

# Difference Strategy 2021-24 (DRAFT)

Version 1 / December 2020



This strategy sets out our main goals for the 3 years from April 2021, and what activities we will focus on to achieve those goals.

Recent events have shown us the importance of being agile, so we will keep this plan under review and adapt it as and when we see fit and in response to the needs of our members as these change.

The strategic goals have come from discussions with our members, along with our charitable objectives and our own assessment of how we can best deliver for our communities.

A number of underpinning principles apply to all of this work:

- We want to remain focused on campaigning rather than service delivery.
- We want our work to be driven by our members.
- We want to represent people who identify as D/deaf or disabled, encompassing the broad range of disabilities.

# Our Key Strategic Aims

## 1. Voice, Influence and Participation

### Aims

- 1.1. Increase the participation and influence of disabled people in civic life, including in leadership and decision-making bodies in our region.
- 1.2. Continue to engage with and listen to disabled voices from across the north east, channelling and amplifying our collective voice to achieve change.

### Activity

- Run a programme of regular consultation and networking events - these may include opportunities for self-development, including seminars/workshops on relevant topics.
- Develop relationships and influence with local authorities, politicians and policymakers.
- Run highly impactful campaigns reflecting the needs and concerns of our members.
- Respond to regional and national consultations.
- Reach out to marginalised groups to ensure we are relevant to and representative of all our communities.
- Establish a Members Steering Group to help increase levels of engagement and empowerment.

## 2. Employment

### Aims

- 2.1. Promote good practice in the employment of disabled people in our region, helping to foster an inclusive employment culture.
- 2.2. Influence regional strategies and services to better support disabled workers and job seekers.
- 2.3. Support and encourage members in achieving their career aims.

### Activity

- Conduct research into the barriers faced by disabled workers and job seekers in our region and recommend actions to address these.
- Co-ordinate an employment Mentoring and peer support scheme, utilising the skills and experience of members.

- Engage with disabled students to help them prepare for the transition to work. Explore options for volunteering, placements and mentoring.
- Engage with employers to promote awareness and good employment practice.
- Organise an employment conference on the topic of disability and employment.

### 3. Awareness Raising and Training

#### Aims

- 3.1. Promote a positive culture of inclusion, challenging stereotypes and raising levels of understanding of disability and disability issues.
- 3.2. Shine a light on the skills, talents and achievements of disabled people in our region, providing role models for young disabled people.
- 3.3. Promote examples of good practice, reinforcing and celebrating inclusive approaches.

#### Activity

- Offer a range of Disability equality, awareness and etiquette training
- Seek opportunities in Public speaking, and education programmes, working with schools, colleges, universities, professional and industry bodies.
- Organise a Difference annual awards scheme to celebrate achievements by individuals and organisations.

### 4. Increasing Access to our Environment

#### Aims

- 4.1. Improve standards of accessibility of public buildings, spaces, facilities and information across our region.
- 4.2. Promote inclusive digital practices, systems and skills in order to help disabled people access the widest possible range of digital services and information.

#### Activity

- Act as the region's Disability observatory – monitor regional developments to identify potential and current access issues.
- Identify key issue(s) and run an impactful campaign to achieve change.

- Develop relationships with key contacts (officers and elected representatives) in local authorities in order to influence planning of public spaces and buildings.
- Engage with national and local authorities and human rights organisations to gain support for regional access enforcement plans.
- Plan and deliver the National Lottery funded Digital Accessibility Project.

## 5. COVID 19

### Aims

- 5.1. Highlight the impact of the COVID-19 pandemic on disabled people in our region and promote action that helps protect disabled people in line with their human rights.
- 5.2. Promote the needs and interests of disabled people in local authority COVID recovery plans.

### Activity

- Continue to monitor and report on the impact of national and regional COVID policy and practice on disabled people in the north east.
- Engage with different sectors to promote meaningful action to mitigate the impact of COVID-19 in line with our 'Manifesto for a Better Normal'.