

ADAPT

my beach



How to create, manage, sustain and improve an Inclusive Beach

Version 1 May 2023

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1. Introduction

Welcome to Mae Murray Foundation's ADAPT my Beach Guide. This tool kit is designed for people, and organisations - charities, social enterprises, community and voluntary groups, beach operators, local authorities or commercial organisations - interested in developing an Inclusive Beach in their area.

The ADAPT my Beach Guide tells you what you need to know to create, manage, sustain and improve an Inclusive Beach and signposts you to useful sources of information and guidance.

Drawing on the lived experience of Mae Murray Foundation's members, and informed by our beach operating partners and collaborators, the ADAPT my Beach guide is the first of a series of guides designed to support people to create genuinely inclusive environments. ADAPT my Gym, ADAPT my Play and ADAPT our Events will follow in due course. Ultimately, we aim to ADAPT people's thinking about how to design spaces for all-abilities.

Acknowledgments

We would like to thank Esmee Fairbairn Foundation and Centre for Public Health, Queen's University Belfast for their generous support of the publication of this ADAPT my Beach Guide.

Thanks also go to our stakeholders, critical friends (including beach operators elsewhere in the UK) and Mae Murray Foundation Membership Advisory Committee for their invaluable and honest guidance.

2. Mae Murray Foundation - Who we are and what we do

The origins of Mae Murray Foundation are rooted in the birth of Talia McDowell, the daughter of our chairperson and founder, Alix Crawford. Born in 1999 and diagnosed with quadriplegic Cerebral Palsy, both Talia and Alix found themselves socially excluded and isolated as a result of Talia's complex needs.

Determined to make a difference to others facing the same barriers, Alix established Mae Murray Foundation in 2016. Named after her late mother, Mae Murray, who embodied a positive, can-do attitude and a passionate commitment to inclusivity, the charity started out with just 20 families. Today, we have over 1400 member families (comprising 4000 people), clear evidence of the huge need for, and positive impact of, our work.

Mae Murray Foundation is a lived-experience, membership led organisation which makes it possible for people of all ages and abilities to experience the world together, taking part in activities and building friendships in environments which are genuinely inclusive.

We recognise one another to be of equal and inseparable value, regardless of physical or learning ability, sensory, medical or undiagnosed condition, age or caring role. We are particularly focused on making sure that people with more complex needs, whose requirements are often overlooked, are able to participate fully. Our values are wholly aligned to the UN Convention on the Rights of Persons with Disabilities which aims to ensure disabled people have the same rights to full and effective participation and inclusion in their communities.

We run a comprehensive range of innovative and inclusive projects for children, teenagers and adults. These range from outdoor activities, to music and social events, and a popular powered wheelchair loan scheme for small children. Crucially, we draw on our members' lived experiences to co-design and implement permanent solutions in everyday environments like beaches so that everyone can participate together.

3. Mae Murray Foundation – Vision, Mission and Values

Mae Murray Foundation’s *vision* is to create an inclusive society with true participation for ALL in leisure and social settings, regardless of age or ability.

Our *mission* is to improve quality of life, through participation of all-abilities, together.

Our core values define, guide and underpin our work.

We will always:

Listen

The voice of lived experience leads our work and we support the rights of everyone, including those who are non-verbal, to be heard.

Include

We are committed to constantly learning, adapting and improving, to ensure we deliver true inclusion for all and to empower each individual’s potential.

Partner

We are committed to working in partnership with other organisations and stakeholders.

Influence

We strive to influence others and create fundamental change together.

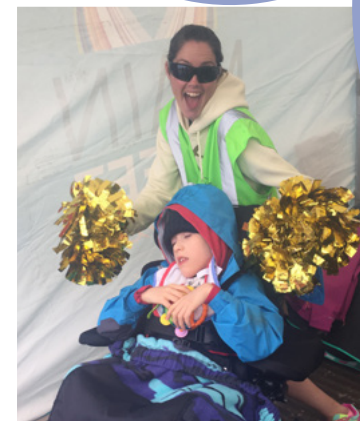
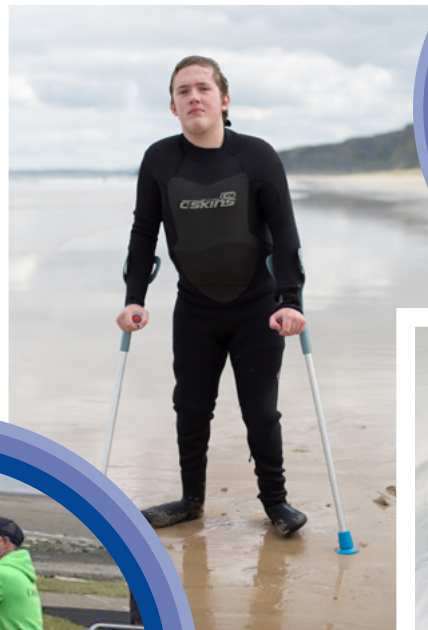
Deliver

We aim to deliver sustainable solutions and best practice models for a better, inclusive, shared society.

4. What an Inclusive Beach looks like

The term Inclusive Beach was coined by Mae Murray Foundation to describe a beach environment which has been carefully planned so that people of all ages and abilities can take part, have fun, and be included.

Mae Murray Foundation created the first Inclusive Beach in Northern Ireland in Benone, in August 2017 in partnership with Causeway Coast and Glens Borough Council. There are now five Inclusive Beaches across Northern Ireland, run as partnerships between Mae Murray Foundation and various beach operators. In Summer 2022, the success of the scheme saw an amazing 1800+ people taking part at the beach.



Research undertaken by Mae Murray Foundation with Inclusive Beach visitors in 2022 reinforced the importance of making beaches genuinely inclusive. The majority (94%) of those interviewed told us that they could never have visited a beach with their family before the Inclusive Beach was created, **73% deemed the Changing Places Toilet facilities essential to their beach visit**, and 100% told us that the quality time they enjoyed together as a family was down to the equipment loan scheme and Inclusive Beach facilities.

At an Inclusive Beach visitors will be confident that they will have a stress-free arrival with appropriate parking or drop off points, enjoy connectivity between beach, eateries and dignified toileting facilities, know that there will be equipment to support mobility and activities that they can participate in.

Looking around an Inclusive Beach you will see people of all ages and abilities taking part together. From beach cleaning to surfing, school trips to community festivals, diversity will be visible.



The ownership or stewardship of beaches often lies with a local authority or other organisation, like the National Trust. Inclusive Beaches are more easily sustained and managed when they are **run collaboratively** with clear responsibilities agreed and allocated to each partner.

Creating a successful Inclusive Beach is a long term, evolving process. It is essential to keep the Inclusive Beach **under constant review**, seeking the views of all those who use it (and those who don't) and taking positive steps to remove any barriers to participation which emerge.

5. Why Inclusive Beaches matter

Experience tells us that taking away the barriers that stop people from participating empowers individuals to push themselves outside their comfort zone which, in turn, improves their sense of self-worth. This contributes to better mental and physical health.

In our 2022 research,

80% of visitors to Inclusive Beaches said they enjoyed increased social interaction, and

88% said their physical and mental health had improved due to being able to take part at Inclusive Beaches.

And, crucially, making it possible for everyone to enjoy a beach day together challenges prejudices and changes attitudes as people see what we share, not what divides us, changing society for the better.

“Without the beach wheelchair, the hoist, the toileting facilities, this would not have been possible. A day at the beach is not something we were ever able to enjoy. It has given us a new lease of life.” **Parent**



Inclusive Beaches make it possible for people of all ages and abilities to enjoy a day out together, giving everyone the chance to take part in activities within their community, simple pleasures that most people take for granted. Community Youth Group



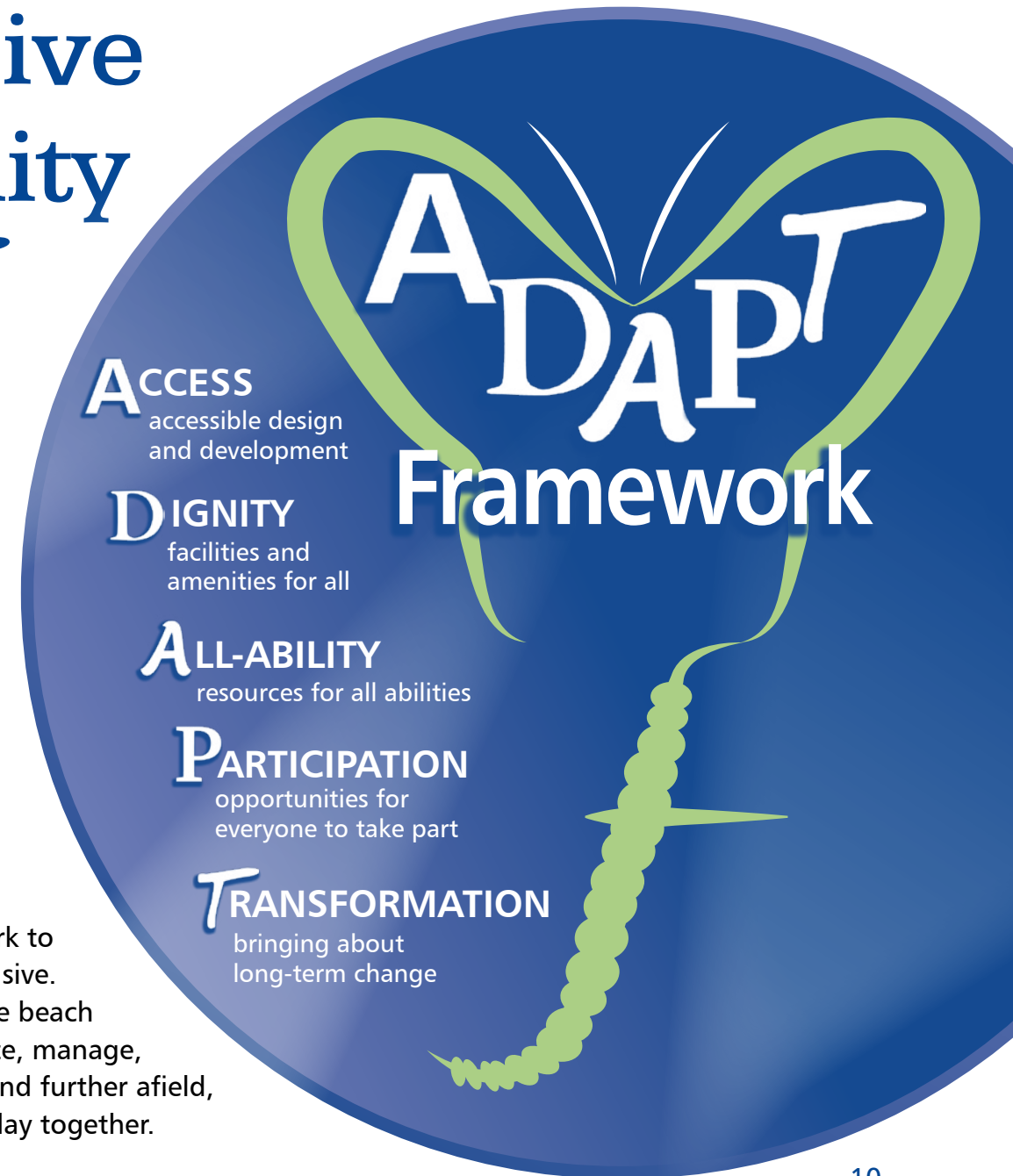
Click [here](#) to view a sample Impact Poster based on Summer 2022.

You can read more about the difference Inclusive Beaches have made to families in Northern Ireland in the 'Personal Stories' section at the end.

6. Making Inclusive Beaches a reality – The ADAPT framework

Mae Murray Foundation is determined to support others to create more genuinely inclusive spaces, in everyday environments like beaches, gyms, play areas and at public events, where people of all ages and abilities can enjoy time together.

To that end, Mae Murray Foundation's membership, all with lived experience, has co-produced and developed the ADAPT framework to underpin and guide the process of making spaces genuinely inclusive. Our first priority is the application of the ADAPT framework to the beach environment. The focus of this guide is to support others to create, manage, sustain and improve Inclusive Beaches here in Northern Ireland, and further afield, so that more people, of all ages and abilities, can enjoy a beach day together.





The terms 'access' and 'accessible' describe measures which remove actual barriers. Common examples would be providing a ramp option where there are stairs, or providing a digital document in a format which works with screen readers.

Inclusive Beach design must consider access and connectivity across the entire location, as well as the visitor journey. Visitors should be able to move from point of arrival on to the sand, café, toilet or equipment loan scheme storage point safely and confidently. Pathways, ramps, terrain, handrails, parking should all be compliant with local regulations. Technical information on outdoor spaces can be found at the [Disability Sport NI Outdoor Places Design Guidance](#) and [Activity Alliance Access for All](#).

WHAT OUR MEMBERS WITH LIVED-EXPERIENCE SAY

"As a visitor with sight loss, I rely on tactile site maps and markers on the pathway or railings to help me find my way independently."

Access across the sand and to the water's edge

Wheelchairs and walkers which are designed specifically for the beach environment move easily across firm sand and can even manage soft sand as long as it isn't too deep. More information about the range of beach mobility equipment can be found in the 'All-ability' section (page 16). However, specialist equipment does not suit everyone. Don't forget to consider the needs of:

- wheelchair users who must remain seated in their own customised chair, and cannot transfer into a beach wheelchair.
- wheelchair users who may choose to remain seated in their own chair, such as wheelchair users who are parents of young children.
- people who are blind or partially sighted.
- young children in buggies.
- adults with mobility difficulties or those who use other walking aids.
- People with sensory challenges.

Walkways bring visitors to the beach, across the beach and to the water's edge. The construction or replacement of a boardwalk, walkway, or stairway on or near a dune, bank, or beach is likely to be strictly regulated with measures in place to ensure the protection of the environment. Always check with your beach operator in the first instance.

In Northern Ireland we have challenges with high tide lines, sand/rock movement, and other considerations which mean permanent walkways, similar to those in southern Europe, are rarely achievable.

Temporary walkways are a good alternative. Options include, but are not limited to, roll-out walkway systems in wood or plastic composite; roll-out matting; tiles or panels which inter-lock. Depending on individual beach site conditions they can be deployed and removed on a daily or seasonal basis.



Think about selecting materials that are easily maintained, resist rot and other deterioration and are environmentally positive (i.e. not harmful to marine life, recyclable). Important features include UV, water and mildew resistance, non-slip, tear resistance, and colour contrasting middle stripe to aid those who are partially sighted. Consider the weight of any materials and how they will be deployed. Longer sections can be put in place more quickly but may be too heavy to deploy without machinery or a specialist dispenser.

A list of walkways which are commercially available at present can be found [here](#). We aim to update this list on a regular basis. If you are a manufacturer or distributor and wish to advise us of your product, please complete and submit the [Beach Equipment Supplier Notification Form](#). Mae Murray Foundation does not endorse or recommend any commercial product. This list is for information only.

Access to Parking

Ample accessible parking and setting-down points are critical to ensuring that disabled people can access outdoor places and, while they are there, enjoy outdoor recreation opportunities with minimal stress.

The beach environment can become very busy during the bathing season. There is often insufficient designated on-site accessible parking in locations which focus on activities for disabled people.

To address this, consider the following additional parking features when planning an Inclusive Beach:

- Protected Project Parking – reserved for visitors who have pre-booked beach mobility equipment through the loan scheme service located as close as possible to associated on-site facilities.
- Parking bays suited to longer vehicles converted for side or rear access using hoists or ramps.
- Accessible drop-off area so that amenities can still be accessed if all parking is full.

WHAT OUR MEMBERS WITH LIVED-EXPERIENCE SAY

“I drive a long wheelbase vehicle. I exit my car through a ramp at the rear. Blue badge spaces rarely give enough space for my car, my ramp and my chair. This places me in dangerous situations as I have to unload into oncoming traffic.” Wheelchair User

Access from towns and public transport

Inclusive Beaches should be accessed in as many ways as possible. For beaches located near a town, it is vital to work with the local authority to plan accessible routes. Steps should be taken to review transport available by bus or train to identify gaps in services. All stakeholders should then work together to improve access. All of this information must then be communicated to beach visitors. Further helpful detail can be found in the [Sensory Trust Access Chain Guide](#).

Access to pre-booking of beach mobility equipment

Website and booking system design can cause barriers which exclude people. An inclusive design approach will allow information and services to be accessible to, and usable by, as many people as possible. Further information can be found in the ‘Create an Inclusive Beach’ section (page 30).

Government policy promotes *community participation* and *active citizenship* yet people continue to be disabled by their environment, preventing them from taking part. A lack of appropriate toilet facilities is a common barrier and denies many the most basic of human rights. *Remember that excluding one family member often means excluding an entire family or group.*

Dignity for all is paramount and is a key component of our Inclusive Beach model. Refreshing and refuelling are basic human needs and Inclusive Beach facilities should provide appropriate facilities for all ages and abilities.



Dignified Toilets

A beach is only genuinely inclusive if it has both standard disabled toilets and a Changing Places Toilet (CPT). A Changing Places Toilet has additional space, a hoist and an adult-sized changing bench. Changing Places Toilets are registered by the Changing Places Toilet Consortium and meet an agreed list of minimum standards. A practical guide to the design of Changing Places can be found [here](#).

Regardless of building regulations, the provision of standard disabled toilets alone will exclude people. This will force people to risk their own health and safety. Carrying out changing on a toilet floor is dangerous, unhygienic and undignified and inevitably stops people from going to the beach.

Mae Murray Foundation has pioneered dignified, accessible toilet facilities at all its Inclusive Beaches since the very start. Our three most recently created Inclusive Beaches have toilets which meet full Changing Places standards and all new Inclusive Beach development will follow suit. Our first two beaches have adult sized changing benches, hoists and supported shower chairs and upgrades are planned.

WHAT OUR MEMBERS WITH LIVED-EXPERIENCE SAY

"I use a catheter. I am self-sufficient in my personal care needs when a hoist and changing bench are provided. Removal of my independence means that I cannot take part, this can make me feel worthless. Since the introduction of Changing Places Toilets at the Inclusive Beaches I have been able to get more active, I have even enjoyed open water swimming and surfing!" Local Businesswoman

Below is a picture of a typical Changing Places Toilet from changing-places.org.



Dignified Amenities

Everyone has a right to eat and drink with dignity, something most people take for granted.

To make this a reality, amenities at an Inclusive Beach must consider the needs of all beach visitors. For example, picnic benches should be designed with space for several wheelchair users to eat together, with their family or friends and sited on hard terrain, so that indoor wheelchairs, as well as beach wheelchairs, can use them.



Beach cafes and other amenities are often operated by private businesses so it's important to talk to them at an early stage to share learning and discuss ways to make their services more accessible.

Think about counter heights, table leg positioning, and general space around the venue and don't forget visitors with specialist dietary needs. For example, those whose food must be blended and may need access to a microwave.

An Inclusive Beach must be open to all abilities and all ages.

To make this possible, you will need to operate a loan scheme offering specialist beach mobility equipment such as beach wheelchairs, floating wheelchairs and beach walkers to support people to access and enjoy the beach.

Equipment loan schemes can be complex to manage. Mae Murray Foundation's experience shows that equipment loan schemes are more easily sustained when run in partnership with the Beach Operator. This is a long-term partnership, with commitment on both sides, which continues throughout the life of the project.

To work well, it is paramount that both partners understand their respective liability, roles and responsibilities and are committed to ongoing successful delivery. It is wise to set this out in a formal Partnership Agreement or Service Level Agreement drawn up with legal expertise, appropriate to the context of the governing laws of the country within which they are written.

Mae Murray Foundation uses a Partnership Agreement. [Click here to view a sample Partnership Agreement](#). This document is a sample and is for information only. It is not a legal template or an exhaustive list. For example, some other topics you may wish to include are; responsibility for site capital costs and equipment loan scheme booking system and cost thereof.



Beach Mobility Equipment

Mae Murray Foundation has no affiliation with any commercial organisation and does not manufacture, endorse or recommend any product or manufacturer. Like many other charities, our beach mobility equipment is purchased thanks to charitable funds.

We have compiled a directory of equipment which may be useful for reference purposes. We have not tried or viewed all of the equipment in this directory and cannot vouch for its suitability or effectiveness. Click here to access the [Inclusive Beach Equipment Directory](#).

If you are a manufacturer or supplier of beach mobility equipment or walkways and are not already listed within our directory, we would like to hear from you. Please click [here](#) and complete the short form to have your details added to our directory.

The ADAPT my Beach guide is designed as a resource for existing and potential Inclusive Beach operators. We have included an equipment review section within the equipment directory. This gives Beach Operators already running beach equipment loan schemes the opportunity to offer constructive feedback on equipment.

Our aim is to provide helpful feedback to both manufacturers and other loan scheme providers as the product market evolves. All reviews are subject to criteria as listed on the form. Submissions which discuss customer service will not be accepted. If you are a Beach Operator or a beach mobility loan scheme provider, you can submit the *Beach Mobility Equipment Review Notification Form* [here](#).

Note: Whilst we acknowledge that there are outdoor powerchairs commercially available that may be suited to the beach environment, we have not included these in this edition of *ADAPT my Beach*. We hope to include them in future editions.



Storage of Beach Mobility Equipment

Appropriate storage space is required on site to operate an efficient Beach Mobility Equipment Loan Scheme. The size of storage will depend on the amount of equipment being made available.

In Mae Murray Foundation's experience, it is sensible to start a Beach Mobility Equipment Loan Scheme with a minimum of two manual beach wheelchairs, a beach walker and, if there is lifeguard presence, two floating wheelchairs.

The *minimum* space required is normally in the region of 5m x 5m (with some wheelchairs wall mounted) but a larger space is *preferable* to allow for expansion. As more funding is secured, more equipment can be purchased in a wider range of sizes to meet a broader range of needs. Elements to consider when designing storage include:

- Wide double doors (large chairs may be 1.2m wide when built)
- Firm, level terrain on the approach to the storage unit
- Threshold flush with the approach, no lip
- Electric point within the storage unit
- Space for small table
- Walls suitable for hanging brackets, notice boards and liability notices
- External tap, with drainage for hosing equipment down after use.



Encouraging and enabling participation is a key element of our Inclusive Beach model. Gaining access to the beach environment is just the start of the journey to taking part within society.

Events and activities held at Inclusive Beach sites help break down barriers to participation, reduce isolation and improve physical and mental well-being. Inclusive events also empower beach visitors to learn new skills, push boundaries and achieve, alongside the rest of the community.

It is important to remember that beach visitors may have had negative experiences in the past when they have been excluded. Providing a range of activities which consider different needs and abilities, particularly those with more complex requirements, will ensure that no one is left out.

Creating visible, all age / all-ability events and activities is also a great way to promote diversity, build understanding and change attitudes within local communities.



Inclusive Beach Activities

Some examples of activities which Mae Murray Foundation has offered on Inclusive Beaches together with further information on adaptation and equipment can be found [here](#).

These activities are aimed at all ages and abilities, including people with physical, learning, sensory or medical needs, deaf/hearing loss, blind/partially sighted and non-disabled adults and children. All suggestions are subject to individual site conditions and thorough risk assessment.

If you have organised a successful inclusive activity on a beach, we would love to hear from you. Please email us at info@maemurrayfoundation.org.



Changing the infrastructure so that people can access the beach and participate in activities together is key but more work is needed. Our lived experience tells us that negative attitudes, a shortage of joined up services, and poor planning, create further barriers.

Our aim is to use our lived experience to help you transform your beach, creating an Inclusive Beach which welcomes, and plans for, the participation of all abilities together and where communities recognise one another to be of equal and inseparable value.

This transformation will not happen overnight and will require ongoing engagement and purposeful support. We need to ensure that from Programme for Government and inter departmental strategies through to localised implementation (in Northern Ireland we call this Community Planning) the health benefits of Inclusive Beach usage are promoted.

Once all-ability participation is visible and expected, society will change for the better.

Here are some ideas to help you drive that fundamental change:

- Collaboration with the beach operator, local authority and other community planning representatives to run community events on the beach bringing disabled and non-disabled people together. This may involve adapting existing events to ensure access and participation, or introducing new events co-designed by people with lived experience of being excluded.
- Promoting the amenities and activities of your Inclusive Beach to other organisations, schools and colleges, encouraging them to think again about planning beach outings, now that all participants/pupils can take part.
- Valuing and encouraging training of beach operating staff and inclusive activity facilitators. Investing in training will build confidence, develop skills and change attitudes.
- Clearly stating the inclusivity aims and values of the beach in signage, in print, online and via social media.
- Providing information in suitable formats e.g. bigger print or simpler language and promoting alternative communication methods, including making booking systems accessible to people using assistive technology.
- Enlisting the support of healthcare professionals and seating specialists to promote Inclusive Beaches to people as a means of building their independence, improving health and boosting well-being.

7. Creating an inclusive Beach – a 10 step guide

Creating an Inclusive Beach, with all the characteristics outlined in Section 4 – *What an Inclusive Beach looks like* - is a complex undertaking which will take time, often up to two years.

There are 10 key steps. The order of these steps may vary depending on the individual circumstances and some may run concurrently:



Step 1

Identify and evaluate beach site



The first step is to identify a possible Inclusive Beach location and carry out an initial visit to evaluate the site and determine how easy it would be to develop an Inclusive Beach.

At Mae Murray Foundation we have created a tool to help us assess site suitability. You can access a sample, for information purposes here: [Site Suitability Assessment Check Sheet](#).

If the site seems feasible, and there is agreement from both parties to proceed, we use a further tool to progress and highlight what needs to be completed going forward. You can access a sample for information purposes here [Project Progress Tracker](#). This becomes the *go to document* to track your progress.



Step 2

Draw up a realistic budget



To ensure your Inclusive Beach is viable and sustainable, it will be important, during the initial planning stage, to work with your partner to draw up a detailed budget comprising capital and operational costs.

Budgets will vary to reflect local need and the unique circumstances, infrastructure and operational requirements of the beach.

Drawing on Mae Murray Foundation's experience, items to consider are listed below. Some indicative costs are also provided as a guide only - based on Northern Ireland prices as at 2023, which are subject to change.

Capital Costs

Ramps, Pathways & Parking – Budgeting should include any siteworks including parking, pathways and connectivity needs.

Storage - Storage space for beach equipment must be included in the budget, unless already available.

Changing Places Toilet - Toilet provision must be to Changing Places Toilet standard. Approximate costs are:

- Fit out of an existing space, assuming existing plumbing and structural support are appropriate – between £12,000 and £30,000.
- Modular unit – £30,000 -£60,000 excluding ground works, delivery and installation.

Equipment

To get started, you are likely to need:

- A minimum of two manual beach wheelchairs
- A beach walker
- Two floating wheelchairs (subject to the beach being lifeguarded)
- A few rolls of beach matting, depending on the size of the beach

Further equipment and matting are added as the project and funding allows.

Beach equipment costs	– in the region of: (VAT exempt)
Manual beach wheelchair with optional supports	£5000
Floating wheelchair	£2-3000
Beach Walker	£1500
Beach Crutches	£900
Wheelchair walkway matting (5M)	£900

Operational Costs

Operational costs to consider include:

- Ongoing maintenance and servicing
- Insurance
- Training equipment
- Participation/community engagement activities
- Website and booking system charges
- Volunteer expenses
- External facilitators, hired on a sessional basis during the season to provide activities on the beach, depending on local availability. See Making an Inclusive Beach a Reality section (page 20)
- Management time to support the project

Operational costs	– in the region of
Service - beach equipment	£30-70 per item per annum
Service - Hoist Loler test (every 6 months)	£150 per hoist
Project insurance	£2500 per annum
Training delivery to beach operating staff	£300 per beach
Web costs & booking system costs	£1000 per annum
Occupational Therapist seating professional – seat assessment / beach clinic costs	£1,000 per annum
Event facilitators	£100/300 per session
Staffing – see step 4	

Step 3



Create a formal collaboration or partnership with a Beach Operator or Local Authority and agree the allocation of responsibilities. Be honest and realistic in your discussions.

Mae Murray uses a Partnership Agreement to govern our partnerships. [Click here to view a sample Partnership Agreement.](#) This document is a sample and is for information only. It is not a legal template or an exhaustive list.

Our experience, and that of some beach mobility loans scheme initiatives in the UK and Ireland, shows that sharing responsibilities and resources works much better in the long term than going it alone. Volunteer led schemes often struggle to recruit and retain volunteers over the longer term.

Drawing on our knowledge of partnership working, the table below shows the tasks to consider and the way in which you could choose to allocate responsibilities.



Task	Charity/ Community Group	Beach Operator
Funding of beach mobility equipment and any other support equipment.	X	
Funding and creation of disabled toilet to Changing Places Toilet standard.		X
Provision of onsite storage space for beach mobility equipment.		X
Creation of and maintenance of accessible pedestrian pathways or ramps connecting parking, storage, toilets and beach.		X
Parking provision for beach mobility loan scheme participants, in addition to disabled parking bays.		X
Equipment booking system.	X	
Design of processes & procedures including servicing and maintenance plans.	X	
Training of beach operating staff to operate beach mobility equipment loan scheme.	X	
Managing sand or rock movement before the season starts.		X
Carrying out liability checks to ensure beach mobility equipment is fit for purpose before each use.		X
Liability insurance & equipment insurance.	X	X
Carrying out equipment cleaning and basic maintenance to maximise longevity of equipment.		X
Equipment handover to beach visitor, including instruction and disclaimer.		X
Maintenance and servicing of Changing Place Toilet and its equipment (inc. essential safety test for hoist).		X
Deployment and retrieval of temporary beach matting / walkways.		X
Funding of servicing and repairs (due to wear and tear as per agreement).	X	
Managing servicing inspections of equipment and records.	X	
Recording of usage data.	X	X
Impact reporting for funder.	X	
Participation initiatives and community engagement activities.	X	X

Step 4

Consider the staffing you need.



In creating an Inclusive Beach there are various staffing roles and responsibilities to think about, which may vary depending on individual circumstances. Adequate beach staff has been a huge challenge for many beach operators – an essential component for the project to operate.

Drawing on Mae Murray Foundation's experience, here are some of the main roles to consider:

Essential Staff:

Project & Partnership Manager

A single point of contact on both sides of the partnership, at a decision-making level, with a clear remit to oversee the implementation, ongoing resourcing and management of the project.

Administration staff

Administration staff generally form the link between the person borrowing the beach equipment and the Beach Operator staff at the beach. Even if bookings are automated, it will be important to consider how the personal data collected is retained and anonymised before it is passed to the Beach Operator staff at the beach (*This process will be subject to compliance with the Data Sharing Agreement forming an Appendix to the Partnership Agreement*).

Beach Operator staff at the beach

Beach Operator staff at the beach handle a number of tasks, including:

- The planning and recording of beach mobility equipment bookings.
- Cleaning and maintenance of beach mobility equipment.
- Greeting visitors and sharing information with members of the public.
- Handing over and return of beach mobility equipment to beach visitors.



Non-essential staff:

Community Development Officer

On Inclusive Beaches operated directly by Mae Murray Foundation, we employ Community Development Officers to promote the beach mobility loan scheme and support the local community with a range of inclusive events.

If funding allows, it is worthwhile to invest in Community Development Officers who can be tasked with community engagement, building relationships and driving awareness and usage of the project. Community Development Officers can deliver training on the beach mobility loan scheme; present information to other third sector organisations and statutory bodies; run activities or events; co-ordinate and monitor visitor satisfaction, as well as leading on the development of solutions, in response to any identified unmet need.

Media & Public Relations

Promotion of the Inclusive Beach is vital and should be resourced on both sides of the partnership. Beach operators may already have PR staff who can take on promotion as part of their workplan. Depending on the size and capacity of the charitable or community partner, the communications role may be filled by a skilled volunteer (quality, continuity and frequency of messaging is key).

Step 5

Develop and deliver Inclusive Beach training



Staff training is essential to creating a successful Inclusive Beach so that everyone involved is aware of ethos, the messaging and the processes and procedures. Mae Murray Foundation is happy to share training resources and information. Some are included below and others can be found [here](#).

Mindful of how past experiences may shape visitors' expectations or raise concerns, the key aim of the training is to help staff to ensure that everyone visiting an Inclusive Beach has a positive experience. To achieve this, training may include, but not be limited, to:

Training of administration staff which covers:

- Overview of the Inclusive Beach project aims / partnership agreement.
- Disability awareness training.
- Details of the beach mobility loan scheme.
- Inclusive Beach site facilities, including Changing Places Toilet.
- Booking process and cancellation options (from user perspective).
- Booking process for groups.
- Booking confirmation process (from operator perspective).
- Data Sharing Agreement.
- Maintaining a bookings record.
- Process for reporting broken equipment and getting it repaired / replaced.

Training for Beach Operator staff based at the beach which covers:

- Overview of the Inclusive Beach project aims / partnership agreement.
- Disability awareness training.
- Safeguarding training.
- Details of the beach mobility loan scheme, including floating wheelchair water safety video, if a lifeguarded beach.
- Beach mobility equipment – practical familiarisation.
- Inclusive Beach site facilities, including Changing Place Toilet – practical familiarisation.
- Understanding how bookings are processed and administered prior to beach-based staff involvement.
- Data Sharing Agreement.
- Understanding how information will be received from administration staff, recorded in diary and handover prepared.
- Familiarisation with Equipment Manual detailing individual equipment cleaning, maintenance and safety checks, in line with manufacturer guidance.
- Familiarisation with [Cleaning and Technical Checks Record](#).
- Familiarisation with [Faulty / missing part process chart](#).
- Familiarisation with servicing arrangements - how and when this happens and who completes (Refer to Partnership Agreement). Servicing requirements will depend on usage - see Risk Management Plan [here](#). Note: Mae Murray Foundation currently service pre / mid & post-bathing season. This is subject to change.

- Familiarisation with [Inclusive Beach Equipment Loan Scheme Handover Form](#).
- How to deal with beach loan scheme enquiries from people who have not pre-booked or are holiday visitors.
- How to answer questions from the general public (provide information leaflets for use).

Training for volunteers supporting events on Inclusive Beaches which covers:

- General volunteer recruitment & training in line with good governance and internal organisational processes.
- Overview of the Inclusive Beach project aims / partnership agreement.
- Disability awareness training.
- Details of the beach mobility loan scheme and how to operate the equipment.
- Familiarisation with Inclusive Beach site facilities, including Changing Places Toilet.

If your beach site is a lifeguarded beach, then it is essential to involve your local lifeguards in appropriate training and risk management. Further information on water safety can be found at Step 7.

Training for Lifeguards & Beach Activity Providers should include

- Disability awareness training.
- Overview of Inclusive Beach project aims and the operation of the beach mobility loan scheme.
- Practical familiarisation with beach mobility equipment.
- Lifting & handling training.
- Explore any opportunities / adaptations needed for joint working which may increase safe participation for more abilities together on the beach. For example, the implementation of a water safety group to contribute to the Inclusive Beach risk management plan.



Step 6

Put in place an online pre-booking system



Mae Murray Foundation has learned, from experience, that a pre-booking system is essential to any Inclusive Beach. Booking in advance avoids disappointment and reduces anxiety.

At every Inclusive Beach managed by Mae Murray Foundation beach mobility equipment is free with no deposit taken. Based on research, trial and error and extensive feedback from beach visitors, we now operate an online, membership-based, loan system. Membership is free of charge and open to anyone who is socially isolated or excluded from taking part. Members do not need to identify as disabled. Anyone, of any age, who will benefit can get involved.

Our pre-booking system is accessed online, via our website, thanks to a software plug-in system, set up by our web developers. It is effectively an online renting platform which allows us to manage and loan equipment. We have been trialling the system since 2022 and it is working well. However, we still have some way to go to ensure that our website and booking system provides a comparable experience for all, so members can find content and accomplish tasks in a way that suits their individual needs. In the interim, members can contact us directly for assistance to book, during office hours.

For information only, [here](#) is a link to Mae Murray Foundation's Inclusive Beach website page, including our online 6 step booking process.

Step 7

Be fully aware of risk and how to mitigate



The risks associated with beaches, and the water in particular, are well known. The use of mobility equipment in the sea undoubtedly increases risk. To mitigate risk, through a Risk Management Plan, it is important to understand all the potential hazards. A full copy of the Mae Murray Foundation's Risk Management Plan can be found [here](#).

We have created a Water Safety Forum comprising our stakeholders and organisations with direct experience of water safety who have oversight of water safety at our Inclusive Beaches. Membership of the forum includes Mae Murray Foundation, RNLI, beach operating partners and water activity facilitators.



Together, we have come up with over-arching rules for operating beach mobility equipment in the sea as follows:

- Only offer floating equipment and sea activities at Inclusive Beaches which are lifeguarded by the RNLI Northern Ireland. At other beaches, offer land-based mobility equipment, and equipment that is suitable for use to the water's edge.
- Water based equipment should be tried and tested by the RNLI before being added to the beach mobility equipment loan scheme.
- Water based activities, procedures and mitigations should be agreed by the Water Safety Forum.
- Water Safety Forum advice is the basis for water-based risk avoidance measures within our Risk Management Plan.
- RNLI advice will always take precedence.

If you wish to set up your own Water Safety Forum for your Inclusive Beach, you may want to draw up Terms of Reference (ToR). These are likely to include:

- The name of the group and the date it was formed.
- The purpose of the group.
- Who membership is open to?
- Meeting frequency / time commitment.
- Accountability, ways of working, secretariat of group.
- Sharing of information and resources (including confidential materials).
- Review date for ToR.

Step 8

Plan and implement ongoing maintenance and servicing



Routine maintenance and regular servicing are essential to ensure the health and safety of beach visitors and the longevity of equipment.

The beach environment can be hard on equipment, reducing its life-span and effectiveness. Always remember that equipment which is not fit for use poses a risk to equipment borrowers, staff, volunteers and the public.

Consider equipment components, exposure to elements, usage, drying and storage facilities. Always consult manufacturer guidance and discuss with your insurers to inform your Risk Management Plan.

Consider the length of time equipment will be available for loan and the frequency of usage. Will there be an off season? The servicing and maintenance requirements of schemes which operate all year round will differ from those which operate only at weekends in the summer months.

Maintenance

Maintaining beach mobility equipment involves cleaning and preventative work such as greasing/oiling ensuring all straps and bolts are secure, checking for fabric tears, to protect the equipment from the elements. Maintenance differs from servicing, which must be carried out by a qualified technician.

At Mae Murray Foundation, beach operator training includes sharing a training manual detailing equipment, its moving parts, detachable or adjustable parts and cleaning requirements. A checklist to record carrying out of maintenance is also provided. A sample of our checklist can be found [here](#).

If faults or missing parts are discovered, there should be a clear process detailing who to report the damage to, and how to remove the equipment from service. [A sample fault process flow chart can be found here](#).

Tools

Mae Murray Foundation keeps a basic toolbox onsite at all our Inclusive Beaches to allow for easy replacement of small parts. The list below is for information purposes only and is not exhaustive:

- WD40 lithium
- Allen keys
- Hammer
- Mallet
- Crowbar
- Adjustable spanner
- Hex nuts AF 13mm
- Ratchet screwdriver
- Screwdriver bits T30, T27
- Rubber bands (to attach disclaimer signage, changing as required)
- Tyre dust caps
- End caps in a variety of relevant sizes
- Pump - with low PSI numbers clearly visible

Servicing

Servicing of equipment is of paramount importance to ensure equipment is safe and fit for use. Servicing must be carried out by a qualified technician, which can be a costly overhead. Mae Murray Foundation engages the services of a mobility equipment technician.

We have found that the quality and frequency of our maintenance plan keeps our annual service costs down.

Your servicing regime will depend on the nature of your site and change according to the season.



Step 9



Gather feedback and review need

To ensure that your Inclusive Beach continues to meet people's evolving needs, it is essential to gather feedback from beach visitors and listen to, and learn from, their experiences at the beach.

Gathering feedback helps identify improvements which could be made to the Inclusive Beach and creates important information to share with funders on the positive impact of Inclusive Beaches.

There are many ways to gather feedback. At Mae Murray Foundation we regularly survey visitors who have borrowed equipment through our equipment loan scheme, via email or text (subject to consent) and at engagement events. It is important to capture both lived experience and statistics. Click [here](#) to view a sample feedback survey.

A sustainable, effective Inclusive Beach should be kept under ongoing review so that positive steps can be taken to remove any new barriers to participation that are identified. Alongside visitor feedback, it is important to review the needs of those who have not visited the beach. Attached is a sample of Mae Murray Foundation's [Needs Review Survey](#) which encourages people whose needs are not being met to get in touch.

Step 10



Effective Inclusive Beach management, season by season

Operating in the beach environment creates many challenges and poses significant risk. Management and sustainability of an Inclusive Beach should ensure that responsibilities are actioned effectively and implemented in a timely manner by both parties.

Overall management of an Inclusive Beach will vary season by season and site by site. Based on our experience, there are a number of common project management actions and responsibilities to bear in mind:

Pre-season

- Review Partnership Agreement (we suggest involving your legal team and insurer).
- Review Data Sharing Agreement.
- Hold any stakeholder review meetings and Water Safety Forum meetings.
- Review Risk Management Plan.
- Ensure your beach operator completes their ['Annual Partnership Responsibility Survey'](#).
- Secure funding for equipment, operational costs and activity programme.
- Prepare all documentation including; [Frequently Asked Questions](#), [Terms and Conditions](#), [Cleaning & Technical Checks Record](#).

- Annual review of processes.
- Review Service Level Agreements for any activity providers, requesting copies of any documentation identified through your Risk Management Plan, such as insurance certificates, risk mitigation and any training or safeguarding evidence.
- Annual insurance review: ensure notification of all capital items, activities and any change to risk, as this may vary from year to year.
- Beach Operator staff training.
- Stakeholder training.
- Update booking system with operation schedule.
- Design and schedule an activity programme.
- Provide monitoring information to users to record impact for funders.
- Prepare social media plan and share with beach operator PR team.
- Schedule servicing of equipment.

Operating Season

- Operate participation initiatives.
- Implement PR plan.
- Manage booking system – ensure beach operator receives bookings.
- Monitor operations – checking that maintenance records and consent forms are completed and stored as agreed.
- Ensure data is removed / stored / destroyed as per Data Sharing Agreement.
- Send feedback forms to beach visitors.
- Implement maintenance plan, as per beach operator pre-season training.
- Schedule any servicing – subject to usage and risk mitigation evaluation.

Post-season

- Schedule servicing of equipment.
- Collate feedback and data.
- Complete key performance indicators and impact report.
- Create reports to funders as required.
- Ensure all data and paperwork is removed / stored / destroyed as per data sharing agreement.

8. Inclusive Beach stakeholder community

There are many stakeholders working to bring inclusion to beaches ranging from beach operators, charitable or community organisations and water safety experts, through to activity specialists and others.

We have asked our own stakeholders to share their experiences and to be frank about the challenges, as well as the rewards of being part of our Inclusive Beach project. Whether it's balancing environmental challenges, staffing or partnership working, there is much we can learn from working together. Reviews can be found [here](#).

We are very grateful to our contributors for their honest accounts of the challenges faced and for highlighting what has worked well.



9. Can every beach be an Inclusive Beach?

The Inclusive Beach model, derived from the ADAPT framework, has been developed by Mae Murray Foundation and its membership - those with lived experience of exclusion in the beach environment.

It is important to state that not every beach will be suitable for the creation of an Inclusive Beach. This may be due to factors such as challenging sand and rock movement; inability to provide parking and toileting facilities; or perhaps site development may be restricted by environmental or planning regulations.

However, we know that smaller coastal towns, villages and rural areas are disproportionately affected by isolation with little or no accessible transport. Progressing inclusion within these communities is vital.

In recognition of this we have piloted alternative arrangements appropriate for the setting. We have learned that that the need in smaller coastal or rural areas is different to larger towns and extends beyond the beach to other leisure and home settings. In due course we intend to research and explore these needs further and recommend appropriate solutions.



10. Disclaimer

The ADAPT my Beach guide's intended purpose is to share Mae Murray Foundation's learning about how to make beaches inclusive. The aim is to empower others to progress the inclusion of people of all ages and abilities.

The information contained within the ADAPT my Beach guide does not negate the need for the reader to comply with any regulatory or legal responsibilities.

Mae Murray Foundation will not be held responsible or liable to any party in respect of any loss, damage or costs of any nature arising directly or indirectly from information published within the ADAPT my Beach guide.

Personal Stories

We are fortunate that some of our beach visitors have chosen to share their personal experiences to help us make the argument for greater inclusion. They have given permission for us to share their anonymised stories within this publication.

1 Jacqueline's Story

We have been on a journey with the Mae Murray Foundation. On our first visit to the beach when the twins were still babies, I couldn't understand why they didn't like the beach. It was the whole sensory experience for them which was overwhelming - the sun, the sea, sky, the sand it was all too much for them. The next year they loved it and had got over their initial fears. As they got older accessibility was difficult. The double buggy was too heavy for me to push myself on the sand. It got stuck, I rang my husband in floods of tears and for the first time I really felt the separation between me and the other families who were already on the beach.

When they got to the age of 4 years old, they were using wheelchairs instead of buggies and this is around the time the Mae Murray Foundation came along with the start of the

beach mobility loan scheme and the surf activity days at Benone Inclusive Beach. We have beautiful memories and photographs from this time, it's great to look back on them.

People don't realise how difficult it is to get a wheelchair on to the beach. You need access to the beach, parking, toilets, with changing bench and hoist facilities. We want to be able to have this experience on a regular basis, just like other families.

Without the Inclusive Beach set up it would be practically impossible for my family to go to the beach.

Seeing both my girls chat, engage with other kids, and get involved was a real turn around moment knowing that it won't

be all doom and gloom, and this can actually be good craic too. It gives you the confidence and courage to do other things too.

When your children are happy you are happy too. It gives you good self-esteem when they are included – there's a sense of joy and joyfulness on the beach. It's lovely to step back and watch everyone being happy – the healthy lifestyle, sounds of the sea, touch of the water, feeling of the wind. It gets everyone outside making memories with siblings and friends.

2 Robert's Story

Before the creation of Inclusive Beaches, going to the beach was not easy – we just never went. Our son wanted to go to the beach, but it was always too difficult with his wheelchair. Even though we have a caravan not too far from the coast we never really went, due to the difficulties with access. Maybe once a year we would drive onto a beach that allows you to park directly on the sand. It became quite frustrating though, as our son didn't have the balance to get out of the car and sit on the sand to build sandcastles. As he got older, he just wanted to get out and move around.

Now because of Inclusive Beaches we go all the time – even during winter!

As a wheelchair user access is the most important thing for our son and having access to beach wheelchair opens up so many opportunities to take part. And now as he is getting older and bigger having access to Changing Places facilities is essential. We used to have to change him in the back of our car.

As a family, we take part in beach cleaning, surfing, archery, and beach schools. The pain and exclusion we felt before is just a distant memory.

Our son simply loves being like everyone else and when his friends at school say I went to the beach at the weekend he can say he did too and chat about the activities enjoyed. It's great that he can join in normal everyday conversation with his friends and has made some new friends on the beach too! We all have!!

I love that we can get out as a family all together, it really helps my mental health. I enjoy meeting other families too that have shared common barriers, or the families who are venturing onto the beach in a wheelchair for the first time and don't know what to expect. We support one another. We are one big family.

3 Brenda's Story

I had an accident some 30 years ago, which led me to using a wheelchair to move around. My daughter who has learning difficulties, my husband and I, always loved the beach. We spend hours there, it's the place my daughter is happiest. We still go, but since my accident I had remained in the car, parked up on the sand – until the Inclusive Beach equipment arrived! Instead of having to remain in the car all day, with the car door open to interact with my family, I am out there across the beach with them! I can't describe what it meant the day that my daughter and I both surfed into shore together. It was very emotional. After 30 years of sitting in the car as a bystander, here I was surfing with my daughter – thanks to a beach wheelchair, specially adapted sit surfboard and superb toileting facilities which support my independence. The choice of equipment is superb. I usually use the chair which has a tilt function and removable armrests, as this allows me to transfer independently.

This outlet has opened up a whole new world for us as a family, in our favourite place.

I will be forever grateful for the mountain of work which has enabled it to happen. Others won't have to face the barriers which I faced and will be able to embrace their adventurous side, which is really good for everyone's mental health. Surf's up!!

4 Erin's Story

I have sight-loss, which has been deteriorating further over the last number of years. I love journeying to the beach for a walk and although it means a couple of bus journeys I manage to visit about once per month.

I disembark the bus in the nearby village and know the route to the beach. My guide cane assists me to gauge where I am on the footpath and avoid hazards. I follow a wall to my right-hand side as I approach the beach. It is helpful that there is a concrete pedestrian walkway the length of the bay. The beach operator has a challenge to keep this free from sand, which is important for my access and for others.

I was delighted to hear that the new Inclusive Beach development would include a ramp and railings onto the beach, then temporary matting to lead across the sand to the water's edge. It is a long time since I have ventured onto the sand as there have been no markers to help me understand where I am in the space.

It was wonderful to arrive at the bay, feel the matting under my feet and find my way to the sea. The non-slip texture is good and a light contrasting line runs down the middle and edges of the matting, to assist those with partial vision. Some of the matting was joined together to create an area to congregate and enjoy some activities. The weather was kind and I enjoyed chair-

based mindfulness and then a group drumming circle – which was great fun! There was great community spirit.

I fed back that it would be helpful if there was some tactile paving on the surrounding concrete pedestrian walkway, to highlight whereabouts to turn onto the temporary matting. My lived experience was positively received and valued. I understand it is going to be actioned, which will support more people in visiting the beach.

5 Local Youth Club

Every year as part of our club programme, we bring the children to the North Coast to have a beach sports and fun day. One of the members of our youth group is a wheelchair user and unfortunately his chair does not move easily on the sand. In previous years he either did not attend or had to watch from the side lines.

Once we heard about the Inclusive Beach, we were so excited to find out more about the possibility of EVERYONE being able to take part in our sports day! The process was very easy; we became a member, which was free, we completed a booking form for an all-terrain wheelchair and received our confirmation.

When we arrived at the beach, we were pleasantly surprised; there was suitable parking, there was a Changing Places Toilet (no more changing on a dirty floor) and staff were onsite to complete the equipment handover process.

Once R was in the all-terrain wheelchair, he was able to move across the sand so easily! He joined in all the games and activities; target games, obstacle races, team building exercises and so much more! The other kids loved taking turns to push him, seeing who could do it the fastest. It was fantastic to see him joining in with his friends instead of sitting on the periphery. We cannot wait for next year already!

Glossary of Terms

Term	Description
ADAPT Framework	ADAPT (Access, Dignity, All-Ability, Participation, Transformation) is a framework, co-produced by Mae Murray Foundation's lived experience membership. The framework could be utilised to underpin inclusion in a range of different environments.
Allied Health Professionals (AHP)	Allied Health Professionals (AHPs) are a diverse group of clinicians who deliver high-quality care to patients and clients across a wide range of care pathways and in a variety of different settings. They play an important role in modern health and social care services.
Annual Partnership Responsibility Survey (APRS)	A Mae Murray Foundation document outlining the responsibilities of the Inclusive Beach Operator and who within each respective organisation is responsible for various aspects of the Inclusive Beach.
Beach Mobility Equipment Loan Scheme	A system which allows Inclusive Beach users to book and hire equipment such as beach wheelchairs, all terrain walkers, floating wheelchairs.
Beach Operations	Day-to-day operational duties which will fall under the relevant beach operator within the local authority or beach owner.
Booking Process Mapping	A means to create a user friendly, step-by-step guide to the administration and process of booking equipment at an Inclusive Beach.

Changing Places Toilet (CPT)	Changing Places Toilets are larger accessible toilets with equipment such as hoists, a screen or curtain, adult-sized changing benches and space for carers. To qualify as a Changing Places toilet, facilities must meet certain criteria and be registered on the ChangingPlaces.org website.
Community Development Officer	A Community Development Officer is a Mae Murray Foundation staff member who will act as the link between communities and a range of other local authority and voluntary sector providers.
Project & Partnership Manager	A person to oversee partnership relations and project implementation, resourcing and management.
Data Sharing Agreement	Data sharing agreements set out the purpose of the data sharing, cover what happens to the data at each stage, set standards and help all the parties involved in sharing to be clear about their roles and responsibilities in line with the relevant legislation.
Inclusive Beach	<p>An Inclusive Beach is a beach environment where people of all ages and abilities can take part, have fun, and be included.</p> <p>An Inclusive Beach provides access (beach wheelchairs, matting etc), designated parking, and disabled toilets to a Changing Places Toilet standard.</p>
Induction and Safety video	A Mae Murray Foundation produced safety video for Inclusive Beach users to view prior to use of beach equipment showing access, use of equipment and safety overview.
LOLER Test	A LOLER (Lifting Operations and Lifting Equipment Regulations 1998) test/inspection is a thorough examination of lifting equipment by a qualified or 'competent' person, as defined by the Health and Safety Executive (HSE). LOLER is a legal responsibility.
Protected Project Parking	A protected parking bay is a reserved space for an Inclusive Beach user. They will be available to any Inclusive Beach users who have made a beach equipment booking. These spaces will offer the same standard of parking as a Disabled Parking Bay.

Risk Assessment	A process of identifying what hazards currently exist or may arise. A risk assessment defines which hazards are likely to cause harm to employees and participants and identifies steps to reduce these risks.
Risk Management Plan	A document defining how risks associated with the Inclusive Beaches project will be identified, analysed, and managed.
Service Level Agreement (SLA)	A Service Level Agreement (SLA) is a contract between a service provider and a customer, defining the types and standards of services to be offered.
Stakeholder	Anyone who will access or facilitate the use of an Inclusive Beach including; beach visitors, beach operators, charitable or community organisations and water safety experts, through to beach and water activity specialists and others.
Water Safety Forum	A group created by Mae Murray Foundation comprising stakeholders who are tasked to identify and reduce risks involved with open water activities. Membership can include, but not limited to, RNLI, beach operators, beach users, activity providers, Inclusive Beach lead organisation.
Lived Experience	Lived experience is a depiction of a person's personal experiences, as well as the knowledge gained from these experiences. This document has been created by those who have experience of being excluded from the beach environment and also the experience of attending Inclusive Beaches.

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Ards and North Down Borough Council
Causeway Coast and Glens Borough Council
Disability Action
Inclusea
Live Here Love Here
National Trust
Nature Scot
Newry Mourne and Down District Council
Queen's University Belfast
RNIB
Sensory Trust
Surfability

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