



**Disability Duties
Disability Action Plan
For**

**The Local Government Staff Commission for
Northern Ireland**

**June 2007
(Revised June 2010)
(Revised March 2013)**

This Disability Action Plan can be obtained from the Commission in alternative formats, including large print, in Braille, on audio cassette, on computer disc and in easy read format. It can also be downloaded from the Commission's website. If you would like a copy in an alternative format, please contact:

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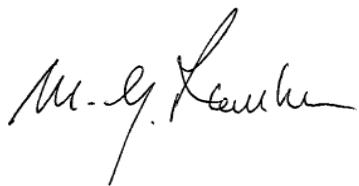
Website: **www.lgsc.org.uk**

Foreword

This Disability Action Plan is an important document in that it is a statement of the Commission's commitment to and proposals for fulfilling the statutory obligations in compliance with Section 49A of the Disability Discrimination Act 1995 (as amended by the Disability Discrimination (NI) Order 2006). This Act places new duties on public authorities, when carrying out their functions to have regard to the need:

- to promote positive attitudes towards disabled people; and
- to encourage participation by disabled people in public life.

The Plan is also important because it outlines how disability issues can be more effectively mainstreamed within the Commission, thus ensuring that they are central to the whole range of policy decision-making within the Commission.



Mervyn Rankin
CHAIRMAN



Dr Adrian E Kerr
CHIEF EXECUTIVE

Contents

1.	Introduction	1
2.	Purpose of the disability action plan	1
3.	The Commission – its role and functions	1
4.	Public life positions over which the Commission has responsibility	2
5.	Commitment to the effective implementation of the disability action plan	3
6.	Internal arrangements	4
7.	Effective engagement	5
8.	Annual Report	5
9.	Five Year Review	6
10.	Consultation	6
11.	Previous measures	7
12.	Action measures	8
13.	How the disability action plan will be published	13
Appendix 1	Commission members	13
Appendix 2	Organisation chart	14

1. Introduction

- 1.1 Section 49A of the Disability Discrimination Act 1995 (as amended by the Disability Discrimination (NI) Order 2006 requires the Commission, in carrying out its functions, to have due regard to the need:
- to promote positive attitudes towards disabled people; and
 - to encourage participation by disabled people in public life.
- 1.2 The Commission is committed to the fulfilment of its disability duties in all parts of its organisation and, under Section 49B of the Disability Discrimination Act 1995 we are required to submit to the Equality Commission by 30 June 2007 a Disability Action Plan (the Plan) showing how we propose to fulfil these duties.
- 1.3 The Commission will undertake a planned programme of communication and training on the disability duties for all staff and Commission members (refer to Action Measures 2 and 3 on page 9).

2. Purpose of the disability action plan

- 2.1 This Plan sets out how the Commission proposes to fulfil the disability duties in relation to its functions.
- 2.2 In preparing this Plan, the Commission has followed the guidance in the Equality Commission for Northern Ireland's document "*A Guide for Public Authorities – Promoting positive attitudes towards disabled people and encouraging the participation of disabled people in public life*".

3. The Commission – its role and functions

- 3.1 The Commission is an Executive Non-Departmental Public Body established under the Local Government Act (NI) 1972. Its powers were later extended under the Housing Orders (NI) 1976 and 1981 and the Local Government (Miscellaneous Provisions) (NI) Order 1992.

3.2 The terms of reference of the Commission are to “exercise general oversight of matters connected with the recruitment, training and terms and conditions of employment of officers of councils and the Northern Ireland Housing Executive and of making recommendations to councils and the Northern Ireland Housing Executive on such matters.” (Local Government Act (NI) 1972 as amended by the Housing Orders (NI) 1976 and 1981).

3.3 The specific functions of the Commission are:

- Recommending Employment and Promotion Procedures
- Convening Advisory Appointment Panels
- Human Resource Planning Activities
- Promoting Co-operation in the Public Service
- Training and Development
- Ensuring Effective Negotiating Machinery

3.4 To support and implement the above statutory functions and provision of services and facilities, the Commission has adopted a wide range of policies.

4. Public life positions over which the Commission has responsibility

4.1 The Commission has responsibility for no public life positions. Commission members are recruited and appointed by the Department of the Environment for NI. However, we will use our influence to work with the Department of Environment for NI and with disabled people and their representatives, to encourage more disabled people to apply (refer to Action Measures 5 and 6 on page 10).

4.2 We will encourage councils to appoint a Diversity Champion at officer and/or elected member level to progress the Diversity agenda including disability duties (refer to Action Measure 8 on page 10).

4.3 We will also seek to involve disabled people in working groups and through our Section 75 Partner Consultee initiative (refer to Action Measure 5 on page 10).

- 5. Commitment to the effective implementation of the disability action plan**
- 5.1 As Chairman and Chief Executive of the Commission, we are committed to implementing effectively the disability duties and this Plan. We will allocate all necessary resources, in terms of people, time and money, in order to implement effectively this Plan.
- 5.2 Overall responsibility for determining policy on how this will be achieved lies with the Commission members. Day to day responsibility for carrying out the policy determined by the Commission members lies with the Chief Executive and he will be responsible for the implementation of administrative arrangements to ensure that the disability duties are complied with by the Commission in carrying out all its functions and related work programmes.
- 5.3 As part of its corporate planning process, the Commission will build objectives and targets relating to the disability duties into corporate and business plans. These will be reflected at all levels of strategic planning within the Commission including individual staff objectives and annual plans. Progress on meeting objectives, including those relating to the disability duties will be monitored and reported upon at the most senior level within the organisation on a quarterly basis. Individual performance on these issues will be monitored and reviewed through performance review arrangements.
- 5.4 A formal report of progress on meeting the objectives relating to the disability duties will be included in the Commission's annual report which is available on our website www.lgsc.org.uk. Our website has been bobby approved.

6. Internal arrangements

- 6.1 Commission membership comprises a Chairman and not more than 14 members. Membership reflects the Commission's customer base, including those with experience as elected members, trade union officials and Local Government senior officers and independent persons chosen for their expertise in human resource management.
- 6.2 A list of the current Commission members is set out in Appendix 1.
- 6.3 The responsibility for the implementation of the Commission's Corporate and Business Plans lies with the Chief Executive. He allocates responsibility for particular areas of business activity across the Professional Services team. The performance of individual officers is monitored through an appraisal process in line with the requirements of the Investors in People initiative.
- 6.4 Overall delivery of the strategy is monitored by the Commission as a corporate body.
- 6.5 The Commission is committed to the fulfilment of its disability duties obligations in all parts of its organisation. Overall responsibility for determining policy on how this will be achieved lies with the Commission members. Day to day responsibility for carrying out the policy determined by the Commission members lies with the Chief Executive and he will be responsible for the implementation of administrative arrangements to ensure that the Section 75 duty is complied with by the Commission in carrying out its functions.

- 6.6 The Chief Executive, Dr Adrian Kerr, may be contacted by letter at:

Commission House
18 – 22 Gordon Street
Belfast
BT1 2LG

by phone: 028 9031 3200
by Typetalk: 18001 028 9031 3200
by fax: 028 9031 3151
or by email: info@lgsc.org.uk.

- 6.7 An organisation chart detailing current Commission staff and positions held is set out in Appendix 2.
- 6.8 We will ensure the effective communication of the Plan to staff and will provide all necessary training and guidance for staff on the disability duties and the implementation of the Plan (refer to Action Measure 3 on page 9).

7. Effective engagement

- 7.1 The Commission is committed to engaging effectively with disabled people, and their representatives, in the implementation, monitoring and review of this Plan. Further information on how this will be done is outlined in Section 10 on Consultation.

8. Annual report

- 8.1 The Commission will prepare an annual report on the implementation of its Plan. The annual report will be included as part of the Commission’s annual report to the Equality Commission on the implementation of our equality scheme.
- 8.2 A copy of the annual report will be made available on the Commission’s website at www.lgsc.org.uk. (The website has been **Bobby** approved).

9. Five year review

- 9.1 The Commission will carry out a review of its Plan in 2015, in line with the five year review of our equality scheme.
- 9.2 The review report will be forwarded to the Equality Commission, and will also be made available on our website at www.lgsc.org.uk. (The website has been **Bobby** approved).

10. Consultation

- 10.1 The Commission was committed to carrying out consultation in a meaningful manner in the development of its disability duties. In doing so the Commission was keen to bring about change for disabled people and we therefore focussed on the issue of involvement and participation in preparing our Plan.
- 10.2 Specifically we were keen to seek the views of disabled people in relation to the development of the Plan. To do this the Commission:
 - allowed a period of two months for the consultation period
 - hosted a consultation event on behalf of the councils and the Commission on 15 March 2007 in Lisburn Valley Island
 - held a meeting with our Partner Consultees
 - sent our Plan to all our consultees and offered to meet with them to hear their views
 - placed this Plan on our website, seeking views from individuals and organisations
- 10.3 We tried to remove barriers to proper consultation by ensuring accessibility of documents in appropriate formats. Information was made available on request in accessible formats including Braille, large print, disc; audio cassette and easy read format (refer to Action Measure 12 on page 11).

- 10.4 As a result of our consultation exercise, we received a number of comments on our draft Plan which were incorporated into this Plan. We wrote to all those who responded to our consultation and provided them with a copy of our Plan.
- 10.5 In addition to consulting with disabled people when drawing up this Plan, we will also consult with disabled people, and seek to ensure ongoing dialogue between the Commission and disabled people, and their representatives, when implementing and reviewing the Plan.

11. Previous measures

- 11.1 The Commission has already taken a number of measures to promote positive attitudes towards disabled people and encourage their participation in public life. A number of key measures are outlined below:
 - We have provided training through the Local Government Training Group for council and Commission staff on disability awareness and sign language for front line staff (refer to Action Measure 4 on page 9).
 - We have worked with a number of councils to assist them to prepare a model strategy and action plan for the employment of persons with a disability which was launched in June 2005 (refer to Action Measure 9 on page 10).
 - We provide a Code of Procedures on Recruitment and Selection for the 26 district councils. We reviewed the Code in 2009 in order to ensure that any barriers to the selection process for disabled people were removed (refer to Action Measures 7 and 8 on page 10).
 - We listen to the views of disabled people, and other consultees, on our policies through our Partner Consultee initiative (refer to Action Measure 7 on page 10).

- We have installed a Typetalk system in our office and have trained our administration staff in its operation (refer to Action Measure 3 on page 9).
- Disability awareness training is part of our induction programme for new members of staff (refer to Action Measure 3 on page 9).
- We are members of Employers for Disability NI.

12 Action Measures

12.1 The following table details the measures which the Commission intends to take over the period 1 January 2013 to 30 April 2015, together with performance indicators or targets:

	Action Measures	Timescale	Performance Indicators/Target
1.	<p>Mainstreaming</p> <p>Two additional screening questions to assess the significance of the disability duties will be added to the S75 screening proforma.</p>	Completed – Questions to be reviewed annually	Better promotion of equality for disabled people
2.	<p>Training and Guidance</p> <p>Provide an awareness seminar on the disability duties to Commission members.</p>	During Induction of new members	Increased awareness of disability issues
3.	Provide specialist disability equality training for senior officers, recruitment and selection panels and front line staff.	Ongoing	Promotion of positive attitudes towards disabled people
4.	Include disability equality training in the Local Government Training Group open course programme.	Ongoing	Increase the numbers of front line staff in councils who can communicate in basic sign language

	<u>Encouraging participation in public life</u>		
5.	Audit the participation of disabled people in working groups and Partner Consultee meetings, including identifying barriers.	Ongoing	Increase the participation of disabled people on working groups.
6.	Implement the action plan to increase the participation of disabled people in working groups and Partner Consultee meetings.	By June 2013	
7.	Review the Code of Procedures on Recruitment and Selection to remove barriers to the selection process.	Ongoing	Increase the numbers of disabled people employed in councils.
8.	<u>Internal measures</u> Encourage Councils to appoint a Diversity Champion at officer and elected member level to progress the disability duties within the Equality and Diversity Framework	By April 2013	Increased awareness of disability issues within the diversity framework
9.	<u>Communication</u> Audit external and internal communication policies, practices and procedures.	By December 2013	Disabled people portrayed in a positive role

10.	Prepare an action plan to ensure that information is accessible and includes positive images of disabled and non-disabled people together.	By December 2013	Promotion of positive attitudes towards disabled people
11.	<u>Access</u> Continue to audit internal/external access to Commission House.	Ongoing	Improved access to facilities and services
12.	Audit website accessibility.	By June 2013	
13.	Prepare an action plan on accessibility.	By June 2013	

Action Measures April 2013 – March 2014

	Action Measures	Timescale	Performance Indicators/Target
1.	Provide an awareness seminar on the disability duties for new Commission members.	By June 2013	Increased awareness of disability legislation.
2.	Drive the Equality and Diversity initiative including the Steering Group and the network of Diversity Champions	Ongoing	Increased awareness of disability issues and increased participation of people with disabilities in councils through the initiative.
3.	Work with Disability Action, to include Disability in the training package for Diversity Champions.	By September 2013	Ensure Diversity Champions are equipped to carry out their role effectively
4.	Hold a Equality and Diversity Conference and ensure that Disability groups are included.	May 2013	
5.	Provide at least two workshops for Diversity Champions.	By March 2014	Enable Disability Groups to network and share information
6	Encourage more councils to participate in the Workable NI programme.	By March 2014	Increase the participation of people with disabilities in councils

13. How the disability action plan will be published

13.1 This Plan is available by contacting:

Lorna Parsons
Director Recruitment & Diversity
The Local Government Staff Commission for NI
Commission House
18-22 Gordon Street
Belfast
BT1 2LG

Tel: 028 9031 3200
TypeTalk: 18001 028 9031 3200
Fax: 028 9031 3151
Email: lorna.parsons@lgsc.org.uk

- 13.2 The availability of the Disability Action Plan will be advertised in our publications and can be accessed on the Commission's website at www.lgsc.org.uk. Our website has been bobby approved (refer to Action Measure 14 on page 11).
- 13.3 The Commission will, through our ongoing work with people with disabilities, find appropriate ways of communicating the Plan. The Plan will be produced in clear print and plain language and will be available in alternative formats on request, including large print; Braille, audio cassette computer disc and easy read format (refer to Action Measures 11 and 12 on page 11).
- 13.4 The Plan will be highlighted through mail shots and meeting directly with disability organisations, representative groups and individuals.
- 13.5 All employees of the Commission will receive a copy of this Plan.

Appendix 1

Commission Members

Chairman

Mervyn Rankin

Former Chief Executive, Ballymena Borough Council

Vice-Chair

Alderman Geraldine Rice MBE

Alliance Councillor, Castlereagh Borough Council

Members

Ashley Boreland

Chief Executive, Ards Borough Council
Chair, Local Government Training Group
Chair, ALACE

Carmel Connolly

Senior Assistant Director of Corporate Services,
Lisburn City Council

William Francey MBE

Former Director of Health & Environmental Services,
Belfast City Council

Bumper Graham

Assistant General Secretary, NIPSA

Nigel Hamilton

Consultant in Business and Community Development

Councillor Marion Smith MBE

Ulster Unionist Councillor, North Down Borough Council

Appendix 2

Commission Staffing

