



Department of the  
**Environment**  
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# **DEPARTMENT OF THE ENVIRONMENT**

## **DISABILITY ACTION PLAN**

**1 April 2011 – 31 March 2014**

Should you require a copy of this Disability Action Plan in an alternative format, please contact us to discuss your requirements. The Department's text phone number has also been included to assist people who are deaf or hard of hearing. It may also be made available in minority languages for those who are not proficient in English and is available on our website.

If you would like a copy in an alternative format, please contact:-

Name: The Director of Finance and Business  
Planning Division

Telephone no: 028 9054 0820

Text Phone no: 028 9054 0642

Email: [equality@doeni.gov.uk](mailto:equality@doeni.gov.uk)

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# CONTENTS

	<b>Page Number</b>
Introduction	4
How to Contact Us	6
Departmental Aim & Objectives	7
Departmental Functions	7
Public Life Positions	10
Action Measures	12

## Introduction

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 Department 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').

Under Section 49B of the DDA 1995, the Department is also required to submit to the Equality Commission for Northern Ireland (ECNI) a **disability action plan** showing how it proposes to fulfill these duties in relation to its functions.

As Minister and Permanent Secretary of the Department of the Environment, we are committed to effectively implementing the disability duties and this disability action plan. This is the third Disability Action Plan to be produced by the Department. The action plan explains what the Department intends to do to implement the disability duties over the next 3 years. We will allocate all necessary resources (in terms of people, time and money) and where appropriate, build objectives and targets relating to the disability duties into corporate and annual operating plans.

We will also put appropriate internal arrangements in place to ensure that the disability duties are complied with and this disability action plan effectively implemented. We will ensure the effective communication of the plan to staff and the provision of all necessary training and guidance for staff on the disability duties and the implementation of the plan.

In fulfilling its duties under Section 75 of the Northern Ireland Act 1998, the Department is already committed to actively engaging with groups from the disability sector.

The Department is committed to engaging effectively with people with disabilities and their representative groups in the development, implementation and review of this plan. A draft of the Disability Action Plan 2011 – 2014 was subject to a targeted consultation with groups from the disability sector and included on

the agenda at the Department's Equality Forum. The final plan has been revised to take account of comments received.

In order to seek the views of staff, the disability action plan was made available on our Intranet site and staff were informed of its availability via the Staff Brief and invited to make comments or suggestions.

This disability action plan will be a 'living document' and any comments received will continue to be considered and, if appropriate, included in future plans.

The Department is committed to engaging effectively with people with disabilities and their representative groups during the implementation and review of this plan. The Disability Action Plan will also continue to be included as a standard agenda item at the Department's Equality Forum, which meets once a year and includes representative groups from the disability sector.

We confirm our commitment to submitting an annual progress report on the implementation of this plan to the Equality Commission and to carrying out a five year review of this plan, or plans submitted to the Equality Commission over the five year review period.

A copy of this plan, our annual progress reports to the Equality Commission and our five yearly reviews will be made available on our website at

[http://www.doeni.gov.uk/index/information/equality\\_unit.htm](http://www.doeni.gov.uk/index/information/equality_unit.htm)

## HOW TO CONTACT US

Responsibility for implementing, reviewing and evaluating this disability action plan will rest with the Minister and the Departmental Board. Day to day responsibility lies with the Equality Team and the Department's Equality Working Group which is made up of representatives from all of the Department's business areas. Reports on progress will be made to the Departmental Board and Minister on an annual basis.

The first point of contact within the Department will be:-

Title: The Director of Finance and Business  
Planning Division

Address: 6<sup>th</sup> Floor, Clarence Court  
10-18 Adelaide Street  
Belfast  
BT2 8GB

Telephone number: 028 9054 0820

Email: [equality@doeni.gov.uk](mailto:equality@doeni.gov.uk)

Textphone: 028 9054 0642

## **DEPARTMENTAL AIM AND OBJECTIVES**

The Department's vision is to make Northern Ireland 'a better place to live, work and invest' and its aim is 'to protect and improve the environment, promote well being, support strong and effective local government and a thriving economy'.

The Department is headed by a Minister who has overall political responsibility and accountability for all of the Department's activities, which include:-

- Planning development and control;
- Driver and vehicle licensing and testing;
- Protection, conservation and promotion of the natural environment and built heritage;
- Planning and environmental policy and legislation;
- Road safety policy, including strategies to reduce the number of people killed or seriously injured on our roads; and
- Local government policy.

## **DEPARTMENTAL FUNCTIONS**

The Department is organised into three Business Groups who work in close partnership under the direction of the Minister to achieve the Department's overall vision and strategic objectives.

- **Environmental Group**

- Environmental Policy Division

- Northern Ireland Environment Agency (NIEA)

- Environmental Policy Division:**

- Environmental Policy Division (EPD) is responsible for developing policy and legislation in relation to water quality, waste management, air quality, biodiversity and climate change to protect and enhance Northern Ireland's natural and built environment and to promote sustainable development.

**NIEA:**

The aim of the NIEA is to protect, conserve and promote the natural environment and built heritage for the benefit of present and future generations.

- **Planning and Local Government Group**

- Planning Policy Division (PPD)
  - Local Planning Division (LPD)
  - Strategic Planning Division (SPD)
  - Local Government Policy Division (LGPD)

**Planning Policy Division:**

To provide a planning system that directs and manages development in a sustainable way, supporting the economy and responsive to community needs whilst protecting the environment and built heritage. To complete the legal and policy framework necessary to restructure the number of Councils and enable eventual transfer of planning to Councils.

**Local Planning Division:**

LPD is responsible for the development plan programme and development management including the determination of major (excluding those above), intermediate and minor applications. LPD also looks after the enforcement of planning control and processing planning and enforcement appeals. Staff are based in a number of planning offices across Northern Ireland.

**Strategic Planning Division:**

SPD, which is based in Millennium House Belfast, has responsibility for: the provision of advice and guidance to staff on development plan and development management procedure and practice; the monitoring of their progress and the NI Marine Plan and Conservation, Landscape and Design services. In addition, SPD processes all large scale investment planning applications (including those designated under Article 31 of the Planning (NI) Order 1991); all wind-farm applications where 2 or more turbines are involved, or where the turbine will be connected to the National Grid; major waste applications; landfill and waste-water treatment

proposals; and those involving mineral extraction. SPD also enforces planning control in relation to these applications.

**Local Government Policy Division:**

Local Government Policy Division aims to support a system of local government which meets the needs of residents, ratepayers and users of district council services and facilities. The division is also responsible for developing policy and legislation for restructuring and modernising local government, following the Executives decision, as part of the Review of Public Administration, to reduce the number of councils.

- **Road Safety and Corporate Services Group:**

- Road Safety Division & Vehicle Regulation Division (RSVRD)
  - Driver & Vehicle Agency (DVA)
  - Finance & Business Planning Division
  - HR& Organisational Change Division

**Road Safety Division & Vehicle Regulation Division**

**(RSVRD)** is responsible for promoting road safety, training and educating road users, producing the Highway Code and producing policy and legislation.

**Driver & Vehicle Agency (DVA):**

DVA was created under RPA on 1 April 2007 by the merger of DVLNI and DVTA. DVA is responsible for:-

- Vehicle and driver testing
- Vehicle registration and licensing
- Collection and enforcement of Vehicle Excise Duty
- Driver Licensing
- Driving Instructor registration
- Road transport licensing
- Enforcement of licensing, roadworthiness and other legal requirements
- Technical policy
- Research and development.

### **Finance & Business Planning Division:**

The aim of Finance and Business Planning Division is to support the Minister, Permanent Secretary and senior management, and oversee the securing and allocation of resources to enable the Department to achieve its business aims and meet its legal and equity obligations. Finance and Business Planning Division is responsible for financial planning, monitoring and reporting; corporate governance; procurement and contract management; business planning; equality; and machinery of government.

### **HR & Organisational Change Division:**

Human Resources & Organisational Change Division is responsible for human resources, organisational change, ICT support (systems development and delivery), information management (including electronic record management and freedom of information issues), customer service and communications.

## **PUBLIC LIFE POSITIONS**

The Department has responsibility for a number of public life positions, including the following NDPBs and Advisory Committees:-

- Northern Ireland Local Government Officers' Superannuation Committee (NILGOSC);
- The Local Government Staff Commission (LGSC);
- Historic Buildings Council;
- Historic Monuments Council; and
- Council for Nature Conservation and the Countryside.

The Department also has responsibility for a number of focus groups and working groups, for example:-

- The Department's **Equality Team** hosts an annual Equality Forum between representatives from each of the Department's business areas and representatives from Section 75 groups, including those from the disability sector,

providing them with the opportunity to discuss and provide input to the Department's decision-making process.

- **Planning Policy Division** in developing legislation and policy in relation to the built, natural and marine environments (including formulating Planning Policy Statements and associated supplementary guidance) will set up stakeholder events and/or workshops, where appropriate, in order to draw in the views of key interests, the public and the community sector, including representatives of disability groups.
- **Road Safety and Vehicle Regulation Division** in developing legislation and policy in relation to its business areas will hold stakeholder events and/or workshops, where appropriate, in order to draw in the views of relevant interests, including representatives of disability groups.

**Action Measures which we propose to take over the period 1 April 2011 to 31 March 2014 to promote positive attitudes towards disabled people and encourage the participation of disabled people in public life. As the last Action Plan was for one year only several of the actions will continue into the new 3 year period.**

<b>Measures</b>	<b>Timescale</b>	<b>Performance Indicators/target</b>	<b>Contact Name and Number</b>
<p>1. The Department is contributing financially to the provision of the Diversity Now training course. This is a new corporate NICS course that is being delivered to all departments by the Centre for Applied Learning (CAL). This is a mandatory course and all 3000 staff in DOE will receive this training. The Diversity course includes a section on the two disability duties.</p>	<p>Ongoing.</p>	<p>All staff will either receive classroom based or on-line training.</p> <p>The effectiveness of the awareness training will be monitored on a quarterly basis through on-line evaluations which are completed by trainees at the end of each course.</p>	<p>Jacqui Wallace Tel: 028 9054 0987 Text Phone no: 028 9054 0642</p>

<p>2. RNID delivers Deaf Awareness Training for <b>DVA</b> staff in Local Vehicle Licensing offices and MOT centres. The training also covers the use of a mini com facility for customers in Enquiries sections.</p>	<p>Ongoing</p>	<p>Create an awareness and understanding amongst staff of the culture of deaf or hard of hearing people and of the different methods of communication available.</p>	<p>Eilish Tosh Tel: 028 9054 0410 Text Phone no: 028 9054 0642</p>
<p>3. <b>NIEA</b> will promote its events, sites and properties to disability representative groups, particularly those which have access for people with disabilities as below:-</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Circulate the NIEA on-line events calendar (postcards stating that details of the calendar and NIEA sites and properties can be found on the 'wonderfulni'</li> </ul>	<p>April 2011.</p>	<p>Postcards promoting the NIEA 'wonderfulni' website to be issued to S75 groups.</p>	<p>Eileen Curry DOE Communications Tel: 028 9056 9278 Text Phone no: 028 9054 0642</p>

<p>website).</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>Issue regular news releases throughout the year about NIEA events, sites and properties.</li> </ul>	March 2012	Local weekly media coverage and on-line promotion (facebook and twitter) throughout the year.	
4. <b>NIEA</b> will audit its accessibility to major sites for those with disabilities and maintain this information on-line.	March 2012.	Improvement in online information on access to major NIEA sites which are accessible for people with disabilities.	Glenn Moorcroft Tel: 028 9056 9561 Text Phone no: 028 9054 0642
5. <b>DVA</b> will seek to increase participation in public life by ensuring that the disability sector is properly represented through meetings with groups such as Disability Action, the Occupational Health Service, Mobilise NI, IMTAC and various other disabled drivers' associations which represent the rights of disabled drivers.	Bi-annually.	Improved mobility and access to DVA services for people with disabilities.  This will be monitored through the DVA Customer Survey, Equality Impact Assessments and the Agency's complaints procedure.	Colin Campbell 028 7035 9903 Text Phone no: 028 9054 0642

<p>The Agency will keep membership of these groups under review.</p>			
<p>6. <b>DVA</b> will help improve the mobility of 16 year old applicants who are in receipt of Disability Living Allowance by allowing them to apply for a driving licence up to two months prior to their 16<sup>th</sup> birthday. Availability of this scheme is advertised on NIDirect and on the DL1 application form.</p>	<p>Already in place - ongoing.</p>	<p>Annual year on year figures will be measured for analysis.</p>	<p>Colin Campbell 028 7035 9903 Text Phone no: 028 9054 0642</p>
<p>7. <b>Road Safety &amp; Vehicle Regulation Division (RSVRD)</b> is preparing legislation which will place a legal duty on drivers of public service buses to assist wheelchair users and other disabled people to board and alight from the bus.</p>	<p>December 2012</p>	<p>Consult and introduce a new Statutory Rule and have it operative by December 2012.</p>	<p>Sharon Clements 028 9054 0908 Text Phone no: 028 9054 0642</p>

<p><b>8. RSVRD</b> A blanket ban exists on insulin-treated diabetics holding taxi driver licences. Consider making changes to legislation, following outcome of UK-wide consultation from 3 February to 28 April 2011, on changes to minimum medical standards for diabetes (and also vision and epilepsy) in relation to driver licensing, including taxis. These changes result from Commission Directives 2009/112/EC and 2009/113/EC.</p>	<p>December 2011</p> <p>Ongoing</p>	<p>Review legislation.</p> <p>If legislation changes are made, monitor in the longer term.</p> <p>DVA statistics will show: (i) The number of applicants refused a taxi driver licence annually due to insulin-treated diabetes and, (ii) The number of taxi driver licences issued annually to applicants with insulin-treated diabetes, assuming standards are revised.</p>	<p>Catherine Johnston 028 9054 1173 Text Phone no: 028 9054 0642</p>
<p>9. The Department's <b>Equality Team</b> will produce a display of awareness raising posters on the disability duties to promote positive attitudes</p>	<p>October 2011</p>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>▪ Initial meeting with DRD and DSD;</li> <li>▪ Design leaflets/posters;</li> </ul>	<p>Laura McAleese Tel: 028 9025 6060 Text Phone no: 028 9054 0642</p>

<p>towards people with disabilities throughout the Department. Work jointly with DRD and DSD Equality Units to prepare leaflets and posters.</p>		<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>▪ Publish/circulate leaflets/posters in DRD/DOE/DSD buildings.</li> <li>▪ Publish in Staff Brief</li> </ul>	
<p>10. Raise staff awareness of the role of the Department's Disability Liaison officer who acts as a point of contact for staff with disabilities and managers who have staff with disabilities.</p>	<p>Ongoing</p> <p>Quarterly</p> <p>Ongoing</p> <p>Ongoing</p>	<p>Publish Disability Liaison Officer contact details on the DOE Intranet site.</p> <p>Contribute article to 'Staff Brief' highlighting current disability issues</p> <p>As events arise throughout the year these will be published on the Departmental Intranet site and/or emailed to all staff.</p> <p>Development of a tailored Disability Awareness Course for staff. This will be on a demand basis and</p>	<p>Ann Valentine  Tel: 028 9054 1039  Text Phone no: 028 9054 0642</p>

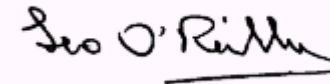
		to complement the awareness raised in the Diversity training.	
11. The Department will review ways of making information on services more accessible and include any resulting additional measures in its Guide to Making Information Accessible.	Ongoing	Continue to seek guidance/training on best practice.	Catherine Fisher. Tel: 028 9025 6021 Text Phone no: 028 9054 0642
	Annually	Monitor number of customer complaints with regard to access to information on services in relation to people with disabilities.	
	Annually	Review of Guide.	
12. To monitor progress on the implementation of existing and future action measures in the Department's DAP at Equality Working Group and Equality Forum meetings.	Annually	Consult with the Equality Forum.	Laura McAleese Tel: 028 9025 6060 Text Phone no: 028 9054 0642
	Bi-annually	Consult with the Equality Working Group	
	As required	Update DAP and ensure it is published in line with best practice (Guide to Making Information	

	Annually	<p>Accessible) and links are provided on internet site.</p> <p>Monitor number of complaints on disability issues, including those satisfactorily resolved, to review effectiveness of DAP and identify potential further action measures.</p>	<p>Catherine Fisher. Tel: 028 9025 6021 Text Phone no: 028 9054 0642</p>
<p>13. The Department will redevelop key websites into a single Departmental website that reaches the required double-A level of accessibility and will determine whether it is possible to reach triple-A accessibility for corporate pages, which would exceed the current Central Office of Information (COI) requirement.</p>	June 2013	<p>A redeveloped single Departmental website, which after audit reaches the double-A standard of accessibility and a corporate section which reaches triple-A if it is determined this is feasible.</p>	<p>Emma Penney Tel: 028 9056 9258 Text Phone no: 028 9054 0642</p>

14. Public appointment competitions to be advertised on Disability Action website and on their e-newsletter.	Ongoing	Increased number of applications for public appointments from people with disabilities.	Catherine Fisher. Tel: 028 9025 6021 Text Phone no: 028 9054 0642
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**Alex Attwood MLA**  
**Minister of the Environment**



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**Leo O'Reilly**  
**Permanent Secretary**