



Equality and Disability Action Plans (2018 – 2022)

Post Consultation Report
January 2019

Accessibility statement

Any request for the document in another format or language will be considered.

Please contact equality.unit@eani.org.uk

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Education Authority

The Education Authority (EA) was established on 1 April 2015 under the Education Act (Northern Ireland) 2014. It replaced the five Education and Library Boards (ELBs) and their Staff Commission as a regional authority with responsibility for the delivery of education services in Northern Ireland.

EA is a non-departmental public body sponsored by the Department of Education and the Department for the Economy, responsible under legislation for ensuring that efficient and effective primary and secondary education and educational services are available to meet the needs of children and young people and for ensuring the provision of efficient and effective youth services.

We work in partnership with the Council for Catholic Maintained Schools (CCMS); Comhairle na Gaelscolaíochta (CnaG); the Transferor Representatives' Council (TRC); the Northern Ireland Council for Integrated Education (NICIE); the Governing Bodies Association NI (GBA) and the Controlled Schools' Support Council (CSSC).

EA's duties and responsibilities include:

- providing a wide range of functions for the funding and delivery of local education and youth services;
- ensuring there are sufficient schools providing primary and post-primary education to meet the needs of all the people in Northern Ireland;
- providing all the finance for controlled schools (i.e. grant-aided schools under the direct control and management of EA);
- equipping, maintaining and meeting other running costs of maintained schools (i.e. grant-aided schools which are not under the direct control and management of EA);
- providing milk and meals, free books, and free transport for eligible pupils;
- enforcing school attendance;
- securing the provision of youth service facilities;
- managing the third level student grant function for the Department of the Economy.

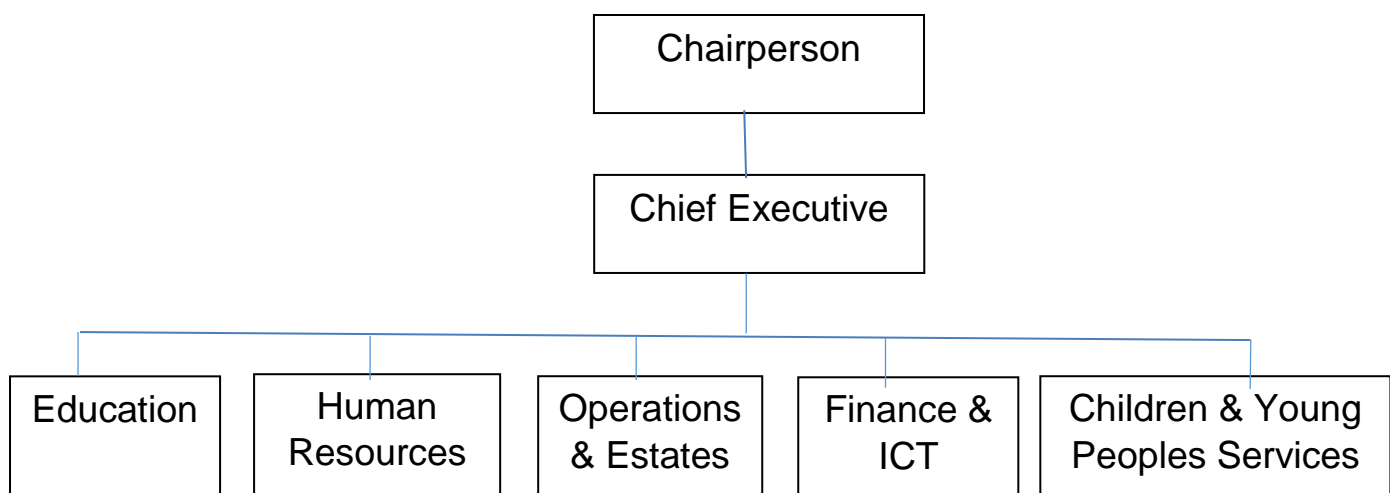
EA has a budget of approximately £1.9 billion annually which includes revenue and capital. It is Northern Ireland's largest employer with over 40,000 staff including teachers, school-based support staff, office based and other non-school-based staff.

As the employing authority for teachers in controlled schools, EA is responsible for the management of the teaching appointments processes for teachers and principals and provision of learning and development opportunities for teachers.

In addition, EA has duties in relation to Shared Education and the community use of school premises. In April 2016, EA also subsumed the Youth Council for Northern Ireland (YCNI) and became the funding authority for voluntary grammar and grant-maintained integrated schools.

A long term change programme is currently being implemented to manage the transition from the previous five autonomous Education and Library Boards, which had responsibility for delivery of education services, to a single Education Authority. In time, the result will be that education policies are delivered in a consistent manner, regardless of which school you attend or where you live.

EA's structure comprises five directorates and the Chief Executive's Office.



Each Directorate is responsible for a range of services and functions.

Introduction

This document sets out the Education Authority's (EA) response to comments received as part of a Public Consultation on our Equality Action Plan 2018 – 2022 and Disability Action Plan 2018 – 2022 (the Plans).

The Plans are aligned to the EA Strategic Plan 2017-2027 and will therefore cover a four year period (2018-2022) followed by new plans, covering a further five year period (2022-2027). Progress will be measured annually with opportunities to amend the plans should this be necessary during each monitoring cycle. In its development, consideration was given to a review of existing priorities and consideration of new priorities.

This plans are 'live' documents and as such will be reviewed on an ongoing basis.

The actions in both plans are reflective of actions and commitments included in the Education Authority's Strategic Plan. A number of the actions relate specifically to the transformation of services and will be reviewed as part of the on-going programme of change.

Equality Action Plan

The Equality Action Plan outlines actions relating to our functions and takes account of our equality scheme commitments relating to Section 75 of the Northern Ireland Act 1998. Our equality scheme is available on our website: www.eani.org.uk

The law requires us when we carry out our work to have due regard to the need to promote equality of opportunity across nine equality categories; age, gender, disability, marital status, political opinion, caring responsibilities, sexual orientation, religion and ethnicity. It also requires us to consider good relations in relation to political opinion, religion and ethnicity.

The Equality Action Plan is aligned to the key themes in our Audit of Inequalities; Access to Education, Attainment, Bullying, Data and Monitoring, Emotional Health and Wellbeing and Workforce.

Disability Action Plan

The Disability Action Plan relates to our disability duties. These duties arise from the Disability Discrimination (Northern Ireland) Order 2006.

This says that the EA must:

- promote positive attitudes towards disabled people; and
- encourage participation of disabled people in public life.

This includes people with any type of disability; some of these disabilities may be hidden and others may be visible. The Disability Action Plan looks at things we could do to promote positive attitudes towards disabled people and encourage their participation in our work areas.

Our Plans take into account our duties but do not list everything we will do under these duties. Each plan contains key actions that we plan to take forward in the next four years.

How we consulted

Both plans were approved by the EA Board in March 2018 and issued for public consultation on 9 April 2018. The consultation was over a 12 week period, ending on 2 July 2018.

As part of the consultation, hardcopy and electronic versions of both plans were made available with accompanying easy read versions. Consultation Response Questionnaires were available for responders to complete.

The consultation was widely publicised, including:

- circulated via email to relevant external stakeholders on our S75 distribution list (297 contacts);
- circulated internally to EA staff through our internal communication systems;
- published on the EA website and promoted on social media through the EA Twitter page;
- was the main agenda item at our Joint Consultative Forum meeting on 16 May 2018;
- via EA Board Member Inequalities Working Group meeting, the EA Finance and General Purposes Committee and through EA Board meetings.

The consultation asked consultees two main questions:

- 1) If consultees broadly agreed with the action measures in the Equality and Disability Action plans;
- 2) If there were any action measures that do not appear in the plans that consultees would like to see the EA take forward as part of this work.

The consultation also sought any additional comments from consultees on both plans.

Engagement

As part of the consultation, officers arranged a number of targeted engagement events to meet with EA staff and School Principals and Board of Governors to seek their views on the plans.

In total officers engaged directly with 63 EA staff and 12 school Principals/Governors.

EA also consulted on both plans at the Joint Consultative Forum meeting in May 2018. This is a forum consisting of staff from the EA, Community/Voluntary sector representatives across Section 75 groups, Trade Unions, the Equality Commission for Northern Ireland, the Northern Ireland Human Rights Commission and the Northern Ireland Commissioner for Children & Young People. At this meeting, members discussed key actions in the plans and gave feedback via workshops.

A number of one to one meetings were held with community and voluntary sector organisations on request.

Responses

17 written responses¹ were received as part of the consultation process. Of these written responses, 6 were completed feedback questionnaires and 11 were in narrative form.

15 responses were from organisations and 2 were from individuals.

EA is committed to consultation and engagement in the planning and delivery of services. We would like to take this opportunity to say a sincere thank you to all consultees both internal and external, for taking the time to provide comments and feedback.

¹ See Appendix 1 for list of those who responded

Equality Action Plan Responses

In general, the comments received on the action plan were extremely positive and supportive of the broad action measures made within the plan. The Plan was recognised as a forward looking document and welcomed by consultees.

Two respondents felt that the plan was aspirational and lacked detail in places on how certain actions will be implemented. However the plan is a high level strategic document that supports a framework for moving equality and diversity forward for EA. The specific timelines, actions and further detail on measurement and delivery will follow in coming months and years and be included in the Annual Progress Report to the Equality Commission for Northern Ireland.

Consultees in particular expressed support for:

- Draft guidance for schools in addressing issues for transgender young people. 6 respondents who provided written comment expressed support and identified a need for such guidance. In addition, as part of the engagement sessions, EA staff and Principals / Governors also expressed support for the non-statutory guidance, agreeing that it was timely. It is noted that one consultee highlighted the importance of engaging with Christian faith organisations and a diversity of views on transgenderism. It was also noted that one consultee, whilst welcoming the guidance, suggested EA should produce guidance on LGB students. It was further noted that the inclusion of youth services would add value to the work.
- EA to consider how to tackle inequalities of outcome caused by socio-economic disadvantage and the plan to scope the practicality of introducing a socio-economic assessment to decision making and policy formation and any associated pilot.
- Good linkages with the Addressing Bullying in Schools Act (NI) 2016.
- Support on the commitment for emotional health and well-being of children and young people.

A number of general comments suggested:

- The Plan would benefit from more action measures in relation to children and young people specifically.
- The importance of establishing baselines to demonstrate changes / improvements across all categories.
- EA to be mindful that children and young people and staff are not made up of one single S75 identity and have multiple factors working together to make up the person they are.
- The need to ensure plans are UNCRC & UNCRPD compliant.
- Better linkages with Youth Services
- The importance of a focus on children with Special Educational Needs.
- Two respondents made comments in reference to the need for more support for reasonable adjustments for children with a disability, but with no statement of special educational needs.

Further to this,

- One consultee recommended an action in relation to the promotion of 'culture'² in the controlled sector (perhaps initially through a cross sectoral roundtable or training for governors).
- One consultee commented on the need for greater co-operation between education and health. In particular, one consultee noted the potential for the Children Services Co-operation Act (Northern Ireland) 2015 to encourage greater co-operation between public authorities.

² Examples provided included Scottish country dancing and Ulster Scots

Next Steps – Equality Action Plan

Following the responses received as part of the consultation, we propose implementing some changes to a number of actions within the **Equality Action Plan** which are detailed below:

	Action	Consultee Comments
1.3	The Education Authority will through the Early Intervention Transformation Programme (EITP) (Looked after Children (LAC) Education Project) raise the educational outcomes of LAC through improving support at Key Stage 2	To reflect that the Early Intervention Transformation Programme (EITP) for LAC is a pilot at this stage

EA Response

We will reflect that the Early Intervention Transformation Programme (EITP) for LAC is a pilot at this stage. It is important to note that this is one aspect of the wider work around supporting Looked After Children. EA have recently appointed a Looked After Children Team.

New action:

The Education Authority will through the Early Intervention Transformation Pilot Programme (EITP) (Looked after Children (LAC) Education Project) raise the educational outcomes of LAC through improving support at Key Stage 2

	Action	Consultee Comments
1.4	<p>The Education Authority will develop guidance on child participation e.g., at annual review and for transition, to include information and support mechanism, including easy read and child friendly versions.</p> <p>This will be disseminated through schools and EA channels, including website</p>	The need to refer to UNCRC and link with CYPS strategy

EA Response

This action will be aligned with a concluding observation from the last UNCRC UK examination in 2016.

	Action	Consultee Comments
2.1	<p>EA will continue to support and challenge schools to identify and target provision to children from section 75 groups as required.</p> <p>EA will report on specific actions annually</p>	Action measure is too broad and vague, needs greater clarity

EA Response

The following specific actions have been included in the Equality Action Plan:

- Complete the Strategic Review of Nursery Provision in Special Schools and develop an Action Plan for implementation.
- Roll out a training programme for Principals and Boards of Governors regarding the SEND Act 2016

- Develop actions for supporting early intervention through the joint Education/Health Working Group for Early Years SEN Provision.
- Provide support to children with diabetes through an agreed health/education protocol.
- Deliver the Facilitating Life and Resilience Education (FLARE) Mental Health project in partnership with the Public Health Agency.

	Action	Consultee Comments
4.3	Research will be carried out into the needs of young people from Rural Areas; the needs of young people with additional needs; the needs of young carers; the needs of young parents and the needs of young travellers	Need to make specific reference to refugee and asylum seeking children

EA Response

EA note the feedback and will consider research into refugee and asylum seekers as part of our future work.

	Action	Consultee Comments
5.1	The Education Authority through the Looked After Children Team in the Education Welfare Service, will continue to support individual LAC pupils at all key stages who are experiencing difficulties in school	Consultees queried why this action was focused on Looked After Children and suggested the emotional wellbeing of staff is important and that mental health first aid training should be considered.

EA Response

This action refers to EAs work around Looked After Children as a particularly vulnerable group. The emotional wellbeing of staff will be progressed through EAs work around the development of a Health and Wellbeing Strategy.

	Action	Consultee Comments
5.7	EA will develop personal development and resilience programmes for young people in mainstream schools which will be delivered by the Youth Service	A query was raised around why this is it only in reference to mainstream schools.

New Action

EA will develop personal development and resilience programmes for young people in schools which will be delivered by the Youth Service. This work is in addition to the work that is carried out through the curriculum in schools.

	Action	Consultee Comments
6.3	The EA will establish a Staff Support Network for LGBT colleagues. The Authority will join Diversity Champions programme and seek to become a Stonewall Top 100 employer	Two consultees raised queries around whether staff who did not want to get involved in these initiatives, and whether that in of itself would be considered discriminatory. A genuinely diverse workplace will allow, even encourage, diversity of viewpoint.

EA Response

EA consider diversity to be a benefit to the organisation. Any staff initiatives that are implemented across EA will be open to all staff who wish to participate on a voluntary basis.

The EA strive to be an employer of choice based on our values of respect and equality.

Disability Action Plan Responses

In general, the comments received on the action plan were extremely positive and supportive of the broad action measures made within the plan. The Plan was recognised as a forward looking document and welcomed by consultees.

Two respondents felt the plan was aspirational and lacked detail in places on how certain actions will be implemented. Similar to the Equality Action Plan, the Disability Action Plan is a high level strategic plan that supports a framework for moving disability forward for EA. The specific timelines, actions and further detail on measurement and delivery will follow in coming months and years and be included in the Annual Progress Report to the Equality Commission.

It was noted that disabilities should not be viewed in isolation to one person and that people are made up of a combined set of attributes such as the S75 categories. EA will be mindful in moving forward that children and young people and our staff are not made up of one single identity and have multiple factors working together to make up the person they are.

Four respondents suggested more action measures in relation to children and young people specifically. The EA will work to determine if there are potentially more opportunities to add child centred outcomes into the future development of the plans. This will be reviewed and incorporated in to the plan as it is a “live” document.

The issue of lack of data on the numbers of children with a disability (as opposed to using proxy figures for children with SEN) was raised.

One consultee noted that EA should ensure the plan is visibly UNCRC and UNCRPD compliant and that actions within the plan are demonstrably measurable against these minimum standards. We have reviewed the plan and the UNCRC/UNCRPD regulations and believe the actions within the plan are fully compliant. This has therefore been made more explicit in the plan.

Consultees in particular made further comments:

- About the link between Autism and Transgender identities and gender non-confirming behaviours. As an integral part of the Equality Action Plan an action measure is around producing guidance for schools and youth setting in relation to supporting Transgender children and young people. This issue will be incorporated in to any work ongoing within that project.
- About the importance of including children and young people with a disability in decision making and development of outcomes.
- People with disabilities will be more aware of jobs that are available.
- Two respondents made reference to the lack of support for Reasonable Adjustments for children with a disability but with no statement of special educational needs and how this relates to no equality of access and associated funding issues.

Next Steps – Disability Action Plan

Following the responses received as part of the consultation, we propose implementing some changes to a number of actions within the **Disability Action Plan** which are detailed below:

	Action	Consultee Comments
1.5	EA will ensure staff are up to date with required disability related training, and report on training undertaken each year	It was suggested the importance of reasonable adjustments training needs to be clear in this action.

EA Response

EA recognises the importance of ensure reasonable adjustments are provided where they are required.

New Action

EA will ensure staff are up to date with required disability related training, *including on reasonable adjustments*, and report on training undertaken each year.

	Action	Consultee Comments
1.6	We will sign up to the Mental Health Charter and associated work plans developed by the consortium of mental health organisations and the Equality Commission for Northern Ireland	This needs to say that EA will adopt and implement the principles contained within the charter

EA Response

EA will amend the action to make clear that we are also signing up to the principles of the mental health charter.

New Action

We will sign up to, *adopt and implement the principles contained within* the Mental Health Charter and associated work plans developed by the consortium of mental health organisations and the Equality Commission for Northern Ireland.

	Action	Consultee Comments
1.7	We will establish links with the voluntary sector and other relevant organisations to have our job opportunities promoted through their networks and websites	More detail on how we would make links with the voluntary sector was requested

EA Response

EA will report the detail annually of how we have made links with the community and voluntary sector.

	Action	Consultee Comments
2.10	We will develop a Reasonable Adjustments Policy and a corporate approach to reasonable adjustments	Include the need for training for managers, issue of financial considerations and the importance of practical things can be done to make the workplace more accessible

EA Response

Reasonable Adjustments Policy will be developed to include the financial considerations, training and practical steps in improving accessibility.

Conclusion

This report reflects the consultation exercise undertaken to capture feedback on the content of EA's Equality and Disability Action Plans.

We have considered the submissions from each of the consultees and acknowledge the commitment of all those who responded. We would like to again, thank all those individuals and organisation that took the time to give us feedback on this work.

Where it has been possible we have addressed comments raised and revised our plans accordingly. In other instances where we feel that that comments and or actions suggested can be better addressed by other service areas, we make a commitment to bring those comments to their attention and work closely with the relevant service area and Directorate to take forward within their own Business Plans/Equality Action Plan.

It is important to highlight that both documents are high level strategic plans setting out the vision for equality and diversity over the next four years. As such both plans have been written at a corporate level. It is anticipated that the detail and further action plans to address the key themes will emerge over coming months.

We will continue to work in partnership with organisations externally to progress areas of inequalities within education in NI.

We will report on progress on delivering the actions in the plans every year, as part of our Annual Progress Report to the Equality Commission. This report and our Equality and Disability Action Plans will also be available on our websites and communicated to S75 consultees.

Through these plans and our Corporate Strategic Plan we have committed to developing our services and having a workforce that benefits from diversity, drives real change and delivers positive outcomes for all our children and young people.

For any queries about the plans, please get in touch us at:

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Appendix 1 – Respondents

Organisation Responses	
1	Autism NI
2	Barnardo's NI
3	Children's Law Centre
4	Christian Institute
5	Community Relations Council
6	Controlled Schools Support Council (CSSC)
7	Department of Education
8	Education and Training Inspectorate (ETI)
9	Evangelical Alliance
10	NI Council for Integrated Education (NICIE)
11	Rainbow Project
12	Save the Children
13	Sinn Fein
14	Transferor Representative's Council
15	UNISON
Individual Responses	
16	Anonymous
17	Integrated Primary School Principal