



# Disability Action Plan 2019 – 2024

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## **Introduction**

As a public authority, the Arts Council of Northern Ireland (ACNI) is required to submit a Disability Action Plan (DAP) to the Equality Commission, showing how it propose to fulfil its duties under Section 49A of the Disability Discrimination Act 1995. It 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').

Under Section 49B of the DDA 1995, The Arts Council of Northern Ireland is also required to submit to the Equality Commission a Disability Action Plan showing how it proposes to fulfil these duties in relation to its functions.

The plan contains details of the practical measures it will deliver over its lifetime (2019 to 2024) to fulfil its obligations under the disability duties. Other information includes the timescale over which these measures are to be implemented, performance indicators and details of how the plan will be published.

Once approved, the Arts Council will submit an annual progress report to the Equality Commission on the implementation of its plans. This will form part of ACNI's annual report to the Commission on the implementation of its equality scheme.

## **What We Do**

The Arts Council of Northern Ireland (ACNI) is the main development agency for the arts and cultural sector and is a non-departmental public body (NDPB) of the Department for Communities (DfC).

The Arts Council (Northern Ireland) Order 1995 established the functions of the Arts Council as follows:

- a) to develop and improve the knowledge, appreciation and practice of the Arts;
- b) to increase public access to and participation in the Arts;
- c) to advise the Department and other government departments, district councils and other bodies on matters relating to the Arts; and
- d) such other functions as are conferred on the Council by any other statutory provision.

The Arts Council has developed a five year strategic framework to guide its work over the same period as the DAP, 2019 to 2024. Inspire, Connect Lead, provides an overview of the direction we are proposing to take over the next five years, setting out in detail the actions to be taken in order to deliver its strategic objectives. A number of DAP actions are reflected in this document demonstrating our commitment to mainstreaming delivery of our disability duties.

A copy of five year plan can be found at [www.artscouncil-ni.org](http://www.artscouncil-ni.org).

## **Our Evidence Base**

Evidence shows us that disabled people are much less likely to participate in cultural activities than the overall population (General Population Survey, 2016). This is due, in part, to physical barriers such as transport and access to venues.

Disabled people are also underrepresented in the cultural workforce (Annual Funding Survey, 2017/18) as well as the creative workforce.

Research commissioned by Arts Council England shows us that in addition to physical barriers, disabled people are much less likely to participate in cultural activities because of negative attitudes and prejudice, inflexible ways of working and exclusion from education.

## **The Social Model of Disability**

The Arts Council works from the perspective of the social model of disability. This understands disability as a problem of exclusion from everyday life, requiring a change in society's values and practices in order to remove attitudinal and environmental barriers to participation.

Under legislation (Disability Discrimination Act 1995) a person is considered to be disabled if they have "a physical or mental impairment which has a substantial and long-term adverse effect on their ability to perform normal day-to-day activities". However, it is important to consider the diverse nature of disability rather than producing a narrow definition on the types of impairments and conditions that define disability.

## **Terminology**

Arts & Disability is a general term to cover a broad range of arts practice embracing artwork by people with disabilities and activities involving disabled people as artists, participants and audience members. This approach is inclusive and aims to involve all sections of the community. Disability Arts is a specific form of arts practice where disabled artists create work that reflects their identity and experience as disabled people. Whilst the Arts Council primarily connects with Arts & Disability practice, we recognise the value and principles of Disability Arts practice and have made

substantial investment to create new opportunities for disabled people's artistic career development.

### **What we have achieved to date**

- Continued to fund a range of organisations that engage directly with disabled people;
- Established the ARTiculate programme which tackles mental health awareness in young people (16-24 target age bracket) through engagement in the arts;
- Provided opportunities for older people, many of whom have age related disabilities, to engage in the arts to reduce loneliness and isolation. 45% of participants (n=247) have identified that they have a disability in their project entrance survey since 2016;
- Continued to fund the iDA awards, administered by University of Atypical (formerly Arts & Disability Forum) to support career development for disabled artists; and
- Reviewed the Annual Funding Survey and Individual Artist data collection to better understand the employment of disabled people within the funded arts sector.

### **How this plan will be published**

A final draft of this Disability Action Plan will be published on ACNI's website, taking feedback into consideration, within 3 calendar months following a public consultation period 12 weeks. Consultees identified within our Equality Scheme will be notified by email following the plan's publication.

Action Measure	DDA Measure	Key performances indicator	Timescale	Outcome
1. ACNI provide disability awareness training to staff members led by disabled trainers.	Encourage participation by disabled people in public life	Number of staff members trained	2020/21	ACNI staff has a better understanding of the challenges and barriers faced by disabled people.
2. Communications content that promotes positive attitudes towards disabled artists	Promote positive attitudes towards disabled people	Number of communications releases with images of or reference to disabled people	Annually	Citizens more aware of disabled artists' work and that their work is of equal standard as non-disabled artists.
3. Support the careers of disabled artists through: Grant giving to individual artists; Funding of key disability arts organisations.	Encourage participation by disabled people in public life / Promote positive attitudes towards disabled people	Number of disabled artists receiving grants	Annually	Disabled artists have more accessible career pathways and better support networks
4. Ensure representation of disabled people in the Deliberative Forum	Encourage participation by disabled people in public life	Number of disabled people on deliberative forum	2020/21	Ensure voice of disabled people heard in policy decisions
5. Based on the independent review ensure that the premium payments award is fit for purpose.	Encourage participation by disabled people in public life	Re - instatement of premium payment award / number of awards annually	2021/22	Arts programmes are more accessible by removing barriers to engagement and participation.
6. Conduct a survey of funded arts venues to determine their accessibility needs for front of house, backstage, and office spaces.	Encourage participation by disabled people in public life	Publish findings of the accessibility of funded arts venues.	2020/21	ACNI have a better understanding of the accessibility needs to the sector and have a baseline to use to request and prioritise capital improvements

Action Measure	DDA Measure	Key performances indicator		Outcome
7. Develop a UK wide disability access scheme and participate in a UK wide Accessibility Audit	Encourage participation by disabled people in public life / Promote positive attitudes towards disabled people	Achievement of disability access scheme. Publicise the findings of the UK Accessibility Audit	2020/21	Accessibility for those engaging in the Arts is improved.
8. Participate in the DWP disability confident campaign	Encourage participation by disabled people in public life	Number of organisations that have signed up to the scheme.	2021/22	Organisations are better able to reach a wider pool of arts employees.
9. Promote careers in the creative industries to encourage applications from disabled creatives.	Encourage participation by disabled people in public life	Number of disabled employees in the creative sector	2023/24	Organisations are better able to reach a wider pool of arts employees.