**NATIONAL DISABILITY AUTHORITY**

**STRATEGIC PLAN 2016 – 2018**

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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.

**The overarching mandate of the National Disability Authority is, in summary, to provide advice and information to the Minister for Justice and Equality on matters concerning policy and practice in relation to people with disabilities and to assist the Minister in the co-ordination of disability policy.** In doing so, the National Disability Authority has functions in relation to research; assisting the development of standards; producing codes of practice; monitoring implementation of standards and codes of practice, and recognising the achievement of good standards and quality. The National Disability Authority 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, with a remit to promote the design of the built environment, products, services and information and communications technology, 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 education courses and curriculum in relevant professions and occupations, and raising awareness of Universal Design. The universal design role, while including disability, also extends beyond disability to consider design issues for all citizens, engaging with standards bodies, industry, professional bodies and educational institutions.

## Foreword

I am delighted on behalf of the National Disability Authority (NDA) to present to the Minister our Strategic Plan for the years 2016 to 2018.

We will continue to ensure that we can bring added value as an independent statutory body in guiding the Minister, Government Departments, public bodies and others to advance the inclusion of people with disabilities in the mainstream of Irish life and to build a society that embraces and accommodates the range of human diversity.

As an independent body it is important that we can gather evidence and information to help inform our advice papers to Ministers and officials as well as the guidelines we develop. Through our statutory function of research we undertake original research, collate national and international research evidence, analyse statistics and document the learning from good practice. It is also important that we can learn from the experience of persons with disabilities, their families and carers and from disability organisations. Through engagement with stakeholders we can hear the broad-ranging views, insights, challenges, ideas and in particular learn from those with the lived experience.

We recognise that the economic challenges Ireland has faced have impacted on all citizens but in particular those with disabilities. While the years ahead will see continuing challenges in ensuring that services and supports are appropriate to a growing and an ageing population, we will actively seize opportunities to ensure that the needs of people with disabilities receive due attention as Ireland emerges into a more hopeful era.

New policies focused on supporting people with disabilities to live ordinary lives in ordinary places will involve a major transformation in disability services and the need to ensure our communities offer a disability-friendly environment. The National Disability Authority, through its policy analysis, its research, its work on standards, and its work on universal design, will have a wide ranging work programme to support the achievement of a successful refocusing of disability services.

The programme of transformation underway in disability services is a key element of the overarching national disability plan which continues to drive change across all Government Departments and agencies. Implementation is monitored by a national steering group chaired by the Minister and involving senior officials, local authorities, disability stakeholders and the National Disability Authority. A further 3 year national disability plan, coinciding with the term of this strategic plan, will also guide the focus of our work. We will continue to play our role in ensuring independent monitoring and evaluation of progress and the impact of the plan. We will also continue to provide evidence-informed advice to Departments and advice papers to the steering group.

The NDA has been advising the Minister and Departments on matters relevant to the UN Convention on the Rights of Persons with Disabilities. As the Government ratifies the Convention, Ireland will have a national monitoring and consultation mechanism in place and will make reports to the UN Monitoring Committee. We continue in our commitment to play our role in guiding on the implementation of the Convention including, for example, the roll-out of the new Assisted Decision Making legislation.

The implementation of the national comprehensive employment strategy published by the Government in 2015, with its 3 year action programme, is a significant development. We hope that the growth in the economy, along with the implementation of this strategy, will ensure that people with disabilities can get their fair share of employment opportunities. The NDA has committed to delivering on specific actions within that strategy including, for example, to guide on an effective national vocational rehabilitation system. We also have a role in guiding implementation of actions by the relevant Departments and agencies and will monitor the implementation of the overall action programme as well as the outcomes achieved.

Our role in universal design is relevant not only to people with disabilities but also to the wider community, including older people, the very young, and people across the full range of human diversity. Our statutory Centre of Excellence in Universal Design works with many professionals in the design sector; industry, professional bodies, educational bodies and national and international standards bodies, to ensure universal design is incorporated into how they work, learn and operate.

Our society has a commitment to supporting people to live in their own homes and communities. A key factor is to design homes and communities that can adapt to people’s changing needs over their life course. Our Centre for Excellence has produced universal design guidelines to deliver sustainable design solutions both for new buildings and in retrofitting existing homes and streetscapes. Good design delivers long-term economic benefits, especially where individuals can remain in their own homes longer or convert them at low cost as needed.

We launched housing research and guidelines in 2015 and will continue to work to support their adoption in practice. We continue to work on guidance on wider aspects of the built environment. We have also undertaken much work to guide the training and education curriculum for the relevant professionals and will continue to engage with stakeholders to support implementation and roll out. We will also work to promote adoption of universal design in a wider range of services and everyday products which benefit everyone regardless of their age, size, ability or disability.

The NDA recognises its responsibility to bring useful and relevant evidence, information and advice to the table. We facilitate a space for learning and active engagement, towards the common goal of shaping effective policy to achieve a more inclusive society for persons with disabilities. We continue to promote universal design in practice. We look forward to continued engagement and co-operation with the Minister and with officials in the Departments and public bodies, as well as other stakeholders on disability matters. We will work to build on our network of universal design champions and look forward to working with the wide range of stakeholders in industry, academia, standards and professional bodies as well as other relevant bodies to progress the universal design agenda.

Within the framework of this strategic plan, we will develop annual work programmes towards delivery of the strategic priorities set out. Specific projects will be informed by national developments and areas where we can strategically add value, but there will also be a number of forward-looking projects whose impact may be realised in the medium term. We acknowledge that specific developments or unforeseen issues may determine priorities at a particular time over the period of the strategy, and that work programmes will need to be flexible and regularly reviewed.

We welcome the expertise and professionalism of our staff who are committed to implementing this strategic plan to high quality standards. We also recognise that we have limited resources but will continue to support staff to deliver to the best of their ability and potential while meeting strategic objectives.

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Helen Guinan

Chairperson

# Mission – why we are here

The National Disability Authority is the independent statutory body that advises and informs the Government and public sector on disability matters; assists in the co-ordination of disability policy and promotes excellence in universal design to benefit the wider population.

# Vision - what we wish for

An Irish society in which people with disabilities have equal rights and opportunities to participate in economic, social and cultural life; have choice and control over how they live their lives; and are enabled to reach their full individual potential in a society that embraces and accommodates the range of human diversity.

# Values – the principles that guide us

The following values inform the work of the National Disability Authority:

* A focus on areas of work with the potential to make a real difference to people’s lives
* A commitment to add value through independent, quality, evidence-based and objective research, advice and guidance on national policy and practice
* A commitment as the independent advisory body to work collaboratively and to engage actively with all relevant stakeholders
* A shared commitment to excellence and to public service, demonstrating integrity, flexibility, efficiency and value for money in delivering on our mandate
* An ethos of teamwork, integrity, continuous improvement, openness, transparency and innovation to drive achievement
* Always professional, respectful and ethical in our relationships and communications with internal and external stakeholders.

# What we do

The National Disability Authority

* Undertakes research and policy analysis
* Provides policy advice
* Monitors implementation and impact of national strategies
* Develops technical and practical guidance, toolkits and educational materials, available on-line and free of charge
* Participates in working groups on policy, implementation, standards and good practice
* Assists in standards development
* Develops codes of Practice
* Hosts Seminars, conferences, roundtables, consultation exercises and events and design workshops
* Supports award schemes, to promote excellence in disability research and universal design.

We engage in strategic collaborations to support the delivery of our statutory remit and to enable the most effective deployment of resources.

The National Disability Authority is independent in the exercise of its functions. Our policy analysis, advice, standards and guidelines are grounded in the evidence base we have brought together, by

* Undertaking original research
* Consulting and engaging on the lived experience of people with disabilities
* Collating the national and international research evidence
* Analysis of the statistical data
* Documenting national and international good practice.

# Background and context

Among the issues that will form the context for this Strategic Plan are

* Ratification and implementation of the United Nations Convention on the Rights of Persons with Disabilities
* European Union policies and directives including the EU Disability Strategy 2010-2020
* Relevant International, European and national standards
* Continued implementation of the National Disability Strategy and structured cross-departmental co-operation and co-ordination of policy and delivery
* Roll out of assisted decision-making legislation
* The major change programme underway in disability services, supporting people with disabilities to live ordinary lives in ordinary places with greater choice and control (implementing Value for Money and Policy Review of Disability Services)
* The low employment rate of people with disabilities
* Community attitudes towards people with disabilities
* Continuing and future demographic pressures on supports and services
* Public service reform and new ways of delivering public services
* Constraints on staffing and financial resources.

# Strategic Priorities Overview

## Strategic Priority 1

## Co-ordinated cross-government action on disability and advanced implementation of the United Nations Convention on the Rights of Persons with Disabilities towards achieving an equal and inclusive society.

**Objective:** To support and monitor the effective development and delivery of co-ordinated cross-government action on disability and the implementation of the United Nations Convention on the Rights of Persons with Disabilities. The NDA will conduct research, advise and assist government departments and public bodies on policy and practice that ensures people with disabilities, across the lifecycle, can participate as valued citizens in the mainstream of Irish society and can live the lives they want to lead.

## Strategic Priority 2

## Excellence in Universal Design

**Objective:** To promote excellence in universal design through standards, practice, education and awareness, in order to facilitate participation in Irish society by people regardless of age, size, ability or disability.

## Strategic Priority 3

## An effective and efficient organisation

**Objective 1**: To lead, and promote an effective and efficient organisation to enable the National Disability Authority to deliver on its strategic objectives.

**Objective 2:** To effectively lead and foster a culture of flexibility, responsibility, innovation and a high performing organisation in the achievement of its objectives.

# Strategic Priorities – our key areas of focus

## SP1 – Co-ordinated cross-government action on disability and United Nations Convention on the Rights of Persons with Disabilities towards achieving an equal and inclusive society.

## Objective: To support and monitor the effective development and delivery of co-ordinated cross-government action on disability and the implementation of the United Nations Convention on the Rights of Persons with Disabilities. The NDA will conduct research, advise and assist government departments and public bodies on policy and practice that ensures people with disabilities, across the lifecycle, can participate as valued citizens in the mainstream of Irish society and can live the lives they want to lead.

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### Actions

* Advise Ministers, Government departments and public bodies on disability policy and practice to support inclusion of people with disabilities in mainstream society, in mainstream services and to have a valued role in the community
* Advise on the implementation of the agreed programme of change in disability services to give individuals more choice and control in their daily lives
* Assist the Minister for Justice and Equality in co-ordination of policies and services for people with disabilities
* Advise on innovation and technology
* Provide advice to guide the implementation of the United Nations Convention on the Rights of Persons with Disabilities
* Promote positive public attitudes to people with disabilities
* Promote employment of people with disabilities, and monitor employment of people with disabilities in the public service
* Monitor outcomes for people with disabilities
* Advise on effective systems and safeguards against abuse and neglect
* Advise on standards and services for people with disabilities
* Support the building of an inclusive community through promoting Universal Design of places and of public services.

### Key Performance Indicators

* Research and policy analysis undertaken and guidance developed
* Effective engagement carried out with Government Departments and public bodies around policies and services to people with disabilities, and implementation of the United Nations Convention on the Rights of Persons with Disabilities
* Advice provided to guide a co-ordinated ‘whole-of-Government’ approach to disability
* Research, policy analysis and guidance provided on relevant issues and in response to specific requests for research and policy advice from Government, Ministers, or Departments
* Research carried out on good practice to inform advice and implementation
* Dissemination of NDA guidance
* Report on Statutory monitoring of Part 5 Disability Act delivered to Minister and follow on action pursued with public sector bodies as appropriate.
* Monitoring impact of national policies and programmes on lives of people with disabilities
* Universal design demonstrated as an integral aspect of guidance on an inclusive society.

## SP2 – Excellence in Universal Design

**Objective:** To promote excellence in universal design through standards, practice, education and awareness, in order to facilitate participation in Irish society by people regardless of age, size, ability or disability.

### Actions

* Work with national and international bodies to promote Universal Design in standards and guidelines
* Promote the development of courses and take-up of curriculum incorporating Universal Design in relevant initial professional training, education and in continuing professional development (CPD)
* Engage and partner with stakeholders; including people and organisations representing the diversity of age, size, ability and disability, education and training bodies, professional organisations, and industry and services;
* Further develop the network of champions and extend the knowledge base of good practice in Universal Design
* Promote awareness and understanding of universal design in the built environment, products, services, and information and communication technologies.

### Key performance indicators:

* Universal Design standards, guidelines and toolkits developed and disseminated
* Universal Design adopted by the relevant bodies across the relevant curricula, including continuous professional development of design professionals
* Increased awareness of Universal Design across built environment, products, services and ICT achieved.

## SP3 – An effective and efficient organisation

**Objective 1**: To lead, and promote an effective and efficient organisation to enable the National Disability Authority to deliver on its strategic objectives.

**Objective 2:** To effectively lead and foster a culture of flexibility, responsibility, innovation and a high performing organisation in the achievement of its objectives.

### Actions

* Support a high-performing organisation, through effective leadership, motivating staff, developing staff potential, and managing performance
* Maintain and develop effective knowledge resources and infrastructure to support the work
* To plan, manage and deploy staff resources to effectively deliver on strategic priorities and annual work programmes
* Effectively manage budgets, payments and accounts
* Submit Annual Report to the Minister in line with legislative timeframe
* Plan for and manage risks, and arrange for internal and external audit
* Adhere to high standards of financial procedures and governance, and meet all compliance requirements and in particular Health and Safety requirements.

### Key performance indicators:

* Staff development supported and staff performance managed
* Effective well-being and staff morale initiatives delivered
* Staff resources planned and managed through effective workforce planning to deliver on strategic priorities and work programmes
* Operate effectively within allocated budget
* Risk effectively managed
* High standards of governance
* Compliance with all legal and regulatory requirements.

# Measuring Impact

The NDA through its evidence-based information, research, advice and guidance to the Government aims to achieve tangible improvements in the lives of persons with disabilities. Through the role of our Centre for Excellence in Universal Design to promote universal design of the environment, we aim to achieve the adoption of guidance and standards, embedding of UD in the relevant curricula and an enhanced awareness and understanding of universal design.

We will monitor the success of this strategic plan in a number of ways:

* regularly review the achievement of key performance indicators outlined under each strategic priority
* respond to key opportunities to influence national policy which may arise over the course of the plan
* regularly review the outputs and impact from actions in the annual work plans produced under the strategy
* report on progress at quarterly meetings between the Executive and the Disability Policy Department at the Department of Justice and Equality and in accordance with the agreed Performance Framework Agreement
* regularly engage with stakeholders including people with disabilities and representative groups
* regularly engage with universal design stakeholders.

# Appendix

## Functions of the National Disability Authority 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:

* 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

### Additional Functions of the Authority under the Disability Act 2005 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 people 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)

## 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 recommendations for the review, reduction or withdrawal of moneys provided by the Oireachtas for any programme or service where it feels it is being provided in an inadequate or unsatisfactory manner or is not being provided to people with disabilities (section 15(4), 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).