

Law Centre NI statement on the
Northern Ireland Executive's Disability Strategy 2025-2035
March 2026

Law Centre NI (LCNI) welcomes that the Northern Ireland (NI) Executive have brought forward the draft Disability Strategy 2025-2035 for consultation.

A Disability Strategy for NI must be delivered without further delay, however it is essential that this is the right Strategy. This must include and be supported by specific strategic commitments and an action plan that will ensure disabled people and their rights are protected.

We are concerned that this draft Strategy excludes detail, measurables, targets and timelines, and we urge the Executive to acknowledge the following considerations:

- *Legislative and structural gaps: There is no legislative or structural framework for this Strategy to ensure long term accountability or oversight;*
- *Funding and delivery concerns: There is no ring-fenced budget for any of the outlined strategic commitments or initiatives. There is a lack of a clear delivery programme or an implementation plan;*
- *Lack of targets and measurement tools: There is no specific targets or timebound milestones. There is little evidence of what data will be captured to monitor trends and evaluate impact;*
- *Participation issues: There appears to be no regard for the previous work of the Co-design group, little incorporation of lived experience perspectives and little engagement with civil society.*

Anti-poverty policy advocacy is a key component of LCNI's work, therefore we would like to draw attention to the acute impact poverty has upon disabled people across NI. As such, this Strategy must be considered in the wider context of deepening poverty in NI which is reaching crisis levels: 18% of individuals (approximately 335,000) and 25% of children (approximately 115,000) live in relative poverty and 15% of individuals (approximately 279,000) and 21% of children (approximately 95,000) live in absolute poverty (all statistics are after housing costs).¹ Recently, the

¹ Department for Communities, [Northern Ireland Poverty and Income Inequality Report, 2023/24](#)

Jospeh Rowntree Foundation (JRF) have highlighted people with disabilities ‘face a higher risk of poverty, driven partly by the additional costs associated with disability and ill health, and partly by the barriers to work that disabled people face’.²

To ensure that any Strategy is sustainable and effective, we would also like to highlight the following key priorities which must be included in the final Strategy:

- *The advice sector must receive sufficient investment to allow for specialist, independent, accurate and timely intervention to be provided across NI;*
- *Welfare Mitigations and Discretionary Support are the safety net below the safety net and must be sufficiently resourced to provide this critical lifeline. Welfare Mitigations, and the resourcing of Discretionary Support, must be extended to provide an adequate provision of support to those who live in poverty;*
- *The particular needs of disabled migrants, including asylum seekers, must be acknowledged and addressed;*
- *There must be high quality, suitable, and accessible job opportunities for all individuals across NI, and specific measures to protect individuals and their rights.*

LCNI strongly recommend that the NI Executive consider and implement our key considerations and priorities in the final version of this Strategy. Disabled people and their rights must be upheld protected through a robust, detailed and resourced Strategy.

We welcome further engagement with the NI Executive and interested parties on this matter.

For further information about this statement, please contact:

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² JRF, <https://www.jrf.org.uk/sites/default/files/pdfs/poverty-in-northern-ireland-2025-d9ac1158166706e2f44b218952f546ed.pdf>