

Final



**Disability
Equality
Scotland**

A better life for disabled people

Disability Equality Scotland

Strategic Plan 2020-2023

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1. Introduction

We are a national charity working to make life more accessible, equal and inclusive for disabled people in Scotland.

We promote access in its widest sense, including access to the built and natural environment and access to the same opportunities as are enjoyed by others in our communities thus promoting a life of dignity, respect, choice and independence. This extends beyond physical access to include access to information, access to inclusive communication and inclusion in decision-making, whether with planners over inclusive design or transport providers about accessible travel.

Our aim is for every disabled person to have the opportunity to participate in a fulfilling life and to enable them to reach their full potential.

We represent the views of individuals with any type of impairment, as well as disability organisations and groups who share Disability Equality Scotland's values.

We are a membership organisation and as such listen to the views of disabled people and champion on their behalf. We work to influence the policies of the Scottish Government, which affect how disabled people live and we work to encourage others to be inclusive and informed in their attitudes towards disabled people.

We are also the umbrella organisation for all disability Access Panels in Scotland, and we are the principal provider of support and guidance to the Access Panels presently representing disabled persons at a local level throughout Scotland. Access Panels are committed to improving access and equality in its widest form, which means access to the physical environment, Education, Housing, Health, Social Care, Transport, Leisure & Recreation and Social Justice amongst other areas.

2. How we developed the strategy

We listened to different people in the development of this strategic plan.

- We sought feedback directly from disabled people
- We engaged with our members through weekly polls, parliamentary roundtables, workshops, our Access Panel Conference and our Annual General Meeting
- We gathered information and advice from experts on our board, and
- Staff also shared their views.

This plan represents all the contributions we collected.

3. Context

This Strategic Plan has been developed for the next 3 years (2020-2023). However, there will be instances where there will be political, legal, economic or social change challenges we have to respond to, and our strategic direction may have to change. We promise to keep all stakeholders informed if this happens.

4. Our Vision

Working towards Equality, Inclusion and Participation for Disabled People in Scotland

5. Our Mission

Our mission at Disability Equality Scotland is to give all disabled people in Scotland a voice with trust, care and empathy. We will use what we hear to advocate for and enable change to improve lives.

We will achieve this through:

- Working with Access Panels
- Working with members
- Working with partners and stakeholders

Working with Access Panels

We will work to support Access Panels in Scotland by being the umbrella body for the network. We will work to support Access Panels so they can achieve their goals locally.

We will promote Access Panels and ensure all our stakeholders are aware of their skills and the benefits that engagement with Access Panels brings to the wider community.

We will work to ensure the Access Panel network is sustainable and future proofed in terms of retaining, enhancing and developing their skills to assist local community planning and gain maximum benefit from opportunities to collaborate with Local Authorities, Public Bodies and Private Enterprises.

We will seek opportunities to enhance the financial sustainability of Access Panels as key partners in the Scottish Governments “Democracy Matters¹” agenda.

Working with Members

We are led by our members. We will engage with our members and share opportunities for partnership working, promoting good practice and have a shared voice to influence change.

We will ensure our member’s views are known and their voices are heard. We will seek opportunities to allow our members to participate in issues that matter to them and causes they care about.

Working with partners

We will work with partners in all sectors where we believe that working together will help achieve equal participation for disabled people and bring about change. We will work hard to be an effective partner, building our knowledge, experience and networks to ensure people’s voices are heard and understood. We will use our member’s direct lived experience to say how things are and identify what needs to change. We will tell their stories, good and bad.

¹ <https://www.gov.scot/publications/democracy-matters-community-ideas-future/>

Working with Pledgers and Ambassadors

We will build on the pledges of those who have committed to support our organisation.

We have established strong relationships with key influencers and will continue to seek out those who can help to spread our message. MPs and MSPs pledged their support to the organisation during a parliamentary event in November 2019 and we will use these connections to ensure disabled peoples' voices are heard and influence policy development. We will seek opportunities to engage with organisations and individuals who can be ambassadors for our charity and promote our work through their activities.

6. Our Principles

Our principles help guide us in what we want to achieve. Our work is focused on our three principles:

- **Positivity**
 - Positive Approach. We are a solution focussed organisation. We want to hear what is working well and what is not working to approach the issues in a positive way.
- **Promotion**
 - Promoting Equality. We are a proactive and media aware organisation. We look to promote good/best practice and achieve a greater awareness of disability equality and accessibility across Scotland.
- **Partnership**
 - Partnership-focused. We are a collaborative organisation. We work with partners across all sectors to achieve real measurable change across Scotland with regard to access and equality. We are committed to the disabled people's motto of "nothing about us without us".

7. Our Values

Disabled people are at the heart of all that we do. We will endeavour at all times to enhance their independence and promote the rights of disabled people as equal members of society.

We believe in:

- the honesty and integrity of everyone in, and associated with Disability Equality Scotland
- respect and support for each other and our respective roles
- accountability and responsibility at all times
- working in partnership with others to the mutual benefit of disabled people and wider communities

We will:

- listen and found our objectives on our members needs
- deliver services to the highest possible standard
- say what is right, not what is easy
- be business-like and professional but caring
- aim for financial viability and sustainability
- be forward thinking, innovative and pioneering
- work towards measurable quality outcomes
- raise standards within the sector

8. Our Role

We lead in identifying needs and bringing together resources and services for all disabled people in Scotland to support full long-term community inclusion and participation.

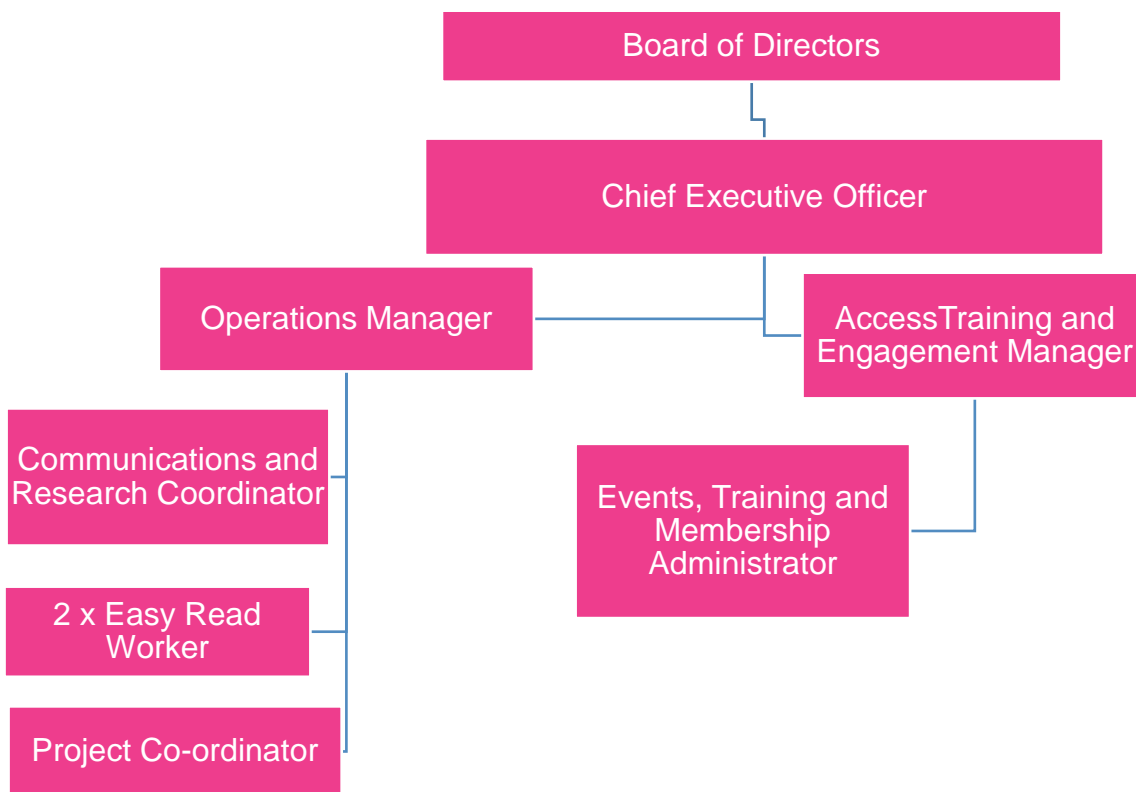
We will:

- promote the benefits of engaging with disabled people in Scotland by seeking opportunities for engagement and encouraging communication between disabled people and national and local organisations concerned with the inclusion of disabled people in society;
- raise awareness of key issues through campaign;
- collaborate with and signposts to other disability organisations and Access Panels;
- capture and share feedback from our members on a wide range of issues through our system of consultations and polls;

- seek opportunities to influence evolving Scottish Government policies and align our strategy and objectives to Ministerial commitments that will deliver improvements and benefits for our members.

9. Our People

Disability Equality Scotland will establish a highly qualified and motivated workforce that actively delivers the organisation’s mission. Disability Equality Scotland is an inclusive and transparent employer. Staff are consulted on aspects of the business and on its future direction, which includes the development of our strategy. We are already recognised as Level 2: Disability Confident Employer, because we are committed to getting the right people for the business and keeping and developing people through positive actions.



10. Our Governance

The Board of Trustees currently consists of nine Directors.

Skills on our Board include a retired senior NHS manager, an experienced Board Chair, an HR professional, Volunteer Management and lived

experience of issues affecting people with disabilities both visible and hidden. We are currently in the process of recruiting young people onto the board as Directors. The fresh perspectives, creativity, and new ideas that young people can bring to our board will only serve to strengthen our organisation.

Our Directors bring experience to the organisation, which includes, but is not limited to:

- Corporate Governance
- Strategic development
- Business management and organisational development
- Project Management using PrInCE2 methodologies
- Management practices including leadership, business, rules of engagement, encouraging democracy, volunteering
- Organisational development, including change management
- Health and Social Care integration
- Risk management and business continuity planning
- Human Resource / Mediation
- Stakeholder engagement and building partnerships

Board members serve two terms of three years and are voted in at our Annual General Meeting. The role of the Board is to oversee the work of the organisation and to make strategic decisions about its future.

The Board meets officially four times a year, with additional meetings for sub-groups. We have the following sub-groups which meet quarterly and report to the quarterly board meetings:

- Strategy and Risk Management Sub-Committee
- Access Sub-Committee
- Project Sub-Committee

Our Convenor leads the board and offers support to our Chief Executive Officer. We have the following Office Bearer roles: Convenor, Vice Convenor and Treasurer.

11. Scottish Government Policies

Our work links to and supports many Scottish Government policies, and we share the Scottish Governments commitment to use health and wellbeing as a measure of success. We also support and tailor our work towards achieving ambitions of A Fairer Scotland for Disabled People:

A Fairer Scotland for Disabled People

A Fairer Scotland for Disabled People² has five long-term ambitions aimed at changing the lives of disabled people in Scotland and ensuring that their human rights are realised.

1. **Support services that promote independent living, meet needs and work together to enable a life of choices, opportunities and participation.** Health and social care support services are designed to meet – and do meet – the individual needs and outcomes of disabled people.
2. **Decent incomes and fairer working lives.** Making sure disabled people can enjoy full participation with an adequate income to participate in learning, in education, voluntary work or paid employment and retirement.
3. **Places that are accessible to everyone.** Housing and transport and the wider environment are fully accessible to enable disabled people to participate as full and equal citizens.
4. **Protected rights.** The rights of disabled people are fully protected, and they receive fair treatment from justice systems at all times.
5. **Active participation.** Disabled people can participate as active citizens in all aspects of daily and public life in Scotland.

² A Fairer Scotland for Disabled People. The Scottish Governments Delivery Plan to 2021 for the United Nations Convention on the Rights of Persons with Disabilities
<http://www.gov.scot/Resource/0051/00510948.pdf>

The plan sets out 93 actions, which will be taken forward during the current parliamentary term and includes linking supporting strategies that seek to half the employment gap for disabled people; setting a target to increase the percentage of disabled people in the public sector workforce and increasing the supply of wheelchair accessible housing.

The Delivery Plan sets out the Scottish Government's approach to policy for disabled people. It is based on the social model of disability as opposed to the medical model, which lays the blame on the impairment, rather than on society's inability to provide for their needs, rights, and aspirations.

The Connected Scotland Strategy is derived from the plan with the aims of reducing social isolation and loneliness, which is particularly relevant to disabled people.

A Fairer Scotland for Disabled People is rooted firmly in the Convention on the Rights of Persons with Disabilities (UNCRPD) and in the aim of the independent living movement, which is that disabled people can live the life they choose, participating equally alongside other citizens in their families, communities, workplaces and wider society, with the support they need.

In December 2019 a progress update to A Fairer Scotland was published. Recommendations and any further actions from this interim review will be incorporated in our strategy and future work to ensure the commitments are progressed and delivered.

The Strategic Aims outlined in this Strategic Plan are aligned with the actions outlined in the Scottish Governments Delivery Plan.

Accessible Travel Framework

Disability Equality Scotland are delighted that Transport Scotland have a ten-year framework³, dedicated to improving public transport and accessible travel for disabled people. We will work with our partners at Transport Scotland to take forward the outcomes set out in the Framework, which include seeking feedback from disabled people about their experiences of travelling on public transport and whether any improvements have been recognised because of the Framework.

³ <http://accessibletravel.scot/wp-content/uploads/2016/11/Going-Further-Scotlands-Accessible-Travel-Framework-Full-Report.pdf>

Through the Accessible Travel Framework Steering Group, we will work with Transport Scotland and other strategic partners to input to the annual delivery plans for the framework including identifying priority areas for focused actions. We will use our member's voices and their views and opinions to advocate what areas need change.

We will continue to lead on the Disability Hate Crime Charter and assist with improving and raising awareness of the Thistle Assistance Card.

We will continue to host the Accessible Travel Hub to share best practice initiatives.

These areas of our work will form a continuous dialogue between the Scottish Government, Transport Scotland, Access Panels and disabled people.

Scottish National Action Plan for Human Rights

This document⁴ sets out the outcomes, priorities, and programmes of action to contribute to the vision of a Scotland where everyone is able to live with dignity. The Action Plan sets out specifically the need to ensure justice and safety for all, and Disability Equality Scotland are working with Police Scotland and the Keep Safe Initiative to research the prevalence of hate crime among disabled people.

Equality Act 2010

The Equality Act⁵ identifies disability as a protected characteristic, which means that it is illegal to discriminate against disabled people due to their disability. We will work with our partners and other organisations to ensure that the terms of the Act are enforced.

We will also ensure a focus on Intersectionality in our work.

⁴ <http://www.snaprights.info/wp-content/uploads/2016/01/SNAPpdfWeb.pdf>

⁵ <http://www.legislation.gov.uk/ukpga/2010/15/section/6>

The National Transport Strategy (NTS) 2

The draft NTS 2 consultation period concluded in October 2019. The findings from this consultation are now published with the NTS 2 delivery plan finalised by summer 2020.

The four priority areas of the NTS2 are:

Our Vision

We will have a sustainable, inclusive and accessible transport system, helping deliver a healthier, fairer and more prosperous Scotland for communities, businesses and visitors.



During the consultation period of the draft NTS2 the Review Research and Evidence Group made a ‘Call for Evidence’⁶. This identified the gaps in engagement and evidence gathering with hard to reach groups and those that did not engage digitally, we feel we can help in this area too, including linking this to our Inclusive Communication Hub.

This work area also links to the recent pursuits of the Scottish Government around “Democracy Matters”⁷ conversations, advocating the need for individuals and communities to have greater control and influence over decisions that affect them most.

⁶ <https://www.transport.gov.scot/media/41506/call-for-evidence-summary-report.pdf>

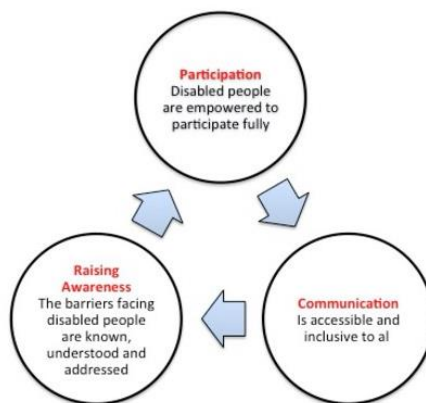
⁷ <https://www.gov.scot/publications/local-governance-review-analysis-responses-democracy-matters/>

Disability Equality Scotland will use these opportunities to link in the voices and experience of our members and Access Panel network to these conversations and opportunities for engagement.

Our drive is for meaningful engagement to ensure the voices of disabled people are heard and that they are involved in decisions that affect them. In doing so, we utilise and promote the cycle detailed in diagram 1:

Diagram 1

Delivering Change



Disability Equality Scotland welcomes the four priority areas of the NTS2 and in particular the focus on promoting equality/reducing inequality and improving health and wellbeing. This chimes well with our member's telling us of the issues they have and barriers they face when trying to access transport and travel in general and specifically in relation to transport to health and social care facilities and appointments.

12. Our Strategic Priorities for 2020-2023

Priority Area 1:

Equality, Participation and Inclusion

Objective:

To provide and take part in opportunities to participate and engage in discussions to bring about change, increase awareness, knowledge and understanding of Equality, Access and Inclusion across Scotland.

Actions:

1. Provide opportunities for disabled people to participate and meaningfully engage in national and local discussions, embedding Inclusive Communication in all methods of communications:
 - a. Events and workshops, providing additional ways to join meetings remotely
 - b. Consultations, in accessible formats particularly Easy Read
 - c. Weekly Polls
 - d. Roundtable discussions
2. Develop and deliver training to raise awareness and improve understanding of Equality, Access and Inclusion, with the aim of achieving SQA accreditation for our training delivery:
 - a. By 2023 Access Panels, and those who want to be educated to understand equality, access and inclusion to undertake access audits
3. Publish and share best practice, experiences of disabled people through our communications and projects:
 - a. Open Door quarterly magazine
 - b. Monthly newsletter
 - c. Consultation Responses
 - d. Social Media – Facebook and Twitter
 - e. Websites
 - i. Inclusive Communication Hub
 - ii. Disability Safety Hub
 - iii. Inclusive Design Hub
 - iv. Accessible Travel Hub

v. Have Your Say website

4. Be actively representative of all disabilities including neurodiversity
 - a. By 2023 Access Panels, Employers and those who want to be educated to understand equality, access and inclusion and be fully accredited to undertake access audits

Results:

1. Experiences from Disabled People in Scotland being shared and informing policies.
2. Increased number of organisations incorporating access and inclusion good practice standards.
3. Increased number of members with Disability Equality Scotland
4. Increased awareness of access and inclusion
 - o Scottish Government, local government and our ambassadors endorsing and supporting access and inclusion, across the following areas: Transport, Inclusive Communication, Inclusive Design, Disability Hate Crime, Engagement with disabled people.
5. Evidence of change (via strategies i.e. NTS, ATF, Connected Scotland, A Fairer Scotland or emerging policies i.e. the planning bill re Changing Places, advocating Access Panels engagement).

Priority Area 2:

Access Panel Network

Actions:

1. The Access Panel Network are supported to operate locally, provided with funds to promote and recruit members, and are sustainable in terms of members and finance.
2. The Access Panel Network are recognised and trained in accessibility legislation, equality and disability awareness allowing them to address inequalities and inaccessibility in local communities across Scotland.
3. Establish Youth Access Panels, to act as a feeder route, offering support and sustainability to local Access Panels. Supporting Access Panels with membership, providing a legacy for the Year of Young People, and ensuring that disabled young people have a say in their local community.

Results:

1. Increased knowledge and skills of accessibility, legislations, audits and surveys amongst young people, assisting and preparing them for the workplace and assessing accessibility externally from the school environment. Assisting with transition phases i.e. life transitions and education to employment.
2. Increase in young people joining Access Panels in local communities.
3. Improved understanding and school accessibility across Scotland.
4. Increased knowledge and skills of accessibility, legislations, audits and surveys across the Access Panel Network.
5. Increase in the confidence of Access Panel members to go out into their communities and provide advice on accessibility and recommend improvements.
6. Increased knowledge of Access Panels and their specialisms.
7. Opportunities for increased engagement between disabled people and Access Panels and local organisations and business, identifying how to address the barriers to accessibility. Making links to the democracy matters agenda.

Priority Area 3

Membership

Actions:

1. Grow membership by at least 10% each year, with campaigns, promotions and awareness raising events.
2. Value our members by hosting a yearly event, recognising the importance of members contributions to our work.
3. Provide a membership that empowers people and that disabled people can feel proud to be part of.
4. Seek benefits for members (members discounts for disability aids, accessible accommodation particularly via our sponsors).
5. Use our communication methods to share member's experiences and the importance of our membership in changing policies and law.
6. Ensure all our communications are inclusive and accessible.

7. Use webinars to engage more widely with members across Scotland, provide an alternative method to participate and engage.
8. Enhance our membership management by investing in Salesforce database.

Results:

1. A membership reflective of all disabilities, visible and hidden.
2. Members feel valued, receive member's benefits and therefore contribute more.
3. We become the 'go to' organisation for disabled people to share experiences, helping change policies and law.
4. We can communicate to a wide range of disabled people.

Priority Area 4

Accessible Transport

Actions:

1. Launch across all transport modes a Hate Crime Charter, which is a joined-up approach to tackling disability hate crime and negative behaviours towards disabled people on public transport across Scotland.
2. Source funding to undertake project work with 'Transport to Health'. This is an area our members want us to take forward.
3. Continue to develop the Accessible Travel Hub with transport providers.
4. Assist with the improvements of the Thistle Assistance Card.
5. Seek improved value for money, lease flexibility and customer engagement with Motability.
6. Continue to create and grow partnership working with transport providers with the aim of identifying and addressing accessibility issues.
7. Link in with the 4 key priorities of the National Transport Strategy, which crosscuts our own priority areas:
 - a. promoting equality/reducing inequality
 - b. tackling climate action
 - c. helping our economy prosper
 - d. improving our health and wellbeing

Results:

1. Increased understanding and recognition of Hate Crime and how to report it.
2. Increased knowledge of how disabled people travel and use transport across Scotland.
3. Input to and increased the knowledge of improvements required and being made to make transport accessible in Scotland.
4. Assist with advocating for a better and more flexible “motability style” car lease scheme for disabled people in Scotland with improved flexibility, customer engagement and value for money,
5. Opportunities for increased engagement between disabled people and transport providers, including Transport Scotland’s Accessibility Team, the Mobility and Access Committee for Scotland and Community Transport schemes to identify how to address the barriers to independent travel.
6. Work to make transport more affordable to disabled people.
7. Increased knowledge of improvements to be made to transport links to health and social care services.

13. In summary

We will...

- Listen to our members and stakeholders and ensure our work responds to their asks and needs.
- Increase awareness and knowledge of equality, access and inclusion.
- Increasing opportunities of participation with disabled people.
- Offer training, information, and advice to those wishing to engage with disabled people.
- Become an SQA accredited Equality, Access and Inclusion training provider
- Involve and give a voice to more young people in what we do

- Increase our membership, seek member's benefits and continue to engage with members on important policy issues, ensuring disabled people continue to have their views and opinions heard.
- Provide regular statistics and data on the issues affecting Disabled People in Scotland.
- Continue to provide informative news to disabled people using our mediums – Workshops, Roundtables, Parliamentary Forums, Access Panel Conference, Annual General Meeting, Open Door magazine, monthly newsletter, website and Hubs.
- Continue to develop the information and resources in the following online Hubs:
 - Inclusive Communication
 - Inclusive Design
 - Access Travel Hub
 - Have Your Say on Disability
 - Hate Crime
- Support, sustain and grow the Access Panel Network in Scotland

14. How we will do it – at a glance

- We will review our current processes and ensure they are working effectively.
- We will continue to review our strategy to ensure it is fit for purpose to deliver on our member's needs.
- We will manage risks and business continuity plans to seek financial sustainability for Disability Equality Scotland and the Access Panel Network.
- We will continue to value and seek opportunities to engage with our members face to face through workshops, roadshows, conferences, meetings and roundtable events.

- We will continue to horizon scan our environment to identify gaps or opportunities.
- We will take on a leadership role, working with a range of stakeholders to identify and meet the needs of disabled people, ensuring our members opinions are at the heart of all decision making.
- We will continue to promote our organisations visibility in the disability community.
- We will continue to highlight the positive role that disabled people play in their communities.
- We will invest in our fundraising activities to ensure that we achieve sustainability through a number of different funding streams.
- We will value our people and support staff to do their jobs well.
- We will invest in effective communication and promotion of the organisation and its projects.