



**An Roinn Coimirce Sóisialaí  
Department of Social Protection**

[www.welfare.ie](http://www.welfare.ie)

**Minister Burton launches National Advocacy Service for  
People with Disabilities**

"Equality is at the heart of what it means to be a citizen in our democracy. This Government believes that everyone has the right to be free from discrimination and that we all benefit from living in a more equal society", said the Minister for Social Protection, Joan Burton TD, today (30<sup>th</sup> March 2011) as she launched the National Advocacy Service for people with disabilities.

"This message from the Programme for Government is very relevant today as we launch a service whereby a trained independent person who, on the basis of understanding a client's needs and wishes, will advise and support that client to make a decision or claim an entitlement and who will, if appropriate, go on to negotiate or make a case for them."

The National Advocacy Service, which will be managed by five Citizens Information Services in five regions across the country, will work with vulnerable people with disabilities in institutions and in the community. It will provide a professional, independent, mainstream representative advocacy service to those people with a disability that require such a service.

Minister Burton continued: "The national element of the service means that on the ground it will be available on an equal basis to any individual with a disability who needs it; the fact that it is organised in five regions means that it will be accessible with no client too far from an advocate; and the configuration of the service with five dedicated managers employed by the Citizens Information Services and the support of the Citizens Information Board means that it will be a high quality service with consistent standards throughout."

Minister Burton went on to explain: "A major function of advocacy is to assist these people by providing an independent guide to services and options, someone to assist them at official proceedings and, in some instances, through the move to living in the community. It is particularly important that an independent person is available to them where they are totally dependent on a single service provider. Essentially the service will level the playing field and provide a voice for the more vulnerable of people with disabilities".

Minister Burton concluded by thanking the staff of the Citizens Information Services and the Citizens Information Board and the organisations which contributed to the pilot programme. The Minister also wished the advocates and their managers who are embarking on this chapter in the development of

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Press Office



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a truly valuable service for people with disabilities in Ireland every success in their work

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