



Ards and North Down Borough Council

Ards and North Down Borough Council

Disability Action Plan

2025 - 2029

Draft Disability Action Plan 2025 - 2029

This Disability Action Plan can be obtained from the Council in alternative formats and languages where a need is identified. It may also be downloaded from the Council's website at:
[Disability Action Plan 2025 - 2029](#)

If you would like a copy in an alternative format, or have any queries, please contact:

Ards and North Down Borough Council

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Purpose

The purpose of a Disability Action Plan is fundamentally rooted in the legal framework established by Section 75 of the Northern Ireland Act 1998 and Section 49A of the Disability Discrimination Act 1995 (as amended). It is a commitment to fostering an inclusive society. This Disability Action Plan has been developed to align with the outcomes identified in the Ards and North Down Borough Council Corporate Plan.

Key aims and objectives

Promoting Positive Attitudes:

A core objective is to actively work towards changing societal perceptions and promoting positive attitudes towards people with disabilities.

Encouraging Participation:

The plans aim to break down barriers and create opportunities for people with disabilities to fully participate in public life.

Fulfilling Legal Duties:

Disability Action Plans are a mechanism for public authorities to demonstrate how they are complying with legal duties, particularly those stemming from the Disability Discrimination Act 1995 (as amended). Specifically, the plans help public authorities demonstrate that they have had "due regard" to the need to promote positive attitudes toward disabled people and encourage participation by disabled people in public life.

Addressing Barriers:

This plan is designed to identify and address the various barriers that people with disabilities face, whether they are physical, attitudinal, or systemic.

Improving Accessibility:

A significant focus of this Disability Action plan is on enhancing the accessibility of services, information, and environments for people with disabilities.

Providing a Framework for Action:

This Disability Action Plan offers a structured framework for Ards and North Down Borough Council to implement disability duties, monitor their

progress, and ensure that disability considerations are integrated into our day-to-day operations.

Improving Service Delivery:

This Disability Action Plan strives to improve the delivery of public services to ensure they are accessible and equitable for all members of society and are effectively mainstreamed within Council.

The Council – its role, functions and policies

The roles and functions of Councils fall within three types:

- **Direct** - the direct provision of a number of services and facilities including the promotion of the arts, tourism, community and economic development and the regulation and licensing of certain activities relating to environmental health, consumer protection and public safety
- **Representative** - a representative role on a number of bodies and boards including Education and Health as well as an advocacy role for the Borough
- **Consultative** - a consultative role in relation to functions conducted by other Government bodies and agencies on issues such as water, roads and housing

In the performance of the above roles the Council carries out functions in the following areas: (This is not an exhaustive list)

Service provision:

The council is responsible for delivering essential local services, including:

- * Refuse collection and waste management.
- * Environmental services.
- * Leisure and recreation facilities.
- * Parks and Cemeteries.
- * Planning and building control.

Community Development:

The council works to promote community well-being and development, supporting local initiatives and addressing community needs.

Economic Development:

It plays a role in fostering economic growth within the borough, attracting investment, and supporting local businesses.

Tourism:

Ards and North Down boasts a beautiful coastline and rich heritage, and the council actively promotes tourism in the area.

Governance:

It is responsible for local governance, making decisions on local policies and managing council resources.

To enable the Council to provide the above services and perform its other functions it must levy an annual rate and has the power to: -

- acquire and dispose of land;
- borrow money;
- employ staff;
- procure goods and services.

Council provides its services through the employment of approximately 1000 employees who are full time, part time, permanent and casual employees.

To support and implement the above statutory functions and provision of services and facilities, the Council has adopted a number of policies. All policies are screened for impacts of S75 categories, Rural needs, Sustainability and Data Protection.

Council responsibility

Ards and North Down Borough Council has 40 councillors representing seven district electoral areas. These members provide leadership for Ards and North Down Borough Council. They represent the interests of their constituents and ensure the views of people across Ards and North Down are reflected in the council's decisions and how services are delivered.

Public life positions over which the Council has responsibility

The Council has responsibility over a number of public life positions i.e. committees in which members of the public participate. A full list of these positions is available on request.

Effective implementation of the Disability Action Plan

The Mayor and Chief Executive of the Council are dedicated to effectively implementing this plan and ensuring the disability duties are executed throughout the organisation. They will allocate all available resources—people, time, and finances—to achieve these goals.

As part of its corporate planning process, the Council will integrate objectives, target setting, and monitoring into relevant business plans. These will be reflected at all levels of the Council's strategic planning, including individual staff objectives and annual plans. Progress towards meeting these objectives will be monitored and reported to the relevant managers and elected members every year. Individual performance in these areas will be reviewed through internal performance review processes.

A formal progress report on meeting objectives related to equality and disability duties will be included in the Council's Annual Report to the Equality Commission.

Internal arrangements

The Council consists of 40 elected representatives, each elected for a four-year period. A full list of the Council's standing and sub-committees are available on the council's website and are also available on request.

The Chief Executive oversees the work of the departments through the Corporate Leadership Team which, together with the Elected Members, create the corporate body of the Council. The Chief Executive is the principal advisor to the Council and responsible for the strategic management of the organisation, for the day to day management of services and the longer-term planning and allocation of resources.

The departmental structure of Ards and North Down Borough Council is available on request and is subject to change.

The Chief Executive has overall responsibility for ensuring the effective implementation of this plan, with the support of the Corporate Leadership Team.

Responsibility for implementing, reviewing and evaluating this Disability Action Plan, and the point of contact within the Council is the Compliance Officer (Equality and Disability).

The Council offers public documents in various accessible formats, including large print, easy read, and audio, with options for translation

into minority languages. Equality and disability documents are created in clear Arial Font size 14. Information is accessible through the ReachDeck facility, and translators or sign language interpreters are provided at meetings as needed. Loop systems are available in Bangor City Hall and some other facilities, while a British Sign Language interpreting service provides instant access to online interpreters for Deaf or hearing-impaired customers.

Every council employee and member of a Council Body or Panel, including the Policing and Community Safety Partnership, Community Planning Partnership, and Peace IV Partnership, has a responsibility to uphold disability duties. All employees and elected members receive training on relevant legislation and are accountable for ensuring that the Council meets its obligations. It is essential that they avoid any inappropriate actions that could lead to a failure in these duties.

Effective engagement

The Council is committed to engaging with stakeholders and representative groups in drafting, implementing, monitoring, and reviewing this Plan.

Annual report

The Council will prepare an annual report outlining its progress in implementing the equality scheme using the Disability Action Plan. This report will be submitted to the Equality Commission.

A copy of the annual report will also be available on the Council's website.

Review of the Disability Action Plan

The Council will conduct a four-year review of its plan. After it is ratified by Council, the review will be submitted to the Equality Commission for Northern Ireland.

This Disability Action Plan has been created to align with the outcomes identified in the Corporate Plan and to further our disability duties.

Consultation

Draft Disability Action Plan 2025 - 2029

The Council is dedicated to meaningful consultations in developing its Disability Action Plan over 12 weeks, engaging key stakeholders and service users. Comments and suggestions will be incorporated into the Plan. To ensure public involvement, the Council will work with representative groups and meet with individuals upon request.

The Disability Action Plan will be advertised on the Council's website and social media. The Council will collaborate with groups to ensure clear communication and accessibility, acknowledging that individuals may face different barriers. The Plan will be promoted through various channels, and requests for minority language versions will be addressed as needed. Employees will also be informed about the Plan and their roles in fulfilling the Council's obligations.

Performance Indicators and actionable measures

The Council is committed to monitoring and reviewing policies and practices to ensure the disability duties are met. This process is undertaken through the policy making and screening processes.

The Council will undertake a review of this plan on an annual basis. This review process assists in the drafting of appropriate actions and performance targets for the next period, as well as highlighting the achievements from the period of the annual review.

The table in Appendix 1 outlines the measures and performance indicators which the Council proposes to undertake between 2025 - 2029 in order to fulfil its statutory obligations.

Mayor of Ards and North Down Borough Council

Chief Executive Ards and North Down Borough Council

Date _____

| 1.We have an engaged Borough with citizens and businesses who have opportunities to influence the delivery of services, plans and investment | | | | |
|--|---|--|-----------|---|
| We will commit to: | We will do: | Responsibility | Timescale | We will know we have been successful by: |
| 1.1 Screening 100% of all new and revised policies to ensure compliance with disability duties and Section 75 of the Northern Ireland Act 1988. | Ensure compliance of Council policies with disability duties. | All Directorates and monitored by Compliance Officer (Equality & Disability) | Ongoing | 100% of policies screened for compliance with disability duties on Jotform. Reviewed within 10 working days of receipt by Compliance section. |
| 1.2 Provide a meaningful forum for individuals with disabilities and their representatives to collaborate with the Council to highlight needs for appropriate action through the Disability Forum. | Establish a database of all local and regional disability representatives and carer representative organisations. | Compliance Officer (Equality & Disability), Leisure Services Service Unit Managers and Elected Members | Ongoing | Have a representative database of local and regional groups of potential and current members of the group updated biennially. |
| | Encourage representative groups to engage individuals at relevant Council consultations | | | Ensure agreed Constitution is reviewed every three years Invite at least one speaker from an external organisation to four meetings per annum. |
| 1.3 Working collaboratively with members of disability groups to raise | Mark and celebrate disability by promoting and publicising disability | Compliance Officer (Equality and Disability) | | Compliance Officer (equality and Disability) to hold a calendar of events organised and events publicised annually |

| We will commit to: | We will do: | Responsibility | Timescale | We will know we have been successful by: |
|---|--|--|-----------|--|
| awareness and signposting for information and help. | related days and events. | | | |
| 1.4 To ensure the Council engage with a broad range of stakeholders. | Have a range of sources to provide alternative formats as requested including easy read and Sign Video | Compliance Officer (Equality and Disability) Crosscutting across all services | Ongoing | Ensuring 100% of all future documents are published in accessible formats. Ensuring automated checks using Microsoft technology to alert users if something falls below the standard. |
| 1.5 Enable people with a disability to get involved with the Council, be heard and inform decisions made. | Ensure a range of Disability groups are available for consultation Produce guidance for staff on how to effectively engage with disabled people in decision making processes. | Compliance Officer (Equality and Disability) | Ongoing | Improved participation of disabled people in consultations about the services we provide. Documents will be provided in easy read format |

| 2. We have a thriving and sustainable economy | | | | |
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| We will commit to: | We will do: | Responsibility | Timescale | We will know we have been successful by: |
| 2.1 Ensure recruitment process is inclusive and accessible. | <p>Ensure recruitment process meets the Disability Discrimination Act 1995. Anticipate and provide reasonable adjustments as required</p> <p>Review recruitment practices in line with ECNI guidance for recruiting people with disabilities</p> | HR and Compliance Officer (Equality and Disability) | Reviewed Annually | Monitor number of reasonable adjustments arranged at interviews and throughout council services. |
| 2.2 Ensure the Council remains Disability Confident Committed employer (Level 1) | Offer to provide employment/ work experience/ placement related opportunities for disabled people | HR/Compliance/SUMs | Reviewed annually | Increase in work experience/placements for those with a disability. |

| We will commit to: | We will do: | Responsibility | Timescale | We will know we have been successful by: |
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| 2.3 Employee Profile Review – Review arrangements to ensure all employees including permanent, temporary and agency are aware of the support available for employees with a disability. | Monitor employees to identify those who have a disability and are comfortable disclosing this information. | HR Officers with responsibility for employee relations and recruitment arrange to provide specific support for all employees who identify themselves as having a disability. | Biennially from 2025 | Establish and keep an up-to-date register of reasonable adjustments that identifies measures taken to support individuals in the workplace. |

| 3. We have a vibrant, attractive, sustainable Borough for citizens, visitors, businesses and investors | | | | |
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| We will commit to: | We will do: | Responsibility | Timescale | We will know we have been successful by: |
| 3.1 To ensure all public events are accessible and reasonable adjustments are made where possible | Encourage participation of those with a disability to attend large events. Continue to engage with | Compliance Officer (Equality & Disability) Events Team Tourism Section | Ongoing as an integral part of the event planning season and established | Record number of events where provision is made. Record numbers who use the facility. |

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| | Disability forum for 'walkability' audits. | Arts and Culture Section | in the annual event programme | |
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| We will commit to: | We will do: | Responsibility | Timescale | We will know we have been successful by: |
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| 3.2 Provision of mobile changing places where changing places are not conveniently located. | Enable individuals and their carers to participate in any event by having suitable toilet facilities available. | Events Team | Annually to be determined and booked for the range of identified events. | Review comments and complaints on location and suitability. |
| 3.3– Demonstrate the council's support and appreciation for carers of all ages from across the Borough | Enable carers from the South Eastern Health and Social Care Trust area to be invited to an event in the Borough annually | Compliance Officer (Equality & Safeguarding) | Annually in June | At least one group of carers in attendance at each event (carers identified as children / young people or older people) |

| We will commit to: | We will do: | Responsibility | Timescale | We will know we have been successful by: |
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| 3.4 Disability Friendly Borough – To work within the Council, with community partners, including IMTAC and Service providers across the Borough to ensure Ards and North Down Borough Council is a welcoming place for all in relation to access to all facilities and services. | Work with Council customer facing services, employers, and service providers across the Borough to encourage all providers of services to have in place reasonable adjustments to suit the breadth of users and potential users | Compliance Officer (Equality & Disability), Customer Service Manager Regeneration Planning Assets and Property Strategic Capital Development Throughout all Departments in Council | Ongoing | <p>Number and range of initiatives taken by the Council officers to encourage participation in Council services by those with a disability and carers.</p> <p>15% of businesses to engage with the Council and community partners in improving their service to be recognised as welcoming. 100% of capital projects to engage with IMTAC members as part of the design consultation. All new designated car parking spaces aligned to meet best practice advice to include WAVs.</p> |

| We will commit to: | We will do: | Responsibility | Timescale | We will know we have been successful by: |
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| 3.5 Work to make Ards and North Down a Visually Aware Borough. | Help raise awareness over the challenges faced by blind and partially sighted people. Ensuring anyone with a visual impairment can expect a safe and accessible welcome from the Borough. | Compliance Officer (Equality and Disability) | Ongoing | <p>Collaborate with RNIB to enhance the Borough's environment by promoting awareness and accessibility for individuals with sight loss.</p> <p>Provide comprehensive training programs for civic institutions and local businesses, focusing on best practices for accommodating and supporting individuals with vision impairment.</p> <p>Ensure that all public-facing staff members and elected officials receive training on understanding sight loss, leading to improved service delivery and inclusivity.</p> <p>Foster a culture of understanding and support within the community, promoting inclusivity for citizens with visual impairments.</p> <p>Develop and distribute informational materials and guidelines to assist organisations in implementing visual awareness practices.</p> |

| 4. We have socially sustainable communities that are safe and welcoming | | | | |
|---|---|---|---|--|
| We will commit to: | We will do: | Responsibility | Timescale | We will know we have been successful by: |
| 4.1 Disability Responsibility Identify Diversity Ambassadors | Agree three Elected Members at the Annual Meeting to attend Disability Forum quarterly. | Director of Corporate services | Ongoing from June annually | One elected member to attend each Disability Forum throughout the year. |
| | Agree a council officer as Diversity Ambassador (to be agreed by Council as agreed with LGSC) | Compliance Manager and Compliance Officer (Equality & Disability) | Ongoing from May 2025 for term of the Council | To agree at least three Elected Members at the annual meeting and an Officer who meets the criteria of Diversity Ambassador as determined by LGSC. |
| 4.2 Ards and North Down Policing and Community Safety Partnership (PCSP) to engage with people with a disability. | Engage actively and meaningfully with people with a disability via the annual PCSP Disability Action Plan | PCSP Manager and Compliance Officer (Equality & Disability) | Annually | Disability Forum members to attend one PCSP meeting annually. PCSP Manager to attend one Disability Forum meeting annually |
| 4.3 Improve accessibility and availability of Council information. | Ensure recommended best practice for everyone | Corporate Communications | Annually on the review of website provider | In accordance with the Public Sector Bodies (Websites and Mobile Applications) (No. 2) Accessibility Regulations 2018. |

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| | accessing information on the Council's website. | | | |
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5. We have active and healthy people

| We will commit to: | We will do: | Responsibility | Timescale | We will know when we have been successful by: |
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| 5.1 Host an event with the Council to raise awareness of World Mental Health Day (10th October) | Organise events in support of World Mental Health Day for employees. | Environmental Health Manager (Health & Wellbeing), Head of Human Resources, Compliance Officer (Equality & Disability) Communications | Reviewed annually | Increased staff awareness of World Mental Health Day. |
| | Increase public awareness of mental health issues through Council events and information | | | Awareness raising of mental health through external communications. |
| 5.2 To develop and implement a Leisure strategy which will be inclusive | Ensure those with a Disability have access to leisure facilities and classes. Emphasise the importance of making active leisure opportunities more | Leisure Services | Ongoing | An increase in regular participation in active leisure. |
| | | | | Daytime delivery of active leisure opportunities by activity providers increases |
| | | | | Growth in active leisure opportunities to the wider community. |
| | | | | An increase in delivery of opportunities in community centres/sports clubs. |

| We will commit to: | We will do: | Responsibility | Timescale | We will know when we have been successful by: |
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| | inclusive, particularly for people with disability | | | Flexible scheduling of active leisure opportunities |
| 5.3 AccessAble – To promote access to premises and facilities and other premises throughout the Borough by auditing for the AccessAble access guide | Audit Council premises and facilities annually by AccessAble to identify access and good practice procedures for all users | Director of Corporate Services Compliance Officer (Equality & Disability) | Annually | Review venues with a Detailed Access Guide (201) and a Summary Access Guide (10) on the Ards and North Down Borough Council pages of www.AccessAble.co.uk annually and update the Detailed Access Guides accordingly. |
| | Deliver 2 days' worth of engagement activity (in person or virtual) with local disabled people and disability groups each year. | Compliance Officer (Equality and Disability) with AccessAble | Annually | Send an AccessAble surveyor to resurvey 10% of all venues (20). Council will be resurveyed with new, updated larger imagery. |
| 5.4 Buddycard – Promotion of existing buddy card schemes to ensure that cards are accepted in all | Increase the use of the leisure centre by individuals with a disability with the support of their carer(s). | Compliance Officer (Equality & Disability) Operations Manager (Leisure) | Ongoing | Raise the profile of the Buddycard scheme within and outside the Borough |

| We will commit to: | We will do: | Responsibility | Timescale | We will know when we have been successful by: |
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| Council leisure facilities and for relevant arts events. | Increase Council support for carers at Tourism Experiences leisure facilities and arts events. | Arts & Heritage Manager Tourism Manager | | 5% increased use of facilities by individuals with a disability and their carers. |
| 5.5 Accessible Beach – To promote Groomsport Beach area and changing places facility as a family friendly facility and encourage Translink to extend service routes | Support families to experience beach facilities together. Raise awareness of the facilities available at Groomsport Harbour. | Community and Culture | Events planned annually from January to commence April until August. | Increase of 3 events per season by Mae Murray Foundation currently 4. 10% Increase Usage of Accessible Beach and accessible toilet facility. |
| 5.6 Dementia Friendly Garden, Ward Park | Create and maintain a garden full of sensory planting for people affected by dementia or with educational needs. | Parks and Cemeteries | Ongoing | Monitoring Comments and Complaints. Once baseline is established an increase in visitors year on year through promotion. |

6. Ards and North Down Borough Council is a high performing organisation

| We will commit to: | We will do: | Responsibility | Timescale | We will know when we have been successful by: |
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| 6.1 Ensure Corporate Leadership Team, Heads of Service and Service Unit Managers are aware of their responsibilities under relevant Disability legislation. | Keep employees informed about the Council's Disability Action Plan | Corporate Leadership Team | Half yearly from September 2025 | Make employees aware of DAP at each internal/external Screening Group on agenda, Council communications, HOST and SUM. Annual report to Committee. |
| | Ensure employees attend mandatory disability awareness training every three years. | Human Resources Training & Development Section / Compliance Section | Annually to meet the needs identified. | All employees to complete mandatory Disability Awareness training through eLearning platform or face to face training every three years. |
| 6.2 Provide training on specific disabilities for policy makers, operational managers, and employees | Organise specific disability training where a need is identified by Elected members, officers, or consultees. | All Directorates to encourage employees to attend training events. | Annually | Recording number of employees attending. Raising awareness of individuals who require support through training. |
| | Review our staff training programmes and ensure that training is informative, that reflects lived experience and includes information on disability and the disability duties. | HR Officers with the responsibility for training across the organisation will source and arrange training programmes and | Annually | Record location of and reasonable adjustments adopted by employees to facilitate colleagues and users following training and comments. |

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| We will commit to: | We will do: | Responsibility | Timescale | We will know when we have been successful by: |
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| | | inform all relevant officers and elected members. | | |
| 6.3 Raise awareness of hidden disabilities and the initiatives. | Address hidden disabilities by raising awareness and highlighting the importance of an inclusive workplace culture. | Compliance Officer (Equality and Disability) | Ongoing | Undertake at least 2 disability awareness sessions annually |
| | Produce a digital handbook on disability for use by all employees | HR & OD Manager and Compliance Officer (Equality and Disability) | Reviewed annually | Review comments regarding handbook and monitor use |
| 6.4 Staff Health & Wellbeing Group To continue to provide a Staff Health & Wellbeing Group to promote and take positive action to | Hold a Wellbeing Group that is representative of the Council employees and directorates and provides for the needs of employees. | Environment Directorate Environmental Health Manager (Health & Wellbeing), | Review and circulate programmes two monthly | Undertake at least 4 meetings per annum of the Wellbeing Group. |

| We will commit to: | We will do: | Responsibility | Timescale | We will know when we have been successful by: |
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| ensure employees' health and welfare are prioritised, advice identified, and events arranged to promote the commitment to employees. | Provide an appropriate range of Employee Health and Wellbeing events that are open to all employees. | Head of Human Resources and Employee Relations Manager | Every Six months | At least 6 Health & Wellbeing initiatives for employees annually. |
| | Positively engage those with mental ill health and their representatives in the development and review of all relevant employment policies. | Environmental Health Manager (Health & Wellbeing), Head of Human Resources and Employee Relations | Reviewed annually | Data from Westfield that identifies the range of enquiries dealt with numbers. All data must be anonymous. Code of Conduct for Mental Health First Aiders to be agreed and brought to the attention of all employees through the range of internal communications. |
| | Deliver ECNI Mental Health Charter commitments through the ANDBC Mental Health Charter and Code of Conduct | Manager Mental Health Champions' | | Increased awareness for employees of referral agencies through internal communication methods. |
| 6.5 Promote equality of opportunity in terms of how we provide goods and services to disabled customers. | Incorporate the Equality Commission's template ECC Customer Services Policy into compliant handling procedure. | Customer Services Manager, Compliance Officer (Equality | Reviewed annually | Produce statistics to enable better decision making and S75 screening decisions |

| We will commit to: | We will do: | Responsibility | Timescale | We will know when we have been successful by: |
|--------------------|---|-----------------------------------|-----------|---|
| | Devise a suitable monitoring form and actively seek views on the customer experience of disabled people, including those with mental ill health | & Disability) and EH Manger (H&W) | | |