# National Disability Strategy Headlines

The Government’s new National Disability Strategy (NDS) has been published. In this document we give an overview of the key themes from the strategy and the issues relevant to blind and partially sighted people.

## Summary

The strategy runs to 121 pages and contains a large amount of information, evidence and commitments. The strategy is divided into three parts:

Part 1 sets out [immediate commitments the government will make to improve every part of a disabled person’s day](https://www.gov.uk/government/publications/national-disability-strategy/part-1-practical-steps-now-to-improve-disabled-peoples-everyday-lives). The government describes these as practical steps that they will act upon now.

Part 2 sets out [changes to how the government works with and for disabled people into the future](https://www.gov.uk/government/publications/national-disability-strategy/part-2-disabled-peoples-everyday-experience-at-the-heart-of-government-policy-making-and-service-delivery). The government describes this work as laying the foundations for longer term, transformative change.

Part 3 summarises the actions [each government department will take as part of the strategy to improve disabled people’s everyday lives](https://www.gov.uk/government/publications/national-disability-strategy/part-3-a-cross-government-effort-to-transform-disabled-peoples-everyday-lives).

This briefing covers each part of the strategy and draws out the specific pledges or actions likely to be of greatest interest to blind and partially sighted people. On each bullet point the text is drawn directly from the strategy with comments from TPT added after in **bold** if applicable.

## Part 1: Practical steps now to improve disabled people’s everyday lives

### Rights and perceptions: removing barriers to participating fully in public and civic life and wider society

* The Cabinet Office has introduced the Elections Bill to require Returning Officers to consider the needs of people with a wide range of disabilities. The legislation will also enable disabled people to receive help casting their vote from any companion who is over the age of 18 in UK Parliamentary elections. **This is welcome, but the Elections Bill will also require the use of compulsory photo identification at polling stations, something that is likely to present an additional barrier for blind and partially sighted people.**
* The Ministry of Justice (MoJ) is investing £1 million by spring 2022 to recruit more disabled magistrates in England and Wales as part of a wider effort to improve diversity, alongside other under-represented groups.
* Building on the experience of the Access to Elected Office fund and the EnAble fund, Ministry of Housing, Communities and Local Government (MHCLG) will support a new scheme from April 2022 to support those seeking to become candidates and – as importantly – once they have been elected to public office. **This is very welcome and something TPT has been calling for. This will offer an important opportunity to encourage blind and partially sighted people to stand for public office.**
* The Cabinet Office will consider how we can best support those standing for public office and those who hold public office.
* The Cabinet Office will launch a new website and application system by March 2022 to improve how talented candidates, including disabled people, can access public appointments. This will be coupled with increased outreach, including with disability networks. **This will offer an important opportunity to encourage blind and partially sighted people to apply for public appointments.**
* The Disability Unit will develop a UK-wide campaign to increase public awareness and understanding of disability, dispel ingrained and unhelpful stereotypes and promote the diverse contributions disabled people have made – and continue to make – to public life.
* In 2021, the Home Office will publish a new cross-government strategy to tackle the crime and disorder that undermines the quality of life for everyone. This will include tackling hate crime, of which tackling disability hate crime will be an integral part. The Home Office commits to work with disabled people and other disability stakeholders to develop the new strategy for publication in the autumn.
* The Crown Prosecution Service will bring together a panel consisting of disabled people’s organisations, academics, partner agencies from government and the police, to advise on further improvements covering support to prosecutors and the Policy Statement on Disability Hate Crime and Other Crimes against Disabled People.

### Housing: creating more accessible, adapted and safer homes

* The Ministry of Housing, Communities and Local Government (MHCLG) will confirm plans to improve the framework to deliver accessible new homes by December 2021.
* Following an independent review of the Disabled Facilities Grant published in December 2018,35 MHCLG and the Department for Health and Social Care (DHSC) will jointly publish new government guidance for local authorities in England on effective delivery of the £573 million Disabled Facilities Grant during 2021.
* MHCLG has commissioned new research to develop robust evidence to inform policy in England on the means of escape from buildings, care homes and specialised housing for disabled people. This will conclude by autumn 2021.

### Transport: improving the accessibility and experience of everyday journeys

* Department for Transport (DfT) will conduct a network-wide accessibility audit of station facilities at all 2,565 mainline railway stations in Great Britain to inform future investment decisions. **This is a vitally important issue to ensure that stations are accessible for blind and partially sighted people.**
* DfT will consult on an update to the Design Standards for Accessible Stations this year (2021).
* DfT will work with Network Rail to develop proposals for the accelerated upgrade of rail station platforms with tactile paving. **We know there is a real lottery in terms of availability of tactile paving on station platforms, so this is important.**
* DfT will work closely with rail companies 43 to further develop the Passenger Assist Programme for disabled passengers, to increase people’s confidence to travel. This will include introducing a passenger assist app this year (2021).
* DfT has invited innovative project ideas to improve communication for disabled passengers and others with reduced mobility on rail services across Great Britain. This will enable people to contact train crew members directly from any seat on the train. Contracts will be awarded by July 2021.
* As announced in Bus Back Better, the National Bus Strategy for England, subject to final analysis, DfT will introduce regulations by Summer 2022 to require bus companies to provide audible and visual announcements onboard their services in Great Britain. **Very important and this will offer an opportunity to push for local action to benefit blind and partially sighted bus users.**
* DfT will invest a further £1.5 million during 2021 to support the rollout of audible and visual announcements. This funding will be available to bus operators across Great Britain.
* DfT will review the Public Service Vehicles Accessibility Regulations 2000, starting with research in 2022. The department will also commission research into the design of bus stations and bus stops in England by April 2022.
* DfT will take forward legislation during the current Parliament to strengthen the law on the carriage of disabled people in taxis and private hire vehicles across Great Britain. This will ensure protection from overcharging and the provision of appropriate assistance, regardless of the service they choose to use. **This is helpful as we know there continue to be issues with use of taxis and private hire by blind and partially sighted people, especially for guide dog users.**
* DfT will continue to encourage local authorities to require drivers to complete disability awareness training. DfT will, as soon as legislative time allows, mandate the completion of disability awareness training through new National Minimum Standards for taxi and PHV licensing. In the meantime, the department will consult during 2021 on updated guidance for licensing authorities, including strengthening recommendations on supporting an inclusive service.
* Electric vehicle charging: DfT will work with consumer groups and charge point operators to set clear accessibility standards for charging infrastructure in 2021 to 2022. **It is vital this includes the physical placement of charging infrastructure on pavements and walkways.**
* Blue badges: DfT is improving the online application process, and will continue work with Blue Badge users and the local authorities that administer the scheme in England to ensure that it works in the best possible way for all users.
* Pavement parking: DfT has consulted on options to help local authorities address the problem more effectively and will announce next steps later this year (2021). **This has been long awaited and we look forward to a more clear policy on pavement parking to minimise obstructions that impact on blind and partially sighted people.**

### Jobs: making the world of work more inclusive and accessible

* To reduce the chance of people being out of work in the long term, Department for Work and Pensions (DWP) will explore offering earlier and more intensive back-to-work support in Jobcentres for people before their work capability assessment (WCA).
* DWP is introducing a new approach to conditionality for disabled people and people with health conditions, aiming to enable an honest and open conversation between a person and their work coach about what they can do.
* From August 2021, to meet an anticipated rise in need for support as a result of COVID-19, DWP will increase places on intensive personalised employment support by 25%. This will help ensure that more disabled people and people with health conditions will be able to rapidly access appropriate tailored support.
* DWP is working with disabled people, disabled people’s organisations and charities via the Access to Work Stakeholder Forums to develop an Access to Work Adjustments Passport, which will be piloted during 2021. **TPT will look to work with DWP on further strengthening opportunities for blind and partially sighted people to seek and retain employment.**
* We will make available a passport for all disabled students (including those receiving Disabled Students’ Allowance (DSA)), when they leave university.
* DWP will test whether providing additional support for employers, who are willing to do more and flex job roles for those who need more than standard Access to Work, can open up job opportunities for disabled people. DWP will run a Proof of Concept to gain insight into the difference this approach can make.
* DWP will work with the Disability Confident Professional Advisers Group (PAG) and the Business Leaders Group this year to review and strengthen Levels 2 and 3 of the scheme, to support employers to increase disabled people’s employment opportunities.
* In 2021, DWP will develop and test an improved information and advice offer for employers.
* The Department for Business, Energy and Industrial Strategy (BEIS), working with the Advisory, Conciliation and Arbitration Service (Acas), has developed a new online advice hub. From July 2021, its remit is to provide clear, accessible information and advice on employment rights for disabled people.
* In 2021, Cabinet Office will consult on workforce reporting on disability for large employers, exploring voluntary and mandated workplace transparency, and publish a set of next steps.
* DWP will fund a local supported employment trailblazer, working with 20 local authorities, expected to begin in autumn 2021.
* BEIS will launch a consultation by the end of 2021 on making flexible working the default in Great Britain, unless employers have good reasons not to.
* BEIS will publish proposals by the end of 2021, to ensure that every disabled person who wants to start a business has the opportunity to do so.

### Education: ensuring children and young people fulfil their potential

* Department for Education will consult on improvements to the special educational needs and disabilities (SEND) system through the SEND Review. **TPT will engage in the SEND review and highlight the particular challenges and opportunities for blind and partially sighted students and young people.**
* DfE is investing a further £300 million to create places, improve existing provision in schools and make accessibility adaptations for children and young people with SEND in the financial year 2021 to 2022.
* DfE is providing funding of up to £3.82 million in the 2021 to 2022 financial year to offer staff in schools and colleges continuing professional development, specifically in supporting children and young people with SEND.
* DfE is contributing £9.3 million in the 2021 to 2022 financial year to fund the training of more educational psychologists, increasing the number of trainee educational psychologists each year to over 200.
* DfE is providing funding of £8.6 million in financial year 2021 to 2022 to strengthen the participation of parents and young people in the SEND system, through ensuring that they have a voice in designing policies and services, and have access to high quality information, advice and support.
* DfE will improve supported internships in England, including updating guidance, developing a self-assessment quality framework, and helping local authorities to develop local supported employment forums by March 2022.
* DfE will evaluate the impact of this £237 million investment in traineeships on young people with SEND by July 2022.
* DfE will work with the Apprenticeship Diversity Champions Network of employers, the Disabled Apprentices Network and the disability sector to understand the current barriers people may face in undertaking an apprenticeship, what works and to co-develop solutions. This will include benefits from flexibilities and support available for those with an Education, Health and Care Plan. Findings will be published during National Apprenticeship Week (NAW) in February 2022.
* To increase awareness of apprenticeships and accessibility for disabled people, DfE will work with DWP on the Disability Confident employer review to take into account the benefits it can provide to apprentices; and on processes for referring people – especially those with disabilities – into apprenticeships.
* DfE will work with DWP, disabled apprentices, employers, providers and disabled people’s organisations and charities as the Access to Work Passport is piloted during 2021, so that apprentices benefit from improvements that are made. Alongside this, DfE will consider links to the accessibility of other lines of funded support for disabled apprentices.
* DfE will also further strengthen the quality of apprenticeships, focusing in particular on narrowing the achievement gap between those who declare and those who do not declare a disability: including through a workforce development programme for apprenticeship providers and support to employers.

### Shopping: creating more consumer choice and convenience

* Department for Business, Energy and Industrial Strategy (BEIS) and the Cabinet Office will set up an Extra Costs Taskforce, bringing together disabled people, regulators and businesses, to better understand the extra costs faced by disabled people, including how this breaks down for different impairments – by summer 2022.
* Department for Transport (DfT) will update Inclusive Mobility guidance and Use of Tactile Paving Surfaces guidance in 2021, and guidance on designing streets for people (Manual for Streets) in 2022. **This is welcome and TPT will continue our Streets For All campaign aimed at improving the accessibility of the built environment for blind and partially sighted people.**
* MHCLG will consider how we can support projects that increase high street accessibility for disabled people, in the design of any future local growth funding.
* BEIS will challenge UK Research and Innovation and other research stakeholders to use future innovation challenges to accelerate innovation in assistive technologies.
* The Department for Digital, Culture, Media and Sport (DCMS) will build the evidence base about the nature and scale of the inaccessibility of private sector websites, and explore how the government can effectively intervene including possible legislative options, reporting back by spring 2022. **We welcome this and further action to improve accessibility of all websites and apps.**
* The Disability Unit is launching an enhanced and expanded programme of Disability and Access Ambassadors in summer 2021.

### Leisure: widening access to arts, culture, sport and the great outdoors

* Arts Councils across the UK are working together with the British Film Institute to launch a free, UK wide arts access card by March 2022.
* Sport England will:
	+ invest £20 million in the financial year 2021 to 2022 through its Tackling Inequalities Fund. This fund has successfully reached and impacted under-represented groups, and includes a specific focus on disabled people
	+ find new ways to address inequalities in physical activity levels between disabled and non-disabled people, in partnership with the Design Council by March 2022
	+ develop and pilot a new training programme to better enable social workers to promote physical activity to disabled people in 2022
* DCMS will:
	+ work with VisitBritain and VisitEngland and other stakeholders in the tourism sector to promote the importance of accessible tourism in the media and to businesses
	+ partner with the Inclusive Tourism Action Group and promote the National Accessible Scheme which rates tourist accommodation based on its suitability for guests with accessibility requirements
	+ hold a series of roundtables, hosted by the Minister for Sport and Tourism, with stakeholders across the tourism industry to better understand the barriers disabled people face as tourists
* The Dept. for Environment, Food and Rural Affairs (Defra) will:
	+ make the England Coast Path as easy to use as possible for disabled people. All stretches of the England Coast Path will be open or with establishment works underway by the end of 2021, unless there are ongoing planning or legal issues
	+ create a new north coast to coast National Trail from St Bees in Cumbria to Robin Hood’s Bay in Yorkshire by 2025
	+ improve access, signage and information on existing national paths and trails
* MHCLG will publish a new National Model Design Code in summer setting out design considerations for local planning authorities. The department will use guidance supporting the Code to stress the importance of providing accessible and inclusive play spaces and equipment for all.

### Public services: making access as smooth and easy as possible

* Since the start of this year (2021), DWP has been testing advocacy support to assess its effectiveness and establish the best delivery model.
* DWP is also exploring options to reduce the frequency of repeat Work Capability Assessments (WCA) and Personal Independence Payment (PIP) assessments, to avoid assessments where a change of award is unlikely.
* DHSC will work with disabled people and disability organisations at every stage of social care reform to ensure their voices are heard and needs reflected. **TPT will engage in the ongoing conversation on social care and continue to highlight the need for sustainable care for blind and partially sighted people.**
* DHSC will establish a new disability data working group in 2021 to look at health and social care datasets and address priority areas where there are gaps in the data.
* This year the Central Digital and Data Office will continue to run a programme to make online public services accessible. The campaign will: help the public sector make mobile applications accessible and raise awareness of how people can raise complaints about inaccessible sites.
* The Disability Unit will consider new ways to make assistive and accessible technology part of the everyday design of public services. **TPT welcomes this commitment and will look to engage with the government on this through our technology team.**

## Part 2: Disabled people’s everyday experience at the heart of government policy making and service delivery

* The Disability Unit will lead a multi-year programme to improve the availability, quality, relevance and comparability of government disability data, co-ordinated through:
	+ a cross-government group responsible for overseeing and implementing data improvement plans
	+ a panel of experts on the lived experience of disabled people to assess findings from research and to provide advice on data improvement projects.
* By January 2022, the Disability Unit will begin regular disability surveys and monitor public perceptions of disabled people and policies through the Office of National Statistics. By summer 2022, the Disability Unit will publish the first in a series of cross-government harmonised disability data. We will encourage wider use of the harmonised standards for disability and impairment.
* This year (2021), the Cabinet Office will create a Disability Commissioning Taskforce of disabled people’s user-led organisations to improve disability organisations’ access to government contracts. set out by the Government Statistical Service (GSS). This will allow us to better compare data collected by different government departments.
* Cabinet Office will appoint a Disability Crown representative to help unlock the innovation and economic benefits of disability inclusion through the government’s commercial activities by March 2022.
* By December 2021, the Disability Unit will review the way the UK government engages with disabled people, in discussions with disabled people, disabled people’s organisations and charities. **TPT will look to actively engage in this, with other disabled people’s organisations, to ensure strong outcomes for blind and partially sighted people.**
* The Cabinet Office will:
	+ ensure a nominated senior civil servant continues to champion accessible communications across government
	+ seek regular feedback from different groups of stakeholders to ensure we are able to communicate effectively with people with different disabilities
	+ identify and seek collaborative ways to co-create communications and continue sharing accessible formats
* The Disability Unit will invest up to £1 million in 2021 to 2022 to develop a new Centre for Assistive and Accessible Technology, reporting on progress by summer 2022.
* By summer 2022, the Disability Unit will publish, following engagement with disabled people, a set of indicators and a dashboard to track the impact of the National Disability Strategy.
* The Minister for Disabled People will chair a quarterly meeting of the Ministerial Disability Champions to drive progress.

## Part 3: A cross-government effort to transform disabled people’s everyday lives

Part 3 summarises the actions [each government department will take as part of the strategy to improve disabled people’s everyday lives](https://www.gov.uk/government/publications/national-disability-strategy/part-3-a-cross-government-effort-to-transform-disabled-peoples-everyday-lives) and notes the Ministerial Disability Champions who have been appointed for each department.

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