

Disability Advisory Group
18 June 2014 – 10.30am
National Autistic Society, Belfast

In attendance:

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| Maria Bannon | Northern Ireland Assembly | (Chair) |
| Roisin Mooney | Northern Ireland Assembly | |
| Dermot Ferris | REAL Network | |
| Jenny Ruddy | Menap | |
| Sue Macleod | Autism NI | |
| Orla McCann | Disability Action | |
| Louise Close | Northern Ireland Assembly | |
| Shirelle Stewart | National Autistic Society | |
| Richard Anderson | Northern Ireland Assembly | |
| Caroline Moore | Northern Ireland Assembly | |

Apologies:

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| Peter Wilson | Cedar Foundation |
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The meeting commenced at 10.35am. The group discussed the minutes from the last meeting held on 22 January 2014 and minutes were agreed.

Richard Anderson provided the group with an update on the signed computer tablets for tours of Parliament Buildings. There is currently one tablet available which can be obtained by enquiring at Parliament Buildings' reception desk. Maria Bannon asked the Group to use their existing communication tools i.e. newsletters/websites to inform their users/members of the new signed tour tablet and Braille tour book.

ACTION: Caroline to issue information to group members on the new tablet and Braille map – information can then be used by group members to send out via existing communication tools. Caroline is also to include online links to the public tours of Parliament Buildings which will be running during the summer months.

Maria Bannon informed the group that the Assembly Commission were pleased to renew its Action on Hearing Loss accreditation as well as the Autism Charter Mark for 2014.

Richard Anderson gave an overview of his paper 'Draft evacuation procedure for people with disabilities from Parliament Buildings'. He asked members of the group to read through the paper and email him with any comments/suggestions by mid-July. Dermot Ferris said that a plain english version would be required for some users.

Maria Bannon informed the group about three forthcoming EQIAs, the Engagement Strategy, Digital First and the flying of the Union Flag.

Louise Close spoke on the new Charities Policy which involves a change in implementation to a previous policy following issues around selection and staff ownership. Louise informed the group that it is hoped that a charity will be in place by September 2014 and that the new policy will be kept under review.

Louise also provided the group with an overview of the recent Assembly Community Connect's AGM.

ACTION: Caroline to issue link to 'What the ACC does' video to all group members for communication out to their subscribers/consultees etc.

Louise informed the group that she is currently drafting a training schedule for her new Outreach Coordinator and asked the group to email her with suggestions for possible training i.e. presenting to groups with hearing/sight loss. Louise also asked the group to email her if they had any suggestions as to how Outreach can improve their service.

ACTION: Caroline to send a link to the group to the Assembly Community Connect's 'Get involved' training programme.

Maria Bannon informed the group that the current Audit of Inequalities (AoI) runs until 2016. Maria is overseeing an annual review of the AoI in order to ensure the document is kept up to date regarding any new data, trends and policies.

Maria added that the Disability Action Plan also runs to 2016 and that the Equality team will be starting to develop the new 2016-2020 plan early in 2015. Maria asked group members to email her any suggestions as to what could be added to the new plan to benefit users.

Maria provided the group with an update on the Gender Equality working group that is currently compiling a list of recommendations. If agreed by the Assembly's Secretariat Management Group, the recommendations will help inform a Gender Action Plan for the Northern Ireland Assembly Secretariat. It is hoped this piece of work will be concluded in early 2015.

Maria also updated the group on the Draft Entry Procedures and thanked members for their contributions. Maria added that the procedures are currently going through the approval process and Maria will inform the group when they are approved and being implemented.

Jenny Ruddy raised that she had attended Parliament Buildings early in 2014 and had encountered problems with the lifts at the East door. Maria informed the group that while there had been an ongoing problem with the lifts at the east door, they were fixed during Easter recess and are now fully operational. Jenny also highlighted that she had a great experience on a recent trip to Parliament Buildings and wished to note the great service that both the Education and IS teams provided.

Maria Bannon mentioned that the Assembly Equality team sit on the Equality Practitioners Group (EPG) – made up of representatives across the Civil Service departments who work in the area of Equality. Maria highlighted that if the group had any issues, she could raise these at an EPG and provide feedback to the group.

Maria asked the group to nominate any other organisations they thought would be interested in joining the Disability Advisory Group. Any nominations are to be sent to Maria Bannon. It was agreed that the group will meet twice a year, with the option to hold additional issue-based meetings if required.

ACTION: Caroline to update the Terms of Reference to reflect the new schedule of meetings and issue a meeting date for January 2015.

ENDS