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Údarás Náisiúnta Míchumais
National Disability Authority

Strategic Plan 2025-2027



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Legal Mandate

The National Disability Authority's mandate is set out in the National Disability Authority Act 1999, with additional functions assigned under the Disability Act 2005, both of which are detailed in the appendix. It also has functions assigned under S.I. 358/20 (EU Web Accessibility Directive), the Assisted Decision Making (Capacity) Act 2015 (amended in 2023) and the European Union (Accessibility Requirements of Products and Services) Regulations 2023 (S.I. 636/2023).

The overarching mandate of the National Disability Authority is to provide advice and information to the Minister for Children, Equality, Disability, Integration and Youth, on matters concerning policy and practice in relation to persons with disabilities, and to assist the Minister in the co-ordination of disability policy. In doing so, the National Disability Authority (NDA) has functions in relation to research; delivery of advice; assisting the development of standards; producing codes of practice; and monitoring implementation of standards and codes of practice. NDA also has responsibility for monitoring the employment of persons with disabilities in the public sector.

The statutory Centre for Excellence in Universal Design is an integral part of the National Disability Authority. It has a remit to promote the design of physical and digital environments and services, so that they can be accessed, understood and used independently to the greatest extent possible by all people, regardless of their age, size, ability or disability. The main functions of the Centre include contributing to the development and promulgation of standards; promoting Universal Design in education courses and curriculum for the relevant professions and occupations; and raising awareness of Universal Design. The Universal Design role extends beyond disability to consider design issues for everyone and entails engagement with standards bodies, industry, professional bodies and educational institutions.

The NDA has been assigned a function to monitor compliance with the EU Web Accessibility Directive across the public sector, which will include assessing public sector websites and mobile applications for compliance with the provisions of the Directive, building awareness of accessibility requirements, and advising public bodies on how to achieve compliance.

The NDA has agreed to take on the role of delivering a statutory report, at prescribed intervals, on the operation of the Irish Sign Language Act (2017).

The NDA has also been assigned a new function in relation to providing information and advice to the Irish Human Rights and Equality Commission (IHREC). This includes the development and provision of statistical information if required, in order to assist IHREC in carrying out its function in relation to monitoring the UN Convention on the Rights of Persons with Disabilities.

In performance of its functions, the NDA focuses on the definition of disability set out in the NDA Act 1999 and the Disability Act 2005, to mean ‘a substantial restriction in the capacity of a person to participate in economic, social or cultural life on account of an enduring physical, sensory, learning, mental health or emotional impairment’ and including persons with autism. The NDA understands ‘substantial restriction’ to include societal barriers such as: lack of access to public transport services; inaccessible public spaces; and inaccessible written, spoken and digital communications (websites, mobile apps), that prevent persons with disabilities from fully participating in mainstream society. In this understanding, it is the barriers within society that are disabling, rather than a specific impairment or difficulty.

Chairperson's Foreword

On behalf of the National Disability Authority (NDA), I'm delighted to present this Strategic Plan 2025-2027 to the Minister of Children, Equality, Disability, Integration and Youth.

The plan sets out how we will deliver on our statutory duty to provide evidence-informed advice to the Minister and officials on matters relevant to disability policy and practice, and to promote Universal Design. The process to develop the plan has been informed by engagement with our wide range of stakeholders, including persons with disabilities through their representative organisations; officials across government and the wider public sector, as well as professional bodies in relevant sectors. I'd like to thank everybody who took the time to participate in our consultation process, whether it was through interview or focus group, or by providing a written submission. There was much rich information gathered through this process, and the NDA will review closely to establish what can be incorporated in the annual work-plans that will sit underneath this overarching strategy.

This Strategic Plan sets out our high level objectives and goals for the next three years, established within our current legislative remit to provide independent advice and guidance to government. There are many stakeholder groups within this landscape, and each of them has its own part to play – whether it is to advocate and lobby for the rights of disabled people, represent the views and perspectives of particular groups, or articulate the experiences and concerns of service providers.

The United Nations Convention on the Rights of Persons with Disabilities (UNCRPD) sets out goals in relation to participation and meaningful engagement of disabled people in policy making, and the NDA will continue its work to put this into practice in its own work, but also to guide other public bodies on how to achieve this. I believe there is work for everyone in this space, and I hope during the lifetime of this plan that we can focus on those areas where we can bring particular expertise and experience to help advance the vision of a fully inclusive Irish society.

I believe we are at an exciting time for this work, with greater awareness and recognition of the import of the UNCRPD across the public sector, and the development of a new National Disability Strategy. The NDA brings particular skills and expertise to support this work, including through our monitoring work, our high quality research, indepth policy analysis and our focus on data and statistics. During the lifetime of this plan, we look forward to building on these strengths and developing outputs that can inform and guide policy making at national and local level alike, and continue adding to the knowledge base in relation to disability.

I also welcome a greater awareness and adoption of Universal Design across a number of sectors over the last number of years, and the partnerships built by the Centre for Excellence in Universal Design at the NDA. I genuinely believe Universal Design benefits our whole society, and hope that under this Strategic Plan we can drive further adoption and application of its principles so that we can foster innovation and encourage a human centred approach to the development of the physical and digital environments as well as the services and systems in which we all operate.

Kathryn O'Donoghue
Chairperson

Mission

To deliver independent, evidence-informed advice and guidance to government on disability policy and practice, to monitor progress, and to promote adoption and application of Universal Design for the benefit of all.

Vision

An Irish society in which persons with disabilities across the lifecourse experience full inclusion, and where their rights are recognised and realised.

Values

Independence: Our work is objective, grounded in robust data and evidence, and informed by all our stakeholders

Excellence: We are committed to excellence and professionalism in delivery of our functions

Respect: We are respectful and ethical in all our engagement and communications activities – with each other and all our stakeholders

Equality: We uphold a commitment to achieving inclusion and equality for all

Effectiveness: We deliver our work based on an ethos of public service, teamwork, innovation and efficiency

Engagement: Our outputs are informed by meaningful and respectful engagement with persons with disabilities and their families, including through their representative bodies, and also with our wider range of stakeholders

Background and Context

The wider policy landscape

In 2025, the NDA moves into its second quarter-century in operation. Irish society has experienced a number of changes and shocks during the last 25 years, in common with the rest of the world. Most recently, the aftermath of the COVID-19 pandemic continues to be felt, for example, through its significant impacts on the world of work and its impacts on social inclusion and participation, as well as the health and well-being of people at risk in our communities.

The effects of the pandemic on the economy have also been significant. While the Irish economy seems to have rebounded more swiftly than some, there have still been economic pressures driven by inflation, and these have been further compounded by war in Ukraine, with the effects of the conflict in Israel and Gaza yet to be understood and experienced in full. Rising energy costs have been felt by everyone, as have the effects of climate change, which are predicted to accelerate and worsen in the coming years.

There is uncertainty about how to understand and prepare for other future challenges, such as the rapid advances in Artificial Intelligence (AI), and the increasing polarisation in public debate that can make it difficult to find common ground on solutions to these challenges.

Irish society has not been immune to these challenges, even though they have been experienced less severely than in other countries. Our economy is strong, and we are at close to full employment. However, these experiences are not universal, and there are marginalised groups within society who are particularly impacted by economic difficulties or lower employment rates. Disabled people are one such group, and research has shown that global economic and political shocks are disproportionately felt by disabled people, with recovery slower to arrive. Research also indicates that disabled and other marginalised groups are more likely to be impacted by future shifts, such as the increased automation of jobs, or the negative effects of climate change.

While these challenges are very real, this is also a time of great opportunity in an Irish context. There is growing awareness of the United Nations Convention on the Rights of Persons with Disabilities (UNCRPD), and increased efforts on the part of Disabled Persons Organisations (DPOs) and other activists to ensure that decision makers at government level recognise and work to realise the rights enshrined in that Convention. This is best seen in the development of a new National Disability Strategy during 2024, which sets out goals and objectives to advance delivery of the goals of the Convention across government. The NDA has a unique position within this overall landscape, and during the lifetime of this Strategic Plan, we will focus on leveraging our core competencies in terms the development and delivery of objective, robust and evidence-informed guidance, policy analysis and advice, informed by direct engagement with disabled people and their representative organisations, as well as other key stakeholders.

The NDA's focus

In light of our statutory role, the NDA's priority is to support and assist implementation of the National Disability Strategy (NDS) through its work to monitor and evaluate progress, and its role to develop data and statistics relevant to disability. This will be important as Ireland prepares for its first State Party Dialogue with the UN Monitoring Committee, which we anticipate will take place in 2027 – towards the end of this Strategic Plan. The NDA will work closely with Ireland's focal point, DCEDIY to provide information and data to prepare for this dialogue, and provision of this information to the independent monitoring body, Irish Human Rights and Equality Commission (IHREC), will also be a core function for us in the coming years. We look forward to ensuring that our outputs are accessible, understandable and useable for the full range of stakeholders interested in this process, whether experts by experience or officials, while maintaining our focus on developing policy analysis and advice across government that is robust and practical. In this way, we will continue to add to the knowledge base concerning disability and Universal Design for the benefit of policy makers and other audiences.

The Equality agenda

There are also a number of other equality strategies currently undergoing renewal at the same time, providing an opportunity to ensure that disability is recognised in these, reflecting the intersectional identities of anyone who lives in this country. With almost 22% of the population declaring as having some form of disability in Census 2022, the importance of recognising and responding to the challenges faced by such a large segment of the population is clear, and this cannot be done in a silo-ed manner. Responses to disability are also closely aligned to demographic change in terms of the age profile of our population, which has been steadily increasing. The NDA's work to advise and guide on universally designed services and supports will be ever more important in this regard, and will help in the advancement of a society where people can live independently across the lifecourse, and can avail of the supports needed to have a life of their choosing. In addition, our work to encourage coordination and coherence across national strategies and action plans will be relevant, including the National Housing Strategy for Disabled People, the Sharing the Vision Strategy for mental health, the Roadmap for Service Improvement 2023–2026 Disability Services for Children and Young People, and the Action Plan for Disability Services 2024–2026.

Disability services and supports

In 2023 we saw the full enactment of the Assisted Decision Making (Capacity) Act 2015, paving the way for the operationalisation of the Decision Support Service, and advances in transforming a culture where decisions were made 'for' people with disabilities to one where individuals are supported to make decisions based on their own will and preferences. The significance of this shift will be felt over the lifetime of this NDA Strategy, and in particular during the process to discharge over 2,200 people who are currently Wards of Court. The NDA will continue its work to understand and document people's experiences of this process to guide on where improvements can be made. In doing so we will continue to build on our track record of detailed analysis and evaluation of the impact of policies and programmes relevant to disability and older people.

We also look forward to supporting delivery of specialist disability services by assisting in the evaluation of some of these services, as well as carrying out research on examples of good practice both nationally and internationally to guide on a system that is aligned with UNCRPD. As responsibility for these services transferred in 2023 from the Department of Health to DCEDIY, there is an opportunity for a coordinated approach to service provision that will better reflect the social model of disability, which should be further advanced during the ongoing restructuring of the HSE, and we look forward to supporting the Department and the HSE in this regard during the lifetime of this Strategy.

International strategies and directives

There are also international developments that have direct relevance to how Ireland builds a fully inclusive society. In 2026 Ireland will hold the EU presidency, providing further opportunities to consider how inclusion and Universal Design can be promoted across Europe, and how developments at European level can be applied at national level.

Through our monitoring work we have already seen the impact of EU regulations in an Irish context, as the introduction of the Web Accessibility Directive has driven increased focus on how to design and deliver accessible websites and mobile apps. This is all the more important with the government focus on its 'digital first' agenda, and the NDA has developed an effective approach to both monitoring compliance and guiding on improvements across the public sector. During the lifetime of this Strategic Plan, the European Accessibility Act is also scheduled for implementation, with the aim of ensuring that goods and services purchased in the EU will hold to common standards of accessibility. The NDA will have a role here to advise and guide those bodies that will have a compliance and regulatory role in relation to this Act, and in doing so we will work to build capacity in relation to accessibility and Universal Design across the various organisations as well as inputting the development of key EU standards that will underpin this Act.

Digital and technological advances

Artificial Intelligence and assistive technologies can bring opportunities for new and innovative ways of working, and also for supporting independent living. These opportunities can best be realised if consideration of Universal Design and disabled users is incorporated from the outset, and the NDA looks forward to playing its part in advising and guiding on how this can be achieved, and how AI/AT can unlock possibilities to benefit disabled and older people. Our work on Universal Design to date has already led to the development of valued resources for others to draw on as they explore creative solutions to the current barriers and challenges in society. We aim to continue this journey during this Strategic Plan, and in particular to guide on how technology can be used in a way that is both creative and ethical. We will also dedicate time to considering how technology can enhance the NDA's own work-processes, delivering greater efficiencies and value for exchequer investment.

Meaningful engagement and the role of data

Understanding the detail of people's experiences is key to identifying and co-designing solutions. The NDA commits to continuing its work to engage directly with disabled people through their representative organisations, as well as hearing perspectives of other stakeholders in the disability landscape. We will also continue in our work to guide other public bodies on how to effectively and meaningfully engage with disabled people in the development of policy and practice. The role of data is also important in this regard, and we will continue to work to encourage exploration of ways to gather robust data to inform policy making, including innovative approaches to measuring and tracking outcomes for disabled people.

Over the lifetime of this plan the NDA commits to consolidate and enhance its position as a provider of high quality research, analysis, advice and guidance to help inform decision-making at both national and local levels. We believe this is where we can add value to support and encourage policy actors but also provide helpful information to those disability organisations who continue to advocate for improvements and growth in Irish society. As part of this effort we will focus on clearly communicating our place in this landscape so that our role is understood, as well as where there may be opportunities to build relationships and collaborations in keeping with that role and remit.

We are also conscious that current disability legislation in Ireland, including our founding legislation, was developed in advance of the UNCRPD, and therefore does not fully reflect the social and rights based model set out within the Convention. We note suggestions at government level that an overall review of this legislation could be progressed in the medium term, and we will ensure our advice and input forms part of that process, including an examination of our own role and remit and where we can maximise our input to guide improvements in disability policy and practice.

We look forward to this next phase in our development and have set out our commitments under the priority areas set out in the following pages.

NDA's Work to Date

During the 2022-2024 Strategic Plan, the NDA was proud to continue progressing work that supported the realisation of the goals of UNCRPD, through various national strategies, policies and programmes. We look forward to building on this work as we move into the next Strategic Plan, during which it is likely that Ireland will be asked to attend a dialogue with the UN Monitoring Committee.

Some of the highlights from the last three years include the following:



3 x Annual Conferences on implementation of UNCRPD across different thematic areas



Support for development of **National Disability Strategy**



Multiple **consultations with persons with disabilities** on themes and topics relevant to the NDA work-programme



3 x **independent assessments** of progress under NDIS



3 x **independent assessments** of progress under CES



Participation Matters Guidance



Partnership with the ESRI on novel approaches to researching attitudes to disabled people



Research on the process to **discharge people from the Wards of Court** system to new decision support structures



Co-production of guidance on **conducting research with disabled people**



Guidance on **Changing Places toilets**



Code of Practice on **Accessible Public Buildings**



Monitoring reports on compliance with the **EU Web Accessibility Directive**



Research on **well being and social inclusion** of disabled people



Support and guidance on the process to support **increased participation in higher education** through the PATH 4 initiative



Funded research on **experiences of consumer based assistive technologies**



Support and input for standards work to underpin implementation of the **European Accessibility Act**



Monitoring reports on compliance with **Part 3** and **Part 5** of the **Disability Act**



Publication of **3rd edition of Customer Engagement Toolkit** for services to the public



Redesign and relaunch of **NDA** and **CEUD websites**



Sponsoring and running **annual Universal Design awards** for both student and industry awards programs



Participation at both national and international level in **advancing and development of accessibility standard**

Strategic Priorities 2025-2027

Strategic Priority 1

Advise on and support implementation of UNCRPD and national strategies through provision of robust, objective and evidence-informed advice and guidance

Strategic Priority 2

Monitor, evaluate and guide performance across government on commitments and obligations to achieve inclusion for all

Strategic Priority 3

Continue to **promote adoption and application** of a Universal Design approach across all sectors

Strategic Priority 4

Engage strategically with our wide range of stakeholders, including disabled people through their representative organisations, to inform and enhance our advice and guidance

Strategic Priority 5

Clearly communicate the value of our work, while maintaining and enhancing **organisational effectiveness**

Strategic Priority 1:

Advise on and support implementation of UNCRPD and national strategies through provision of robust, objective and evidence-informed advice and guidance

Draft Actions:

- **Deliver high quality research and detailed policy analysis** to inform decision making across government on implementation of the UNCRPD
- Translate research findings and policy analysis into **practical guidance and advice**
- Support knowledge-sharing and coordination across the public sector **to enhance realisation of goals of UNCRPD** and implementation of national strategies and programmes
- Advise and guide public bodies on how to **implement the principles of engagement** in disability policy-making to reflect the goals of UNCRPD and strengthen delivery of objectives

What success looks like:

- NDA continues to be recognised as a **trusted provider** of objective and robust research and analysis
- Public bodies **seek and welcome NDA** input on key areas of policy development related to disability
- NDA **advice and guidance is reflected in national approaches** to the coordination and implementation of disability policy
- The public sector **increasingly applies NDA guidance** to improve meaningful engagement processes to support decision making, and NDA outputs are similarly informed by such engagement

Strategic Priority 2:

Monitor, evaluate and guide performance across government on commitments and obligations to achieve inclusion for all

Draft Actions:

- **Monitor and report** on implementation of, and compliance with, statutory obligations in relation to accessibility to guide continued improvement
- **Assess and evaluate progress** on implementation of national strategies and programmes to guide on how to fully realise the rights of disabled people
- Provide a **robust evidence-base** to inform implementation and reporting at national and international levels, including identifying data gaps and taking opportunities to gather new information
- Provide advice and guidance to engage with public bodies as **a critical friend** in order to achieve improvements

What success looks like:

- NDA is **recognised for independent and robust monitoring** and evaluation of progress under UNCRPD and national strategies, as well as compliance with legislative requirements, highlighting where further focus is required
- NDA's monitoring approach is coupled with **ongoing engagement to guide on where and how improvements** can be made
- **Government policy development and reporting is underpinned by robust evidence** and high quality information derived from NDA activity
- Public bodies **respond to monitoring information** by improving performance in relation to inclusion, universal design and accessibility

Strategic Priority 3:

Continue to promote adoption and application of a Universal Design approach across all sectors

Actions:

- Continue to **build awareness and understanding** of Universal Design and its underpinning principles and guidelines
- **Encourage application** of Universal Design and build capacity for innovation and creativity in key sectors through engagement with professional bodies and in particular inclusion across the various levels of education
- **Embed Universal Design concepts** in practice guidance documents and technical standards to support implementation of obligations regarding accessibility and inclusion
- Guide and advise on **Universal Design of technological solutions** to foster inclusive and sustainable communities

What success looks like:

- Universal Design is **integrated into the** all levels of the education system, including Continuous Professional Development
- Adoption and application of Universal Design is enhanced through its recognition and **inclusion in relevant accreditation and award systems**
- **Standards and guidance documents** are underpinned by Universal Design principles and values
- Enhanced **awareness of the opportunities for inclusion** and innovation provided through technology and assistive technology

Strategic Priority 4:

Engage strategically with our wide range of stakeholders, including disabled people through their representative organisations, to inform and enhance our advice and guidance

Draft Actions:

- **Sustain and enhance relationships with policy makers** across government to guide on achieving mainstream recognition of the rights of disabled people
- Continue to ensure NDA **regularly engages** with disabled people through Disabled Persons Organisations and other channels, and the wider disability community to inform our work
- Move towards **co-design and participatory approaches** for relevant NDA outputs
- Add value to the policy development process by prioritising activities requiring our expertise in research, analysis and practical advice

What success looks like:

- **Relationships** between NDA and key public decision makers are **strengthened**, and NDA continues to be a trusted advisor on disability policy and practice
- NDA outputs **reflect the lived experience of disabled people** and their families and carers, with productive and collegiate relationships with representative organisations and other stakeholders, recognising the differing remits of each contributor
- Continued and consistent engagement across government, with NDA advice and guidance welcomed and sought

Strategic Priority 5:

Clearly communicate the value of our work, while maintaining and enhancing organisational effectiveness

Draft Actions:

- Continue to **build communications capacity** to ensure agile and **dynamic engagement** with stakeholders and ensure clarity on our role in the policy landscape
- **Actively disseminate NDA outputs** to support the work of a wide range of stakeholders, including officials and those representing disability issues, driving clearer understanding of where we can add value
- Continue to **enhance internal processes and structures** to support effective delivery of our mandate, including by **leveraging technology** where relevant and appropriate
- Foster a continued **culture of high performance** by investing in development, training and retention of staff
- Ensure ongoing **compliance** with relevant governance requirements
- Act as **good stewards** of NDA property, with due regard for accessibility and sustainability concerns

What success looks like:

- Stakeholders have a **clear understanding and appreciation of the NDA's role**, and where they can use NDA outputs to support their work
- NDA outputs are widely available and accessible to relevant audiences, providing a resource to as many stakeholders as possible
- Internal processes are **streamlined** where relevant, and technological solutions are applied where appropriate
- Staff are **supported and motivated** to deliver excellent work in delivery of the NDA mission
- NDA continues to be a well-run and effective organisation, with **high standards of governance and financial management**, showing strong return on public funds invested
- **Accessibility of NDA building is enhanced** to benefit of staff and visitors, with ongoing progress in relation to energy targets

Public Sector Duty

The Public Sector Equality and Human Rights Duty places a statutory obligation on public bodies to eliminate discrimination, promote equality of opportunity, and protect human rights of staff and of those to whom they provide services. The Duty is set out in Section 42 of the Irish Human Rights and Equality Commission Act 2014.

The Duty puts equality and human rights in the mainstream of how public bodies carry out their functions. To that end, it has the potential to positively transform how public bodies engage with members of the public and their own staff. As a public body, the NDA is required to set out in its strategic plan an assessment of the human rights and equality issues it believes to be relevant to its functions and purpose, and the actions it is taking or proposes to take to address those issues. The promotion of equality for persons with disabilities, through research informed policy advice to government, is a core part of our functions and purpose.

The NDA developed its first action plan during 2019. A review in 2022 found that, of the 16 actions, nine were complete and seven partially completed. The review recommended reframing some actions and including some new actions. A key aim of the revised action plan developed during 2023 and approved in 2024 was to have a smaller number of more focused actions, and this approach will be adopted under this new Strategic Plan.

In recognition of the increased level of staff turnover in the public sector workforce, it has been agreed that the NDA needs to continually foster a shared understanding of the Public Sector Duty internally. We are committed to embedding it within our consultation, engagement, HR and corporate processes and across our organisational activities. Our revised action plan aims to ensure that human rights and equality matters evolve from a statutory duty to be an integral part of the NDA's culture. This action plan continues to be implemented and integrated into the NDA's corporate and operational planning processes. As part of our current strategic planning cycle, the NDA has ensured human rights and equality matters are embedded in this Strategic Plan, taking into consideration the findings from a commissioned consultation exercise with stakeholders.

A number of actions will be advanced during the lifetime of this Plan including developing guidance for accessible events, and ensuring that our working environment is safe and accessible.

Measuring Impact

The NDA is committed to the delivery of independent evidence-informed research, advice and guidance to government in order to achieve meaningful improvements in the lives of persons with disabilities. We also aim to achieve an enhanced awareness, understanding and application of the concept of Universal Design.

The NDA recognises that realisation of our shared vision of an inclusive society involves many stakeholders, each of whom has a different role and remit to guide their activities. The NDA commits to playing its part in this landscape by focusing on those areas where it can add value, noting that it may not always be possible or appropriate to attribute progress to specific outputs. In addition, the quantum of our input will be dependent on the extent of the resources made available to us. However, we will monitor our delivery of commitments in this Strategy through:

- Translation of the goals within the Strategic Plan into detailed, annualised work-plans, with deliverables across specific project areas, and with regular progress reporting;
- Delivery of reports related to statutory obligations in a timely manner, including monitoring and compliance reviews;
- Continued and consistent engagement with government to provide evidence-informed advice and guidance;
- Fostering conditions for safe and trusted engagement with the public sector to support ongoing improvements;
- Ensuring relationships with internal and external stakeholders remain strong and collaborative and seeking opportunities for deeper engagement with disabled people on relevant work items;
- Reviewing and reporting on all governance and compliance requirements to our parent department and the Minister;
- Regularly reviewing our outputs to ensure their dissemination is timely and appropriate, and that accessible formats are prepared as required.

Resources and Critical Success Factors

The NDA will deliver these strategic objectives through its established structures:

- The Policy, Research and Public Affairs Department
- The Standards and Monitoring Unit
- The Centre for Excellence in Universal Design
- The Corporate Services Department

Across each of these units, staff are selected and deployed for their subject matter expertise and the competencies necessary to deliver on our core functions. This use of knowledge experts has been essential to date in ensuring that we continue to develop robust evidence and other resources for others to draw on and learn from.

The NDA has continued to see an expansion of the demands for its independent research, advisory and monitoring roles, and this is likely to continue over the lifetime of this Strategic Plan, particularly in the implementation phase for the European Accessibility Act, and as IHREC progresses its work as the independent monitoring body for the UNCRPD in Ireland. The NDA will also be required to provide information and advice to Government in preparation for the first State Party Dialogue with the UN Monitoring Committee, which is likely to take place during the lifetime of this Strategic Plan.

The NDA will also have deliverables in relation to the new National Disability Strategy, including monitoring progress in relation to same, while a programme of work has already been identified in relation to the Autism Innovation Strategy. In light of these demands it will be important that the organisation is resourced to deliver on these functions to the required standard, in order to assist in delivering positive outcomes for disabled people in Ireland.

We commit to effectively deploying our existing resources to deliver on our wide ranging and expanding work-programme, to avail of external expertise where required, and to secure additional resources as necessary and appropriate to enhance our delivery of agreed outputs. If sufficient resources are made available, it would be possible for the NDA to effect a step-change in its delivery of detailed research and policy analysis, while at the same time developing practical resources for the benefit of multiple audiences.

We will pursue and enhance partnerships with key external organisations to assist in the delivery of our functions within the current resources allocated by our parent department. We will also explore the potential for technological solutions to streamline our processes and offer greater efficiencies, subject to resources available for this effort.

Appendix

NDA's functions under Section 8 of the National Disability Authority Act 1999

The principal function of the National Disability Authority is to advise the Minister for Justice and Equality regarding issues of policy and practice relating to disability and to act as a central, national body which will assist the Minister in the coordination and development of policy in relation to persons with disabilities.

Additional functions of the NDA:

- To undertake, commission or collaborate in research projects and activities on issues relating to disability and to assist in the development of statistical information appropriate for the planning, delivery and monitoring of programmes and services for persons with disabilities
- To advise the Minister on appropriate standards for programmes and services provided, or to be provided, to persons with disabilities and to act as an advisory body with regard to the development of general and specific standards in relation to such programmes and services
- To monitor the implementation of standards and Code(s) of Practice in programmes and services provided to persons with disabilities and to report to the Minister thereon
- To liaise with other bodies, both corporate and unincorporated, involved in the provision of services to persons with disabilities and to facilitate and support the development and implementation of appropriate standards for programmes and services for persons with disabilities
- To prepare Codes of Practice for the purpose of achieving the aim of good standards and quality in the provision of programmes and services provided or to be provided to persons with disabilities
- To recognise the achievement of good standards and quality in the provision of programmes and services to persons with disabilities including through the provision of a disability equality awards system
- To prepare strategic plans to submit to the Minister in line with our statutory remit

Additional functions of the NDA under the Disability Act 2005

These additional functions of the NDA include:

- To prepare Code(s) of Practice relating to the accessibility of public buildings, services, information and heritage sites (section 30)
- To monitor compliance with statutory targets for recruitment and employment of persons with disabilities in the public sector, recommend actions to be taken where these targets are not being met, and prepare Codes of Practice where requested (Part 5 of the Disability Act 2005)
- To establish a Centre for Excellence in Universal Design in the built environment and information technology which will promote the principles of Universal Design that may be accessed, understood and used to the greatest practicable extent by people regardless of age, size, ability or disability in the most independent and natural manner; in the widest possible range of situations; without the need for adaptation, modification, assistive devices or specialised solution (Part 6 of the Disability Act 2005)

Additional functions of the NDA under Section 8 of S.I. 358/2020 (EU Web Accessibility Directive)

The National Disability Authority is the monitoring body for the purposes of the Directive and associated Regulations.

The monitoring body shall periodically monitor the compliance of websites and mobile applications of public sector bodies with the accessibility requirements set out in Regulation 4 on the basis of the monitoring methodology provided for in Commission Implementing Decision (EU) 2018/1524, and shall submit a report to the Minister for Communications, Climate Action and Environment not later than 23 December 2021, and on each third anniversary of 23 December 2021, on the outcome of the monitoring carried out.

The first report submitted shall include:

- a) a description of the mechanisms set up for consulting with relevant stakeholders on the accessibility of websites and mobile applications
- b) procedures to make public any developments in accessibility policy relating to websites and mobile applications
- c) experiences and findings from the implementation of the rules on conformity with the accessibility requirements set out in Regulation 4, and
- d) information on training and awareness-raising activities in relation to the accessibility of websites and mobile applications

Additional role of the NDA in relation to Section 10 of the Irish Sign Language Act 2017

The NDA, at the request of the Minister, shall prepare a report on the operation of the Act. The report shall include an assessment of:

- a) whether any amendments to the scope and contents of this Act are necessary or desirable
- b) whether additional provisions need to be made in relation to supports for a child within the school system whose primary language is Irish Sign Language, and
- c) the qualifications for the minimum level of Irish Sign Language competency for persons who are teaching a child whose primary language is Irish Sign Language. Persons or organisations that are representative of the interests of the members of the deaf community are to be consulted on the matters to be considered in such a report

Functions relevant to implementation of the European Accessibility Act (EAA) as per SI 636/2023

The National Disability Authority shall, for the purpose of assisting the relevant [market surveillance] authority concerned in performing its functions under these Regulations, advise a relevant authority on matters related to the accessibility requirements under the Directive and these Regulations.

The market surveillance authority, in developing the tools to guide microenterprises shall consult with relevant stakeholders, may, where it considers it necessary to do so, request the assistance of the National Disability Authority or a compliance authority. The National Disability Authority or the compliance authority concerned shall comply with such a request made to it.

Statutory Powers

In order to fulfil its statutory functions, the National Disability Authority has certain statutory powers.

The National Disability Authority has right of access to information (including data) of relevance to its functions which is held by public bodies (section 13, National Disability Authority Act 1999) and may seek information on any matter which concerns the provision of programmes or services for persons with disabilities that is provided by statutory duty and that is publicly funded in whole or in part (section 14, National Disability Authority Act 1999).

The National Disability Authority can make annual reports and other reports to the Minister with respect to its functions (section 15, National Disability Authority Act 1999). It can develop codes of practice where so requested to do so by the Minister and such codes must be approved by the Minister, e.g. Code of Practice on Accessible Services and Information provided by Public Bodies. The NDA has functions to monitor the implementation of those codes in programmes and services for persons with disabilities. Further to monitoring implementation of such codes of practice and standards, where it considers appropriate in the circumstances to do so, the Authority can make recommendations to the Minister for the review, reduction or withdrawal of funding by the State for those services and programmes.



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