



Disability Action Plan 2019 – 2024



Image: Dancers Linda Fearon and Mary-Louise McCord represented Northern Ireland at the Meet Share Dance Festival in Portugal, an international network for integrated dance professionals to encourage cultural exchange and artistic development.

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1. Forward

Inherent within an arts experience is the pleasure, stimulation and meaning it can bring to our lives. It can motivate us to seek more experiences and enhance our understanding of other people and their cultures. These benefits enrich our lives and strengthen our sense of place and belonging.

There is also an increasing body of evidence to demonstrate the Arts can make a powerful contribution to health and wellbeing helping to keep us well, aid recovery and support longer lives, better lived.

The Arts Council of Northern Ireland believes that art is universal in its appeal, and should be made available to and enjoyed by, everyone, everywhere.

The increased visibility of disabled people as artists, on our stages and in our galleries, has helped to promote positive attitudes towards disabled people. The work of disabled artist Maurice Orr¹ is now recognised internationally and the local arts festival, Bounce, continues to showcase outstanding work by D/deaf and disabled artist to increasingly large and diverse audiences.

Despite this progress, there remains much still to do. Engagement in the arts by disabled people in Northern Ireland is still lower than the overall population (65% and 86% respectively)² and, in the workplace, disabled people are under-represented on boards and in the workforce due to limited training opportunities and poor access to administration and backstage areas.

This tells us that in addition to physical barriers, disabled people are much less likely to participate and work in cultural activities because of negative attitudes and prejudice, inflexible ways of working and exclusion from education. The arts can help tackle both disability prejudice and accessibility, moving towards a fairer, more caring and more inclusive society.

The Disability Action Plan (2019 to 2024) is a clear statement of the Arts Council of Northern Ireland's ongoing commitment to promote positive attitudes towards people with disabilities and encourage participation by people with disabilities in public life.

We would like to thank the many representatives from individual arts and cultural organisations as well as individual artists and members of the public who responded to the consultation undertaken as part of the plans development.

¹ Maurice Orr shared his experiences of being a disabled artist in a candid interview with the Arts Council. It can be accessed by going to: http://www.artscouncil-ni.org/images/uploads/publications-documents/iDA_Case_Study_Artist_Maurice_Orr.pdf

² www.communities-ni.gov.uk/system/files/publications/communities/experience-of-culture-and-arts-northern-ireland-201819.pdf

2. Introduction

The aim of this plan is to encourage participation by disabled people in public life and promote positive attitudes towards disabled people. As the development agency for the arts in Northern Ireland, it is our aim to achieve this by removing barriers to participation, help to discover new talent, raise the bar for artistic excellence, help to inspire innovation and spark new collaborations.

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

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

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

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



Image: Supported by the Arts Council's International Development Fund, members of Open Arts' Luminous Soul dance programme participated in the international MeetShareDance Festival in Porto.

3. What We Do

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

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

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

We believe that increasing disability access should be embedded in the core strategic work of the organisation. As a result, a number of the actions detailed in this plan are also reflected in our five-year plan *Inspire, Connect Lead* (2019 to 2024). We hope this will help to improve policy alignment and increase its visibility.

Progress against the actions outlined here will be reported on in our annual report to the Equality Commission. Copies of it and our Five Year framework can be found at www.artscouncil-ni.org.

4. The Social Model of Disability

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

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

5. Terminology

Arts & Disability is a general term to cover a broad range of arts practice embracing artwork by people with disabilities and activities involving disabled people as artists,

participants and audience members. This approach is inclusive and aims to involve all sections of the community.

Disability Arts is a specific form of arts practice where disabled artists create work that reflects their identity and experience as disabled people. Whilst the Arts Council primarily connects with Arts & Disability practice, we recognise the value and principles of Disability Arts practice and have made substantial investment to create new opportunities for disabled people's artistic career development.



Image: Drake Music NI's state-of-the art music studio and ensemble workshop space, enabling disabled people to compose and perform their own music.

6. What we achieved

As part of the delivery of the outgoing Disability Action Plan, delivered between 2014 and 2018, we have:

- Completed an independent review of the Arts Council's Premium Payment Programme with recommendations to improve the way it works.
- Documented via case study, the personal and professional impacts of a grant awarded under the Individual Disabled/Deaf Artists (iDA) programme on disabled artists.

- Continued to fund both directly and indirectly the work of disabled artists through its Support for Individual Artists Programmes (SIAP) and iDA awards programme, administered by the University of Atypical.
- Delivered disability confident training to staff helping to increase awareness and confidence.
- Provided opportunities for older people, many of whom have a disability, to engage in the arts via the Arts and Older People Programme, a programme designed to reduce loneliness and isolation.³
- Improved our monitoring and evaluation systems to, more accurately measure, the extent to which disabled people are represented in our audiences, as participants and within our workforce.

³ 45% of participants (n=247) have identified that they have a disability in their project entrance survey since 2016

Action Measure	Disability Discrimination Act Measure	Key performances indicator	Responsibility	Timescale	Outcome
1. Deliver disability equality training to all Arts Council staff (including Board members) using suitably qualified trainers	Encourage participation by disabled people in public life	Number of staff members trained	Human Resources	2019/20 to 2023/24	Staff will be able to identify discriminatory forms of practice and challenge negative stereotypes.
2. Increase the visibility of disabled artists work by embedding it in media output	Promote positive attitudes towards disabled people	Number of references to or images of disabled people used in communications output	Communications	2019/20 to 2023/24	Increased public awareness of disabled artist's work
3. Support the careers of disabled artists by: a) Providing grants through SIAP b) Improving access to application process; and c) Funding key arts and disability organisations	Encourage participation by disabled people in public life / promote positive attitudes towards disabled people	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Number of disability arts organisations funded • Number of disabled artists applying for and receiving funding 	Arts Development and Communications	2019/20 to 2023/24	Disabled artists have access to funding opportunities
4. Work in partnership with arts and disability sector to deliver funding workshops targeted at disabled artists	Encourage participation by disabled people in public life	Number of workshops held and individuals attending	Arts Development	2021/22 to 2023/24	Increased number of application by and awards to people with disabilities

5. Enable participation by disabled people in policy making groups such as the proposed deliberative forum ⁴ to better reflect the needs of unrepresented audiences and participants	Encourage participation by disabled people in public life	Number of disabled people on the deliberative forum	Strategic Development	2020/21	Ensure voice of disabled artists are reflected in policy making forums
6. Implement a revised Premium Payment programme to remove barriers to engagement by disabled people	Encourage participation by disabled people in public life	Number of awards made per annum	Arts Development	2019/20 to 2023/24	Funded activity is more accessible enabling marginalised groups experience the arts
7. Scope existing access provision to core funded venues to evidence need	Encourage participation by disabled people in public life	Publish findings of the accessibility of funded arts venues.	Strategic Development	2019/20 and 2020/21	ACNI have a better understanding of the accessibility needs to the sector and have a baseline to use to request and prioritise capital improvements
8. Arts Council of Northern Ireland to participate in research to establish the feasibility of a national disability access card	Encourage participation by disabled people in public life	Facilitate completion of Northern Ireland research strand	Strategic Development	2019/20	Increase attendance at arts events by disabled people.

9. Arts Council of Northern Ireland to participate on an arts and culture funders round table on disability to positively address priorities relating to access, employment and quality of experience	Promote positive attitudes towards disabled people	Number of round table events attended	Strategic Development	2019/20 and 2020/21	Increase visibility of NI related activity and leverage more funding to deliver dedicated work.
10. Create a dedicated Annual Funding Programme user group to strengthen reporting on equality and disability employment / audiences	Encourage participation by disabled people in public life	Number of organisations using dedicated systems to collect data on equality and disability related issues	Strategic Development	2020/21	More reliable and representative data on employment and equality within the arts sector
11. As part of an audit of youth music, map provision for disabled young people in health and disability settings	Encourage participation by disabled people in public life	Quantification of provision for disabled children and young people	Strategic Development	2019/20	Clearly defined evidence base to strategy development

⁴ The Deliberative Form is scheduled to be created in Year 2 of the Five Year Framework: Inspire, Connect, Lead.