



Llywodraeth Cymru  
Welsh Government

PUBLICATION, DOCUMENT

# Disabled People's Rights Plan 2025 to 2035

Our 10-year plan to improve the rights of disabled people living in Wales.

**First published:** 15 December 2025

**Last updated:** 15 December 2025

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## Ministerial foreword

We are proud to present this Disabled People's Rights Plan for Wales, which will help us to advance the rights and opportunities of disabled people, remove barriers and challenge the prejudice and discrimination they face. Life for disabled people is often difficult, fraught with daily challenges and systemic barriers that impede their ability to participate in and contribute to society fully. These challenges limit disabled people's opportunities and can erode their sense of belonging and inclusion.

On 15 May, we launched a 12-week **consultation on the draft Disabled People's Rights Plan** (<https://www.gov.wales/draft-disabled-peoples-rights-plan>). Throughout this process, we received crucial feedback, highlighting areas of the Disabled People's Rights Plan that were well received as well as others where this Plan could be strengthened. These included the need for clear measurability of impact; the need for a greater emphasis on digital inclusion of disabled people; greater recognition of the roles of parents and carers; and the importance of robust co-production with disabled people.

This plan sets out our ambition for a Wales where disabled people can enjoy equitable rights, inclusion and participation. At the heart of our approach is the Social Model of Disability, which helps us to understand how disabled people can be held back by the world around them, and how we can make the world easier for everyone to be part of. We are also guided by the principles and obligations of the United Nations Convention on the Rights of Disabled People. The barriers disabled people face can range from inaccessible buildings and services that aren't adjusted to meet their needs through to some people's attitudes towards them. We are committed to continuing to remove these barriers to create an inclusive and accessible society for all. Our commitments are outlined in 2 key documents:

- This 10-year plan which lays out the long-term ambitions.
- **Our short-term actions** (<https://www.gov.wales/disabled-peoples-rights-plan-2025-2035-short-term-actions>) that we will take forward now.

We thank everyone who supported the development of this plan through the Disability Rights Taskforce and its working groups, and we thank Professor Debbie Foster, for her leadership as Taskforce co-chair. The Taskforce worked extensively to consider the challenges identified in the ‘Locked Out: Liberating Disabled People’s Lives and Rights in Wales beyond COVID-19’ report, and their **recommendations** (<https://www.gov.wales/recommendations-disability-rights-taskforce>) have heavily influenced this Plan.

This Plan can only succeed if organisations and people across Wales work together to deliver it. We will set up an External Advisory Board to provide advice and support on the implementation, delivery, and impact of the Disabled People’s Rights Plan.

Achieving our ambition of a Wales where disabled people can live, work, and flourish as equal citizens requires a concerted effort. Together we can make a difference by removing barriers facing disabled people and challenging the discrimination and prejudice disabled people continue to face every day. By upholding the rights of disabled people and ensuring their voices are heard and acted upon, we can together create an inclusive society.

Eluned Morgan MS

Prif Weinidog / First Minister of Wales.

Jane Hutt MS

Cabinet Secretary for Social Justice, Trefnydd and Chief Whip.

## **1. Introduction**

The Welsh Government is committed to supporting a society where diversity is embraced and valued for the positive impact it has. Disabled people bring different perspectives, skills and expertise, which it is important to value, recognise and strengthen.

The Welsh Government is committed to this Plan, which is influenced by every policy area and endorsed by this Welsh Government. This Plan sets out our cross-government 10-year framework which expresses the ambitions and outcomes we want to achieve, to ensure disabled people can flourish as equal members of Welsh society, and to challenge discrimination and prejudice. All organisations across Wales, and people themselves need to work together to realise this ambition.

In 2021, the **proportion of disabled people in Wales** (<https://www.ons.gov.uk/peoplepopulationandcommunity/healthandsocialcare/disability/articles/disabilitybyagesexanddeprivationenglandandwales/census2021#disability-and-deprivation-wales-2021>) was 21% (670,000 people). The proportion of disabled people within the population increased with age, and females were more likely than males to report being disabled. We know disabled people face multiple forms of discrimination and exclusion, in education, employment, health, housing, transport, and more.

Of the **working age population** (<https://www.gov.wales/wellbeing-wales-2025-more-equal-wales.html>) in 2024, disabled people were more likely to have no qualifications (15%) than non-disabled people (5%). **Employment rates** (<https://stats.gov.wales/en-GB/4a494d18-6c2a-45a5-be60-dfc1967a743e>) for disabled people aged 16 to 64 are 29 percentage points lower than non-disabled people (year ending June 2025). One in 7 disabled people or people with a limiting long-standing illness lived in a household in material deprivation compared with 1 in 10 people who were not disabled (2024 to 2025) (**National Survey Wales**). (<https://www.gov.wales/national-survey-wales-results-viewer-dashboard>)

## Disability Rights Taskforce

The COVID-19 pandemic impacted the lives of people across the globe, intensifying inequalities and socio-economic disadvantage. In Wales, Covid disproportionately impacted some communities.

In July 2021, the **'Locked Out: Liberating Disabled People's Lives and Rights in Wales beyond COVID-19'** report (<https://www.gov.wales/locked-out->

[liberating-disabled-peoples-lives-and-rights-wales-beyond-covid-19](#)) highlighted the inequalities experienced by disabled people in society. One of the responses to the report was to set up the Disability Rights Taskforce, a partnership between Welsh Government and stakeholders and co-chaired by the Cabinet Secretary for Social Justice, Trefnydd and Chief Whip, Jane Hutt MS, and Professor Debbie Foster, Cardiff University and author of the 'Locked Out' report.

The Taskforce formed 10 thematic working groups, to recommend action that would improve disabled people's lives, these were:

- embedding and understanding of the Social Model of Disability (across Wales)
- access to services (including communications and technology)
- independent living: social care
- independent living: health
- travel
- employment and income
- affordable and accessible housing
- children and young people
- access to justice
- well-being (as a workshop)

The Taskforce operated on the principle of co-production, with over 350 external stakeholders and 200 Welsh Government policy officials working together to develop recommendations aimed at improving outcomes and ensuring the rights of which disabled people in Wales are fully realised. Disabled people were active partners and leaders in the Taskforce's process, sharing insights and lived experiences, which have shaped actions to address disabled people's rights and dismantle existing barriers. The principle of "nothing about us without us" is essential for ensuring that disabled people are actively involved in matters that affect their lives.

The **Taskforce's co-produced recommendations** (<https://www.gov.wales/recommendations-disability-rights-taskforce>) have been used to inform the actions and outcomes of this important plan. These recommendations will continue to be an important resource that Welsh Government can return to in the future, to set out its medium to long-term actions to deliver the ambition and outcomes for

disabled people set out in this 10-year plan.

## **Who is this Plan for?**

The Equality Act 2010 is an important piece of legislation that aims to protect disabled people from discrimination and to promote equality of opportunity. The Act makes it unlawful for employers, education providers, service providers, and others to discriminate against a disabled person because of something arising as a result of their difference, impairment, or health condition.

A significant part of the Equality Act 2010 is the requirement for employers, service providers, and others to make “reasonable adjustments” for disabled people. This includes taking steps to remove barriers that may prevent disabled individuals from accessing employment, education, or services. The Act also protects people from being treated unfairly because they are a carer or support worker for a disabled person.

Case law has shown that the word ‘Disabled’ can include people with:

- learning disabilities (e.g. Down syndrome)
- physical differences / impairments (e.g. people who may use mobility aids such as a walking frame or wheelchair)
- sensory differences / impairments (e.g. vision differences, people who are deafblind)
- long-term health conditions (e.g. diabetes, asthma, Crohn’s disease)
- specific learning difficulties (e.g. dyslexia)
- mental health conditions (e.g. depression, anxiety)
- progressive health conditions (e.g. dementia, cancer, Parkinson’s disease)
- people who are neurodivergent (e.g. attention deficit hyperactivity disorder)

It is important to recognise that, although the examples above illustrate some of the ways in which people may be considered disabled under the law, not everyone with these experiences or conditions will identify as disabled. Identity is shaped by individual choices and circumstances.

Disabled people with fluctuating or dynamic health conditions may face

additional barriers in accessing consistent support, appropriate workplace adjustments, and full social participation. Addressing these challenges requires flexible and responsive approaches across services, workplaces, and society to ensure their rights and needs are met.

## **Our overarching ambition**

We will make Wales an inclusive, accessible nation where disabled people can assert, access, and enforce their rights. We will ensure disabled people can participate fully in every aspect of Welsh life, without limits, restrictions, or discrimination. Our commitment extends to making all aspects of Welsh life, including health, education, employment, housing, and travel accessible. We are determined to lead the way in digital inclusion, with our ambition to support citizens, should they choose, to meet the minimum digital living standard, ensuring that no one in Wales is left behind. Together, we will work with disabled people, parents and carers to remove barriers, uphold individual and collective rights, and foster a society where everyone's personal strengths, intersecting identities and contributions are understood, valued and celebrated.

## **2. Governance, monitoring and evaluation**

### **Introduction**

The Disabled People's Rights Plan aims to achieve the ambition of becoming a Wales where disabled people can live, work, and flourish as equal citizens. In pursuit of this ambition, the Plan sets out its intention to deliver real, measurable change across a range of policy areas that affect the everyday lives of disabled people in Wales.

This section outlines the monitoring, evaluation, and governance arrangements that will be established to evidence this change and to oversee the delivery of the Plan (see Annex 1 for more information). Each will be developed and delivered in line with the principles of the Social Model of Disability, incorporating

lived experience at each stage to ensure that the needs and voices of disabled people are fairly and accurately represented throughout the entire process.

## **External Advisory Board**

To ensure robust oversight and meaningful guidance throughout the implementation of the Disabled People's Rights Plan, we will establish an influential and independent External Advisory Board. This Board will play a critical role in shaping the direction, monitoring progress, and maximising the impact of the Plan, acting as a crucial link between disabled people, policy makers, and service providers. Its responsibilities will include advising on delivery, identifying emerging challenges, recommending improvements, and ensuring that the voices and needs of disabled people remain central to all activities and decisions.

Membership of the External Advisory Board will be drawn from a diverse range of individuals, including people with direct lived experience of disability and key representatives from disabled people's organisations, and other relevant stakeholders across Wales. This inclusive approach will guarantee that the Board reflects the breadth of experience and expertise necessary to address the complex and evolving issues faced by disabled people in society.

The Board will be established in 2026 and will operate in accordance with the principles of the Social Model of Disability, ensuring that all discussions and recommendations are grounded in the realities of disabled people's lives. The Board's input will be sought at every critical stage, from strategic planning through to evaluation, to guarantee that the Plan delivers real, lasting change and that all actions are transparent, accountable, and responsive to the community it serves.

By embedding the External Advisory Board at the heart of our governance structure, we are making a clear commitment to participatory decision-making, collaboration, and continuous improvement. This will help to build trust, drive innovation, and ultimately support the ambition of creating a Wales where disabled people can live, work, and flourish as equal citizens.

# **The Welsh Government Disability Disparity Evidence Unit: how we will measure change**

The Disability Disparity Evidence Unit, a team from the Welsh Government's Social Research profession, is responsible for overseeing the monitoring and evaluation arrangements for the Disabled People's Rights Plan. This includes measurement of the Plan's ongoing progress against individual actions, as well as a wider assessment of the overall impact made against its intended outcomes in the longer-term.

## **Outlining the process for change**

In order to measure change, the process for how it will be achieved must first be understood. This will be done through the development of 'Theories of Change', or 'logic models', for each area of the Plan. Welsh Government will map out each step in how the Plan aims to deliver its desired change, from inputs through to activities, outputs, outcomes, and impacts.

These steps will help to shape how progress and success of the Plan is measured. In the short to medium term, monitoring and evaluation arrangements will focus on providing evidence against actions and outcomes through a measurement framework and process evaluation.

## **Measurement framework**

Aligned to the Theories of Change, which set out how the Plan intends to achieve its objectives, an overarching measurement framework is in development to evidence progress and demonstrate the direction of change across key areas of the Plan. This framework, to be finalised within the first year of the plan, will include indicators for each area which, when considered together, will provide a holistic view of the effect that the Plan is having overall.

These indicators are being carefully selected to provide the most accurate and

comprehensive view of the Plan possible, in a way that meets the needs of our stakeholders. It is likely, however, that not all data will be available. The Disability Disparity Evidence Unit will target these gaps in the data where possible, to improve the availability, quality, granularity, and accessibility of equalities evidence in the future.

## **Process evaluation**

A process evaluation will begin in 2026 to understand how the Plan is being implemented by finding out what is working well, identifying barriers to delivery, and making recommendations for improvement in the future. This research will focus on the initial period from the date the Plan is published up until 2027 and will be designed around the principles of the Social Model, incorporating lived experience at every stage to ensure that disabled people remain at the heart of the evaluation.

The research will draw upon different types of data to assess the implementation of the Plan. Numerical 'quantitative' data will be used to monitor the outputs of actions in the short-to-medium term. For example, monitoring data may be used to show the number of disabled people engaged with during the development of a policy or the number of service providers that have attended Social Model of Disability training.

People's thoughts and opinions will also be captured through the use of 'qualitative' data methods, such as interviews or focus groups. These methods will be used to explore changes in greater detail, helping to understand why a change has happened and how people have been affected by it. They will help to accurately represent the views of everyone involved with the Plan including those involved in its delivery, and most importantly, the disabled people whose lives it aims to improve.

Once completed, this stage of the research will be followed by a 'impact evaluation', focussed on assessing the success of the Plan in achieving its outcomes in the mid-to-long term. This second phase of the research will draw upon data collated across a longer timeframe, and on the experiences of the disabled people affected by the Plan, to assess its overall impact.

## Our actions

Many of the **actions set out within the 'Actions' document**

(<https://www.gov.wales/disabled-peoples-rights-plan-2025-2035-short-term-actions>) are already in progress, reflecting a commitment to the timely implementation of the Plan's objectives and demonstrating the Government's priority to the rights of disabled people. The initial **short-term actions** (<https://www.gov.wales/disabled-peoples-rights-plan-2025-2035-short-term-actions>) are expected to be completed by 2027 or before, serving as a foundation for the delivery of the 10-year ambitions in the Plan.

Additional medium-term and long-term actions, intended for delivery by 2031 and 2035 respectively, will be informed by the recommendations of the Disability Rights Taskforce, working in partnership with disabled people, disabled people's organisations, and the Welsh Government. This participatory approach will ensure that the priorities and lived experiences of disabled people remain central to delivery of the Plan'. Progress against these actions will be monitored and measured through the evaluation approach outlined in this Plan, and the External Advisory Board.

## Engagement mechanisms

The Disability Equality Forum, chaired by the Cabinet Secretary for Social Justice, Trefnydd and Chief Whip will continue to bring together disabled people, policy makers, service providers, researchers, and other stakeholders. The Forum will also continue to serve as a platform for sharing good practice, learning from each other, and building alliances across different groups and interests.

Disabled People's Organisations (DPOs) represent the different voices and interests of disabled people; they will have an important role in gathering views from disabled people and grassroots organisations and individuals across Wales, bringing their feedback, concerns, and suggestions back to the forum for discussion and challenge.

We will continue to work with the Welsh Government's Disabled People's Employment Champions and our Disabled People's Employment Working Group. This Group, chaired by the Champions, is well placed to review our progress on inclusion and access to work and apprenticeships.

We will meet regularly with our Equality Leads across Welsh Government to ensure this cross-Government plan delivers positive outcomes for disabled people.

We will work closely with the Learning Disability Ministerial Advisory Group and the Neurodivergence Ministerial Advisory Group.

This Plan will use existing and developing strategies across Welsh Government as levers for changing our landscape. Mainstreaming the Social Model of Disability across policy means that all policies and strategies include disabled people, their needs, and preferences, and that equality for disabled people is embedded in all decision-making processes.

### **3. Overarching approaches to developing this plan**

Alongside the important work and recommendations of the Taskforce, the development of this Plan has been guided by wider considerations, principles, obligations and objectives, which are set out below.

#### **Working with disabled people**

Working with disabled people is essential for advancing an inclusive, equitable and thriving society. Collaborating with disabled people to address the real issues and challenges they face ensures policies are effective and more likely to achieve the intended outcome that respect the rights and contribution of disabled people.

Disabled People's Organisations across Wales have a strategic role in

promoting the rights of disabled people in Wales. We continue to fund **Disability Wales** (<https://www.disabilitywales.org/about/>) the national association of Disabled People's Organisations in Wales. Disabled People's Organisations' expertise and value is supporting the Welsh Government and its policy development.

## Independent living

Independent living means all disabled people having the same freedom, dignity, choice, and control as other citizens whether in their home environment, at work, in education and in the community. It does not mean having to live by yourself or do everything for yourself. It means rights to practical assistance and support to participate fully in society on the same basis as others, as well as voice, choice, and control over how this is provided. It is about ensuring people of all ages and from all communities can enjoy well-being and access appropriate support when and how they need it.

This is underpinned by article 19 of the United Nations Convention on the Rights of Disabled People, ratified by the UK in 2009, under which disabled people have the right to live in the community with choices equal to others. This includes the opportunity to choose their place of residence and with whom they live, without being obliged to live in a particular arrangement. Additionally, community services and facilities available to the general population must also be accessible and responsive to the needs of disabled people.

## Equality

Understanding how a person's identity aspects, like gender, race, and disability, combine to create unique discrimination experiences improves policy development. It enables policymakers to recognise and address the complex and interconnected nature of individuals' identities and personal experiences.

The **Equality Act (2010)** (<https://www.legislation.gov.uk/ukpga/2010/15/section/20>) requires employers and service providers to make reasonable adjustments to remove disadvantages faced by disabled people. This duty ensures that disabled individuals have equal access to services, employment, and public

functions. Failure to make these adjustments may be considered unlawful discrimination.

As part of our duties under the Equality Act, the Welsh Government has 7 **National Equality Objectives** (<https://www.gov.wales/written-statement-achieving-equitable-wales-national-equality-objectives-2024-28>), (NEOs) these are:

- National Equality Objective 1: We will create a Wales where everyone has opportunities to prosper in line with our organisational goal to reduce poverty.
- National Equality Objective 2: We will create a Wales where everyone can be aware of their human rights, and where those rights are protected, promoted, and underpin all public policy.
- National Equality Objective 3: We will create a Wales where everyone can be aware of and has equitable access to high quality public services.
- National Equality Objective 4: We will create a Wales free from discrimination, victimisation, harassment, abuse, hate crime and/or bullying against all people.
- National Equality Objective 5: We will create a Wales where everyone from the full diversity of backgrounds can participate in public life, have their voices heard and see themselves reflected in leadership positions.
- National Equality Objective 6: We will create a Wales with fair and equal opportunities to gain employment and for fair and equal treatment in the workplace, including fair pay and conditions.
- National Equality Objective 7: We will create an environmentally sustainable Wales with the capacity to both ensure our journey to net zero is fair and to respond to the inequitable impacts of climate change.

Embedding **equality and human rights** (<https://www.gov.wales/equality-plan-and-objectives-2025-to-2029>) approaches into Welsh Government work requires systemic and cultural change and will take time. Through our NEOs and Human Rights Statement, this plan introduces a coherent framework for planning and delivery.

The Welsh Government is committed to reducing inequality across society, taking action through our equality plans, including **Advancing gender equality: action plan** (<https://www.gov.wales/advancing-gender-equality-action-plan>). Our **Anti-**

**racist Wales Action Plan** (<https://www.gov.wales/anti-racist-wales-action-plan-2024-update>) (ArWAP) shows how Welsh Government intends to collectively, make a measurable difference to the lives of Black, Asian and Minority Ethnic people, including Gypsy, Roma and Traveller communities by 2030. Our **LGBTQ+ Action Plan for Wales** (<https://www.gov.wales/lgbtq-action-plan-wales>) sets out how we are supporting LGBTQ+ communities in Wales.

Disabled people may face overlapping inequalities due to factors such as race, gender, age, and socio-economic status. This is often called intersectionality. Intersectionality is related to the way in which different types of discrimination (i.e. unfair treatment because of a person's protected characteristics) are connected to and affect each other.

The Well-being of Future Generations (Wales) Act is about improving the social, economic, environmental and cultural well-being of Wales. The Act gives a legally-binding common purpose, the 7 well-being goals for national government, local government, local health boards and other specified public bodies. It details the ways in which specified public bodies must work and work together to improve the well-being of Wales. This plan will support the **Well-being goals** (<https://www.gov.wales/well-being-future-generations-act-essentials-html#60676>) of a:

- prosperous Wales
- resilient Wales
- healthier Wales
- more equal Wales
- Wales of cohesive communities
- Wales of vibrant culture and thriving Welsh language
- globally responsible Wales

## **Climate change Wales and global responsibility**

The 2025 Global Disability Summit (GDS) **full report** ([https://www.globaldisabilitysummit.org/wp-content/uploads/2025/03/GIP03351-UNICEF-GDIR-Full-report\\_Proof-7.pdf](https://www.globaldisabilitysummit.org/wp-content/uploads/2025/03/GIP03351-UNICEF-GDIR-Full-report_Proof-7.pdf)), 'Accelerating Disability Inclusion in a Changing and Diverse World', emphasises the profound impact of climate change on disabled

people around the world. The report also highlights the urgent need for action on climate change and accessible technology. It calls for inclusive policies in climate adaptation and mitigation solutions, and for the involvement of disabled people in co-designing processes, to create more resilient communities that are better prepared to withstand the impacts of climate change and other emergencies.

## United Nations Convention on the Rights of Disabled People (UNCRDP)

The UK ratified this **Convention** (<https://www.ohchr.org/en/instruments-mechanisms/instruments/convention-rights-persons-disabilities>) in 2009, to uphold and promote the rights of disabled people. Throughout this plan we refer to the convention as the 'Convention on the Rights of Disabled People' or UNCRDP rather than the given name Convention on the Rights of People with Disabilities; this is to reflect our commitment to the Social Model of Disability which is discussed in more detail below.

The Equality and Human Rights Commission (EHRC), in its '**Is Wales Fairer?**' (<https://www.equalityhumanrights.com/our-work/equality-and-human-rights-monitor/equality-and-human-rights-monitor-2023-wales-fairer?return-url=https%3A%2F%2Fwww.equalityhumanrights.com%2Fsearch%3Fkeys%3Dis%2Bwales%2Bfairer>) report found that many disabled people in Wales continue to experience significant inequalities in the domains of health, education, employment, housing, transport, and access to justice. This Plan to enhance equality for disabled people in Wales outlines the high-level and detailed outcomes we aim to achieve in these areas.

The EHRC's **Human Rights Tracker** (<https://www.equalityhumanrights.com/thehumanrightstracker>) shows current and historic gaps in our delivery of rights under the UNCRDP, particularly in relation to independent living, access to justice and participation in decision-making. Through the efforts of the Welsh Government's Legislative Options Working Group (LOWG), work continues on a detailed review of both the Convention of the Elimination of Discrimination Against Women (CEDAW) and UNCRDP's articles to consider possible

legislative and non-legislative approaches to incorporation under devolved powers. The outcome of their work will be a report giving clear recommendations on Welsh Government's approach.

The 2024 **United Nations Report on the 'Rights of Persons with Disabilities'**

([https://tbinternet.ohchr.org/\\_layouts/15/treatybodyexternal/](https://tbinternet.ohchr.org/_layouts/15/treatybodyexternal/)

[Download.aspx?symbolno=CRPD%2FC%2FGBR%2FFUIR%2F1&Lang=en](https://tbinternet.ohchr.org/_layouts/15/treatybodyexternal/Download.aspx?symbolno=CRPD%2FC%2FGBR%2FFUIR%2F1&Lang=en))

underscores several critical areas where the UK must enhance the lives of disabled individuals. The report advocates for comprehensive strategies to address labour shortages in disability and mental health services and highlights the necessity of sufficient personal assistance, recreational support, and accessible transportation. It also emphasises the need to improve social security arrangements, including detailed assessments and benefit adjustments to cover disability-related costs. It calls for targeted support for marginalised groups to guarantee independent living and underscores the importance of preventing the institutionalisation of disabled people due to inadequate community support.

In Wales, the Welsh Government is responsible for devolved areas like health, education and some areas of travel, while social security remains a UK Government responsibility. A unified cross-Governments effort is required to resolve some of the cross-cutting issues for all disabled people in the UK.

The work to make the grants and benefits that are governed by Welsh Government (sometimes known as Welsh benefits) as easy to claim as possible has positive potential for disabled people in Wales. The introduction in January 2024 of the **Welsh Benefits Charter** (<https://www.gov.wales/welsh-benefits-charter>) which has been adopted by all 22 Welsh local authorities, signified a culture shift towards a more coherent, person centred design and delivery of Welsh benefits and grants, based upon rights and entitlements. The Welsh Government, working collaboratively with its partners, are turning the Charter commitments into reality which will ensure everyone is treated equally and fairly, without discrimination, and that all partners follow the social model of disability when administering Welsh benefits.

## The Social Model of Disability and accessibility

The Social Model of Disability focuses on societal barriers rather than impairments, advocating for the same rights for disabled people as their peers. The Social Model of Disability shifts responsibility to society, calling for the removal of barriers, structural, cultural, and discriminatory, which hold back disabled people's participation. Structural barriers include inaccessible buildings. Cultural barriers arise from attitudes, beliefs, and practices within a society that lead to exclusion, discrimination, and prejudices favouring non-disabled people. By challenging these views, society can demonstrate that being disabled is not negative, and society and communities are stronger and more cohesive with a diversity of people, including disabled people. This model empowers disabled people to claim their rights and celebrates their diversity and contributions.

Access to the world is fundamental for disabled people. Whether it is accessible websites, alternative formats for documents, hospital appointment letters in large print or braille, the provision of British Sign Language interpreters at events, or ensuring physical premises and cash machines are usable by all, and more, these measures are vital for inclusion. Recent evidence from the UK Government's report **The lived experience of disabled people in the UK: a review of evidence** (<https://www.gov.uk/government/publications/the-lived-experience-of-disabled-people-in-the-uk-a-review-of-evidence/the-lived-experience-of-disabled-people-in-the-uk-a-review-of-evidence>) shows that disabled people in the UK continue to experience multiple and intersecting barriers across all areas of life. While there have been improvements in legislation and awareness, significant work remains to achieve true equality, accessibility, and inclusion.

According to analysis by **Project Nemo** (<https://projectnemo.co.uk/learning-disabilities-report/>) and **AlixPartners** (<https://www.alixpartners.com/newsroom/uk-businesses-lose-70bn-annually-due-to-lack-of-accessible-payment-options-new-study-from-alixpartners-and-project-nemo-suggests/>), the UK economy is estimated to lose up to £70 billion annually due to a lack of accessible payment solutions. The report highlights that many disabled people encounter barriers when making payments, both online and in person, physical access, and a lack of staff support, which restricts disabled people's inclusion in economic life. These

challenges not only affect disabled people but also result in missed business opportunities and reduced consumer spending, underlining the urgent need for more inclusive payment systems.

## **Discrimination and prejudice**

Disabled people often experience discrimination that favours non-disabled people, this is known by many as Ableism. This can show in a failure to provide accessible infrastructure such as ramps and accessible toilets, accessible communication and information, such as large print letters. Additionally, some disabled people face deliberate discrimination, such as exclusion and insults. Discrimination can have profound consequences for disabled people, including isolation, reduced life opportunities, and emotional harm. To address these issues, we need societal changes, including the design of inclusive spaces, spreading awareness, and ensuring equality for everyone.

## **British Sign Language (BSL)**

BSL is a distinct language with unique grammar, syntax, and vocabulary, and is the first or preferred language for many deaf people in Wales.

BSL was recognised as a language of Wales in 2004 by the then Assembly Government and we remain committed to ensuring the deaf BSL signing community is fully included and empowered in all aspects of Welsh society. Recognising BSL as a language is vital for the deaf community's well-being, but true inclusion requires more than recognition, it demands accessible services, equal participation, and respect for BSL as a core part of identity and culture. The Welsh Government recognises the barriers faced by deaf BSL signers and the need to overcome these to prevent prejudice and exclusion.

This Plan emphasises the need for participation from both the government and the deaf BSL signing community in designing, delivering, and evaluating relevant policies and services. Welsh Government established a BSL Stakeholder Group in January 2025 to develop a set of **recommendations** (<https://www.gov.wales/british-sign-language-bsl-stakeholder-group-recommendations>) to inform the Welsh

Government's production of a BSL policy 'route map'. The route map will provide a strategic framework that sets out the key priority actions Welsh Government is taking to promote and facilitate BSL and to improve outcomes for the deaf BSL signing community of Wales. The route map will represent the first steps toward realising our ambition of creating a Wales that respects, promotes and facilitates BSL.

## Welsh language

The Welsh Government's strategy for the Welsh language, Cymraeg 2050, aims for one million Welsh speakers and a doubling of the daily use of the Welsh language by 2050. We believe that the Welsh language, Cymraeg belongs to us all, wherever we are on our Welsh language journey. Cymraeg is more than just a matter of cultural identity and diversity. It's also about social inclusion and equality.

We recognise the intersectionality of language and disability. Mwy na geiriau / More than just words is the Welsh Government's plan for the Welsh language in health and social care and is aligned with the aims of Cymraeg 2050. Mwy na geiriau / More than just words recognises that effective communication is a key requirement in health and social care services, and that consideration of a person's language is fundamental to delivering safe, quality and person-centred care.

We have also ensured alignment between our priorities for recording, tracking and sharing information on the Welsh language (which are central to the delivery of priorities in Mwy na geiriau / More than just words), and the **All Wales Accessible Communication and Information Standards** (<https://www.gov.wales/accessible-communication-and-information-standards-healthcare-html>), published in September 2025.

Disabled Welsh speakers may face extra barriers in accessing services, education, and employment in Welsh. Technology can help people with specific needs use Cymraeg. This could include disabled people, older people, people with additional learning needs, or people with needs resulting from a medical treatment, a cognitive or a physical impairment. This isn't just about use of

Cymraeg, it's about making people able to use the Welsh they have, with no extra steps, and without causing them additional challenges. In line with the **Active Offer** ([https://www.gov.wales/sites/default/files/publications/2019-04/delivering-the-active-offer-information-pack-health\\_0.pdf](https://www.gov.wales/sites/default/files/publications/2019-04/delivering-the-active-offer-information-pack-health_0.pdf)) principle in our Mwy na geiriau / **More Than Just Words: Welsh language plan in health and social care** (<https://www.gov.wales/more-just-words-welsh-language-plan-health-and-social-care>) plan for embedding the Welsh language in health and social care, the responsibility lies on health and care providers to offer services in Welsh, rather than the patient or service user having to request them.

In our policy statement on Welsh language technology (January 2025), the Welsh Government has committed to work to help everyone use more of their Cymraeg in tools where Welsh isn't supported to the degree it needs to be e.g. in specific software for disabled people.

We'll continue to look for opportunities for technology to support the use of Cymraeg and making health and social care more accessible in line with our priorities in **Mwy na geiriau / More than just words** (<https://www.gov.wales/more-just-words-welsh-language-plan-health-and-social-care>).

Ensuring appropriate and up to date terminology exists in the Welsh language is essential for Welsh speakers in all walks of life. Welsh language standardised terminology in this field, as published in the Welsh Government's TermCymru online terminology database and the Porth Termau terminology portal by Bangor University's Language Technologies Unit, was recently updated in line with the Social Model of Disability. The continued mainstreaming of this framework will aid in consistency and awareness of these terms. Welsh language terminology in this area will continue to be updated proactively to meet the needs of users.

We also recognise the importance of ensuring that our Welsh-medium spaces, such as Eisteddfodau, our grant-funded activities and cultural festivals are accessible and inclusive to all disabled people.

# Digital and technology

The **Digital Strategy for Wales** (<https://www.gov.wales/digital-strategy-wales>) (March 2021), a Programme for Government commitment, makes clear how we will use digital, data and technology to improve the lives of people in Wales. The strategy sets out a vision to create an inclusive digital society where everyone can enjoy the benefits of digital technology.

Mission 2 of the **strategy** (<https://www.gov.wales/digital-strategy-wales-html#66659>), Digital Inclusion, outlines the aim to support everyone to gain the motivation, confidence and basic digital skills needed to make informed decisions and choose how they participate in, and make the most of, our increasingly digital world. Welsh Government views digital inclusion as a key social justice and equalities issue and is committed to ensuring that no citizen is left behind as we embrace a digital first (as opposed to digital by default) approach and the key principles of digital inclusion will be at the heart of all we deliver.

We know a digital divide still exists, meaning that some individuals lack equal access to the benefits of modern digital technologies and services, whether by choice or due to wider barriers.

Welsh Government acknowledges that the ability to engage in digital technology extends beyond personal use of the internet and has been actively exploring a measure through the work on a **Welsh Minimum Digital Living Standard** (<https://www.gov.wales/towards-welsh-minimum-digital-living-standard>) (MDLS). To date the Welsh Government has commissioned 2 phases of research to develop a citizen-centric definition for a minimum and have delivered a wide range of projects with housing associations, older people organisations and Gypsy, Roma and Traveller communities to understand how it can support the ambition.

The MDLS is a citizen-centred benchmark which defines the essential digital goods, services, and skills required for individuals and households to participate fully in modern life.

- Digital goods and services: Reliable home broadband, mobile data, devices (e.g., smartphones, laptops), and access to digital content and services.

- Digital skills and confidence: The ability to communicate, connect, and engage safe and legal, and confidently.

This standard is aspirational, to be owned across a variety of sectors, and is a framework to guide policy and practice towards universal digital inclusion. Aligning policy and interventions to the minimum will help ensure we create a cohesive and inclusive digital ecosystem that supports the well-being of all Welsh people.

Working towards the ambition for supporting citizens to meet, if they choose, the minimum digital living standard is not a role solely for Government. We must adopt a cross-sector approach, co-producing interventions with all sectors: public, private, and third and with citizens, ensuring clear ownership by all.

## **4. High-level outcomes**

This Plan has been structured against 4 overarching areas, which are aligned to the 7 National Well-being Goals of the Well-being of Future Generations (Wales) Act:

- Neighbourhoods, places, and transport.
- Employment, income, and education.
- Independent living, health, and social care.
- Justice and supporting environments

For each of these 4 areas, this plan sets out our overarching high-level outcomes and more detailed outcomes we want to achieve over the next 10 years. The detailed outcomes are described in the following sections. The short-term actions Welsh Government will take towards achieving the high-level and detailed outcomes are outlined in 'The Disabled People's Rights Plan, Wales: Our short-term actions'.

It will be for future governments to consider the high-level and detailed outcomes and how best they are achieved over this period. Future Governments will set the medium to long-term actions they will take to achieve the ambition and

outcomes for disabled people set out in this 10-year plan.

This Plan replaces the Welsh Government's 2019 **Action on Disability: The Right to Independent Living** (<https://www.gov.wales/action-disability-right-independent-living-framework-and-action-plan>). While many positive actions have been delivered through this plan, we are committed to improving outcomes for disabled people in Wales.

## **Neighbourhoods, places, and transport**

The overarching high-level outcomes for neighbourhoods, places, and transport are:

- An accessible, safe, welcoming and inclusive transport system that facilitates independence, provides links to employment, healthcare, social participation, and plays a role in reducing social isolation, especially in rural Wales. Disabled people are involved in effective governance mechanisms to help transport operators understand the barriers and make improvements to services enabling disabled people to use public transport with confidence and ease.
- An accessible housing system integrates inclusive policy development with seamless service delivery and information provision, reducing barriers to accessible housing and safeguarding the rights and needs of disabled residents from all backgrounds.
- Accessible communities ensure that disabled people can freely use public amenities and spaces without barriers and actively promotes disabled people's full involvement within the local community through coordinated support from public, private, and third sectors. Digital technology is used as a tool to help achieve this.

## **Employment, income (money), and education**

The overarching high-level outcomes for employment, income, and education are:

- An inclusive approach to employment, volunteering, income and public procurement supports disabled people to have equal access to fulfilling and fair work, through the adoption of inclusive recruitment and working practices, greater opportunities for skills development, and improved access to self-employment support.
- Disabled children and young people can access their right to education and feel safe and included within their educational settings, where their educational needs are identified and responded to as well as through learning that reflects disabled people's needs, experiences, and rights.

## **Independent living, health, and social care**

The overarching high-level outcomes for independent living, health, and social care are:

- Reduced socio-economic inequalities among disabled people, including access to welfare benefits that enable independent living at a level to meet living costs.
- Disabled people lead fulfilling lives, enjoying rights to well-being, and independent living. Health, and Social Care systems are accessible and the Social Model of Disability is embedded across Health, and Social Care commissioners and providers to ensure that individual needs are met, and rights are protected.

## **Justice and supporting environments**

The overarching high-level outcomes for justice and supporting environments are:

- Disabled people have the autonomy to express themselves and engage in enriching experiences within their local communities and alongside their peers, doing so in the language of their preference and without fear of unnecessary obstacles or exclusion.
- Disabled people are empowered through equitable access to both digital and non-digital resources, assistive technologies, and accessible platforms

designed around user needs. This ensures that everyone can participate fully in all aspects of society in ways they choose.

- Barriers to digital engagement are addressed through user centred design and the provision of alternative channels (e.g. non digital), helping to ensure no disabled person is left behind in an increasingly digital world.
- Disabled people's experiences with the legal and justice systems, both civil and criminal, are improved through better coordinated services, knowledge of rights, responsive support for abuse survivors, and robust evidence-based improvements.
- Disabled people's rights and experiences are championed, supported by Disabled People's Organisations, inclusive public services, and a Welsh Government that values and enshrines their rights in policy and law, to create a truly inclusive society.
- Legal and justice systems, both civil and criminal, are improved through better coordinated services, knowledge of rights, responsive support for abuse survivors, and robust evidence-based improvements.

## **5. Neighbourhoods, places, and transport**

To achieve the long-term overarching ambition, and the high-level outcomes for neighbourhoods, places, and transport described in section 4, this section sets out the detailed outcomes we expect to see over a 10-year period as a result of the actions we must all take to ensure our neighbourhood, places, and transport are inclusive, so that disabled people can thrive. Neighbourhoods, Places, and Transport is made up of the following themes: travel, housing, and the Social Model of Disability.

### **Travel**

#### **Outcome 1: accessible transport services**

Transport services and travel infrastructure are inclusive, interconnected, and equipped to support disabled people's right to full participation within the

communities in which they live and society more broadly.

## **Outcome 2: supporting staff**

Those involved at all levels of the planning, development, and delivery of transport services and infrastructure have training and resources available to understand and address the travel needs of disabled people and deliver against their own obligations under equality law and in line with the Social Model of Disability.

## **Outcome 3: inclusive policy**

Policy making involves disabled people in the design and delivery of Wales' transport networks, ensuring that the needs of all disabled people are embedded across transport modes and providers at its earliest stages.

## **Outcome 4: accessible information**

Travel information is available in a range of communication forms including British Sign Language, designed to enable disabled people to plan, book, and embark on their journeys without barriers, and protect their right to seek and receive information.

## **Outcome 5: effective governance**

Establish effective governance mechanisms that focus on delivering inclusive and accessible travel for people in Wales, ensuring that their lived experience is valued and acted upon, working with industry partners and across transport modes.

## **Outcome 6: climate change and travel**

Disabled people are not disadvantaged or excluded by policies supporting net zero. All relevant policies are co-designed with disabled people to ensure their needs and voices are included.

## **Outcome 7: digital inclusion and technology**

Digital platforms, technology, and innovation such as websites, apps, and assistive support technology are fully accessible and inclusive across all modes of transport to ensure disabled people can independently access real-time travel information and book and undertake journeys without barriers.

## **UNCRDP**

The outcomes above align to Article 9 of UNCRDP which sets out that countries need to take appropriate measures to ensure disabled people have access, on an equal basis with others, to the physical environment, to transportation, to information and communications, including information and communications technologies and systems, and to other facilities and services open or provided to the public, both in urban and in rural areas.

The outcomes above align to Article 20 of UNCRDP which sets out that countries need to take effective measures to ensure personal mobility for disabled people including facilitating access to various modes of transport, mobility aids, and assistive technologies, as well as providing training and encouraging inclusive design in mobility solutions.

Inaccessible travel remains a significant issue for disabled people, who often face numerous challenges to inclusive transportation, such as obstructions to pathways and at bus stops, especially those stops that are pull-in, with a lack of dropped kerbs, and malfunctioning lifts at railway stations. This is recognised in the Wales Transport **Strategy and Plan** ([///C:/Users/Huws-JohnG/Objective/Objects/Wales%20Transport%20Strategy%20and%20plan%20https://www.gov.wales/transport-](https://www.gov.wales/transport-wales-strategy-and-plan)

[strategy-and-delivery-plan](#)) which highlights the lack of available, affordable or nearby transport as a barrier to accessing employment, services and leisure to some individuals, in particular older and disabled people who may also require a door to door service.

These uncertainties can impact disabled people's confidence and trust when moving around communities. Disabled adults or those with a limiting long-standing illness are less likely to report feeling safe, walking in their local area or travelling (60%) than non-disabled people (73%) in **2024 to 2025** (<https://www.gov.wales/national-survey-wales>). In an increasingly digital world, ensuring accessible travel requires more than just focusing on physical spaces. Now, individuals must also navigate online platforms and digital ticketing systems to move from one location to another. Accessible and inclusive end-to-end journey planning must improve, and particularly in rural areas where access to transport is often worse.

Disabled people often feel their needs are forgotten in the design of transport infrastructure. This can include cycle lanes close to pedestrian walking areas, for example. **Research by Guide Dogs UK** (<https://gd-prod.azureedge.net/-/media/project/guidedogs/guidedogsdotorg/files/how-you-can-help/campaigning/ucl-guide-dogs---designing-for-inclusion-full-report-sept-2024-final.pdf>) shows that some cycle lane designs at bus stops pose significant safety risks for people with visual impairments and other disabled people. These designs reduce access to activities and independence and pose considerable risk to disabled people's safety, highlighting the need for better, inclusive transport infrastructure designing and planning to promote active travel while avoiding these risks and improving access for all.

The Welsh Government is committed to improving travel for disabled people in Wales and will commence work to establish its first multi-modal disabled people's inclusive travel panel during 2025 to 2026. This will help ensure that the rights and voices of disabled people are central to shaping transport policies. By integrating their perspectives and expertise, we aim to create an inclusive transport infrastructure that respects and upholds the rights of all disabled people.

Some 'passenger assist' schemes are inadequate and fail to recognise disabled

people's needs. Transport for Wales (TfW) has a vital role to play in ensuring inclusive and accessible travel for all disabled people using its rail services. Welsh Government will work with TfW to embed the Social Model of Disability (placing the emphasis on removing any barriers) into its culture and services, by ensuring all frontline staff receive training and information on the model.

Bus services, taxis, and private hire vehicles are all critical to supporting disabled people's access to essential activities including work, health appointments and leisure. Taxis and private hire vehicles are often the only way many disabled people can move around their towns and cities due to the lack of fully accessible public transport. We want a taxi and private hire vehicle (PHV) licensing system that is fit for a modern Wales, promotes safety for passengers and drivers, contributes to a cleaner environment, improves the customer experience and is accessible by all. The Welsh Government is committed to working with disabled people to better understand the existing community transport provision and identify any gaps in transport services for disabled people.

Moving around on our transport system in Wales to visit friends and family, get to work, or access healthcare, education, and leisure activities is something many of us take for granted. The Welsh Government has implemented a range of policies, frameworks, and initiatives to promote safe travel and independence for people with learning disabilities, who need it. For rail journeys, we offer the National Passenger Assist programme, which helps with the planning and undertaking of journeys, as well as a concessionary bus pass for bus travel.

Our Orange Wallet Scheme is for anyone who may find it difficult to communicate their needs when travelling on public transport and who would like support to communicate with staff when travelling by bus or train. Our Travel for All Approach aims to improve real-time information and ensure it is fully accessible, and we are working across government to make sure that people with learning disabilities are represented in our governance frameworks.

Delivering a just transition from the current fossil-fuelled economy to a low-carbon future will mean developing a clear understanding of the potential impacts of change and making sure these impacts are fairly distributed across society.

The Welsh Government's approach to planning for a just transition is heavily linked to the Well-being of Future Generations (Wales) Act 2015 (WFGA), which helps us ensure that decarbonisation and climate resilience work is carried out in a way that avoids creating or exacerbating inequalities and supports a systems approach to understanding and addressing risks and opportunities.

The Welsh Government will publish a Just Transition Framework to help policy developers, and decision-makers consider the wider impacts and opportunities of their plans. The framework achieves this through the provision of a set of guiding principles, and through encouraging action in analysing impacts, mobilising stakeholders, and integrating just transition considerations into decision-making processes.

As well as reducing our emissions and reaching net zero, we also need to ensure we successfully adapt to our changing climate and are prepared for the profound impacts being caused by climate change. Our Climate Adaptation Strategy for Wales was published in October 2024 and sets out what we are doing across Welsh Government portfolios to respond to the changing climate. The Strategy reaffirms our commitment to tackling all forms of inequality, including ensuring teams across Welsh Government consider the voices of disabled people across all of our collective work on climate adaptation, as they should in all areas of policy and delivery. Portfolios across Welsh Government are working to deliver the actions in the Strategy.

## **Housing**

### **Outcome 1: information and awareness**

Disabled people are aware of their housing rights and the options available to them regarding accessible housing and the provision of supporting services.

### **Outcome 2: supply and availability of accessible housing**

More adapted and accessible housing is available, affordable, equipped and

appropriately located to meet the needs of disabled residents, with sufficient supply of quality accommodation available to help meet demand and reduce waiting times.

### **Outcome 3: accessible housing services**

More accessible housing services, including application processes, are seamless and transparent, operating under a holistic, whole-system approach to reduce barriers to housing for disabled residents and ensuring protection of the most vulnerable groups (e.g. those experiencing homelessness, or fleeing violence).

### **Outcome 4: inclusive policy**

Housing strategy and related policy is developed through the involvement of disabled people and considerate of intersectional need.

### **Outcome 5: effective governance**

Housing services and support for disabled people are well governed and held accountable through the relevant mechanisms of monitoring, regulation, enforcement, and data collection.

### **Outcome 6: supportive staff**

All involved in the development and delivery of matters relating to accessible housing, including elected officials, public sector employees, housing providers, and landlords, are appropriately informed on the Social Model of Disability and the needs of disabled people.

## UNCRDP

The outcomes above align to Article 28 of the UNCRDP which sets out disabled people's rights to an adequate standard of living and social protection. It recognises the rights of disabled people to an adequate standard of living for themselves and their families, including adequate housing, and access by disabled people to public housing programmes.

Having accessible information on housing is crucial for disabled people. Welsh Government is committed to improving access to housing information for disabled people, including those who are digitally excluded. By providing accessible and inclusive information, we can empower disabled people to make informed decisions about where and how they live and improve equitable access to housing opportunities. This approach helps to prevent loneliness and isolation, promotes well-being and independence, and supports the full inclusion of disabled people in the community.

Ensuring disabled people have access to suitable housing is essential for achieving independent living and enhancing their quality of life. Providing quality, accessible homes for disabled people improves health and well-being, supports better educational attainment and other benefits. The lack of affordable and accessible housing limits the options available to disabled people, making it difficult for them to find accommodation that supports their independence (**Housing and Disabled People: Britain's Hidden Crisis** ([https://www.equalityhumanrights.com/sites/default/files/2023/housing-and-disabled-people-britains-hidden-crisis-main-report\\_0.pdf](https://www.equalityhumanrights.com/sites/default/files/2023/housing-and-disabled-people-britains-hidden-crisis-main-report_0.pdf))).

Adapting existing properties to make them accessible can be too expensive. Many disabled people face financial challenges, and the high cost of necessary adaptations adds an additional burden. Addressing these financial barriers through grants, subsidies, and inclusive housing policies can help ensure that disabled individuals have equal access to safe, comfortable, and accommodating living environments.

The Welsh Government is committed to supporting disabled people to live independently in the community. If disabled people need to make changes to

their homes, they can apply for support from the Disabled Facilities Grant or our **ENABLE: Support for Living Independently scheme** (<https://www.gov.wales/adapt-your-home-if-you-are-disabled-or-older-person>). The 'ENABLE' scheme helps disabled people with grants for adaptations such as grab rails and stair rails, chair lifts and building an extension. Additionally, the Welsh Government is committed to working with local authorities to improve the accessibility and coordinated delivery of housing adaptations and the supply of equipment.

Disabled people can **experience serious deterioration in their mental well-being** ([https://www.equalityhumanrights.com/sites/default/files/2023/housing-and-disabled-people-britains-hidden-crisis-main-report\\_0.pdf](https://www.equalityhumanrights.com/sites/default/files/2023/housing-and-disabled-people-britains-hidden-crisis-main-report_0.pdf)) due to living in unsuitable accommodation. The absence of secure accommodation can negatively impact mental health and physical well-being, leading to further difficulties in securing employment and maintaining relationships. The Welsh Government's White Paper on **Ending Homelessness** (<https://www.gov.wales/annex-b-a-white-paper-on-ending-homelessness-summary>) identifies disabled people as requiring additional support to reduce the risk of homelessness. Building on the White Paper, the **Homelessness and Social Housing Allocations (Wales) Bill** (<https://business.senedd.wales/mglIssueHistoryHome.aspx?lId=45883>) was introduced to the Senedd on 19 May 2025.

When it isn't safe to stay in their own homes, disabled people and their children facing domestic violence not only need to escape a dangerous environment but also need to secure accommodation that keeps the families fleeing together and meets their unique accessibility requirements. The Welsh Government recognises the importance of working with local authorities and service providers to improve the provision of accessible accommodation for disabled people, their carers, and their children when fleeing from violence.

A lack of accessible and affordable accommodation can negatively impact disabled people, for example from Gypsy and Traveller communities, limiting their independence and contributing to poorer health outcomes and reduced quality of life. The Welsh Government is committed to collaborating with all communities to understand and address specific housing barriers.

# **Embedding and understanding the Social Model of Disability**

## **Outcome 1: access to public services**

Disabled people's right to live in the community is exercised through implementing inclusive planning and design, ensuring equal access to public amenities, facilities and spaces, without barriers.

## **Outcome 2: inclusive and cohesive communities**

Disabled people are represented and able to participate fully within their local communities, with co-ordination from the public, private and third sectors ensuring that any new facilities and services that are open to the public, reflect all aspects of accessibility for disabled people and their support networks.

## **UNCRDP**

The outcomes above align to Article 9 of the UNCRDP which sets out that countries need to take appropriate measures to ensure disabled people have access, on an equal basis with others, to the physical environment, to transportation, to information and communications.

The Social Model of Disability illustrates a different way of thinking about disability and barriers to inclusion. The Social Model of Disability recognises that disabled people have different experiences because of the barriers created by society, through inaccessible environments, people's attitudes and values for example. Under this model, and by removing those barriers, disabled people can participate fully in society on an equal basis and society benefits from disabled people's full inclusion.

This contrasts with the Medical Model of Disability which views disabled people as unable to take part in society due to their impairments or differences. This

viewpoint can negatively impact not only on disabled people's lives, but how some disabled people see themselves, which can discourage disabled people from challenging their exclusion from mainstream society.

Embracing the Social Model of Disability helps to create an equitable society, where the rights and contributions of disabled people are valued. Through adopting the Social Model of Disability across society, health and social care services can be transformed to provide inclusive and accessible environments for all disabled people, educational institutions can ensure that all students have equitable opportunities to learn and flourish, and employers can create accessible and inclusive workplaces that utilise the skills and talents of disabled workers.

The Welsh Government is committed to the Social Model of Disability and ensuring disabled people are involved in the design, implementation and monitoring of relevant new and improved policies, practices, and procedures and do not create barriers for disabled people. By embedding the Social Model of Disability through our training programmes and into everyday practices, we challenge discrimination against disabled people and foster an inclusive and equitable society. We have already provided Social Model of Disability training to over 200 Taskforce and working group members who have subsequently integrated this knowledge into their own policy areas, organisations and everyday practices.

Social Model of Disability training is available through the Welsh Government's Disabled People's Employment Champions and the Business Wales Disabled People's Employment Advisors. An e-learning module for businesses is available on the Business Wales website and plans are underway to provide an e-learning module for all public sector workers across Wales.

The Welsh Government's **Equality, Race, and Disability Evidence Units** (<https://www.gov.wales/equality-race-and-disability-evidence-units>) work to improve the availability, quality and granularity of evidence about individuals with protected and associated characteristics to help us understand whether our ambition is being achieved for different groups of people. The Evidence Units are designing and testing standardised survey questions that reflect the Social Model of Disability, which could be incorporated into future data collections and **social**

**research** (<https://uksa.statisticsauthority.gov.uk/wp-content/uploads/2024/08/Inclusive-Data-Taskforce-commitments-Annual-Progress-Report-2024.pdf>). Disabled people have been actively involved at every stage of the research.

## **6. Employment, income (money), and education**

To achieve the long-term overarching ambition, and the high-level outcomes for employment, income, and education described in section 4, this section sets out the outcomes we expect to see over a 10-year period, as a result of the actions we must all take to ensure disabled people have access to a good standard of living through fair income and employment. Education, Income, and Employment is made up of the following themes: employment and income; and education for children and young people.

### **Employment, income (money), and education**

#### **Outcome 1: employment and business support**

Disabled people can access timely and co-ordinated advice and devolved services that are knowledgeable and accessible, to enable them to achieve equitable access to paid and unpaid volunteering/work experience, self-employment, and long-term job opportunities/careers.

#### **Outcome 2: inclusive policy and practice**

Disabled people have access to inclusive recruitment, retention, and progression practices. This includes leveraging the public purse to foster behaviours that support an inclusive workforce, removing barriers, and creating a supportive environment where disabled people can thrive in their careers.

### **Outcome 3: accessible employers**

Disabled people are represented at all levels in the Welsh workforce. Employers are aware of their legal responsibilities and the employment rights of disabled workers. Employers are encouraged to adopt inclusive practices to eliminate prejudice and discrimination in the workplace and promote the equitable recruitment, retention, and progression of disabled workers, understanding that different treatment, through the provision of reasonable adjustments is often the means of achieving equity in employment outcomes.

### **Outcome 4: skill development**

Disabled jobseekers and workers of all ages understand their employment rights and have the means to exercise them, including through positive action to ensure equitable opportunities for lifelong learning. Disabled people are not disadvantaged in the job market by barriers to education, training, or recruitment support. Disabled people have access to personalised impartial professional careers and employability information, advice, support and guidance.

### **Outcome 5: addressing barriers to income**

Disabled people's views are taken into account when engaging with UK Government on reforms to the non-devolved benefits system.

### **Outcome 6: reduced socio-economic inequality**

Socio-economic outcomes for disabled people are improved, and inequalities reduced, through positive action and delivering on the Socio-economic Duty across the public sector in Wales.

## **Outcome 7: education for adults and lifelong learning**

Working with Medr and sector partners, the benefits of learning throughout life are promoted and targets set to increase participation, particularly among those under-represented in tertiary education who may face social, economic, cultural or organisational barriers to learning.

### **UNCRDP**

The outcomes above align to Article 27 of the UNCRDP which sets out disabled people's equal right to gain a living in an open, inclusive, and accessible labour market. Countries must take steps to prohibit discrimination in all employment matters and ensure just and favourable working conditions, including protection from harassment and the right to redress grievances. Measures should also be taken to promote employment opportunities, career advancement, and self-employment for disabled people, as well as to provide reasonable accommodation in the workplace.

The outcomes above align to Article 24 of the UNCRDP which sets out disabled people's right to access general tertiary education, vocational training, adult education and lifelong learning without discrimination and on an equal basis with others.

Many disabled people who want work cannot access it; barriers include a lack of accessible workplaces and support when in work, which prevents them from earning a fair wage and achieving job fulfilment. Despite legal requirements set out in the Equality Act, many employers still fail to understand the necessary accommodations required to support disabled people into employment. Unquiet Media's Intro to Neurodiversity in the Creative Industries training, funded by Welsh Government via Creative Wales, is one of the programmes we are supporting which are seeking to address this. Training for employers on making reasonable adjustments for neurodivergent workers is also available from the Welsh Government's Disabled People's Employment Champions.

For the year ending June 2025, the employment rate among disabled people

aged 16 to 64 in Wales was 52% whilst the rate for people who are not disabled was 81% **in Wales** (<https://stats.gov.wales/en-GB/4a494d18-6c2a-45a5-be60-dfc1967a743e>). Disabled workers often also find themselves in lower-paying positions. The **Well-being of Wales Report: 2025** (<https://www.gov.wales/wellbeing-wales-2025>) indicates the pay disparity between disabled and non-disabled people in Wales was £1.18 (8%) in 2024. National Milestones sets the long-term target to eliminate the pay gap for gender, disability and ethnicity by 2050.

Amongst working-age adults, 27% of individuals who live in a family where a disabled person lives are in relative income poverty compared with 18% of those in families where no-one identifies as disabled **relative income poverty** (<https://www.gov.wales/relative-income-poverty>). In 2024 to 2025, 1 in 7 disabled people or people with a limiting long-standing illness (14%) lived in a household in material deprivation compared with 10% of people who were not disabled, **National Survey for Wales** (<https://www.gov.wales/national-survey-wales>). In previous survey years around 1 in 4 or 5 disabled people or people with a limiting long-standing illness lived in a household in material deprivation. The National Survey for Wales sample in 2024-25 included fewer people from low-income areas. This may have impacted on the estimates for material deprivation. These numbers highlight a concerning disparity that is simply unacceptable in a fair and just society.

Ensuring disabled people have access to an equitable standard of living through fair income and work is essential to advancing an inclusive society where everyone can contribute meaningfully. Evidence suggests encouraging applications for employment from disabled people is good for businesses, giving organisations a competitive edge. It can help increase the number of high-quality candidates and create a workforce that reflects its local **local community** (<https://www.gov.uk/government/publications/employing-disabled-people-and-people-with-health-conditions/employing-disabled-people-and-people-with-health-conditions>).

The Disability Confident Scheme is a UK wide initiative set up to support employers to make the most of the talent disabled people can bring to the workplace. However, low numbers of public sector organisations attain the highest Level 3 Leader status and trust in the scheme by disabled people. We

are committed to working with the UK Government as it undertakes its review of the Disability Confident Scheme, to address these issues. We also want to increase the number of employers in Wales achieving leader status. To achieve this, we are establishing a Disability Confident Leaders Forum for Wales. This will bring key stakeholders together with employers who have achieved Disability Confident level 3 Leader status to share and spread good practice and use peer learning to encourage other organisations in Wales to join the scheme and progress to Leader status. We also call on our public sector partners to lead by example and commit to becoming Disability Confident Leaders where this is not already the case.

Our Disabled People's Employment Champions are actively supporting employers across the private and public sectors to achieve this goal. This is complemented by the work of Business Wales Disabled People's Employment Advisers who support Small and Medium Business Enterprises to improve employment practices, and through digital resources available through Business Wales. We are also working to improve our relationship with DWP Disability Advisers to enable us to work together more strategically in our efforts to increase the number of organisations progressing to Disability Confident Leader status. In addition, we have worked with members of the Disability Rights Taskforce to co-produce evidence that will test the feasibility of a Welsh specific scheme.

The Welsh Government has published co-produced **Research exploring the Disability Confident Scheme** (<https://www.gov.wales/exploration-two-recommendations-proposed-disability-rights-taskforce-help-disabled-people>), led by disabled people in Wales. Findings from this research represents stakeholder perspectives.

**Business Wales** (<https://businesswales.gov.wales/>) is the Welsh Government's leading bilingual business support service for Welsh micro-businesses and Small and Medium Enterprises including social enterprises, and aspiring entrepreneurs of all ages.

The Welsh Government employs 5 Disabled People's Employment Champions (DPECs), who bring lived experience and expertise to their roles, as permanent members of staff. The DPECs support delivery of the Welsh Government's

ambition to improve employment outcomes for disabled people working both internally and externally. The Welsh Government is committed to promoting the inclusion and rights of disabled people by encouraging organisations and businesses across Wales to appoint dedicated champions to improve disabled people's access to work.

Hybrid or flexible working options are particularly important for many disabled people; hybrid working arrangements can benefit employers and disabled workers. Appropriate arrangements need to be available at the point of employment to ensure disabled people are supported to undertake their roles and responsibilities and that employers work within the **legal frameworks** (<https://www.equalityhumanrights.com/guidance/supporting-disabled-workers-hybrid-working-guidance-employers>).

Support for post-school higher education, skills development, and apprenticeships is needed for both young disabled people and those in later life seeking to re-skill, supporting empowerment, independence, and equality. By supporting inclusive policies and practices, Wales can set a benchmark in creating a society where everyone has the chance to fulfil their potential and contribute in a meaningful way.

Disabled people are often viewed as passive recipients of services such as care and support. In reality, disabled people are economic leaders, entrepreneurs, and employers. Inclusive economics, where disabled people bring lived experience, and expertise supports the economy to achieve a more prosperous Wales.

Medr funds the **Employability e-Hub** (<https://employability.wales/>), an online resource developed to help students from **groups statistically less likely to attend university** (<https://employability.wales/glossary/#G>) find their career path. It can help disabled learners build skills and career confidence when seeking employment.

Student Space, jointly funded by Medr, provides expert information, support services, and a wide range of bilingual online resources created with students, to help with the challenges of university life. This includes resources and advice for **disabled students** (<https://studentspace.org.uk/wellbeing/life-as-a-disabled->

student).

## **Education for children and young people**

### **Outcome 1: access to education**

Disabled children and young people's educational and health needs are identified, responded to and considered in the development of education and health policy.

### **Outcome 2: inclusive education policy**

Disabled learners and staff are meaningfully engaged in the development of education policy through a rights-based approach, having a voice in the planning and provision of support that they receive across all education institutions, including where education is received at home.

### **Outcome 3: supportive providers of education**

Education providers have the resource and understanding necessary to fully incorporate the Social Model of Disability and embed the rights of disabled learners, both as children and young people and as disabled people, including through the recruitment of disabled teaching staff and the provision of specialist training and equipment.

### **Outcome 4: inspection, regulation and compliance**

Inclusive and accessible education is delivered for all disabled learners, with robust mechanisms of regulation, inspection, and enforcement supported by an effective programme of monitoring and evaluation that reflects the experiences of disabled learners and identifies and promotes examples of good practice.

## **Outcome 5: accessible educational settings**

Educational settings and other academic institutions are accessible both in their design and in their supporting physical infrastructure, enabling disabled people to learn among their peers and within their local communities.

## **Outcome 6: access to further and higher education**

Disabled learners experience a smooth transition to further or higher education through effective transition planning, inclusive practices, and supportive learning environments.

## **UNCRDP**

The outcomes above align to Articles 7 and 24 of the UNCRDP.

Article 7 sets out countries' requirement to take all necessary measures to ensure disabled children enjoy fully their human rights and fundamental freedoms equally with other children.

Article 24 recognises disabled people's right to education, mandating an inclusive system at all levels. Countries must ensure disabled people are included in general education, provide reasonable accommodations, and support effective learning. This includes teaching Braille and British Sign Language to people, employing qualified teachers, and ensuring access to higher education and lifelong learning without discrimination. Inclusion in mainstream settings promotes a sense of belonging and community, essential for the social and emotional well-being of every child and young person. Education of disabled children, and in particular children who are blind, deaf or deafblind, is delivered in the most appropriate languages and modes and means of communication for the individual, and in environments which maximise academic and social development.

Inclusion and access for disabled children during their early years and

throughout their school life are essential for them to achieve their potential. Early inclusion and participation ensure children develop a strong sense of belonging and self-worth, which is foundational for their overall development. However, their experiences vary depending on the availability of the right support and access to inclusive early childcare and play, learning and care experiences and opportunities.

Access to the right types of resources and support for disabled children to engage in play and educational activities is essential to children's development. As they progress through school, continued inclusion and access to tailored educational opportunities help them build essential skills, confidence, and independence. This supportive environment not only enhances their academic achievements but also prepares children and young people for a successful and fulfilling future, empowering them to contribute meaningfully to society.

Disabled children and young people often face extra challenges they must overcome if they wish to take part fully in society and live life on their **own terms** (<https://www.dewis.wales/disability-and-young-people-cyp>). Improving accessibility and support is crucial to ensuring disabled children and young people have the best beginning. Some children and young people may need more help in school to achieve their full potential. It is important to recognise that not all disabled children and young people have additional learning needs (ALN), the support required may be for better access to a premises, or quieter area at school for example.

**Some parents** (<https://www.gov.wales/recommendations-disability-rights-taskforce>) and carers report that some children with ALN continue to experience barriers to accessing education. In 2024/25, 32% of GCSE entries by pupils in year 11 with an additional learning need were awarded a grade at A\* to C (down from 34% in 2023 to 2024) (**Examination results** (<https://www.gov.wales/examination-results>)). As of the 2024/25 academic year, there were 3,014 pupils in Wales receiving some type of education other than at school (EOTAS). In 2024/25, there were, proportionately, significantly more pupils with ALN mainly educated outside school than in the **general student population** (<https://www.gov.wales/pupils-educated-other-school>).

The Welsh Government remains dedicated to ensuring all children are able to

exercise their right to education regardless of their differences, receive a high-quality inclusive education and the opportunity to succeed. **The Curriculum and Assessment (Wales) Act 2021** (<https://www.legislation.gov.uk/asc/2021/4/contents/enacted>) (the Act) sets out the duty to promote knowledge and understanding of both UN Conventions on the rights of children and the rights of disabled people. Schools and other settings must promote knowledge and understanding of the 2 conventions among those who provide learning and teaching in respect of their school or setting's curriculum. Welsh Government's Hwb provides a range of digital content and tools to education settings in Wales to support the transformation of digital teaching and learning practices' including guidance on the 2 conventions. We are committed to ensuring training programs are provided to improve outcomes for disabled children and young people.

Welsh speaking children with ALN may face additional barriers when accessing education. The Additional Learning Needs and Education Tribunal (Wales) Act 2018 places a duty on local authorities to improve Welsh language provision for learners with additional learning needs and for workforce planning with the additional learning needs sector. This is monitored through local authorities' Welsh in Education Strategic Plans. The Welsh Government has produced **Guides to support teachers when planning and delivering support to learners with hearing and/or vision impairment, autism and ADHD** (<https://www.gov.wales/learning-support-guidance>). These build on the **Rapid Evidence Assessments** (<https://www.gov.wales/effectiveness-educational-interventions-support-children-and-young-people-attention-deficit>), which look at the effectiveness of educational interventions to support these learners.

Events including taster days with quiet hours, virtual tours, summer schools, keeping in touch (KIT) days and bespoke career fairs can support a smoother transition for learners into further and higher education. Students can approach their Student Services team for advice when support is needed. This could include discussions on financial assistance or reasonable adjustments. Student Finance Wales also provides information on support available for **disabled students**. (<https://www.studentfinancewales.co.uk/undergraduate-finance/full-time/tuition-fee-and-living-cost-students/what-s-available/disabled-students-allowance/#anchor-2>)

The **ALN Pathfinder** (<https://www.alnpathfinder.wales/>) is designed to help young people with additional learning needs (ALN) to make a successful transition from school to further education. Together in partnership with colleges across Wales, the resource supports ALN learners and their families to make informed choices as they plan their next steps. The website has been developed using Welsh Government ALN Transformation grant funding and supported by ColegauCymru.

The **Reaching Wider** (<https://reachingwider.ac.uk/>) programme, funded by Medr, is a collaboration of colleges, universities and other education partners. It delivers widening access activity to encourage school and college learners to consider their future and education aspirations, as well as academic skills building and mentoring. It helps under-represented groups, including disabled learners. It raises educational aspirations and skills and creates innovative study opportunities and learning pathways to higher education.

All colleges and universities have Strategic Equalities Plans in place and work collaboratively to achieve commitments including promoting equity of access and equality of opportunity. Medr reviews their plans, which set out how they will meet duties under the Equality Act 2010.

Medr produces **Regulatory and Funding Conditions** (<https://www.medr.cymru/en/funding-for-providers/>), including conditions on 'Equality of Opportunity' and 'Staff and Student Welfare', which sets expectations on colleges and universities, including on supporting disabled students.

Children and young people with attention deficit hyperactivity disorder (ADHD) typically find it difficult to focus and pay attention in educational settings. This can result in poor academic performance and attendance, a need for special education provision, in some cases exclusion from school, and making it less likely for them to go on to further education. The Welsh Government is committed to supporting learners with ADHD and has published **Guidance** (<https://www.gov.wales/supporting-learners-attention-deficit-hyperactivity-disorder-adhd.html>), based on an assessment of research studies, which have considered the effectiveness of approaches to support children and young people with ADHD. The aim of the guide is to support practitioners when planning and delivering timely and effective support for children and young people with ADHD.

The Welsh Government wants to ensure that all disabled children have the best possible start in life. Inclusive early years provision, lays strong foundations for a child's development. Early years childcare should be fully accessible to disabled children. We are committed to reviewing how the Childcare and Early Years Capital Programme supports the accessibility of the physical environment for inclusive registered childcare and play services.

One or 2 babies in every 1,000 are born with a hearing impairment that may affect their speech and language development. Newborn hearing screening helps to find those babies and offer help and **support from the start** (<https://phw.nhs.wales/services-and-teams/screening/newborn-hearing-screening-wales/about-newborn-hearing-screening/>). For a child who is identified as deaf or having hearing impairment at any age, language and communication needs are considered at the earliest stage in Wales by Audiologists.

If a communication need is identified, then a referral is made to Qualified Teachers of the deaf and/or Speech and Language Therapists. Options may include spoken language, British Sign Language, Sign Supported English, Makaton or a combination of spoken and signs, including bilingualism, depending on what is considered best for the child following assessment and collaboration between families and professionals. Outcomes of referrals are monitored within the Audiology Individual Patient Management Plan. The Welsh Government is also committed to developing accessible, high quality, responsive and citizen-centred services which meet the needs of all deafblind people in Wales.

Language acquisition for all babies is vital. Both parents and deaf babies/ children should be provided with the opportunity to learn BSL and access deaf BSL signing role models. Early assessment support and access to language for deaf babies and children are essential to their cognitive and linguistic development. Strong, effective communication through BSL supports healthy and positive relationships between parents / carers and their children. We will continue to work to improve early assessment and support for deaf babies and children.

The Welsh Government remains committed to supporting British Sign Language (BSL) and to furthering the use, knowledge and expertise of the language in

Wales. It is our intention to design and develop policy which delivers the greatest positive impact for the BSL signing community of Wales, making provisions to promote and facilitate the use of BSL and its tactile forms and removing existing language barriers. BSL has been integrated into the new Skills for Life qualification, which will be available in all schools from September 2027. This change allows for a comprehensive approach, addressing the need for qualified teachers and embracing regional dialect differences in BSL.

## **7. Independent living, health, and social care**

To achieve the long-term overarching ambition, and the high-level outcomes for independent living described in section 4, this section sets out the outcomes we expect to see over a 10-year period, as a result of the actions we must all take to ensure disabled people have the same freedom, dignity, choice and control as other citizens at home, work, in education and in the community. Independent living, health, and social care is made up of the following themes: well-being and health, care and support.

### **Well-being**

#### **Outcome 1: access to well-being experiences**

Disabled people have equitable opportunity and rights to participate in the delivery and enjoyment of enriching experiences across arts, sport, heritage and culture. They are supported to do so by workforces and organisations that value the contribution of disabled people and understand their role in protecting disabled people's right to participation in cultural and sporting life.

#### **Outcome 2: inclusive recreation and play**

From childhood, disabled people can engage in local accessible play, recreation, and leisure activities alongside their peers, including through disability-specific

events, with the equipment and instruction necessary to overcome barriers to participation.

### **Outcome 3: equal expression and communication**

Disabled people can engage with local services and express themselves freely in their preferred languages, both verbal and non-verbal. They are enabled through the provision of resource and training to access technologies that support all forms of communication, including British Sign Language and Welsh.

### **UNCRDP**

The outcomes above align to Article 30 of the UNCRDP which sets out that disabled people have the right to participate in cultural life, recreation, leisure, and sport on an equal basis with others. Additionally, under the United Nations Convention on the Rights of the Child (UNCRC) which applies to all children, Article 15 sets out the right for children to meet and join groups, and Article 31 the right to play.

The well-being and inclusion of disabled people in culture, heritage, arts, sport, play and leisure are key to a lively and inclusive society. By removing barriers and promoting accessibility, we make the lives of disabled people better and create communities where everyone can take part and contribute to. However, disabled people continue to face barriers to accessing cultural, heritage, arts, sport, play and leisure activities. Physical barriers, promoter/venue policy, proportional ticketing, lack of information, and inadequate training of staff are common problems. Access to banks or building societies is also highlighted **as a barrier for many disabled people** (<https://www.gov.wales/barriers-faced-disabled-people-national-survey-wales-april-2016-march-2017>).

Accessible leisure and retail facilities can help the local economy by attracting more customers. Additionally, accessible play, leisure and retail facilities improves inclusion, equality, and community engagement. However, the 2016 to 2017 **National Survey for Wales** (<https://www.gov.wales/barriers-faced-disabled-people-national-survey-wales-april-2016-march-2017>) found the most commonly

reported type of building that disabled people had difficulty accessing and using was shops (45% of disabled people) followed by hospitals (38%). Of those who had difficulty accessing public buildings, 41% said their difficulty related to 'moving around the building', 25% reported 'parking problems' as a difficulty and 22% reported 'inadequate lifts' and 'inadequate toilet facilities'. By making exhibitions and performances accessible through provisions such as British Sign Language, audio descriptions, and neurodivergent-friendly environments, society helps ensure that disabled people can engage with and contribute to the preservation and celebration of our diverse cultural heritage.

The arts serve as a great way for people to express themselves and take part in the local community. Inclusive arts programs and accessible venues provide an opportunity for disabled artists to showcase their skills and talents and share their views, challenge stereotypes and promote inclusion. Welsh Government continues to support Hijinx, a professional theatre company working to pioneer, produce and **promotes opportunities** (<https://www.gov.wales/nurturing-skills-and-talent-creative-wales>) for actors with learning disabilities and/or autism to create theatre and film productions.

The **Priorities for Culture** (<https://www.gov.wales/priorities-culture>) published in May 2025 set out the Welsh Government's priorities and ambitions for museums, libraries, archives, arts and the historic environment. This includes Ambition One 'Making Culture inclusive, accessible and diverse', which is a priority for the first year of implementation. For disabled people this includes making cultural venues more accessible for disabled people who visit, work and volunteer, making venues more representative of disabled people and enabling disabled people and a carer or companion to attend and participate.

Over £3 million capital grants have recently been awarded to cultural organisations across Wales to undertake capital improvement projects, including accessibility improvements to cultural venues for disabled people. The Transformation capital grant programme supports museums, archives and libraries to make improvements to buildings including accessibility improvements.

The Hynt scheme works across the Welsh arts sector with theatres and arts venues to provide a consistent offer for visitors with an impairment or specific

access requirement and their Carers or Personal Assistants. Arts Council Wales also runs the Creative Steps Funding Programme which supports individuals and organisations including deaf, disabled and neurodivergent groups/ individuals to overcome barriers to accessing Arts Council Wales funding.

Cadw offers a Disabled Person's Membership which allows a disabled person plus a companion to enter all Cadw staffed sites for free. There are also Access Guides for each Cadw property to help disabled people plan their visit. Cadw has been improving access to its properties for disabled people. This includes the installation of a bridge at Castell Harlech, bridges and a lift providing access to all floors of the King's Gate at Castell Caernarfon and this year new ramps and paths at Caerphilly Castle. There are also hearing loops installed in all Cadw visitor centres.

Participation in sports and leisure activities is important for physical health, mental well-being, and relationships. Accessible sports facilities and inclusive programs support disabled people to experience the rewards of an active lifestyle. Sports also provide opportunities for teamwork and creating a sense of belonging and mutual support. The Welsh Government will continue to work with **Disability Sport Wales** (<https://www.disabilitysportwales.com/en-gb/about>), who aim to create an inclusive sports sector.

As part of local authorities play sufficiency duties, there is a requirement to assess the sufficiency of play opportunities that are inclusive and accessible and that encourage all children to play and meet together if they wish to.

The duties recognise that children and adults with impairments are disabled by barriers that commonly exist in society. These barriers include negative attitudes as well as physical and organisational barriers, which can prevent children from taking part in the range of play opportunities in their area.

The Welsh Government supports children's play opportunities in improving the quality of play spaces and playgrounds. Local authorities have the flexibility to purchase large scale items to improve the quality of play spaces, refurbish playgrounds and support in creating inclusive and accessible play spaces.

We are taking proactive steps to increase the availability and quality of

accessible exhibitions, performances, matches and events, ensuring they are accessible and inclusive. This includes efforts to remove physical barriers, and discriminatory ticketing policies show clearly provision of British Sign Language, audio description/autism friendly performances.

## **Health, care and support**

### **Outcome 1: co-ordinated and timely care**

Disabled people of all ages are empowered to exercise their right to the highest attainable standard of health through coordinated, seamless and timely access to the right care and support, which addresses current inequalities and overcomes existing barriers, including those faced during transfer between providers or age-related services.

### **Outcome 2: accessible care settings**

Disabled people receive care and support within social care settings (both in person or remote) that are accessible, equipped with the facilities and functionality to ensure all access needs are met across all ages. Disabled people have autonomy, to choose how and where they receive their care and support.

### **Outcome 3: rights-centred and person-centred care policy**

Disabled people participate in shaping policies related to their care and support through inclusive and collaborative approaches. Policies and guidance provided to Local Authorities, Health Boards, Primary Care Contractors and Welsh NHS Bodies aim to reflect the Welsh Government's commitment to embedding the Social Model of Disability and removing barriers that limit the independent living options of disabled people. This commitment promotes the rights of disabled people in health, social care, and independent living.

## **Outcome 4: supportive care providers**

Disabled people have equal access to health and social care services. Health and social care and support services providers are properly equipped to meet the varied and intersectional needs of disabled children and adults, with workforces that understand disabled people's rights, the Social Model of Disability, and their own obligations under The Social Services and Well-being Act, working collaboratively across organisations to improve quality in care.

## **Outcome 5: reduced inequalities in care**

Disabled people are represented within the governance of health and social care, with a renewed focus on removing discrimination, and promoting proactive accessible practices to improve service standards for all disabled people, including those with intersectional needs.

## **Outcome 6: transparent communication in care**

Disabled people understand their rights to access health and social care and are empowered through the broadened All-Wales Accessible Communication and Information Standards (2025), and the Welsh Language active offer in Mwy na geiriau / More than just words to communicate freely with their care providers and support networks using the formats and languages, that best meet their individual need.

## **Outcome 7: unpaid carers**

Unpaid carers of disabled people are recognised and valued as key partners in the health, social care and educational plans for the person to whom care is provided.

## **Outcome 8: unpaid carers**

Unpaid carers have timely access to information and are aware of their rights to support.

## **Outcome 9: climate change in health care**

Disabled people are actively involved in shaping policies and practices that address the health impacts of climate change. Their lived experiences inform the development of accessible adaptation and mitigation strategies, ensuring that responses to climate-related health risks are inclusive, equitable, and reduce existing health inequalities.

## **Outcome 10: emergency planning:**

Disabled people are actively involved in shaping policies and practices that pertain to planning, response and recovery to public health emergencies. Their lived experiences guide the development of accessible response and recovery strategies, ensuring that emergency measures are inclusive, equitable, and help to reduce existing health inequalities faced by disabled people.

## **UNCRDP**

The outcomes above align to Articles 25 and 19 of the UNCRDP.

Article 25 of the UNCRDP sets out disabled people's equal right to the enjoyment of the highest attainable standard of health without discrimination on the basis of being a disabled person.

Article 19 of the UNCRDP a pivotal right in the treaty, sets out disabled people's right to independent living and community participation. It requires measures by countries to enable full enjoyment of this right, allowing individuals to choose where and with whom they live without being forced into specific living

arrangements.

Article 11 of the UNCRDP provides for situations of risk and humanitarian emergencies. It requires measures by countries to take, all necessary measures to ensure the protection and safety of disabled people in situations of risk, including humanitarian emergencies and the occurrence of natural disasters.

In the **2021 Census** (<https://www.gov.wales/disabled-peoples-outcomes-health-housing-education-and-economic-status-census-2021>), the proportion of people in Wales who reported to be disabled was 21%. **National Survey statistics and research 2019** (<https://www.gov.wales/barriers-faced-disabled-people-national-survey-wales-april-2016-march-2017>) showed that 38% of disabled people reported having difficulty accessing hospitals. Of those who reported difficulties accessing any public buildings, 44% identified issues with 'moving around the building (stairs, doors, narrow corridors)', 'parking problems' (38%), 'inadequate lifts or escalators' (26%).

Accessing healthcare can be particularly challenging for disabled people and evidence demonstrates poorer health outcomes for disabled people. The **overview report on mortality amongst people with a learning disability** (<https://www.gov.wales/mortality-amongst-people-learning-disability>) showed that there was roughly a disparity of 2 decades in the typical age of death with the wider population.

For those with mobility impairments, inadequate parking facilities, inaccessible clinics, and hospitals can make it difficult to attend appointments. The failure to provide interpretation services for disabled people including British Sign Language or through the **Deafblind Manual** (<https://deafblind.org.uk/learn-deafblind-manual/>) for example can prevent or complicate access to healthcare services for deaf people and people with sensory impairments such as deafblind people and blind or partially sighted people. These barriers can lead to missed appointments, delayed treatments, and poorer health outcomes. Providing, inclusive healthcare requires the provision of accessible facilities, including parking, and effective communication support to ensure that all disabled people receive the care they need.

In 2018, the Welsh Government published its national strategic 10-year plan for

health and social care **A Healthier Wales** (<https://www.gov.wales/healthier-wales-long-term-plan-health-and-social-care>). A Healthier Wales sets out a vision for everyone in Wales to have longer, healthier and happier lives, and to be able to remain active, independent and in their own homes for as long as possible supported by an integrated health and care system.

To ensure the actions taken under A Healthier Wales over the next few years remain the right ones, the Welsh Government **published 35 refreshed** (<https://www.gov.wales/healthier-wales-long-term-plan-health-and-social-care>) actions in December 2024. These actions have been designed around what an effective health and care system should look like. We have chosen core principles which reflect our ambitions; one of which focuses on person-centred care where we want our approach to be person-centred so that people can receive the right care they need at the right time and in the right place; and one which aims to reduce health inequalities by ensuring equality of access to the health and social care system to achieve equity of outcomes. Under the core principle of providing person-centred care, one of our specific actions is to ensure that all citizens can receive timely health and care services equitably, regardless of the language or communication format they need.

The Welsh Government is determined to ensure access and inclusion is considered fully from the start of every disabled person's healthcare journey. This includes a range of services from the accessibility of 111 and the NHS Wales App, to suitable parking facilities to the inclusivity of GP surgeries primary care contracted services, including GPs and hospitals.

The **Learning Disability Strategic action plan** (<https://www.gov.wales/learning-disability-strategic-action-plan-2022-2026.html>) is delivering the commitments made in the Improving Lives programme, seeking to improve outcomes through better understanding of higher mortality disparities, including highlighting avoidable deaths, increasing access to annual health checks and delivering the Paul Ridd learning disability training for health staff.

The **All-Wales Accessible Communication and Information Standards** (<https://www.gov.wales/accessible-communication-and-information-standards-healthcare.html>)(the Standards) aim to ensure that people who are deaf, deafened or hard

of hearing, people who are blind or partially sighted, people who are deafblind, people who have language and communication access barriers arising from an impairment (including dementia, learning disabilities and mental health conditions), people who have language and communication barriers arising from neurodivergence receive appropriate communication support when accessing healthcare services. These Standards expect healthcare providers to proactively offer information in accessible formats to ensure equity of access for all.

In 2023, the Welsh Government committed to broaden and renew the Standards to ensure they represent people with other types of impairment. The effectiveness of these broadened Standards when implemented, will be regularly reviewed to promote inclusive healthcare. The Welsh Government is committed to ensuring the health and social care workforce (including prison health staff) is knowledgeable in understanding the Social Model of Disability and embedding it into their practice, through comprehensive training for all healthcare staff on the diverse needs of disabled people.

Timely and coordinated hospital discharge processes support the well-being and recovery of disabled people. Prolonged hospital stays can delay recovery, increase the risk of picking up hospital-acquired infections, and lead to mental health issues such as anxiety. There is sometimes an imbalance in our health and social care system and **missed opportunities** (<https://www.gov.wales/hospital-discharge-guidance>) for prevention and early intervention in the community. The Welsh Government's Hospital Discharge Guidance sets out advice on Hospital Discharge standards for health, social care, third and independent sector partners in Wales.

The Office for National Statistics found that, in England and Wales disabled people had **higher rates of dying by suicide than non-disabled people** (<https://www.ons.gov.uk/peoplepopulationandcommunity/healthandsocialcare/healthinequalities>). The Welsh Government's **All Age Mental Health and Well-being Strategy 2024 to 2034** (<https://www.gov.wales/mental-health-and-wellbeing-strategy-2025-2035>) aims to improve and protect the mental health and well-being of people in Wales. The Strategy recognises that disabled people and neurodivergent people are at particular risk of experiencing poor mental health and well-being. The strategy acknowledges the need to recognise the specific

rights of individuals, so services are available on an equitable basis. The Suicide Prevention and Self-harm Prevention Strategy also adopts a rights-based approach and references the need to embed children's rights and disabled people's rights into service design and delivery.

Healthcare professionals must recognise and respond to impairments in babies and infants promptly to support their development and well-being. Early intervention ensures that children receive the necessary care and resources to thrive, minimising the impact of any challenges they may face. The **Healthy Child Wales Programme** (<https://www.gov.wales/healthy-child-wales-programme-school-aged-children-0>) has been created following an NHS Wales-led review of the way we currently support families with young children in Wales. The Welsh Government is committed to ensuring disabled children and adults have seamless access to health care, including mental health services. We are dedicated to promoting accessible and inclusive positive transition arrangements into adult services.

Accessibility is not just about compliance but about creating an inclusive digital environment for all. Artificial Intelligence (AI) holds great promise for improving access to healthcare for disabled people, if delivered in a safe, responsible and ethical way. Considered implementation and continuous evaluation of AI technologies will be needed to ensure disabled people receive equality in healthcare. We have created some high-level principles to help guide the responsible use of AI by the public sector in Wales so that it is: ethical, trustworthy, and aligned with the values and interests of the people of Wales, inclusive, accessible, and beneficial for everyone, especially to those who are most disadvantaged, innovative, collaborative, and supportive of our Research and Development ecosystem, and transparent, accountable, and subject to the right governance and oversight.

The Workforce Partnership Council published their **Using artificial intelligence at work guidance** (<https://www.gov.wales/using-artificial-intelligence-work>), which highlights the ethical considerations of using AI in the workplace. The Centre for Digital Public Services (CDPS) has also published broader, cross-sector guidance on the use of **AI technologies** (<https://digitalpublicservices.gov.wales/guidance-and-standards/service-manual/using-artificial-intelligence-public-sector>).

Aligned with this, the Equalities and Human Rights Commission have published guidance on the need to consider the PSED from the very outset of any AI plans.

The Artificial Intelligence Commission for Health and Social Care is a senior advisory group of specialists and leaders, representing the health, social care and life sciences sectors. The Commission works collaboratively across the sector and with national, and international, partners to advise, and provide direction on the regulation and adoption of safe, responsible, and ethical AI for **Health and Social Care**. (<https://www.gov.wales/ai-commission-health-and-social-care>)

An analysis by the Office for National Statistics of Coronavirus (COVID-19) related deaths by 'disability status', England and Wales: 2 March to 14 July 2020 showed that in Wales, disabled people made up almost 7 in 10 (68%) of all deaths involving COVID-19 in **this period** (<https://www.gov.wales/coronavirus-covid-19-and-impact-disabled-people-html>). The **Locked Out Report** (<https://www.gov.wales/locked-out-liberating-disabled-peoples-lives-and-rights-wales-beyond-covid-19-html>) highlighted a number of areas in which disabled people were disproportionately affected during the pandemic, many of which may have contributed to increased health risks such as access to healthcare, housing, income, employment, and social exclusion. The incorporation of ethical considerations into healthcare is vital, particularly when meeting the needs and rights of disabled people. Ensuring that disabled people are involved in the development and implementation of healthcare policies promotes equity and inclusion.

Health economic measures have an important role in helping us understand and compare the impact of different health treatments and conditions. However, there are limitations for some tools, such as **quality-adjusted life years** (<https://www.who.int/data/gho/indicator-metadata-registry/imr-details/158>), which may oversimplify disabled people's life experiences to numbers. Welsh Government is committed to ensuring healthcare is provided equitably to disabled people in Wales, through its network to support consistent standards and functioning for clinical ethics advisory groups across NHS Wales.

Disabled people have the right to inclusive health and social care services, but these can be challenging to access. Improving the infrastructure and technology of health and social care services, as well as supporting the workforce in understanding the Social Model of Disability, can improve access for disabled people. With the right support, many disabled people can continue to live independently. Disabled people's organisations play a crucial role in this process, providing invaluable support and advocacy. The **Social Services and Well-being (Wales) Act 2014** (<https://www.legislation.gov.uk/anaw/2014/4/contents>) sets out the principles of voice, choice, and control for people needing care and support, including disabled people.

Recruitment and retention within the social care workforce remains challenging, especially in ensuring that disabled people receive consistent and high-quality support tailored to their needs. This is even more pronounced in rural communities and among Welsh-speaking populations, where access to appropriately trained staff can be limited. Without a robust, well-supported workforce, disabled individuals will face significant barriers to living independently and participating fully in community life. Addressing these workforce gaps is crucial to upholding the rights, dignity and well-being of disabled people throughout Wales.

Recruitment and retention within domiciliary services is a significant factor relating to the sufficient availability of domiciliary care. Overall, there has been an improvement in domiciliary care capacity in the last few years, although there remain regional variation and some parts of Wales, particularly the more rural areas, continue to experience capacity issues that impact on waiting lists for service. The social care workforce is a priority for Welsh Government. We have established the Social Care Fair Work Forum which brings together trade unions, social care employers and government to work in partnership, with the aim to improve pay, terms and conditions for our social care workers. The Forum is overseeing a number of work programmes aiming to attract more people into social care.

Since 2022 we have been funding the Real Living Wage for our social care workers, and this remains a priority because fair pay is the foundation of a valued workforce. Looking ahead, we want to further improve pay and are working closely with the UK Government to deliver Fair Pay Agreements for

social care workers in Wales through the UK Government Employment Rights Bill. We continue to work in social partnership with the establishment of the Social Care Workforce Partnership, who are collectively developing voluntary Models of Best Practice for employers in the independent sector, aiming to bring consistency to terms and conditions across social care. We are also developing a Pay and Progression Framework for social care which will give our social care workers a clear career path, offering and highlighting the real opportunities to progress in their social care career.

We know that there are many unpaid carers supporting the social care sector. A new national strategy for unpaid carers will be published during 2026. The current **Strategy for Unpaid Carers** (<https://www.gov.wales/strategy-unpaid-carers-collection>) has as its priorities: identification and valuing unpaid carers, access to information and advice, support for life alongside caring (including access to respite) and supporting unpaid carers in education and employment. These areas continue to be priorities in the new strategy.

The Chief Nursing Officer's Strategic Vision outlines a 5-year path that unites the professions, empowers action, and showcases their transformative impact across the health and care system. Shaped by the voices of nurses, midwives, service users, and stakeholders, it defines how the professions will lead, innovate, and influence at every level. Driven by 6 transformative themes: workforce empowerment, leadership, excellence, population-focused care, innovation, and global partnerships, the vision promotes action, strengthens professional identity, and embeds sustainability in practice. Building on our ambition for a Wales that is equal and fair where our nursing and midwifery workforce reflects the populations that we serve and where nurses and midwives shine a light on and address the inequalities that hinder the lives of our diverse communities.

We want to make sure that people with learning disabilities who have additional support needs are supported in the community, and where specialist support is required, admission into specialist in-patient services is rare, close to home and discharge plans are in place. We are taking action, improving data collection, and are working with partners to develop appropriate community support services. We will be working to deliver the requirements of the reform of the

Mental Health Act, where autism and learning disability will no longer be grounds for detention under Section 3 of the Mental Health Act unless there is a co-occurring mental health condition. This change aims to prevent inappropriate long-term detention of individuals who do not have a treatable mental illness.

In 2022, the Welsh Government established a 3-year Neurodivergence Improvement Programme (NDIP) which ran until March 25, backed with £12m funding. The Programme aimed to improve early access to information, advice, and help, regardless of diagnosis and enhance the provision of post diagnostic support taking a whole system approach and tackling waiting times. The NDIP has been extended to March 2027, in response to the growing demand for neurodevelopmental services and to tackle urgent pressures and lengthy waiting times for children's neurodivergence assessments. The key priority is 3-year waits by March 2027. However, the NDIP has 4 other priorities Children's Neurodivergence Service transformation, Adult Service transformation, wider system changes from a neurodivergence perspective and the development of a new Neurodivergence Code of Practice.

The Welsh Government is committed to improving outcomes for people living with dementia and their families. We are progressing work on the successor to the Dementia Action Plan and we are using the published [evaluation of the Dementia Action Plan](https://www.gov.wales/final-findings-dementia-action-plan-2018-2022-evaluation) to inform our approach to this work. We are committed to co-production of the new plan, and the involvement of partners and people with lived experience throughout. This work is ongoing and has included a number of events and a public questionnaire, which is being used to shape our engagement activities for the successor Dementia Action Plan.

The Social Services and Well-being (Wales) Act 2014 [Code of Practice Part 2](https://www.gov.wales/sites/default/files/publications/2024-07/part-2-code-of-practice-general-social-care-functions-2024-version.pdf) lays out the need for local authorities to promote well-being and protect individuals. It focuses on preventing the need for care and support through promoting well-being, supporting disabled people and carers. Local Authorities provide a variety of preventative services, offer information on community well-being services, and give advice on direct payments and care charges. This helps people plan for their future care needs.

Additionally, authorities ensure practitioners and individuals collaborate as equal partners to plan and deliver care and support.

Supporting disabled people's voice, choice and control and independence require robust infrastructure in areas such as social care, transportation, employment, and Direct Payments. Direct Payments are funds provided by the local authority, they are aimed at people regardless of impairments but can **include disabled children and adults** (<https://www.dewiscil.org.uk/what-are-direct-payments>). On 31 March 2024, 48,519 adults had a care and support plan, of which 13% had a care and support plan supported using a Direct Payment **supported using a Direct Payment** (<https://www.gov.wales/social-services-activity-april-2023-march-2024>).

Direct payments are available for social care services and can significantly enhance the independence, and therefore quality of life of disabled people, and those with long-term care needs by providing greater voice, choice, and control. The **Health and Social Care (Wales) Act 2025** (<https://www.legislation.gov.uk/asc/2025/1/contents/enacted>), which received Royal Assent on 24 March, includes provision for the introduction of direct payments for Continuing Healthcare (CHC) in Wales.

The Welsh Government has published co-produced **Research** (<https://www.gov.wales/exploration-two-recommendations-proposed-disability-rights-taskforce-help-disabled-people>) exploring the concept of establishing a National Centre for Independent Living led by disabled people in Wales. Findings from this research represents stakeholder perspectives on a range of aspects for a National Centre including the prospective enablers, aims, functions and practical considerations.

Launched in autumn 2021, **Age Friendly Wales: Our Strategy for an Ageing Society** (<https://www.gov.wales/age-friendly-wales-our-strategy-ageing-society.html>), sets out the action we will take to prepare for the future. It considers the many things that influence how we age, like health and social care, transport and even the way we socialise, work and care for others and sets out our ambitious vision for an age friendly Wales that supports people of all ages to live and age well.

A supporting delivery plan was published in April 2022 which is updated

annually. The Strategy was coproduced with older people and their representatives; the Ministerial Advisory Forum on Ageing guided the development of the strategy and continues to monitor progress.

To support implementation, £1.1million per annum is allocated to local authorities (£50,000 each) to fund a dedicated age friendly post. The funding supports local authorities to gain membership of the World Health Organisation's Network of Age Friendly Cities and Communities. This work is delivered in partnership with the Older People's Commissioner who is an affiliate member of the WHO Network. Age friendly communities can support all older people to age well and provide environments and communities that support older disabled people to remain independent and engaged.

Our vision is for an age friendly Wales that celebrates age and, in line with the UN Principles for Older Persons, a nation that upholds the independence, participation, care, self-fulfilment and dignity of older people at all times.

Climate change is recognised as a concern in relation to health. A **Health Impact Assessment** (<https://phwwhocc.co.uk/resources/climate-change-in-wales-health-impact-assessment/>) by Public Health Wales highlights that some disabled people are likely to be at greater risk of negative impacts on their physical or mental health as a result of climate change. This may be through disproportionate susceptibility to harm, disproportionate exposure to harm, a reduced adaptive capacity in the event of harm, or a combination of these factors.

The Welsh Government's **Health protection framework** (<https://www.gov.wales/health-protection-framework>) describes how the health protection system in Wales will work together for the people of Wales to minimise harm, save lives and promote well-being. One of its key objectives is that "Excellent services and functions are delivered safely, equitably and in a timely and person-centred way that reduces inequalities". The Framework emphasises the importance of partnership working and how the entire system should work together across prevention, preparedness, response and recovery in a way which seeks to constantly improve the health equity of the population.

## **8. Justice and supporting environments**

To achieve the long-term overarching ambition, and the high-level outcomes for justice and supporting Environments described in section 4, this section sets out the outcomes we expect to see over a 10-year period, as a result of the actions we take to ensure disabled people can access justice and have supportive environments. Justice and supporting environments is made up of the following themes: access to justice and accessible and supporting environments.

### **Access to justice**

#### **Outcome 1: influence on reserved powers**

Disabled people's experiences with reserved functions of the legal and justice systems are improved through continued engagement with the UK Government to champion the rights of disabled people, better coordinated supporting services, and pursue improved outcomes for those interacting at all stages of the process.

#### **Outcome 2: effective access to civil and criminal justice**

Disabled people in Wales are educated on their rights in relation to justice, whether as a claimant, victim or perpetrator of crime, and have access to appropriate and local legal advice and complaints procedures that can meet their needs for community care, education, housing, immigration and asylum, and welfare benefits, wherever they are in Wales.

#### **Outcome 3: violence, sexual abuse and domestic violence**

Disabled victims/survivors of violence, sexual abuse, and domestic abuse have access to appropriately resourced, high quality, needs-led, strength-based, inter-sectional and responsive services across Wales.

## **Outcome 4: representative legislation**

The rights enshrined in the United Nations Convention on the Disabled People and the Social Model of Disability are recognised within policy and, where appropriate and possible, legislation based on the on-going review of existing legislation.

## **Outcome 5: evidence**

Through independent research, analysis of existing data, and engagement with partner agencies, disabled people's outcomes and experiences with the legal and justice systems are better understood, providing a robust evidence base to support the case for an accessible and inclusive system.

## **UNCRDP**

The outcomes above align to Article 5 of the UNCRDP which sets out that all individuals are equal before the law and entitled to equal protection and benefits without discrimination. It mandates countries prohibit discrimination based on disability and ensures equal legal protection for disabled people.

Hate crime remains a significant issue for disabled people across the UK, mainly due to persistent societal prejudices and misconceptions about disability. These crimes are often underreported, partly because victims may fear not being taken seriously or may lack confidence in the support systems available. Additionally, disability hate crimes, can sometimes be perpetrated by those close to the victim, complicating the reporting and prosecution processes. Although hate crime recorded by the police in Wales, where disability was a motivating factor decreased from 752 in 2023 to 2024 to 739 in 2024 to 2025 (**Hate Crime** (<https://www.gov.uk/government/statistics/hate-crime-england-and-wales-year-ending-march-2025>)), the number of these crimes remains unacceptably high.

According to the Chief Crown Prosecutor and National Hate Crime Lead in Investigating and Prosecuting Disability Hate Crime (**Hate Crime: Best Practice**

**CPS** (<https://www.cps.gov.uk/publication/investigating-and-prosecuting-disability-hate-crime-best-practice>):

“ Disability hate crime is one of the most pervasive and underreported forms of hate crime. It is an insidious crime that can manifest itself in overt violence or subtle, yet deeply harmful, acts of prejudice and targeting. Its impact on individuals and communities remains far-reaching and profound.” ”

We must continue to take action to address and prevent these horrendous crimes, ensuring that disabled people are protected and supported at all levels of society.

The Welsh Government is committed to challenging these misconceptions and advocating for the rights and protection of disabled people. To improve the understanding of hate crime, the Welsh Government is committed to collaborating with Disabled People's Organisations to make information accessible, particularly for people with learning disabilities, and to ensure disabled people recognise hate crimes, know how to report these crimes, and understand where to seek support. Additionally, the Welsh Government's Hate Hurts Wales 2025 to 2027, will include a focus on crimes against disabled people.

The Welsh Government is committed to ensuring that disabled survivors and victims of crime have equal access to high-quality and responsive services across Wales. We are also committed to advocating for better access to data on the disabled population in prisons, including women prisoners from Wales who are housed in England. This effort is crucial for understanding and addressing the needs of disabled people in prisons.

We know that disabled people, particularly those who are neurodivergent, are overrepresented in the criminal justice system. Training on the Social Model of Disability for staff is important to fostering an inclusive and supportive environment for disabled individuals in the justice system. The Welsh Government is committed to ensuring prisoners are assessed appropriately, and early, to ensure equal access to education in Wales.

We are continuing to invest in the delivery of the Violence against Women and Domestic Abuse and Sexual Violence Strategy to provide victims with support and advice across all areas of Wales through regional grant funding. Additionally, the Welsh Government will review provision of support services for disabled survivors of abuse in Wales through the Violence Against Women Domestic Abuse and Sexual Abuse (VAWDASV) Sustainable Whole System Approach workstream.

We will continue to work with the BSL stakeholder group and disabled people's groups to inform the development/translation of safeguarding resources in line with key messages/topics/materials they have designated as a priority for them. Every 3 years, these actions will be reviewed and updated so that they reflect progress being made and the learning arising.

As part of the delivery structure for the strategy we have a Victim-Survivors Advisory Group and a Children and Young People's Advisory Group, and we will continue to work with key internal and external stakeholders to publicise opportunities to join these groups or for engaging in other ways to ensure disabled children and adults are represented and have their voices heard.

The Welsh Government's **Information and Advice Quality Framework (IAQF)** (<https://www.gov.wales/information-and-advice-quality-framework>) is designed to assist members of the public in the selection of sources of support by providing assurance that information and advice services offer high quality interventions. The IAQF Wales is particularly focused on social welfare advice topics that directly support these goals, most importantly: welfare benefits, financial inclusion including debt and money advice, housing and homelessness, employment, immigration and discrimination. Welsh Government will continue its support for the IAQF Wales and will make resources available to support a strategically planned framework of social welfare advice services across Wales that targets key population groups, including disabled people, improving their access to quality assured impartial social welfare advice.

# **Accessible and supporting environments**

## **Outcome 1: a discrimination free society**

Bullying in schools of disabled children, harmful and discriminatory attitudes toward disabled people, including stereotypes, are challenged on a societal level, with a collective understanding of disabled people's rights, experiences, needs, and history ensured to drive forward an inclusive culture, instilled throughout the public, private, and third sectors to improve outcomes for all.

## **Outcome 2: support for disabled people's organisations**

Disabled People's Organisations (DPOs) across Wales have a strategic role in advocating for the rights of disabled people and are supported through the funding, capacity, and financial security necessary to further their positive impact. Their value and expertise are reflected in both the support and opportunities they receive from the Welsh Government and other organisations and their involvement in policy and service development throughout the public sector in Wales.

## **Outcome 3: inclusive public services**

Public bodies in Wales have increased resource, understanding, and lived-experience at all levels to incorporate the Social Model of Disability and uphold the rights of disabled people, and are held to account against the Public Sector Equality Duty by leadership and scrutiny bodies that ensure the fair representation of disabled people.

## **Outcome 4: inclusive politics**

Disabled people in Wales participate actively in political and public life, which enriches the democratic process, leading to a more just and equitable Wales.

## **Outcome 5: The Welsh Government**

Disabled people in Wales are represented by a government that values, understands, and respects them, enshrining disabled people's rights in policy and law. The Welsh Government draws upon lived experience in leadership and throughout the organisation, and works with stakeholders to achieve substantive, societal change.

## **Outcome 6: digital inclusion**

Everyone in Wales has access to the digital tools, basic digital skills, and connectivity they need to meet a minimum digital living standard. They are empowered to choose how they use and engage with digital technology in ways that are meaningful to them. This enables full participation in society, enhances well-being, and supports a more inclusive, equitable, and digitally confident Wales.

## **UNCRDP**

The outcomes above align to Article 9 and Article 8 of the UNCRDP.

Article 9 of the UNCRDP which focuses on accessibility, emphasising the need for countries to ensure disabled people have access to information, distribution of accessible information and communications technologies and systems at an early stage, so that these technologies and systems become accessible at minimum cost and other services, including electronic service.

Article 8 of the UNCRDP which sets out countries need to raise societal awareness about disabled persons, combat stereotypes and prejudices, and promote respect for their rights and dignity. Measures include public awareness campaigns, education initiatives, media guidelines, and training programs to foster positive perceptions and social awareness.

In our increasingly digital world, the exclusion of disabled people due to the lack

of accessible technology remains a significant barrier to equality. Many applications are not designed with accessibility in mind, leading to difficulties in access to transport, work, and leisure. Approximately 7% adults in Wales continue to be **digitally excluded** (<https://www.digitalcommunities.gov.wales/digital-inclusion-in-wales-2/>), and the move to a cashless society continues to create a barrier for many disabled people. Mencap Cymru has called for both cash and cards to continue to be used at shops and restaurants, to ensure disabled and older people are not excluded and **discriminated against** (<https://petitions.senedd.wales/petitions/245384>).

This lack of accessible technology obstructs disabled people's ability to participate fully in various aspects of daily life. As set out in the Equality Act 2010, reasonable adjustments must be made to ensure that disabled people have equal access to these technologies. However, without accessible technology, the potential of digital tools to enhance independence and inclusion is lost, perpetuating cycles of exclusion and inequality. Welsh Government has committed through its **Learning Disability Strategic Action Plan** (<http://www.gov.wales/learning-disability-strategic-action-plan-2022-2026>) to reviewing the appropriate use of technology and digital options to maximise engagement and build and improve connections for people with learning disabilities.

The Welsh Government is working to ensure that appropriate Welsh language assistive software, including bilingual speech recognition and synthesis is easily available to improve the well-being of disabled people.

Journalism, social media and the media industry play a crucial role in shaping public perceptions and attitudes towards disabled people. Negative portrayals can contribute to the marginalisation of disabled people, reinforcing negative attitudes and creating barriers to inclusion. An informed and inclusive approach, highlighting the achievements, rights, and contributions of disabled people is needed to improve outcomes for disabled people.

The Welsh Government is committed to raising public awareness challenging discrimination of disabled people, promoting positive attitudes towards disabled people, and collaboration with stakeholders to ensure policies are inclusive. Welsh Government aims to continue to integrate the views and expertise of disabled people into all aspects of society, including local and national

democratic structures. It is important that individuals lived experience is able to inform discussion, and outcomes and that this results in a better, more inclusive environment for disabled people actively participate in shaping the decisions that impact on their daily lives. Engaging with political parties and supporting broader initiatives that seek to increase the representation of disabled people in politics is key to ensuring this active participation driven by mutual respect.

The Welsh Government is committed to making the Senedd and local government more diverse and representative of the people they serve. Disabled people are likely to face greater costs when seeking elected office due to their impairments. A key action of our Diversity in Democracy programme was the delivery of our pilot Access to Elected Office Fund for Wales. An independent evaluation of the arrangements was undertaken, and the report concluded there was overwhelming support for the fund and that it should be retained. The Elections and Elected Bodies (Wales) Act 2024 builds on our work to date and includes a range of measures aimed at creating a more inclusive political environment. This includes the requirement for the Welsh Ministers to establish and maintain a fund to support disabled candidates with the additional costs associated with standing for election.

Work is underway to deliver these arrangements. We have recently **consulted on draft guidance to support registered political parties in Wales** (<https://www.gov.wales/diversity-and-inclusion-guidance-for-registered-political-parties>) to:

- develop, publish, implement and regularly review diversity and inclusion strategies for Welsh elections
- collect and publish diversity information about candidates for Senedd elections and elected Members
- consider steps they may take in relation to voluntary quotas for women

## 9. Glossary

### Barriers

Barriers are hurdles that prevent people from accessing prospects or services.

They can be physical, like steps and no ramps, or social, like prejudice and discrimination.

## **Co-production**

Co-production is about working together with people who use services to design and deliver those services. It values everyone's input equally.

## **Devolved and reserved powers**

Devolved and reserved powers: the relationship between the United Kingdom and Wales is defined by a system of devolved and reserved powers. Devolved powers are those transferred from the UK Parliament to the Welsh Parliament (Senedd Cymru), allowing Wales to legislate on areas such as health, education, and local government. Reserved powers, remain under the control of the UK Parliament and include matters like defence, foreign affairs, welfare and immigration.

## **Intersectionality**

Intersectionality is related to the way in which different types of discrimination (i.e., unfair treatment because of a person's protected characteristics) are connected to and affect each other.

## **Lived experience**

Lived experience: this refers to the knowledge and expertise gained from people's own experiences. It is often used to inform and improve services and policies.

## **Social Model of Disability**

Social Model of Disability: this model views disability as a result of barriers in society, not the individual's impairment or health condition. It focuses on removing these barriers to ensure people can participate fully in society.

## **Well-being**

Well-being is about a person's own experience of feeling good in life. It includes mental, physical, emotional and cultural well-being.

## **Annex 1**

### **The Welsh Government Disability Disparity Evidence Unit: how we will measure change**

As part of its core function, the Disability Disparity Evidence Unit is responsible for overseeing the monitoring and evaluation arrangements for the Disabled People's Rights Plan. This includes measurement of the Plan's ongoing progress against individual actions, as well as a wider assessment of the overall impact made against its intended outcomes in the longer-term.

The Disability Disparity Evidence Unit consists of Government Social Researchers who will evaluate the Plan in line with the principles for evaluation and monitoring set out in the **Magenta Book** (<https://www.gov.uk/government/publications/the-magenta-book>) and **Green Book** (<https://www.gov.uk/government/publications/the-green-book-appraisal-and-evaluation-in-central-government/the-green-book-2020#monitoring-and-evaluation-5>). The Government Social Research (GSR) profession in the Welsh Government operates independently of policy teams. It is guided by the GSR Code, which is designed to ensure analytical integrity and ensure that all research is impartial, methodologically robust, and free from undue influence.

## **Outlining the process for change**

In order to measure change, the process for how it will be achieved must first be understood. This will be done through the development of Theories of Change, or logic models, for each broad area of the Plan. These logic models will map out each step in how the Plan aims to deliver its desired change, from inputs through to activities, outputs, outcomes and impacts as defined below.

### **Inputs**

Inputs are what needs to be 'put in' to ensure that the Plan can deliver its actions. For example, this may be funding, capacity, expertise, or any other resource required to bring about change.

### **Activities**

Activities group together the various actions and strands of work that will be undertaken to achieve the desired outcomes and impacts. These are the steps being taken to achieve the desired change.

### **Outputs**

Outputs are the direct and short-term results from each activity. Progress against these is often tracked through monitoring data but they are not usually enough on their own to evidence whether change is being delivered.

### **Outcomes**

Outcomes take a more holistic view of change in the medium-term, with multiple actions and outputs usually contributing towards a single outcome. They are typically measured using 'indicators', which take a higher-level view of progress towards the overall aims of a Plan.

## Impacts

Impacts are the longest-term changes that the Plan aims to achieve overall. They cannot be attributed to any one activity, output, or outcome but represent the combined effects of the Plan in its entirety over an extended period of time.

Each of the stages above will help to shape how progress and success of the Plan is measured. In the short to medium term, monitoring and evaluation arrangements will focus on providing evidence against actions and outcomes through a measurement framework and process evaluation.

## Measurement framework

Aligned to the Theories of Change, which set out how the Plan intends to achieve its objectives, an overarching measurement framework will be developed to evidence progress and demonstrate the direction of change across key areas of the Plan. This will include between 5 and 10 indicators for each policy area which, when considered together, will provide a holistic view of the effect that the Plan is having overall.

There are a number of factors to be considered to identify which indicators will provide the most accurate and comprehensive view of the Plan; for example, the quality of the data provided, if it is available at the necessary scale and frequency, and whether it aligns with the goals of the Plan. These indicators also need to complement each other and must be able to clearly communicate evidence in a way that meets the needs of the Plan's stakeholders.

Additionally, not all data will be available for every area of the Plan and in the process of developing the framework, gaps in the evidence will undoubtedly emerge. In line with the **mission of the Equality, Race, and Disability Evidenced Units** (<https://www.gov.wales/equality-race-and-disability-evidence-units-strategy-html#105595>), the Disability Disparity Evidence Unit will target these gaps where possible, aiming to improve the availability, quality, granularity, and accessibility of equalities evidence both now and through its future work Plan.

## **Process and impact evaluation**

While the measurement framework will be a valuable source of information, indicators alone are not enough to determine causality or to fully demonstrate why a change has happened. In order to address this, the framework will be supported by a process evaluation, which aims to understand how a policy or intervention is being implemented by finding out what works well, identifying barriers to delivery, and making recommendations for improvement in the future.

The process evaluation will draw upon different types of data to assess the implementation of the Plan. Numerical 'quantitative' data will be used to monitor the outputs of actions in the short-to-medium term, as outlined within the Theories of Change. For example, monitoring data may be used to show the number of disabled people engaged with during the development of a policy or the number of service providers that have attended Social Model of Disability training.

Though similar to the use of data in the measurement framework, monitoring data used in the process evaluation will be more closely aligned to individual actions and less indicative of wider change in the long-term. The evaluation may also draw upon additional data from surveys to address any gaps that emerge in the evidence and to provide a snapshot of people's experiences with the Plan.

Where a deeper level of understanding is required, people's thoughts and opinions will be captured through the use of 'qualitative' data methods, such as interviews or focus groups. These will be used to explore changes in greater detail, helping to understand the process for why a change has happened and how people have been affected by it. Ultimately, qualitative methods help to accurately represent the views of everyone involved with the Plan including the Welsh Government officials that are responsible for actions, partnership organisations involved in its delivery, and most importantly, the disabled people whose lives it aims to improve.

As such, lived experience will be essential to ensure that disabled people remain at the heart of the evaluation. In addition to the lived experience of researchers within the Disability Disparity Evidence Unit, disabled people will be involved at

every stage to make sure that the research is accessible by design and that the experiences of disabled people are fully represented. The External Advisory Board will have a key role in this. It is imperative that the research abides by the principle of 'nothing about us, without us', embedding the Social Model of Disability throughout to ensure a fully inclusive and representative approach.

Although primary focus of the process evaluation will be on the implementation of the Plan and addressing barriers to delivery over the first 2 years, it will provide some indication of early impact and emerging outcomes but as the wider effects on disabled people in Wales may not be fully evident until further down the line.

This stage of the research will be followed by a subsequent 'impact evaluation', focussed on assessing the success of the Plan in achieving its outcomes in the mid-to-long term. This second phase of the research will draw upon data collated across a longer timeframe, and on the experiences of the disabled people affected by the plan, to assess its overall impact.

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