

Briefing Paper: National Disability Strategy

Key documents

National Disability Strategy – [full document](#)

Related documents

Department for Work and Pensions, The [Health and Disability Green Paper](#)

HoC Work and Pensions Committee, [Disability Employment Gap Report](#)

Introduction

The National Disability Strategy is a cross-government plan with an ambition to transform the lives of people with disabilities. The strategy contains a huge number of actions (around 120) on everything from research, transport and employment to technology, justice and the arts.

Part 1 sets out practical steps the government will take in the short-term, part 2 sets out the longer-term vision for designing and delivering services and part 3 focusses on accountability for delivering the strategy across government. While many of the commitments are welcome, on its own the strategy is unlikely to address the long standing social and financial inequalities faced by many people with disabilities.

Briefing

Accessibility – the Strategy includes several commitments around improving accessibility with a focus on public services. A neurodiversity training toolkit will be rolled out to staff in the justice system in 2022 (p.32) while the Ministry of Housing, Communities & Local Government (MHCLG) will set out plans to improve the delivery of accessible new homes by December 2021 (p.36). Steps to make transport more accessible includes an accessibility audit of all mainline railway stations in Great Britain to inform future investment (p.42) and a requirement for all busses to provide audible and visual announcements (p.44).

Plans for a new ‘Centre for Assistive and Accessible Technology’ with £1 million of funding to ensure more effective awareness raising, training and support for disabled people to use the technology (p.97).

Awareness – learning from similar campaigns around loneliness and mental health, the strategy sets out plans for a public awareness campaign to tackle stigma and promote the contributions of people with disabilities (p.29).

Employment & Welfare – a focus on improving support for people to start and stay-in work where appropriate. Commitment to consult on workforce disability reporting for large employers, exploring mandated reporting as we see with gender pay gap reporting (p.56). Plans to review and improve Access to Work scheme (p.51) and the Disability Confident scheme (p.54). Introduction of up to 1-week unpaid carers’ leave across Great Britain by the end of 2021 (p.59).

DWP looking at reducing the frequency of repeat Work Capability Assessments (WCA) and Personal Independence Payment (PIP) assessments where a change of award is unlikely (p.80). No commitment or comment on Universal Credit or the planned removal of the £20 per week uplift introduced during the pandemic.

Adult social care reform – The Department of Health and Social Care (DHSC) plans to work with disabled people and wider sector on social care reform and reiterate plans to bring forward a proposal for reforming adult social care in 2021 (p.87). Adult social care is vital for many people with neurological conditions who need and deserve clarity around how reforms will better support them.

Data and research – the Strategy commits to establishing a disability data working group to look at health and social care datasets and address data gaps along with new funding for research to improve the quality of life of people with multiple long-term conditions (p.88). Commits to a multi-year programme to improve the availability, quality, relevance and comparability of government disability data (p.94). The Office of National Statistics (ONS) will also conduct regular disability surveys from January 2022 (p.94)

Autism – plans to expand the Learning Disabilities Mortality Review (LeDeR) programme to include autistic people by March 2022 DHSC will evaluate training on autism and learning disability for all 2.7 million health and adult social care staff. (p.89) echoing the recent [Autism Strategy](#).

Extra Costs Taskforce – establishing a taskforce to better understand the extra costs faced by disabled people, including for specific conditions by summer 2022 (p.72).

Next steps for the Strategy – commitment to better involve people with disabilities in policy making and service delivery by 1. ensuring fairness and quality 2. considering disability from the start 3. supporting independent living 4. increasing participation 5. delivering joined up responses. (p.93).

A set of indicators and a dashboard will be developed by Summer 2022 with input from people with disabilities to track the impact of the Strategy (p.100).

Alliance thoughts

Many of the actions in the Strategy are welcome with many well overdue. However, there is a glaring omission in the Strategy around addressing the significant inequalities faced by people with neurological conditions including poverty, increased living costs and the specific challenges faced by families with disabled children. The pandemic has only increased these inequalities.

The Strategy also must be put into context, particularly in relation to welfare reform and the recent Green Paper. If the government proceed with plans to remove the £20 per week Universal Credit uplift introduced during the pandemic the actions outlined above will seem largely insignificant in the face of additional financial hardship.

What next?

The Alliance will be responding to the recently announced consultation on the Health and Disability Green Paper setting out plans for further welfare reform.

We will also continue to support calls made the Disability Benefits Consortium (DBC) and others to improve the welfare system for people with disabilities. Without the financial security to which everyone should be entitled, it is difficult to see how the lives of every person with disabilities can be meaningfully improved, even with a Strategy as wide-ranging as this.



We will also seek to engage with the Government on a number of the commitments set out in the strategy, including the extra costs commission and work to bring together key datasets.