



# **Disability Action Plan 2024 - 2028**

**1.1** Under Section 49A of the Disability Discrimination Act 1995 (DDA 1995), as amended by Article 5 of the Disability Discrimination (Northern Ireland) Order 2006, InterTradeIreland has a duty to:

- Promote positive attitudes towards disabled people; and
- Encourage participation by disabled people in public life (referred to as ‘the disability duties’).

In addition, under Section 49B of the DDA 1995, InterTradeIreland is required to submit a Disability Action Plan to the Equality Commission, outlining how it proposes to meet these duties in relation to its functions.

**1.2** The Chairman, Richard Kennedy, and the Chief Executive Officer, Margaret Hearty, are fully committed to the effective implementation of both the disability duties and this Disability Action Plan. To achieve this, InterTradeIreland will:

- Allocate the necessary resources (people, time, and funding) to implement this plan effectively and, where appropriate, incorporate disability-related objectives and targets into corporate and annual operating plans;
- Establish internal mechanisms to ensure compliance with the disability duties and the effective implementation of this plan;
- Communicate the plan effectively, providing staff with appropriate training and guidance on the disability duties and their implementation;
- Submit an annual progress report to the Equality Commission, reviewing the implementation of the Disability Action Plan and progress on the Action Measures (outlined in Section 3);

- Conduct a five-year review of this plan;
- Annually review and update the Action Measures in Section 3;
- Carry out timely, open, and inclusive consultation in accordance with Equality Commission guidelines.

Responsibility for implementing, reviewing and evaluating the plan disability action plan and the point of contact within InterTradeIreland is:

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***Should you require this plan in an alternative format (such a large print, in Braille, on audio cassette, easy read or on computer disc) and/or language, please contact the person named to discuss your requirements.***

**1.3** We confirm our commitment to submitting an annual progress report on the implementation of this plan to the Equality Commission and carrying out a five-year review of this plan, or plans submitted to the Equality Commission over the five-year review period.

A copy of this plan, our annual progress to the Equality Commission and our five-year review of this plan will be made available on our website [www.intertradeireland.com](http://www.intertradeireland.com).

## 1.4 Functions of InterTradeIreland

InterTradeIreland is the only organisation which has been given responsibility by both Governments to boost North/South economic co-operation to the mutual benefit of Northern Ireland and Ireland. By encouraging better use of our collective resources, we help to expedite trade and business growth across the island and create an environment where it is easier to do business.

We support SMEs across the island to identify and develop North/South trade and innovation opportunities. We do this through business programmes, research and statistics and networks and partnerships.

InterTradeIreland helps small businesses explore new cross-border markets, develop new products, processes and services and become investor ready. We offer practical cross-border business funding, information, advice and support to SMEs.

## 1.5 Public Life Positions

Although InterTradeIreland has limited opportunity to directly encourage disabled people to apply for/participate in public life positions, we will continue to clearly communicate our goal of encouraging the participation of disabled people in public life by direct recruitment to InterTradeIreland.

## 2. Previous Measures

InterTradeIreland has already taken several steps to **promote positive attitudes** towards disabled people and **encourage the participation of disabled people in public life**. These include:

### Accessibility of Our Facilities:

- Our office in Newry provides a fully accessible environment for disabled employees, including accessible toilet facilities and a lift to the first floor.
- Emergency evacuation procedures are in place for disabled individuals, with regular audits to ensure compliance.
- On-site parking is available for staff with disabilities.

### Access to Information and Communication:

- We uphold the principle that everyone has the right to equal access to information.
- A Textphone number is provided on all publications and our website to ensure accessibility.
- Our website meets AA accessibility standards, ensuring usability for people with sensory and motor disabilities.
- All documentation is available in alternative formats upon request, encouraging applications and participation in public life.

### Recruitment and Selection:

- InterTradeIreland has transitioned to an online digital interface for applications using the GetGot system, ensuring user-friendliness for all candidates. In 2023, several upgrades and enhancements were made, including accessibility features such as screen reader compatibility, based on consultation with the Royal National Institute of Blind People (RNIB).
- All job advertisements state that appointments are made based on merit, and job details are available in alternative formats upon request.
- The Candidate Information Booklet informs candidates that alternative formats and reasonable adjustments are available throughout the recruitment process. Disabled applicants who need special arrangements for interviews are encouraged to contact [recruitment@intertradeireland.com](mailto:recruitment@intertradeireland.com).
- Invitations to interviews and events include a request for candidates or attendees to disclose any special provisions or accessibility requirements they may need.

### Providing Information in Alternative Formats:

- When requested, we provide information in the preferred format quickly and at no cost.
- If a preferred format is not possible, we offer alternatives such as:
  - Face-to-face meetings.
  - Oral briefings.
  - Staff assistance in understanding and completing forms.
- Where feasible, we provide interpreters and sign language support for events.

### Staff Training and Awareness:

- All staff receive equality awareness training during induction and in accordance with our Equality Scheme, ensuring awareness of responsibilities regarding disability.
- InterTradeIreland's Wellbeing Team, the 'Happy Healthy People Team,' sends out a 'Monday Message' to staff, sharing disability-related information, resources, and a quarterly calendar highlighting key awareness days.
- The 'Happy Healthy People Team' organise Wellbeing Days and other initiatives to promote staff health and inclusion.



# 3. Action Measures: April 2024 – March 2028

InterTradeIreland will take both direct and indirect actions to promote **positive attitudes towards disabled people** and **encourage their participation in public life**. These actions will include:

Action Measures	Performance Indicators	Timescale
<p><b>1.</b> Establishment of a Staff Forum to seek input from disabled staff and others who wish to join, focusing on how to meet these two measures, promote disability equality in the workplace, and gather feedback on current policies, practices, and procedures.</p>	<p>This team will be Chaired by the HR Manager (Sharon Hughes) and ensure cross-directorate responsibility for the creation/ongoing review/delivery of the Disability Action Plan 2024-2028.</p> <p>A review of the achievement of action measures will be collated and presented as a quarterly agenda item at Senior Leadership Team meetings.</p>	<p>Quarterly.</p>
<p><b>2.</b> A review of InterTradeIreland’s external and internal communication policies, practices, and procedures to ensure that disabled people are portrayed positively.</p>		<p>Review every 6 months.</p>
<p><b>3.</b> Following the review, InterTradeIreland will ensure that all new or revised promotional materials, such as leaflets, booklets, and advertising campaigns, portray disabled people in a positive role. This imagery aims to challenge and dispel preconceived perceptions about the capabilities of people with disabilities.</p>	<p>Number of photographs/images of people with disabilities in corporate publications, on social media and websites. Images of disabled people will have prominence across visual branding.</p>	<p>Review every 6 months.</p>
<p><b>4.</b> To promote positive attitudes among our employees and other stakeholders (including the wider public and service users), we will produce and distribute targeted articles and communication materials featuring positive role models with disabilities. These will be included in internal communications (e.g., Mondays Message) and, where appropriate, in external communications such as blogs and e-zines distributed to public service users.</p>		<p>Review every 6 months.</p>

Action Measures	Performance Indicators	Timescale
<p><b>5.</b> We will maintain a quarterly calendar outlining training sessions, awareness days, and events related to health, wellbeing, and inclusion.</p> <p><b>6.</b> Key topics on health, wellbeing, and disability awareness will also be highlighted in the Monday’s Message to keep staff informed and engaged.</p> <p><b>InterTradeIreland has limited opportunities to directly encourage disabled individuals to apply for or participate in public life positions, other than through employment with the organisation. In this regard, the following measures will be maintained:</b></p> <p><b>7.</b> Ongoing review of InterTradeIreland’s Recruitment &amp; Selection procedures to ensure that no applicant is discriminated against due to disability during any stage of the process.</p> <p><b>8.</b> For each appointment, job advertisements, job descriptions, personnel specifications, application forms, and offers of employment will be reviewed to remove any unnecessary barriers for disabled individuals applying.</p> <p><b>9.</b> InterTradeIreland will continue to review and improve its online application system (GetGot) to ensure ease of use for all.</p> <p><b>10.</b> Prior to interviews, we will continue to ask candidates if they require any reasonable accommodations or special arrangements, and these will be fully accommodated.</p>	<p>We will record numbers who participate and monitor staff feedback from the sessions provided.</p> <p>Monitor the number of applicants who declare a disability and the number of reasonable adjustments requested.</p>	<p>Various Awareness Days.</p> <p>Weekly Monday Messages.</p> <p>Ongoing on completion of each recruitment competition.</p> <p>Ongoing.</p> <p>Ongoing.</p> <p>Ongoing.</p>

Action Measures	Performance Indicators	Timescale
<p><b>In relation to participation in other public life positions other than becoming an employee of the Body the following measures will be introduced:</b></p> <p><b>11.</b> InterTradeIreland will endeavour to influence the North South Ministerial Council to ensure participation of disabled people on the Board.</p> <p><b>Training/Guidance and Employment Measures:</b></p> <p><b>12.</b> In collaboration with individuals and organisations with expertise in the field, we will deliver training to all staff members, including the Senior Leadership Team (Directors). This training will be targeted and cover two key topics:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"><li>• Disability equality legislation, to include an understanding of employer and employee’s duties and responsibilities under the DDA and in addition to this act.</li></ul> <p><b>And</b></p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"><li>• Disability awareness and etiquette to includes issues and topics such as: an explanation of the barriers faced by disabled people in society including attitudinal and environmental factors and a greater understanding of the social model of disability</li></ul> <p><b>13.</b> We will engage with specialist disability organisations to explore the creation of work experience or volunteer placements for disabled individuals, as well as other appropriate outreach measures.</p>	<p>Correspondence to be drafted as appropriate – responses will be recorded/monitored.</p> <p>Attendance and participation at training/information sessions.</p> <p>Monitor the uptake of this measure.</p>	<p>Ongoing.</p> <p>All staff in post will receive this training within 3 months of the revised Plan being in force. These sessions will then be delivered annually 2024 – 2028.</p> <p>Ongoing.</p>

Action Measures	Performance Indicators	Timescale
<p><b>14.</b> We will conduct annual exercises to encourage staff to declare any disabilities or long-term health conditions and ensure that appropriate reasonable adjustments are implemented. This will include providing information and support to both line managers and staff as needed.</p> <p><b>15.</b> Regularly monitor and evaluate the effectiveness of these measures and adjust strategies as needed to ensure continued progress in promoting disability equality.</p> <p><b>16.</b> Ensure that the Disability Action Plan is communicated regularly to all staff and stakeholders, with clear updates on progress and changes.</p> <p><b>17.</b> Integrate disability equality goals into staff performance management systems to ensure ongoing commitment to inclusive practices.</p> <p><b>External Events</b></p> <p><b>18.</b> When selecting venues for external events, InterTradeIreland will take into account accessibility requirements to ensure venues are as accessible as reasonably practicable for participants with disabilities, including provision of appropriate facilities and accommodations.</p> <p><b>19.</b> For all external events hosted by InterTradeIreland, the event registration process will include a section for participants to specify any accessibility needs or reasonable adjustments required. This information will allow us to make reasonable adjustments where possible to facilitate the full participation of disabled attendees.</p>	<p>This data will be monitored regularly to ensure the Body is aware of employees needs and acts upon them appropriately. The aim is that because of this measure, staff in the workplace will feel more supported and a greater number of staff will feel comfortable declaring that they have a disability.</p>	<p>Annual.</p> <p>Annual.</p> <p>Ongoing.</p> <p>Annual.</p> <p>Ongoing.</p> <p>Ongoing.</p>