



## **PRESS STATEMENT**

### **Intellectual Disabilities National Plan**

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**MINISTER OF SOCIAL DEVELOPMENT AND SENIORS**

**18 May 2022**

Good Morning.

It is with great pleasure that I announce the start of our consultation on a National Plan for People with Intellectual Disabilities and their families.

Intellectual disability is recognized internationally as the term that describes people who have:

- a significantly reduced ability to understand new or complex information, to learn new skills with
- a significantly reduced ability to cope independently (impaired and or social functioning) and
- Which is apparent before adulthood is reached and has a lasting effect on development

On island, there are an estimated four to five hundred adults with intellectual disabilities, and 125 children. People with intellectual disabilities experience higher incidents of challenges with health, education, behavior, financial, vocational opportunities, family supports and other personal circumstances. In Bermuda, the majority of persons live at home but most require a range of support services for at least one aspect of their daily lives. A significant number may require full time residential care.

The need for a Plan arose from service organizations and families seeing significant gaps in our system for adults with intellectual disabilities, especially those with more complex needs. The Plan development will occur in a phase approach addressing first the gaps associated with persons who are 14 years and older with intellectual disabilities for

which it is identified supportive services become significantly reduced. We do not have a single agency or sector with overall responsibility for providing the support needed to adults with intellectual disabilities. Accordingly, the draft Plan is a result of cross Ministry and sector collaboration.

We are very appreciative of our partnership with the Mid-Atlantic Wellness Institute who have spearheaded this Plan with the support of the Ministry of Health and the Ministry of Education.

A Steering Committee of committed and passionate community and government stakeholders was established to draft the Plan. Members included key charities including Windreach and Tomorrow's Voices, public service providers across the three Ministries, as well as advocates and family representatives. I am very thankful for their work in drafting this Plan and their ongoing commitment to seeing its implementation.

The Plan is to be the key guiding document for the next five years to coordinate service provision and development, and to address critical gaps impacting the lives of persons with intellectual disabilities and their families. This Plan is about building supportive environments and empowering people.

**The Plan aims to enable people with intellectual disabilities to:**

1. Live long and healthy lives
2. Be able to make choices and be in control of their lives
3. Feel happy, safe and supported
4. Lead fulfilling and active lives
5. Be respected and treated with dignity

To reach this aim, the Plan sets out 5 priority areas with objectives for each. The priority areas are:

- Quality;
- Education & workforce;
- Policy, regulation & accountability;
- Financing; and
- Advocacy & Communications

Annually, key stakeholders will set action plans to achieve the objectives and report back to the Ministry and public. Annual actions plans will include for example, steps to achieve Throne speech initiatives such as the Disability Register as well as coordinated service improvement and development across the sector.

Involving persons with intellectual disabilities in the Plan's development and implementation is essential. For this purpose, an easy to read summary of the Plan, using photosymbols and an audio recording are available. We will be holding consultation directly with persons with intellectual disabilities and ensuring they are represented on the Stakeholder Oversight Group.

The consultation period is May 17-31<sup>st</sup>. The draft Plan, and the easy to read and audio summary versions, are on the government consultation site [forum.gov.bm](http://forum.gov.bm).

A virtual town hall consultation process will be on May 24<sup>th</sup> at 6.30pm.

I encourage all people to review and provide feedback on the Plan in order to help ensure we strengthen the support and inclusion of intellectual disabilities on our island.

Thank you.

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