



Disability Action Plan

2019-2023



**Mid & East
Antrim**
Borough Council

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Foreword

As Mayor and Chief Executive of Mid and East Antrim Borough Council, we are delighted to bring forward this **Disability Action Plan for 2019-2023**.

In combination with the Chief Executive's roles as the Chair of the SOLACE NI Equality and Diversity Group and the SOLACE NI Disability Champion, we are excited to focus our efforts on making a real difference for people living with a disability in our Borough.

This Disability Action Plan is a statement of the Council's commitment to the promotion of equality of opportunity for disabled people. It complements the Council's Equality Scheme under Section 75 of the Northern Ireland Act 1998.

The Plan has been designed to ensure that the Council fulfils its statutory obligations in compliance with Section 49A of the Disability Discrimination Act 1995 (DDA 1995) (as amended by Article 5 of the Disability Discrimination (Northern Ireland) Order 2006).

The Disability Discrimination Act places duties on public authorities, when carrying out their functions, to have due regard to the need to:

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

We are committed to proactively implementing measures to ensure that the Council is fulfilling the Disability Duties. We will allocate all necessary resources (in terms of people, time and money) in order to effectively implement this plan and where appropriate, build objectives and targets relating to the Disability Duties into corporate and annual operating plans.

We will ensure the effective communication of the plan to the public, the Elected Members and all council staff and provide all 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.

A copy of this plan, our annual progress report to the Equality Commission and our five-year review of this plan will be made available on our website midandeantrim.gov.uk



Councillor Maureen Morrow
Mayor of Mid and East Antrim
Borough Council, 2019-2020



Anne Donaghy,
Chief Executive of Mid and East
Antrim Borough Council

1.0 Introduction

- 1.1** Under Section 49A of the Disability Discrimination Act 1995 (DDA 1995)¹ as amended by Article 5 of the Disability Discrimination (Northern Ireland) Order 2006), Mid and East Antrim Borough Council is required, when carrying out its functions, to have due regard to the need to:
- promote positive attitudes towards disabled people; and
 - encourage participation by disabled people in public life ('the Disability Duties').
- 1.2** The Disability Action Plan, through a series of actionable measures, outlines the Council's proposals for fulfilling the duties in compliance with Section 49A of the Disability Discrimination Act 1995 (as amended by the Disability Discrimination (Northern Ireland) Order 2006).
- 1.3** This Plan, in form and content, must conform to the guidelines contained within the Commission's guide for public authorities.
- 1.4** Previously, Mid and East Antrim Borough Council has submitted Disability Action Plans which reflect annual measures. This Plan has been created to be implemented over 4 years in order to align with our Council term and aims to fully integrate with our key strategic plans together with the future planning cycles of our service areas.
- 1.5** The Council will ensure the effective communication of the Plan to staff and will undertake a planned programme of training and guidance for all staff and Elected Members as outlined in Section 9.
- 1.6** The Council will commit the necessary resources to deliver the actions within this Disability Action Plan.
- 1.7** As part of its corporate planning process, the Council will build objectives, target setting and monitoring into relevant business plans.
- 1.8** The objectives will be reflected at all levels of strategic planning within the Council including individual staff objectives and annual plans. Employees will be made aware of this Disability Action Plan and how their duties and responsibilities assist the Council to meet its obligations. Progress on meeting the objectives will be monitored and reported to relevant section managers and the Elected Members on an annual basis. Individual performance on these issues will be monitored and reviewed through internal performance review arrangements.
- 1.9** A formal report of progress on meeting the objectives relating to the Disability Duties will be included in the Council's Annual Report to the Equality Commission.

¹ What the Disability Discrimination Act 1995 means by disability: "A physical or mental impairment which has a substantial and long-term adverse effect on a person's ability to carry out normal day-to-day activities." - Definition of Disability, Equality Commission for Northern Ireland, 2007





2.0 Annual report

2.1 The Council will prepare an annual report on the implementation of its Plan. This report will be included as part of the annual report to the Equality Commission which details the Council's progress on the implementation of its Equality Scheme.

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

3.0 Review of the Disability Action Plan

3.1 The Council will carry out a five-year review of its Plan, in consultation with the Equality Commission for Northern Ireland.

4.0 Consultation

- 4.1** The Council is committed to carrying out meaningful and proactive consultation in the development and implementation of its Disability Action Plan. In doing so the Council is keen to bring about change for people with disabilities by taking measures in response to the Disability Duties. The Council would therefore like to ensure the involvement of people who have a range of disabilities and those who care for people with a disability, in the development of this Plan.
- 4.2** Consultation on the Disability Action Plan is on-going via engagement with key stakeholders and service users.
- 4.3** Comments and suggestions on the Plan are welcomed at any time, with public consultation of this Plan due to be advertised in local and social media, on the Council website and distributed widely to representatives and members of local disability groups.
- 4.4** The Council will seek to ensure the involvement of people with disabilities by consulting with representative groups at both regional and local levels, as well as talking to individuals with a disability.
- 4.5** Consultation with local disability groups is to ensure that people with disabilities can assist the Council by:
- Identifying barriers faced by disabled people in participating in public life and specifically how any barriers they have encountered in relation to their dealings with the Council can be overcome
 - identifying circumstances in the past in which the Council has not promoted positive attitudes towards disabled people and identify opportunities in the future for the Council to promote such attitudes
 - assist the Council in identifying key priorities and remedial actions to ensure the application of the disability duties
 - monitoring and making decisions on the revision of the plan as a result of these comments and reviewing the effectiveness of measures taken.
- 4.6** The Council believes it is important that people with disabilities are involved in the implementation, monitoring and review of the Plan. Consultees will be advised of any changes made.
- 4.7** The Council will arrange for translators and/or signers to be present at appropriate meetings, either where a need has been identified in advance, or where a need is anticipated.
- 4.8** Loop systems are installed in the Council Chamber and portable loop systems are available for use in some Council facilities.



5.0 Responsibility for the Disability Action Plan

- 5.1** Responsibility for implementing, reviewing and evaluating this Disability Action Plan and the point of contact within Mid and East Antrim Borough Council will be:

The Policy Team
The Braid, 1-29 Bridge Street,
Ballymena, Co. Antrim,
BT43 5EJ

T: 0300 124 5000

E: policy@midandeastantrim.gov.uk

- 5.2** Following submission to the Equality Commission for Northern Ireland, this Plan will be published on the Council website at: midandeastantrim.gov.uk

- 5.3** The Council will, through its work with people with disabilities, ensure appropriate ways of communicating the Plan. It acknowledges that disabled people may experience different barriers according to their type of impairment. The Plan will be produced in clear print and plain language and it will be made available in accessible formats on request, which may include braille, large print, disc and easy read.

- 5.4** If you require this Plan in an alternative format (such as in large print, in braille, audio, easy read or on computer disc) and/or language, please contact the Policy team as outlined at 5.1 to discuss your requirements.

- 5.5** Hard copies are also available upon request from the Policy team as detailed above.

- 5.6** Requests to produce the Plan in a minority language will be met.



6.0 Functions

- 6.1** The roles and responsibilities of councils, established in the Local Government Act 2014 and in other legislation, fall into four types:
- Direct – councils are responsible for the provision and management of services
 - Development – councils have a role in facilitating economic and community development initiatives
 - Representative – council nominees sit on statutory bodies
 - Consultative – councils reflect community views and concerns, and provide a challenge function, in a range of issues including education, health and housing.
- 6.2** Mid and East Antrim Borough Council's responsibilities from April 2015 are outlined at Appendix A.
- 6.3** To support and implement the above statutory functions and provision of services, the Council has adopted, and will continually develop, a number of policies.
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7.0 Internal arrangements

- 7.1** The Council consists of 40 elected representatives, each elected for a four-year period.
- 7.2** The Chief Executive oversees the work of the departments through the Senior Management Team which, together with the Elected Members, create the corporate body of the Council.
- 7.3** 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.
- 7.4** The organisational structure of Mid and East Antrim Borough Council is available as part of the Council's constitution and is available at www.midandeantrim.gov.uk/constitution
- 7.5** The Disability Duties are the responsibility of every employee of the Council, Councillor and any member of a Council Body or Panel.

8.0 Public Life Positions

- 8.1** The Council has responsibility over a number public life positions in which members of the public participate. A full list of these positions is available on our website.



9.0 Actions and Measures

In this section, we will outline the actions we propose to take and how we will measure our performance.



Training

We will provide training and guidance on Equality, Diversity and Inclusion (EDI) matters, including the relevant legislation. This will raise awareness of the increasing and diverse needs of people living with disability to ensure effective service delivery.

2019-2020 (Year 1)	2020-2021 (Year 2)	2021-2022 (Year 3)	2022-2023 (Year 4)
Develop a core training curriculum for staff and Elected Members	Implement the training regime across all staff and Elected Members, ensuring new staff receive training as soon as possible after employment commences	Mainstreaming EDI awareness by delivering refresher sessions to staff and Elected Members	EDI awareness training becomes included in the new Mid and East Antrim Borough Council Corporate Plan (2023-2027)
Conduct a scoping exercise to procure a suitable training system and/or provider	Incorporate EDI awareness training into departmental business plans and personal development plans	Offer tailored EDI awareness information to key delivery partners, contractors and interested groups within the Borough	Elevate training to determine if curriculum objectives have been met and staff knowledge of the disability duties has increased
Incorporate EDI awareness sessions into Council's corporate induction programme and departmental team days	Monitor and maintain a record of training and attendance	Monitor and maintain a record of training and attendance	Monitor and maintain a record of training and attendance
Facilitate a skills development programme for tourism businesses, including one business which facilitates tours for disabled customers	Training for shortlisting and interview panels to better equip them to fairly recruit people with disabilities	Survey staff for feedback on training, additional support required and future development	Encourage opportunities for staff to obtain accredited training through personal development plans and supported study e.g. Level 1 sign language
Monitor and maintain a record of training and attendance		Provide specialised training sessions for staff on: <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Mental health issues • Auditory and visual awareness • Autism • Working with people with communication difficulties 	

Engagement

We will engage with local and regional disability groups, representatives and service users. We will identify creative and innovative ways to best meet the increasing and diverse needs of people with a disability living in our Council area.

2019-2020 (Year 1)	2020-2021 (Year 2)	2021-2022 (Year 3)	2022-2023 (Year 4)
Create and maintain a centralised database of consultees e.g. local disability groups, charities, disabled individuals, carers, etc.	Conduct outreach visits to disability groups within the Borough to better understand their role, services and membership	Explore and develop the concept of Parliament for People with Disabilities with the engagement forum	Involve the engagement forum in the review of the action plan and development of the Disability Action Plan for 2023-2027
Undertake a communications audit to determine the best and most effective means of communicating and distributing information to consultees	Establish the engagement forum and hold at least two meetings	Continue to distribute the e-newsletter to support the work of the engagement forum, inform members and invite attendance and engagement in Council activities and public consultations	Continue to distribute the e-newsletter to support the work of the engagement forum, inform members and invite attendance and engagement in Council activities and public consultations
Develop a proposal for an engagement forum in order to engage and build a consultative network to best allow Council to explore the barriers to participation in public life and learn the best ways to make a tangible difference to those living with a disability in our Borough	Raise awareness of the engagement forum within Council and departments as a means of consulting and engaging with equality and disability representatives to increase participation in Council activities and to seek feedback on plans and consultations		
	Develop an e-newsletter to support the work of the engagement forum, inform members and invite attendance and engagement in Council activities and public consultations		



Participation

We will take measures to encourage and create opportunities for people with disabilities to participate fully in Council activities, events, services, employment and public life positions. We will work to remove barriers to the participation in public life.

2019-2020 (Year 1)	2020-2021 (Year 2)	2021-2022 (Year 3)	2022-2023 (Year 4)
Review the public life positions available through the Council including the roles, terms of office, responsibilities, advertisement, promotion, recruitment and selection to best allow disabled people to see the opportunities	Research and consult on the barriers to participating to full in Council activities, events, services, employment and public life positions	Initiate a shadowing programme for employment/ members/local businesses to encourage confidence to participate in everyday life	Continue shadowing programme for employment/ members/local businesses to encourage confidence to participate in everyday life
Work with USEL and other social enterprises to scope opportunities for employment for people with disabilities in the Borough	Develop and deliver bespoke 'How the Council Works' sessions to disability groups and special needs schools e.g. attendance at monthly Council meetings	Work with USEL and other social enterprises to scope opportunities for employment for people with disabilities in the Borough	Work with USEL and other social enterprises to scope opportunities for employment for people with disabilities in the Borough
	Work with USEL and other social enterprises to scope opportunities for employment for people with disabilities in the Borough		



Accessibility

We will strive to achieve equality of opportunity to Council services and facilities for those with a disability through enhanced accessibility and encouraged participation

2019-2020 (Year 1)

Enhance arrangements for accessibility and additional requirements at key Council buildings and events

Monitor and assess accessibility of our website

Scope AccessAble app and website for implementation in our Borough

Establish a Disability Hub Programme using the £45k funding secured from Sport NI

Deliver sports and activity programs and services to facilitate access to physical activities for people of all ages who live with a disability

Application of the £60k funding secured by Arts and Culture in January 2019 to deliver improvements to the booking arrangements and signage at The Braid theatre for the pan-disability community

Application of the granted funding (secured in November 2018) for "Autism Friendly" resources within the Braid Museum

Tourism team to establish an "Access for All" scheme which will capture specifics about disabilities with a view to enhancing customer service by ensuring that Council is proactively meeting the needs of customers with increased access requirements

Record and monitor customer complaints or compliments in relation to access to services and information about services

2020-2021 (Year 2)

Review the current provision of accessibility measures across Council services and buildings

Review the current provision and arrangements for accessibility and additional requirements at all events, including consultation with Events staff and organisers

Develop and promote an accessible information guide to improve access to information for users who have a disability

Monitor and assess the accessibility of our website

Pilot Every Customer Counts scheme in at least one Council operated facility

Deliver sports/activity programs and services to facilitate access to physical activities for people of all ages who live with a disability

One accessible theatre performance





2021-2022 (Year 3)

Establish and conduct regular front of house audits to ensure our accessibility measures are fit for purpose

Develop guidance in respect of Council signage for improvements in accessibility

Undertake website accessibility assessment exercise and address issues of inaccessibility

Promote Every Customer Counts scheme to Council operated facilities, achieving at least two more accreditations

Three accessible theatre performances

Improved disabled personal hygiene/ toileting facilities across the Borough including considerations made for optimal facilities in all new Council buildings

Increase and enhance the provision of inclusive play equipment and activities in parks through the Play Strategy

2022-2023 (Year 4)

Commission a mystery shopping exercise to determine progress made in respect of access to services

Monitor and assess the accessibility of our website

Work with USEL to open more Ability Cafes in the Borough

Ensure the inclusion and consultation of disabled people in the design of new or renovation of Council buildings. Encourage the use of the engagement forum to critically review plans and offer improvements

Council to participate in Disabled Access Day on 16 March 2023 as a complimentary event to the Every Customer Counts scheme



Communications

We will ensure people with disabilities are more aware of the Council services available to them and find accessing information quick and easy. We will portray people with disabilities in an inclusive and positive way in our external and internal communication practices, policies and procedures.

We will promote positive attitudes towards people with disabilities amongst employees, Elected Members and the public.

2019-2020 (Year 1)	2020-2021 (Year 2)	2021-2022 (Year 3)	2022-2023 (Year 4)
Mark the International Day of Persons with Disabilities (3 December)	Mark the International Day of Persons with Disabilities (3 December)	Mark the International Day of Persons with Disabilities (3 December)	Mark the International Day of Persons with Disabilities (3 December)
Increase external and internal awareness of the location and availability of disabled facilities and services across the Borough, including radar keys, assisted bin lifts, etc.	Dedicated equality and disability area on the Council website to promote services, events, consultations, concessions, etc. Increased visibility of people with disabilities in Council promotional and branded material and social media	Develop video content to promote services and to explain the processes and how to access Council services	Promote partnerships with other businesses and organisations (USEL, RNIB, Disability NI, etc.)
Increase awareness of Disability Action Plan amongst local disability groups and representatives	Dedicated equality and diversity feature in every edition of the Council magazine		
Communication and promotion of services provided by other organisations within the Borough for people with disabilities and their carers	"Who Are We" – profiles of staff/ members/constituents with disabilities in Council magazines		
Develop a marketing campaign for the current Ability Café and any similar projects delivered by Council in the Borough			

Reporting

We will continue to review Council's actions to ensure learning, continual improvement and facilitate standard setting for the future

We will conduct ongoing research to identify ways to meet the increasing and diverse needs of people with a disability living in our Council area and take action towards securing funding and implementing the identified requirements

2019-2020 (Year 1)	2020-2021 (Year 2)	2021-2022 (Year 3)
Promote the centralised equality and disability function within Corporate Services to implement, coordinate, review and report on Council's compliance with the Disability Duties and the Disability Action Plan	Gather relevant data from the Council data systems in order to identify opportunities to improve services and facilities for users with disabilities	Report to Senior Management Team, Policy & Resources Committee and Council on the progress of the Disability Action Plan
Report to Senior Management Team, Policy & Resources Committee and Council on the progress of the Disability Action Plan	Conduct annual exercise to encourage staff to provide information to assist with monitoring and reporting on disabilities in the workplace	Review Equality and Disability Action Plans based on the updated audit of inequalities
Update the Audit of Inequalities for use in equality screenings, to better inform policy development processes and to better understand the profile of the Borough	Review the use of disclaimer or restricted access notices (at events, premises or activities) to facilitate access and participation	Analyse data from the new booking system in the Braid and identify measures to help improve access to services
	Scope the role of Disability Champion within Council including what levels of the organization the role should cover	Review quarterly screening reports to identify policies with an impact on people with disabilities
	Draft appropriate job descriptions	Appoint disability champion(s)
		Achieve the NI Diversity Charter Mark Report on the effectiveness of the Disability Champion role

2022-2023 (Year 4)

Report to Senior Management Team, Policy & Resources Committee and Council on the progress of the Disability Action Plan

Provide update report to Council on the work of the engagement forum

Review quarterly screening reports to identify policies with an impact on people with disabilities



Appendix A

- Access to information
- Arts and Entertainment
- Biodiversity
- Building maintenance and contract management
- Building regulation
- Civic functions
- Community Development
- Community Safety
- Consumer Safety
- Control of communicable diseases and food poisoning
- Corporate Health and Safety
- Corporate Planning
- Corporate projects
- Dangerous buildings
- Dog and Pest Control
- Economic Development including local economic development, Start a Business Programme and Enterprise Shows, Youth Entrepreneurship
- Emergency Planning liaison
- Energy performance of buildings
- Environment and Countryside
- Environmental protection
- Equality legislation
- Estate management
- EU Rural Development Programme
- Financial Services
- Food control
- Good Relations
- Grounds maintenance – including horticulture, cemeteries, parks and play areas
- Health and Safety
- Home Safety
- Housing
- Registration of houses in multiple occupation, housing unfitness responsibilities including repair and demolition notices
- Information systems and technology
- Internal Audit
- Leisure Facilities
- Licensing
- Local Tourism including small scale tourism accommodation development; providing business support including business start up advice along with training and delivery of customer care schemes, and providing advice to developers on tourism policies and related issues
- Member services
- Museum Service
- Neighbourhood renewal – enterprise initiatives
- Off street carparking
- Parks and Open spaces
- PCSP – Policing and Community Safety Partnership
- Personnel, training and development
- Planning- to include: local development plan functions, development control and enforcement, postal naming and numbering;
- Property certificates

- Public Health
- Policy development
- Purchasing and Tendering
- Registration of Births, Deaths and Marriages
- Sports Development
- Street cleansing – including public conveniences
- Sustainable Development
- Tourism and visitor attractions
- Town Hall facilities
- Urban regeneration and community development including functions associated with physical development
- Vehicle and plant maintenance
- Waste Management –including Recycling & Disposal



If you need this in an alternative format, such as large print or another language, please email **policy@midandeastantrim.gov.uk**

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