

Actions for Inclusion

Including people with intellectual disability
in Disability Inclusion Action Plans (DIAPs)





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About this guide

People with intellectual disability have lifelong experiences of not being included. This makes them resilient, skilled and insightful about what all people need to be included. People with intellectual disability need and use all Government services.

CID members have said...



I want to be part of the community, not just walk through it.



We want a community where all people with intellectual disability are valued and included.

This guide is designed to be used by Government and Local Councils in conjunction with the [NSW Disability Inclusion Action Plan Guidelines](#). It will help Government agencies build and improve on current Disability Inclusion Action Plans (DIAPs), so actions have a genuine impact on increasing meaningful inclusion and decision-making autonomy for people with intellectual disability.



Reflection....

Does your DIAP have specific actions/outcomes that increase inclusion, participation and the autonomy of people with intellectual disability and those with cognitive impairment?

When thinking about disability inclusion, it is common to think primarily about physical and sensory access.

Estimates suggest there are over 150 000 people with intellectual disability in NSW. Coupled with their families, over half a million people in NSW benefit when Government services are inclusive. When we consider that inclusive practices can improve things for those with other cognitive impairments, this number increase significantly.

This Guide was developed by the [Council for Intellectual Disability](#) (CID).

We work with and for people with intellectual disability to increase access and inclusion in key areas such as employment, health, justice, information and technology. Everything we do at CID is underpinned by a supported decision-making approach that promotes autonomy in decision making.

This guide suggests **specific** things to include in your DIAP to make communities and government services more accessible and inclusive for **people with intellectual disability**. It is based on:

- What people with intellectual disability tell us about their lived experience.
- Our extensive co-design experience with people with intellectual disability.

Some actions will be a better fit for your organisation than others, depending on the broader operational context and organisational readiness. Remember, any step towards better access and inclusion for people with intellectual disability is positive. It will also benefit many others in the community including people with cognitive or mental health conditions, people from culturally and linguistically diverse backgrounds and older people.

As the supports provided by the NDIS are reduced, State and Local Governments' services will need to expand to fill the gaps for people with intellectual disability.

Reflection....



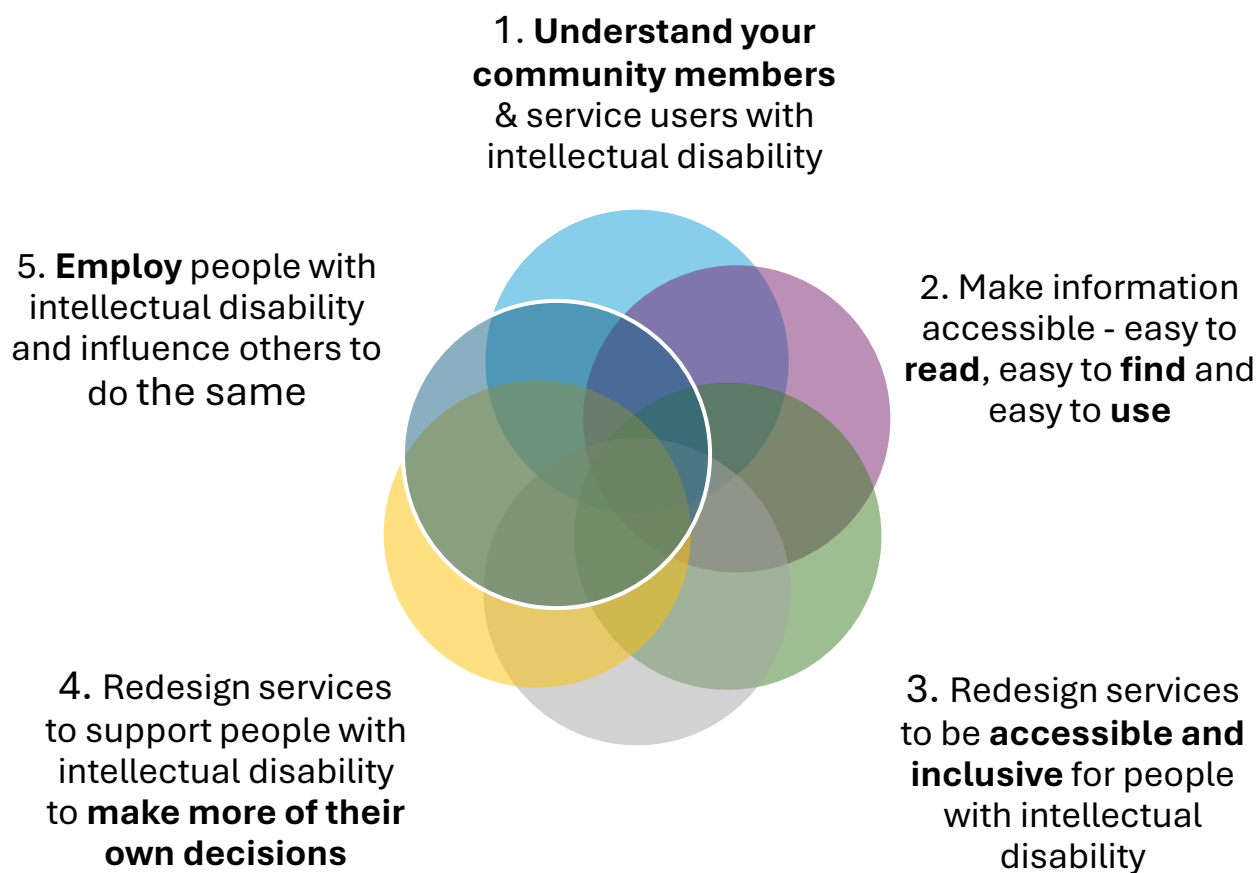
How do your service users/community members with intellectual disability have input into decisions that impact on their inclusion in your services and systems, and their local communities?

[The NSW Disability Inclusion Plan 2026 -2029](#) sets out 4 focus areas as well as high level actions and measures. This forms the basis for Government agencies to prepare Disability Inclusion Action Plans (DIAPs).

- 1 Developing positive community attitudes and upholding the rights of people with disability
- 2 Creating liveable and safer communities
- 3 Supporting access to meaningful employment and independence
- 4 Improving access to mainstream services through better systems and processes

CID has identified the following **priority actions for inclusion** to contribute to meaningful outcomes for people with intellectual disability in these focus areas.

Priority actions for inclusion



1. Understand your community members/service users with intellectual disability

Collate relevant information to inform your plan

It is important to understand who uses your service(s). It is also important to understand the intersectionality between all the attributes of your community members/service users with intellectual disability. This includes things like age, Aboriginality, gender, religion, cultural and linguistic diversity and sexuality.



One of our Project Workers told us...

Remember, the disability we have is only one part of us. Our life experience, emotional intelligence, education, family, support and personality all contribute to who we are and what is important to us.



Reflection...

- *How do people with intellectual disability use your services? (e.g. face to face, online, phone etc)*
- *What is their situation/context at the time of using your service? (e.g. is it an enquiry or is it a crisis or something in between?)*



Consider...

- Gather as much data and other information as possible about your community members/service users with intellectual disability.
- You should look within your agency for data as well as other relevant sources such as [Australian Bureau of Statistics](#), [Australian Institute of Health and Welfare](#), [The National Centre of Excellence in Intellectual Disability Health](#).
- People with intellectual disability are overrepresented in many parts of our justice system and social housing. They have poorer health outcomes than the general population and are underrepresented in employment and higher education.
- Some attributes compound disadvantage for people with intellectual disability. For example, the rate of intellectual disability

is higher for First Nations people than it is for the general population¹.

- Your DIAP should be integrated with other relevant plans and policies within and outside your organisation. For example, consider how your DIAP links to your Reconciliation Action Plan.



Actions to consider for your DIAP...

- Compile a profile of service users/community members with intellectual disability.
- Collect information on how people with intellectual disability use your services and build in data collection points if you do not have access to this information.
- Create a list of the services and resources most needed or used by people with intellectual disability and prioritise making them accessible.

Ask community members/service users with intellectual disability what they want and need

People often make assumptions about whether people with intellectual disability can understand information, give their opinions or make their own decisions. People with intellectual disability have valuable insights and considered ideas about how to make things more inclusive and accessible. The best way to start including people with intellectual disability in your DIAP and services(s) is to communicate in an accessible way and ask them what they want and need.



One of our members suggested...

Create a safe space where you actually want our input – ask us what will make things better

¹ Chong, R. Y., & Bhandarkar, R. (2021). Intellectual Disability in the Australian Aboriginal Population: A Critical Review. *Australian Indigenous Health Bulletin*, 2(3).
<http://dx.doi.org/10.14221/aijhjournal.v2n3.5>



One of our Project Workers told us...

When people communicate in an accessible way, it helps us feel involved, comfortable, and heard. It means we can understand what is happening. Without it, people with intellectual disability can feel overwhelmed, embarrassed, and excluded. Accessible communication isn't hard.



Reflection...

- How do people with intellectual disability have a say about your services and resources?
- Do you have the principles of co-design embedded in your systems? You can read more about it in this [Guide to Co-Design with people living with disability](#)



Consider...

Things you can do to communicate in an accessible way include

- Ask the person how they like to communicate
- Stick to one idea/topic at a time and don't use jargon
- Give the person time to answer you
- You can read more about accessible communication [here](#) or watch this [video](#).
- Create advisory groups of people who use your services and are interested in helping you improve how you reach people with intellectual disability. Pay people fairly for their time. Provide adequate support before, during and after meetings so people can meaningfully contribute. Find out more here [Good Practice Guidelines for Engaging with People with Disability | Disability Gateway](#)
- CID is one of several organisations that can assist you to connect with people with intellectual disability for consultation, advisory groups and testing of materials.
- Some people with intellectual disability communicate differently. Non-verbal people are often more marginalised, so it is important

they have options to give them a voice. For example, communication boards, books, picture cards, choice making symbols, speech generating devices or tablet apps.



Actions to consider for your DIAP....

- Train staff about accessible communication including communicating with people who are non-verbal.
- Adapt community consultation and decision making processes so people with intellectual disability can participate.
- Create an advisory committee that includes people with intellectual disability. Make sure meetings are inclusive! Find out how [here](#).
- Support an advisory committee member to take a leadership role using CID's [Inclusive Governance Framework](#)
- Co-design with people with intellectual disability. [Co-design](#) includes people with lived experience, community members, researchers and professionals working together to improve something, make something new or find the solution to a problem. Listen to what one of our Project Workers says about codesign [here](#).
- Create safe spaces for open communication and [sensory rooms](#) where people feel calm if they become overwhelmed.

2. Make information accessible - easy to read, easy to find and easy to use

It is a significant barrier to inclusion for people with intellectual disability when information is not accessible. This limits their participation and reduces their ability to be autonomous decision makers. This might be information about your services, events, the law or a request to get stakeholders involved in developing and implementing your DIAP. You can make information accessible to people with intellectual disability by ensuring it is

- **Easy to read**
- **Easy to find and**
- **Easy to use.**

Use Easy Read



One of our Board members told us...

Don't use big words I can't understand. Use Easy Read instead. Easy Read is important. It means I can understand and I'm included.



Reflection...

- *What documents have you translated into Easy Read?*
- *Are your existing Easy Read documents regularly reviewed?*



Consider...

- Just like we do for our CALD communities, translating information to Easy Read is how we can make information accessible for people with intellectual disability.
- Easy Read is a way of presenting information that uses clear, everyday language matched with images to make sure everyone understands.
- When government information is translated into Easy Read more people with intellectual disability can independently access the essential information and services they need.



Actions to consider for your DIAP...

- Develop a schedule for translating important information and frequently used forms into Easy Read.
- Include a budget for Easy Read translations in all communication plans. Find out how [Inclusion Services at CID](#) can help.

Make information Easy to Find and Use



CID members tell us that...

Navigating government websites is very challenging. Using search engines is hard and trying to find information in websites is confusing.



Reflection...

How do you know if people with intellectual disability find your website easy to use?

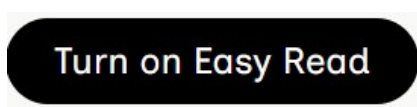
Do your Easy Read documents have embedded links to forms that are not accessible?



Consider...

If Easy Read translations are hard to find, they will not be used. Easy Read information is easy to find when:

- The first page of any website has a clear link to all Easy Read information e.g.



- Links are placed at the top of the page to reduce the need to scroll.
- The number of clicks and scrolling is kept to a minimum.
- Easy Read information is embedded into the relevant webpages as well as in Easy Read Hubs.
- All government websites are consistent and use the same navigation tools.
- Legal forms are also translated into Easy Read, with jargon and administrative prompts for Government staff removed.



Actions to consider for your DIAP....

- Engage or employ people with intellectual disability to test how easily they can find information on your website.
- Engage or employ people with intellectual disability to simplify navigation on your website.

3. Redesign services to be accessible and inclusive for people with intellectual disability

People with intellectual disability have the right to good quality government services. They also have the right to speak up and make complaints about services. Government service providers have a responsibility to provide good services and listen to people with intellectual disability.

CID members tell us that they have a lot of issues accessing services...



Staff can be rude and impatient or avoid people with intellectual disability.



Proof of identity can be hard to do and online forms are difficult.



Sometimes I have to wait a long time to talk to someone who can help me.



Reflection...

- *Do your staff know how to communicate effectively with people with intellectual disability?*
- *Are your staff trained in trauma informed practices?*
- *What reasonable adjustments do you make in your service(s) and programs for people with intellectual disability to be included?*
- *Is it easy for people to get to services in your local community?*



Consider...

People with intellectual disability need to be able access services in different ways. Logging in to websites to get services can be difficult for some people. Not everyone has a smartphone to use apps. Many people don't drive or have access to transport. It is important therefore to maintain a range of options to access services and

information (including face to face, phone and online) so people can choose what is best for them.

- Reasonable adjustments specifically for people with intellectual disability are essential. Examples include
 - Providing information in Easy Read and checking for understanding.
 - Continuing to offer in-person options.
 - Giving the person the option to make an appointment.
 - Providing appointment reminders.
 - Giving the person the option meet in a quiet room.
 - Allowing extra time to complete processes.
 - Changing waiting areas to make it less stressful.
 - Simplifying signage/using graphics.
 - Simplifying forms.
- All policies and programs should have built-in supports to keep people with intellectual disability both safe and strong. They should address possible harm and risks by providing appropriate supports and ensure any restriction or safeguarding for a person, is proportionate and does not impinge on their human rights.
- Often, funding for people with intellectual disability does not adequately pay for transport to and from activities or services. This is a significant barrier to inclusion for our community.



Actions to consider for your DIAP...

- Make [intellectual disability awareness training](#) mandatory for all staff.
- Include specific content about intellectual disability in induction and customer service training.
- Establish designated quiet spaces or sensory rooms in facilities and outdoor spaces.

- Consult with people with intellectual disability to make sure internal and external community events are inclusive and accessible for them.
- Review rules on forms of identification required to access information/services/update details and make reasonable adjustments for people with intellectual disability who do not have a driver's licence or passport.
- Train staff about how unconscious bias can impact on delivery of services and support for people with intellectual disability. You can hear about the effects of unconscious bias in delivery of health services [here](#).
- Develop a protocol to [make meetings inclusive](#) for people with intellectual disability through reasonable adjustments before, during and after the meeting.
- Train staff on trauma informed practices for example, [Guidelines for Trauma Informed Practice: Supporting People with Disability who have experienced Complex Trauma](#)
- Ensure complaint pathways are accessible with phone and in-person options.
- Create a list of reasonable adjustments/supports and make it available to people with intellectual disability.
- Provide free transport with a council or club community bus to get people to activities and appointments in their local area.

4. Redesign services to support people with intellectual disability to make more of their own decisions

The United Nations Convention on the Rights of People with Disabilities and the Australian Law Reform Commission have given us [clear guidance](#) on how to ensure people with disability have maximum autonomy in their lives, and how to promote good support for decision making. This includes ensuring:

- Everyone has the right to make decisions.
- Everyone has the right to take risks to build their strengths.
- Everyone has the right to support.
- Everyone should respect what a person decides.

It is often assumed people with intellectual disability cannot make their own decisions and others must decide for them. This means their rights are not upheld and they cannot maximise their autonomy.

Often, decisions made by others do not match what people with intellectual disability want for themselves. This might be in the context of government and other services, family matters or everyday activities.

Supporting people with intellectual disability to access their rights is everyone's responsibility. Government services can build a person's capability and promote inclusion by but making adjustments to support autonomous decision making.



Reflection...

Do you maximise opportunities for people with intellectual disability to make their own decisions using principles of supported decision making?

Supported decision making

Supported Decision Making (SDM) is a way of supporting people with intellectual disability so they can make more of their own decisions about their own lives.

Different SDM approaches have been developed, including a framework by CID.

Follow these links to find out more

[CID's SDM framework](#)

[Deciding with Support](#)

[Decision Agency](#)

[Advocacy Essentials - IDRS](#)



People with intellectual disability have said...

We are autonomous people who make our own decisions throughout our lives. These can be both small and these can be big, and they can be both safe and risky and we have the right to make them all. And some people are not given these rights.



Make it our own choice. And not let people to make the decisions for you. Sometimes they force you to do something you don't like.



Reflection...

- *How do you build the capability of people with intellectual disability to be more independent and autonomous when accessing your agency?*
- *How does your department demonstrate respect for decisions made by people with intellectual disability?*
- *How do you ensure people feel both safe and strong when using your services?*
- *If protection of a person is required, how do you safely include them in this decision?*



Consider...

- When people with intellectual disability make their own decisions, it means they can be autonomous and independent decision makers and less reliant on services and systems.
- Have control over their own lives - they are free to choose the things that make them happy and that align with their values.
- Be themselves and show people who they really are.
- Build their knowledge and skills and their self-confidence.
- Learn from their mistakes.

Important note on Safeguarding

We want to support people to become more independent and encourage their informal and formal networks to help build their capabilities.

However, we must also be aware of the signs of **undue influence** and coercive control.

We all have a responsibility to speak up and offer support if someone is at risk of this from other people.



Actions to consider for your DIAP...

- Train staff in supported decision making.
- Implement supported decision making for frontline service processes.
- Build supported decision making principles and approaches into policies and procedures including assuming capability, providing appropriate supports, seeking a person's will and preferences, supporting reasonable risks and applying proportionate safeguards when required.

- Develop processes that help discover what a person can do (strengths based) and then what they need for inclusion or safety.
- Safeguarding resources and tools should be strengths based starting with what a person knows, wants and what they get from their support networks
- Advise staff if they have concerns about someone's safety to contact the [Ageing and Disability Commissioner](#) for advice and resources.

5. Employ people with intellectual disability and influence others to do the same

Everyone has the right to participate in the workforce so they can contribute and feel included and respected. Historically, people with intellectual disability have been denied access to meaningful paid employment. This means that they are excluded from mainstream society in general, and do not have the opportunity to realise their true potential.

People with intellectual disability can succeed in paid employment if they can access a job that matches their strengths, skills and interests, and if they receive the right support.



Our members and staff with intellectual disability tell us...

Having a job means more than just having money. It also can bring independence, dignity and purpose.



With the right support, people with intellectual disability can work in open employment in the community with real wages



Reflection...

- *How many people with intellectual disability do you employ?*
- *Are the roles for people with intellectual disability meaningful and do they have career progression?*
- *Are people with intellectual disability embedded into teams, with good supervision and support?*



Consider...

- There are different approaches to increasing access to meaningful jobs for people with intellectual disability.
- One effective approach to employing people with intellectual disability is **customised employment**. This is when a workplace works with a person with intellectual disability to create a new role

that matches their skills, strengths, and support needs while also meeting genuine business needs.

- Even if you don't create a fully customised role, using strategies from customised employment e.g. job carving or role crafting, can make a real difference in recruiting and supporting people with intellectual disability. Some elements of a role that can be customised include hours of work, location of work, duties and responsibilities.
- Initiatives like [More than just a job](#) and the [Everyone at Work program](#) (developed by Revenue NSW) have shown how positive inclusive employment can be for an organisation. [Ben's story](#) is a great example!
- Another approach is being piloted by the Department of Communities and Justice. The program comes from [research](#) by the Disability Employment Centre of Excellence at Swinburne University of Technology and is based on paid internships for people with intellectual disability.



Actions to consider for your DIAP...

- As you develop your workplace adjustments policy (as directed in [Office of PSC NSW - PSC Direction on workplace adjustments policy](#)) invite people with intellectual disability to be part of your advisory committee.
- Trial employment of people with intellectual disability using CID's [Inclusive employment guide for Councils](#)
- Adopt the [Everyone at Work program](#) developed by Revenue NSW to employ people with intellectual disability.
- Support businesses to employ people with intellectual disability.
- If procuring from a Disability Employment Service ensure the people working there are getting fairly paid and have good conditions.
- Support employees with intellectual disability to take leadership roles using CIDs [Inclusive Governance Framework](#).

Appendix 1:

Quick Guide: Inclusion Actions to consider for your DIAP

1. **Understand your community members/service users** with intellectual disability

- Compile a profile of service users/community members with intellectual disability.
- Collect information on how people with intellectual disability use your services and build in data collection points if you don't have access to this information.
- Create a list of the services and resources most needed or used by people with intellectual disability and prioritise making them accessible.
- Train staff about accessible communication including communicating with people who are non-verbal.
- Adapt community consultation and decision-making processes so people with intellectual disability can participate.
- Create an advisory committee that includes people with intellectual disability. Make sure meetings are inclusive! Find out how [here](#).
- Support an advisory committee member to take a leadership role using CID's [Inclusive Governance Framework](#)
- Co-design with people with intellectual disability.
- [Co-design](#) includes people with lived experience, community members, researchers and professionals working together to improve something, make something new or find the solution to a problem. Listen to what one of our Project Workers says about codesign [here](#).
- Create safe spaces for open communication and [sensory rooms](#) where people feel calm if they become overwhelmed.

2. **Make information accessible** - easy to read, easy to find and easy to use

- Develop a schedule for translating important information and frequently used forms into Easy Read.
- Translate all legal forms into Easy Read.
- Include a budget for Easy Read translations in all communication plans. Find out how [Inclusion Services](#) at CID can help.
- Engage or employ people with intellectual disability to test how easily they can find information on your website
- Engage or employ people with intellectual disability to simplify navigation on your website.

3. **Redesign services to be accessible and inclusive** for people with intellectual disability

- Make [intellectual disability awareness training](#) mandatory for all staff.
- Include specific content about intellectual disability in induction and customer service training.
- Establish designated quiet spaces or sensory rooms in facilities and outdoor spaces.
- Consult with people with intellectual disability to make sure internal and external community events are inclusive and accessible for them.
- Review rules on forms of identification required to access information/services/update details and make reasonable adjustments for people with intellectual disability who do not have a driver's licence or passport.
- Train staff about how unconscious bias can impact on delivery of services and support for people with intellectual disability. You can hear about the effects of unconscious bias in delivery of health services [here](#).
- Develop a protocol to make meetings inclusive for people with intellectual disability through reasonable adjustments before, during and after the meeting.

- Train staff on trauma informed practices for example, [Guidelines for Trauma Informed Practice: Supporting People with Disability who have experienced Complex Trauma](#)
- Ensure complaint pathways are accessible with phone and in-person options.
- Create a list of reasonable adjustments/supports and make it available to people with intellectual disability.
- Provide free transport with a council or club community bus to get people to activities and appointments in their local area.

4. Redesign services to support people with intellectual disability to make more of their own decisions

- Train staff in supported decision making.
- Implement supported decision making for frontline service processes.
- Build SDM principles and approaches into policies and procedures. including assuming capability, providing appropriate supports, seeking a person's will and preferences, supporting reasonable risks and applying proportionate safeguards when required.
- Develop processes that help discover what a person can do (strengths based) and then what they need for inclusion or safety.
- Safeguarding resources and tools should be strengths based starting with what a person knows, wants and includes their support networks.
- Advise staff if they have concerns about someone's safety to contact the [Ageing and Disability Commissioner](#) for advice and resources.

5. Employ people with intellectual disability and influence others to do the same

- As you develop your workplace adjustments policy (as directed in [Office of PSC NSW - PSC Direction on workplace adjustments policy](#)) invite people with intellectual disability to be part of your advisory committee.
- Trial employment of people with intellectual disability using CID's [Inclusive employment guide for Councils](#)

- Adopt the [Everyone at Work program](#) developed by Revenue NSW to employ people with intellectual disability.
- Support businesses to employ people with intellectual disability.
- If procuring from a Disability Employment Service ensure the people working there are getting fairly paid and have good conditions.
- Support employees with intellectual disability to take leadership roles using CIDs [Inclusive Governance Framework](#).

Appendix 2

All Links

[About coercive control.](#)

[Advocacy Essentials - IDRS](#)

[Australian Bureau of Statistics,](#)

[Australian Institute of Health and Welfare,](#)

[Australian Law Reform Commission report on Easy English](#)

[Ben's story about working at Ryde Council](#)

[CID Inclusion Services](#)

[CID's Best practice guide for inclusive meetings.](#)

[CID's inclusive communication tips](#)

[CID's inclusive communication tips video.](#)

[CID's Inclusive employment guide for Councils](#)

[CID's Inclusive Governance Framework](#)

[CID's SDM framework](#)

[Council for Intellectual Disability](#)

[Deciding with Support](#)

[Decision Agency](#)

[Everyone at Work program](#)

[Good Practice Guidelines for Engaging with People with Disability | Disability Gateway](#)

[Growing intellectual disability employment in NSW government: Final report](#)

[Guide to Co-Design with people living with disability](#)

[Guidelines for Trauma Informed Practice: Supporting People with Disability who have experienced Complex Trauma](#)

[Intellectual disability awareness training](#)

[More than just a job](#)

[NSW Disability Inclusion Action Plan Guidelines.](#)

[Office of PSC NSW - PSC Direction on workplace adjustments policy](#)

[Ricky talks about co-design at CID](#)

[The National Centre of Excellence in Intellectual Disability Health .](#)

[The NSW Disability Inclusion Plan 2026 -2029](#)

[Unconscious bias in the delivery of health care](#)

[What are sensory rooms Easy Read](#)

Appendix 3

Resources and further reading

[“If I Was the Boss of My Local Government”](#) Perspectives of People with Intellectual Disabilities on Improving Inclusion

[Advocacy Essentials - IDRS](#)

[Australasian Society for Intellectual Disability](#)

Brit J Learn Disability - 2022 - Robinson - Involving people with intellectual disability in setting priorities for building.pdf

[CID Inclusion Services](#)

[DCJ Disability and inclusion action planning resources](#)

[Intimate partner violence against women with intellectual disability: A relational framework for inclusive, trauma-informed social services](#)

[National Centre of Excellence in Intellectual Disability Health](#)

This Guide was produced by the Council for Intellectual Disability.

For further information please contact [Inclusion Services](#).

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W <https://cid.org.au/contact-us/>