

**Your  
Voice**

**Our  
Action**

**A Commitment to make Dublin City  
the First Autism Friendly Capital in the World  
2026-2028**



**Comhairle Cathrach  
Bhaile Átha Cliath  
Dublin City Council**



**IRELAND'S  
AUTISM  
CHARITY**

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# 1. Message from CEO AsIAM, Adam Harris

Dear Reader,

On behalf of AsIAM, Ireland's Autism Charity, I am delighted to welcome the publication of Dublin City Council's 3 year plan to realise its commitment to becoming a recognised Autism-Friendly Capital City, a global first.

Autism-Friendly villages, towns and cities are communities which come together to co-create solutions to the often-invisible barriers which Autistic people face in day-to-day life in the community. Barriers which often prevent Autistic people from having the same chance to live, learn, work and play in their locality.

Our Autism-Friendly Town Award recognises communities which achieve a quota of champion businesses, public services and voluntary organisations who build their knowledge of Autism and take concrete steps to make their services more inclusive. Participating communities also must create and implement a 3 year plan which recognises specific challenges and opportunities in their own context. Since Dublin made its initial commitment to go on this journey, under the then Lord Mayor Daithi De Roiste, in November 2024 important in-roads have already been achieved, including the development of the Sensoria Festival, inclusive spaces and opportunities at events across the year including St. Patrick's Day and Christmas, and the implementation of Autism-Friendly Accreditation in Dublin's City Hall.

Whilst the villages that make up the city have also been busy working towards the standard – with Drumcondra recognised as Ireland's first Autism-Friendly village in 2025 and committees now in place in seven communities across eleven electoral areas.

As an organisation, we are proud to be working closely with Dublin City Council and the Lord Mayor, Cllr Ray McAdam, in the development and implementation of this initiative including through the creation of a dedicated Dublin Autism-Friendly City Officer, Maeve Gilmore, working within AsIAM. The plan presented here is both ambitious and achievable and represents an important example of co-creation, with extensive consultation informing its content and delivery. This plan will not only make day-to-day experiences like using public transport, accessing public services or engaging in the arts and cultural life of the city easier, it has the potential to transform lives by creating an accepting community which affirms its Autistic citizens and prevents the social isolation, poorer quality of life and exclusion which all too often are experienced by our community.

I would like to take this opportunity to thank Richard Shakespeare, Shauna McIntyre and both the staff and elected representatives of Dublin City Council for placing a strategic emphasis on this work and for all its support in getting the project to this stage, alongside the autistic community in Dublin whose insight, experiences and perspectives are and must be central to all Dublin is setting out to achieve.

Every good wish,

Adam Harris

Founder-CEO – AsIAM, Ireland's Autism Charity



## *2. Message from Dublin City Council Lord Mayor Ray McAdam*

As Lord Mayor of Dublin, I am proud to introduce this ambitious and forward looking plan to make our capital the first autism friendly capital city in the world.

To celebrate Dublin is to celebrate all of its people. It is to recognise that the strength of our city lies not only in its history, its culture, or its achievements, but in its capacity to welcome, to include, and to value every person who lives in, works in, or visits our capital.

Dublin has always been defined by the spirit of its people. Ours is a city of imagination and endurance, of warmth and diversity, of community and character. This initiative reflects the very best of who we are and the very best of what we can yet become. It speaks to a shared determination to build a city founded on understanding, respect, and opportunity for all.

In 2023, Dublin City Council took an important step forward by entering into a formal partnership with AsIAM, Ireland's Autism Charity. Together, we committed to adopting the Autism Friendly Town framework and to advancing a shared vision for Dublin: a city where Autistic people have the same opportunity to live, learn, work, and participate fully in the everyday life of our capital.

That vision is both necessary and inspiring. For many Autistic people and their families, navigating a busy urban environment can present real and daily challenges. Sensory sensitivities, communication differences, and the need for supportive, predictable spaces are realities that a modern and compassionate city must not only acknowledge, but actively address. This strategy gives shape and purpose to that responsibility. It strengthens work already underway and provides a practical roadmap to remove barriers and build a Dublin that is more inclusive, more accessible, and more responsive.

Yet becoming an autism friendly capital is not a destination reached in a single moment. It is an ongoing act of leadership. It requires public services, businesses, transport providers, cultural institutions, and communities to work together with focus and ambition. It calls on us to listen more carefully, to learn more deeply, and to think more boldly about how we shape the city around us.

What makes this plan especially powerful is its commitment to meaningful change. It is about creating quieter spaces, improving the accessibility of information, training staff, and ensuring that the voices and experiences of autistic people are placed at the very heart of decision making. Shaped in partnership with AsIAM and informed directly by the autistic community, this strategy will not only improve life for autistic people, it will help create a city that is kinder, fairer, and better for everyone.

That is what celebrating Dublin must mean in our time. It must mean building a capital that matches its great traditions with a great sense of responsibility. It must mean creating a city whose progress is measured not only by economic growth or physical development, but by whether every citizen feels seen, respected, and able to belong.

I warmly commend all those who have contributed to the development of this strategy and all those who will help bring it to life. Their work reflects a simple but powerful truth: that the best cities are those that choose inclusion, not as an afterthought, but as a principle.

Now we have the opportunity and, indeed, the obligation to lead. To lead with imagination. To lead with compassion. To lead with determination. And to show, here in Dublin, that a capital city can be dynamic and gentle, ambitious and understanding, proud of its identity and open to all.

Let this be our statement of intent to the people of Dublin and beyond. Let it say that in this city, difference is not merely accommodated, it is respected. In this city, participation is not reserved for some, it is a right belonging to all. In this city, no person should feel that they stand apart from the life of the capital they call home.

If we are true to this vision, then Dublin will not simply be known as the first autism friendly capital in the world. It will be known as something even greater: a capital that had the courage to see every one of its people, and the wisdom to build a future in which every one of them could thrive.

Cllr. Ray McAdam

Fine Gael - Dublin Central

Lord Mayor of Dublin



## 3. Background to the Initiative

### What is Autism?

Autism is an invisible, lifelong, developmental difference which relates to how a person communicates and interacts with others and how they experience the world around them.

Autistic people make up a diverse community of people with a wide variety of support needs, strengths and intersectional experiences. It is estimated that at least 1 in 20 people in communities across Ireland are Autistic.

Autistic people frequently encounter accessibility barriers in the community, which are not experienced by others. These barriers are often invisible but can have a pervasive impact, for both individuals and families, preventing Autistic people from enjoying the same chance to live, learn, work and play in their locality.

### Autistic Life in Dublin

Autistic people play an important role in the day-to-day life of Dublin – enriching the fabric of city life with diverse thinking, insights and unique strengths and perspectives. Autistic people and families are to the forefront of advocating for a more inclusive city – through local advocacy, support groups, and sporting and cultural initiatives. Autistic people also contribute through participation in our schools, voluntary organisations and workplaces and are represented, visibly and invisibly, in every sector of our society.

Despite a significant growth in Autism awareness in recent years, there remain significant gaps in public understanding and acceptance of Autistic people. Each year AsIAM publishes its Same Chance Report, a state of the community report on Autistic life in Ireland. This year, 443 Autistic people living in Dublin were represented in the data and they set out clear accessibility barriers in day to day life including:

- 90% did not feel the public understood enough about Autism.
- 78% reported, based on their experiences, that being Autistic was a barrier to being accepted by, and to forming friendships with others.
- 81% reported having to mask or change who they are in order to fit in or to take part in day-to-day activities.
- 79% reported not having the same chance to be fully their Autistic self in the community.
- 58% did not find the general public support of Autistic community needs and preferences.
- 34% reported experiencing barriers when requesting reasonable accommodations in public spaces.
- 44% did not find it easy to access information needed to prepare to engage in activities in the community e.g. going somewhere new / accessing a public service / engaging in a community activity.
- 34% did not feel safe and protected in the community.
- 44% reported experiencing discrimination in the last 12 months on the grounds of being Autistic.
- 49% did not feel that they had the necessary opportunities to participate in recreational activities.
- 32% reported that judgement and attitudes of others was the most significant societal barrier to their inclusion in the community.
- 51% reported that businesses in the community were not accessible for Autistic people.
- 40% found the public transport system to be inaccessible to Autistic people.

These experiences exist alongside major challenges faced by Autistic children and adults to accessing timely supports and services and together represent fundamental barriers to full participation in the life of the community. Day-to-day experiences which many take for granted, such as engaging with a public service or shopping in the city centre, can be overwhelming, exhausting or simply out of reach for Autistic people and families. Cumulatively, this inaccessibility has a deep impact on the long term health, wellbeing and quality of life for Autistic citizens who seek to adapt everyday for a community not designed with their needs and preferences in mind.

## **Autism and Accessibility**

Under the Disability Act, 2005, public services and businesses have an obligation to be accessible to people with disabilities, who also have a right to reasonable accommodations when participating in life in the community. Despite these protections, the invisible accessibility barriers which Autistic people face are often misunderstood or overlooked.

No two Autistic people will have the same accessibility requirements however, there are lenses in which we can consider how to plan and design for the needs of Autistic people namely:

- Communication
- Predictability & Control
- Sensory Processing
- Judgement and Attitude

This approach aligns with Ireland's obligations under the UN Convention on the Rights of Persons with Disabilities which requires the state to approach disability through a human-rights model in which the personal characteristics of the individual are considered alongside the environmental and attitudinal barriers which they encounter. Simply put it is incumbent upon us to build communities that are inclusive of all.

Often small changes to the environment or how things work can have a major impact for Autistic people, common adaptations include:

- Using visual supports to enable communication, provide predictability and support way finding
- Creating break or relaxed spaces which individuals can access in public spaces should they need to re-charge or are feeling overwhelmed
- Providing sensory equipment or toolkits to enable a person to curate their surroundings
- Developing a visual guide which enables a person to know what to expect when engaging with a new experience or environment
- Putting in place quiet or priority times in which the environment can be adapted to meet the needs and preferences of Autistic people

Whilst changes such as these are essential to support the participation of Autistic people, and families, they can also break down barriers for others in the community such as other neurodivergent people, people with dementia, people with hearing loss or migraine or those for whom English is not their first language. Indeed, creating spaces in which each person is enabled to participate in a way that meets their needs can be good for all in the community.

## What is an Autism Friendly City?

An Autism Friendly City is a community which comes together to break down the day-to-day barriers to participation experienced by Autistic people, whilst setting out on a journey to embed inclusive practices across city life.

In 2018, AsIAM developed a framework for communities to achieve Autism Friendly accreditation. Developed in Clonakilty, Co Cork, the awards programme requires participating villages, towns and cities to:

- Establish a Steering Committee bringing together Autistic people, families and key stakeholders within the community.
- Recruit a quota of Autism Friendly Champions – businesses, public services and voluntary organisation – which undertake training and commit to making small changes to improve accessibility in terms of communication, predictability, sensory processing and judgement and attitude. For a city, a cross-section of 60 champions is required.
- Develop and implement a 3 year plan, specific to the community and in consultation with Autistic people, on promoting Autism acceptance and enhancing accessibility across the life of the community.



## Autism Friendly Towns



Autism Friendly communities seek to level the playing field for Autistic people by ensuring that environmental and attitudinal changes enable Autistic people to engage with opportunities in which they may be typically excluded or may simply “survive” as opposed to “thrive”. The current outcomes for Autistic people are not inevitable and by adapting the community to meet the needs of Autistic people, long-term impacts in terms of positive self-esteem, mental health, employment and quality of life will also be realised.

Since the inception of the framework, Maynooth, Killarney and Waterford City has gone on to achieve the status, with Drumcondra being Dublin's first Autism Friendly Village in 2025.

## The Journey to Date

In November 2023, Dublin City Council announced its intention to cooperate with AsIAM to adopt the Autism Friendly Towns framework and become the first recognised Autism Friendly capital city in the world. This bid is focused on achieving the standard for the city as a whole whilst also recognising the specific villages and communities which make up Dublin and are also presently working to achieve and implement the framework in their locality, namely:

- Drumcondra (Embrace Autism)
- Ringsend, Irishtown, Pearse Street (NIRP)
- Terenure (Involve Autism)
- Dublin 12 (D12 AutismSupport)
- Ballyfermot (Neurovibe Tribe)

Since commencing the journey, the city has already undertaken a number of key actions including:

- Discussion of the initiative of Dublin City Council meetings
- The launch of a mobile sensory space for use as community and cultural events
- The roll-out of "Finding Charlies Voice" communication boards across the city's parks and playgrounds.
- Creating opportunities for Autistic children to enjoy an accessible Santa experience in the Manion House.
- Creating opportunities for Autistic children to access family fun and play opportunities at the Mansion House
- Sponsoring a relaxed space at the city's St. Patrick's Day parade to enable up to 900 Autistic people access this seminal event, in an inclusive and supportive environment, at the heart of the celebrations.
- Creating the Sensoria Festival – a now annual family event in Merrion Square designed with the needs and preferences of Autistic and neurodivergent people in mind.
- Commencing the Autism Friendly accreditation of Dublin City Hall
- Supporting Dublin's bid and hosting of the 14th AutismEurope Congress in September 2025
- Investing in a full-time Dublin City Autism Friendly Officer, based within AsIAM, to drive the initiative, deliver training to prospective Autism Friendly Champions and support the work of local Autism Friendly village committees across the capital.

Over the coming 12 months, the city will now embark on a process of champion recruitment and training and the implementation of the Action Plan, which has been informed by a series of consultations with Autistic people and families in the Oak Room of the Mansion House in 2024.



## 4. Autistic Community Consultations

Our vision to make Dublin City the first Autism Friendly Capital in the world seek to place the voices and experiences of Autistic people at the centre of the process. By conducting meaningful consultation with the Autistic community in Dublin, the plan reflects real insights and seeks to meet the needs of the community it serves. The plan is guided not just by existing data or an extensive consultation process but by ongoing dialogue with the city's Autistic community, through local Autism Friendly Town Committees, membership of the Steering Committee and co-creation with AsIAM, Ireland's AutismCharity and a recognised Disabled Person's Organisation (DPO).



### **Approach:**

Over 150 Autistic participants and their families were invited to attend consultation sessions that were held in the Mansion House in Spring 2024. In partnership with the Lord Mayor's Office, Dublin City Council and AsIAM, four engagement sessions were arranged to gather insights into the lived experiences of Autistic people in the capital. The sessions were independently facilitated by Dara Connolly, CEO of Common Purpose, and sought to provide an accessible space for diverse voices. In addition to the in-person consultations, community members were invited to submit contributions in formats that aligned with their preferences.

The four consultation sessions gave participants the opportunity to share their experiences of the city such as how they live, work, and move through Dublin as an Autistic person or family member. Conversations explored the public's understanding of Autism and how different sectors could play their part in creating positive change. Participants were asked what an Autism Friendly Dublin might look like and to share their vision for the plan.

A wealth of valuable insight was collected during the consultations. A draft document consolidated the findings, themes and suggested actions were identified. To ensure strong and effective delivery, Dublin City Council provided AsIAM funding to recruit a designated Dublin City Autism Friendly Officer responsible for finalising a draft Action Plan and supporting the City Council with its implementation.

Across the consultations, several key themes for improvement of the capital city were consistently voiced by participants, namely:

1. Public Knowledge and Acceptance of Autism
2. Dublin's Infrastructure, and Accessibility,
3. Support and Community
4. Celebration and Opportunity of Autistic Community,
5. Inclusive Employment and Development

A clear outcome of the consultation is that no one agency or sector can deliver an Autism Friendly City – it requires sustained commitment across the life of our capital. Whilst some actions and recommendations relate directly to the remit of Dublin City Council, others will require support and buy-in from a range of public services, businesses and voluntary organisations. It is of note that the publication of this Action Plan follows the Government of Ireland's Autism Innovation Strategy, a whole of government policy on Autism inclusion, which was launched in August 2024. There is significant cross-over in themes and priorities across both plans at the local and national level.

- *Public Knowledge and Acceptance of Autism*

The participants emphasised the need to increase the public's level of understanding and acceptance of Autism through all stages of life. Targeting specific areas such as schools, transport networks as well as creating a city-wide education campaign were some of the suggested actions that could make the greatest impact. Participants highlighted the importance of promoting an attitude of acceptance, not just awareness amongst the public to ensure meaningful and lasting inclusive practices.

- *Dublin's Infrastructure and Accessibility*

Participants shared that Dublin City's infrastructure remains a significant barrier to meaningfully interact with the city. Changes to public transport infrastructure were highlighted as key priorities including greater predictability, staff training and access to designated car parking. Participants highlighted the value of sensory friendly initiatives like designated sensory hours in businesses and services in helping the community to feel more supported, whilst emphasising the importance of ensuring improved accessibility across opening hours. Greater availability and awareness of public sensory spaces would assist community members to plan their day with confidence and alleviate anxiety when travelling to the city.

- *Celebration and Opportunity of Autistic Community*

In order to be recognised as the world's first Autism Friendly Capital, participants emphasised that Dublin must create more opportunities for Autistic people to fully engage with the city's cultural life and festivities throughout the year. Enhancing inclusive practices like Sensoria, a neurodivergent festival, and hosting relaxed spaces has made a great impact and should continue to develop. Furthermore, participants shared that Autistic creatives should have the opportunity to display their talent in shaping Dublin City's cultural scenes.

- *Support and Community*

Participants expressed that having Autistic-led groups in Dublin is important to reflect their experiences and to foster a strong sense of belonging. They emphasised the importance of developing more community-based initiatives to bring Autistic people together, providing opportunities for peer support, advocacy, and the creation of positive role models for younger generations. Participants also state that society must actively consult with the Autistic community when making decisions that affect their lives, ensuring that their voices remain central to shaping a more inclusive Dublin.

- *Inclusive Employment and Development*

Participants called for a stronger commitment to supporting Autistic people to access and thrive in the workforce. They highlighted the value of initiatives such as alternative interview formats, internship opportunities, and sensory-friendly job fairs to promote more accessible employment pathways. Participants suggested collaborations with agencies such as Intreo, alongside specialised training for businesses. Furthermore, the importance of investing in programmes that support the community's professional growth and development were also stressed. Participants called for a broader shift in how society views Autism and employment and to advocate for one that recognises the unique strength, skills and perspectives Autistic jobseekers can offer.

## 5. Overview of Goals, Objectives and Desirable Outcomes

Reflecting on these themes, Dublin City's Autism Friendly Action Plan will:

Establish a strong sense of community for Autistic people in Dublin City and champion their advocacy

Enhance public knowledge and understanding of Autism to combat the rise of misinformation and reduce stigma

Improve Dublin City's infrastructure to become more inclusive, accessible and safe for Autistic people

Create a safe and inclusive city that welcomes the Autistic community to visit, live and study in Dublin

Celebrate Dublin's Autistic community and highlight their strengths to society

Promote inclusive workplaces in Dublin City and strengthen pathways to meaningful employment that Autistic people can access



## **Goal 1: Establish a strong sense of community for Autistic people in Dublin City and champion their advocacy**

Building a city where all Autistic people can feel welcome and belong enhances the city's vibrancy and overall wellbeing. Dublin City can provide a space to empower and advocate to ensure all Autistic voices are heard. We want to champion local volunteers and advocates and continue to recognise their impact in creating a fairer society for all. Strengthening advocacy in local communities builds confidence and helps inspire the next generation of future leaders. Developing the Autism Friendly Towns framework across the Dublin City region will mean the Autistic community will have a network of support that is locally driven. The plan aims to provide a platform to amplify Autistic lived experiences and enhance opportunities to empowerment.

- To drive the initiative and ensure the representation of Autistic people, and the required cross-section of key stakeholders, we will establish a Steering Committee, chaired by the Lord Mayor, to oversee implementation and the awards application process
- Building on the success of existing local Autism Friendly Town Committees, we will seek to support the establishment of such a group in each of the 11 Local Electoral Areas
- Through the Steering Committee, we will engage businesses to participate in the initiative as Autism Friendly Champions – enhancing accessibility and reaching new audiences
- We will seek to support the development of Autism advocacy in the city by seeking to build the capacity of existing Autism Friendly Town Committees, and other support groups, by supporting their engagement with existing funding and development opportunities

### **Desirable Outcomes**

- *Establishment of an Autism Friendly City Steering Group*
- *Increase the number of Autism Friendly Town Committees across Dublin*
- *Strengthen relationships with other Autism advocacy groups*
- *Increase public knowledge of Autism Friendly Champions in the community*



## **Goal 2: Enhance public knowledge and understanding of Autism to combat the rise of misinformation and reduce stigma**

Providing opportunities for Understanding Autism training is essential to establishing a city that is welcoming and inclusive. Insights from the consultation findings and the Same Chance Report 2025 highlighted that the rise of misinformation about Autism is a challenge that Autistic people face every day. By positioning Dublin City as the first Autism Friendly Capital, it serves as a powerful platform for accurate information and awareness in creating spaces to educate and promote truthful information. Dublin City can lead the way to break down barriers to acceptance and build confidence in the wider community in supporting Autistic people. Achieving a lasting rise of understanding requires efforts that are wide reaching as well as targeted to ensure the city's progress is rooted by empathy, respect and continues to benefit the Autistic community in years to come.

- We will recruit and train at least 60 Autism Friendly Champions across Dublin City – including public services, voluntary organisation and businesses
- We will provide Understanding Autism Training to all Dublin City Council staff members and elected representatives
- We will seek to extend this training to providers of public transport within Dublin City.
- We will continue our accreditation journey as a local authority, seeking to expand the number and range of our services which have achieved Autism Friendly accreditation.
- As a local authority, we will mark World Autism Month each April with a targeted public information campaign
- We will offer Understanding Autism training to other public services in the city including frontline and emergency services.

### **Desirable Outcomes**

- *Increase the number of Autism Friendly Champions in the city*
- *Increase Autism understanding with Dublin City Council staff*
- *Increase Autism understanding with staff in the various transport networks*
- *A collaborative campaign for World Autism Month in April*



### **Goal 3: Improve Dublin City's infrastructure to become more inclusive, accessible and safe for Autistic community members**

As Dublin City continues to grow and develop, it is important that its infrastructure is accessible for the smooth function of the city as well as the wellbeing of its Autistic community. Collaboration with Dublin City Council, transport networks and other public bodies will be key to improving accessibility and ensuring inclusive design across all areas of development. Suggestions gathered from the consultations sessions will be shared with relevant organisations to ensure each development is implemented with the Autistic experience at its core. By documenting the improvements across the city, it will help Autistic people navigate Dublin with confidence and serve as a valuable guide when planning their journeys. Accessibility enhancements should continue to expand across the city, ensuring that Dublin city becomes a place where Autistic individuals feel free, safe and supported.

- We will continue to roll-out communication boards across public spaces
- We will explore the implementation of public quiet spaces and accessible infrastructure such as priority Autistic parking spaces
- We will seek to roll-out visual guides, sensory boxes and break out rooms in public buildings where appropriate
- We will create a sensory map of the city that highlights public break zones, sensory toolkits and sensory gardens
- Through the steering group, and ongoing engagement with the Autistic community, we will identify areas of the city in which specific accessibility barriers exist and seek to address them.
- We will work in partnership to ensure all major transport stations have suitable sensory PPE equipment for public use.
- We will engage with transport networks Accessibility Officers to explore and enhance inclusive public transport on public holidays and major events in the city.

#### **Desirable Outcomes**

- *Increase the number of communication boards across the city*
- *Enhance the city's infrastructure with sensory adaptations*
- *Create a sensory map of Dublin City*
- *Complete a day-to-day sensory audit of the city*
- *Increase sensory considerations in major train stations in the city*



## **Goal 4: Create a safe and inclusive city that welcomes the Autistic community to visit, live and study in Dublin**

As a Capital City, Dublin's vibrant atmosphere attracts millions of people each year for a variety of reasons. It is important that Autistic people feel welcome and have the same chance to enjoy what the city has to offer. At the end of the plan, Autism Friendly businesses will be showcased in a public directory to highlight those who have embraced Autism Friendly practices. In order to be an Autism Friendly Capital, we must also recognise the various reasons people visit Dublin and ensure to embed Autism Friendly practices across tourism, education and community. Linking inclusive efforts from higher education institutions and tourist attractions can warrant Ireland's "Land of a thousand welcomes" highlights Autistic experiences as a part of its vision.

- Create a dedicated webpage on Dublin City Council website for Dublin City Autism Friendly Initiative and detailed accessibility measures that have been put in place.
- Publish a directory of Autism Friendly businesses, organisations and supports in Dublin City
- Engage with the Dublin City Taskforce about the experiences and barriers faced by Autistic People in the community.
- Promote Dublin as an Autism Friendly Capital with support from Failte Ireland

### **Desirable Outcomes**

- *Publish an online directory of detailed sensory enhancements within the city*
- *Create a dedicated webpage for the Dublin City Autism Friendly Capital to sit on Dublin City Council's website*
- *Increase the recognition of Dublin as an Autism Friendly Capital internationally*



## **Goal 5: Celebrate Dublin's Autistic community and highlight their strengths to society**

Providing accessible opportunities for Autistic creatives to share their talent will further enrich Dublin's vibrant, cultural landscape. By ensuring that Autistic artists can confidently participate and contribute to the city's creative spaces, Dublin can challenge stereotypes, increase visibility and inspire others through authentic representation. Participants from the consultations recommended creating smaller local competitions through schools as well as larger scale, long-lasting projects to exhibit how Autistic creatives can influence Dublin's art, literature and music scenes. Furthermore, it is central that Autistic people have the same opportunities to attend and enjoy the city's abundant artist and cultural offerings in welcoming, sensory- considerate environments.

- Explore methods to expand festivities and inclusive practices across major Dublin City celebrations
- Create opportunities for Autistic talent to be showcased in literature, music and art.
- Create a mural in Dublin City, created by an Autistic artist celebrating Autism Acceptance

### **Desirable Outcomes**

- *Increased opportunities for Autistic people to perform and showcase in Dublin City celebrations*
- *Create a dedicated webpage for the Dublin City Autism Friendly Capital to sit on Dublin City Council's website*
- *Install a mural in Dublin City to celebrate Autism Acceptance.*

## **Goal 6: Promote inclusive workplaces in Dublin City and strengthen pathways to meaningful employment that Autistic people can access**

As Ireland's capital city, Dublin acts as a major hub for employment and a pillar in the country's economy. Through the consultation process, it became clear that many Autistic people feel unrepresented in the workforce and still experience barriers to attaining sustainable and meaningful employment. Participants highlighted the importance of developing inclusive community initiatives that support Autistic jobseekers and providing training to employers to build understanding, break down stigma, and create inclusive workplaces. By strengthening pathways to meaningful opportunities and promoting inclusive hiring practices, it grants Autistic people financial independence and the ability to confidently sustain a fulfilling lifestyle in the city. The plan will link with employers, training providers and other major stakeholders to help champion inclusive workplaces to highlight the various strengths Autistic people can offer and instilling confidence in those applying.

- We will use the opportunity to signpost businesses and services to AsIAM's Employment services to conduct training on inclusive hiring as well as champion inclusive practices
- We will bring together key employment networks such as Local Enterprise Offices, Dublin Chamber of Commerce and Dublin Towns to collaborate efforts to address underrepresentation of Autistic people in the workforce and combine efforts to support inclusive hiring practices

### **Desirable Outcomes**

- *Increase opportunities for Autistic jobseekers in the city*
- *Increase business's awareness of supports available for Autistic employments*
- *Increase inclusive hiring practices across Dublin based organisations*



## **6. Implementation Plan**

### **Goal 1: Establish a strong sense of community for Autistic people in Dublin City and champion their advocacy**

<b>Objectives</b>	<b>Actions</b>	<b>Timeline</b>
1.1 Establish a Steering Committee, chaired by the Lord Mayor, to oversee implementation and the awards application process	1.1.1. Appoint appropriate members to the Dublin City Autism Friendly Steering Group	Short term
	1.1.2 Confirm terms of reference and schedule regular meeting dates	Short term
	1.1.3 Regularly update the Steering Committee with progress of the plan	Medium – Long term
1.2 Support the establishment of an Autism Friendly Towns Committee in each of the 11 Local Electoral Areas	1.2.1 Link in with Dublin City Council Community Officers to identify local groups	Commenced
	1.2.2 Support Committees in the Autism Friendly Towns Framework to achieve the award	Commenced
	1.2.3 Assist in the promotion and planning of local Autism Friendly Towns events	Commenced
1.3 Engage businesses to participate in the initiative as Autism Friendly Champions – enhancing accessibility and reaching new audiences	1.3.1 Introduce Dublin City based Autism Friendly Champions to their local committees.	Commenced
	1.3.2 Build public awareness of the Autism Friendly Towns framework	Commenced
1.4 Support the development of Autism advocacy in the city by seeking to build the capacity of existing Autism Friendly Town Committees by supporting their engagement with existing funding and development opportunities	1.4.1 Identify Dublin City Council funding streams and other grants available for committees	Short term
	1.4.2 Provide guidance to Autism Friendly Towns committees in their applications	Commenced
1.5 Strengthen collaboration with other advocacy groups that share common goals to build collective impact and advance inclusion across the city	1.5.1 Link in with the Irish speaking Autism community in Dublin	Commenced
	1.5.2 Promote the AsIAm Advocacy for Impact Working Group and expand it's membership	Commenced
	1.5.3 Engage advocacy partners in updates regarding the Dublin City Autism Friendly plan	Long term

**Goal 2: Enhance public knowledge and understanding of Autism to combat the rise of misinformation and reduce stigma**

Objectives	Actions	Timeline
2.1 Recruit and train at least 60 Autism Friendly Champions across Dublin City – including public services, voluntary organisation and businesses	2.1.1 Facilitate Champion Training to 60 businesses/ public services or volunteer groups across the city	Commenced
	2.1.2 Provide support to businesses developing visual guides and other sensory accommodations	Commenced
2.2 Provide Training to Public Transport networks across Dublin	2.2.1 Identify appropriate staff in each transport network for training	Short term
	2.2.2 Facilitate a specific transport network Autism- Friendly Champion training	Medium – long term
2.3 We will mark World Autism Month each April with a targeted public information campaign	2.3.1 Collaborate with Dublin City Council in planning the campaign	Medium – long term
	2.3.2 Gather insight from Dublin based Autism Friendly towns committees on the messaging of the campaign	Medium – long term
2.4 Offer Understanding Autism training to other public services in the city including frontline and emergency services	2.4.1 Link in with frontline services to provide Autism Friendly Champion training	Commenced
	2.4.2 Facilitate Autism- Friendly Champion training to Dublin City Council staff	Commenced
	2.4.3 Look to enhance Dublin City Council's accreditation programme.	Medium – Long term
	2.4.4 Provide Autism Friendly Champion training for public representatives	



**Goal 3: Improve Dublin’s infrastructure to become more inclusive, accessible and safe for Autistic community members**

Objectives	Actions	Timeline
3.1 Continue to roll-out communication boards across public spaces	3.1.1 Work with local AFT committees to identify key locations for communication boards  3.1.2 Work with Dublin City Council to construct communication boards in public spaces	Medium – Long term
3.2 Explore the implementation of public quiet spaces and accessible infrastructure such as priority Autistic parking spaces	3.2.1 Identify areas across Dublin for potential quiet spaces  3.2.2 Discuss the need of localised accessible infrastructure with local committees and public representatives	Medium – Long term  Medium – Long term
3.3 Roll-out visual guides, sensory boxes and break out rooms in public buildings where appropriate	3.3.1 Collaborate with Dublin City Council area Offices to identify what sensory provisions are possible  3.3.2 Provide sensory toolkits for all Dublin City Council area offices and libraries	Commenced  Medium – Long term
3.4 Create a sensory map of the city that highlights public break zones, sensory toolkits and sensory gardens	3.4.1 Identify areas of the city that have accessibility barriers exist and seek to address them  3.4.2 Complete a sensory audit of Dublin City  3.4.3 Work with Dublin City Council to promote the public break spaces and sensory provisions	Medium – Long term  Medium – Long term  Medium – Long term
3.5 Enhance sensory accommodations in each of the train stations and other transport network across the city	3.5.1 Identify what provisions are currently provided in the stations in Dublin  3.5.2 Increase public awareness of available sensory supports  3.5.3 Create visual guides to support individuals using public transport.  3.5.4 Engage with transport networks Accessibility Officers to provide support for those traveling for major festivities in the city centre.	Short term  Medium – Long term  Medium - Long term  Medium – Long term

**Goal 4: Create a safe and inclusive city that welcomes the Autistic community to visit, live and study in Dublin**

Objectives	Actions	Timeline
<p>4.1 Support the development and delivery of Autism inclusion training across higher education settings to ensure campus environments are welcoming and accessible to all.</p>	<p>4.1.1 Promote the AsIAm Autism Friendly HEI programme to all Dublin based institutions</p> <p>4.1.2 Identify what supports are available in each of the AsIAm accredited institutions</p> <p>4.1.3 Collaborate with AsIAm’s HEI team to roll out Autism Friendly Champion Training to front facing services such as libraries, shops and student unions</p> <p>4.1.4 Promote the Dublin City Autism Friendly Capital initiative with recruitment and international Offices in institutions</p>	<p>Commence</p> <p>Short term</p> <p>Medium – Long term</p> <p>Medium – Long term</p>
<p>4.2 Create a dedicated webpage on Dublin City Council website for Dublin City Autism Friendly Initiative and detailed accessibility measures that have been put in place.</p>	<p>4.2.1 Publish a directory of Autism Friendly businesses/ organisations and supports in Dublin City</p> <p>4.2.2 Effectively promote the directory that it can be easily accessed</p>	<p>Long term</p> <p>Long term</p>
<p>4.3 Engage with city partners to identify and address challenges impacting the sense of safety and belonging among Autistic people in Dublin</p>	<p>4.3.1 Engage with the Dublin City Taskforce about the experiences and barriers faced by Autistic People in the community.</p> <p>4.3.2 Communicate the experiences of Autistic people starting third level education to various departments through the AsIAm HEI programme</p> <p>4.3.3 Schedule regular meetings with Dublin based HEI’s about the initiative</p>	<p>Medium – Long term</p> <p>Short term</p> <p>Commenced</p>
<p>4.4 Celebrate Dublin as the First Autism Friendly Capital in the world in partnership with Failte Ireland and various institutions International and Recruitment departments</p>	<p>4.4.1 Outline the various sensory accommodations that have been implemented in the Dublin City Autism Friendly Plan to universities</p> <p>4.4.2 Create appropriate messaging to entice international Autistic people to visit Dublin</p> <p>4.4.3 Link the Autism Friendly Webpage to various tourism and study abroad pages when established</p>	<p>Medium – Long term</p> <p>Medium – Long term</p> <p>Medium – Long term</p>

**Goal 5: Celebrate Dublin’s Autistic community and highlight their strengths to society**

Objectives	Actions	Timeline
5.1 Explore methods to expand inclusive practices across major Dublin city celebrations	5.1.1 Engage with Dublin City Council to identify accessibility initiatives that can be promoted	Medium – Long term
	5.1.2 Provide guidance on implementing sensory spaces and accessibility measures to be rolled out for all major Dublin City Council celebrations	Medium – Long term
	5.1.3 Discuss other opportunities with Dublin City Council’s events to celebrate the Autistic community	Medium – Long term
5.2 Create opportunities for Autistic talent to be showcased in literature, music and art.	5.2.1 Collaborate with Dublin City libraries, arts and cultural team about creating pathways for Autistic creatives	Medium – Long term
	5.2.2 Promote available opportunities for Autistic creatives to submit their work	Medium – Long term
5.3 Install a mural in Dublin City, created by an Autistic artist celebrating Autism Acceptance	5.3.1 Consult with local Autism Friendly Committees about their vision for the project	Long term
	5.3.2 Work with Dublin City Council to deliver the mural	Long term



**Goal 6: Advocate for more inclusive workplaces in the Dublin City and strengthen pathways to meaningful employment that Autistic people can access**

Objectives	Actions	Timeline
6.1 Promote available supports for Autistic jobseekers and businesses	6.1.1 Signpost Autistic jobseekers to AsIAM's Employment services	Commenced
	6.1.2 Work with Intreo and other service to help inform Autistic jobseekers about supports	Medium- Long Term
	6.1.3 Engage Dublin-based businesses and AsIAM's Employment Team to promote inclusive employment practices and build workplace confidence in supporting Autistic employees	Commenced
6.2 Enhance pathways for Autistic job seekers to avail of support and development opportunities	6.2.1 Provide guidance on sensory accommodations for local Dublin based job fairs	Medium – Long Term
	6.2.2 Collaborate with stakeholders such as Local Enterprise Offices, Dublin Chamber of Commerce and Dublin Towns to promote inclusive practices in business and recruitment	Medium – Long Term
	6.2.3 Promote internship, mentorship, and work placement opportunities tailored for Autistic jobseekers to support skill-building and workplace readiness	Commenced

\*Short term actions to be completed within 8 months of the plan

Medium actions to be completed within Year 2 of the plan

Long term actions to be completed to be completed with Year 3 of the plan



## 7. Governance & Oversight

### Dublin City Autism Friendly Steering Group:

To ensure the commitments from the above actions are fulfilled, a Dublin City Autism Friendly Steering Group will be established. The committee will consist of various stakeholders with diverse experiences who can drive action. The steering group will be chaired by the Lord Mayor of Dublin and will meet regularly to monitor progress. Moreover, the steering committee will advise on key decisions, provide guidance and ensure project objectives are delivered in an inclusive and effective manner. The Steering Committee will make every effort to guide and support the successful completion of each objective within this action plan. However, if an objective is assessed to be no longer feasible or appropriate, the steering group may decide to discontinue that action. Any such decision must be supported by a comprehensive justification, clearly outlining the reasons for the change and its impact on the overall plan.

The formation of the steering group is to strengthen the plan's implementation and to honour the hundreds of Autistic voices that contributed to the consultations that took place in the Mansion House 2024.

### Risk Analysis:

Category	Risk Description	Likelihood	Impact	Mitigation Measures
Strategic/Governance	Lack of sustained political support	Medium	High	Secure cross-party endorsement; formalise DCAF within DCC's inclusion strategy; publish annual reports.
Strategic/Governance	Governance fragmentation	Medium	Medium-High	Define roles clearly in Steering Group TOR; DCAF officer to maintain alignment.
Strategic/Governance	Insufficient stakeholder coordination	High	High	Establish communication protocols; quarterly cross-sector meetings; public tracker.
Financial/Resource	Funding shortfalls	Medium-High	High	Diversify funding; phase investments; demonstrate ROI through pilots.
Financial/Resource	Over-reliance on external partners	Medium	Medium	Develop internal DCC capacity; cross-train staff; ensure continuity funding.

## Risk Analysis:

Category	Risk Description	Likelihood	Impact	Mitigation Measures
Operational	Slow recruitment of 60 Autism Friendly Champions	Medium	High	Incentivise participation; engage Dublin Chamber, Failte Ireland, and Dublin Town networks.
Operational	Implementation delays	Medium-High	Medium-High	Adopt review cycles; quarterly Steering Group updates; KPIs and milestones.
Reputational	Tokenism or performative inclusion	Medium	High	Maintain transparency; report on tangible outcomes; elevate Autistic voices.
Reputational	Public misunderstanding of 'Autism Friendly'	High	Medium	Develop clear award criteria and brand guidelines.
Social/Cultural	Limited public engagement	High	High	Implement city-wide acceptance campaigns; school and transport partnerships.
Social/Cultural	Stigma and discrimination persist	Medium-High	High	Promote Autistic-led storytelling; include inclusion metrics; visibility campaigns.
Technological/Data	Digital exclusion	Medium	Medium	Ensure website accessibility; offer physical communication channels.
External/Environmental	Economic downturn	Medium	Medium-High	Phase high-cost actions; secure funding commitments; leverage CSR partnerships.



## ***8. Measuring Success***

This action plan is designed as a three-year road map to become the First Autism Capital in the World alongside the vision that it becomes a living document that Autistic community members feel it's impact in years to come. Progress will be monitored both qualitatively and quantitatively to ensure the development is tracked, celebrated and continuously improves. Key milestones such as fulfilling various objectives, collaborating with city stakeholders and achieving the Autism Friendly Towns Award will be measured. To ensure transparency and to sustain momentum, a yearly report will be published about the plans progress as Dublin grows to be an inclusive and welcoming city for all.

### **Monitoring progress of Objectives and Key desirable outcomes**

Given the wide range of goals, objectives, and desired outcomes within this Action Plan, progress will be measured in a variety of ways. The number of recruited champions, committees and various training sessions will be recorded numerically. For objectives that are not defined by numerical targets, progress will be tracked through the completion of key milestones and ongoing feedback from the Autistic community and other contributors involved in each objective. This will allow the plan to evolve in response to real experiences, while also identifying challenges and opportunities for growth. The Dublin City Autism Friendly Steering Group will have a pivotal role in monitoring progress of the initiative as they will receive regular updates of developments throughout the year in addition to the annual report.

### **Annual reporting**

An Annual Report will be presented to serve as a public record of the action plans progress outlining the achievements, challenges and next steps. The annual report will be evaluated against the action plan's objective and goals. Furthermore, the annual report will be presented with experiences from the Autistic community since the project began. By bringing together data, stories and insight, it will demonstrate how actions are manifested into meaningful change across Dublin City.

### **Dublin City Autism Friendly Towns Recognition Award**

The recognition of Dublin as an Autism Friendly City will be acknowledged using the AsIAms' Autism Friendly Town framework. The AsIAm Autism Friendly Towns Programme is a national initiative with currently 45 voluntary steering committees located across the Republic of Ireland in villages, towns and cities. To be awarded the Autism Friendly Status, each area must have a designated number of Autism Friendly Champions in their area, depending on the population. An Autism Friendly Champion can be a business, public service or voluntary organisation. In order to attain the award as an Autism Friendly Town, Dublin City requires 60 Autism Friendly champions. Each recruited champion must complete Autism Friendly Training and make small sensory adaptations to their premises to make it more inclusive. They must also have a sensory box on site. Each year, an independent judging panel is formed and adjudicates if the community has met the criteria.

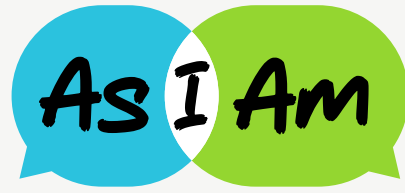
## 9. Appendices

### Acronyms Index

AFT	Autism Friendly Town
CEO	Chief Executive Officer
CSR	Corporate Social Responsibility
DCAF	Dublin City Autism Friendly
DCC	Dublin City Council
DPO	Disabled Persons Organisation
HEI	Higher Education Institutes
ROI	Return on investment
TOR	Terms of Reference



Comhairle Cathrach  
Bhaile Átha Cliath  
Dublin City Council



IRELAND'S  
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CHARITY

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