

DISABILITY ACTION PLAN

Department of Finance and Personnel

1.1	<p>Introduction</p> <p>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 of Finance and Personnel is required when carrying out its functions to have due regard to the need to:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none">• promote positive attitudes towards disabled people; and• encourage participation by disabled people in public life ('the disability duties'). <p>Under Section 49B of the DDA 1995, the Department of Finance and Personnel is also required to submit to the Equality Commission a disability action plan showing how it proposes to fulfill these duties in relation to its functions.</p>
1.2	<p>As Minister, First and Second Permanent Secretaries of the Department of Finance and Personnel, we are committed 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 effectively this plan and where appropriate, build objectives and targets relating to the disability duties into corporate and annual operating plans.</p> <p>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 to providing all necessary training and guidance for staff on the disability duties and the implementation of the plan.</p> <p>We confirm our commitment to submitting an annual report to the Equality Commission on the implementation of this plan as well as carrying out a five yearly review of this plan.</p>

DRAFT

We are committed to engaging effectively with people with disabilities and their representative groups in the development, implementation and review of this plan. The Department financed a corporate NICS consultation event in May 2005, which was attended by a number of disability-related organisations and, following which, this plan was produced.

[The plan will be regarded as a work in progress and amended and updated as necessary to reflect any further consultation comments received and any issues emerging from the Department's engagement with representative groups and people with disabilities.]

Responsibility for implementing, reviewing and evaluating this disability action plan and the point of contact within the Department of Finance and Personnel will be:-

Name: Gerry Cosgrave

Title: Director of Personnel, Department of Finance & Personnel

Address: Rathgael House, Balloo Road, Bangor, BT19 7NA

Telephone number: 028 9185 8265

Fax number: 028 91

Email: Gerry.cosgrave@dfpni.gov.uk

Textphone:

If you require this plan in an alternative format (such as in large print, in Braille, on audio cassette, easy read or on computer disc) and/or alternative language, please contact Carolyn Barr at Department of Finance and Personnel, Rathgael House, Balloo Road, Bangor, BT19 7PR, telephone 02891858173, email; carolyn.barr@dfpni.gov.uk to discuss your requirements.

1.3

We confirm our commitment to submitting an annual progress report on the implementation of this plan to the Equality Commission and 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 to the Equality Commission and our five year review of this plan will be made available on our website – www.dfpni.gov.uk.

DRAFT

1.4	<p>Functions</p> <p>Outlined below are the range of functions of the Department of Finance and Personnel</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none">• the strategic oversight of the expenditure managed by Northern Ireland Departments;• the corporate personnel management policies of the Northern Ireland Civil Service; and• a wide variety of services, many of which are carried out centrally on behalf of the Northern Ireland Civil Service as a whole.
1.5	<p>Public Life Positions</p> <p>All public appointments in the Department are made, as far as practicable, in accordance with the Code of Practice for Ministerial Appointments to Public Bodies, published by the Office of the Commissioner for Public Appointments (Northern Ireland) and follow the guidance provided by the Central Appointments Unit. Further information, with details of actions taken or planned centrally in respect of the two disability duties, is contained in the Disability Action Plan for the Office of the First Minister and deputy First Minister.</p> <p>The range of public life positions over which the Department of Finance and Personnel has responsibility for, are as follows:-</p> <p>The Lay Observer for Northern Ireland Statistics Advisory Committee Civil Service Appeal Board Northern Ireland Authority for Utilities Regulation Northern Ireland Building Regulations Advisory Committee</p>
2.	<p>Previous Measures</p> <p>Outlined below are the key measures which the Department of Finance and Personnel has already taken to promote positive attitudes towards disabled people and encourage the participation of disabled people in public life.</p>

Promoting positive attitudes towards disabled people

- *The evolution of NICS corporate personnel policies and practices has always been informed by consultation and negotiation with staff representatives through their recognised Trade Unions and by formal and informal consultation with representative bodies and other employers.*
- *The NICS Equal Opportunities Policy applies to all aspects of working life in the NICS. It has implications for our day-to-day behaviour and for how we treat our colleagues and customers. The policy states.....*

"In order to provide a high quality service to the people of Northern Ireland, the NICS needs to recruit, retain and promote the best available people..... We aim to foster a culture which encourages every member of staff to develop his or her full potential and which rewards achievement. Creating a working environment where individual differences are valued and respected enables all staff to give of their best and helps us to respond more effectively to the needs of the people we serve."

This policy statement is made available to all staff and is part of the NICS Staff Handbook.

- *Equal Opportunities training for all staff, which includes an awareness of equality legislation and tells staff of their duty to avoid acts of unlawful discrimination and to promote a harmonious working environment where individual differences are valued and all staff are respected and treated with dignity.*
- *The NICS has been monitoring the composition of it's workforce since 1985. A primary purpose of monitoring is to provide the Service with a tool by which to measure the success of its equal opportunities polices and practices. The NICS currently monitors it's workforce in terms of community background, gender, race and disability.*

DRAFT

- *We regularly produce reports which provide a range of information on the compositional profile of the NICS and the dynamics of the organisation in terms of recruitment and promotion.*
- *We have recently met with representative groups, including the Northern Ireland Council for Ethnic Minorities, the Chinese Welfare Association and Disability Action, to identify actions to encourage people from groups currently under-represented in the NICS workforce to apply for jobs in the Service and to address barriers (real and perceived) to their retention and progression within the Service.*
- *Recruitment Service liaises with applicants who have declared a disability to identify reasonable adjustments to enable them to compete in the selection process. For example,*
 - *Application forms and test papers are made available in alternative formats;*
 - *Academic qualifications are waived for applicants with a disability where eligibility can be determined through an aptitude/practical test.*
 - *Reasonable adjustments are made to the test and interview arrangements, where appropriate;*
- *Recruitment Service regularly liaises with schools and organisations for disabled people to increase their awareness of job opportunities in the NICS and to encourage people with disabilities to consider a career in the NICS.*
- *Members of recruitment and promotion selection boards receive appropriate training.*
- *NICS Departments in their role as employers and providers of services to staff and the public, regularly review the premises they occupy, the way they deliver their services and all employment policies and practices and make reasonable adjustments to ensure that people with disabilities are not disadvantaged.*

DRAFT

- *The NICS has produced guidance for our line managers to help them manage absenteeism. This guidance takes account of disability legislation and seeks to apply best practice. The over-riding aim is to prevent discrimination on grounds of disability and to assist rehabilitation of staff with sickness absence so they can continue working.*
- *The NICS has participated in the Employment Support Scheme and its forerunner, the Sheltered Placement Scheme, since 1988.*
- *In December 2006, the NICS launched a process by which people placed in NICS Departments via the Employment Support Scheme could apply to become NICS employees.*
- *The DFP website is built to conform with:*
 - *Guidelines for UK Government Websites and the eGovernment Interoperability Framework (eGIF)*
 - *NICS Corporate Guidelines which include the NICS Corporate Identity and Layout for the Internet and the [NICS Guidelines for Accessibility](#) which require that Northern Ireland government websites conform to level double-A of the W3C [Web Content Accessibility Guidelines 1.0](#), including all Priority 1 and Priority 2 checkpoints defined in the Guidelines.*
- *The Department participates in the Promoting Social Inclusion Disability Working Group Forum and related sub group on Housing, Transport, Information and Access.*
- *The Department has included an equality clause in all government procurement contracts which states:-*

The Contractor shall comply with all applicable fair employment, equality of treatment and anti-discrimination legislation, including, in particular, the Employment (Northern Ireland) Order 2002, the Fair Employment and Treatment (Northern Ireland) Order 1998, the Sex Discrimination

DRAFT

(Northern Ireland) Order 1976 and 1988, the Employment Equality (Sexual Orientation) Regulations (Northern Ireland) 2003, the Equal Pay Act (Northern Ireland) 1970, the Disability Discrimination Act 1995, the Race Relations (Northern Ireland) Order 1997, the Employment Relations (Northern Ireland) Order 1999 and the Employment Rights (Northern Ireland) Order 1996 and shall use his best endeavours to ensure that in his employment policies and practices and in the delivery of the services required of the Contractor under this agreement he has due regard to the need to promote equality of treatment and opportunity between:

- a. persons of different religious beliefs or political opinions;
 - b. men and women or married and unmarried persons;
 - c. persons with and without dependants (including women who are pregnant or on maternity leave and men on paternity leave);
 - d. persons of different racial groups (within the meaning of the Race Relations (Northern Ireland) Order 1997);
 - e. persons with and without a disability (within the meaning of the Disability Discrimination Act 1995);
 - f. persons of different ages; and
 - g. persons of differing sexual orientation.
- The Department continues to work with Department for Employment and Learning and the Social Economy Network to encourage capacity building within the Supported Business sector to avail of the opportunities to meet the needs of public sector bodies where appropriate.
 - The Department operates an Employer Supported Volunteering scheme whereby members of staff are encouraged to volunteer to work with organisations including those with disabled people for the benefit of the community or the environment. The Department will match leave commitments by staff for up to a maximum of 3 days.

DRAFT

The Department recognises the benefits of volunteering both to individuals in terms of development and to a community

- The LPS (former RCA and VLA) is engaged in implementing the Rating Reform Programme. An information and outreach strategy was put in place to take this forward in a way which would be open and accessible as possible to all members of the public
- Rating Reform - Key Measures Taken
- Consulting, working and liaising with Intermediary Organisations such as Citizen's Advice Bureau, Disability Action, RNIB, Help the Aged, and the NI Council for Ethnic Minorities to enable the development of an information and outreach strategy,
- All published information made available in alternative formats including Braille, audio tape, audio CD, Daisy master and large print
- Public able to contact our free helpline by a range of methods including phone, mini com, fax, on-line or in writing (post paid).
- Ensuring disabled access to LPS building or providing alternative methods of access for disabled people e.g. home visit.

NISRA

- NISRA recently carried out a large scale survey of people with disabilities and analysis is now under way. The results of the survey will provide up to date information on the prevalence of disability in N.I. and will help to inform future policies and highlight areas of need .As part of the process, survey interviewers received specialized disability awareness training which included guidance on how to interact with people with disabilities with sensitivity and how to recognise signs of upset.

DRAFT

- When conducting this and other surveys NISRA produces advance letters and showcards in large print and, in the case of the disability survey, in braille. An audio version of our advance letter has also been used and made it available on our website. Signers for people with hearing impairment are also available.

GENERAL REGISTER OFFICE.

- The Office regularly reviews and considers the needs of disabled customers and ensures that action is taken to make the service available to all sections of the community.
- An induction loop, textphone and a member of staff trained in British Sign Language are available to assist deaf and hard of hearing customers while large print posters and leaflets in Braille, large print and audiotape are available for blind or partially sighted customers.
- The doors to the public office are automatic to suit wheelchair users and a low-level wheelchair counter is provided.
- GRO staff receive Disability Awareness Training and are sensitive to the needs of disabled customers and will assist these customers in the completion of application forms.
- Work is currently ongoing in respect of the GRO website to ensure this is accessible to all customers with disabilities
- LAND REGISTERS FOR NORTHERN IRELAND utilised the Diversity Excellence model to embed Section 75 principles in its approach to customer services. It currently has 12 employees with disabilities carrying out a range of functions.
- It has developed bespoke Customer Information Centre to facilitate customers with disabilities
- It has also provided in- depth training to information centre staff on meeting and working with disabled customers and currently has 4 staff trained as signers

DRAFT

	<p>Encourage the participation of disabled people in public life</p> <p>As stated in 1.5 above all public appointments in the Department are made, as far as practicable, in accordance with the Code of Practice for Ministerial Appointments to Public Bodies, published by the Office of the Commissioner for Public Appointments (Northern Ireland) and follow the guidance provided by the Central Appointments Unit. Further information, with details of actions taken or planned centrally in respect of the two disability duties, is contained in the Disability Action Plan for the Office of the First Minister and deputy First Minister.</p>
3	<p>Action Measures</p> <p>Outlined below are the measures which we propose to take over the period of this disability action plan, together with performance indicators or targets.</p>

Measures to promote positive attitudes towards disabled people and encourage the participation of disabled people in public life

	Measures	Timescale	Performance Indicators/target
1.	<p>DIGNITY AT WORK</p> <p>The NICS is currently developing a new policy and associated procedures to promote a harmonious working environment where all workers feel valued and respected and provides the means to tackle complaints of harassment and bullying. This will cover all aspects of social identity, including disability. (This is intended to replace existing departmental arrangements.)</p>	<p>1.1 Proposals to be endorsed by Summer 2007</p> <p>[Formal review of policy after 5 years – this might be outside the period covered by this action plan]</p>	<p>1.1.1 Proposals introduced and implemented across the NICS [<u>by a date yet to be agreed by EOM</u>]</p> <p>1.1.2 [Departments will continue to regularly monitor the number of complaints received and report to senior management and TUS.]</p>

DRAFT

<p>2.</p> <p>2.1</p>	<p>TRAINING</p> <p>Diversity Awareness Training for NICS staff</p> <p>The NICS has recently procured a new, high-impact diversity and equal opportunities training programme to replace its existing equal opportunities training course. As well as providing staff with an awareness of employment legislation, including the Disability Discrimination Act, this training package will promote a positive attitude towards all staff (including those with a disability) by helping staff create and maintain a more positive working environment, by avoiding unacceptable behaviour, by knowing how they can effectively and safely challenge such behaviour in others, and by adopting positive behaviours, which promote respect and diversity in the workplace.</p> <p>This will also support the proposed new Dignity at Work policy.</p> <p>(This training package has also been made available, free of charge, to other employers, in support of wider government policies on social cohesion.)</p>	<p>2.1.1 Training will commence in early Summer 2007 and continue on an on-going basis.</p>	<p>2.1.1a <u>All</u> new entrants will be required to take the new diversity awareness training course via classroom module.</p> <p>2.1.1.b <u>All</u> staff will be required to take the new diversity awareness training course via either classroom or e-learning (on-line) module [by a date yet to be agreed by senior management].</p>
<p>2.2</p>	<p>The new training referred to above, is intended to be the Service's new foundation course on equal opportunities and diversity. We plan to work with departments and other interested parties to identify and develop/procure additional training in this field.</p>	<p>2.2.1 Initial proposals to be put to NICS senior management by Autumn 2007.</p>	<p>To be determined.</p>

DRAFT

	<p>In particular, we intend to explore options for a module on managing staff with disabilities, which could be incorporated as a mandatory element into First Line Manager training and Middle Management development programmes, as well as being available separately on demand. <u>Any new training will take account of the new duty to promote a positive attitude towards disabled people.</u></p> <p>We will also explore options for a more consistent and focused approach to disability awareness training for front-line staff, to replace the current training. Any new training will take account of the new duty to promote a positive attitude towards disabled people.</p>		
<p>3.</p>	<p>FOCUS GROUPS FOR STAFF</p> <p>We have commissioned an external organisation (Disability Action) to facilitate focus groups with NICS <u>staff (disabled and non disabled) to gage their views on our corporate personnel policies and practices with regard to disability issues, including the new duty to promote a positive attitude towards people with a disability.</u></p>	<p>3.1 Focus Groups to be held by [Autumn 2007].</p> <p>3.2 Review success and outcomes of focus groups to determine the benefits of holding further focus groups.</p>	<p>3.1.1 Findings of focus groups to be used to inform development and review of NICS corporate personnel policies and practices.</p>
<p>4.</p>	<p>EMPLOYMENT SUPPORT</p> <p>Placements moving to direct employment in the NICS – Review the process and monitor the number of applications and the success rate across the NICS.</p>	<p>4.1. In early 2008 - To initiate a review of the process (i.e. 12 months after the process was launched).</p>	<p>4.1.1 CPG will continue to monitor the number of applications received and the success rate.</p>

DRAFT

<p>5.</p>	<p>OUTREACH</p> <p>Continue to work with representatives of the disability community to encourage people with disabilities to consider a career in the NICS and to identify and address and barriers (real or perceived) to their retention and progression in the NICS.</p>	<p>5.1 Specific measures to be identified and an action plan produced by Autumn 2007.</p>	<p>5.1.1 Issues to be considered and factored into policy review and development, as and when they are identified.</p>
<p>6.</p>	<p>ATTITUDES</p> <p>The Department will include appropriate questions in the staff survey to provide baseline data from which to monitor the change in attitudes and to determine what additional action can be taken to further improve attitudes towards people with disabilities</p>	<p>6.1 Survey results should be available by January 08</p>	<p>6.1.1 Improvement in attitudes and reporting of same by staff with disabilities</p> <p>Staff survey conducted bi-annually</p>
<p>7.</p> <p>7.1</p> <p>7.2</p> <p>8.</p>	<p>LAND AND PROPERTY SERVICES</p> <p>TRAINING</p> <p>Training and guidance to be provided to all LPS staff on disability equality legislation and disability awareness.</p> <p>Disability Equality Legislation awareness training to be incorporated into LPS Induction Programme for all new staff.</p> <p>OUTREACH</p> <p>Continued involvement with organizations such as CAB, Disability Action, Help the Aged with regard to communication of and maximizing take up of Rate Reliefs by vulnerable groups.</p>	<p>7.1.1 Commencing 2007 and delivered on an ongoing basis.</p> <p>7.2.1 Commencing 2007 and delivered on an ongoing basis.</p> <p>8.1 Ongoing</p>	<p>7.1.1a number of staff who have received training</p> <p>7.2.1a number of staff who have received training</p> <p>8.1.1 Number of meetings held throughout the year.</p> <p>8.1.2 Action points taken forward.</p>

DRAFT

9.	SURVEYS		
9.1	Incorporate a section in the Staff Survey for disabled staff with regard to their participation in LPS activities and their views on improvements for the future.	9.1.1 During completion of the staff survey.	9.1.1a Survey report 9.1.2 b Actions implemented
9.2	Customer Satisfaction Survey to include a section to be completed by customers with a disability to determine how the Agency can improve its service.	9.2.1 During completion of the staff survey.	9.2.1a Survey report 9.2.1 b Actions implemented
	LAND REGISTERS NORTHERN IRELAND		
	TRAINING		
1.	Full refresher training for all senior staff, line managers and Corporate and Customer Services Personnel on Section 75 and DDA obligations as per Article 5 of the Disability Discrimination (Northern Ireland) Order 2006 and recommended by Section 5 of the ECNO Disability Plan Guide	1.1 Commenced in 2006 and delivered on an on-going basis	1.1.1 Diversity Excellence review, Customer satisfaction survey and staff performance against individual behavioural objective.

Signed by:

First Permanent Secretary

Minister

Second Permanent Secretary