



Cavan County Council



Cavan County Council



# Disability Strategy

2009

2013

Building an inclusive  
society in County Cavan

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# 1. Foreword

There are almost 400,000 people with disabilities in Ireland today. According to the 2006 census 1 in 11 people have a disability in Cavan. They often find themselves excluded from what's going on because of the way in which we as a society organise ourselves. We in Cavan County Council want to change the way things are done in order to make sure that people with disabilities can participate equally and fully in the life of our county. That is why we are delighted to present **Building an inclusive society in County Cavan**, Cavan County Council's first Disability Strategy. It marks a significant milestone in our efforts to promote equality for people with disabilities in our county.

Cavan County Council has developed this Strategy in the context of a changing national and local environment. The Disability Act 2005, the National Disability Strategy and equality legislation all require local authorities to make significant changes. The Department of the Environment, Heritage and Local Government's Sectoral Plan and the multi-annual funding that accompanies it, supports our efforts and is very welcome.

Cavan County Council's Disability Strategy builds on all the work we have done since 2003. The commitment made in our Corporate Plan 2004-2009 to putting the people of this county first and our core values of quality customer service and social inclusion, are in harmony with our determination to deliver universal accessibility. Since a strategy has to be grounded in reality in order to achieve its objectives, we have identified critical factors which will determine how successful Cavan County Council is. There is a high level of commitment and motivation within our council but we know that there is still a long way to go. **Building an inclusive society in County Cavan** will help us to stay on the right road, in partnership with local people with disabilities.

Thanks to the CRAIC Team for drafting this Strategy. We are confident that its implementation will bring about real and meaningful advances for people with disabilities in Cavan and will result in a better county for all of us.



**Jack Keyes**  
County Manager



**Charlie Boylan**  
Cathaoirleach

## 2. Why this strategy – and why now?

In 2003 Cavan County Council began to work out how best we can enable local people with disabilities. (See pages 8-11 for details of what we have achieved so far). A partnership approach with local people with disabilities helps us to stay focused, and the funding we secure through the National Disability Strategy is enabling us to address deficiencies in the built environment and services.

After five years of efforts to deliver full access to services and environments in the county, the challenge for Cavan County Council is now clear. When we look at the experience and situation of people with disabilities in Cavan we can see the urgency and importance of this work.

**Building an inclusive society in County Cavan**, our first Disability Strategy, sets out our vision and mission for the future, together with the core values which will guide our work over the next five years. Building on the strong foundations already laid by Cavan County Council, the Strategy outlines four broad strategic objectives. Each objective contains a number of actions. These actions will produce tangible results and will result in embedding a real focus on accessibility. Through the Strategy we intend to deliver lasting change for people with disabilities in this county.

“I want to be able to go where everyone else goes in Cavan without having to think in advance about access into and around public buildings”

Jacinta Fox, Cavan Access Association



# 3. What we want to achieve

## Our Vision

We in Cavan County Council have an ambition for equality. We want our society to be fully inclusive and to enable everyone to participate fully in Cavan life. We recognise that realising this vision requires the active involvement of local people with disabilities, other public agencies and the private, voluntary and business sectors.

## Our Mission

We intend to make sure that people with disabilities have full access to everything that is going on in County Cavan. To do that we have to embed a focus on accessibility into the way we work. We will work hard to ensure that:

- ▶ people with disabilities can participate equally and fully in the life of our county, and in decision-making in our Council
- ▶ people with disabilities have full access to Cavan County Council services
- ▶ universal accessibility is central to our thinking in all our services and facilities
- ▶ the needs of people with disabilities are consciously and deliberately considered in the way in which Cavan County Council does its business
- ▶ we use our influence with other agencies and service providers in Cavan to make universal accessibility a reality in our county.

## **Our Core Values**

Our Core Values for this strategy are grounded in the core values of our Council as outlined in Cavan County Council's Corporate Strategy. These values are quality customer service, staff resources, local democracy, sustainability, accountability, value for money and social inclusion. This Disability Strategy is one aspect of social inclusion that is being addressed by Cavan County Council. Cavan County Council's Social Inclusion Group will be addressing other key areas of exclusion.

### **Equality and independence**

We base our approach on the social model of disability (see page 6) and the principles of equality. We are committed to facilitating independent participation.

### **Working together**

Effective consultation with people with disabilities and their advocates is central to our approach. We can only achieve universal accessibility if we all work together.

In 2006 Cavan County Council set up the CRAIC Advisory Group, which represents people with all forms of disability. This group works strategically with the Council to help it to deliver its mission. It provides opportunities for key decision-makers and policy-makers in the Council to actively listen to the concerns and opinions of people with disabilities.

We already enjoy positive relationships with other bodies, including the Equality Authority and the National Disability Authority. Developing these relationships further will help us to deliver this Strategy more effectively.

### **Quality accessible services**

Cavan County Council is committed to delivering best quality customer services. We have learned that improvements made to services for people with disabilities can impact positively on service delivery for other excluded groups and for the public as a whole. We are committed to using best practice accessibility standards in the design, delivery and monitoring of services.

## 4. Key concepts and roles informing our strategy

Cavan County Council uses the **definition of disability** given in the Disability Act 2005:

“Disability, in relation to a person, means a substantial restriction in the capacity of the person to carry on a profession, business or occupation in the State or to participate in social or cultural life in the State by reason of an enduring physical, sensory, mental health or intellectual impairment.”

### How we think about disability

Cavan County Council works from the **social model of disability**. Historically, disability was seen as a medical problem. It is only in recent years that people have come to see that disability is an issue for society, not a problem for individuals.

According to the social model, the exclusion of people with disabilities from everyday activities is the result of the way in which we, as a society, organise ourselves. In Cavan County Council we are working towards a society in which physical and mental differences among people are accepted as normal and expected, rather than being seen and treated as abnormal or unusual. As a society we have plenty of ways of accommodating human differences should we choose to. How we react to human differences is a social choice and a policy choice. Cavan County Council stands for a social structure that aims to make sure that everyone can play a full part in society.

### What we mean by universal accessibility

Universal accessibility is a user-centred approach. The idea is to simplify life for everyone of all ages, sizes and abilities, by making services and facilities usable by all, irrespective of varying degrees of ability.

## Role of the CRAIC Team

The CRAIC Team is an internal cross-sectional group of key staff. CRAIC stands for “Creating Reasonable Accommodation in Cavan”. Established in 2005, the role of the CRAIC Team is to embed universal accessibility into the way Cavan County Council works. A member of the Council’s Senior Management Team chairs CRAIC and ensures that the Team focuses on delivery within the framework of our Corporate Plan.

## Role of the CRAIC Advisory Group

The CRAIC Advisory Group represents people with all forms of disability. It makes sure that local people with disabilities are central to Council decision-making and have a clear voice in our efforts to deliver universal accessibility.

Three members of the CRAIC Team are also members of the CRAIC Advisory Group. This helps to ensure good communication and effective working relationships.

For more information about the CRAIC Advisory Group see page 5.

“I want to see Cavan County Council and local people with disabilities working together to make Cavan truly accessible once and for all.”

**Sheila Courtney**, Chairperson, CRAIC Advisory Group



## 5. What we have done so far: 2003 to 2008

Cavan County Council has come a long way since 2003. We have made what we hope are obvious improvements to our services and facilities. Other local authorities have followed our lead and we have been honoured with a number of national and international awards. Perhaps our most important achievement has been what we have learned, and how this has informed the compilation of this, our first Disability Strategy.

There have been three main stages in our efforts to address the needs of people with disabilities:

### **Library Access Project: September 2003 to February 2005**

In September 2003 Cavan Library Service joined a ground-breaking Library Access project run by the Library Council. We focused on our new library development for Cavan town as we were determined to deliver the best quality library building, services and customer care for people with disabilities. We learned that there are three fundamentally important aspects to getting it right for people with disabilities: effective consultation, leadership and staff training.

The work has continued in Cavan Library Service with new approaches to provision of adaptive and assistive technology and to the HSE Bibliotherapy project.

### **The emergence of CRAIC: February to September 2005**

The success of the library project at a time when disability was high on the national agenda led Cavan County Council to commit to a new initiative, in partnership with the Equality Authority. The programme aimed to apply what had been learned in the library service to the wider County Council, and to come up with ways of making local authority services more accessible. To make this happen, a group of key decision-makers from across the organisation came together, and the CRAIC Team (see page 7) was born.

As part of the initiative, the Council undertook five short-term pilot projects. These succeeded in delivering real solutions quickly, and within existing Council resources.

The programme resulted in the Council committing itself to embedding a focus on access into Council policy, practice and service delivery across the board. At the same time National Disability Strategy funding became available. Our strategic thinking about accessibility helped us to get the best for County Cavan out of this opportunity.

Want to know more? Read the “Dara has the CRAIC” booklet which was launched at Johnston Central Library in May 2007.

## **CRAIC Into the Future: September 2005 to October 2008**

After the CRAIC project the Council’s Senior Management Team adopted a two-pronged approach to mainstreaming accessibility in Cavan:

**Strand One:** The **CRAIC Advisory Group** working in partnership with the CRAIC Team (see page 7) ensure that consultation is central to all developments.



**National Disability Authority, Excellence through Accessibility Award**

## **Strand Two: Harnessing internal leadership and organisational structures.**

The CRAIC Team aims to ensure that accessibility features significantly in the work of all sections and at all levels of Cavan County Council, within the framework of the Corporate Plan. In addition:

- ▶ accessibility actions feature in annual Business Plans
- ▶ our Annual Report has a section dedicated to accessibility
- ▶ review of progress in accessibility is built into the management process.

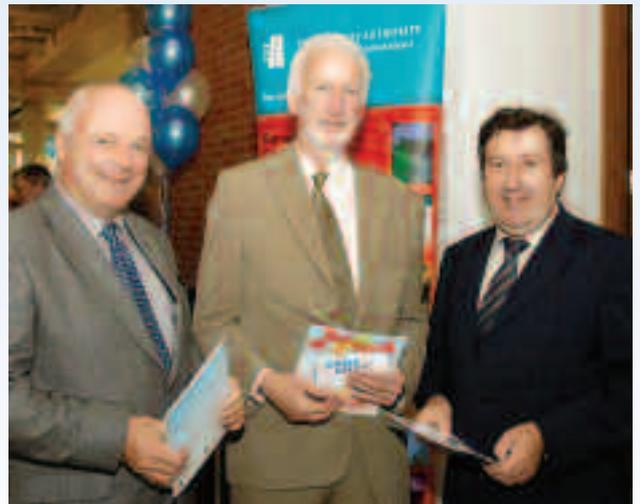
We have initiated important policies and projects relating to access over the last three years:

- ▶ We developed an Integrated Training Programme. This aims to build positive attitudes, in-house knowledge and expertise on disability-related issues. Training delivered to date includes disability awareness, access auditing, literacy awareness and accessible road and street design.

- ▶ We completed a Disability Implementation Plan in late 2007. Based on over 200 best-practice accessibility audits undertaken in 2007, the Plan sets out a programme of prioritised actions to deliver universal access to public spaces, buildings and services.

- ▶ We were able to optimise the funding available through the National Disability Strategy. The County Council drew down over €1.97 million for Cavan between 2005 and 2008. This funding is crucial, as we need significant resources – over €8.2 million – if we are to deliver our Disability Implementation Plan.

- ▶ We developed new policies with accessibility in mind, including our Communication Strategy, a Permanent Works Accessibility Design Certificate, a Meeting and Training Facility Checklist, Provision of Information in Accessible Formats and Customer Care for People with Disabilities.



**“Dara has the CRAIC” Launch**

- ▶ Our work has been recognised nationally. We have influenced both the Sectoral Plan of the Department of Environment, Heritage and Local Government and a national Guidance Framework document of good practice for local authorities.
- ▶ Cavan County Council will lead the Cross-Border Disability Access Initiative approved by INTERREG IVa. This aims to establish a cross border disability access partnership comprising councils, voluntary organisations, equality authorities and employers. The project aims to identify key barriers to access and agree a common approach to issues such as education, awareness raising and strengthening of legislation.

We have won several international and national awards for best practice in accessibility. Participation in accessibility award schemes helps us to deliver excellence, as well as developing our expertise and introducing us to new access networks.

Awards are also great marketing tools. They allow the public to see what we are getting right, and help to build a positive image of our county.



**O2 Ability Awards**



**Public Library Buildings Award  
UK & Ireland**

## 6. What we are going to do next: 2009 to 2013

Cavan County Council has four strategic objectives which we intend to use to deliver on our mission over the next five years.

### Our Strategic Objectives

- A Planning:** Change the way we work, so that planning for people with disabilities is an intrinsic part of what we do
- B Environment:** Make real improvements to the accessibility of Cavan's public spaces and buildings
- C Services:** Deliver best practice for people with disabilities in our services
- D Spreading the word:** Influence other key organisations

The next 6 pages set out the actions which we will take to make sure that these objectives become a reality by 2013. The various departments of Cavan County Council will take each strategic objective and action, and will develop ways of implementing them. We will review our plans and actions each year to assess progress and to make sure that our priorities keep up with changing circumstances.

“I want to be able to see a future”  
Local person with a visual  
impairment commenting on our  
Strategy.

# Strategic Objective A

## **Planning: Change the way we work, so that planning for people with disabilities is an intrinsic part of what we do**

Planning for inclusion is vital if we are to achieve our aims. This strategic objective will be achieved through seven actions:

- Action 1:** We will develop and implement this Disability Strategy, making sure that a fully inclusive consultation process informs its progress. New demands, challenges and opportunities arise constantly. The implementation process will enable priorities to change in response to altered circumstances during the 2009-2013 time-frame.
- Action 2:** To make sure that we get the best from our partnership approach, we will strengthen and develop the role of the CRAIC Advisory Group. We will make sure that it meets regularly and that its views are listened to and taken fully into account.
- Action 3:** The CRAIC Team will act as a resource to the various County Council departments as they develop the practical actions necessary for achieving these objectives. These actions will feature in the annual Business Plans of all Sections.
- Action 4:** The CRAIC Team will monitor the delivery and assess the progress of the Strategy. It will report on the Strategy and the Disability Implementation Plan to the CRAIC Advisory Group and the Senior Management Team.
- Action 5:** The Senior Management Team will assess the impact of advances made.
- Action 6:** Accessibility proofing of all council policies and procedures will become standard practice.
- Action 7:** We will participate in accessibility award schemes such as the NDA's Excellence through Accessibility Awards and the O2 Awards. These activities help to motivate and support us in delivering excellence and in embedding accessibility in the organisation.

# Strategic Objective B

## **Environment: Make real improvements to the accessibility of Cavan's public spaces and buildings**

For Cavan County Council, universal accessibility to public spaces means access for all people, irrespective of any disabilities that they may have. This strategic objective will be achieved through seven actions:

- Action 1:** We will make our existing public spaces and buildings universally accessible, as far as our funding allows. We want to deliver universal accessibility by 2015, but this is subject to significant resources being made available.
- Action 2:** To finance the work, we will optimise the monies available through National Disability Strategy funding and other sources, as appropriate.
- Action 3:** We will ensure that all new developments in the council-built environment comply with best accessibility standards.
- Action 4:** Accessibility will be a central and explicit concern in our maintenance and management procedures for the built environment.
- Action 5:** We will make sure that, to the greatest extent possible, the external environment becomes fully accessible to people with disabilities. We will prioritise the features that people with disabilities name as priorities, notably development of accessible parking and set down facilities, public transport stops, access routes to accessible entrances and the accessibility of urban roads and footpaths.
- Action 6:** We will ensure that all public service areas in Council buildings and environments are fully accessible. We will prioritise the provision of good signage, power-operated doors in wide entrances, lifts, reception desks, accessible toilet facilities, seating and induction loops.
- Action 7:** We will provide safe access to and egress from Council buildings for people with disabilities, giving particular attention to egress in emergency situations.

# Strategic Objective C

## **Services: Deliver best practice for people with disabilities in our services**

Every resident of County Cavan deserves to be able to access best-quality services. This strategic objective will be achieved through ten actions:

- Action 1:** We will ensure that all our customer care and equality policies and procedures address the needs of people with disabilities explicitly.
- Action 2:** We will develop and deliver best-quality inquiry and complaints procedures on access-related issues. We will promote awareness among both staff and the public of key Council access roles (for example the Access Officer, Inquiry Officer, CRAIC Advisory Group and the CRAIC Team).
- Action 3:** We will continue to develop and deliver an integrated training programme for staff and elected members. We will make sure that all elected members and staff receive disability equality training. We will give priority for additional training to key decision-makers, policy-makers and frontline staff. We will evaluate the training programme each year.
- Action 4:** We will implement the accessibility actions identified in our Communications Strategy 2008, giving priority to the accessibility of Council documentation, the use of Plain English and making information available in different formats.

**Action 5:** We will use advances in accessible information technology to make it easier for people with disabilities to use our services. We will:

- ▶ achieve conformance level Double-A with the Web Accessibility Initiative's (WAI) Web content accessibility guidelines
- ▶ achieve conformance with the relevant NDA IT accessibility guidelines for all computers, kiosks and other public terminals used by the public
- ▶ offer adaptive and assistive technology for the public in our library service and for staff who need it in the workplace.

**Action 6:** We will use our Meeting and Training Checklist to ensure that all public events organised by Cavan County Council take place in accessible venues and are conducted in an accessible manner.

**Action 7:** We will carry out a review of job descriptions and job structures so that we can take positive action to promote the employment and career development of people with disabilities. We will develop and put in place a code of practice for the employment of people with disabilities in our organisation.

**Action 8:** We will integrate accessibility into all recruitment procedures.

**Action 9:** We will work to ensure that we attract and retain staff with disabilities. We will make sure that we provide working environments suited to their needs.

**Action 10:** We will develop our public procurement policy to ensure that the goods and services we purchase conform to best-quality accessibility standards.

# Strategic Objective D

## Spreading the word: Influence other key organisations

Cavan County Council plays a pivotal role in the ongoing development of our county. Council policy-makers and decision-makers are involved in key agencies and networks. We want to make sure that our enthusiasm for accessibility results in more usable environments and services for everyone. This strategic objective will be achieved through seven actions:

- Action 1:** We in Cavan County Council are committed to showing leadership on accessibility in Cavan actively and consciously. We will seek out every opportunity to inform and persuade other organisations in the public, business, community and voluntary sectors of the benefits of committing to universal accessibility. In particular, we will galvanise the County Development Board to actively promote co-ordination of services for local people with disabilities.
- Action 2:** As they are developed, we will make our best practice accessibility policies, procedures, models and templates available to other agencies in Cavan.
- Action 3:** We will use local media to enable us to inform people with disabilities about what we are doing and what is available to them. The media can help to deliver the message that planning for people with disabilities and delivering universally accessible services and facilities is a winner for every organisation.

- Action 4:** We will continue to participate in access awards schemes to promote the benefits of the universal accessibility approach.
- Action 5:** We will ensure that accessibility criteria feature appropriately in briefs and specifications aimed at architects, consultants and other suppliers.  
(See also Strategic Objective C, Action 10).
- Action 6:** We will use our influence to comment on relevant national policies and procedures that impact on the lives of local people with disabilities. We will continue to participate in national accessibility events and steering groups such as the LGMSB Disability Act Steering Group, LGMSB Disability Implementation Sub-Group on Built Environment Access and the North East Independent Living (NEIL) Sub-Group. We will communicate our learning with relevant audiences, including Government Departments and other national agencies.
- Action 7:** We will grasp all opportunities that arise to develop awareness of universal accessibility in Cavan, such as the Disabled Go! Initiative.

# 7. How we will make this Strategy work

## **Commitment**

We have learned that delivering universal accessibility is not just about resources. Much can be achieved – even without adequate financial resources – if Cavan County Council’s staff team has the right attitude. We are building on the commitment and energy of our staff and the strong foundations laid over the last five years.

The effective implementation of this Strategy depends on having a committed and experienced CRAIC team in place. This Team will be the day-to-day driver of whatever takes place. It will need support in order to remain focused and effective.

## **Accountability**

If this Strategy is to mean anything our actions must result in tangible benefits. We believe that the most important judges of this will be local people with disabilities, and their carers and advocates.

We intend to account for this Strategy openly and honestly. The Council’s Annual Report will be the key mechanism for public monitoring of progress. We will also present the CRAIC Advisory Group with a detailed annual review of progress on this Strategy and the Disability Implementation Plan. This will inform decision-making on priorities for the following year by the CRAIC Team and CRAIC Advisory Group.

In line with initiatives already underway in Cavan County Council to improve public services and accountability, we will integrate the measures outlined in this Strategy with the Performance Management and Development System.

## **Resources**

We need significant financial resources in order to deliver many of the actions outlined in this strategy. At present public finances are under grave pressure. We will ensure that we use whatever resources are made available to us in a prioritised and consultative manner. However, it must be noted that the lack of adequate resources may necessarily limit our ability to deliver key areas of this strategy. We will seek to optimise funding for the Strategy and Implementation Plan, and we will re-prioritise annually on the basis of available funding.



“We want to see this Strategy succeed and we are determined to do our part to make this happen.”

**Cavan County Council Craic Team**

# Appendix

## Disability and the role of Local Authorities: Important dates, legislation and events



2009	Adoption of Disability Strategy by Cavan County Council
2008	Cavan County Council Draft Disability Strategy Cavan Local Authorities Communications Strategy
2007	DARA has the CRAIC launched Cavan County Council's Implementation Plan 206 Access Audits of Council's built environment carried out.
2006	Department of the Environment, Heritage and Local Government's Sectoral Plan Deadline for delivery of universal accessibility 2015 Accessibility Audits by Local Authorities by end April 2007. Implementation Plan within 3 months of completing audits i.e. end July 2007. Use of Social Inclusion Units to advance disability proofing  Guidance framework document of good practice for Local Authorities published. LGMSB. Assists Local Authorities in developing their responses to the Disability Act 2005. Addresses: Attitude and awareness / Strategic planning/ Internal structures/ Consultation/ Training/ Access Auditing/ Communications/ Funding/ Procurement
2005	Excellence through Accessibility Awards  National Disability Act 2005  Part of a framework of government legislative measures which support equality and social inclusion. Local authorities have an important role in implementing the requirements of the National Disability Strategy.

In 2005 a multi-annual programme of initiatives to implement the National Disability Strategy, including both capital and current funding, was commenced. This programme will continue until 2009. This funding is intended to complement existing funding streams.

Parts 3 (Access to buildings and services) and Part 5 (Public service employment) of the Act and the Sectoral Plan puts serious obligations on Local Authorities to deliver accessibility to a timeframe.

Section 25: Access to public buildings
Section 26: Access to Services and Access Officers
Section 27: Accessibility of Services supplied to our public body
Section 28: Access To Information
Section 36: Requirement to prepare a Sectoral Plan
Section 38: Complaints
Section 39: Inquiry Officer
Section 47: 3% Quota for employment of people with disabilities

2004 — National Disability Strategy

Pre 2004 — Framework of government legislative measures which support equality and social inclusion.

Equal Status Acts 2000 and 2004  
 Education for Persons with Special Educational Needs Act 2004  
 Employment Equality Acts 1998 and 2004  
 Local Government Act 2001

1995 — Barcelona Declaration  
 Supports the right of people with disabilities to participate as equal citizens.  
 Endorsed by Cavan County Council  
 Local Authorities undertake to raise disability awareness and to engage in a consultative process with people with disabilities to deliver accessibility in an integrated manner.  
 Led to the production of the “Disability proofing template for local government.”





Building an inclusive society in County Cavan is available in Large Print, Braille, Audio and Irish upon request. It is also available in electronic format on our website [\*\*www.accesscavan.ie\*\*](http://www.accesscavan.ie)

If you have any questions about this strategy please contact our Access Officer, Emma Breiden on 049 437 8392 or by emailing [\*\*info@accesscavan.ie\*\*](mailto:info@accesscavan.ie)

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