

## Irish Language Scheme 2008–2011

### Chapter 1: Introduction and Background

The Citizens Information Board has prepared this Irish Language Scheme under Section 11 of the Official Languages Act 2003. The Scheme was prepared in accordance with Guidelines under Section 12 of the Official Languages Act, which were prepared by the Department of Community, Rural and Gaeltacht affairs.

Section 11 of the Act provides for the preparation by public bodies of an Irish Language scheme detailing services provided

- ✓ Through Irish
- ✓ Through English, and
- ✓ Through Irish and English

A notice of intention to prepare a scheme and inviting submissions in this regard was published in the national press on 24<sup>th</sup> May 2007. Submissions were also sought from Citizens Information Board customers and staff.

The Citizens Information Board recognises the right of our customers to conduct their business with us through Irish if that is their preferred choice. The CIB will endeavour to ensure more of our services are provided through the Irish Language and are committed to implementing the provisions of the Official Languages Act. This will be done gradually, building on existing arrangements for the provision of services in this first scheme which will be developed in line with both demand for services and available resources.

This scheme includes a brief overview of the Citizens Information Board, the services we provide and the level of services already available through Irish, English and bilingually. This scheme sets out to improve our service provision in Irish.

This scheme has been confirmed by the Minister for Community, Rural and Gaeltacht Affairs. The scheme is commenced with effect from the 1<sup>st</sup> July 2008 and shall remain in force for a period of 3 years from this date or until a new scheme has been confirmed

by the Minister pursuant to Section 15 of the Official Languages Act, whichever is earlier.

**Who we are and What we do.**

The Citizens Information Board (CIB) was established as a statutory body under the Comhairle Act 2000. This Act was amended by the Citizens Information Act 2007, which also changed the name of the organisation to the Citizens Information Board. The Citizens Information Board is responsible for supporting the provision of information, advice and advocacy services to members of the public on a wide range of social and civil services.

The Citizens Information Board's mandate, as defined by the Acts, is:

- To ensure that individuals have access to accurate, comprehensive and clear information relating to social services
- To promote greater accessibility, co-ordination and public awareness of social services
- To support, promote and develop the provision of information on the effectiveness of current social policy and services; and to highlight issues which are of concern to users of those services
- To support the provision of or directly provide advocacy services for people with a disability

***Citizens Information Strategic Plan 2006–2009***

This strategic plan consolidates the work of the previous years during which the Citizens Information Board developed the production and delivery of integrated high-quality information, advice and advocacy. It also takes into account the Citizens Information Act, legislation that has changed the name of the organisation and expanded its remit. An important objective of the new strategy is to increase public awareness of the Citizens Information brand. Another key theme is the development and expansion of advocacy services particularly the new Personal Advocacy Service aimed at people with a disability.

*The aim of the Strategic Plan 2006–2009 is to ensure that all individuals have easy access to high quality, independent information, advice and advocacy services so they can identify their needs and access their entitlements to social and civil services.*

The plan is built around four strategic priorities. Each priority is further broken down into two or more objectives linked to specific actions and indicators. A detailed implementation plan identifies the tasks associated with each action and sets out a

timeframe for the implementation of each task. This implementation plan is reviewed twice yearly. The priorities are outlined below.

**Strategic Priority 1: Integrated Information**

Produce high quality customer-focused and integrated information on all aspects of social and civil services to assist people in securing their rights and entitlements.

**Strategic Priority 2: Service Delivery**

Ensure the delivery of customer-focused information, advice and advocacy services through a range of accessible web-based, phone, and face-to-face delivery channels, as well as emerging technologies.

**Strategic Priority 3: Advocacy and Social Policy Development**

Develop and facilitate advocacy services, particularly for people with disabilities, and influence policy developments and administrative systems and procedures.

**Strategic Priority 4: Accessibility**

Enhance accessibility to information, advice and advocacy services with particular reference to vulnerable groups and those most in need.

The Citizens Information Board has a statutory commitment to assist and support people, including those with disabilities, in identifying and understanding their needs and options in accessing their entitlements to information on social and civil services. The CIB's core activity is the production of civil and social service materials and resources for information providers. Services include:

***Provision of Information Resources***

***Online Resources***

The Citizens Information Board website, [www.citizensinformationboard.ie](http://www.citizensinformationboard.ie), provides comprehensive details on its services and links to other information resources.

The Citizens Information website, [www.citizensinformation.ie](http://www.citizensinformation.ie), delivers highly accessible, accurate public service information on the social and civil rights of everyone in Ireland. This online information uses the innovative method of structuring information around key life events. [www.citizensinformation.ie](http://www.citizensinformation.ie) covers an exhaustive range of subjects, including employment rights, buying a home, moving abroad, education and much more. The information is divided into 14 categories so that users can readily access the topic relevant to them. Straightforward, accurate, and comprehensive the information is sourced from a wide variety of service providers and agencies. Each category addresses a series of frequently asked questions on the topic which is supported with a wealth of

in depth information, informative case studies, supporting documents and downloadable forms.

The website has a range of features such as a *'find an address'* tool which enables people to contact over 8,000 service providers and government bodies nationwide, and a *My Information* facility. Using the *My Information* feature, users can create their own accounts to store links to information and documents of personal relevance in addition to setting their own preferences for things such language or type size. All content is available in both English and Irish and with over 1200 documents available in Irish it is one of the state's largest repositories of information in the Irish Language. In a drive for greater accessibility to accommodate the diverse backgrounds of the rapidly growing immigrant community, relevant content on [www.citizensinformation.ie](http://www.citizensinformation.ie) is published in Polish, French and Romanian. The site has also been designed to be accessible to users with disabilities, who may need to use Assistive Technologies to access the site.

### ***Assistive Technology***

The CIB has developed an assistive technology database and related telephone helpline as an integrated online source of information on technical aids and appliances for people with disabilities in Ireland.

The core objective of this is the provision of a comprehensive resource containing relevant information on products, suppliers and resources related to disability and daily living. This online information repository has been developed in consultation with disability organisations, support services and service providers throughout Ireland and further a field. The Assist Ireland website is available at [www.assistireland.ie](http://www.assistireland.ie).

### ***Information publications***

The Citizens Information Board produces a diverse range of information publications and social policy reports. These publications include RELATE – a monthly information bulletin – and a range of booklets on entitlements.

Publications are available on the CIB website. A full list can be obtained from Head Office, in Ballsbridge, Dublin 4, or from the Citizens Information Board website at [www.citizensinformationbaord.ie](http://www.citizensinformationbaord.ie).

The CIB also provides information grants to a range of organisations throughout the country (including voluntary groups, community groups and the CIC network). In addition an Information "Ask a Question" query service is available to information providers.

### ***Regional Services***

The Citizens Information Board Regional Services assist and promote the development and delivery of information services through:

- the provision of funding, information products and general support to a range of information providing agencies, particularly the network of Citizen Information Services and the Citizens Information Phone Service.
- ongoing delivery of customised training courses aimed at the development needs of information providers.
- Development and co-ordination of information and advocacy initiatives, in partnership with other organisations, aimed primarily at marginalised groups.

### ***Customer Service & Training***

The Customer Service & Training team seek to ensure that the CIB customers have access to high quality training services to enable them to deliver quality information, advice and advocacy services to all. It delivers and supports the delivery of the accredited Information Providers Programme throughout the country catering for the network of CISs and other information-providing organisations in the voluntary, community and public sectors.

### ***Social Policy***

The Citizens Information Board contributes to the development of national social policy by collecting feedback on the policy concerns identified by CIB, CISs and CIPS and other providers of independent information and advice services. Social policy research & reports are available in print and on the Citizens Information Board website.

### ***Advocacy & Accessibility***

The Citizens Information Board promotes advocacy in a number of ways by bringing social policy issues to the attention of the Government, supporting the development of advocacy services within the CISs and providing resources to a number of advocacy projects in the voluntary and community sector. From time to time it commissions research to further the understanding of advocacy and the services and supports required for its development.

The Citizens Information Act 2007 provides for a personal advocacy service specifically aimed at people with disabilities.

### **CIB Staff and Office Locations**

Currently there are over 100 CIB staff located in 15 locations nationwide. There are over 50 staff based in our Head Office, in Ballsbridge Dublin 4. Regional staff are based in the remaining 14 locations throughout the country. Head Office functions include Information Production, Information Publications & Social Policy, Customer Service & Training and ICT along with support services such as HR, Finance and PR.

None of the CIB offices are located in a Gaeltacht area.

### **CIB Clients and Stakeholders**

An examination of The Citizens Information Board customers indicates a varied and wide-ranging cross-section of customers, many of whom interact with more than one section of the CIB. Customers include members of the general public making use of the online resources, readers of various information publications, the nationwide network of Citizens Information Services (CIS), the Citizens Information Phone Service (CIPS) and a broad range of voluntary, community, not-for-profit and statutory organisations. A high-level listing of CIB's main customer groups is provided below.

The main Citizens Information Board customer groups include: –

- The general public including particular sectors such as over 60s, school-leavers, people with disabilities, etc.
- Citizens Information Services & the Citizens Information Phone Service
- Other voluntary or not-for-profit public information services, e.g. Refugee Information Service, FLAC, Youth Information Services, etc.
- Community & voluntary sector organisations, including disability organisations
- The Department of Social & Family Affairs, other Government Departments, State agencies, local authorities, and health agencies
- Internal customers i.e. the staff of The Citizens Information Board as internal customers

## Chapter 2: Preparing the Scheme

The Citizens Information Board undertook the following consultation process in preparation for this scheme:

- In accordance with Section 13(1)(a) of the Act, the Citizens Information Board published a notice of intention to prepare such a scheme. Bilingual advertisements inviting submissions from the public on the preparation of the scheme were placed in the national press, on the CIB website . A copy of this notice can be found in Appendix 1. There were two submissions received during the consultation phase. Both can be found in Appendix 2.
- In addition, the CIB sought submissions from a sample group of CIB customers in May 2007.
- CIB staff were notified and submissions were sought.
- A Working Group comprised of a number of staff from a variety of service teams to co-ordinate the draft scheme was established internally.
- An internal audit of services requested through Irish and an examination of the proficiency levels of staff and their capacity to deal with clients through Irish was carried out.

## Chapter 3: Summary of Services provided in Irish

### Online Resources

The **CIB website**, [www.citizensinformationboard.ie](http://www.citizensinformationboard.ie), details the services provided by the CIB. The site provides a limited Irish language option. A number of publications, e.g. the Annual Report, the Strategic Plan and the Information Age booklet for older people are available in Irish on the CIB website.

The **Citizens Information website**, [www.citizensinformation.ie](http://www.citizensinformation.ie), covers an exhaustive range of subjects, including employment rights, buying a home, moving abroad, education and much more. The information is divided into 14 categories so that users can readily access the topic relevant to them. This online resource is entirely provided and maintained by the CIB. Over 1200 individual documents have been translated into Irish to make the website fully bilingual.

This website provides all its information in both English and Irish. All information pages are available in both languages and users can choose their preferred language option at various points in the website.

The “Ask a Question” online advice service is a service provided via the Citizens Information website. This information service will be upgraded to be of bilingual format by the end of the scheme. It should be noted that currently all queries received through this service in Irish will be responded to in Irish.

The [www.assistireland.ie](http://www.assistireland.ie) is an online resource which provides information on over 6000 products and appliances designed to assist people with disabilities and older people in their daily living. This service is available in English only.

### Publications

For a number of years the Annual Report and Strategy documents have been published bilingually in accordance with section 10 of the Official Languages Act. The Information Age publication was also produced in both Irish & English.

All other CIB information publications are produced in English. However all of the information in these publications is available on the Citizens Information website all of which is in both English and Irish as described above.

## **Chapter 4: Plans to Increase service Provision through Irish**

### **Personal Contact.**

Staff on the CIB head office switchboard will be trained to respond to telephone enquiries made through Irish by the end of the scheme. Training will be provided to all staff who provide receptionist duties so that by January 1<sup>st</sup> 2010 they will

- ✓ Be able to give the name of the organisation in Irish
- ✓ Be familiar with the basic greetings in Irish and
- ✓ Be able to put members of the public, in touch speedily with whatever office or officer is responsible for offering the service through Irish where available.

The CIB has identified 4 staff both in Head Office and in the Regional Offices who have the level of proficiency required to support such service provision through Irish. It should be noted that the nature of the business of the CIB is such that counter services are not provided to the general public.

There will be a search capability on the staff listing on the CIB website to indicate staff who have the ability to provide services through Irish.

The Customer Service Charter will be available bilingually when it is revised in 2009.

### **Recruitment**

Recruitment policy will be reviewed in the context of proficiency in the Irish language being a business requirement for a number of positions.

### **Publications**

The CIB plans to increase the number of publications printed in Irish by translating existing information leaflets and fact-sheets on a phased basis. By the end of the current scheme the CIB will provide 75% of leaflets / fact-sheets in both languages. Leaflets and fact-sheets will be provided bilingually within the one document, except where this is not feasible because of the nature and size of the document.

By the end of the scheme all Social Policy Reports will provide an Executive Summary in Irish.

Currently all information in the CIB information booklets is available on the Citizens Information website in both Irish and English.

### **Website & ICT**

The Citizens Information website, [www.citizensinformation.ie](http://www.citizensinformation.ie), will be maintained as a completely bilingual website.

By the end of the first year of the scheme a generic email address for queries in Irish will be established. These queries will be answered promptly by bilingual staff.

The CIB will increase the amount of information in Irish available on its website [www.citizensinformationboard.ie](http://www.citizensinformationboard.ie). By the end of the scheme, 20% of static content web pages, including the “About Us” section will be available in both languages.

The Assistive Technology database will be fully bilingual by the end of the 2<sup>nd</sup> scheme.

The CIB will ensure that new computer services to CIB customers will be fully capable of handling the Irish language and that existing systems will, where necessary, be made compatible in conjunction with the next suitable planned maintenance or upgrade work.

Where the CIB introduce on-line interactive services in the future, these will be bilingual.

### **Staff Awareness & Training**

The CIB Staff Induction training will now include a language awareness section and will detail staff responsibilities in relation to the provision of services through Irish.

The CIB will encourage training in Irish through PMDS. The CIB have always supported staff who studied Irish including the reimbursement of fees and the granting of study Leave. From the commencement of the scheme staff throughout the organisation will be actively encouraged to undertake training in the Irish Language.

A simple Irish lesson will be posted monthly on the CIB Intranet.

Handbook of relevant vocabulary to be developed and circulated to all staff  
Staff who volunteer to provide services through Irish will be given all necessary support.

## Chapter 6: The Future

### Assessing Demand

The CIB will carry out periodic audits of demand for the provision of services through Irish. An audit was carried out directly before the commencement of the scheme which will provide a useful benchmark going forward. The websites pages in Irish will also be monitored to assess levels of use.

### Monitoring & Revision.

The CIB Irish Language scheme will be reviewed annually over its lifetime by CIB management and will be reported to the Board.

The day to day operation of the scheme, along with ongoing monitoring of the level of demand for the various services will be the responsibility of the HR & Admin Manager.

### Communicating the approved Scheme

The provisions of the approved scheme will be brought to the attention of the public as follows:

- ✓ The scheme itself and subsequent updates and reviews will be published on the CIB website and reported on in Annual Reports.
- ✓ The scheme will be circulated to those who made submissions on the scheme, to Irish Language organisations, to the network of CISs and to all staff.
- ✓ A copy of the scheme will be forwarded to Oifig Choimisinéir na dTeangacha Oifigiúla for inclusion on their website [www.coimisineir.ie](http://www.coimisineir.ie)