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# Finian McGrath pledges to ratify convention on people with disabilities

‘Dumping’ of relatives in institutions a key matter of concern in Government strategy

Fri, Jul 14, 2017, 18:36

**Kitty Holland**



Minister of State with Responsibility for Disability Issues Finian McGrath: “My job is to get those people out of those institutions that want to go, and get supports in place for them.” Photograph: Dave Meehan

Legal disagreement over whether families should be allowed to “dump” disabled relatives in institutions is one of the key factors delaying ratification of the UN Convention on the

Rights of People with Disabilities, according to a Minister. Minister of State with Responsibility for Disability Issues Finian McGrath said he “100 per cent” wanted to see the convention ratified, but he was still “sorting out a couple of matters in relation to legislation”.

Mr McGrath said in May last year the convention would be ratified “within six months”. Ireland signed the framework in 2007, but has not yet made it legally binding by ratifying the convention, making the Republic the only country in the EU not to have done so.

Asked what the ongoing legal obstacles were, Mr McGrath said: “The two key issues are deprivation of liberty and legislation on assisted decision-making.

“There’s a big debate going on behind the scenes with families. If there is a person with a disability who doesn’t want to go into a residential place, some of the families would be very, very concerned about that.”

He said there was a “clash of rights” between those of families who want to place disabled loved ones in an institutional setting, and the rights of disabled people who did not want to be there. This needed to be resolved legally.

He said he agreed with disability campaigners who have described this placing of relatives in institutions as akin to “kidnapping” or being “dumped” out of society.

Desire to leave

“Absolutely and I am on their page. I visited one [institution] recently in the southeast and one young man called me aside and said, ‘Finian, get me out of here . . . I want to have my own place. I want to have my breakfast and dinner when I want, watch my own television in my own bedroom’. And he was in this institution.”

He said the man was in his early 30s and had been placed there when he “about seven”.

“My job is to get those people out of those institutions that want to go, and get supports in place for them.”

He said 233 people would be supported to move out of such

settings this year

Mr McGrath was speaking to media at the publication of a new National Disability Inclusion Strategy in Dublin. The 47-page strategy sets out 114 actions to be taken between now and the end of 2021, across eight areas, including education, employment, housing, transport and accessible places, and person-centred disability services. The strategy will, if implemented, impact positively on the lives of about 600,000 people.

Also at the publication were Minister for Health **Simon Harris**, Minister for Social Protection **Regina Doherty**, Minister for Transport **Shane Ross** and Minister of State **Kevin Boxer Moran**. They said this reflected the “all-of-Government” support for the new strategy.

Some €1.654 billion will be put into services underpinning it. Among its actions is one to “introduce statutory safeguards to protect residents of nursing homes and residential centres and ensure they are not deprived of liberty save in accordance with the law and as a last-resort measure in exceptional circumstances”.