6</sup> In contrast to this, Section 1 of the EPSEN Act defines special education needs as “a restriction in the capacity of the person to participate in and benefit from education on account of an enduring physical, sensory, mental health or learning disability, or any other condition which results in a person learning differently from a person without that condition”<sup>7</sup>. The Act takes a medicalised approach to describing a disabled person’s needs and in the context in which we read it now, does not reflect the shifts that have happened within our education system and with society’s understanding of disability. The Act fails to recognise, that ‘restrictions’ are not as results of an individual's disability or neurotype, but how these differences interact with other barriers, such as structural or attitudinal barriers, inaccessible environments or a lack of access to supports, which impact the pupil’s full and equal participation in the education system. A pupil’s support needs do not just arise from their difference or disability, but also from classroom environments and how the education system is designed and how both mainstream and special schools and classes operate on a day-to-day basis.

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<sup>5</sup> Ombudsman for Children, Department of Education Review of the Education for Persons with Special Educational Needs Act 2004, [https://www.oco.ie/app/uploads/2023/03/OCO\\_Submission\\_Review-EPSEN-Act-2004\\_March-2023.pdf](https://www.oco.ie/app/uploads/2023/03/OCO_Submission_Review-EPSEN-Act-2004_March-2023.pdf) (accessed 08 Mar 2023), p.6.

<sup>6</sup> Article 1, United Nations Convention on the Rights of Persons with Disabilities.

<sup>7</sup> Section 1, Education for Persons with Special Educational Needs Act 2004.

As Ireland is moving away from seeing disability purely as a health issue towards embracing a more Social Model/rights-based conception of disability, the EPSEN Act needs to reflect this paradigm shift in understanding and use language in the Act that reflects a Social Model/human rights understanding of disability. Reforms to the Act should consider support needs within an inclusive education environment and accessible curriculum and removes more patronising language such as ‘special’ or ‘special needs’ which presupposes that people with education support needs should be educated away from their peers or their community.

### **Inclusive Learning Environment**

AsIAM also agrees with the Ombudsman for Children’s view that Section 2(b) of the EPSEN should be removed as it has the effect of segregating pupils with educational support needs from the school system, which comprise 2% of the school-going population.

AsIAM believes that the EPSEN Act needs to take a holistic approach to defining what an ‘inclusive learning environment’ which is consistent with Article 24 and General Comment 4 on Inclusive Education, and which also considers how a child feels valued, accepted and how they can be supported to participate in their school and community. The CRPD Committee sets out what an inclusive learning environment looks like in that it “involves a process of systemic reform embodying changes and modifications in content, teaching methods, approaches, structures and strategies in education to overcome barriers with a vision serving to provide all students of the relevant age range with an equitable and participatory learning experience and environment that best corresponds to their requirements and preferences”<sup>8</sup>. It does not necessarily mean that a child can only be included if they can access a classroom in a mainstream school. In General Comment 1, the Committee sets out that this means that including more pupils

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<sup>8</sup> United Nations, Committee on the Rights of Persons with Disabilities. General comment No.4 (2016) Article 24: Right to Inclusive Education. 2 September 2016. CRPD/C/GC/4. par. 11

with additional educational support needs in their local school would also have to be supported by wider structural, pedagogical and cultural reforms which facilitate their inclusion and participation. The CRPD Committee sees full inclusion as an ongoing process and as a “result of a process of continuing and pro-active commitment to eliminate barriers impeding the right to education, together with changes to culture, policy and practice of regular schools to accommodate and effectively include all students”<sup>9</sup>.

### **Addressing non-commenced sections of the EPSEN Act**

One of the key issues affecting our community, as highlighted in our Green Paper, is that significant sections of the EPSEN Act, have not been commenced, including a statutory entitlement to an educational assessment for all children seeking additional supports, the development of a statutory Individualised Education Plan, the delivery of educational supports following an IEP and an independent appeals process. The dysfunction within the system as these sections are not commenced has led to a situation where supports for pupils are not being provided on the basis of need leading to disparities in how pupils and families can access supports on the ground. This has led to a situation where the EPSEN Act’s credibility and authority has been undermined, where many people and families entitled to support have little faith in the current system to find a school place for their child that meets their needs, or to support their child at school. The Courts have made this known, for example in the cases of (a minor) v Health Service Executive [2020] IEHC and M.R. (Albania) v Minister for Justice and Equality [2020].

There is presently no statutory right for families to have their child assessed or to an IEP for the child, no timescales for when plans and assessments must be carried out and no independent process for families to make complaints for failures in assessments,

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<sup>9</sup>United Nations, Committee on the Rights of Persons with Disabilities. General comment No.4 (2016) Article 24: Right to Inclusive Education. 2 September 2016. CRPD/C/GC/4. par. 34(f)

planning or delivery of services. All these issues cause serious hardship for pupils and families who are frustrated by having to navigate delays and waiting lists to accessing supports and by the lack of accountability in the system, and who often must resort to grassroots advocacy or litigation to have their child's education rights acted upon. To resolve this deadlock, AsIAM calls for the EPSEN Act to be fully commenced and resourced so that families can receive assurance that their child will receive timely access to school places with the necessary supports in place.

## **Other Issues within the EPSEN Act in Practice**

This review creates an opportunity to examine EPSEN within a rights-based framework and within the paradigm shift set out by the UNCRPD, to fully realise the Act's progressive intentions, and create meaningful change that looks towards building a child-centred education system which complies with our Constitutional and our international obligations. In this section, we also identify a number of other issues with how the EPSEN Act is implemented in practice.

In looking at EPSEN, we echo Inclusion Ireland's calls that the Department of Education should consider the need to change the title of the Act from EPSEN to the Inclusive Education Act. Whilst this shift in language also needs to be backed by more inclusive practices and policies on the ground, it is an important message to those who need additional support to access their education, including Autistic pupils and disabled pupils, of the State's intent to comply with our constitutional and human rights obligations, and that the inclusion of every pupil of all access need is the long-term goal. It also signals to the community that from now on that access to education is not "special" and that those who require individualised supports do not have "special needs". Every pupil has the right to receive an education in their local school that meets their needs alongside their peers, no matter the level of support they need or the barriers that need to be addressed to be accepted and included in their community and in all aspects of society.

Another issue with the EPSEN Act as it is currently constituted is that it does not provide for the right to litigate for any breaches to a person's right to education which happen under the Act, nor does it provide for mechanisms where they can seek redress or oblige the Department of Education or school bodies to enforce the Act. The Special Education Appeals Board established in 2006 after Sections 36 and 37 of the Act were commenced, but the preceding sections were not commenced, which meant that the Board could not go into operation. AsIAM recommends that this issue should be addressed and that families should have access an independent appeals process so that they to have their child's rights vindicated.

This review should also seek to encourage or embolden the need to drive reforms across Government to realise equality and promote active participation and inclusion in all strands of Irish society. This should include a review and reform the Disability Act to bring its provisions into line with a line with a rights-based conception of disability as set out by the UN Convention.

## AsIAM's Recommendations for Reforms to the EPSEN Act

As Ireland's National Autism Advocacy Organisation aiming to advance the rights of Autistic people across all strands of Irish society, AsIAM believes that a transition towards an inclusive education system should occur in incremental stages, but with real momentum and a clear policy direction which builds towards inclusion at school for every pupil. As with our Green Paper, we call for a "twin-track" approach which calls on the Department to increase investment to ensure that every person has a school place with supports which meet their needs presently but also builds for longer term reforms which facilitate an inclusive education system that every child can access and be included, with their rights on a statutory footing. As the Ombudsman for Children stated in his Report on School Places: "All decisions made and actions taken from this time forth should be about building a strong, inclusive education system, which is fully supportive of all our children equally"<sup>10</sup>. We support the Ombudsman's calls for reforms which both addresses the need for school places in the here and now, including through special schools and access to alternative education, but also builds towards a future where every child can be included in their local school with timely access to services and supports which meets their needs. This will help to ensure that children will receive access to school places and to the supports they need presently and are not left behind as we make the longer-term transition towards a fully inclusive education system. However, stakeholders will also need to continuously engage with and build trust among families that their child's support needs will be met in inclusive settings so they can have the confidence that their child has the same chance to be included in their local school and be educated alongside their peers, and with the wider community everyone benefits from greater inclusion at school and that more inclusive schools build more cohesive, inclusive communities.

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<sup>10</sup> Ombudsman for Children, 'Plan for Places – Forward Planning for the Provision of Schools Places for Children with Special Educational Needs: A Children's Rights Issue', p. 7. <https://www.oco.ie/app/uploads/2022/06/Plan-For-Places-Full-Report.pdf> (accessed 03 Mar 2023).

For this transition to succeed, we are calling for a **fully costed, cross-party Inclusive Education Plan** to be introduced so that there is an agreed pathway from all parties and independent towards building an inclusive education system across successive Governments. This plan should include significant investment, both immediate and over the longer term, in;

- **reducing class sizes to 20:1 and below over the next few years to bring us into line with the European average;**
- **increasing SNA (special needs assistants) and teacher training and numbers across the system;**
- **longer-term systemic and structural reforms which support every child's right to be educated and be included in a mainstream classroom with their peers in their local school, and for all children to see the benefits of inclusion at school;**
- **taking an expansive approach to defining an 'inclusive learning environment' to fully incorporate Articles 24 of the UNCRPD and General Comment 4, ensuring access to individualised and person-centred supports and reasonable accommodations are available to pupils in mainstream classrooms;**
- **building and redesigning local classrooms and schools to be universally accessible to every pupil;**
- **Greater provision of reasonable accommodations in mainstream classrooms;**
- **policy and legislative change in line with best practices in universal design and accessibility and in inclusive and neuro-affirmative education policy;**
- **Increasing provision for access to individualised and needs-based support within mainstream classrooms and schools, implementing recommendations set out in General Comment 4;**
- **fostering cultural change between stakeholders within the school community, such as teaching staff, Boards of Management, etc. to facilitate this transition and engage with families to build trust and confidence that their children will be included and educated at their local school, with their access needs met;**



- **Political will and leadership across successive Governments from Ministers and Department officials across Government departments, to teachers, SNAs, SENOs (Special Education Needs Organisers) and therapists, to schools and the school community to realise this transition towards inclusion on the ground.**

These changes, including accessing an environment and curriculum that is adaptable, flexible, and fully accessible to meet Autistic children's access and support needs should be key parts of building an inclusive, holistic, rights-based education system.

Curriculums should be designed with the principles of Universal Design for Learning and blended learning in mind to be available, intuitive, adaptable, and accessible to every student regardless of support need, and for children to access individualised support in their local community without having to be separated from their peers.

The opportunity to engage with student's interests and to learn life skills, with greater co-ordination between key supports such as Speech and Language Therapists, Occupational Therapists, access to individualised support with trained teachers and SNAs, and a cultural change among stakeholders, should be key pillars of fostering an inclusive education system. Such changes should also include:

- **Implement the EPSEN Act in its entirety particularly the sections on assessments, IEPs, appeals processes and co-ordination between schools and health services, and update the Act's provisions to reflect a Social Model/Human Rights understanding of disability and best practices for inclusive education under the UNCRPD and UNCRC (United Nations Convention on the Rights of the Child);**
- **Increased training and opportunities for professional development for teachers and SNAs, on training which focuses on child-centred, neuro-affirmative approaches to supporting Autistic pupils and pupils at school. This has been highlighted by many teachers and SNAs as a key barrier to pupils receiving an education in their local school and can leave families who are looking to access individualised supports to meet their child's needs having navigate waiting lists and to travel considerable distances to access a school place;**

- More consistent data collection to so that the Department can better anticipate future needs and to better support Autistic and disabled children to access an education in their local school;
- Recognition of the intrinsic role of Special Needs Assistants, support teachers and therapists, and provide for their inclusion across the education system, including mainstream classrooms and schools. Also provide for the right for all students to access reasonable accommodations and an accessible curriculum at school;
- Provision for the regulation of Codes of Behaviour to be accessible and to Autistic pupils and for practices to be inclusive and neuro-affirmative;
- Statutory guidelines which aim to reduce the use suspensions and expulsions to discipline children;
- Statutory guidelines for the regulation of seclusion and restraint with a view towards phasing out this practice in the medium term;
- Set up a statutory footing around the provision of Individual Education Plans, including a right to full educational assessments for children with additional education support needs;
- Expansion of the role Children’s Disability Network Teams within across a range of education settings, to ensure that pupils can access Speech and Language Therapists, Occupational Therapists and Psychologists that meet their needs in their locality and there is greater investment on disability services in conjunction with Progressing Disability Services, so that greater co-ordination between the health and education system to meet these needs accordingly at the point of need.
- Better communication and co-ordination between other departments/divisions/agencies regarding the delivery of services, for example the school transport scheme.
- Statutory guidelines which regulate the use of reduced timetables, suspensions and expulsions, and behaviourist interventions, such as Applied Behavioural

Analysis and Positive Behavioural Support, with a view to phasing out these practices over the medium term;

- Implementing the Optional Protocol of the UNCRPD so that disabled people and families can seek timely remedies to any breaches of their education rights under Article 24;
- Incorporating access to alternative education frameworks such as (iScoil) within an inclusive education framework, and allowing opportunities for the child who avail of these frameworks to return to school based on their will and preferences;
- Replace the title of EPSEN Act with the Inclusive Education Act.