

International Day of Disabled People 2024

Summary Report

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Photo credit: Cheryl Ferris-Stewart



‘Advocating for accessibility’

Background

International Day of Disabled People (IDODP) is a Global Day of Recognition created by The United Nations which takes place every year on 3 December. The annual observance of this day aims to promote an understanding of disability issues and mobilise support for dignity, rights and wellbeing of disabled people.

It was launched in 2019 to coincide with the United Nations Disability Inclusion Strategy that came into being in June that year.

IDODP is recognised by the British Government as an important part of our UK Disability Policy, although the role of Minister of State for Disabled People, Health and Work no longer exists. The appropriate role is now held by Rt Hon Sir Stephen Timms MP and is the current Minister of State for Social Security and Disability. The principles of IDODP are Celebration, Learning, Optimism and Action.

Since 2019, Forum Central has worked in partnership with The Disability Hub at Leeds City Council to host the 'Leeds for All – International Day of Disabled People'. 2024 saw the event being hosted for its 6th year.

You can read more about the [history of Leeds for All on our website](#).

The theme for 2024 was 'Advocating for Accessibility'.

"International Day of Disabled People is a really lively event, and it is wonderful to see people with learning disabilities, carers, and people working in the sector coming together to share good practice and have fun! I always meet new people when attending and this has led to exciting new collaborations and projects. The event is well organised and feels really inclusive and friendly."

- Nicky Lines, Pyramid of Arts.



Photos used in this report are all from the IDODP 2024 event.

Photo credit:
Cheryl Ferris-Stewart.

Executive Summary

An overall figure of approximately 520 people attended the IDODP Celebrations Day on December 3, 2024, not discounting the stallholders and their volunteers. A wide variety of people attended with lived experience from those with learning disabilities, sensory impairments and autistic people, plus organisations which support these communities and individuals. It was a great success.

The event was opened by the following guest speakers: The Lord Mayor of Leeds - Abigail Marshall Katung, Councillor Kevin Ritchie - Lead Member for Disability at Leeds City Council, Rob Moriarty - Businessman, Entrepreneur and Self Advocate, Anne Marie Davies - Volunteer and Advocate.

The marketplace hosted 27 stallholders, which were local organisations, in the Broderick Hall, as well as various performances coordinated by People in Action: 7 Singers, Dance, Rap, and Performance Poetry. Leeds Older People's Forum were also present, hosting a stall on 'Let's Talk Transport' an opportunity for discussion hosted by Travel Connections at Leeds Older People's Forum. BSL interpreters were available throughout the day in the marketplace.

[Watch the short video of IDODP 2024 highlights on YouTube >](#)

There was also an Art Zone hosted by Pyramid of Arts that saw 72 people attend. Leeds Autism Services also hosted a quiet sensory room that had 40 people make use of this calming space.

We had a Wishing Tree in the main room where people could write comments about what they 'wished' to see change in Leeds in 2025. These statements covered a wide range of themes and are listed on page 16 of the full report or via this link: [Wishing Tree Statements.](#)

People were welcomed to join the day and make new connections, meet up with friends, share ideas and celebrate!

IDODP continues to promote the ambitions of the Better Lives Strategy to 'support every person to live in a place they call home with people and things they love, in communities that look out for one another, doing the things they love'. Without advocacy and self-advocacy, many historical disability rights movements would not have taken place. IDODP provides a space for community engagement, collaboration and innovation, sparking initiatives that can ensure people's voices are heard and influence change.





Partnership in Practice

It is with gratitude that we give thanks to all who work in our partnership to make this event a success each year. The IDODP event is run in partnership under the brand name 'Leeds for All'. It includes Forum Central, Leeds City Council Equality Team, Forum Central members, and the IDODP Reference Group.

The annual IDODP Marketplace Event has a large reach and is an important place outside of The Disability Hub meetings where direct engagement can happen between the Council's Equality Team and disabled people. The Disability Hub works with organisations and speaks directly with disabled people to get their views on how the Council can keep moving towards making Leeds a more inclusive city across all aspects of their services.

IDODP promotes and supports the work of VCSE and Third Sector organisations, facilitating such key annual events is a priority of the Equality Team and something which they seek to do across all protected characteristics.

IDODP also promotes the ambitions of key Leeds City Council strategies such as the Best City Ambition, Better Lives Strategy, and increases public awareness of contributions by Leeds City Council to the city's disabled support infrastructure.

Co-production and Advocating for Accessibility

The ethos of the Leeds for All team and Reference Group in 2024 was to advocate for accessibility. Co-design was central to our project planning and while we feel this improves year on year, there is always more that we can learn and so seek to continue to make improvements for future IDODP events.

Event Summary: IDODP 2024 'Advocating for Accessibility'

This was the sixth IDODP event, which is now a well-established programme, held annually at Leeds City Museum. Based on feedback from 2023, we chose to change the room layout slightly so that fewer stallholders shared tables, making use of more table space and keeping more free space to move between stalls so people could visit stallholders more easily. Feedback also showed that people enjoyed hands-on activities in 2023 so we chose to include an Art Zone, which hosted various activities people could get involved in throughout the day. 2023 also saw the introduction of a quiet sensory room and this was kept for 2024's event, as the room was well utilised and had positive feedback. The sensory room was hosted by Leeds Autism Services again with some equipment provided by Leeds City Museum.

People were free to attend IDODP for as long or little as they liked, giving it the feel of a 'drop in'. People used the space for networking, socialising and learning about new organisations. Each year, we seek to take an intersectional approach, ensuring that our event is as diverse as the communities we work with, this proves to be one of the highlights that is enjoyed by most attendees but can cause some challenges in organising a big event in one main room.

A selection of feedback

*Alice Clayden: **Pyramid of Arts:***

"We were really pleased that people who were interested in becoming members at Pyramid used the event as an opportunity to bring in their sketchbooks and artwork to show us. Having the designated art zone allowed us to have really meaningful 1:1 conversations with people about how they could get involved with Pyramid. Hopefully the people we met at the event will be joining us to make more art in the Pyramid Studio soon!."

*Ian Graham - **Aspire:***

"The first IDODP event I went to a few years ago seemed to just be professionals networking with each other. It's been much better since an effort was made to make it a more inviting event for people who actually use the services we're all providing."

*Craig Asquith - **Leeds Autism Services:***

"We wanted to say thank you to you and the team for organising and running the quiet/sensory room at IDODP! It was great, so calming! The video and sound for the background was really nice too. I hope you enjoyed the day. Thank you again. And to Michael especially for helping us get over 500 attendees!"





In Conclusion

The 2024 IDODP Marketplace Event was a great day of celebration; increasing its attendance by more than 200 people than the previous year.

It has a significant ability to encourage and provide opportunities for relationship and partnership building than its predecessors. Many opportunities for 'in-person' interactions have been lost since Covid-19 pandemic and lockdowns, reducing people's opportunities to connect informally in a welcoming environment. The Forum Central Learning Disability and Physical and Sensory Impairment Teams worked with partners as a collaborative and as a developmental project, which resulted in a greater reach.

The IDODP event helps spark new interest in Forum Central's Specialist Networks, of which IDODP is promoted as an event Network Members would benefit from attending. Forum Central's IDODP team will continue to work towards becoming more accessible in producing formats and content to be more inclusive/accessible, to enable us to reach new audiences and those with lived experience.

Broadening our range of audience will continue to help reshape Forum Central's accessibility and future developmental work with organisations in Leeds. Including how we organise in-person or hybrid meetings and live events.

Recommendations

- To reintroduce the IDODP Small Grants Fund as a central part of future plans.
- A different venue is needed for this event, which is larger and more accessible for all.
- To build stronger engagement with Hearing and Sight Impaired people.
- To have basic BSL and sight guide training available pre-event for all Leeds for All staff.
- To use Plain English and continue to develop and produce information in a variety of accessible formats.
- To further develop Leeds for All accessibility strategies.
- Future IDODP events must be more intentional in their priorities, to achieve strategic objectives in improving outcomes for disabled people.