

A . CITY IDENTITY

- City name * South Dublin County
- Country * Ireland
- City size: 278, 767 *
- Short Description of City: Bounded by the River Liffey to the North and the Dublin Mountains to the South, the County lies 16 kilometers south-west of Dublin city centre and has an administrative footprint of 223sq. kilometers. The County has nine main villages Clondalkin, Lucan, Palmerstown, Rathfarnham, Tallaght, Templeogue, Saggart, Rathcoole and Newcastle and is bounded by adjoining counties Wicklow, Kildare, Dublin City, Fingal and Dún Laoghaire. South Dublin County is a vibrant and inclusive place for the people who live, visit, work, and do business here. We prioritise social inclusion, equality of access and opportunity, and the needs of the most vulnerable people in society when we design and deliver services.

B. SCOPE OF THE INITIATIVES

- Please provide a general description of existing and planned initiatives, making reference to the following four areas:

1. Accessibility to the built environment and public spaces
2. Accessibility to transportation and related infrastructures
3. Accessibility to information and communication, including information and communication technologies
4. Accessibility to public facilities and services

[Max 2600 characters including spaces][Help](#)

- SDCC is a literacy friendly local authority. Our Corporate Plan 2020 – 2024 is NALA plain English accredited. Council policies and plans are equality, access and plain English proofed on an ongoing basis.
- Changing places accessible toilet facilities installed in County Hall and North Clondalkin Library, with further facilities under construction in Tallaght Stadium and the new Lucan Swimming Pool.
- Annual participation in Make Way Day of action to promote safe pedestrian access, free from obstacles such as wheelie bins, advertising boards, temporary street furniture and vehicles on pavements.
- Annual access awareness raising campaign and events schedule across South Dublin County during National Accessibility Week.
- South Dublin County Council is a JAM Card© friendly local authority.
- Braille and tactile way finding signage is provided across the County including in our civic offices, South Dublin Libraries and facilities such as Tallaght Stadium and the community centres.
- AFILs for those who are hard of hearing have been installed at most of our customer service points and the Irish Remote Interpretation Service is available in County Hall and Civic Offices Clondalkin.
- Ongoing implementation of the SDCC Housing Strategic Plan for Disabled People.
- www.sdcc.ie is compliant with the EU Web Accessibility Directive. A multidisciplinary team of Council staff monitor and drive compliance.
- Autism friendly resources and facilities are available across our Libraries.
- A significant range of access for disabled people (both as spectators or participants) is provided across the County in venues such as Rua Red County Arts Centre, Civic Theatre Tallaght, Tallaght Stadium, Tallaght and Clondalkin Leisure Centres and within our parks.
- Inclusive playspaces programme delivered across the County.
- Clondalkin Round Tower Visitor Centre: A high level of access is provided. Disabled visitors' mobility and sensory access needs are met through interactive multimedia exhibits, tactile exhibits, ramps, accessible toilets, literacy friendly text, AFILs for people who are hard of hearing and the use of highly scented plants for a sensory experience in the gardens.

- Our Public Realm Department ensure accessibility of our parks and public spaces in terms of physical access, accessible features and providing information to the public.

2355 characters including spaces

C. OWNERSHIP / LEVEL OF COMMITMENT

- Please describe your overall approach and global strategy to improve accessibility in your city and how the policy is implemented or planned to be implemented.

[Max 1300 characters including spaces] [Help](#)

South Dublin County Council is committed to meeting its responsibilities under all relevant legislation and policy including:

- The Disability Act 2005
- Irish Sign Language Act 2017
- Equal Status Acts 2000 - 2018
- Employment Equality Acts 1998 - 2015
- Irish Human Rights and Equality Act 2014, particularly Section 42 (Public Sector Human Rights and Equality Duty)
- National Disability Inclusion Strategy 2017 – 2022
- National Housing Strategy for Disabled People 2022 – 2027

We are also committed to working with, and within, the framework of the UNCRPD.

At a county level our commitment is detailed in a variety of policy documents including our:

- Corporate Plan 2020 - 2024
- County Development Plan 2022 - 2028
- Public Sector Equality and Human Rights Duty Framework
- SDC Housing and Disability Strategy
- Our Libraries, Our Future. South Dublin Libraries Development Plan 2023 – 2027

Our overall approach to improving accessibility in South Dublin County involves a strong commitment to universal design, an understanding of intersectionality and valuing the importance of listening to and learning from those with lived experience of requiring accessibility.

1159 characters including spaces

D. IMPACT

1) How has the city's policies/initiatives improved equal access and the quality of life of people with disabilities? It is important to mention project(s) involving people with intellectual disabilities. Max 1300 characters including spaces.

Since 2015 SDCC have built over 40 new play areas which are physically accessible, provide a range of universally accessible equipment and accommodate the needs of children with ADHD, sensory issues, speech and language difficulties and intellectual disabilities.

We use the 7 principles of Universal Design: Equitable Use, Flexibility in Use, Simple and Intuitive Use, Perceptible Information, Tolerance for Error, Low Physical Effort, Size and Space for Approach and Use.

Through extensive consultation and research, we learned that physical access was only part of making a play area accessible. We learned to better accommodate children with ADHD and a range of other disabilities.

WE achieve this by maximising contact with nature, creating more free play areas with less rules to understand, providing both bright and shady spaces, providing hidden areas and quiet spaces for children away from the full glare of observers and providing sensory rich environments using plants and natural materials.

The playspaces are very natural in character. They incorporate meadows, trees, hills, streams and other natural features where available. These environments are proven to improve the physical and mental wellbeing of all children but can be especially important to children with additional needs.

1299 characters including spaces

2) How do these initiatives benefit, beyond persons with disabilities, also wider parts of the population? Max 1300 characters including spaces

Having more inclusive equipment means children can now play together with their friends and siblings rather than being segregated. The focus on free play and natural play has increased the range of play experiences for everyone.

Making our playspaces more relaxed has benefitted all playground users including adults. Playground visit times have increased dramatically. Imaginative play, constructive play and other child led play activities are now to the fore. There are huge benefits to children with language difficulties, non-English speakers and even to shy children as the types of play engaged in encourage more interaction than traditional play areas.

Where there are play features with no rules, children start imagination games and role playing which is easier for children with poorer social skills or language difficulties to participate in. Improving physical access for wheelchair users has proven very beneficial to all other users too. One example is our sand pits which now have accessible paths and sand tables. On wet days nearly all children choose to stay on these paths and play at the sand tables. Parents with buggies use these paths, children carrying schoolbags leave their bags here and it has increased sand play dramatically from when our sand pits were not accessible.

1299 characters including spaces

E. QUALITY AND SUSTAINABILITY OF RESULTS

1) How do you ensure the quality and sustainability of accessibility measures?

Rejecting the conventional brightly coloured plastic playgrounds with rubber play surfacing has many benefits in terms of environmental sustainability. We use sustainably grown timber for the equipment and local suppliers for safety surfacing, sand etc. There are also economic savings as natural play areas need less or no play equipment. Natural surfaces are also much cheaper. We can create interesting, varied landscapes with many play opportunities without doing environmental damage in the process. A major drawback with traditional “rubber safety surface playgrounds” is that they are very expensive to repair and replace. The rubber must be exported for recycling so there are high lifetime costs. The natural play areas develop and grow and usually start to look better with time rather than depreciating.

We still employ the same safety standards, but the quality and sustainability are far greater. Another sustainability factor is that our own staff can maintain the playspaces. They do not need to use wetpours/glues or other synthetic materials. The maintenance is done by landscape crews- grass cutting, litter picking, raking sand and topping up woodchip areas are the most common tasks. We also see a huge reduction in vandalism compared to our previous playgrounds.

1291 characters including spaces.

E 2) What are your plans and initiatives to continue these efforts in the future?

Play areas in South Dublin are developed either by the local authority or by developers as part of new residential developments. It is the policy of SDCC to seek natural and inclusive playspaces as part of the planning conditions for all new residential developments. We provide guidance on how to develop these play areas. These types of play facilities tend to be popular with developers as they are visually attractive, often less expensive and have high safety standards.

On Council projects we are committed to providing inclusive natural play areas in all new parks and when renovating existing playgrounds. We have shared our experiences of accessible play in presentations both nationally and internationally and we are very proud of our achievements in this regard.

We currently have plans in motion for several new play areas as well as renovation works. We continually do market research for new inclusive equipment, and we consult widely before developing new play areas.

In the past year we have started to provide communications boards in many of our play areas. Our website has a video explaining these boards and requesting feedback from the public on their

effectiveness. We are also committed to continually improving our standards and responding to the needs of our residents.

1300 characters including spaces

E3- NO EU funding for playspaces but many EU funded Council Projects

F. INVOLVEMENT OF PERSONS WITH DISABILITIES AND RELEVANT PARTNERS

- Please describe the involvement of persons with disabilities, their representative organisations and accessibility experts in both the planning, implementation and maintenance of city's policies and initiatives aimed at increased accessibility.

[Max 1300 characters including spaces][Help](#)

The SDC Disability Advisory and Consultative Panel was established in 2010. Membership of the Panel is voluntary, and all members have a personal or professional interest in making sure that facilities, services and activities that the County Council deliver are designed to be accessible to the entire community. There is an incredible wealth of knowledge and personal experience within the Panel which provides an invaluable resource for the Council to draw upon. The Panel is underpinned by an understanding of the importance of listening to / consulting with people with lived experience. The Council, through the Disability Liaison, Access and Equality Officer, provides administrative and operational support throughout the year including the provision of ISL interpretation for meetings.

A Disability Liaison, Access and Equality Officer supports the Council to meet its responsibilities under the Disability Act 2005, UNCRPD and the Human Rights and Equality legislation; as well as providing support and guidance to staff with regard to access and equality. This staff member is a person with lived experience of requiring accessibility.

The SDCC Housing and Disability Steering Group has people with lived experience within its membership.

- Do you carry out awareness raising or information activities around accessibility? Do you exchange and share experience and good practices with other cities at local, regional, national and/or European level?

If so, please describe them.

[Max 1300 characters including spaces][Help](#)

During 2022, SDCC Disability Liaison, Access and Equality Officer made the keynote address at the Centre for Excellence in Universal Design (CEUD) / National Standards Authority of Ireland (NSAI) webinar to launch the new European standard for Accessibility and usability of the built environment. The title of her address was 'Universal design: the foundation of vibrant, sustainable communities, and presented on the accessibility of public services and buildings and showcased examples from SDCC at the NDA's annual conference. The Council's Inclusive Playspaces programme were showcased as example of best practice within both presentations.

We participate in Make Way Day and Operation Enable initiatives each year.

We provide Disability Access and Public Sector Duty webpages within www.sdcc.ie

In 2019 we held a seminar on our Inclusive Playspaces programme. The purpose of the seminar was to share our learning about universal design gained while delivering the programme, and developing accessible, inclusive playspaces. The seminar was targeted at Public Realm designers, parks staff, planners, and any others who had a role, or interest, in providing inclusive playspaces and developing healthy, sustainable communities. The event was extremely well attended and we are still receiving regular requests for information and support.

- Have you addressed disability in other initiatives undertaken by your city? If so, you may mention any initiative your city has worked on, even if it was not addressed directly to people with disabilities, as long as it included measures to improve accessibility or raise awareness about disability and accessibility

[Max 1300 characters including spaces][Help](#)

The SDCC Public Sector Equality and Human Rights Duty Framework was published in 2022. The Framework is available as a PDF document, and an ISL

interpreted video, from the Council's [Public Sector Duty webpage](#). Publication of the Framework fulfils SDCC's commitment under our Corporate Plan and the legal requirement under Section 42 of the Irish Human Rights and Equality Act 2014. An annual action plan is developed, and implementation reported on within the Council's annual report.

The identified groups, for the Public Sector Duty are those:

- covered by the grounds under our equality legislation: gender (including gender identity); civil status; family status (including lone parents and carers); age; disability; sexual orientation; race (encompassing race, colour, nationality and ethnic or national origins); religion; and membership of the Traveller community; and
- groups covered by the ground of socio-economic status, who are at risk of or experiencing poverty and social exclusion.

South Dublin County Council has a deep understanding of intersectionality and therefore we ensure that disabled persons and issues related to accessibility and inclusion are included in our consultations, focus groups, multidisciplinary teams, and steering groups, such as the Staff LGBTQ+ Network, Women in Politics initiative, Integration Strategy Steering Group, Age Friendly Network and so on.

G. WHY DOES YOUR CITY DESERVE THE AWARD? Please provide a short presentation of your overall accessibility policy and actions. Please explain why your results and your city's accessibility policy are extraordinary and why you believe you deserve the Award. Max 1300 characters including spaces

SDCC deserves the award for its innovative approach to play which not only benefits all children living in the county and also improves the local environment. Rather than focussing on Special Needs we adopted a universal design approach placing human diversity at the heart of the design process.

A major difference between SDCC's playspaces and other accessible play areas is the concentration on providing contact with nature. Natural environments are proven to be beneficial to the physical and mental wellbeing of children, but they are particularly important to children with ADHD and children with a range of sensory issues.

We quickly discovered that these spaces not only benefitted children with ADHD but made all playground users feel more comfortable and normal playground visit times became much longer.

This approach also allowed us to create more environmentally friendly and sustainable playgrounds. While most playgrounds in Ireland still feature brightly coloured metal and plastic equipment with bright rubber surfaces our play areas celebrate nature. In this era of Climate Change and Biodiversity loss we are very proud to be setting a good example by providing high quality, inclusive, natural play environments for children without damaging the environment.

1281 characters incl spaces

H. WHICH OF YOUR INITIATIVES TO IMPROVE ACCESSIBILITY COULD YOU DESCRIBE AS BEAUTIFUL, SUSTAINABLE AND INCLUSIVE?

Please give examples of projects where you considered aesthetics and sustainability in addition to accessibility, in line with the values of the New European Bauhaus. Please describe whether and how local communities and relevant stakeholders were involved and participated in the process of designing and implementing the initiative. Max 2000 characters including spaces

SDCC's playspaces exemplify the values of the New European Bauhaus in terms of Sustainability, Aesthetics, Inclusive Design, Innovation and Community Participation.

Sustainability: Being based on contact with nature and experiences in natural environments means our play areas have a very low environmental footprint and are often ecologically rich environments. They are also better value and have lower maintenance costs.

Aesthetics: our playspaces are greener, less sterile, and more interesting than our previous playgrounds. The unique designs reflect local community needs, local landscape types and local people's ideas.

Inclusive Design: Learning about ADHD led us to discover a new type of **Inclusivity** that incorporated far more than physical access requirements.

Innovation: Our designers turned away from what the market was supplying in favour of creating child focussed spaces. Being child led and listening to the needs of children rather than concentrating on available equipment led to better design solutions.

Community Participation: including meetings, workshops, school visits, play days, questionnaires, drawings and model making. Hundreds of people of all ages and abilities described what play means to them. Younger children communicated best through drawings and older people through conversations. We trialled equipment with wheelchair users and asked children to give presentations to us. One special needs school organised a day of events based around the theme of playing in mud. We later built a mud play area based on their input. We included parents and special needs advocates, and we got input from the Councils landscape architects, Sports officers, Disability Officer, Community officers and the Communications team.

This project has received accolades for best practice in terms of consultation, innovation, green procurement, health and greenspace initiatives, play value and universal accessibility.

1941 characters including spaces

I. WHERE DID YOU HEAR ABOUT THE 2024 ACCESS CITY AWARD COMPETITION?

One of our local representatives who is a carer and parent of a young disabled person put forward the idea to apply for the awards. Also our main county town Tallaght received a Special Mention for the accessibility of our public facilities and Services in the access City Awards in 2013.

K. CONTACT PERSON AND WEB LINKS

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- Official city website www.sdcc.ie
- Possible webpages devoted to accessibility: [Accessible South Dublin County - SDCC](#)

- [sdcc playspaces - Google Search](#)
- Postal address South Dublin County Council, County Hall, Tallaght, Dublin 24