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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BT1 2LG

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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 –

Name: David McCallum  
Title: Director of Corporate Services  
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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:


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.

### 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.
<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Theme</th>
<th>Measures</th>
<th>Timescale</th>
<th>Performance indicators/ targets</th>
</tr>
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<tr>
<td><strong>1. Communication</strong></td>
<td>1.1 Review the accessibility of the Agency website and explore opportunities to increase accessibility to disabled people.</td>
<td>Annually, commencing July 2015.</td>
<td>Complaints/feedback from users.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>1.2 Consider the application of Plain English to public documents.</td>
<td>Initial review to be completed by March 2016.</td>
<td>Complaints/feedback from users.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>1.3 Notify organisations representing disabled people of impending training courses, employment opportunities, etc.</td>
<td>As opportunities arise.</td>
<td>Feedback from recipients (to be requested on an annual basis).</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>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.</td>
<td>Awareness raising as part of refresher training in 2016 Images to be gathered on a continuing basis.</td>
<td>Number of images used in publications.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Theme</td>
<td>Measures</td>
<td>Timescale</td>
<td>Performance indicators/targets</td>
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<tr>
<td>2. Access</td>
<td>2.1 Review the locations where public events are held and ensure that they are fully accessible to disabled people.</td>
<td>Initial review to be completed by March 2016. Access to new venues to be considered as they arise.</td>
<td>Number of venues approved.</td>
</tr>
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<td></td>
<td>2.2 Ensure that a signer is available at public events, where appropriate.</td>
<td>As and when required.</td>
<td>Number of occasions when signer is required.</td>
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<td>2.3 Raise awareness among staff of the need to provide information on parking for disabled people when planning public events.</td>
<td>Awareness raising as part of refresher training in 2016.</td>
<td>Number of occasions when information is provided.</td>
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<td>2.4 Include emergency evacuation procedures in relation to disabled people in Health and Safety training, equality/disability training and Induction training.</td>
<td>To be included in training modules.</td>
<td>Number of staff trained.</td>
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<td>2.5 Review visual signage at the Agency offices.</td>
<td>Review by December 2016.</td>
<td>Improvements made.</td>
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<td>Theme</td>
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<td>Performance indicators/ targets</td>
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<tr>
<td>3. Training and awareness raising</td>
<td>3.1 Provide refresher training for all staff to promote awareness and commitment to disability equality.</td>
<td>Refresher training to be completed by March 2016 and repeated every two years.</td>
<td>Number of staff trained.</td>
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<td>3.2 Provide disability equality training to all Board Members as part of their induction.</td>
<td>Within 6 months of appointment.</td>
<td>Number of Board Members trained.</td>
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<td>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.</td>
<td>Establish range of support available by June 2016. Avail of support as required.</td>
<td>Number of organisations contacted. Number of specific training events.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Theme</td>
<td>Measures</td>
<td>Timescale</td>
<td>Performance indicators/ targets</td>
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<tr>
<td><strong>4. Employment</strong></td>
<td>4.1  Ensure all reasonable adjustments for staff are completed in a timely manner and are appropriately monitored.</td>
<td>As required.</td>
<td>Review appropriateness of adjustments in accordance with schedule agreed with staff member.</td>
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<td><strong>3.4</strong>  Explore options for additional training for front-line staff, e.g. level one Certificate in British Sign Language (BSL)</td>
<td>Investigate options by March 2016.</td>
<td>Train one member of staff per year and monitor number of occasions when sign language is used.</td>
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<tr>
<td>Theme</td>
<td>Measures</td>
<td>Timescale</td>
<td>Performance indicators/ targets</td>
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<tr>
<td>5. Consultation and engagement</td>
<td>5.1 Review and update the list of consultees who are consulted on disability issues.</td>
<td>Review by December 2015.</td>
<td>Number of consultees contacted and number who respond.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>6. Monitoring</td>
<td>6.1 Review all monitoring procedures to ensure that information about disabled people is captured accurately and in sufficient detail.</td>
<td>Review by December 2015.</td>
<td>Number of changes to monitoring procedures.</td>
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</table>
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 Tochar
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