



Strategic Plan

2023 – 2027







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About Us

Active Disability Ireland believe that people with disabilities should have an equal opportunity to be **active for life!** That's why we remain committed to helping to build a more inclusive society where collectively we can help to empower, encourage and support people with disabilities to be more active with whom they want, when they want and where they want!

Many people will remember us as Cara Sport Inclusion Ireland. We've been through some changes recently and have rebranded as Active Disability Ireland. Our name may have changed, but we still strive to be the same, trusted, credible pan-disability organisation that works collaboratively across Ireland to enhance active and healthy lifestyles for people with disabilities.

Over the past 15 years we have committed to supporting national policy and building an inclusive infrastructure across the sport sector. We are proud of the impact we, along with our partners, have made, but we know there is still much more that needs to be done to achieve our refreshed vision of:

Creating an Ireland where people with disabilities have equal opportunities to be active.

Developing an insights led strategy was a priority for us. We really wanted people with disabilities to be at the heart of our thinking, to influence and shape our priorities by understanding the everyday barriers faced and identifying the solutions that can have the biggest impact on their access to, and lifelong enjoyment of physical activity and sport.

Our strategy builds on the strong foundations we have already laid with our current partners across the sports sector whilst extending our support and influence across other connected sectors such as health, education, and the wider community.

We know that we are stronger together, so taking a collaborative approach will be key to the success of our strategy.

We look forward to continuing our long-standing partnership with Sport Ireland, whilst also working with Irish Government, Local Sport Partnerships, and National Governing Bodies of Sport. Collectively, we will continue to support the ambition of the National Sports Policy target of reducing the gradients within sports participation with, as you would expect, a laser focus on the impact we can make for people with disabilities.

We also welcome the continued partnership with the Health Service Executive who have been instrumental in supporting us to develop new and innovative programmes within

disability services across Ireland. We are excited to explore new partnerships with both traditional and non-traditional partners who can help us to remove the barriers that people with disabilities face.

Our four strategic ambitions will only be achieved with the right level of financial resources and a dedicated team. We have committed to ensuring that we diversify and grow our investment streams through purpose led partnerships with both the public and commercial sectors.

Learning together will be central to our work as we journey through the next five-years. We will constantly monitor and evaluate the impact of our work whilst ensuring that we place people with disabilities at the very heart of our organisation. Finally, we will work hard every day to live our values and behaviours by listening to people and our partners, by being creative and open minded and bold in our approach and by leading from the front as we challenge exclusion and use physical activity and sport as the catalyst for change to create a fairer society for people with disabilities.

From all the team at Active Disability Ireland, let's work together to make a meaningful difference!

Introduction

“ Exercise, it’s a human thing. If you want to exercise, regardless of what your body looks like, whether you have an impairment or not, that is your right. You should be able to do that without extra barriers in your way. ”

Creating An Ireland Where People With Disabilities Have Equal Opportunities To Be Active

Physical activity has the power to have a huge impact on people’s lives. Not only does it help to keep us fit and healthy but it provides the opportunity to meet new people, to learn, to grow and to become leaders. It is clear that people with disabilities face a multitude of additional barriers to participation, making them much less likely to be active.

People with disabilities have the right to participate in physical activity and Active Disability Ireland understands that we play a critical role in creating more opportunities, encouraging and supporting people with disabilities to take ownership of their own physical activity journey.





There is a strong need for increased efforts on behalf of all organisations to ensure that we do all we can to enable people with disabilities to engage in physical activity in a way of their choosing. Active Disability Ireland is committed to supporting this process to creating an Ireland where people with disabilities have equal opportunities to be active.

We have a deep understanding that inclusion can only come from direct representation by people with disabilities.

“Nothing About Us, Without Us”

With this as our guiding principle, we have undertaken an ambitious consultation, opening up discussion spaces seeking to hear directly from people with disabilities from across Ireland. Through this approach, we will strive to be a force for positive change, guided by the experiences as shared by people with disabilities.

United Nations Sustainable Development Goals

Active Disability Ireland is committed to creating high quality, inclusive opportunities for people with disabilities targeting sustainability over time. With the focus of our organisation being equality and inclusion, our strategic plan supports and contributes to the United Nations Sustainable Development Goals (SDGs). The SDGs are an urgent call for action, providing a blueprint for a fairer and more equal world. This vision aligns with the vision of Active Disability Ireland as we seek to create an Ireland where people with disabilities have equal opportunity to participate in physical activity.

The United Nations aims to achieve the SDGs by 2030 and Active Disability Ireland will support their effort through this strategic plan. The SDGs which our organisation will contribute to are:





Who We Work For And Why

The reality is that people with a disability in Ireland are far less likely to be active than those without a disability with a difference of

27% vs 49%

taking part (ISM, 2021 q3). This difference is also apparent within younger demographics with the CSPPA (2018) study showing a substantial difference for children and youths with a disability.

We understand the transformative power that physical activity can have on a person's life and we want to reduce this gradient so that people with disabilities have equal opportunities to experience the benefits that physical activity can bring.

“ I take part because it's good for my health. I like participating. I enjoy meeting my friends and making new friends. ”

Key Areas Of Success So Far



Supporting the programme for government offering guidance in the design and implementation of national policies such as the National Sports Policy, National Physical Activity Plan, Outdoor Recreation Strategy and National Swimming Strategy

Coordinating the National Inclusive Training Programme delivering **261 workshops** to

8450 Participants

through a dedicated team of 35 tutors



Working in partnership with Sport Ireland, supporting the network of Local Sports Partnerships and National Governing Bodies of Sport



1772 Organisations

signed up to the sport inclusion disability **charter**

Xcessible

Successful roll out of the Xcessible Programme for Local Sports Partnerships, National Governing Bodies and Clubs



Launch of Active Healthy Me across the network of Adult Day Service Locations delivering a Health and Wellbeing Education programme for people with disabilities



171 Volunteers

took part in our National Inclusive Volunteer training programme



32 I'm In Too Stories

Captured and shared where people with disabilities share their own stories or their experiences participating in sport and physical activity

Launch of Ireland's first Active Disability Services Awards

••• ACTIVE •••
DISABILITY SERVICES

AWARDS



Achieved compliance to the Governance Code for Sport, with a continued commitment to operating with transparency through effective leadership and governance.



500 Leisure Centres and Gyms

all over Ireland have taken part in

fit for all

147 Outdoor Activity Providers

took part in Ireland's first ever inclusive outdoors week



We have Hosted
4 National Inclusion Seminars & Live Casts

with over **2231** delegates in attendance and with a reach of 23 countries.



Developing Our Strategy

In the development of this strategy there was a recognition that, while we develop and expand our strategic direction, it is important to maintain the elements of our work which have been key to our success as an organisation. We will continue to advocate for increased, quality physical activity opportunities for people with disabilities in Ireland whilst also exploring new areas in which we can have a significant impact.

The strategic planning process involved significant consultation and engagement with stakeholders over a focused 4-month period. The four staged strategic planning process is set out below.

1 Desk Review and Early Reflections

Internal reflections on the baseline position of Active Disability Ireland and the early visioning on the new strategic plan in July 2022.

2

Community Consultation

People With Disabilities

11

Interviews /
Focus Groups

202

Online Survey
Responses

Stakeholder Organisations

38

Interviews /
Focus Groups

111

Online Survey
Responses

3

Action Planning

Two action planning meetings with the Active Disability Ireland team helped bring the consultation findings to life through strategic goals and objectives.

4

Developing Our Vision and Mapping Actions

Refining the vision, mapping the strategic alignment of Active Disability Ireland in a national context and developing draft and final documents.

As an organisation that is focused on supporting people with disabilities to be active, Active Disability Ireland have made a commitment to being led by the voice of people with disabilities. In line with this, our strategic development process was underpinned by a collaborative approach which sought to include people with disabilities in all aspects of strategic development. The process was led by people with disabilities throughout and guided by an advisory group consisting of people with disabilities which worked as an invaluable source of information, a sounding board for ideas and key decision makers overseeing the process.

People With Disabilities National Survey

A survey was developed, with the support of the advisory group, with the goal of understanding the living experience of people with disabilities in Ireland. The survey was made available in Irish Sign Language and Easy Read formats in order to ensure that it was accessible by all. Interviews were conducted, expanding on the survey, which provided an opportunity for deep and honest discussions, providing key insights into the reality of physical activity opportunities for people with disabilities.

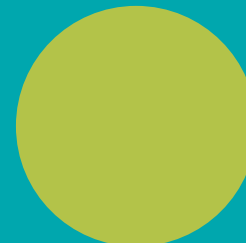
Consultation With Key Stakeholders

An in-depth consultation with key stakeholders was facilitated by external strategic consultants, S3 Solutions. This process enabled organisations which work with us to highlight how we can best support them in their work so that they can in-turn provide more opportunities for people with disabilities to be active.

The insights gained from people with disabilities and our other key stakeholders, provided us with a greater understanding of where we need to focus our strategic direction in order to have the greatest impact and enabled us to clearly define the strategic actions that will take us through the next 5 years.

A significant amount of work was undertaken by all staff and board members at Active Disability Ireland to refresh our mission, vision and values in line with our updated strategic direction. Through these sessions, we gained a deeper understanding of who we are as an organisation, what we stand for and how this is reflected in the work that we do.

We are excited to present this strategic plan and we are grateful to all those who took part in the process and enabled Active Disability Ireland to refocus our strategic direction.



During the stakeholder engagement process we learned that there is a continued need to:

Increase understanding of diverse populations

Create positive attitudes to inclusion through training and education

Increase accessible facilities, environments and equipment

Improve transport infrastructure

Increase promotion of opportunities

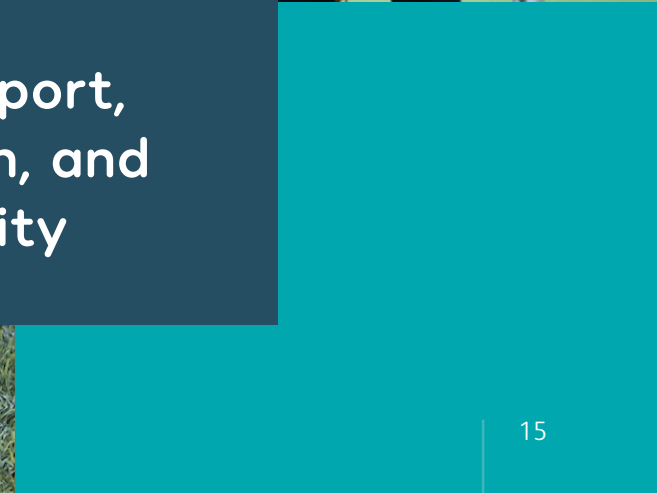
Engage with children with disabilities and their support structures to impact on early childhood experiences





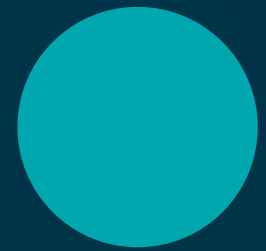
Reducing the gradient requires a whole system approach, engaging with all sectors -

Health, Sport, Education, and Community





We Are





- > Our Vision
- > Our Purpose
- > Our Values



Our Vision

To create an Ireland where people with disabilities have equal opportunities to be active.



Our Purpose

To listen, support, challenge and build capacity so that people with disabilities have equal opportunity and choice to be physically active.



Our Values



1

Value Living Experience

We will listen with empathy and respond with intent to the living experiences of people with disabilities. The needs, challenges and experiences of people with disabilities will shape and inform how we develop and design our work and how we challenge exclusion.

2

Making A Difference

We will invest our time, energy, expertise and passion into everything we do to ensure we knock it out of the park and make a positive difference in the lives of people with disabilities.

3

Stronger Together

It takes people with different ideas, strengths, interests and cultural beliefs to achieve positive change. We will work in collaboration with others to share our collective missions and we will respect and value the contribution of all.

4

Adventurous And Bold

We will be creative and open minded, daring in our approach, always with a willingness to learn and improve.

5

Lead And Challenge

We will strongly challenge exclusion and use physical activity and sport as the catalyst for change to create a fairer society for people with disabilities.

6

Down To Earth

We love what we do and we want people to love working with us. We will be fun, approachable and professional to work with as we collectively strive to make a difference.

Our Strategic Themes and Ambitions



1

Creating Opportunities
And Choice

2

Increasing Profile
And Visibility

3

Influencing And
Challenging

4

Leading By Example



1

Creating Opportunities And Choice

Why is this important?

People with disabilities told us consistently that an increase in the amount of accessible and inclusive opportunities would enable more choice and increase participation in physical activity.

Our organisation originated within the Sports sector and we have evolved and grown with the support of Sport Ireland and sports sector partners. We value this experience and these relationships and this collective effort has created additional sport and physical activity participation opportunities for people with disabilities. We want to continue this work, use what we have learned and replicate the things that have worked well in sectors beyond sport, to offer increased opportunity and choice for people with disabilities across all stages of their life.





Ambition 1

To continue to play a key role in the delivery of the National Sports Policy in collaboration with our partners Sport Ireland, Local Sports Partnerships, Federation of Irish Sport and National Governing Bodies, enhancing opportunity and choice for people with disabilities.

Ambition 2

To create and foster new relationships, leading to sustainable participation pathways in the health, education and community sectors.

Ambition 3

To build the capacity of individuals and organisations across the sport, health, education and community sectors to effectively engage people with disabilities in physical activity, and to better define our impact.

“ Parents who have kids with disabilities are expected to be experts in disabilities within about five minutes without the training and education piece, it is hard to know how to best support your kid. ”

2

Increasing Profile And Visibility

Why is this important?

People with disabilities told us that living experience was a powerful way to communicate and to ensure that opportunities become more inclusive and accessible.

#NothingAboutUsWithoutUs

We heard consistently that people with disabilities wanted more promotion of inclusive opportunities to enable increased awareness and facilitate greater participation.

We believe that by increasing the profile of our own organisation, and of others working in the disability sport and physical activity space, that we can extend our collective reach, extend our collective influence and raise awareness of opportunity and choice.



Ambition 4

To embed living experience at the heart of our organisation, and to ensure this shapes and informs everything we do.

Ambition 5

To improve the profile, reach and awareness of our organisation, our work and the work of others so that we can positively influence improved choice and opportunity for people with disabilities.

Ambition 6

To raise the understanding and profile of the benefits, experiences, impacts and opportunities in physical activity amongst people with disabilities.

“ I have a wheelchair. It doesn't mean anything other than that, I'm a grown up. I'm a woman. I'm a mom. Allow me to define what I can do and then help me to do it. ”

3

Influencing And Challenging

Why is this important?

People with disabilities told us that policies, strategies and approaches must adequately reflect their needs, experiences and challenges. We also heard that Active Disability Ireland has successfully positioned our organisation in a way that we can have a positive influence on local, regional and national strategies. Active Disability Ireland wants to use insights from people with disabilities to educate and inform decision making and to influence policy and practice.





Ambition 7

To challenge existing and new strategies and policies across the health, education, and community sectors to adequately reflect the needs, aspirations, experiences and challenges of people with disabilities in physical activity.

Ambition 8

To advocate and promote continued investment in participation in physical activity for people with disabilities and protect its place within the wider inclusion agenda.

“Active Disability Ireland plays a key role in ensuring that Disability Sport is kept as a priority for Sport Ireland and Department of Sport. Vitally important that investment continues to be made in this area across all sports and Sports Partnerships.”

4

Leading By Example

Why is this important?

The consultation informing this strategy told us that our board and staff are a key strength and that we “breathe a culture of inclusion”. We are proud of this and want to build on these strengths by further investing in our team, ensuring that Active Disability Ireland is a great place to work and a great organisation to work with. We also believe that our work makes a difference, so we want to continue to grow and develop this work ensuring an even greater impact on participation in physical activity amongst people with disabilities, this will require a renewed focus on financial sustainability, succession planning and governance.





Ambition 9

To operate as a progressive, ethical, trusted and respected pan disability organisation, underpinned by good governance and valued by people with disabilities and those working in the sector.

Ambition 10

To increase our financial sustainability through a diversification of funding and income sources.

Ambition 11

To ensure that Active Disability Ireland is a great place to work where our people are supported personally and professionally and where well-being is prioritised.

“ Active Disability Ireland lives and breathes a culture of disability and inclusion – every single person that’s working there really wants to do the best they can for people with disabilities and that really comes across to their culture of the organisation. ”



What Success Looks Like In 2027

Creating Opportunities And Choice

- All NGBs and LSPs on some level of the Xcessible programme by the end of the strategy.
- Percentage of sport, health and education sector partners reporting that their collaboration with Active Disability Ireland was impactful.
- Number of organisations adopting the Sports Inclusion Disability Charter increases year on year.
- Percentage of all individuals trained that report improved knowledge, confidence and skills to provide greater opportunity and choice for people with disabilities.
- Number of people trained from health, sport and education and community sectors increases year on year.
- Positive social return on investment ratio for our training and education framework.

Increasing Profile And Visibility

- Number and profile of people recruited to the strategic advisory group and a designated number of meetings held.
- Percentage of people with disabilities reporting that Active Disability Ireland is an organisation that embeds living experience (during evaluation of our strategy).
- Extent of reach of our organisation increases year on year across online platforms.
- Percentage of partners, stakeholders and people with disabilities reporting that Active Disability Ireland's communications was effective and impactful.

Influencing And Challenging

- Qualitative measure of meaningful policy interventions achieved by our team.
- Value of funding into disability sport and physical activity initiatives increases year on year, with the help of our influences.

Leading By Example

- Proportion of our board and staff with a disability increases from baseline.
- Retain compliance with the governance code and achieve one externally accredited governance award.
- Income sources diversify from baseline with a more equitable spread from across relevant sectors.
- Percentage of staff reporting positively on Active Disability Ireland as a great place to work in annual staff survey.



“ Physical activity gives me a huge release of any anxiety, anger or upset, it also gives me time to socialise with people ”



activedisability.ie

Head Office

Kerry Sports Academy,
Munster Technological University,
North Campus,
Tralee, Co. Kerry. V92 HD4V
Tel: +353 (0) 66 71 45 646

Dublin Office

Irish Sports HQ,
Sport Ireland Campus,
Snugborough Road, Blanchardstown,
Dublin 15. D15 DY62
Tel: +353 (0) 1 625 1160