

DEPARTMENT OF HEALTH

**DRAFT DISABILITY ACTION PLAN
2025-2030**

If you require this plan in an alternative format, please contact the Department at equality&humanrights@health-ni.gov.uk

Statement of commitment

Under Section 49 (A) of the Disability Discrimination Act 1995 (DDA 1995) as amended by Article 5 of the Disability Discrimination (Northern Ireland) Order 2006, the Department of Health (DoH) is required, when carrying out its functions, to have due regard to the need to:

- a) Promote positive attitudes towards disabled people; and
- b) Encourage participation by disabled people in public life.

Under Section 49(B) of the DDA 1995, the Department of Health is also required to submit to the Equality Commission a Disability Action Plan (DAP) showing how it proposes to fulfil these duties in relation to its functions. The department's disability action plan is set out as per the bullet points above.

Department of Health will allocate the necessary available resources, in terms of people, time and money as available, in order to implement this plan and, where appropriate, build objectives and targets relating to the disability duties into corporate and annual operating plans.

We will also put appropriate internal arrangements in place to ensure that the disability duties are complied with and this DAP fully implemented where possible within budget constraints. Department of Health will ensure the effective communication of the plan to all staff and will ensure they have the necessary training and guidance on the disability duties and the implementation of the plan.

We confirm our commitment to submitting an annual report to the Equality Commission on the implementation of this plan as well as carrying out a five yearly review of this plan. A copy of this plan, our annual progress report to the Equality Commission NI and our five-year review of this plan will be made available on our website - <https://www.health-ni.gov.uk/doh-equality>.

Within the Department of Health, day-to-day responsibility for dealing with and reporting on the DAP lies with the Equality and Human Rights Unit. E-mail: equality&humanrights@health-ni.gov.uk

How we developed our Disability Action Plan 2022-25

Our starting point in developing the Disability Action Plan 2025-30 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 our [2019-24 Disability Action Plan](#) to see if we achieved what we set out to do.
- 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 disability organisations to get their feedback on our Disability Action Plan 2022-25 and to ask for suggestions for activities we could think about including in it.
- We also read the guidance from the Equality Commission on what should be in a Disability Action Plan, and we consulted them when writing our Action Plan.
- The Department of Health will input to the Executive Office's (TEO) Disability Strategy which is built around eight strategic outcomes, each supported by strategic commitments and together, they will form a framework to drive progress.

How we will monitor our Plan

In accordance with the [Department's Equality scheme](#) the Department is required to submit to the Equality Commission for Northern Ireland (ECNI) the Departmental Equality Action Plan for a period of 5 years and then subsequent [Yearly Progress Reports](#)-showing how it has fulfilled its equality duties in relation to its functions. A copy of this plan and our annual progress report to the Equality Commission will be made available on our website.

The implementation of this action plan is subject to appropriate funding being received as part of Budget 2025-26 and subsequent budget processes.

The point of contact in relation to the consultation, implementation, review and evaluation of this Disability Action Plan is the Equality and Human Rights Unit, email: equality&humanrights@health-ni.gov.uk

PART A - MEASURES TO PROMOTE POSITIVE ATTITUDES TOWARDS DISABLED PEOPLE

Aim	Objective	Action (How we are going to do it)	Timeframe
Raising Staff Awareness	All staff will have awareness of current and relevant disability related issues for a positive attitude towards disabled people.	In conjunction with NICS wide Disability Network we facilitate staff awareness seminars/training on disability/ diversity related themes, at a minimum, twice a year. Where possible voluntary organisations/ disability groups will be invited to deliver sessions.	Yearly
		The in-house DoH e-zine publication 'The Pulse' issues quarterly to all staff and is used as a mechanism to raise awareness of and promote Diversity and Inclusion (D&I) across the Department. This includes raising awareness of the NICS Diversity and Inclusion Networks that exist	quarterly
		The DoH Staff Hub is updated regularly with relevant guidance and links e.g. Equality Commission NI S75 guidance.	on going
		The DoH Equality and Human Rights Unit (EHRU) will issue a minimum of 2 equality/ disability articles per year, by e-mail or in the Pulse, to raise awareness and highlight statutory responsibilities.	biannual
		To increase awareness and support for specific disability related events to staff e.g. Deaf Awareness Week, Carers Week, Mental Health Awareness Week etc.	ongoing
		To share this plan with all staff annually and publish an annual update on our website.	Every 5 years
Staff training and opportunities on disability and diversity Awareness and issues	All staff will have access to training and opportunities to attend training on disability and diversity issues to raise awareness.	All levels of staff have access to the HR Connect "Links" online training resources and webinars and complete mandatory diversity and inclusion courses, as appropriate.	ongoing
		Liaise with The Executive Office/Equality Commission for NI to arrange for the delivery of training on Section 75 and disability duties for staff	ongoing
		Attendance at specific disability related training, as appropriate, working in conjunction with at least 1 partner/voluntary organisation (NICS wide) to deliver staff training annually.	ongoing

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Aim	Objective	Action (How we are going to do it)	Timeframe
		A minimum of 60% of DoH staff will complete the JAM awareness training by 2025.	31-Dec-25
		Raise awareness of the “Guide for Allies” to staff for increased understanding of barriers and challenges faced by disabled persons. This Guide also supports allies to proactively champion and advocate for marginalised or under-represented groups.	ongoing
		Staff opportunities to complete external courses when available and have a minimum of 1 staff member accredited as Disability Positive who has completed Employers for Disability NI training.	ongoing
Monitoring	Annually review, update the action plan if required and submit an annual report to Equality Commission NI.	Equality and Human Rights unit to commission update on actions and review on progress on implementation of the DAP and publish update.	Yearly
Promote positive attitudes towards disabled people	Representation at NICS Diversity Champion Network and feedback as appropriate for staff	Departmental representation at quarterly NICS Diversity Champions Network meetings and taking relevant actions within DoH as required.	quarterly
	Current relevant information available for everyone and to inform policy areas.	EHRU to share IDOX relevant equality monthly bulletins with policy teams to support decision making for departmental staff.	On going

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Aim	Objective	Action (How we are going to do it)	Timeframe
	Implementation of the relevant actions from the People Strategy and Action Plan.	Delivery of the relevant actions relating to diversity and inclusion and equality from DoH People Strategy and Action Plan.	Monthly
		EHRU will arrange and Chair a minimum of 3 meetings of the Equality and Human Rights Steering Group annually to discuss key issues and share knowledge and good practice. (Membership includes HSC, N. Ireland Ambulance Service and NI Fire and Rescue Service).	On going
		Promotion of the new disability staff network hub	Yearly
		Promote a real life example of disabled people in public life positions	Yearly
		Department of Health to support the implementation of the NICS Guaranteed Interview Scheme and make reasonable adjustments, as appropriate for external recruitment competitions.	Yearly
Appropriate communication, consultation and engagement and interaction with sector.	Improved communication to meet individuals needs and consultation best practice to inform policy making and appropriate engagement with the sector.	Encourage use of appropriate communication methods during consultations and engagements.	on going
		Where possible, carry out pre-engagement prior to formal consultation and consider outreach pre-engagement with disability community-based groups, as appropriate.	on going
		Annually update and review DoH Consultee list to ensure appropriate interaction with the disability sector.	Yearly
		Policy teams to use a range of social media to raise awareness of consultation documents for feedback.	on going
		As per NICS Policy Making Guide (2017) adopting the models of co-production, co-design and co-create to ensure policies are developed in partnership with stakeholders.	on going

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Aim	Objective	Action (How we are going to do it)	Timeframe
		Through the Diversity Champion role in DoH contribute annually to the review and development of the NICS Diversity Action Plan.	on going
		DoH to continue to ensure consultation processes (including procurement) are accessible to disabled people and proactively seek out their views using the consultee list.	on going
To create an open and inclusive workplace culture which displays respect for those with mental ill health.	An inclusive workplace for all.	DoH will promote and participate in any initiatives arising from the NICS commitment to the Mental Health Charter to ensure support for managers and staff and promote mental health and wellbeing in the workplace.	on going
		Introduce accredited mental health first aiders in line with the Mental Health Charter to the Department.	on going
All information will, where possible, be made available in other formats on request.	An inclusive environment for all making feedback accessible to everyone.	Alternative formats, which may include Braille, audio formats (CD, mp3 or DAISY), large print, will be provided in a timely fashion, usually within 20 working days.	within 20 working days from request
		Specific consideration will be given as to how best to communicate with children and young people with disabilities (in particular people with learning disabilities) .	on going

PART B - Measures to encourage participation by disabled people in public life.

Aim	Objective	Action (How we are going to do it)	Timeframe
Department of Health Disabled Peoples Forum for people with a physical, sensory and/or communication difficulty to share views.	To encourage participation of service users with health and social care.	The Regional Disabled Peoples Health and Social Care Forum established in 2021 plans to meet a minimum of 3 times a year with the purpose to bring the views of service users, their carers, Disabled Peoples User Led Organisations, statutory, voluntary and community sectors closer to government.	3 times a year
To improve the recruitment process for disabled candidates, encourage people with disabilities to join the service and market the NICS as a disability positive employer	An inclusive workforce for the future.	Participation in the work experience placement scheme for people with disabilities, offering a minimum of 1 placement per year within DoH.	on going
		Participate in the annual International Job Shadowing Day for disabled people in April each year to offer a minimum of 1 placement within DoH.	yearly
		Support implementation of any recommendations from the NICS Disability Champion and Working Group(s) on recruitment, placement opportunities, career development and management support for disabled staff	on going
		Promote adherence to the policies and procedures from NICS to remove barriers to the recruitment and selection process.	on going
Equality in Public Appointments – Executive Ministers are committed to improving diversity on the boards of public bodies.	Improved diversity in public appointments	EHRU to complete annual review of consultee lists by public consultation and to ensure a wide outreach to groups representing disabled people when advertising public appointments.	on going
		At the outset of each public appointment competition liaison with DoH Press Office to ensure that all social media avenues are utilised and specifically mention that DoH is interested in seeking applications from people with disabilities.	on going
		At the outset of each public appointment competition, the advertisement should be placed in the 3 regional newspapers to ensure it reaches a wider audience.	on going

PART B - Measures to encourage participation by disabled people in public life.

Aim	Objective	Action (How we are going to do it)	Timeframe
		At the outset of each public appointment competition ensure that data is collected from applicants with disabilities on a voluntary basis.	on going
Working to expand our outreach with people with disabilities and ensuring equality of opportunity for people with a disability in applying for public life appointments.	Improved diversity in public appointments	DoH will continue to canvas Disability Action and other key disability groups as a means of outreach to disabled people to encourage participation in public appointments.	on going
		All documentation and advice relating to public appointments is considered in terms of language, images and format to ensure ease of accessibility for people with a disability.	on going
		Invitation to interview letters ask candidates if they have any special requirements in relation to access or sensory needs to allow the necessary arrangements to be made to facilitate attendance at interview.	on going
		Publish the current and upcoming vacancies for DoH in the Public Appointments newsletter on our website.	on going
NI Statistics and Research Agency annual statistics for Public appointments published by The Executive Office.	Improved diversity in public appointments	Review annually The Executive Office publication of Public Appointments disability information for NICS from Equal Opportunities Monitoring forms.	yearly
DOH input to the TEO Disability Strategy	Deaf and disabled people have access to quality health and social care on an equal	The Department will take action to restore respite care to pre-Covid-19 pandemic levels as soon as possible.	on going
		Deaf and disabled people will participate actively in health and social care policy and service design provision via the Department of Health's Regional Health and Social Care Disability Forum.	

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	basis and without discrimination.	<p>Ongoing training in Disability and Equality issues for public-facing Health and Social Care staff and review the training on a continual basis.</p> <p>A digital care record for every patient in NI and clarify pathways to clinical support.</p> <p>A review of the direct payments process to ensure people are able to access appropriate day care services.</p> <p>Exploration of the greater use of social prescribing to improve the physical and mental health of Deaf and disabled people.</p>	