Disability Action Plan

Consultation summary for people with MS, family and friends

# What is the Disability Action Plan?

The Disability Action Plan sets out how the UK Government aims to improve disabled people’s lives over the next year (2023 – 2024). The actions in the plan are for the UK Government, rather than the devolved nations’ governments. The Action Plan is separate from the National Disability Strategy, which sets out longer-term commitments.

The UK government is consulting on the proposals to get disabled people’s feedback. The consultation is open until 6 October 2023. This leaflet sets out an explanation of the proposals in the Action Plan which are most relevant to people affected by MS and how you can give your views.

# Why is the UK Government consulting?

The Disability Action Plan consultation sets out proposed actions which the Disability Unit will take. They focus on 12 aspects of daily life including using public services, parenthood and assistive technology.

The actions are meant to have either a direct impact on disabled people over the next year or make meaningful progress towards longer-term goals. The UK Government wants to hear your thoughts on whether you think these actions are the right ones to help disabled people.

## How can I get involved?

Disabled people, family and friends and organisations which work with them are all able to take part in the consultation. The consultation closes on **6 October 2023**.

You can respond to the consultation online [using this survey](https://equalityhub.citizenspace.com/disability-unit/disability-action-plan-consultation/). For most of the questions, you can tick a box on a scale of ‘strongly agree’ to ‘strongly disagree.’ There are also free text boxes for you to add more information if you would like. You can save your responses and come back to them later if you need to. There is no time limit on the survey’s webpage.

# The proposals

**The proposals in the Action Plan cover many different topics. In this leaflet, we’ve highlighted some of the areas which may be of more interest to people affected by MS.**

## Disability Enabled Badge scheme

The Disability Unit is proposing to launch a Disability Enabled Badge scheme which will encourage businesses and services to train their staff in disability awareness.

Similar to the Disability Confident scheme, the Badge scheme would offer disability awareness training to businesses and services around making their products more accessible. It’s likely that businesses would receive their badge after they train enough staff who work directly with customers. The Disability Unit are planning to test the scheme in 5 parts of the UK in spring 2024.

### What could this mean for people with MS?

The Disability Enabled Badge scheme will train businesses and public services to improve accessibility for disabled people. This could be, for example, providing training to staff in a shop so that they are able to make adjustments for disabled customers. Businesses will be able to use the Badge scheme in their branding and marketing. This may help disabled people to find and use businesses and public services that will meet their needs.

Whilst the Government are preparing to the pilot the Disability Enabled Badge, it is undecided how businesses will qualify for it. This means that the Government still need to work out how the Badge scheme will work before it gets rolled out nationally.

## Raising the profile of assistive technology

Assistive technology is a term used to describe equipment which helps make environments more accessible. Examples of assistive technology are mobility aids like scooters, medical devices like heart monitors and home adjustments like grab rails.

The Disability Unit is proposing to raise awareness of assistive technology within Government by:

* appointing a Senior Assistive Technology Champion in government
* improving public sector staff such as civil servants’ knowledge and skills around assistive technology
* developing a ‘feasibility study’ which will explore options for assistive technology training for public sector staff.

### What could this mean for people with MS?

A Senior Assistive Technology Champion would be a senior role which could be carried out by a government minister. They would be responsible for making the Government more aware of assistive technology. Similarly, a feasibility study would look into potential training programmes for the public sector to improve their understanding of assistive technology.

These actions may improve the Government’s and the public sector’s knowledge of assistive technology and how disabled people use it. However, they are only focused on raising awareness rather than changes to help disabled people access assistive technology.

## Support for disabled parents

The Disability Unit is proposing to set up a taskforce to explore the challenges which disabled parents face and come up with solutions. Three areas which the taskforce may look into are:

* accessibility issues in the parenting support provided by health and care services
* difficulties within the family courts and child protection services, such as children being removed from disabled parents
* domestic abuse.

The Government’s taskforce will be a group of policymakers who develop solutions to challenges that disabled parents face, particularly around accessing healthcare, the family courts, child protection services and domestic abuse. There is also potential for the taskforce to look into other issues that are important to disabled parents.

### What could this mean for people with MS?

Many people find out they have MS just as they are starting a family, or thinking about doing so. Pregnancy, childbirth and breastfeeding can have an impact on the treatments people are offered for their MS, as well as sometimes affecting MS relapses. MS can also mean that people need support after birth to manage things like fatigue and mental health. This is why it is so important that pregnant people with MS are offered the right support and information from their health care professionals before, during and after pregnancy.

We have more information and advice about pregnancy, childbirth and MS on the [pregnancy, birth and breastfeeding pages on our website](https://www.mssociety.org.uk/about-ms/what-is-ms/women-and-ms/pregnancy-and-birth#:~:text=Can%20I%20have%20a%20healthy,healthy%20babies%20as%20those%20without.).

## Improving disability evidence and data

The UK Government is proposing to improve the amount and the quality of data collected about disabled people by:

* establishing a cross-government ‘disability evidence and data improvement programme’ to improve the existing data on disabled people and collect more of it where there are gaps
* exploring a set of ‘indicators’ which will be used to assess how well government policies and services address the things which matter most to disabled people.

### What could this mean for people with MS?

Research and data around disabled people are often patchy, with large gaps in what and how evidence is collected. This means it is often difficult to track disabled people’s needs or their experiences with services.

The improvement programme aims to fill some of the data gaps and enable the Government to better identify issues which disabled people face, as well as monitor the impact that government policies have on disabled people’s lives.

Similarly, success indicators are criteria that set a standard for what inclusivity looks like. These would help the UK Government to keep track of how well policies and services are addressing issues which disabled people face.

## Climate adaptations and mitigation work

Climate change adaptations and mitigations are schemes which attempt to control or reduce the impact of something on the environment. An example of a climate change adaptation is London’s Ultra-Low Emission Zones (ULEZ) scheme, which charges people for using a vehicle which produces a high amount of pollution.

The Disability Unit is proposing to develop inclusive climate change adaptations and mitigations by:

* working with disabled people to develop guidance on disability-inclusive approaches to schemes
* commissioning research into the inclusivity of climate change adaptations
* co-ordinating a cross-Government working group to address the inclusivity issues surrounding climate change adaptations.

### What could this mean for people with MS?

The Government would gather disabled people’s views on how to make sure climate change adaptations consider disabled people and their needs. For example, developing guidance for local authority-led schemes like Ultra-Low Emission Zones and Clean Air Zones to make allowances for vehicles that have been adapted disabled users. Research into climate change adaptations would also investigate how well current schemes are taking disabled people into account.

A cross-Government working group will mean multiple Government departments work together to improve current climate change adaptations. The working group would be able to make changes to existing schemes based on the evidence they collect, but their investigations may take some time.

# Frequently asked questions

## Where can I find out more information about the actions?

You can find more information about the UK Government’s plans, including the ones we’ve not included in this leaflet, in the [consultation document](https://www.gov.uk/government/consultations/disability-action-plan-2023-to-2024/disability-action-plan-2023-to-2024-consultation-document). This is available in lots of formats including web-accessible PDF, British Sign Language and large-print.

## There’s something I’d like to see changed, but it’s not in the list of actions. Can I include this in my consultation response?

Yes. Questions 13 and 14 of the questionnaire ask for your opinion on the Action Plan overall and asks whether there are any other actions the UK Government should take. These questions give you an opportunity to give suggestions and your overall thoughts on the Action Plan. You can also make suggestions for things the Government should be prioritising if you think that a priority issue is missing from the Action Plan.

## I think the actions are helpful, but the way the Government is planning to do them isn’t right. Can I give feedback on this?

Yes. Each question has a 500-word free text box where can explain your answer. You can use these boxes to give your opinions on the actions and how you think the Government should go about them.

## I don’t feel any of these actions would make a difference to me. Should I still take part in the consultation?

Absolutely! On most of the questions, you can tick ‘neither agree nor disagree’ or one of the ‘disagree’ options to tell the Government that you think these actions are not relevant. The free-text boxes also give you an opportunity to explain why. You can then use questions 13 and 14 to make suggestions if you want to. Remember that your opinion matters and that this Action Plan is meant to help all disabled people.

## Do I have to answer all of the questions?

No, you do not need to answer all of the questions. You also don’t have to explain your answers in the free-text boxes if you don’t want to. It is completely up to you how many questions you choose to answer. Even if you just answer one, your opinion still matters.

## Where can I get more support?

If you would like more information about MS, or about this consultation, you can get in touch with us via our Helpline. You can call the Helpline on 0808 800 8000 Mondays to Fridays 9am-7pm or email us at helpline@mssociety.org.uk.