

DWI Statement on supporting disabled people arriving in Ireland from Ukraine

Disabled Women Ireland stands with the disabled community in Ukraine and want to acknowledge the work of our colleagues in DPOs (Disabled People's Organisations) throughout Ukraine in doing all they can to raise the issue of disabled people and their experiences of the ongoing war. DPOs have led the way in raising awareness of disabled people and their concerns as well as being at the forefront of supporting safe evacuations for people who chose to leave. Many, often small, DPOs have been left doing the job of the large international agencies whose response has not met the unique needs of disabled people.

As we welcome disabled people who have fled war in Ukraine, it is essential that they are well supported from the moment they enter this country. While some may have received disability supports in Ukraine, others may have acquired their disability on their route to the border and be unaware of what supports they need. It is essential that all disabled people are made aware of the supports that are available to them in Ireland. Many disabled people will not have English as a second language, so it is important that all information is provided to them in a language that they understand, and that all information be made available in accessible formats such including Easy to Read information.

It is important to acknowledge the faults in our current system as well as the increased demand that the war in Ukraine will bring to our disability support services which are already over stretched. Many of our members talk about broken systems and we fear that some people may fall through the gaps. It is imperative that Government sit down with DPOs and hear directly from disabled people to ensure the rights of the new members of our community do not fall short of the highest standards.

Disabled Women Ireland are ready to welcome disabled women and other gender minority people from Ukraine into our community and to help in whatever way we can.