

# Disability Inclusion Action Plan 2016–2019

Snapshot 2023–24



# Disability Inclusion Action Plan

The [NSW Health Disability Inclusion Action Plan 2016-2019](#) is our agency's framework for ensuring people with disability have equitable access to quality services and employment within our health system.

It reflects NSW Health's commitment to removing barriers to inclusion and elevating the voices and choices of people with disability. The DIAP centres on four focus areas, each with supporting strategies – ten strategies in total. The NSW Health DIAP aligns with the focus areas for whole-of-government action outlined in the NSW Disability Inclusion Plan.



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The NSW Ministry for Health acknowledges the traditional custodians of the lands across NSW. We acknowledge that we live and work on Aboriginal lands. We pay our respects to Elders past and present and to all Aboriginal people.

Further copies of this document can be downloaded from the NSW Health webpage [www.health.nsw.gov.au](http://www.health.nsw.gov.au)

This Snapshot presents examples of NSW Health's achievements during the eighth year of implementation. It covers the period 1 July 2023 to 30 June 2024.

An updated NSW Health DIAP will be launched in early 2025, which will set the direction and priorities for action for NSW Health to 2028. The updated plan has been developed in consultation with people with disability,

carers, peak and advocacy organisations and NSW Health staff. The plan will also support implementation of the NSW Government response to the recommendations of the Royal Commission into Violence, Abuse, Neglect and Exploitation of People with Disability and the review of the National Disability Insurance Scheme.

## Promoting positive attitudes and behaviours

1. Communicate and reflect the importance of a culture of disability inclusion across the NSW Health system
2. Review, amend and develop training resources to build disability confidence in our staff

## Creating liveable communities

3. Embed disability inclusion as a priority in the planning and design of new and refurbished facilities
4. Elevate the voices of people with disability, their carers and families in facility design and planning processes
5. Identify and address key shortfalls in facility design identified by people with disability

## Providing equitable systems and processes

6. Provide support to consistently improve disability inclusion and extend existing good practice in delivering person centred care to people with disability across the system
7. Service delivery organisations will engage meaningfully with people with disability, carers and families, and relevant key partner agencies
8. Deliver enhanced services and build greater accountability by improving data collection and reporting on disability inclusion
9. Ensure all users have the same access to information regarding their treatment and care

## Supporting access to meaningful employment opportunities

10. Review recruitment practices to support inclusion and increased employment of people with disability and support our employees with disability to advance their careers within NSW Health





# DIAP Focus Area 1:

## Promoting positive attitudes and behaviours regarding disability inclusion

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### DIAP Strategy 1: Communicate and reflect on the importance of a culture of disability inclusion across the NSW Health system

All of NSW Health staff have a role to play in creating a culture of disability inclusion, which is reinforced by organisational policies, practices and individual behaviours.

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“When we have a diverse workforce that feels valued for what their differences bring, we build a culture where people feel they truly belong.”

(NSW Health Culture and Staff Framework)

In 2023/24, the Ministry of Health undertook work to refresh the [NSW Health Culture and Staff Experience Framework](#).

The Framework outlines how NSW Health organisations and teams can take action to increase the diversity and inclusivity of their workforces and workplaces, how this will lead to a sense of belonging for staff and shape NSW Health’s workplace culture. The Ministry’s Workforce Planning and Talent Development Branch has also developed a video series for use as part of recruitment and awareness raising activities within NSW Health. The videos showcase workplace adjustments that foster inclusive work environments and remove barriers for people with disability in our NSW Health workforce.

Focusing on workplace adjustments helps to educate and support the introduction of the social model of disability and demonstrate some of the small adjustments that can be made that have a significant impact on the accessibility of NSW Health roles and the inclusivity of our workplaces for people with disability.

At a local level, NSW Health organisations demonstrated their commitment to an inclusive health system and workplace by hosting awareness raising events and campaigns targeting both staff and the public.

To mark International Day of People with Disability in December 2023, information stalls were set up at all hospitals across the Mid North Coast Local Health District to promote disability inclusion training for staff and share valuable resources, including from the district’s [Enhancing Inclusion in the Health System Project](#).

### Making health information and staff training accessible to all


eHealth NSW’s Digital Health Education and Training team developed a suite of accessible eLearning modules for NSW Health clinicians to support the implementation of the Virtual Medication Management (VMM) pilot. The eLearning modules addressed a variety of accessibility requirements for people with vision, hearing and motor impairments that extended beyond the minimum accessibility standards typically applied in NSW Health eLearning modules, such as voiceover, closed captions and transcripts. These additional features included:

- enabling screen-readers using common screen-reading software tools
- providing multiple alternatives to mouse access such as basic keyboard access and voice commands.

The eLearning suite also considered cognitive demands in its design, such as reducing attentional demands and inputs. This pilot project led to the development of a template to facilitate the application of these accessibility standards to future learning products.

### New Easy Read resources

The Ministry of Health’s System Performance Support Branch developed [Easy Read resources](#) in conjunction with the Council for Intellectual Disability to increase awareness and acceptance of virtual care amongst people who are not familiar with English or have low literacy or learning abilities. The resources provide accessible information on the benefits of virtual care, how to ask for virtual care and how to join a virtual appointment.


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## Getting My Health Information Ready for Hospital

Following comprehensive consultations where both people with disability and healthcare workers collaborated in providing advice and input as key contributors, the project launched the toolkit 'Getting My Health Information Ready for Hospital' in December 2022.

This free toolkit was developed by and for people with disability to share their important healthcare information when going to hospital or other health services.

[Click here to view videos](#) on what people think about the toolkit.

- My Health Information Handover Form
- My Health Information for Emergency Services Wallet Card
- Guidance notes for completion



A suite of Easy Read and plain English resources have also been developed by the NSW Health Education Centre Against Violence for use by NSW Health Sexual Assault Services with adults with intellectual or cognitive disability who have experienced sexual assault. The resources were co-designed with people with disability and were published in late 2023.

### Communicating needs: Ready for Hospital Toolkit rolled out

Improving communication between people with intellectual and developmental disabilities and health staff was the focus of the [My Health My Communication project](#), a collaboration between Nepean Blue Mountains Local Health District and DARE Disability Support. The project, which was finalised in November 2023, produced a 'Getting My Health Information Ready for Hospital' toolkit for people with disability to share their important health information and support needs with hospital and health services. The toolkit, co-designed with people with disability, includes a My Health information handover form and emergency services wallet card. In July 2023, a trial was also conducted at Nepean Hospital to upload a scanned copy of the patient's information handover form to a person's electronic record.

The physical toolkit, which is also available for free online on the project website, assists people with disability to be more involved in their care and to communicate their needs consistently and in an accessible format. The project, which was funded by the Australian Government Department of Social Services as part of a NDIS Information, Linkages and Capacity-Building Program, also developed concise training for hospital staff on communication tips and disability awareness. A final project report and additional resources are available on the project's website.

In a separate but similarly focused initiative, Sydney Local Health District has developed a patient resource for its district known as a Disability Health Passport. The support document allows people with disability or their carers to communicate important information to district staff, including details about their disability, functional abilities, their communication and behaviour needs, as well as any assistive technology they utilise. This information can be used to indicate the person's need for reasonable adjustments and support staff to provide inclusive and accessible healthcare in the hospital and in the community. The passport document was developed in partnership with people with lived experience of disability, their carers and disability providers.

## DIAP Strategy 2: Review, amend and develop training resources to build disability confidence in our staff

### Expansion of Get Skilled Access Training for inclusive healthcare

During this reporting period, the NSW Ministry of Health contracted disability inclusion consultancy Get Skilled Access to deliver disability inclusion training to a further 10 hospitals across NSW local health districts and specialty health networks under a NSW Government election commitment. The education and training builds on a pilot program that took place with four NSW Health hospitals in 2022/2023. This expanded project is targeting both metropolitan and regional NSW Health sites, with a combination of face to face and online training to be delivered.

### Building staff confidence in recruitment

The Ministry of Health's Workforce Planning and Talent Development Branch sourced and made available on My Health Learning two new training resources for NSW Health leaders and staff focused on increasing awareness, knowledge and skills in disability employment.

These resources are:

- **Removing the Barriers: Inclusion of people with disability.** Developed by the Public Service Commission, modules include what is disability; diverse perspectives on disability; creating and enabling an inclusive workplace; creating a positive employment experience, and your words and actions matter. These modules are designed to provide managers with information, knowledge and practical tips to foster an inclusive workplace for staff with disabilities.
- **Disability Confident Recruiter.** Developed by the Australian Disability Network, modules include inclusive recruitment; workplace adjustments, and disability confident conversations. These modules help build the confidence of staff to manage an inclusive recruitment process and deliver workplace adjustments.

Complementing these statewide initiatives are targeted local resources. For example, Northern Sydney Local Health District's People and Culture team published a *Procedure on Workplace Adjustments* to guide managers on how to secure funding for and implement reasonable adjustments for staff with a permanent disability. The procedure was co-written with and co-launched by the Northern Sydney Local Health District Disability Employee Network on 1 December 2023 at celebrations for International Day of People with Disability.

At Northern NSW Local Health District, resources for managers on disability inclusive employment were developed to support positive recruitment practices. The guidance included information on recruitment and on-boarding, managing team dynamics, workplace adjustments, student placements and accessible communication. An Inclusive Workplaces Collaboration Group has also been established for district diversity leads to learn from and support each other's work. Four meetings were held in 2023/2024.

At St Vincent's Health Network Sydney, training has been completed with 150 administrative staff to support their knowledge and understanding of diversity and inclusion for consumers accessing and enquiring about services.

To help build the confidence and capability of staff, Murrumbidgee Local Health District's NDIS and Disability Coordinator has introduced a district-wide Disability Champions Community of Practice to share learnings and build disability confidence in staff across a range of practice settings.

New resources and training were also made available to NSW Health clinical staff in 2023/2024 to support the delivery of best practice clinical care. For example, the Agency for Clinical Innovation published:

- a [Virtual Care in Practice Guide](#), which includes information for staff on how to adapt practice and support people with disability to access virtual care
- guidance on psychosocial care of adults with spinal cord injury. [The guide](#) aims to ensure people who have spinal cord injury receive comprehensive and cost-effective psychosocial care that enhances their wellbeing and life goals.

### Deploying Virtual Reality in staff training

To enhance awareness and understanding of visual impairment and blindness, Sydney Hospital and Sydney Eye Hospital ran a Vision Australia Virtual Reality (VR) session for 25 staff and consumers to experience various types of vision impairments through VR technology. Participants wore headsets that mimicked the effects of eye conditions such as cataracts, glaucoma, and macular degeneration, highlighting how these diseases can impact visual perception and promoting the need for disability inclusion and adjustments in the delivery of health care.

In another training session at Sydney Hospital and Sydney Eye Hospital, a person with lived experience of blindness provided guidance to 48 staff on appropriate interaction techniques, how to offer guiding support, and proper etiquette when engaging with guide dogs.



# DIAP Focus Area 2:

## Creating liveable communities for people with disability

### DIAP Strategy 3: Embed disability inclusion as a priority in the planning and design of new and refurbished facilities

#### New headquarters for NSW Ambulance

NSW Ambulance relocated to a new multi-level building in Sydney Olympic Park in early 2024, designed and fitted out with disability inclusion as a priority. The facility is fully wheelchair accessible, featuring lifts, ramp access, and wheelchair-friendly turnstiles. High-contrast signage is found throughout the building, as well as tactile surfaces for navigation. Braille has been included on most signage and all major spaces are hearing loop accessible.

During the planning phase, people with disabilities were consulted to ensure the facility could be as accessible as possible. This commitment to accessibility benefits both employees and visitors with a disability and role models what best practice accessibility looks like.

#### Accessible facilities for consumer and carers at Wyong Hospital

In Central Coast Local Health District, Wyong Hospital refurbishment Stages 2 and 3 have been designed in line with universal design principles and with strong carer and consumer input. Specifically, a new carer support unit has been designed with direct, even access internally, and externally via a carer drop off zone, and parking at the door allowing easy access. Carers and consumers were instrumental in key design decisions made for the unit, such as inclusion of a quiet room and meeting room in the unit.

#### Creating safe youth spaces at Macquarie Hospital

Located at Macquarie Hospital, the new Safe Haven space for young people experiencing psychological distress includes a sensory room for people with autism and additional sensory needs to promote a sense of safety. An accessibility ramp, wide entry and an accessible bathroom were also added to the building to enable equal access for people using a wheelchair.

#### Hornsby Ku-Ring-Gai Hospital Upgrade

Hornsby Ku-Ring-Gai Hospital added accessibility ramps to Angophora House and accessible bathrooms to several of the older buildings, to enable equal access for people using a wheelchair. The hospital's visitor map has been updated to include new parking, accessible routes for people using a wheelchair, and safe drop-off points following the hospital redevelopment.





## DIAP Strategy 4: Elevate the voices of people with disability, their carers and families in facility design and planning processes.

### Consumers and carers front and centre in design access workshop

In Southern NSW Local Health District, the Bateman's Bay Community Health project master plan was released in January 2024 for community consultation to inform planning and design. A wide range of stakeholders were consulted including people with disability, carers, disability services and support groups. Engagement occurred across multiple formats, including workshops, community information drop-in sessions, a letterbox drop and an e-newsletter. Feedback at the access design workshop included the benefits of step-free access throughout the building, high contrast colours to identify the entry, varying heights for the reception counter and tables with central pedestal for easy wheelchair access.

## DIAP Strategy 5: Identify and address key shortfalls in facility design identified by people with disability.

### Accessibility audits identify improvements

Sydney Local Health District has updated its disability accessibility audit tool in 2024, and all inpatient and community health facilities have conducted an annual accessibility audit of their site. This has included consulting with people with disability and building experts to determine priority areas to improve accessibility across facilities. This review process is incorporated into local facility disability action plan committee meetings and discussed monthly at the district's Disability Action Plan Steering Committee.



# DIAP Focus Area 3:

## Providing equitable systems and processes

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**DIAP Strategy 6: Provide support to consistently improve disability inclusion and extend existing good practice in delivering person centred care to people with disability across the system.**

### **Additional LHDs implement a sedation pathway**

In 2023/2024, Illawarra Shoalhaven Local Health District developed a sedation pathway tailored for people with very complex disabilities who are unable to receive required medical assessments, diagnostics and procedures under standard conditions. This pathway had input from district clinical and executive staff, NSW Ambulance, private NDIS providers and carers of people with a disability.

The process aims to ensure sedation is administered safely and effectively, with a focus on person-centred care, and results in multiple examinations and investigations in a single-day procedure. As an example, a participant with severe intellectual disability, autism and bipolar disorder who was prone to violent outbursts when triggered or feeling unsafe, was scheduled as the first patient for the day, allowing for dental, imaging, pathology, vaccinations and examinations to be conducted under anaesthesia.

### **Neurodiverse Perioperative Pathway project underway**

At Western NSW Local Health District, the Specialist Intellectual Disability Health Team has partnered with the Orange Health Service Perioperative Department in the Neurodiverse Perioperative Pathway Project. This project aims to improve timely access and outcomes for people with an intellectual disability or neurodiversity requiring surgery. The project is developing education for staff and resources to support consumers and carers through the surgical journey to ensure effective communication and responsive care.

**DIAP Strategy 7: Service delivery organisations will engage meaningfully with people with disability, carers and families and relevant key partner agencies**

### **Partnering with people with disability to improve outcomes**

The Agency for Clinical Innovation has partnered with Down Syndrome Australia (DSA) to access DSA's Health Ambassadors as an expert reference group for the ACI's Intellectual Disability Health Network and its projects. The DSA Health Ambassadors are a group of individuals with Down syndrome who work to improve health outcomes for people with Down syndrome. The Health Ambassadors have had a key role in shaping ACI's guidelines on inclusive governance.

In 2023, Western Sydney Local Health District established two new reference groups for consumers and staff with lived experience of disability as part of implementing the district's Disability Inclusion Action Plan. The two reference groups identify areas for improvement for elevation to the Disability Inclusion Action Plan Steering Committee.

South Eastern Sydney Local Health District's Mental Health Service recruited six consumers and carers to be part of the SESLHD Mental Health Services Clinical Services Plan working group. The paid consumers with lived experience of psychosocial disability will help to facilitate development of the clinical services plan for the next 10 years.

### **Co-designing resources with carers**

To better support the needs of carers, Far West Local Health District has established the Carer Advisory Committee, which meets monthly to discuss issues relating to carers in the health setting, including those supporting people with a disability. Activities have included co-design of resources such as the Adelaide Accommodation Directory for people living in remote areas who need to travel to Adelaide for medical interventions.

## Partnering in research

BreastScreen NSW was involved in a research project led by the University of NSW to identify strategies to ensure accessible breast screening for people with intellectual disability. The project presented the agreed strategies to BreastScreen NSW service directors to inform health policy and quality improvement practices.

The agreed strategies fall into five key action areas: decision making and consent; accessible information; engagement of peer mentors; service navigators and equipping key stakeholders.

### Improving service access for male survivors with disability

The Ministry of Health's Government Relations Branch funded not-for-profit service provider Survivors and Mates Support Network (SAMSN) to build its capacity to deliver trauma-informed services and resources for adult male survivors of child sexual abuse with disabilities.

The project committed \$750,000 in 2022-23 and 2023-24 to provide:

- disability confidence training to all SAMSN staff delivered by People with Disability Australia
- Easy Read training delivered by the Centre for Intellectual Disability for policy and administrative staff
- access to Sunflower Hidden Disabilities training and a resource library for staff
- an accessibility training library for staff, including disability training and a library of accessibility-focused readings
- a facility and policy audit of the SAMSN's western Sydney service and website to improve accessibility.

SAMSN's work aligns with the NSW Government's commitments to the Royal Commission into Institutional Responses to Child Sexual Abuse recommendations, particularly recommendation 9.3, which focuses on supporting adult survivors with disabilities.

## DIAP Strategy 8: Deliver enhanced services and build greater accountability by improving our data collection and reporting on disability inclusion.

### Working towards a better hospital experience

Local health districts and affiliated health organisations are improving the identification of people with disability at hospital admission to better target supports and improve the patient experience.

At Southern NSW Local Health District, a census task list, which is reviewed daily by relevant staff provides awareness of when a National Disability Insurance Scheme (NDIS) participant or person with intellectual disability presents to a hospital. This early notification enables outreach to occur to the hospital ward, the provision of support to the clinical team and patient, and to facilitate timely hospital discharge.

Similarly at St Vincent's Health Network, any patient currently receiving NDIS services is flagged at the Emergency Department or upon admission to facilitate delivery of specific additional supports as required.

In South Western Sydney Local Health District, identification of a person with disability is now included in maternity service electronic record systems to identify mothers with a disability requiring additional supports.

### Using data to improve service delivery

At Illawarra Shoalhaven Local Health District, the district's disability team has implemented strategies to improve the accuracy of disability data collection and reporting through education and process improvements. A disability alert has also been introduced in the electronic medical record, together with comments on reasonable adjustments required.

## DIAP Strategy 9: Ensure all users have the same access to information regarding their treatment and care.

### Boosting the capacity and skills of maternity services

The Hunter New England Specialist Intellectual Disability Health Team has partnered with Hunter New England Maternity Services to develop Easy Read maternity resources as well as capacity building education for staff to assist in the care of patients with an intellectual disability using maternity services.

### Staff training in basic sign language

At South Western Sydney Local Health District, education has been provided in several teams about basic signing for social communication.

## Online Statewide Health Literacy Hub now available

NSW Health has created a [Statewide Health Literacy Hub](#) to provide healthcare staff and consumers with tools and resources to improve health literacy.

The Hub is hosted by Western Sydney Local Health District and delivered in partnership with the University of Sydney.

The Hub aims to address health disparities by equipping health organisations to develop accessible health information and building the capacity and confidence of health consumers.

**Statewide Health Literacy Hub**

Home About the Hub What is health literacy? Resources Research Information for consumers

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### What is the Statewide Health Literacy Hub (the Hub)?

The Hub is a NSW Health initiative that builds and advances health literacy leadership and capacity at local and system levels.

#### Vision

An equitable healthcare system is one where everyone can easily access, understand and use healthcare services. The Hub supports healthcare organisations to improve equity for NSW communities through a focus on health literacy.

#### Mission

The mission of the Hub is to support healthcare organisations to apply health literacy to:

- improvements in clinical safety and quality,
- consumer and community engagement in healthcare, and
- research innovation and its translation into practice.

#### We do this by

Building and advancing leadership and capacity at local levels to...

- Build awareness and capacity in health literacy
- Foster partnerships and knowledge sharing in health literacy
- Enhance systemwide processes and resource implementation
- Develop and grow health literacy research, translation and dissemination
- Empower consumer/community to achieve outcomes that matter to them



# DIAP Focus Area 4:

## Supporting access to meaningful employment opportunities

### DIAP Strategy 10: Review our recruitment practices to support inclusion and increase employment of people with disability and to support employees with disability to advance their careers within NSW Health.

As of 30 June 2024, 1.8% of the NSW Health workforce reported having a disability. Work is continuing to increase the employment of people with disability within NSW Health to ensure the organisation represents the diverse communities we serve.

The NSW Ministry of Health's Workforce Planning and Talent Development Branch commenced a project in 2023/2024 to review NSW Health recruitment practices with a focus on nurses and midwives, the largest workforce in the system. Consultancy Get Skilled Access has been commissioned to conduct a review of recruitment processes and job role requirements for the nursing and midwifery workforce to identify accessibility and inclusion barriers and areas for improvement. A recommendations report was delivered during the reporting period. Next steps for the project include developing a toolkit to help recruitment managers increase the accessibility and inclusion of recruitment activities. NSW Health will also develop an implementation plan to action the project's recommendations.

#### People with disability take up NSW Health pathology traineeships

In 2023/24, NSW Health Pathology launched 21 pathology traineeships to boost the diversity of the NSW Health workforce including targeting people with disability or long-term health conditions. Due to the targeted strategies and additional supports provided, 29 per cent of the appointed trainees are people living with disability.

NSW Health Pathology redesigned the recruitment process for the traineeships to target job seekers with a disability including:

- changing the health assessment processes and providing person-centred adjustments during the interview process
- panel interviews including a person living with a disability
- training and education of managers
- workplace assessments and adjustments made during the onboarding process.

The traineeship combines NSW Health employment with formal training and education through TAFE NSW.



