Disability Action Plan

Context

- This action plan aligns with University Strategy Commitment Three: Fairness and belonging.

- Disability pay gap is a long-term success measure - Disclosure rates are an immediate measure of success.

- As of September 2025, only 9.9% of staff have disclosed a disability via NUPF vs 12.5% in surveys.

- Over 5,300 students have declared a disability.

- This plan was developed through participatory workshops and Disability Equality Steering Group feedback.

Disability Action Plan Aims

1. Access to spaces

To drive inclusive and accessible environments, both physical and digital, that enable all disabled people, including those with hidden, non-visible, and neurodivergent conditions, to work, study, thrive, and belong.

2. Safety to share

To ensure Northumbria University is a safe, respectful, and supportive place for individuals to disclose any disability, including those that are not immediately visible, and to have their needs taken seriously.

3. Cultures of belonging

To empower disabled staff and students by fostering a culture of unity and belonging. One that speaks in terms of "us" and "we," not "you" or "them."

4. Learning to understand

To understand and learn from the lived, intersectional experiences of our community, recognising aspects of identity that interact to shape individual experiences.

Aim 1: Access to Spaces

To drive inclusive and accessible environments, both physical and digital, that enable all disabled people, including those with hidden, non-visible, and neurodivergent conditions, to work, study, thrive, and belong.

	Action	Action Owner
1.1	Establish a collaborative process with Estates to identify and prioritise accessibility improvements based on disabled community needs.	Director of Campus Planning and Development
1.2	Conduct a comprehensive review of AccessAble to integrate its use effectively, across the institution.	Director of Facilities and Estates
1.3	Establish and champion a unified approach to physical and digital accessibility, leveraging expert knowledge from staff and students to embed best practices proactively across all relevant functions to ensure inclusive and safe environments.	Senior Sponsor for Disability
1.4	Proactively monitor and integrate evolving disability regulations and pioneering sector approaches into estate maintenance and planning, driving leading excellence in accessible environments for staff and students.	Director of Equality, Diversity and Inclusion Head of Student Accessibility and Inclusion
1.5	Ensure our disabled staff and students are safe and supported appropriately whilst on campus and effectively during emergencies.	Head of Health and Safety
1.6	Enable disabled staff to reach their full potential by identifying and removing barriers to career progression and professional development.	Director of Organisational Development

Aim 2: Safety to share

To ensure Northumbria University is a safe, respectful, and supportive place for individuals to disclose any disability, including those that are not immediately visible, and to have their needs taken seriously and met with appropriate support.

	Action	Action Owner
2.1	Conduct a focused review of existing policies and processes to identify any gaps and areas for enhancement, in supporting disability disclosure.	Director of Equality, Diversity and Inclusion
2.2	Embed disability inclusion as a core principle in the leadership, structure, and strategic planning of EDI throughout the academic restructure.	Director of Equality, Diversity and Inclusion
2.3	Enhance the visibility, accessibility, and operational efficiency of key policies and processes to ensure timely, appropriate, and equitable support.	Director of Equality, Diversity and Inclusion
2.4	Partner with ERGs and Student networks to build trust and confidence in disclosure processes by co-creating messaging, events, and sharing positive stories of individuals who have disclosed and benefited from support.	Director of Equality, Diversity and Inclusion Head of Student Accessibility and Inclusion
2.5	Foster a culture of psychological safety by equipping leaders and staff with the skills and confidence to respond supportively to disability disclosures and challenge stigma.	Director of Organisational Development

Aim 3: Culture of belonging

To empower disabled staff and students by fostering a culture of unity and belonging. One that speaks in terms of "us" and "we," not "you" or "them."

	Action	Action Owner
3.1	Improve the visibility and accessibility of the online resource hub to help improve awareness and understanding across the institution.	Director of Equality, Diversity and Inclusion
3.2	Implement regular communication of inclusive best practices and anti-ableism messages tailored for both staff and student communities, recognising their distinct communication channels and methods.	Chief Marketing Officer
3.3	Strengthen the Staff Disability Network, ensuring it is well-resourced, supported, and functions as a more active, purposeful, and effective voice for disabled staff, operating more like an Employee Resource Group (ERG).	Senior Sponsor for Disability
3.4	Promote diverse and relevant research on disability and neurodiversity to enhance university wide understanding and inform practice.	Senior Sponsor for Disability
3.5	Develop the cultural competence and humility of leaders and managers to foster psychologically safe environments where disabled staff and students feel a genuine sense of belonging and are empowered to thrive.	Director of Organisational Development

Aim 4: Learning to Understand

To understand and learn from the lived, intersectional experiences of our community, recognising how disability, neurodivergence, and other aspects of identity interact to shape individual experiences.

	Action	Action Owner
4.1	Conduct a series of targeted listening groups with disabled staff (visible, non-visible, physical etc) to gather insights our lived experiences, including intersectional perspectives.	Senior Sponsor for Disability
4.2	Establish a mechanism for sharing and applying learnings from student disability support (e.g., Universal Design for Learning) to inform staff processes and practices.	Director of Equality, Diversity and Inclusion Head of Student Accessibility and Inclusion
4.3	Systematically collect, analyse and disseminate disability data for both staff and students, ensuring that insights, especially those grounded in lived experiences, directly inform the continuous improvement of university policies, practices and culture to enhance the experiences of disabled members of our community.	Director of Equality, Diversity and Inclusion Head of Student Accessibility and Inclusion
4.4	Create safe, inclusive spaces for staff and students to engage in open conversations about language and terminology related to disability. Encourage dialogue that builds mutual understanding, challenges assumptions and supports a culture of respect, inclusion and belonging for all.	Senior Sponsor for Disability