



# Independent Commission for Reconciliation and Information Recovery

Disability Action Plan 2024-2029

June 2024

# Document information

## Owner

The owner of this policy is the **Director of People & Culture**

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The author of this document is the **Director of Planning, Strategy and Performance**

## Approver

The approver of this document is the **Executive Leadership Team.**

## Document location

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## Equality, diversity and inclusion (EDI) screening

This policy has been reviewed by the author in accordance with the ICRIR EDI Screening process.

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## References

## Document history

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## Foreword

As the Chief Commissioner of the Independent Commission for Reconciliation and Information Recovery (ICRIR), it is important to me that I personally present our finalised Disability Action Plan for 2024-2029. The legacy of the Troubles/Conflict has left a significant number of people with disabilities. Thousands of people were injured during the conflict, many of whom continue to live with the physical and psychological scars of that period.

Additionally, it is estimated that around two in five of Northern Ireland's population has experienced Troubles/Conflict-related trauma. This underscores the critical need for our services to be accessible to all, particularly those with disabilities.

Furthermore, Northern Ireland has an ageing population, with associated health issues becoming increasingly prevalent. The number of people aged 65 and over is projected to increase by a quarter between 2021 and 2031. Many in this demographic are also victims and survivors of the Troubles/Conflict, and their unique needs must be addressed as part of our commitment to inclusivity.

Our work is grounded in the values of integrity, impartiality, openness, accountability, and respect. These principles guide us as we strive to create an environment where all individuals, regardless of their abilities, can access our services with confidence. We are dedicated to not only removing barriers but also proactively ensuring that people with disabilities feel supported and empowered. As an employer, we are committed to fostering an inclusive workplace. The Commission is dedicated to providing reasonable adjustments throughout the recruitment process and during employment to support our staff members with both visible and invisible disabilities.

This Disability Action Plan has been shaped by the stakeholder feedback received during our public consultation. I extend my sincere gratitude to everyone who contributed their insights and recommendations. Your input has been instrumental in

helping us refine our approach and strengthen our commitment to equality and inclusion.

This plan is a living document, reflecting our ongoing commitment to improving accessibility and inclusivity. We will review and update it to ensure it remains relevant and effective.

I invite all stakeholders, partners, and members of the public to engage with us as we implement this plan. Together, we can build a Commission that truly serves all people, reflecting the rich diversity of Northern Ireland.

Sir Declan Morgan

Chief Commissioner

## **1. Executive Summary**

1.1 As Chief Executive Officer of the Independent Commission for Reconciliation and Information Recovery (ICRIR), I present our finalised Disability Action Plan for 2024-2029. It is important to me that the Commission in all it does is inclusive and accessible to all – both our staff and those we interact with. This plan underscores our commitment to inclusivity, equality, and safeguarding the rights of people with disabilities.

1.2 Under Section 49A of the Disability Discrimination Act 1995 (DDA 1995), as amended by Article 5 of the Disability Discrimination (Northern Ireland) Order 2006, ICRIR is mandated to promote positive attitudes towards people with disabilities and encourage their participation in public life.

1.3 Our plan has been shaped by the feedback received during the public consultation phase. We are dedicated to both meeting our statutory obligations and creating an inclusive environment for all.

1.4 Our key commitments include:

- **Accessible Infrastructure:** We have ensured that all our public spaces
- are accessible to people with disabilities.
- **Comprehensive Training:** We are providing comprehensive disability
- awareness and equality legislation training for all staff and officeholders.
- **Accessible Formats:** We have ensured that all public documents and
- information are available in accessible formats.
- **Assistive Technologies:** We are offering assistive technologies and
- support services to facilitate participation in our public meetings and
- events.
- **Engagement and Consultation:** We will actively seek input from people
- with disabilities and their representative and support groups to inform our
- decision-making processes.
- **Representation:** We are committed to promoting the representation of
- disabled people within our workforce and decision-making processes.

1.5 Our approach is underpinned by a Trauma and Resiliency Informed Model (TRIM), which ensures our work supports the unique needs of families, victims and survivors affected by the Troubles/Conflicts. We have structured our work into three stages—Support, Information Recovery, and Findings—to provide a comprehensive, person-centred approach.

1.6 To ensure compliance with Section 49 Duties of the DDA 1995, we have implemented measures to foster positive attitudes towards people with disabilities and encourage their participation in public life. This includes mandatory disability awareness training for all staff and inclusive recruitment practices.

1.7 We are committed to continuously reviewing and updating this action plan to ensure it remains relevant and effective. Our goal is to build a Commission that truly serves all people, reflecting the diversity of Northern Ireland.

Tristan Pedelty

Chief Executive Officer and Commissioner

June 2024

## 2. Overview of the Commission and its Functions

### Overview

2.1 The Independent Commission for Reconciliation and Information Recovery (ICRIR) is an independent organisation established to recover information about Troubles/Conflict-related deaths and serious injuries to families, victims and survivors and promote reconciliation.

2.2 We are continuing to build the Commission (ICRIR) following the commencement of our powers on 1 May 2024. We are a values-led organisation. We operate with integrity, impartiality, openness, accountability, and respect, as set out in our Code of Conduct, which aligns with the Seven Principles of Public Life. Within this it is inherent that we work to promote positive attitudes and participation from people with disabilities.

2.3 This is reflected in our fair and open recruitment processes. We encourage people across all ages, genders, race, religion or belief, political opinion, sex, sexual orientation, people with disabilities, those who are married and in civil partnerships and those who are not, those with dependents and those without, to join us and help contribute to delivering our mission. This aligns with Section 75 of the Northern Ireland Act 1998 and the Disability Discrimination Act 1995, ensuring relevance and inclusivity in our action plan.

2.4 Our key commitments to meeting our disability duties are:

- We will implement accessible infrastructure in our public spaces.
- We will provide comprehensive disability awareness and equality legislation training for all staff, recruitment and selection teams and officeholders to promote understanding and inclusivity.
- We will ensure the availability of accessible formats for public documents and information.
- We will offer assistive technologies and support services, such as sign language interpreters, to facilitate participation in public meetings and events.

- As part of our general feedback and consultation mechanisms, we will seek relevant input from people with disabilities and support groups and organisations representing them through our feedback and engagement mechanisms.
- We will operate our recruitment practices to be open and non discriminatory and will monitor our new appointments and total workforce against diversity characteristics.
- Through our workforce and wider evidence-gathering and engagement, we will promote the perspectives of people with disabilities in decision-making processes. This includes ensuring their inclusion in shaping policies and practices.

## **Functions**

2.5 Our functions are set out in legislation in summary, they are to:

- Investigate deaths and other serious Trouble/Conflict-related incidents, where requested, including deciding whether a criminal investigation should be part of the investigation.
- As part of investigations, individuals are given the opportunity to make personal statements on how the incidents have affected them.
- We require that any information necessary for our work is provided by Police Service of Northern Ireland (PSNI), the security services, the Northern Ireland Office, or any other public body, and any person must come to the Commission (ICRIR) to provide information.
- Use police powers, where appropriate, to secure evidence, arrest, and question suspects.
- Produce and publish reports setting out the findings that have been determined from the investigations and addressing questions that have been raised by those making the request.

- Refer deaths and other serious Trouble/Conflict-related incidents to prosecutors, where appropriate.

Produce a record of deaths caused by incidents during the Trouble/Conflicts and strive to promote reconciliation through all we do.

## **Who are we, and what we do**

2.6 ICRIR has been set up to investigate deaths and serious injury during the Troubles/Conflicts, with an emphasis on providing information to victims, survivors, and families, including seeking to answer any specific questions they have. It will produce authoritative reports setting out the circumstances of the case, giving families, victims, and survivors the opportunity to make a personal statement about the impact of the events on them.

2.7 We have embedded a Trauma and Resiliency Informed Model (TRIM) in how ICRIR undertakes its investigations. We are not a traditional law enforcement body and can follow different practices that will better support families, victims, and survivors.

2.8 We will undertake our work in three main stages through three interlocking teams:

**Stage 1: Support.** This is the start of an individual's journey with the Commission. Dedicated Case Support workers will help individuals and families better understand how the Commission may be able help them (and what it will not be able to do), the different options available to them and the information the Commission will need to move to the next stage. While this is the first stage of the journey, that support will be available throughout the entire process. The case support team will provide a single point of contact and consistent, objective support for the requesting individual and family throughout their time with the Commission. They will respond to any questions and provide people with the space, time and information to make decisions that are right for them and the information recovery outcomes they seek.

**Stage 2: Information Recovery.** In this next stage, a team of investigators will gather information and evidence and seek to answer the questions the requesting individual and family have raised. The team will need a range of skill sets, to comb through archives, interview witnesses and secure evidence. Investigators will work across a range of different cases at any one time to maximise progress and efficiency. Each investigation will be overseen by a Senior Investigative Officer. Investigators will be able to require access to all material from any previous fact-finding and determination processes, as well as all material held by the state, no matter how sensitive. They may also undertake new investigative work. Investigative teams will follow defined terms of reference for each investigation, which will start with a scoping exercise, based on an approach to cold case reviews that follows with internationally recognised best practice. This will inform the Commissioner for Investigation's decision on which of three investigative routes will be most appropriate for the case. All three routes will embed the features required for an ECHR compliant investigation.

**Stage 3: Findings.** The Chief Commissioner is responsible for the production of reports at the conclusion of investigations. In this work, they are supported by the Findings Team. An officer from the team will be assigned to each investigation from an early stage and will independently challenge the direction of investigative work. As the investigation nears its conclusion, the Commissioner for Investigations and team will present their evidence to the Chief Commissioner, who will assess and evaluate it to determine findings. Further investigative work may be requested. Reports will be produced to record the findings that have been made and to seek to address the requesting individual's questions.

### **3. Arrangements for Assessing**

Compliance with Section 49A Disability Duties 1995

#### **Overview**

3.1 In December 2023, ICRIR was officially designated by the Equality Commission for Northern Ireland as a public authority, with duties to promote positive attitudes towards people with disabilities and encourage their participation in public life. Below are the specific areas that our actions focus on and the steps that ICRIR takes, and will take, to discharge these duties. This also addresses the needs of an ageing population and associated health issues in Northern Ireland, recognising the number of people with disabilities who are victims/survivors of the Troubles/Conflicts.

#### **Awareness and skills improvement**

3.2 Disability Awareness Training: This training aims to foster empathy, understanding, and positive attitudes towards people with disabilities. In particular, understanding the connection between the ICRIR's work and those with a range of disabilities – visual and hidden – is an important part of the Commission's wider approach to understanding the needs of those who may come to the Commission or with whom the Commission will need to interact as part of its investigations. It is mandatory for both existing and new staff (and is refreshed on an annual basis), including those participating in recruitment and selection processes. The sessions seek to raise awareness of disability-related issues, cultivate empathy and understanding towards people with disabilities, and align with the Commission's commitment to adopting a TRIM approach. ICRIR has initiated planning for training sessions on disability awareness for new staff and is in the process of implementing comprehensive induction and ongoing training related to disability awareness and equality.

#### **Diversity in decision-making**

3.3 Representation and Consultation: The Non-Executive Commissioners were recruited through the UK Public Appointments process, and a recruitment agency was used, including a remit, to seek a diverse range of candidates. For all roles ICRIR advertises, reasonable adjustments are offered for interviews, and from March 2024,

candidates with a disability are able to indicate if they wish to have a guaranteed interview if they meet minimum criteria. Roles in wider consultative groups, such as the External Assurance Group, have been advertised openly to support diverse representation.

3.4 Inclusive Community Engagement: ICRIR seeks to engage inclusively with a wide range of stakeholders, including disability support organisations. We proactively communicate with specific disability organisations to raise awareness of the Commission and offer a dialogue. Outreach meetings are considered with a view to the location, format, attendees, and content being tailored to meet the needs of those attending.

### **Accessibility of the Commission**

3.5 Accessible Information and Communication: ICRIR provides accessible information and communication for people with disabilities upon request and makes this offer known on its website and in the text of each document. The website includes an accessibility statement which sets out the current online provision and testing: Accessibility statement – Independent Commission for Reconciliation & Information Recovery ([icir.independent-inquiry.uk](http://icir.independent-inquiry.uk)) We are currently improving our website functionality to include some audio/visual content in addition to written text.

### **Accessible spaces and infrastructure to support this**

3.6 We have designed our public spaces and meeting approaches with accessibility in mind, seeking to ensure that all individuals can engage effectively with the Commission.

### **Participation in public life**

3.7 It is important that everyone has the opportunity to be involved in all aspects of public life. The Commission's advisory or external groups are an opportunity to ensure a wide range of diversity is brought into the Commission's decision-making. While some roles may require specialist skills or experience, positions on the groups are advertised openly (alongside some co-opted appointments), and diversity will be monitored. Practices for filling any vacancies or adding further members will be tested to minimise

and remove barriers to involvement. The appointment for non-executive commissioners (public officer holders) is an open and fair competition, in line with the UK Government Code on Public Appointments, and is regulated by the Commissioner for Public Appointments, ensuring fairness and openness.

3.8 As above, feedback, engagement and consultation from the Commission about policymaking are open and accessible, and disability organisations are specifically made aware of the initiatives so they can consider responding.

3.9 Responsibility for implementing, reviewing, and evaluating this disability action plan rests with the Director for Strategy, Planning and Performance.

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**Telephone: 028 90 362006**

3.10 If you require this plan in an alternative format, we will provide an alternative format (such as in large print, braille, audio etc.), please get in touch on the above postal or email address to request your requirements.

3.11 We will submit to the Equality Commission an annual progress report on implementing this plan and carry out a five-year review of this plan or plans submitted to the Equality Commission over the five-year review period.

3.12 A copy of this plan, our annual progress report to the Equality Commission (contained within our Annual Report and Accounts) and our five-year review of this plan will be made available on our website:

## 4. Action Measures

Outlined below are the measures that we propose to take over the period of this five-year plan, together with performance indicators that go beyond the requirements of the Disability Discrimination Act 1995 to ensure comprehensive disability inclusion.

### Measures to promote positive attitudes towards disabled people and encourage the participation of disabled people in public life:

Action Measures	Function	Timescale & Performance	Responsibility
4.1 We will install accessible infrastructure in the public areas of our premises.	To ensure that all our locations have infrastructure that accommodates accessibility needs.	Initial measures have been initiated, with completion targeted for June 2024. Additional sites will undergo similar enhancements, with completion scheduled by October 2024.	Chief Operating Officer
4.2 We will ensure focus on accessibility which: a. extends to our operational sites and b. off-site meeting locations.	a. We will conduct assessments at operational sites to ensure accessibility for our staff. b. Additionally, plans will be formulated to ensure that offsite meeting locations	Further requirements and actions, such as the installation of hearing loops, will be reviewed in December 2024 for potential inclusion in the 25/26 annual plan.	Chief Operating Officer

	are also accessible to individuals with disabilities		
4.3 We will provide disability awareness training for staff to promote understanding and inclusivity.	Training will be rolled out from the summer of 2024 and will continue for onboarding staff thereafter. include disability awareness and disability equality legislation for staff and office holders.	Available from 1 May 2024 includes a training package.  Regular all-staff training sessions are to be run biannually.  Audit of training completion at induction to be carried out in December 2024 and annually.	Chief Operating Officer (supported by HR Director)
4.4 We will ensure the availability of accessible formats for public documents and information	We will provide an alternative format (large print, braille, audio, etc.) upon request.	Available from 1 May 2024 Review of take-up and other requests by 1 May 2025	Director of Strategy, Planning and Performance (supported by Director of Outreach)
4.5 We facilitate wider and easier engagement with the Commission.	We will offer assistive technologies and support services to facilitate participation in	The main requirements are to be available from 1 July 2024 at the latest, with a wider set available through	Director of Strategy, Planning and Performance (supported by Director of Outreach)

	public meetings and events.	the provider from 1 September 2024.  Promotion of availability by December 2024 and refreshed annually. Review of take-up and provision by October 2025	
4.6 We seek input from disabled support services through consultation mechanisms.	We are engaging and will continue seeking input from disabled support services through our consultation mechanisms.	Audit of groups representing disabled people's interests in consultation / engagement / information lists to be undertaken by the end of December 2024. Annual data monitoring of the proportion of responses from disabled people and groups representing their interests.	Director of Strategy, Planning and Performance (supported by Director of Outreach)
4.7 We will promote the representation of disabled people in decision-making processes.	Next Non-executive Commissioners appointed through public appointments process emphasising	June – November 2027  March – October 2024	Chief Executive Officer (Head of Governance)

	<p>diversity of candidates</p> <p>welcome and remove barriers</p> <p>Appointment processes for membership of advisory groups to include elements of open and fair selection, with membership monitored against protected characteristics</p>		
<p>4.8 We will promote the representation of disabled people in decision-making processes.</p>	<p>Provision of the Guaranteed Interview Scheme.</p> <p>We will work to obtain Level 3 of the Disability Confident Scheme</p>	<p>Update for roles from 1 March 2024.</p> <p>Workforce diversity data, including disability, is to be reviewed by ExCo and Remco annually.</p> <p>Level 1 to be achieved by 1 March 2025 Level 3 to be achieved by 1 March 2028</p>	<p>Chief Operating Officer (HR Director)</p>