



## **Northern Ireland Assembly Commission**

### **Disability Action Plan 2025-2030 Public Consultation Outcome Report**

**March 2025**

#### **1. Introduction**

- 1.1 The draft Disability Action Plan 2025-2030 sets out how the Northern Ireland Assembly Commission proposes to meet its statutory obligations Under Section 49A of the Disability Discrimination Act 1995 (DDA 1995) which requires the Northern Ireland Assembly Commission 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.
- 1.2 Section 49B of this Act places a duty on the Northern Ireland Assembly Commission to prepare a Disability Action Plan outlining how it proposes to fulfil the Section 49A duty outlined above.
- 1.3 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.

#### **2. Disability Action Plan 2025-2030 - Development and Public Consultation**

- 2.1 In developing the draft Disability Action Plan 2025-2030 we:

- looked at what we said we would do in our 2022-2025 Disability Action Plan to see if we achieved it.
- asked staff what they felt had worked well and what could be improved.
- met with other legislatures to find out what they are doing to help people with disabilities, and to share ideas and good practice.
- spoke to our External Disability Advisory Group to get their feedback on our draft Disability Action Plan 2025-2030 and asked for suggestions about improvements we could make.
- looked at feedback from visitors with disabilities to Parliament Buildings to see what they said about accessibility at Parliament Buildings.

2.2 A 12-week public consultation on the draft Disability Action Plan 2025-2030 was undertaken from 11 November 2024 to 17 February 2025. The public consultation used a range of methods including face to face meetings, emails to consultees, press advertisements, a web-based survey, emails to staff and Twitter and Facebook posts. This report summarizes the responses received to the public consultation.

2.3 In total, 23 consultation responses to the public consultation were received via a web-based survey and via direct e-mail. The Northern Ireland Assembly Commission's response to each of the comments received during consultation is at Annex A.



Northern Ireland  
Assembly

Annex A

## Northern Ireland Assembly Commission Disability Action Plan 2025-2030 Public Consultation Outcome Report

Summarised Consultee Comments	Northern Ireland Assembly Commission Response
<p><b>Action 1: Deliver staff training to ensure staff understand the requirements relating to disability equality legislation and disability awareness.</b></p> <p>Special attention should be paid to hidden disabilities.</p> <p>This may add to teachers' workload, and consistent attendance and application of the training can be challenging.</p>	<p>The issue of hidden disabilities will be considered in the development of training for staff.</p> <p>Delivery of staff training will have no impact on teachers' workload. Staff completion and understanding of training will be monitored.</p>
<p><b>Action 2: Offer staff Masterclasses focusing on a range of disabilities.</b></p> <p>The full range of disabilities should be covered. Invisible disabilities and bowel conditions are often overlooked.</p> <p>The training must be accurate.</p> <p>This will require careful time allocation within an already busy schedule and depends on the quality of the content provided.</p>	<p>We will continue to review masterclass content to ensure that it is both up to date and comprehensive; and that our staff can access masterclass information at a range of times.</p> <p>As above</p> <p>As above.</p>
<p><b>Action 3: All Education and Youth Assembly Officers complete the course</b></p>	

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<p><b>'Developing SEND Inclusive Learning with Confidence'.</b></p> <p>This training should be provided to all staff dealing with the public including ushers, catering, cleaning, education, corporate, IT development, communications and administration staff.</p> <p>This training will require significant time investment and regular updates to incorporate best practice.</p>	<p>This training is designed for staff who deliver educational training to SEND groups and would not be appropriate for other members of staff.</p> <p>We will provide time to allow Education and Youth Assembly Officers to complete this training. The training will be kept up to date to reflect best practice.</p>
<p><b>Action 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.</b></p> <p>Should aim to achieve the highest possible standard and go beyond the limited reach of The Public Sector Bodies (Websites and Mobile Applications) Accessibility Regulations.</p> <p>This ongoing requirement may be perceived as an additional burden and could be time-consuming.</p>	<p>All staff involved creating web content or online publishing will be offered appropriate training. Specialised accessibility training will be provided to Content Management System editors in the web team.</p> <p>Training will be managed to ensure that it can be completed with minimal disruption to workload.</p>
<p><b>Action 5: Continually improve accessibility of our website and digital offerings, and strive for compliance with accessibility regulations.</b></p> <p>Amend the aim on the timeline to read: 'Complete the website redevelopment project by 2028 taking into account potential accessibility barriers and creating a site which allows all users to perceive, understand, navigate, interact with and contribute to the site' as it will not now be realistic to complete this project by March 2026.</p>	<p>Aim amended from '<i>Complete the website redevelopment project by 2026 with the aim of addressing potential accessibility barriers and creating a site which allows all users to perceive, understand, navigate, interact with and contribute to the site</i>'.</p>



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<p><b>Action 7: Monitor feedback from the visitor experience in Parliament Buildings with a focus on customer service, public facilities and accessibility to Assembly business.</b></p> <p>There should be a digital feedback option. Where do you get the feedback form?</p> <p>Implementing changes based on this feedback can be time-consuming and costly but is essential for progress.</p>	<p>The Visitor Survey will be mainstreamed across services which interface with the public in order to collect data to inform access and service provision. We will explore options for digital as well as paper-based survey feedback.</p> <p>Your comment is noted.</p>
<p><b>Action 8: Identify opportunities to promote positive attitudes of disability through images on the Assembly website, on social media and in Assembly publications.</b></p> <p>The Disability Action Plan should include a section confirming the accessibility supports provided for MLAs.</p> <p>Not all disabilities are visible. Using images of people with disabilities does not, in itself, mean you are inclusive.</p> <p>A corporate approach to the use of staff and visitor images that promote positive attitudes towards disabled people is necessary for consistency and effectiveness.</p>	<p>The actions in the Disability Action Plan will have benefits for everyone who works in or visits Parliament Buildings, including MLAs.</p> <p>The action aims to promote positive attitudes of people with disabilities by ensuring that images on the Assembly website, social media and publications are representative of people with disabilities.</p> <p>A corporate approach to the use of images will be adopted to promote positive images of disability. We have reflected disabled people contributing in the citizens' parliaments.</p>
<p><b>Action 9: Awareness days to be marked/celebrated by the Assembly Commission, including annual plan of engagement events.</b></p> <p>A calendar of awareness days to be marked/celebrated to be made available to the public and all building users.</p>	<p>An annual plan of engagements events including celebration of disability awareness days will be developed.</p>

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<p>How do you determine which days are relevant? Choosing what is relevant is a form of disability discrimination in itself.</p> <p>A full range of awareness days should be recognised. The public should be able to forward requests of awareness days in an online portal.</p> <p>Planning and executing these events requires time and resources, they are crucial for meaningful stakeholder engagement.</p> <p>Not all disabilities are visible.</p> <p>Advertise this so people are aware.</p>	<p>We are currently considering best use of resources in order to be as inclusive as possible.</p> <p>As above.</p> <p>As above.</p> <p>Consideration of all disabilities will form part of our approach.</p> <p>Celebration of awareness days will be promoted in the Assembly's communications.</p>
<p><b>Action 10: Continue to encourage Special Educational Needs Schools, and mainstream schools with pupils with Special Educational Needs, to take part in the education programmes.</b></p> <p>These initiatives may add to teachers' workload, particularly in terms of attending training sessions, developing bespoke activities, and using new resources. Ensuring all schools have access to the necessary resources and support can be challenging, particularly in areas with limited funding or infrastructure.</p>	<p>We are committed to extending a supportive service to all school pupils that is robust and flexible to meet individual needs.</p>
<p><b>Action 11: Deliver accessible tours of Parliament Buildings.</b></p> <p>Publish times when a tour in sign language is available - even if only a couple of times a year.</p> <p>Accessible tours are positive in themselves, but they are not as important as the other action points.</p>	<p>We will be providing and advertising tours of Parliament Buildings in both British Sign Language (BSL) and Irish Sign Language (ISL).</p> <p>The action aims to provide those with additional needs the opportunity to take part in a tour of Parliament Buildings.</p>

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<p>Highlighting the 'can't wait card' is vital.</p> <p>Tours need to be advertised and published.</p> <p>Organising tours may require additional resources and planning.</p>	<p>A changing places toilet facility is available at all times.</p> <p>The availability of accessible tours will be advertised.</p> <p>Additional resources will be made available to deliver accessible tours.</p>
<p><b>Action 12: Maintain the Autism Friendly Award.</b></p> <p>This action plan is vague. Maintaining an award means nothing in practice.</p> <p>This requires ongoing investment, training, and ensuring that all aspects remain autism-friendly.</p>	<p>Maintaining the Autism Friendly Award requires us to meet standards and demonstrates our commitment to ensuring that Parliament Buildings is welcoming for people with autism.</p> <p>We will undertake to provide ongoing investment and training to ensure that the Autism Friendly Award is maintained.</p>
<p><b>Action 13: Work with RNID and others to provide accessible services for service users who are deaf or with hearing loss.</b></p> <p>'Service users' should be defined.</p> <p>The action is too vague - a form of box ticking.</p> <p>Need to be aware of support for other disabilities, especially hidden disabilities.</p> <p>Implementing changes may require resources and training.</p>	<p>We will define service users more clearly in the action to include visitors, building users and staff.</p> <p>The action aims to demonstrate our commitment to improving access to Parliament Buildings for deaf people.</p> <p>Your comment is noted and welcomed.</p> <p>Resources and training will be provided to ensure that changes are implemented.</p>
<p><b>Action 14: Maintain membership of the Disability Confident Scheme. <i>Disability Confident is a government scheme that encourages employers to recruit, retain and develop disabled people.</i></b></p> <p>The Disability Action Plan should include promotion of being an elected representative.</p> <p>This action is vital and should be further up the agenda.</p>	<p>Increasing representation of disabled people in elected roles is a matter for the political parties.</p> <p>Your comment is welcomed and noted.</p>



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<p>Ensuring that, as an employer, we continue to enable disabled people to have the opportunity to fulfil their potential is essential.</p>	<p>Your comment is welcomed and noted.</p>
<p><b>Action 15: Maintain Just a Minute (JAM) Card standards.</b></p> <p>Provide JAM cards for any building users.</p> <p>This requires ongoing training, resources, and consistent awareness among staff.</p>	<p>The JAM card licence will be renewed annually and new staff members will complete JAM card training.</p> <p>As above.</p>
<p><b>Action 16: 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.</b></p> <p>There should be at least two spaces for MLAs with disabilities on EDAG.</p> <p>Does EDAG membership include people with lived experience of learning disability or deafness?</p> <p>Continuous engagement requires dedicated resources and time, and ensuring consistent participation can be challenging.</p>	<p>EDAG is an external group and the Terms of Reference is focussed on accessibility to and within Parliament Buildings and the services provided for visitors, building users and staff. MLAs do not sit on EDAG but can raise accessibility matters directly with the relevant Assembly Commission staff.</p> <p>EDAG is made up of representative groups and individuals including people with lived experience of a range of disabilities. Membership is reviewed every two years to ensure a full range of disability organisations are represented on the Group.</p> <p>Staff in the Equality Unit manage engagement with EDAG to ensure consistent participation.</p>
<p><b>Action 17. Continue to provide short-term supported placements for people with a disability under the Apprenticeship and Placement Framework.</b></p> <p>Why not a long-term placement?</p>	<p>The aim of this action is to offer a short-term supported placement for people with disabilities under the Assembly</p>

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<p>Finding suitable placements and providing necessary support can be resource-intensive and may present logistical challenges.</p>	<p>Commission's Apprenticeship and Placement Framework, in order to provide individuals with opportunities to develop their skills and confidence in the workplace and gain meaningful work experience.</p> <p>Placements will be identified through disability representative organisations and resources will be provided.</p>
<p><b>Action 18: Hold a Disability Parliament as part of a series of citizens parliaments.</b></p> <p>The Plan should include actions to support MLAs who have disabilities.</p> <p>Need to advertise the Disability Parliament to raise awareness.</p> <p>Organising such events requires significant planning and resources and ensuring effective follow-up can be challenging.</p>	<p>The actions in the Disability Action Plan will have benefits for everyone who works in or visits Parliament Buildings, including MLAs.</p> <p>The Disability Parliament will be promoted through the Assembly's website and social media.</p> <p>Outreach Parliaments are co-designed with a core panel of people who have disabilities, or who represent people with disabilities. This is coupled with the Assembly Engagement Team's experience of delivery.</p>
<p><b>Action 19: Young people with disabilities are represented on the Northern Ireland Youth Assembly.</b></p> <p>Ensuring adequate support and accommodations for young people with disabilities requires resources, including funding, assistive technologies and trained staff.</p> <p>Coordinating participation, including transportation, accessible venues, and suitable meeting times, can present logistical challenges.</p> <p>There is a risk of representation being seen as tokenistic if not handled thoughtfully and inclusively.</p>	<p>Through our recruitment processes we actively ensure that young people with disabilities become members of the Northern Ireland Youth Assembly and we build in the support they need to fully participate.</p> <p>We manage a balance of online and in-person participation that best suits the needs of our young people, including those with specific needs.</p> <p>We have specifically considered additional needs and Youth Assembly Members with disabilities tell us what their needs are.</p>

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<p><b>Action 20: Ensure staff are kept up to date on progress on new Disability Action Plan.</b></p> <p>All building users should be updated, not just the employed staff.</p> <p>What is a Disability Action Plan?</p> <p>This requires effective communication strategies to ensure that all staff members receive and understand the information.</p>	<p>Progress reports on the actions in the Disability Action Plan will be communicated to staff and in addition, will be published on the Assembly's website which can be accessed by other building users.</p> <p>The Disability Action Plan sets out how the Assembly Commission will meet its statutory under the Disability Discrimination Act 1995 and is the subject of this consultation.</p> <p>Six-monthly progress reports on the actions in the Disability Action Plan will be communicated to staff.</p>
<p><b>Action 21: Report on progress to Senior Management Team (SMT) every six months and the Assembly Commission every year.</b></p> <p>The report on progress should be published and available online.</p> <p>Reports should be provided to SMT every quarter.</p> <p>The reporting process can be resource-intensive and may require significant coordination and effort to compile and present the necessary data.</p>	<p>The six-monthly reports on progress to SMT will be published on the Assembly's website.</p> <p>We consider that the reporting arrangements proposed in Action 21 are appropriate.</p> <p>Staff and resources are available to ensure that progress is reported to SMT and the Assembly Commission.</p>
<p><b>Action 22: Report on progress yearly to the Equality Commission.</b></p> <p>The Annual Report should include a survey of MLAs and all MLA/Party staff.</p> <p>The annual report should be acted upon.</p> <p>Preparing these reports can be time-consuming and requires</p>	<p>There is a requirement in our Equality Scheme to complete an annual report to the Equality Commission. The annual report includes progress on the actions contained in the Disability Action Plan to support staff and building users.</p> <p>The annual report will summarise progress on the Disability Action Plan.</p> <p>Resources will be available to ensure that the annual progress report to the Equality Commission is completed.</p>

Summarised Consultee Comments	Northern Ireland Assembly Commission Response
thorough documentation and analysis.	
<p><b>Action 23: Carry out a five-year review of our Disability Action Plan.</b></p> <p>The review should be completed at least once per electoral cycle.</p> <p>A five-year review period is too long – a 2 or 3-year review would be best practice.</p> <p>The review process can be extensive and may require significant resources and stakeholder involvement to ensure a thorough and accurate evaluation.</p>	<p>The Disability Action Plan covers the five-year period from 2025 to 2030. The requirement in our Equality Scheme is to carry out a review of the Disability Action Plan every five years. This is a requirement through legislation.</p> <p>As above.</p> <p>Resources will be available to ensure that the five-year review of the Disability Action Plan is completed.</p>