



Background

Access for All is a network of individuals who have lived experiences of disabilities, local disability organisations and community stakeholders, which focus on continually improving universal access of the local built environment for all people irrespective of size, age and ability, on an equal basis with others. Established in the 1990s, members of Access For All have collectively advocated for improved accessibility to public spaces through involvement in Make Way Day, Galway Social Inclusion Week, consultations with Galway City Council and businesses to ensure universal access and the provision of accessible information. Together we aim to promote the United Nations Convention on the Rights of People with Disabilities (UNCRPD) and work towards developing Galway City as a Disability Friendly City.

Access for All, in collaboration with Galway City Community Network welcomes the opportunity to submit to the Galway City Local Economic and Community Development Plan (LECP) 2023-2029. Despite progress made in recent years, people with disabilities (PWD) still face additional challenges and barriers in both to participation in the cultural, economic, and social life of the city. These barriers to inclusion, equality and support are barriers to our rights, and we ask that Galway City Council embeds the United Nations Convention on the Rights of Persons with Disabilities (UNCRPD) within the new LECP to give due strategic regard to this important human rights instrument which will be domesticated into Irish law.

Ireland ratified the UN CRPD with legally binding obligations to 'undertake to ensure and promote the full realisation of all human rights and fundamental freedoms for all persons with disabilities without discrimination of any kind on the basis of disability' (Article 4)¹. According to the Public Sector Duty Act² Galway City Council has an obligation to implement the UNCRPD. This will ensure the full inclusion and equality of disabled people in the cultural, social and economic life of Galway City.

Submission

This submission is built on the lived experience and expertise of Access for All members (including Disability Federation of Ireland, Galway City Partnership, and GCCN) and their recommendations for the inclusive development of Galway City's economy, culture and communities are presented thematically under each of the five high level goals that will inform the forthcoming plan. The themes of the recommendations are then linked to the relevant rights, UN Sustainable Development Goals, and International Agreements to illustrate how the integration of the recommendations into the LECP can achieve Public Sector Duty in Galway City.

¹ <https://nda.ie/Disability-overview/Legislation/UN-Convention-on-the-Rights-of-Persons-with-Disabilities.html>

² Irish Human Rights and Equality Commission Act 2014

Goal 1. A world-class, creative city region.

Accessibility to venues is of crucial importance if PWD are to be included as audiences for the arts in Galway. Access to the arts and cultural participation provides critical social engagement for people with disability, enabling them to improve their rights to culture and quality of life (Yoon, 2021:1). Including PWD in cultural life ensures that they feel included and welcomed as full members of society³.

- Efforts to ensure accessibility need to include people with lived experience at the earliest stage possible to prevent these measures from failing. An example given was of a ramp failing to support wheelchair access to an event. Reaching out to people with experience as consultants can help ensure that events are proofed for accessibility. Ensuring that venues are accessible should be supported by policy and guidance. Funding conditions may be a way of supporting this action going forward.
- Lack of a full time dedicated Access Officer has an impact on cultural events supported by Galway City Council. The example was given of Heritage Week where a member was informed by email that the events were not considered on terms of accessibility due to complexities in practice.
- The representation of PWD was also discussed. It is important that resources and initiatives are funded to support the representation of PWD in the arts, whether that is as performers, creators, or social enterprises. Representation in the arts is of equal importance, allowing people to give voice to experience, and change perceptions, expectations, and attitudes by providing insight through cultural expression⁴This is vital given the high levels of discrimination⁵ and access issues generated by a lack of attention to the social dimension of disability⁶.
- Any education that supports the creative sector in Galway should ensure that it is proofed for accessibility and inclusion. Educational opportunities should not be targeted at one particular group without considering if a) it is necessary or b) the intersectional nature of disability.

| Goal 1 Themes | Relevant Articles of UNCRPD |
|----------------|---|
| Accessibility | <p>Article 3: Non-discrimination; full and effective participation and inclusion in society; Equality of Opportunity; Accessibility.</p> <p>Article 4: Realisation of Rights; Universal Design</p> <p>Article 9: Accessibility</p> |
| Representation | <p>Article 3: Respect for Difference and acceptance of PSD as part of human diversity.</p> |

³ Laaksonen (2010) Making culture accessible Access, participation, and cultural provision in the context of cultural rights in Europe. Council of Europe.

⁴ Yoon, Jung. (2021). Cultural strategy for people with disability in Australia. International Journal of Cultural Policy. 28. 1-17. 10.1080/10286632.2021.1916003. 8. 1-17. 10.1080/10286632.2021.1916003.

⁵ [Equality and Discrimination 2019 - CSO - Central Statistics Office](#)

⁶ Yoon, Jung. (2021). Cultural strategy for people with disability in Australia. International Journal of Cultural Policy

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| | Article 8: Awareness raising Article 30: Participation in Cultural Life |
| Participation in Planning | Article 3: Participation and Inclusion Article 30: Participation in Cultural Life Article 33: Participation in Planning Processes |
| Education | Article 24: Inclusive Education |

Goal 2. An innovative city

People with disabilities have a human right to work and the positive effects of gainful employment on the health and well-being of people with disabilities are well documented. However, the employment rate of people with disabilities is low compared to people without disabilities, making them vulnerable to the negative consequences of unemployment and poverty⁷. Furthermore, Ireland’s rate of employment of people with disabilities is almost 20% lower than the EU average of 50.8%⁸. People with a disability are also paid less⁹, experience discrimination when seeking work, and are less likely to secure high-skilled positions¹⁰. This marginalization from economic activity cannot be ignored as Galway seeks to drive the innovative and sustainable development of its economy. The following recommendations can be part of the solution to this social problem.

- If businesses are being encouraged to be innovative, then consideration needs to be given to accessibility, inclusion, and consideration for PWD’s as both customers, or consumers, and employees. There is potential for businesses that recycle or reuse materials to make space for PWD as employees or work with partner organisations in strategic partnerships to drive opportunities for employment conditions may be a useful tool in this regard. An example of this is the company Circular Blu which translates medical waste into tote bags ¹¹, addressing both an environmental and social challenge.
- Strategic partnerships between local agencies and services can help drive the capacity of businesses and services to employ PWD, particularly as we transition to a green way of living.
- Galway City has Tech companies who may have benefited from the technological surge during the pandemic. They also have either Corporate Social Responsibility Funds or Tech for Social Good models where they may provide support and provide mentoring to employment programmes, community groups and social enterprises.

⁷ Chang et al. (2020) Company Characteristics, Disability Inclusion Practices, and Employment of People with Disabilities in the Post COVID-19 Job Economy: A Cross Sectional Survey Study.

⁸ European Disability Forum Poverty and Social Inclusion of People with Disabilities: European Human Rights Report, Issue 4 2020.

⁹ NDA, Factsheet 2: Employment Briefing Information, May 2019.

¹⁰ ESRI and IHREC, Monitoring decent work in Ireland, https://www.esri.ie/system/files/publications/BKMNEXT414%20%281%29_0.pdf

¹¹ Veleva (2018) Corporate-entrepreneur collaborations to advance a circular economy & Bruyère, S. & Filiberto, D. (2013). The green economy and job creation: Inclusion of people with disabilities. International Journal of Green Economics.

- This needs to be supported with policy and guidance¹², and funding to support the integration of accessibility and inclusion as principles into the economy of the future. This can help address work cultures, and the disposition of employers towards PWD, helping address discrimination within the labour market. An example of this is universal aptitude tests, and interview processes that act as barriers to PWD as potentially loyal and valuable members of staff.
- Policy and guidance can also support businesses to adapt working practices for PWD, for example adjusting work hours structures to allow for someone who may need more frequent breaks. This notion that there is only one way of doing things to fit all radically needs to be changed. An individual might shine in a role but may need a little extra thoughtfulness and support to preform they're duties and to be safe and healthy in doing so.
- There are grants available to people to encourage them to employ people with disabilities for example the Wage Subsidy Scheme, and the Workplace Adaption Grant etc. and these provisions should be advertised widely.
- PWD need targeted supports and resources to encourage them to start their own businesses. These supports must be holistic and sustainable and include training and supports necessary to move into the circular economy.
- Galway City Council sponsored a new Accessibility, Diversity, and Inclusion Award open to all Galway Chamber members and non-members. Supporting and building on initiatives such as this can help drive innovation that supports inclusion and participation in business. For example, the very innovative business, ByoWave, co-founded by a person with a disability won the award for their accessible and customisable gaming controller for disabled gamers¹³.

| Goal 2 Themes | Relevant Articles of UNCRPD |
|--------------------------------|---|
| Participation in Economic Life | <p>Article 3: Article 3: Non-discrimination; full and effective participation and inclusion in society; Equality of Opportunity; Accessibility.</p> <p>Article 5: Equality & non-discrimination</p> <p>Article 27: Work and Employment</p> <p>Article 28: Adequate Standard of Living</p> <p>Article 4: Realisation of rights and Universal Design</p> <p>Article 8: Awareness Raising</p> <p>Article 9: Accessibility</p> |

Goal 3. An equal and inclusive city

The LECP must make reference to the UNCRPD if social inclusion and equality and the obligations of Public Sector Duty are to be achieved. It is noted that in the Issues Paper, disability is recognized as a cross cutting priority, and while it is true that the experience of disability intersects with many actions relevant to the

¹² UNCRPD (2006)

¹³ [Galway Chamber Business Awards 2021 - Galway Chamber](#) and [ByoWave - Home](#)

LECP, and to diverse circumstances such as age of acquisition, membership of ethnic groups, sexual orientation and gender, there is a commonality of experience that unites the group. For this reason, it is recommended that PWD become a target group so that the universal issues that affect the community, such as access, support and inclusion in public life are adequately addressed for all. A number of actions are needed to progress towards this goal.

- Galway City must also continue to support, promote, and build on local public awareness campaigns that highlight barriers to universal access including IWA's Back in 5, Not My Independence Day, Think Ahead Think Housing, and Think Ahead Build Accessible¹⁴; NCBI's Change Your View, Seeing Your Career, Accessible Voting and Clear Our Paths¹⁵, and DFI's Make Way Day¹⁶ and Purple Lights¹⁷ campaigns.
- The city is in need of both a social inclusion, and access strategy to provide a road map to equality and the meaningful inclusion of marginalized communities in our city. Without these strategies any action remains ad hoc, and the continued exclusion of PWD from social life remains a risk.
- A lack of personnel to support social inclusion, and access within the council is hampering efforts to move this issue forward. For example, recent social inclusion weeks failed to generate activity as the burden of production fell upon marginalized groups who were expected to generate events with insufficient tokenistic funding. Resources must be given to this work if Galway is to achieve its goals as a city that is equal and inclusive. This should include the provision of a fulltime Access Officer to drive this mission forward.
- Access for All is a valuable point of contact for decision-makers in services, and agencies at a local level, and can coordinate action on issues like employment, and accessibility, while networking to provide peer support. This coordinated approach can help drive inclusion in public, social and economic life which is fundamental to a fulfilling life. However, Access for All is constrained by lack of formal support from a full time Access Officer, a venue in which to base operations, and sustainable funding.
- The establishment of the Wicklow Model of public participation can provide an opportunity for PWD to influence meaningful change for their community in Galway City. This model entails the setup of a disability inclusion steering committee (DISC) within the city council that includes representatives with lived experience and senior personnel from all Galway City Council departments that are relevant to actions that promote the rights of PWD.
- The Gold Star Initiative can support access to public life for people with disabilities by promoting accessible business, service, and agency environments. It is important that this initiative is sustainably funded as this will allow for the project to be progressed in meaningful ways over time. This particularly important as building relationships and supporting the development of businesses and services capacity to be accessible will take time, as will the progression of businesses through the standards, and the regular implementation of audits and recognition

¹⁴ [Our Campaigns - Irish Wheelchair Association \(iwa.ie\)](http://www.iwa.ie)

¹⁵ [Latest Campaigns - NCBI](http://www.ncbi.ie)

¹⁶ [Make Way Day | Home Page](http://www.makewayday.ie)

¹⁷ [Latest News | Disability Federation of Ireland \(disability-federation.ie\)](http://www.disability-federation.ie)

processes. This initiative can be embedded within the work of the DISC and further inclusion and participation in the social, cultural, and economic life of Galway.

- The concept of universal design links Galway City’s Development Plan to the LECP, and the two must operate in holistic synergy. This is because the built environment interacts with the cultural, and economic participation, independent living, and social inclusion of PWD. Galway should integrate universal design in public spaces in order to fulfill the requirements of the Barcelona Declaration. The city center is an often-inaccessible place, particularly with regards to access to public transport hubs, footpath, and pedestrian crossings. Available funding should be used to remedy this shortcoming and demonstrate that Galway is a forward-looking City able to include diverse mobility needs of aging, disabled, and family groups. This action should be preceded by an updated accessibility audit.
- There should be universal access to mobility aids held by the city council strategically in public amenities and spaces. It is of crucial importance that these aids are accessible and can be booked by the general public, rather than through specific organizations which could limit access to these vital resources.
- Any measures that are taken to advance the circumstances of PWD in Galway need to be measurable, monitored and experienced by this community in Galway City. Consultation fatigue is a major issue and feedback on progress and milestones achieved is essential in order to overcome this challenge.

| Goal 3 Themes | Relevant Articles of UNCRPD |
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| Awareness and Inclusion | <p>Article 3: Non-discrimination; full and effective participation and inclusion in society; Equality of Opportunity; Accessibility.</p> <p>Article 4: Realisation of Rights; Universal Design</p> <p>Article 9: Accessibility</p> <p>Article 5: Equality & non-discrimination</p> |
| Participation in Planning and Policy Development | <p>Article 29: Participation in Public and Political Life</p> <p>Article 33: Participation in Planning and Monitoring Processes.</p> |
| Universal Design | <p>Article 3: Non-discrimination; full and effective participation and inclusion in society; Equality of Opportunity; Accessibility.</p> <p>Article 4: Realisation of Rights; Universal Design</p> <p>Article 9: Accessibility</p> <p>Barcelona Declaration</p> |
| Measurable Progress and Feedback | <p>Article 33: Participation in Planning and monitoring processes.</p> <p>Article 28: Adequate Standard of Living and Social Protection</p> |

Goal 4. A sustainable, resilient urban environment that is the regional capital of the West

- There must be locally accessible, rather than centralized recycling facilities, and bring banks and other amenities should also be local to take into consideration the logistics of people’s access to recycling facilities.
- Opportunities for PWD to get involved in green activities must be supported with adaptations and resources, such as community gardens with raised beds to enable maximum participation.

| Goal 4 Themes | Relevant Articles of UNCRPD, SDG’s & Declarations |
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| Recycling Practices and Facilities | SDG 12: Responsible Production and Consumption Article 4: Universal Design Article 9: Accessibility Barcelona Declaration |
| Green Community Activity | Article 4: Realisation of Rights; Universal Design Article 9: Accessibility Article 24: Inclusive Education |

Goal 5. A city that promotes the health and well-being of all its people

Health is linked to social inclusion and social inclusion is linked to accessibility measures and the actions that are discussed under all the previous goals. Full participation in the cultural economic and social life of the city is a must if this goal is to be achieved. There are additional actions needed to ensure that the health and wellbeing of PWD is achieved in Galway City.

- The Local Area Co-ordination (LAC) model should be considered as a means to support PWD to participate in services, supports and community activities community¹⁸. This is an initiative in the UK that mainstreams disability inclusion and integration and increases communities’ capacity to respond to the needs of disabled people. The benefits of this model have included informal and peer support networks, more integrated services, reduced isolation for individuals, families and carers, engagement with hard-to-reach people, who may not link in with any services, through home visits. In parts of the United Kingdom the Local Area Co-ordinator is based within the Local Authority¹⁹.
- While the vast majority of people with disabilities live in the community, over 90% of disabled people are not funded by the disability health budget and primarily engage with mainstream supports through general community health and social services like primary care, mental health, neurological and acute hospital services. Integrated community-based health and social care supports are required to be accessible if 90% of disabled people are supported through general

¹⁸ [Local Area Coordination \(lacnetwork.org\)](http://lacnetwork.org)

¹⁹ [Local Area Coordinators – City of York Council](#)

community health and social services. They include: access to counselling and mental health services, GP surgeries and pharmacies, occupational therapy and physiotherapy, health and wellbeing and community integration programmes, self-advocacy training, peer support groups, family support services, assistive and other enabling technologies, and access to local rehabilitation facilities, home share for short-term respite.

- The participation of children with disabilities in sports and recreational activities promotes inclusion, minimises deconditioning, optimises physical functioning, and enhances overall well-being. In a recent study less than 20% of children and adolescents with disabilities are achieving the minimum activity levels. It found that children with disabilities required more family and peer support to be physically active compared with the general population ²⁰. The report states that ‘strategic investment is clearly needed to accelerate progress and extend the benefits of physical activity to all children, including those living in social disadvantage and children with disability.
- Participating in sports is difficult due to the conditions placed on funding applications for specialist equipment which requires long term commitment from funding applicants. Life courses can change, and it would be better if equipment, spaces, and volunteers were funded on a sustainable level to ensure maximum engagement from users with varied abilities.
- Accessibility to public spaces is key if people are to get the health benefits from outdoor spaces. At present many public amenities are inaccessible due to kissing gates, or other physical barriers and hazards and there is a lack of public access to mobility aids. Universally accessible mobility aids and dedicated changing places are a must if PWD are to access public recreation and take part in outdoor activities. The development of accessible multi-use community facilities should be supported by Galway City Council. Many mainstream sports facilities in the City and suburbs have their roots in small voluntary organisations. It is beyond the reach of many of these clubs to immediately upgrade their facilities to make them accessible to all. Multi-use community facilities would provide greater opportunities for people with disabilities to be involved in mainstream sports clubs and groups in their community.
- As well as ensuring access to mainstream sports facilities and tourist attractions, people with disabilities should have the opportunity to participate in disability-specific sports in the city. Galway Sports Partnership as well as disability-specific clubs, such as Galway Speeders, and individual disabled athletes should be supported to ensure they can continue to provide these opportunities.

| Goal 5 Themes | Relevant Articles of UNCRPD |
|-------------------------------------|--|
| Access to Local Supports & Services | <p>Article 3: Non-discrimination; full and effective participation and inclusion in society; Equality of Opportunity; Accessibility.</p> <p>Article 4: Realisation of Rights; Universal Design</p> |

²⁰ [PA-Report-card-summary-final.pdf \(activehealthykidsireland.org\)](https://www.activehealthykidsireland.org/pa-report-card-summary-final.pdf)

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|--|---|
| | Article 5: Equality & non-discrimination Article 9: Accessibility Article 25: Health |
| Participation in Healthy Activities | Article 3: Non-discrimination; full and effective participation and inclusion in society; Equality of Opportunity; Accessibility. Article 30: Participation in Sport Article 4: Realisation of Rights; Universal Design Article 5: Equality & non-discrimination Article 9: Accessibility Article 25: Health |

LECP Flagship Six: Develop and Monitor Implementation of a Rolling Action Plan for the City that Achieves the Standards set in the UN CRPD

This submission concludes with an affirmation of the importance of building on and expanding Flagship Six as outlined in the Galway City Local Economic and Community Plan Implementation Plan 2020-2021 through continued development and implementation of actions, including the recommendations presented here. This will develop the ‘capacity to achieve the standards established in the UN CRPD, in the public, private and community sectors.

For this Flagship to be successful it needs adequate resources, and involvement from all of the agency partners listed in the Implementation Plan to gain sufficient momentum. It is the recommendation of Access for All that this issue is addressed in the forthcoming LECP, with the continued support of key lead partners including DFI, Galway City Council, HSE, Tusla, NUIG Disability Law and Policy, DFI, GCP, GCCN, local disability organisations and self-advocacy groups, Galway Council of Trade Unions, GRETB, Galway Chamber of Commerce and DEASP. The Wicklow Model (DISC) should be seen as an important component of this work.