



DISABILITY ACTION PLAN

Interim for the period

October 2015 – October 2017

(Extended until March 2018)

**Drawn up in accordance with Section 49B of the Disability Discrimination Act 1995
as amended by Article 5 of the Disability Discrimination (Northern Ireland) Order
2006**

This document can also be made available, on request, in alternative formats including in large print, in Braille, by e-mail, on computer disc, on audio-cassette and in minority languages to meet the needs of those people who are not fluent in English.

September 2017

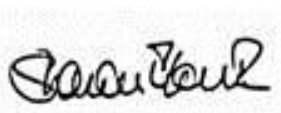
Foreword

This interim Disability Action Plan is a statement of the Education Authority's commitment to the promotion of equality of opportunity for people with disabilities. It complements our Equality Scheme under Section 75 of the Northern Ireland Act 1998.

The interim Plan has been developed to ensure that the Authority fulfils its statutory obligations in respect of our disability duties under Section 49A of the Disability Discrimination Act 1995 (DDA 1995), as amended by the Disability Discrimination (NI) Order 2006.

We have prepared an interim Disability Action Plan at this time for two main reasons. Firstly, due to the short timescale between the establishment of the Education Authority (1 April 2015) and the statutory deadline (1 October 2015) for the submission of the plan to the Equality Commission. Secondly, as the Authority has only recently been established the majority of regional structures and Directorates are not yet in place, progress on this will be made over time. Once regional structures are in place an updated version will be developed, following consultation with interested parties and people with disabilities.

Progress on the implementation of this Plan will be monitored through an annual report, which will be published on our website and submitted to the Equality Commission.



Sharon O'Connor
Chair



Gavin Boyd
Chief Executive

1. Introduction

Under Section 49A of the Disability Discrimination Act 1995, as amended ('the Act'), public authorities, when carrying out their functions must have due regard to the need to:

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

Under Section 49B of the Act, public authorities are also under a duty to submit to the Equality Commission for Northern Ireland plans (referred to as 'disability action plans') showing how they propose to fulfil the disability duties in relation to their functions.

2. Commitments

The Education Authority (the Authority) is committed to effectively implementing the disability duties in this interim Disability Action Plan. The Authority fully recognises the importance of the disability duties proposed under the Act and accepts that it has an important contribution to make to ensure people with disabilities enjoy equal respect and full inclusion in our society.

Resources

We will commit the necessary resources (in terms of people, time and money) in order to effectively implement this plan.

Internal Arrangements

We will put appropriate internal arrangements in place to ensure that the disability duties are complied with and this interim Disability Action Plan is effectively implemented. We will ensure the effective communication of the plan to staff and provide training and guidance where appropriate.

The first point of contact for this plan is Cathy Lavery. If you have any questions or comments regarding the interim Disability Action Plan, contact Cathy at the address below and she will respond to you as soon as possible.

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The interim Disability Action Plan and other relevant documents are available on the Authority's website: www.eani.org.uk

The Authority's Senior Management Team will have overall responsibility for the interim Disability Action Plan. The Equality Unit will have operational responsibility for ensuring the implementation and monitoring of the plan. A formal report of progress on meeting the

objectives relating to the plan will be included in the Authority's Annual Report to the Equality Commission.

Communication to Staff

The Authority will ensure effective communication of the plan to staff. Appropriate staff will be provided with information on the plan via staff meetings, the intranet and e-mail.

Consultation

The Authority is committed to ensuring meaningful and effective public involvement and participation. To inform the development of this plan, we will actively engage at both regional and local levels to obtain the views of people with disabilities. The Authority will also consult local groups representing a broad range of disabilities. The interim plan will also be placed on our website.

We will continue to engage with people with disabilities and their representative groups through day to day communication and the Joint Consultative Forum (JCF). We will also strive to remove barriers by making sure consultation documents are available in alternative formats, on request.

3. Functions

The Education Authority was established under the Education Act (Northern Ireland) 2014 and became operational on 1 April 2015. It is a non-departmental body sponsored by the Department of Education. The Authority is responsible for ensuring that efficient and effective primary and secondary education services are available to meet the needs of children and young people, and support for the provision of efficient and effective youth services. Further detail on the functions and services provided can be found on our website and draft Equality Scheme (www.eani.org.uk)

The Authority employs in the region of 39,000 staff across Northern Ireland in a wide variety of roles. This includes teachers in controlled schools, school-based support staff and staff in sub-regional offices.

4. Public Life Positions

The Authority does not have responsibility for the membership of public life positions. The appointment of Board Members to the Authority and Boards of Governors to Schools is the responsibility of the Department of Education. However, by promoting general awareness of the disability duties, we aim to encourage participation in focus groups, working groups and user groups for services provided by us. We will continue to liaise with representative disability groups via forums such as the JCF and regional groups.

5. Action Measures

The interim action plan at Appendix 1 outlines the measures which we intend to take in order to promote positive attitudes towards people with disabilities and encourage positive attitudes towards disabled people in public life.

6. Review

It is anticipated that this interim plan will be reviewed within 2 years or earlier, in line with evolving organisational structures. Further consultation with interested parties and people with disabilities will be an integral part of this process.

Action Plan (to cover the timescale October 2015 – October 2017)
(Extended until March 2018)

Appendix 1

Action	Responsible Section	Timescale	Expected Outcome
Encourage Participation in Public Life 1. Raise awareness of the Disability Duties to encourage people with disabilities to participate in focus groups, working groups and user groups for services provided by the Authority	Training & Development/Equality	Ongoing	Raised awareness by staff and increased participation of people with disabilities in focus groups, working groups and user groups
Disability Awareness and Training 2. Ensure Chief Executive, Directors and Senior Managers are aware of their responsibilities under the relevant legislation to include Disability Discrimination Order (NI) 2006, Disability Discrimination Act 1995 and Section 75 of the NI Act 1998	Equality	December 2015	Increased awareness by relevant employees of disability legislation including: EA's Disability and Equality obligations, Disability Action Plan and Equality Scheme
3. Ensure staff are aware of the interim Disability Action Plan, as appropriate	Equality/ Communications	2015/16	Increased awareness of disability legislation and the Authority's Disability Action Plan and Equality Scheme
4. Organise disability training where a specific need is identified	Training & Development /Equality	Ongoing	Specialist training provided to key personnel
5. Review induction training for new employees to promote positive attitudes of people with disabilities, for example, raising awareness of specific barriers faced by people with disabilities and increase awareness of the range of disabilities and needs	Training & Development /Equality	2016/17	Induction process reviewed and updated in line with the disability duties
6. Develop the intranet system as an information and training tool to improve disability awareness	Training & Development /ICT/Equality	2016/17	Development of relevant user friendly training tools which can be accessed via the intranet Relevant information/articles to be posted on the intranet system to raise awareness of disability issues

Action	Responsible Section	Timescale	Expected Outcome
<p>Policy screening 7. Implementation of screening requirements in relation to new and amended policies (screening template includes questions relating to the disability duties)</p>	All Directorates and monitored by Equality	Ongoing	All completed screening templates will address disability duties, where appropriate
<p>Recruitment and Selection 8. Ensure disability issues are taken into account in all recruitment processes</p> <p>Explore the setting up of links to the websites of the Rainbow Project, Disability Action, Mencap, NICE and other relevant websites to increase awareness of job opportunities amongst specific equality groups</p>	<p>All Directorates/Training & Development / HR/ Equality</p> <p>HR/Equality</p>	<p>Ongoing</p> <p>December 2015</p>	<p>Specialised training provided to staff dealing with recruitment matters. All applicants will be asked if they have any specific requirements in order that adequate preparations can be made for the required reasonable adjustments</p> <p>Improved communication of EA job opportunities amongst specific equality groups</p>
<p>Existing Employees 9. Ensure existing employees who are or who become disabled are supported and facilitated through the Authority's reasonable adjustment arrangements</p>	HR /Welfare /Equality	Ongoing	Supportive culture for employees with disabilities within the Authority. This will be addressed on a case by case basis
<p>Accessibility/Communication 10. Continue to maintain accessibility of the website and ensure that it is Browse Aloud enabled, where possible</p> <p>Have contacts for alternative formats available</p>	<p>ICT /Equality</p> <p>Equality</p>	<p>Ongoing</p> <p>Ongoing</p>	<p>Standards maintained</p> <p>Facilitate requests for alternative formats within required timescale</p>

Action	Responsible Section	Timescale	Expected Outcome
11. Provide Textphone/ Loop systems for those with hearing difficulties	Communications/ Equality	Ongoing	Improved communications for those with hearing difficulties
12. Provide support for staff in relation to mental health and well-being through the availability of the Staff Counselling Service	Welfare	Ongoing	Support for employees' mental health and well being
13. Ensure strapline advising that documents can be obtained in alternative formats is included in all relevant external publications	Communications/ Equality	Ongoing	Improved communications
14. Include photography in corporate publications, where appropriate, and within our internet and intranet systems using positive imagery of people with disabilities accessing our services. Work with disabled people to consider the diversity of images used and potential for portraying wider range of individuals when developing information materials including the website	Communications/IT / Equality	Ongoing	Improved communications
Implementation of the Plan 15. Prepare an annual report on the implementation of the Disability Action Plan	Equality	Annually - August	Progress monitored and annual report developed
Review of the Plan 16. Review the interim plan within two years or earlier in line with evolving organisational structures. Further consultation with interested parties, JCF members and people with disabilities will be an integral part of the process.	All Directorates/Equality	October 2017 (or earlier)	Updated Plan in line with evolving organisational structures