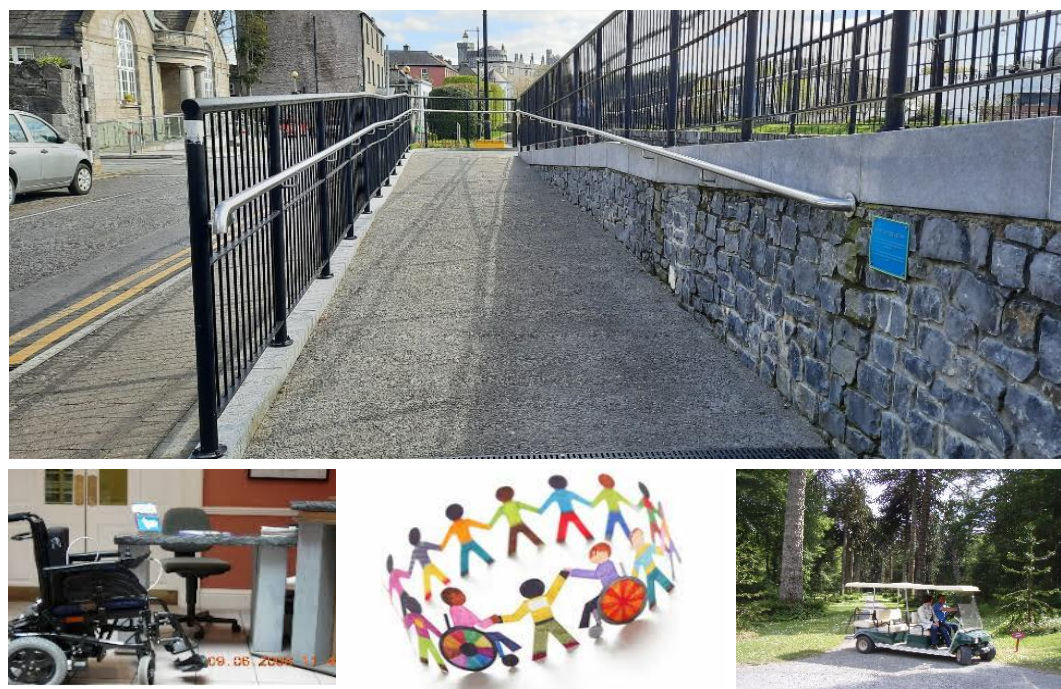


KILKENNY COUNTY COUNCIL DISABILITY INCLUSION STRATEGY **DRAFT** **2023-2026**



This document was produced by Kilkenny County Council in consultation with Kilkenny County Council staff and external stakeholders including the PPN (Public Participator Network).

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Message from Chief Executive

I welcome this new Disability Inclusion Strategy for Kilkenny County Council. This strategy gives Kilkenny County Council a focused road map while working towards providing a universally accessible environment and services. This strategy will also assist Kilkenny County Council in working towards enhancing the quality of life for people with disabilities in County Kilkenny.

Council Departments have been responsible for developing key actions and reporting on how accessible their services are. This review took place between 2022 and mid-2023. As part of our review, consultation and engagement also took place with employees of Kilkenny County Council and the Kilkenny Access Group.

Kilkenny County Council are committed to continue to review the services, buildings facilities to ensure that our organisation is accessible to all.

I would like to thank all those who contributed to the consultation process and to those who were involved in the preparation of this strategy and action plan.

Lar Power
Chief Executive
Kilkenny County Council

Message from Cathaoirleach

As Cathaoirleach, I am delighted to welcome the 2023-2026 Kilkenny County Council Disability Inclusion Strategy. This strategy will act as framework to further build and improve on the work carried out by Kilkenny County Council.

Kilkenny County Council are fully committed to continue to provide services, facilities, buildings and infrastructure that everyone can use and is accessible to all. This strategy will help us to continue working towards achieving that goal.

I would like to take this opportunity to thank all the staff who worked in consultation with various stakeholders in putting this strategy together.

Yours sincerely
Michael Doyle
Cathaoirleach
Kilkenny County Council

Introduction

The Kilkenny County Council Disability Strategy is guided by the National Disability Inclusion Strategy 2017-2022. The National Disability Inclusion Strategy (2017-2021) (NDIS), was launched in 2017 and was originally intended to run for five years until the end of 2021, it was later extended to 2022. The National Strategy is a whole-of-government approach to improving the lives of people with disabilities. It provides a significant framework for all activity across government departments and agencies. This supports progress in delivering on the obligations in the United Nations Convention on the Rights of Persons with Disabilities (UNCRPD) which was ratified in March 2018.

In this document, the terms “people/persons with disabilities” and “disabled people” are used interchangeably. The term “disabled people” is recognised by many within the disability rights movement in Ireland to align with the social model and human rights approach of disability, as it is considered to acknowledge the fact that people with an impairment are disabled by barriers in the environment and society. However, it is also recognised that others prefer the term “people/persons with disabilities” because of the inherent understanding in the term that they are first and foremost human beings entitled to human rights. This also reflects the language used in the UNCRPD. It is recognised that many people with an intellectual disability, people with a mental health difficulty or psycho-social disability prefer person-first language. It is also recognised that some people do not identify with either term.

Background Information

Barcelona Agreement

When Ireland signed the Barcelona Declaration in March 1995, which contains Seventeen Agreements that relate to a broad range of access issues it committed to making Ireland a more accessible environment for people with disabilities. This meant that, among other things, Ireland's built environment, services and decision-making processes would become more accessible. Kilkenny Local Authorities adopted the Barcelona Declaration and in doing so committed themselves to creating a more inclusive society for people with disabilities and to establishing structures for ongoing consultation with the advocates of this sector.

Goal / Purpose:

The purpose of the Barcelona Declaration Project is to make Kilkenny a more accessible environment for all by implementing the agreements. The seventeen agreements can be summarised as follows:

1. To promote disability awareness and ensure the rights of people with disabilities to be different and their right to receive personal attention.
2. To develop policies and equality/disability proof decision-making processes.
3. To develop consultative processes.
4. To provide people with disabilities access to the social and physical environments as well as services
5. To provide training programmes dealing with equality/disability issues
6. To develop monitoring, evaluation and impact assessment procedures for actions, projects and policies regarding equality/disability issues.

Other notable documents include;

The UN Convention on the Rights of Persons with Disabilities¹

Ireland has ratified this convention, which sets out the rights of people with disabilities and requires governments to actively take steps to promote and protect those rights.

The Equal Status Acts 2000-2015²

These Acts prohibit discrimination in access to goods and services, including public services on the grounds of disability.

The Building Regulations- Part M³

This section of the building regulations act sets out requirements for the design and construction of buildings to ensure that they are accessible to people with disabilities.

The Accessible Public Transport Charter⁴

This charter outlines the standards of accessibility required for public transport in Ireland.

National Disability Authority Guidelines⁵

¹ <https://www.ohchr.org/en/instruments-mechanisms/instruments/convention-rights-persons-disabilities>

² <https://www.irishstatutebook.ie/eli/2000/act/8/enacted/en/html>

³ <https://www.gov.ie/en/publication/78e67-technical-guidance-document-m-access-and-use/>

⁴ https://www.nationaltransport.ie/wp-content/uploads/2014/11/Accessible_Licensed_Bus_Public_Consultation_Issue_Paper_November_2014.pdf

⁵ <https://nda.ie/about/what-we-do/standards-monitoring>

National Disability Act

The Disability Act was passed in 2005. The Act set out the following definition of disability:

“Disability”, in relation to a person, means a substantial restriction in the capacity of the person to carry on a profession, business or occupation in the State or to participate in social or cultural life in the State by reason of an enduring physical, sensory, mental health or intellectual impairment.

The Disability Act is made up of seven Parts containing fifty-eight Sections.

Local Authority Obligations Under the Disability Act 2005

Part 3 and **Part 5** of the Act are relevant to and inform Kilkenny County Council's Disability Inclusion & Access Strategy.

Sectoral Plans

Part 3 of the Disability Act 2005 required six Government departments to prepare plans (known as sectoral plans) that set out how they will deliver specific services for people with disabilities.

The Department of Environment, Heritage and Local Government **Sectoral Plan** was published in 2006. It set out a range of measures to be taken by the Department and Local Authorities regarding the improved provision of services to persons with disabilities and set out national objectives and guidelines for access to services and built facilities. The sectoral plan (2006) required each Local Authority to undertake a number of actions including: Draw up an implementation plan setting out a programme to implement the commitments and objectives contained in the Disability Act 2005 and in the sectoral plan.

The implementation plan was published by each local authority. In drawing up their implementation plans, local authorities had to have regard to the funding and staffing resources available to them for implementation. Priority was given to local authority buildings and other facilities to which access is most frequently required as well as accessible public footpaths streets and crossings in urban areas. The plans set out targets and timeframes for carrying out these works to reflect local priorities.

Access and Accessibility: Buildings and Services

In addition, the Disability Act (2005) provides a statutory basis for making public services accessible. Various sections of the Act place specific obligations on local government to ensure universal access to public spaces, buildings and services (including information provision) owned and operated by local authorities nationally. Furthermore, the Act places an obligation on local authorities to integrate disability service provision within mainstream services, where this is practical and appropriate.

Part 3 of the Act places obligations on public bodies to make their public buildings, services and information accessible to people with disabilities.

Specifically, the sections relating to the above obligations are as follows;

Section 25 of the Act requires public bodies to ensure that its public buildings are, as far as practicable, accessible to persons with disabilities, and that all public buildings existing as at the commencement of the Act (31 December 2005) must “as far as practicable” be brought into compliance with Part M of the 1997 Building Regulations by the end of 2015.

Section 26 of Part 3 of the Act – public bodies are required to ensure that their services are accessible for people with disabilities by providing integrated access to mainstream services where practicable and appropriate.

Section 26(2) of the Disability Act 2005 requires that public bodies must authorise at least one of his or its officers (referred to as “**access officers**” to provide or arrange for and co-ordinate the provision of assistance and guidance to persons with disabilities in accessing its services.

Section 27 of Part 3 of the Act - public bodies are required to ensure that the goods or services that they purchase are accessible, unless it would not be practicable or justifiable on cost grounds or would result in an unreasonable delay

Section 28 of Part 3 of the Act – communications by a public body to a person with a hearing or visual impairment must, as far as practicable, be provided in an accessible format. Information provided electronically must, as far as practicable, be compatible with adaptive technology. Published information, relevant to persons 2 March 2008 with intellectual disabilities must also be, as far as practicable, made available in easy to read formats.

Section 39 - provides that Public Bodies may appoint “inquiry officers” to investigate and make determinations in relation to complaints alleging the failure of the body to comply with section 25, 26, 27, 28 or 29 of the Act. Procedures must be put in place for dealing with such complaints. In the case of a determination that there has been such a failure, Inquiry Officer must outline the steps required to be taken by the public body concerned to comply with the provision concerned.

Employment of People with Disabilities

Part 5 of the Act provides that public bodies take, in so far as practicable, all reasonable measures to promote and support the employment of persons with disabilities. It also provides for a framework for monitoring the employment target for people with disabilities, currently set at 3%, the National Disability Authority has an overall monitoring and reporting role under the Act. The Government have committed to progressively increase the statutory target of 3% of employees with disabilities in the public sector towards 6% by 2024. (Comprehensive Employment Strategy for People with Disabilities 2015 – 2024).

National Disability Inclusion Strategy (2017-2021)

The National Disability Inclusion Strategy (2017-2021) was introduced to promote greater inclusion by people with disabilities in Irish society. One of the key objectives of the strategy is to give legal effect to the principle that mainstream public services should serve people with disabilities alongside other citizens, as set out in the Disability Act 2005.

Key Themes in the strategy centred around

- Education;
- Employment;
- Health and well-being;
- Person-centred disability services;
- Housing;
- Transport and accessible places;
- Equality and choice and
- Joined-up services.

Examples of Kilkenny County Councils Projects

In recent years particularly since the introduction of the 2005 Disability Act, Kilkenny County Council has made significant progress with regard to facilitating people with disabilities, but also acknowledge that more needs to be done.

Some examples of core activities to date include the setting up an accessible Customer Services Desk in County Hall as the first point of contact for customers. New Signs have been erected around County Hall and in other Council Offices for easier access to all Departments. Disabled parking facilities have been improved significantly in both the city and county. From a built environment perspective, a number of council buildings and public offices have been made more accessible, examples include the Castlecomer Area Office which has been relocated to the centre of the town and is now fully accessible with a lift installed, the Callan Area Office and other area offices are also now fully accessible.

Other examples of accessible improvements completed include works onto the Motor Tax Public Office in County Hall and the Housing Department in Johns Green. A new telephone system *with brail technologies has also been introduced*. Fire alarms are now accessible for people with disabilities. Health and Safety emergency wheel chairs for stairs have been installed at County Hall and in Johns Green House. The Provision of a battery-operated mobile cart in Woodstock is now in place to make access easier for people with mobility issues, in general our parks department have made significant improvements in making our public amenities more accessible. Our housing and roads department continue to ensure that housing and our infrastructure adhere to accessibility guidelines.

From a communication perspective work is presently underway to carry out an updated accessibility audit of the Kilkenny County Council Information Technology Services.

Over the last number of years Kilkenny County Council continue to support the Public Participation Network who in turn support and facilitate the Kilkenny Access Group who in partnership work towards making Kilkenny City and County as accessible as possible.

Committee Members

The Kilkenny County Council Disability Strategy Team members presently include members from the Housing Department, Community & Culture, Human Resources, Environment, Corporate, Roads, Tourism and Enterprise and the Information Technology Department.

Our Plan & Framework:

In developing this plan for Kilkenny County Council, the obligations under the National Disability Act the National Disability Inclusion Strategy (2017-2021) was used as a framework for developing locally based actions. This framework has been structured to using the following headings.

Communication, Information & Services
Buildings & Infrastructure
Housing & Community
Employment & Training
Transport & Connectivity
Housing & Community
Tourism & Local Development

Consultations

In the development of this plan, Kilkenny County Council consulted with key departments within the organisation and separate online consultations took place using a detailed online staff survey. This online survey asked staff members a number of questions relating to how accessible the organisation was and a number of recommendations were made. Over 84 staff members responded which is a significant representation from the organisation. Under the Public Participation Network (PPN) the Kilkenny Access group who represent people with disabilities in County Kilkenny were also consulted with directly and a number of recommendations were made, and these recommendations are also reflected in this strategy.

ACTION PLAN



Communication, Information & Services

What is our objective	What will we do	Sections Responsible	When will we do it
Communication, Information & Services			
Appointment of an Access Officer.	Kilkenny County Council are committed to assigning a new Access Officer.	Corporate	4 th Quarter 2023
To achieve compliance with the Web Content Accessibility Guidelines (WCAG) 2.1 AA standard as outlined by the European Union Accessibility Directive. This objective is part of Kilkenny County Council's ongoing commitment to ensuring equal access to our digital services for all users, including those with disabilities.	<p>Tender presently being developed for professional accessibility services for six of the Kilkenny County Council core websites.</p> <p>The tender will include;</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Comprehensive audit of six of our primary websites. • Reports and guidance on issues discovered and follow up re-audits. • Specific audit 	IT Department	Ongoing
	Publish a staff accessibility guide based on the National Disability Authority's (NDA) advice and make it available to our staff and partners.	IT Department	Ongoing
Provide accessibility proactively	Provide an aid or service that will be effective, given the	All Sections	Ongoing

	<p>nature of what is being communicated and the person's method of communicating.</p> <p>Staff training for frontline staff for assisting people with disabilities and making them aware of requirements for communicating effectively with people who have communication disabilities.</p>	HR Training	
Engage with Organisations/Leaders in the Disability Community	Feedback Surveys to understand their needs.		Ongoing
Accessible Documents	<p>Create documents accessible by screen readers.</p> <p>Provide training for staff in making documents accessible.</p>	<p>All Sections</p> <p>HR Training</p>	Ongoing
Inclusive Communications Policy	To develop an Inclusive Communications Policy. Having a policy will define how we will commit to providing inclusive communications.	HR Training	Ongoing
To provide artists with disabilities to access information & support	To provide online information regarding accessing documents	Arts Department	Ongoing
Designated point of contacts to be identified in relevant Local Authority Departments and these contacts to be		All Departments	Ongoing

represented on the Disability Inclusion Team.			
<p>To investigate the further use of braille signs to accommodate visual impairment.</p> <p>Investigate the development of a JAM card system.</p>		All Departments	Ongoing

Buildings & Infrastructure

What is our objective	What will we do	Sections Responsible	When will we do it
Buildings & Infrastructure⁶			
Achieve age friendly library status in all libraries using adjustable tables, book trolleys and suitable signage.	Assess all libraries and introduce recommended age friendly improvements to ensure we meet the criteria for age friendly library status.	Library Department	May 2023
Age friendly parking spaces.	Expand access to other library branches - Castlecomer and Urlingford are complete	Library Department	Ongoing
Ensure all libraries are accessible externally and internally.	Review signage and ensure all new shelving adheres to recommendations re accessibility and existing disability guidelines.	Library Department	Ongoing
Embed accessibility in our procurement process when purchasing equipment/furniture.	Ensure accessibility is included in purchasing procedures	Library Department	Ongoing
To support people with a disability to actively be able to use our outdoor recreational facilities and trails.	At suitable locations, develop trails that are fully accessible to wheelchair users and those with reduced mobility. Continue to seek funding to	Project Office & Parks	2023 -2026

⁶ Adhere to Universal Design Principles where feasible when developing new amenities and community spaces.

	<p>deliver fully assessible play equipment, age friendly seating, wheelchair accessible picnic benches and enhanced trail surfacing across the city and counties outdoor recreational amenity offering.</p>		
<p>Kilkenny County Council will work towards implementing the National Housing Strategy for Disabled People 2022 – 2027 that was published on 14 January 2022. It is a joint publication of the Department of Housing, Local Government and Heritage; the Department of Health; and the Department of Children, Equality, Disability, Integration and Youth. The Strategy sets out how the Government will put in place the frameworks to ensure that the housing and support needs of disabled people are comprehensively addressed. The Housing Agency is preparing a detailed implementation plan for the Strategy.</p>	<p>Implement the Housing Strategy for Disabled People 2022 – 2027.</p> <p>The overarching vision of the Strategy is to facilitate disabled people to live independently and be included in their communities. The National Housing Strategy for Disabled People 2022 – 2027 aims to build upon the work achieved through the previous National Housing Strategy for People with a Disability 2011-2016 (extended to 2021). It documents the framework for the delivery of housing for disabled people through mainstream housing policy. The Strategy has been developed under the guiding principles of Housing for All –</p>	Housing Department	2022-2027

	A new Housing Plan for Ireland.		
Adhere to Universal Design Principles where feasible when developing new amenities and community spaces.		All Sections	Ongoing

Employment & Training

What is our objective	What will we do	Sections Responsible	When will we do it
Employment & Training			
To continue to follow the 'Comprehensive Employment Strategy for People with Disabilities 2015-2024'. (NDIS Action 47).	<p>Continue to report annually to the Department of Housing, Planning and Local Government on this target.</p> <p>Prepare and carry out staff census on all staff employed in Kilkenny County Council.</p>	HR SECTION	<p>March 2023</p> <p>Q3-Q4 2023</p>
Provide and encourage staff to complete disability awareness training. (NDIS Action 20)	All staff to complete the NDA eLearning module once updated version is available from NDA.	HR SECTION	2023 / 2024
Ensure that all training courses offered provide real value, are worthwhile and encourage and support accessibility.(NDIS Action 46)	<p>Organise Plain English training and awareness for our website content coordinators and report and policy authors</p> <p>Organise Literacy Awareness training for persons working in customer service front of house roles in Kilkenny County Council.</p>	HR SECTION	<p>Q4 2023</p> <p>Q4 2023</p>

To ensure that our recruitment process is wholly inclusive.	<p>Ensuring that all job vacancies are advertised on platforms that are accessible by all.</p> <p>Consulting with our online applications provider around providing accessibility toolbars on all application forms</p> <p>Ensure that all our interview locations are wheelchair accessible, have hearing loops and computer access for anyone who requires this assistance.</p>	HR SECTION	<p>Q3 2023</p> <p>Q3 2023</p> <p>Q3 2023</p>

Housing & Community

What is our objective	What will we do	Sections Responsible	When will we do it
Housing & Community			
To work closely with communities and the relevant agencies to identify specific needs when planning and designing future amenity facilities.	When delivering future playgrounds and amenity spaces we will engage with the local communities and schools etc., to identify particular needs within the community that will inform our design to make the delivered project more inclusive and welcoming for all.	Project Office & Parks	2023 -2026
Continue to carry out activities in line with Kilkenny County Councils Local Economic and Community Plan.		Community & Culture Department	2023 -2026
Continue to support and resource the PPN which has a disability strand relevant to engagement and consultation processes.		PPN/Community & Culture Department	2023 -2026
We want to continue to deliver appropriate and relevant housing in keeping with the	Endeavor to include appropriate numbers of universally designed units	Housing Department	2023-2026

“National Housing Strategy for Disabled People 2022–2027”.	within new housing schemes, both direct build and turnkey.		
To continue to ensure that an appropriate percentage of acquired housing stock meets universal design standards where possible.	Engage fully with developers at pre-planning stage to ensure that Universally Designed units are included within new housing schemes under Part V of the Planning and Development Act 2000.	Housing Department	2023-2026
To continue to upgrade our existing housing stock to provide accessible dwellings where feasible.	We will review the suitability of houses to improve accessibility or upgrade to fully accessible houses as they become vacant.	Housing Department	2023-2026
To ensure our application process for housing services is as accessible as possible.	We will investigate digital and plain English options for applications for housing services where feasible.	Housing Department	2023-2026

Transport & Connectivity

What is our objective	What will we do	Sections Responsible	When will we do it
Transport & Connectivity			
Continue with active travel measures\enhancements to improve connectivity for all.	Work with the NTA (National Transport Authority) to secure funding for projects	City\Roads	2023-2026
Continue to review the City Bus service with a view to adding additional routes\services.	Work with the NTA to secure funding for projects	City	2023-2026
Provide Mobility Hubs at locations that allow for switching to sustainable modes of transport.	Identify suitable locations	City\Roads\Planning	2023-2026
Continue to work with the NTA on providing rural bus stops and shelters.	Work with the NTA to identify suitable locations	Roads	2023-2026
Continue to ensure that all improvement\enhancement works are accessible to all where practicable.	Keep on agenda of all design team meetings	Roads	2023-2026
To work towards making our outdoor amenity spaces more accessible and inclusive for people with a disability.	<p>Increase the number of fully accessible play equipment across our playground facilities.</p> <p>New and replacement picnic benches will be wheelchair accessible in appropriate locations.</p>	Project Office & Parks	2023 - 2026

	<p>New or replacement seats will be age friendly in design.</p> <p>Increase the provision of dedicated disabled and age friendly parking spaces in carparks within our amenity grounds.</p> <p>Design and construct, where appropriate, new trails so that same are suitable for people with reduced mobility and wheelchair users.</p> <p>Where appropriate, continue to improve existing trails so that same are more suitable for people with reduced mobility and wheelchair users.</p> <p>Offer the services of a wheelchair accessible buggy within Woodstock Gardens.</p>		
Where feasible, parking spaces to be aligned with the most up-to-date specifications & additional signage to be incorporated where feasible in rural areas.			All Relevant Departments

Tourism & Local Economic Development

What is our objective	What will we do	Sections Responsible	When will we do it
We will continue to improve access to all visitor attractions throughout Kilkenny City and County	<ol style="list-style-type: none"> 1. work in partnership with Kilkenny Tourism to carry out an audit of attractions to establish access issues both in their buildings and on web-sites 2. Investigate Virtual Reality experiences for visitors to inaccessible sites in the county and look at applying for funding opportunities to deliver these experiences (e.g. St Canices Round Tower & Dunmore Caves) 3. Share any software upgrades used by KCC for their software accessibility with other tourism partners 	Tourism	2023-2026
We will ensure that all Festival and Events supported by KCC through the Festival Grants	<ol style="list-style-type: none"> 1. Include assessment criteria in Grant Applications requesting applicants to 	Tourism	2023

Scheme adhere to "Accessibility for All" principles	<p>demonstrate how they aim to make their events accessible for all</p> <p>2. Evaluation to consider the festival/events commitment to Accessibility for All principles in recommending grant approval to Council</p>		
To ensure the LEO First Stop Shop for entrepreneurs adhere to accessibility for all principles	1. Participate in the rolling out of National LEO targeted schemes to support all who are interested in starting their own business	LEO	2023 onwards

Acknowledgements

Kilkenny County Council CEO wishes to acknowledge the collaboration and interagency working which took place in the preparation of this strategy. I gratefully acknowledge the contribution of all those who actively participated in our workshop and the local access and disability groups across the county who were part of the consultation process and their guidance has been invaluable .

Summary

This Disability Inclusion Strategy is a working document and reviews of its progress will be carried out periodically. Each of our section managers are committed to ensuring that the identified actions in this strategy will be adhered to and delivered.