

Guide to starting a Changing Places campaign



Produced by the Changing Places Ireland Steering Group

Getting started

The most successful campaigns are the result of a group of people working together. This can make things easier as people will bring different skills, knowledge and experience to the table. You can start by getting a few people together who also feel strongly about this issue including individuals who are directly affected by the lack of a Changing Places.



Another way of getting started may be to set up a 'working group' as part of an existing community group that could focus specifically on a Changing Places campaign.

Gathering information and building your case

When starting a campaign, it is important to be informed about the issue. Gather information and facts in order to build your case.



1. What is involved in installing a Changing Places?

Know what this entails and the specification necessary to install and register a Changing Places facility. Visit the Changing Places Ireland website, www.changingplaces.ie, for further information on the specifications.

At a later stage in the campaign, visiting a Changing Places facility could be a very useful exercise.

2. Who is affected by the lack of a Changing Places?

Contact relevant organisations and agencies working with disabled people and older people to find out more about the issues. Talk to someone who needs a Changing Places about the difference it would make in their life if they had convenient access to one. This could be written up as a case study. See Changing Places UK for examples of personal stories. www.changing-places.org

3. What does public policy say?

As of yet, there is no national Government strategy to deliver Changing Places facilities in Ireland. Local authorities, on an individual basis, have started to recognise the need that exists for Changing Places in their area and have been working with the Changing Places Ireland Steering Group to make this happen.



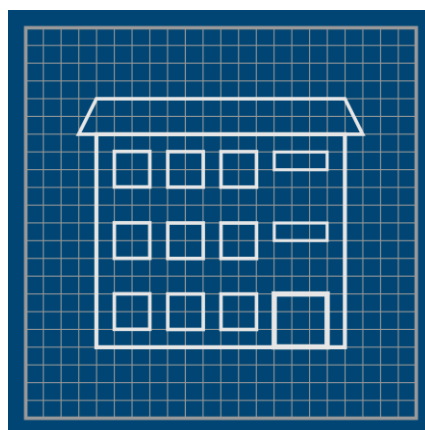
This is why it is important to contact your public representatives in your local council, your TD or a Senator to let them know that Changing Places are important to you and that you want the Government to make these facilities a priority. However, there may be opportunities to raise the issue of Universal Design as outlined in Appendix 1.

4. Where is the nearest Changing Places facility?

As there are only a very small number of Changing Places in Ireland, it is likely that there will not be a facility in your county or perhaps your region. Know where the nearest one is to you, what is the distance to the Changing Places facility from your home? How long would it take you to get there? This adds weight to your argument because it shows the difficulties that people go through in order to access a Changing Places currently.

5. Any plans in your area/region for a Changing Places?

Find out from your local authority if any public or private bodies have plans for a Changing Places in your area. Making contact with the Council is a way of building relationships and letting them know that you are starting a campaign. Ask them to keep you informed of any relevant developments.



6. Is a CP facility on anyone else's agenda?

Find out if any other organisations or networks are working on this issue. Contact relevant organisations, community and issue based such as Age Action, the Irish Wheelchair Association or Disability Federation of Ireland and so on. The Public Participation Network (PPN) may know if it is on the agenda of any community groups. The PPN has a register of all groups and each Network has a Resource Worker.

www.drcd.gov.ie/list-of-ppn-website/



7. Where might be the best location for a Changing Places?

Large public places can be good locations, places such as:

- Local authority buildings.
- Train and bus stations, airports and motorway service stations.
- Hospitals.
- Shopping centres.
- Universities and student unions.
- Sports, leisure and entertainment centres.
- Galleries, museums and heritage centres.



Developing your campaign plan

The information you have now gathered should help to inform your campaign plan and help you decide the following:

- The number of Changing Places you aim to get installed. (You might decide on one, particularly if there is none at all in the county)
- The best location that would make the most difference for people.
- Organisations and businesses most likely to install a Changing Places facility.
- New construction projects being planned that could incorporate a Changing Places facility.



Some key points to consider when developing a plan:

- What are your goals?
- How are you going to achieve them?
- What resources do you have and what resources will you need? (funding, meeting place, people with specific skills)
- What will be the role of the media?
- What groups and organisations should you link in with?

A leaflet about your campaign

Having a leaflet or flyer is very useful in publicising your campaign and raising awareness of the issue. This could include a summary of:

- Who you are.
- What the problem is and who is affected.
- What a Changing Places is.
- What needs to change.
- Your plan to get a Changing Places installed.

Keep the leaflet short and simple, using clear language. Draw up a mailing list of who should read it, which could include councillors and council officials, media and your allies – local, regional and national organisations.

Gaining support

Developing relationships within the community and with different organisations is vital to strengthening your campaign. In undertaking the steps above, you will have already started this process.

Building alliances with regional and national organisations is also vital. Sharing ideas and information could even reduce the amount of work you have to do! In other parts of the country there may be a similar campaign happening.



A campaign that has the support of the public can have a greater chance of succeeding. Encouraging people in your community to offer their support can give your campaign momentum. This could involve distributing leaflets, signing a petition or participating in other activities organised.

Approaching the right people

Now that you have your plan and have decided on the general location and the best place for the installation of a Changing Places, you need to talk to the right people to get them on board. Who you talk to will be determined by the venue and location you have decided on. It may be:

- Public sector organisations, like the county council
- Private sector organisations, like supermarkets, businesses



Public sector – approaching your county council

If your goal is to get a Changing Places installed in a large public building in your county, the best option may be to approach your Council. Many buildings owned by local authorities are centrally located and open to the public. Apart from their main offices, councils own or manage many buildings such as arts centres, libraries and leisure centres.

There are many ways to approach your local authority to discuss how they can support your campaign to get a Changing Places facility installed in your area. You may know some councillors already or officials so this may help you decide your first approach.

Here are some suggestions to get a Changing Places on the Council's agenda:

- Meet the Access Officer, Equality or Inclusion Officers (titles vary) to get an overview of the Council's approach to access issues.
- Meet your local Councillors and ask them to submit a 'motion' at a meeting of the Council calling on it to install a Changing Places (See Appendix 2 for a sample). A presentation at a Council meeting on the campaign could also be requested.
- Make contact with the Disability Consultative Committee to get a Changing Places facility on their agenda.
- Find out when the next County Development Plan is being drafted. Make a submission arguing that it should include a Changing Places facility to ensure 'socially and physically inclusive neighbourhoods'. Having such a clause is vital when holding the Council to account on their plan.

New buildings

Applications for new buildings have to be approved by councils. They must take into account the needs of disabled people when considering applications. This can present a great opportunity as it is cheaper and easier to install Changing Places facilities if they are included at the start of the planning process.



Find out from the Council if there are plans for new public buildings like a shopping centre, supermarket or leisure centres.

Private sector – approaching a business

Making a direct approach to a private company or business can also be part of your campaign strategy. Places could include motorway service stations, shopping centres, leisure centres and cinemas.

Before approaching a company, some things to consider:

- What is the most likely business that would consider installing a Changing Places?
- Where is the most footfall in the local town?
- It's good for business – economic reasons and benefits.

Get the Changing Places installed

At this stage, you will have an agreement from a public body or a business that they will install a Changing Places. The location and venue is agreed, the plan now just needs to be implemented! Much campaigning is about PERSISTENCE so the work continues to make sure it will happen by keeping the pressure on to ensure it does.



Celebrate!

When the Changing Places is finally installed it's time to celebrate. Congratulations, you have reached your goal!



Hold a fun event, ask your local media to attend the event to promote the facility, and acknowledge and celebrate the achievements of the campaign.

Appendix 1 - Policy

The Building Regulations Part M sets out the statutory minimum design, requiring that “adequate provision shall be made for people to access and use a building, its facilities and its environs” and those involved in the design of buildings must “foster an inclusive approach to the design and construction of the built environment” and adequately provide for all people regardless of their age, size or disability.

It also indicates that the requirements of Part M underpin the principle of ‘Universal Design’ which is “the design and composition of an environment so that it can be accessed, understood and used to the greatest extent possible by all people regardless of their age, size, ability or disability”.

The Department of Housing, Planning and Local Government state building owners and designers are encouraged “to have regard to the design philosophy of universal design and to consider making additional provisions, where practicable and appropriate”.

Appendix 2 - Campaign Tools

Example motions for County Councillors:

“That this Council commits to the installation of “changing places” (fully accessible toilets that include additional features such as: height-adjustable, adult-sized changing benches; ceiling track hoist systems; height-adjustable sinks; adequate space for a person with a disability and up to two assistants; centrally located toilet bowls with space both sides for assistants; privacy screens; wide paper rolls; and large waste disposal bins) in County Council public buildings throughout the county.”

“That ... County Council seek funding from relevant Department to install a ‘Changing Places’ facility in ... town as current standard disabled toilets do not meet the needs of all people with disabilities. This would ensure that those with specific needs are not excluded from participating in social, cultural and economic activities.”

“That the Chief Executive ensures there is at least one “Changing Places” installed in this County with the next years.”

Further information

Changing Places Ireland

<https://changingplaces.ie/>

Changing Places UK – Take Action

Running a local campaign. Who to contact; Writing to the government.
Telling people about the campaign

http://www.changing-places.org/get_involved/take_action.aspx

A Guide to Effective Lobbying for Women’s Groups in Ireland

http://www.nwci.ie/download/pdf/nwci_lobbying_final.pdf