

The Northern Ireland Assembly Commission **Draft Disability Action Plan 2025-2030**



Alternative Formats

You can access and read this document on our website:

<https://www.niassembly.gov.uk/dap25-30-consultation>

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Foreword by the Speaker and Clerk/Chief Executive

The Northern Ireland Assembly Commission is committed to ensuring that people with disabilities can engage fully in the work of the Assembly and to identifying potential barriers to that participation. We are therefore pleased to consult on this draft Disability Action Plan for the 2025 to 2030 period.

This draft Disability Action Plan 2025-2030 sets out how the Northern Ireland Assembly Commission proposes to meet its statutory obligations under the Disability Discrimination Act 1995. This Act places duties on public authorities, when carrying out their functions, to have due regard to the need to:

- promote positive attitudes towards people with disabilities; and
- encourage participation by people with disabilities in public life.

To that end, the draft Disability Action Plan 2025-2030 includes proposed actions covering a range of areas, from staff training to public engagement and access to information and services.

We encourage you to respond to this consultation to let us know your thoughts on our proposals. We want to make sure that this draft Action Plan will really make a difference to people with disabilities. Your help will be invaluable in helping us to achieve our goal of a fully accessible Assembly.

The Speaker
Edwin Poots MLA



Clerk/Chief Executive
Lesley Hogg



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Introduction

The Northern Ireland Assembly Commission (the ‘Assembly Commission’) strives to meet all of its obligations arising under Sections 49A and 49B of the Disability Discrimination Act 1995.

Section 49A of the Disability Discrimination Act 1995 says that the Assembly Commission must:

- **promote positive attitudes towards disabled people, and**
- **encourage participation by disabled people in public life.**

Section 49B says that the Assembly Commission must prepare a Disability Action Plan setting out how it will meet its responsibilities (under Section 49A) and that it must send this Action Plan to the Equality Commission for Northern Ireland (“the Equality Commission”).

A Disability Action Plan covers people with all types of disabilities; for example, physical disabilities, learning disabilities, sensory disabilities, mental health disabilities, and other hidden disabilities.

All the Assembly Commission’s Disability Action Plans are published on our website:

[Assembly Commission Disability Action Plans](#)

Every year, we report on progress on our Disability Action Plan through our annual progress reports to the Equality Commission, and we publish these on our website.

About the Assembly Commission and the Assembly

The main function of the Assembly Commission is to ensure that the Assembly has the property, staff and services it needs to carry out its work.

The staff of the Assembly Commission help to support the Assembly in carrying out its work to make laws for the people of Northern Ireland and to scrutinise the work of Ministers and Government Departments. Staff also ensure that the public has access to information about the work of the Assembly and Assembly Committees.

People visit Parliament Buildings for many reasons; for example, to attend plenary sittings of the Assembly, to attend Assembly Committee meetings or to take part in events and functions. Ordinarily, people can also visit to take a tour of the building, to eat at the restaurant or to take part in the Education Service's education programme, which helps young people to learn about the work of the Assembly.

How we developed our draft Disability Action Plan 2025-2030

Our starting point in developing this draft Disability Action Plan 2025-2030 was to look at everything we had done to make a difference for people who have a disability.

- We looked at what we said we would do in our 2022-2025 Disability Action Plan to see if we achieved it.
- We asked staff what they felt had worked well and what could be improved.

- We looked at the Disability Action Plans of other organisations in the public sector, and we contacted other legislatures to find out what they are doing to help people with disabilities, and to share ideas and good practice.
- We spoke to our External Disability Advisory Group to get their feedback on our draft Disability Action Plan 2025-2030 and to ask for suggestions about improvements we could make.
- We looked at feedback from visitors with disabilities to Parliament Buildings to see what they said about accessibility at Parliament Buildings.

What is included in our Draft Disability Action Plan 2025-2030

The draft Disability Action Plan 2025-2030 sets out how we intend to:

- **promote positive attitudes towards disabled people, and**
- **encourage participation by disabled people in public life.**

The draft Action Plan has six areas that are informed by the guidance that is published by the Equality Commission for drafting a Disability Action Plan. These are:

- 1) Staff Training
- 2) Communications and Feedback
- 3) Engagement and Participation
- 4) Awards, Accreditation and Standards
- 5) Representation
- 6) Monitoring and Reporting

The draft Disability Action Plan 2025-2030 clearly sets out what we want to do over the next five years, when we will do it, and who will do it. We will continue the work that we have done in certain areas under our 2022-2025 Action Plan. For example, we will continue to:

- Strive to retain our Autism Friendly Award and maintain membership of the Disability Confident Scheme;
- Provide sign language interpretation for the Northern Ireland Assembly Question Time and occasional special events;
- Work with RNID and others to provide accessible services for service users who are deaf or with hearing loss; and
- Engage with the Assembly Commission's External Disability Advisory Group, which is made up of disability organisations from across Northern Ireland.

However, the draft Disability Action Plan 2025-2030 now has new actions including:

- All Education and Youth Assembly Officers to complete 'Developing SEND Inclusive Learning with Confidence' course;
- Develop a strategy for communicating the work of the Assembly to engage with a wide and reflective range of communities;
- Encourage SEN schools, and mainstream schools with SEN pupils, to take part in education programmes; and
- Deliver accessible tours of Parliament Buildings.

Our Corporate Strategy and Corporate Plan

The Corporate Strategy guides the direction of the Assembly Commission in providing support, services and advice to the Assembly. The current Strategy covers the five year-period from 2023 to 2028, and it sets out priorities and objectives across four key values: Excellence, Positivity, Integrity and Collaboration.

Many of the actions in the draft Disability Action Plan 2025-2030 will support the work being undertaken through the Corporate Plan 2023-2028, in particular, the objectives to:

- Promote a learning environment to support staff in their careers;
- Make the work of the Assembly more accessible;
- Develop and implement a strategy to communicate the impact of the Assembly;
- Develop and implement a public engagement strategy; and
- Create more opportunities to engage with Committees;

How to have your say on our Disability Action Plan 2025-2030

Public consultation on the draft Disability Action Plan 2025-2030, will take place from **11 November 2024** to **17 February 2025**. The draft Disability Action Plan 2025-2030 is attached, and you can complete a consultation questionnaire via the following link:

<https://lk.nia.fyi/DAP25-30>

On page 2 you will find information about different ways to contact us, should you wish to discuss your needs regarding alternative formats. We will publish the draft Action Plan on our website, and we will let people know about the consultation by advertising in local newspapers and on social media, and by emailing our equality contacts.

We will inform our staff, building users and our Trade Union representatives about the consultation.

We are happy to hold meetings to discuss the draft Action Plan if requested.

At the end of the consultation period we will review all of the responses we received, and consider whether any changes should be made to the draft Action Plan.

We will summarise and consolidate the consultation comments received, and our responses to those comments, into a table called the 'Consultation comments/responses table' which we will publish on our website.

How we will monitor our Disability Action Plan

Once the draft Action Plan is approved, the Assembly Commission's Equality and Good Relations Unit will oversee the monitoring of progress on our Action Plan. We will review progress regularly and provide the Senior Management Team with an update on all of the actions every six months. We will provide an annual update to the Assembly Commission.

These updates will show what we have done to work towards our targets. They will show when actions are complete and whether we are on schedule to meet our targets. They will also show if we are behind on meeting our targets.

We will also use these updates to let people know about any new actions we have added to the Action Plan. These updates will be published on the Assembly website every six months for the public to see our progress.

As well as preparing and publishing progress updates every six months, we will continue to hold meetings with our External Disability Advisory Group to let them know about the work we are doing.

Encouraging the participation of disabled people in public life

The Assembly Commission seeks to fulfil the duty set out in section 49A of the Disability Discrimination 1995 to encourage the participation by disabled people in public life, through our External Disability Advisory Group.

This Group is made up of representatives of disability organisations from across Northern Ireland. Through engagement and meetings with the Group, we keep disability organisations informed about our Plans around disability, and we seek advice and input from Group members on our work. The membership of the group is reviewed every two years.

The Assembly Commission has established a Youth Assembly for Northern Ireland. The Youth Assembly is a platform designed to give young people, including young people with disabilities, the chance to have their voices heard. Members of the Youth Assembly have a unique opportunity to share their views and directly influence decisions taken by the Assembly. Youth Assembly members will discuss the issues that they think are important and put forward their ideas.

We would like to thank all those who have helped us to develop our draft Disability Action Plan 2025-2030.



The Northern Ireland Assembly Commission
Draft Disability Action Plan 2025-2030

Draft Disability Action Plan 2025-2030

Aim 1: Promoting positive attitudes towards disabled people

Corporate Strategy 2023-2028 High Level Objective: Promote a learning environment to support staff in their careers				
Area: Staff Training				
Action	Aims and Objectives	Measurable Outputs	Timescale	Lead Business Area
1. Deliver staff training to ensure staff understand the requirements relating to disability equality legislation and disability awareness.	Ensure staff are up to date with required disability training, how it relates to their work and the importance of being treated with dignity, fairness, equality, and respect.	Development of an eLearning course on Disability Awareness co-produced with disabled people.	Over the lifetime of the plan.	Learning and Development. Equality Unit.
		Monitoring records show training has been delivered to all staff.		
		Evaluation of training shows increase in staff knowledge of disability legislation and related issues.		
2. Offer staff Masterclasses focusing on a range of disabilities.	To raise staff awareness on a range of disabilities and how they impact on people's lives.	Evaluation of Masterclasses shows increase in staff awareness and knowledge.	Over the lifetime of the Action Plan.	Learning and Development.

Corporate Strategy 2023-2028 High Level Objective: Promote a learning environment to support staff in their careers

Area: Staff Training

Action	Aims and Objectives	Measurable Outputs	Timescale	Lead Business Area
3. All Education and Youth Assembly Officers complete the course 'Developing SEND ¹ Inclusive Learning with Confidence'.	Ensure staff are trained in delivery of Educational programmes to SEND groups.	Staff feedback on the value of the course and their preparedness to cater for SEND groups.	All Education and Youth Assembly Officers will have completed training by March 2026.	Education Service and Youth Assembly.
4. Continue to deliver training, and provide guidance, to ensure staff who are content creators/publishers, understand online accessibility and compliance with the requirements set out in relevant regulations ² .	To ensure that staff, who are content creators/publishers, are aware of the latest accessibility guidance and know how to apply it in their work.	All staff involved in creating content or online publishing are offered training.	Over the lifetime of the plan.	Communications Office.
		Monitoring records show training has been delivered to relevant staff.		
		Video guides, advice, and guidance are made available on intranet for all staff and updated as required.	Over the lifetime of the plan.	
	General awareness training on online accessibility is offered once a year to all staff.	Monitoring records show that awareness training has been delivered to interested staff.	Annually.	

¹ SEND refers to Special Educational Needs and Disability.

² [The Public Sector Bodies \(Websites and Mobile Applications\) Accessibility Regulations.](#)

Corporate Strategy 2023-2028 High Level Objective: Promote a learning environment to support staff in their careers

Area: Staff Training

Action	Aims and Objectives	Measurable Outputs	Timescale	Lead Business Area
		Evaluation of training shows increase in staff knowledge.		
	Specialised accessibility training is provided to CMS ³ editors in web team.	Monitoring records show training has been delivered to all relevant staff.	As and when required.	
		Evaluation of training shows increase in staff knowledge of accessibility best practice.		

³ Content Management System.

Corporate Strategy 2023-2028 High Level Objective(s):

1. Make the work of the Assembly more accessible
2. Develop and implement a strategy for communicating the impact of the Assembly

Area: Communication and Feedback

Action	Aims and Objectives	Measurable Outputs	Timescale	Lead Business Area
5. Continually improve the accessibility of our website and digital offerings, and strive for compliance with accessibility regulations.	Complete the website redevelopment project by March 2026 with the aim of addressing potential accessibility barriers ⁴ and creating a site which allows all users to perceive, understand, navigate, interact with and contribute to the site.	Track and consider 80% of user-reported accessibility issues within a 3-month timeframe.	Development stage commenced in Autumn 2024.	Communications Office.
		Consider the top 5 most frequently accessed pages with accessibility barriers with a view to addressing the issues if possible.	Every six months.	
		Conduct annual accessibility audits using tools like WebAIM WAVE to measure against WCAG 2.2 AA standards. Record and report any issues to the IS Office for development support.	Annually.	
		Update website accessibility statement annually based on audit results.	Annually.	

⁴ Addressing accessibility barriers will include colour contrast, keyboard navigation, screen reader compatibility and use of plain English.

Corporate Strategy 2023-2028 High Level Objective(s):

1. Make the work of the Assembly more accessible
2. Develop and implement a strategy for communicating the impact of the Assembly

Area: Communication and Feedback

Action	Aims and Objectives	Measurable Outputs	Timescale	Lead Business Area
	Investigate the feasibility of a Content Strategy to accompany the website redevelopment project that provides direction on how to standardise and present all published information in a more user-friendly and accessible manner for all users.	Establish the parameters for the formulation of a content strategy.	In line with the lifetime of the website redevelopment project.	
		Produce a paper with recommendations for Heads of Business.		
		Establish resource implications to deliver the content strategy recommendations.		
6. Communicating the work of the Assembly.	Provide sign language interpretation for the Northern Ireland Assembly Question Time and occasional special events.	Sign language interpretation (British Sign Language, BSL & Irish Sign Language, ISL) is provided for at one Northern Ireland Assembly Question Time per week, with Question Time to The Executive Office (TEO) always to be interpreted; and that certain special events, such as the first sittings in a new mandate, are sign language	Over the lifetime of the plan.	Parliamentary Services.

Corporate Strategy 2023-2028 High Level Objective(s):

1. Make the work of the Assembly more accessible
2. Develop and implement a strategy for communicating the impact of the Assembly

Area: Communication and Feedback

Action	Aims and Objectives	Measurable Outputs	Timescale	Lead Business Area
		interpreted (subject to availability).		
	The new Assembly website will be compliant with The Public Sector Bodies (Websites and Mobile Applications) Accessibility Regulations 2018.	Manual accessibility website audit conducted.	Two yearly over the lifetime of the plan (2026, 2028 and 2030).	Communications Office.
7. Monitor feedback from the visitor experience in Parliament Buildings with a focus on customer service, public facilities and accessibility to Assembly business.	The Visitor Survey is mainstreamed across services which interface with the public in order to collect data to inform access and service provision.	Visitor survey feedback considered and action taken as appropriate.	Every six months.	RaISe has responsibility for the analysis of survey responses. Public Engagement to forward any issues raised to relevant business area.
8. Identify opportunities to promote positive attitudes	We will have a corporate approach to the use of staff	Review of images used in Assembly communications	Ongoing over the lifetime of the Action Plan.	Communications Office.

Corporate Strategy 2023-2028 High Level Objective(s):

1. Make the work of the Assembly more accessible
2. Develop and implement a strategy for communicating the impact of the Assembly

Area: Communication and Feedback

Action	Aims and Objectives	Measurable Outputs	Timescale	Lead Business Area
of disability through images on the Assembly website, on social media and in Assembly publications.	and visitor images which promote positive attitudes towards disabled people.	to ensure they are representative of people in the community and, where possible, of people engaging with, or participating in, Assembly Commission services, including those with a disability.		

Corporate Strategy 2023-2028 High Level Objective(s):

1. Develop and implement a public engagement strategy
2. Create more opportunities to engage with Committees

Area: Engagement and Participation.

Action	Aims and Objectives	Measurable Outputs	Timescale	Lead Business Area
9. Awareness days (including those related to particular disabilities) to be marked/celebrated by the Assembly Commission, including annual plan of engagement events.	To mark awareness days over the course of the action plan with the aim of raising awareness of particular disabilities as well as demonstrating how people can participate in the	Awareness days will be delivered on an annual basis.	Annually.	Public Engagement.

Corporate Strategy 2023-2028 High Level Objective(s):

1. Develop and implement a public engagement strategy
2. Create more opportunities to engage with Committees

Area: Engagement and Participation.

Action	Aims and Objectives	Measurable Outputs	Timescale	Lead Business Area
	work of the Assembly. A targeted approach will be adopted to identify the most relevant awareness days.			
10. Continue to encourage SEN ⁵ schools, and mainstream schools with SEN pupils, to take part in the education programmes.	Offer inclusive and bespoke activities suitable for pupils.	Increased number of SEN schools and pupils taking part in education programmes either through a visit to Parliament Buildings, a virtual session or an outreach session.	Over the lifetime of the plan.	Education Service.
	Develop more visual/sensory resources for children with special educational needs.	Positive feedback from teachers.		
11. Deliver accessible tours of Parliament Buildings.	To provide people with additional needs the opportunity to take part in a tour of Parliament Buildings.	Increased delivery of specific accessible tours.	Over the lifetime of the plan.	Public Engagement.

⁵ SEN refers to Special Educational Needs

Corporate Strategy 2023-2028 High Level Objective(s):				
1. Develop and implement a public engagement strategy 2. Create more opportunities to engage with Committees				
Area: Engagement and Participation.				
Action	Aims and Objectives	Measurable Outputs	Timescale	Lead Business Area
		Over the course of the plan measure uptake of these tours.		

Corporate Strategy 2023-2028 High Level Objective: Make the work of the Assembly more accessible				
Area: Awards, Accreditations and Standards				
Action	Aims and Objectives	Measurable Outputs	Timescale	Lead Business Area
12. Maintain Autism Friendly Award.	To show our commitment to ensuring that Parliament Buildings is a welcoming place for autistic people and their families.	Standards met as required.	Annually.	Facilities.
13. Work with RNID and others to provide accessible services for service users who are deaf or with hearing loss.	To show commitment to improving access to Parliament Buildings for people with deafness, tinnitus and hearing loss.	Annual review of disability access audit (2024) findings.	Annually.	Facilities.
14. Maintain membership of the Disability Confident Scheme. Disability Confident is a government scheme	To ensure that, as an employer, we continue to enable disabled people to	Membership of the Disability Confident Scheme is maintained.	2025.	Human Resources Office.

that encourages employers to recruit, retain and develop disabled people.	have the opportunity to fulfil their potential.			
15. Maintain JAM (Just a Minute) Card standards.	To make Parliament Buildings a welcoming place for people with a learning difficulty, autism or a communication barrier.	Renew JAM card license each year.	Over the lifetime of the plan.	Learning and Development.
		Ensure new employees complete the JAM card e-learning course.		

Aim 2: Encouraging the participation of disabled people in public life

Corporate Strategy 2023-2028 High Level Objective(s):				
1. Develop and implement a public engagement strategy				
2. Create opportunities to build networks and teams				
Area: Representation				
Action	Aims and Objectives	Measurable Outputs	Timescale	Lead Business Area
16. Continue to engage with our External Disability Advisory Group (EDAG). EDAG is made up of practitioners and representatives from the disability sector who assist with the development and implementation of the Disability Action Plan.	Engagement and participation of disabled people and their representative groups continues to inform the implementation of the Disability Action Plan.	Full meeting of the Group is held once or twice a year (or as agreed by the Group) and separate meetings on particular initiatives/issues are held as required.	Meetings arranged as required throughout the lifetime of the Action Plan.	Equality Unit.
		Membership is reviewed every two years to ensure a full range of disability organisations are represented on the Group.	Review of membership carried out every two years: by June 2027 and 30 June 2029.	
17. Continue to provide short-term supported placements for people with a disability under the Apprenticeship and Placement Framework.	To provide opportunities for people with a disability to develop their skills and confidence in the workplace and gain meaningful work experience.	Further short-term supported placements are facilitated during the lifetime of the Plan.	First placement to be facilitated by 31 March 2026 and further placement by 31 March 2028.	Human Resources Office.
18. Hold a Disability Parliament as part of a series of citizens parliaments.	To afford people with Disabilities the opportunity to have their voices heard on issues that are important to them.	Annual Parliament for People with Disabilities is held.	Annually.	Public Engagement.

Corporate Strategy 2023-2028 High Level Objective(s):

1. Develop and implement a public engagement strategy
2. Create opportunities to build networks and teams

Area: Representation

Action	Aims and Objectives	Measurable Outputs	Timescale	Lead Business Area
19. Young people with disabilities are represented on the Northern Ireland Youth Assembly.	To ensure the Northern Ireland Youth Assembly is representative of the youth population of Northern Ireland.	Young people with disabilities are represented on the Northern Ireland Youth Assembly.	Throughout the lifetime of the DAP. Youth Assembly recruitment happens every 2 years (2025, 2027, and 2029).	Youth Assembly.
	To ensure that the voices of young people with disabilities are heard in the Northern Ireland Assembly.			

Monitoring and Reporting

Action	Aims and Objectives	Measurable Outputs	Timescale	Lead Business Area
20. Ensure staff are kept up to date on progress on new Disability Action Plan.	To raise staff awareness of the work the Assembly Commission is doing on disability and of wider disability issues.	Once the Plan is approved, staff are kept informed on progress on the results of the consultation; where to find the final agreed Plan and what the Plan contains.	May 2025.	Equality Unit.

Action	Aims and Objectives	Measurable Outputs	Timescale	Lead Business Area
		Staff are notified by email of availability of six-monthly updates on the website.	Bi-annually.	
21. Report on progress to Senior Management Team (SMT) every six months and the Assembly Commission every year.	To ensure that we deliver on the targets in our plan and that we keep staff and the public informed of progress.	Following consultation with business areas, six-monthly updates are prepared for SMT and annual updates for the Assembly Commission.	Bi-annually.	Equality Unit.
		Approved six-monthly updates are published on the Assembly website.	Bi-annually.	
22. Report on progress yearly to the Equality Commission.	To ensure that we deliver on the targets in our plan and that we keep the Equality Commission informed of progress.	Following approval by SMT and the Assembly Commission, annual progress reports are prepared and submitted to the Equality Commission.	June each year (ECNI deadline for submission is 31 August each year).	Equality Unit.
		Following a meeting with the Equality Commission to discuss annual report content, reports are published on the Assembly website.	October each year.	
23. Carry out a five-year review of our Disability Action Plan.	To review our plan to make sure it is effective and achieves what it sets out to do.	Review of the Disability Action Plan is carried out, in consultation with business areas, and presented to SMT and the Assembly Commission.	2030.	Equality Unit.

Action	Aims and Objectives	Measurable Outputs	Timescale	Lead Business Area
		Once approved, the review is published online. Email is issued to staff and stakeholders to inform them the review is available.	2030.	