



Department of the
Environment

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**DEPARTMENT OF THE
ENVIRONMENT**

DISABILITY ACTION PLAN

1 April 2010 – 31 March 2011

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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. We will allocate all appropriate 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 2010 – 2011 was subject to a targeted consultation with groups from the disability sector and 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 Departmental Team Brief and invited to make comments or suggestions. No comments or suggestions were received.

The Department is entering a period of substantial change as a result of the preparation for and implementation of the Review of Public Administration (RPA) and the Reform of Planning Service. For this reason a one year Disability Action Plan has been prepared for 2010-2011. A three year Plan will be prepared in 2011 for 2011-2014.

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 through its 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

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 Department's Equality Unit 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: 6th Floor, Clarence Court
10-18 Adelaide Street
Belfast
BT2 8GB

Telephone number: 028 9054 0820

Fax number: 028 9027 9430

Email: equality@doeni.gov.uk

Textphone: 028 9054 0642

DEPARTMENTAL FUNCTIONS

The Department's main functions are:

- Planning and Environmental Policy.
Planning and Environmental Policy Group brings forward policy and legislation to conserve, enhance, protect and promote the natural and built environment:

- Planning and Natural Resources Division are responsible for developing policy and legislation in relation to landscape, biodiversity, freshwater and the marine environment and are also responsible for the preparation of Planning Policy Statements
- Climate and Waste Division are responsible for developing policy and legislation in relation to Climate Change, Waste and Air & Environmental Quality.

- Planning.
The aim of **Planning Service** is to improve the quality of life of the people of Northern Ireland by planning and managing development in ways which are sustainable and which contribute to creating a better environment.

However it must be noted that a fundamental part of the current Reform of Local Government is an extensive review of the delivery of the planning function in NI. It is anticipated as part of this that the bulk of planning powers, including those in relation to Development Management and Development Plan, will transfer to local government.

- Road Safety.
Road Safety Division (RSD) is responsible for promoting road safety, training and educating road users, producing the Highway Code, producing policy and legislation.
- Driver and 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.
- Local Government.
The aim of **Local Government Policy Division** is to support the delivery of a system of strong and effective local government.
 - **Northern Ireland Environment Agency (NIEA).**
The aim of the NIEA is to protect conserve and promote our natural environment and built heritage for the benefit of present and future generations. NIEA does this by:
 - promoting both public awareness of environmental issues and the action needed to deal with them;
 - helping to control adverse human impacts upon the environment;
 - working with partners to protect the environment; and
 - advising Government and other relevant organisations on environmental issues.

DEPARTMENTAL AIM AND OBJECTIVES

The Department's **aim** is to **contribute to a better and safer environment which will support a vibrant and dynamic economy, and to support the delivery of a system of strong and effective local government.**

In support of this aim the Department has a number of key **strategic objectives**:

- To contribute to and support communities, safer road users and a healthier environment.
- To plan and manage development in a sustainable way which is responsive to the needs of the community and which supports the economy.

- To conserve, enhance, protect and promote the natural environment and built heritage.
- To support the delivery of a system of strong and effective Local Government.
- To support a vibrant, dynamic and sustainable economy.
- To manage DOE resources effectively and efficiently within the constraints of the current financial position, and to ensure the security of information assets.

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 Unit** hosts an annual Equality Forum – an annual meeting 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 Section (Natural Resources Division – PEPG)**, in developing policy and legislation and in the preparation of Planning Policy Statements, currently sets up stakeholder groups, and where appropriate makes use of workshops and other external arrangements through consultants, in order to draw in the views of key interests, the

public and the community sector, including representatives of disability groups.

Action Measures which we propose to take over the period 1 April 2010 to 31 March 2011 to promote positive attitudes towards disabled people and encourage the participation of disabled people in public life.

| Measures | Timescale | Performance Indicators/target | Contact Name and Number |
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| <p>The Department will contribute financially to provision of the Diversity Now training course which will be provided by the Centre for Applied Learning.</p> <p>This new equality and diversity foundation course is mandatory for all 3000 staff and includes a section on the two disability duties.</p> | <p>Ongoing (new staff are recruited continually either by transfer, promotion or external recruitment).</p> <p>All staff in post will have either been trained or have access to on line training by March 2011.</p> | <p>Increased staff awareness and understanding of the new duties.</p> <p>The effectiveness of the awareness training is monitored by evaluation sheets completed by trainees at the end of each course.</p> | <p>John Small Tel: 028 9054 1116</p> |
| <p>NIEA will promote their events, sites and properties to disability representative groups, particularly those which</p> | | | <p>Eileen Curry Tel: 028 9056 9278</p> |

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| <p>have access for people with disabilities as below:-</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Circulate the NIEA events calendar, including details of the suitability of each event for people with disabilities, to disability representative groups. The website address for the events, sites and properties will also be promoted with this circulation. | <p>May 2010</p> | <p>Events calendar to be issued to all S75 groups on DOE's contact list.</p> | |
| <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Issue a news release about NIEA events, sites and properties, highlighting their accessibility for the disabled. | <p>May 2010</p> | <p>Press release to go to NI's 3 main newspapers.</p> | |
| <p>Planning Policy Section (Natural Resources)</p> | <p>Ongoing</p> | <p>To ensure that the views of key interests particularly</p> | <p>Chris Ball Tel: 028 9025 4855</p> |

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| <p>Division – PEPG, in the preparation of Planning Policy Statements, will set up stakeholder groups, and where appropriate, make use of workshops and other external arrangements through consultants, in order to draw in the views of key interests including representatives of disability groups.</p> | | <p>disability groups are sought.</p> | |
| <p>DVA's Driver Licensing Division will seek to increase participation in public life by ensuring that the disabled sector is properly represented through meetings with groups such as Disability Action, the Occupational Health Service, the Disabled Drivers' Association and various</p> | <p>Bi-annually</p> | <p>Improved mobility and access to services for people with disabilities.</p> <p>This will be monitored through the DVA Customer Survey, Equality Impact Assessments and the Agency's complaints procedure.</p> | <p>Colin Campbell 028 7034 1448</p> |

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| <p>other disabled drivers' associations which represent the rights of disabled drivers. The Agency will keep membership of these groups under review.</p> | | | |
| <p>Road Safety Division 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>September 2010</p> | <p>Introduce a new Statutory Rule and have it operative by September 2010.</p> | <p>Sharon Clements 028 9054 0908</p> |
| <p>RSD – Education Officers making visits to Special Needs schools to promote inclusion of road safety education through provision of advice and resources to teachers and sessions with children (previous measure from DAP).</p> | <p>June 2011</p> | <p>A minimum of 2 visits to Special Needs schools in the school year.</p> | <p>Ronnie Tosh 028 9054 0809</p> |

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| <p>The Department's Equality Unit will produce a display of awareness raising posters on the disability duties to promote positive attitudes towards people with disabilities throughout Departmental staff.</p> | <p>August 2010</p> | <p>Work jointly with DRD Equality Unit to prepare leaflets and posters:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> ▪ Initial meeting with DRD; ▪ Design leaflets/posters; (OP) ▪ Publish/circulate leaflets/posters in DRD/DOE buildings. | <p>Laura McAleese Tel: 028 9054 0203</p> |
| <p>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>Annually</p> | <p>One article per year in the joint DRD/DOE/DCAL publication, Equality Times (a copy of which is issued to each member of staff)</p> | <p>Jacqui Wallace/Angela Starkey Tel: 028 9054 0987 Tel: 028 9054 1018</p> |
| <p>The Department will review ways of making information on services</p> | <p>Ongoing</p> | <p>Seek guidance/training on best practice.</p> | <p>Alex Boyle Tel: 028 9054 1194</p> |

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| <p>more accessible and include any resulting additional measures in its Guide to Making Information Accessible.</p> | <p>Annually</p> | <p>Monitor number of customer complaints in relation to people with disabilities.</p> | |
| <p>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.</p> | <p>March 2011 Annually Bi-annually As required January 2011</p> | <p>Annual review of Guide Consult with the Equality Forum Consult with the Equality Working Group Update DAP and ensure it is published in line with best practice (Guide to Making Information Accessible) and links are provided on internet site. Commence consultation process for new Disability Action Plan 2011 - 2014 to replace the existing plan.</p> | <p>Laura McAleese</p> |

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| | <p>March 2011/April 2012</p> | <p>Alex Boyle</p> |
| | <p>Revised DAP sent to Equality Commission and stakeholders including the Assembly Environment Committee.</p> | <p>Laura McAleese</p> |
| <p>Annually</p> | <p>Monitor number of complaints including those satisfactorily resolved to review effectiveness of DAP and identify potential further action measures.</p> | |



Edwin Poots MLA
Minister of the Environment



Leo O'Reilly
Permanent Secretary