



Ulster-Scots Agency
Boord o Ulstèr-Scotch

Disability Action Plan
(November 23 2015)

**Drawn up in accordance with Sections 49A and 49B of
the Disability Discrimination Act 1995**

**as amended by the Disability Discrimination
(Northern Ireland) Order 2006**

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Access to information

As part of our commitment to promoting equality of opportunity and good relations, we want to ensure that everyone is able to access the documents we produce. We would therefore be happy to provide any of the information in this document in alternative formats on request.

Contact details

All comments, requests and queries about anything in this document should be addressed to:

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1. INTRODUCTORY STATEMENT

The disability duties

1.1 Under Section 49A of the Disability Discrimination Act 1995 (DDA 1995) as amended by Article 5 of the Disability Discrimination (Northern Ireland) Order 2006, the Ulster Scots Agency is required, when carrying out its functions, to have due regard to the need to –

- promote positive attitudes towards disabled people; and
- encourage participation by disabled people in public life ('the disability duties').

1.2 Under Section 49B of the DDA 1995, the Ulster Scots Agency is also required to submit to the Equality Commission a disability action plan showing how it proposes to fulfil these duties in relation to its functions.

1.3 This disability action plan will be subject to consultation over a 12 week period concluding February 28th 2016 and will outline the actions which will be undertaken over the next three years.

About us

1.4 The Ulster-Scots Agency has been given the legislative remit of the "promotion of greater awareness and use of Ullans and of Ulster-Scots cultural issues, both within Northern Ireland and throughout the island".

1.5 The aims of the Ulster-Scots Agency are to promote the study, conservation, development and use of Ulster-Scots as a living language; to encourage and develop the full range of its attendant culture; and to promote an understanding of the history of the Ulster-Scots.

1.6 The Agency was established as a part of the North/South Language Body set up under the Belfast Agreement of 1998. The other part of the Language Body is Foras na Gaeilge which has responsibility for the development of the Irish (Gaelic) language. Each of these agencies has its own Board whose members together constitute the Board of the North/ South Language Body.

1.7 The Agency is jointly funded by the Department of Culture Arts and Leisure in Northern Ireland and the Department of Arts, Heritage and the Gaeltacht in the Republic of Ireland and is responsible to the North/South Ministerial Council.

1.8 The Agency has its main office in Belfast with a regional office in Raphoe, Co. Donegal.

Public life positions

1.9 Within the context of the duty to encourage disabled people to participate in public life, we acknowledge our role in ensuring that disabled people are aware of opportunities available provide access to information.

1.10 In addition, we acknowledge that the disability duties relate not only to formal public appointments but also to the way in which disabled people contribute to or are involved in policy decision making or decisions relating to the way in which public authorities carry out their functions. We therefore, as a matter of course, consider ways to encourage disabled people to participate in any consultative, discussion or working groups we may establish in the course of our work.

Statement of commitment

1.11 The Chairman and Chief Executive of the Ulster Scots Agency, wholeheartedly commit to implementing effectively the disability duties and this disability action plan. We will allocate all necessary resources (in terms of people, time and money) in order to implement this plan effectively and, where appropriate, build objectives and targets relating to the disability duties into corporate and annual operating plans.

1.12 We have already put in place appropriate internal arrangements to ensure that the disability duties are complied with and that the disability action plan is implemented effectively. We will ensure the effective communication of the updated plan to staff and provide all necessary training and guidance for staff on the disability duties and the implementation of the updated plan.

1.13 We are committed to engaging effectively with disabled people in the drafting, implementation, monitoring and review of this disability action plan

and to ensuring that consultation is inclusive and targeted. We will ensure that appropriate methods are used for all consultation (in line with the guiding principles set out in the Equality Commission guidance on Section 75) and that a period of at least 12 weeks is allowed.

1.14 The Board will be responsible for the effective implementation of this disability action plan. The Chief Executive will be accountable to the Board for the implementation, review and evaluation of the plan. The Director of Corporate Services will be the point of contact in relation to the plan; his contact details are –

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1.15 We confirm our commitment to submitting an annual progress report on the implementation of this plan to the Equality Commission and carrying out a further review in three years time.

1.16 A copy of this plan and related equality documents are available on our website at:

<http://www.ulsterscotsagency.com/about-us/corporate-publications/>

Tom Scott OBE

Ian Crozier

Chairman

Chief Executive

2. PREVIOUS MEASURES

2.1 Prior to the publication of our disability action plan, we have already taken a number of actions to promote positive attitudes towards disabled people and encourage the participation of disabled people in public life, including –

- **Access to information**

We ensured that all information about Agency initiatives and Board meetings were fully accessible to disabled people. We have also regularly reviewed the accessibility of our website.

- **Access to services**

We have considered innovative ways of encouraging participation by disabled people in our various projects. As one example, in conjunction with Clanmill Housing, a kneeling bus was organised to bring people with a disability to our annual Christmas carol service in Bangor Abbey.

2.2 Over and above the specific action measures as set out below, as a result of the development of the disability action plan, we commit to the following general mainstreaming procedures –

- **Policy screening**

We will adopt a mainstreaming approach to ensure that consideration of the disability duties is incorporated into the development of all policies at the appropriate stages and becomes central to policy decision making. We have revised the screening template we use in relation to screening policies under Section 75 of the Northern Ireland Act 1998 to include a further question relating to the disability duties.

- **Policy review**

We will review our existing policies to determine whether there are opportunities to better promote positive attitudes towards disabled people and encourage the participation of disabled people in public life.

- **Awareness raising**

All staff and Board Members will be made aware of the disability duties, the disability action plan and our commitment to the successful implementation of the plan. We will provide training for all staff

involved in the implementation and/or monitoring of the plan and we will include awareness training on disability duties in induction courses.

▪ **Consultation**

In order to encourage disabled people to participate in any consultative, discussion or working groups we will establish, from time to time, procedures to ensure that any new opportunities will be brought to the attention of organisations representing the views of disabled people and placed appropriate information on our website.

3. ACTION MEASURES

3.1 As part of the development of this disability action plan, we undertook desk research into action measures adopted by other similar organisations and discussed potential further action measures. As a result of this process, we have developed a range of action measures which we propose to take over the next three years, together with timescales and performance indicators and/or targets. These are described below and summarised in the table on page 11.

Communication

3.2 We consider that, in order to promote positive attitudes towards disabled people, we must consider what appropriate and effective measures we can take as regards our external and internal communication policies, practices and procedures. Over the next three years we will:

- review the accessibility of our website on an annual basis and explore opportunities to increase accessibility to disabled people;
- consider the application of Plain English to our public documents and corporate standards;
- notify organisations representing disabled people of impending training courses, employment opportunities, etc.;
- raise awareness among staff of the need to increase the number of relevant positive images of disabled people in future publications and ensure that such images are gathered and held on file.

Access

3.3 We consider that, in order to promote positive attitudes to disabled people, we should ensure that their needs are taken into account, as a matter of course, wherever our work is carried out. Over the next three years we will:

- review the locations where our public events are held and ensure that they are fully accessible to disabled people;
- ensure that a signer is available at public events, where appropriate;
- raise awareness among staff of the need to provide information on parking for disabled people when planning public events
- include emergency evacuation procedures in relation to disabled people in Health and Safety training, equality / disability training and Induction training.

Training and awareness raising

3.4 We consider that one of the key methods of promoting positive attitudes to disabled people is to raise awareness among staff so that they can ensure that disability issues are taken into account in every aspect of our work and can influence other organisations with which they come into contact to do the same. Over the next three years we will:

- provide refresher training for all staff (at least bi-annually) to promote awareness and commitment to disability equality;
- provide disability equality training to all Board Members as part of their induction;
- engage with specialist disability organisations to determine the range of training and support the organisations can provide to the Agency when specific training is required for either an individual with a disability or the colleagues of the individual with the disability;
- explore options for additional training for front-line staff, e.g. level one Certificate in British Sign Language (BSL);
- review induction materials to ensure they emphasise the requirements of positive disability duties.

Employment

3.5 We acknowledge that in order to effectively implement the disability duties, we must ensure disability equality in the way we employ disabled people. Over the next three years we will:

- ensure all reasonable adjustments for staff are completed in a timely manner and are appropriately monitored;
- consider the possibility of establishing a work experience placement for a disabled person.

Consultation and engagement

3.6 As stated above, we are committed to engaging effectively with disabled people in the implementation, monitoring and review of this disability action plan. In order to ensure the appropriate levels of engagement, we will:

- review and update the list of consultees with whom we consult on disability issues.

Monitoring

3.7 We acknowledge that this disability action plan will only be effective if we continually evaluate the impact of the measures listed above and keep the action plan under review so that we can respond to changing situations. Over the next three years we will:

- review all monitoring procedures to ensure that information about disabled people is captured accurately and in sufficient detail.

Summary

3.11 The table overleaf summarises the action measures, timescale and performance indicators and/or targets we will employ over the next three years in order to fulfil the disability duties in relation to our functions. All performance indicators will be collected and evaluated on an annual basis in June of each year.

Theme	Measures	Timescale	Performance indicators/ targets
1. Communication	1.1 Review the accessibility of the Agency website and explore opportunities to increase accessibility to disabled people.	Annually, commencing July 2015.	Complaints/feedback from users.
	1.2 Consider the application of Plain English to public documents.	Initial review to be completed by March 2016.	Complaints/feedback from users.
	1.3 Notify organisations representing disabled people of impending training courses, employment opportunities, etc.	As opportunities arise.	Feedback from recipients (to be requested on an annual basis).
	1.4 Raise awareness among staff of the need to increase the number of relevant positive images of disabled people in future publications and ensure that such images are gathered and held on file.	Awareness raising as part of refresher training in 2016 Images to be gathered on a continuing basis.	Number of images used in publications.

Theme	Measures	Timescale	Performance indicators/ targets
2. Access	2.1 Review the locations where public events are held and ensure that they are fully accessible to disabled people.	Initial review to be completed by March 2016. Access to new venues to be considered as they arise.	Number of venues approved.
	2.2 Ensure that a signer is available at public events, where appropriate.	As and when required.	Number of occasions when signer is required.
	2.3 Raise awareness among staff of the need to provide information on parking for disabled people when planning public events.	Awareness raising as part of refresher training in 2016.	Number of occasions when information is provided.
	2.4 Include emergency evacuation procedures in relation to disabled people in Health and Safety training, equality / disability training and Induction training.	To be included in training modules.	Number of staff trained.
	2.5 Review visual signage at the Agency offices.	Review by December 2016.	Improvements made.

Theme	Measures	Timescale	Performance indicators/ targets
3. Training and awareness raising	3.1 Provide refresher training for all staff to promote awareness and commitment to disability equality.	Refresher training to be completed by March 2016 and repeated every two years.	Number of staff trained.
	3.2 Provide disability equality training to all Board Members as part of their induction.	Within 6 months of appointment.	Number of Board Members trained.
	3.3 Engage with specialist disability organisations to determine the range of training and support the organisations can provide to the Agency when specific training is required for either an individual with a disability or the colleagues of the individual with the disability.	Establish range of support available by June 2016. Avail of support as required.	Number of organisations contacted. Number of specific training events.

	3.4 Explore options for additional training for front-line staff, e.g. level one Certificate in British Sign Language (BSL)	Investigate options by March 2016.	Train one member of staff per year and monitor number of occasions when sign language is used.
	3.5 Review induction materials to ensure they emphasise the requirements of positive disability duties.	Complete review by December 2015 and update as required.	Number of staff trained using induction materials.

Theme	Measures	Timescale	Performance indicators/ targets
4. Employment	4.1 Ensure all reasonable adjustments for staff are completed in a timely manner and are appropriately monitored.	As required.	Review appropriateness of adjustments in accordance with schedule agreed with staff member.

Theme	Measures	Timescale	Performance indicators/ targets
5. Consultation and engagement	5.1 Review and update the list of consultees who are consulted on disability issues.	Review by December 2015.	Number of consultees contacted and number who respond.

Theme	Measures	Timescale	Performance indicators/ targets
6. Monitoring	6.1 Review all monitoring procedures to ensure that information about disabled people is captured accurately and in sufficient detail.	Review by December 2015.	Number of changes to monitoring procedures.

4. CONSULTATION

4.1 This draft disability action plan will be the subject of consultation over a period of at least 12 weeks, ending on 28th February 2016.

4.2 During this period we will draw attention to the consultation process by contacting organisations and individuals who may have an interest in the issues contained within the plan and by publicising the availability of the document on our website.

4.3 Arrangements will be put in place to ensure that the consultation document and any associated reports can be made available in hard copy and alternative formats on request on a timely basis.

4.4 At the end of the consultation period, we will review all feedback and use this to develop the final plan.

5. PUBLICATION

5.1 The updated disability action plan will be published on our website. We will notify consultees, stakeholders and staff of the availability of the action plan.

5.2 The disability action plan and any associated reports will be made available in hard copy and alternative formats on request in a timely manner (usually within 4-6 weeks).

Please note, this list is indicative not exhaustive and will be reviewed on an annual basis.

ADAPT Northern Ireland

Age NI

Age Sector Platform

Aisling Ghear

Alliance Party of Northern Ireland

Altram

An Gaelaras

An Munia Tober

Antrim Borough Council

Archbishop of Armagh

Ards Borough Council

Armagh City & District Council

Armagh Local Strategy Partnership

Armagh Observatory

Armagh Planetarium

Arts & Business Northern Ireland

Arts Council of Northern Ireland

Ballymoney Borough Council

Banbridge District Council

Banbridge Local Strategy Partnership

Barnardo's Northern Ireland

BBC Northern Ireland

Belfast Butterfly Club

Belfast City Council

Belfast Civic Trust

Belfast Education & Library Board

Belfast Hebrew Congregation

Belfast Islamic Centre

Belfast Music Society

Belfast Telegraph

Bishop of Down & Connor
Blackie Community Group Association
British Council
Bryson House
Carers Northern Ireland
Carrickfergus Borough Council
Castlereagh Borough Council
Cedar Foundation
Child Poverty Action Group
Children in Northern Ireland
Children's Law Centre
Children with Disabilities Strategic Alliance
Chinese Welfare Association
Clough & District Community Association
Coalition on Sexual Orientation
Mr John Coghlan
Coiste Forbatha Charn Tochair
Coiste na n-iarchimi
Coleraine Borough Council
Colmcille
Comhaltas Uladh
Committee for Culture, Arts & Leisure
Committee for Industrial Heritage (JCIH)
Committee on the Administration of Justice
Community Foundation for Northern Ireland
Community Places
Community Relations Council
Conradh na Gaeilge
Council for Maintained Schools
Craigavon Borough Council
Criostoir mag Fhearaigh
Culturlann MacAdam O Fiaich
Cumann Chluain Ard

Cumann Culturtha Mhic Reachtain

Deaf Self Help

Ms Mary Delargey

Department of Foreign Affairs

Derry City Council

Derry Well Woman

Disability Action

Disability Sports NI

Down District Council

Dungannon & South Tyrone Borough Council

Employers' Forum on Disability

Equality Commission for Northern Ireland

European Commission Office in Northern Ireland

Evangelical Alliance Northern Ireland

Falls Community Council

Falls Women's Centre

Federation of Small Businesses

Fermanagh District Council

Fermanagh Local Strategy Partnership

First Division Association (FDA)

Mr Andrew Flavelle

Foundry Regeneration Trust

Foyle Friend

Foyle Friend Women's Group

Foyle Women's Information Network

Gael Linn

Gairm

Gingerbread NI

Glentoran Community Trust

Global Gateway

Glor na nGael

Goldblatt McGuigan Chartered Accountants

Grand Orange Lodge of Ireland

Guide Dogs for the Blind Association Northern Ireland

Heritage Lottery Fund

ILEX Ltd

Indian Community Centre

Insight Mystery Shopping

Institute of Ulster-Scots Studies

Irish Congress of Trade Unions

Irish News

Knights of Columbanus

Labour Party

Laganside Corporation

Larne Borough Council

Left Field Sports Consultancy

Lesbian Advocacy Services Initiative

Libraries NI

Library & Information Service Council NI

Limavady Borough Council

Linen Hall Library

Lisburn City Council

Local Government Staff Commission for Northern Ireland

Mr Seamus Mac Mathuna

Mr Neely McGinley

Patsy McShane

Magherafelt District Council

Mencap Northern Ireland

Mid-Ulster Women's Network

Moyle District Council

Multi-Cultural Resource Centre

Professor Pauline Murphy

Museums Association

Museums, Libraries and Archives Council (MLA)

National Art Collections Fund

National Museums & Galleries of Northern Ireland

Newry & Mourne District Council
Newry & Mourne Women
Newsletter
Newtownabbey Borough Council
North Down Borough Council
North West Community Network
North West Forum of People with Disabilities
Northern Ireland Agricultural Producers' Association
Northern Ireland Anti-Poverty Network
Northern Ireland Association for Mental Health
Northern Ireland Association for the Care and Resettlement of Offenders
Northern Ireland Blind Sports
Northern Ireland Committee, Irish Congress of Trade Unions
Northern Ireland Council for Ethnic Minorities
Northern Ireland Council for the Curriculum, Examinations and Assessment
Northern Ireland Council for Voluntary Action
Northern Ireland Screen Commission
Northern Ireland Gay Rights Association
Northern Ireland Local Government Association
Northern Ireland Museums Council
Northern Ireland Public Services Alliance
Northern Ireland Rural Development Council
Northern Ireland Rural Women's Network
Northern Ireland Sikh Cultural and Community Centre
Northern Ireland Sports Forum
Northern Ireland Tourist Board
Northern Ireland Women's European Platform
Northern Visions
NSPCC Northern Ireland
Mr Donal P O Baoill
Office of the NI Commissioner for Children & Young People

Ogmios

Omagh District Council

Omagh Women's Area Network

Parents' Advice Centre

Pobal

Progressive Unionist Party

Rainbow Project

Margaret Ritchie MLA

Royal Institution of Chartered Surveyors

Royal National Institute for Blind

Royal National Institute of the Deaf People

Rural Community Network

Rural Development Council NI

Save the Children

Schomberg Society

Senior Citizens' Consortium Sperrin Lakeland

Sense Northern Ireland

Sinn Fein

Social Democratic and Labour Party

South Eastern Education & Library Board

Southern Education & Library Board

Special Olympics Ulster

Sports Council for Northern Ireland

St Mary's University College

Staff Commission for Education & Library Boards

Statutory Advisory Councils

Strabane District Council

Teach an Cheoil

Tha Boord o Ulstèr-Scotch

The Baha'I Council for Northern Ireland

The National Deaf Childrens Society

The Queen's University of Belfast

The Representative Church Body – Church of Ireland

Ti Chulainn

John Totten

Training for Women Network Ltd

Ulster Coarse Fishing Federation

Ulster Deaf Sport Council

Ulster People's College

Ulster-Scots Academy

Ulster-Scots Language Society

Ulster Television plc

Ultach Trust

University of Ulster

Volunteer Development Agency

West Belfast Economic Forum

Western Education & Library Board

Wheelworks

Whitewater Consulting Ltd

Women into Politics

Women Together for Peace

Women's Centre

Women's Information Group

Women's Resource and Development Agency

Women's Support Network

Workers' Educational Association (Northern Ireland)

Workers Party

Dr JR Young

Youth Council for Northern Ireland

Youthnet