



Northern Ireland
Assembly

Northern Ireland Assembly Commission
Results of the Consultation on the
Disability Action Plan 2011-2012

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1 Introduction

- 1.1 The Northern Ireland Assembly Commission's (hereafter referred to as the Commission) purpose is to support the Assembly and its Members in their role as elected representatives and legislators and to facilitate engagement between the Assembly and the public.
- 1.2 The Commission's vision is of an Assembly that strengthens democracy and engages the people of Northern Ireland in creating a better future for all.
- 1.3 The Northern Ireland Act 1998 states, 'there shall be a body corporate known as the Northern Ireland Assembly Commission (the Commission) to perform:
- (a) The functions conferred on the Commission by virtue of any enactment;
 - and
 - (b) Any functions conferred on the Commission by resolution of the Assembly.
- 1.4 The Commission is the body corporate of the Northern Ireland Assembly. It has the responsibility, under section 40 (4) of the Northern Ireland Act 1998, to provide the Assembly, or ensure that the Assembly is provided with the property, staff and services required for the Assembly to carry out its work.
- 1.5 The Commission may delegate any of its functions to the Speaker or a member of staff of the Assembly and may determine its own procedures.
- 1.6 The Commission is chaired by the Speaker and consists of five other Assembly Members.
- Chairperson, The Speaker : Mr William Hay
Mr Peter Weir DUP
Mr Barry McElduff SF
Mr Leslie Cree, MBE UUP
Mr Pat Ramsey SDLP
Mrs Judith Cochrane ALLIANCE
- 1.7 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 Northern Ireland Assembly Commission is required to have due regard to the need to:
- promote positive attitudes towards people with disabilities; and
 - encourage participation by people with disabilities in public life
- 1.8 Under Section 49B of the DDA 1995, the Northern Ireland Assembly Commission is also required to submit to the Equality Commission a Disability Action Plan showing how it proposes to fulfil these duties in relation to the functions for which it is responsible.

2 Consultation Methods

- 2.1 The Disability Action Plan was prepared and made available for distribution to the public on Monday 25 July 2011. The consultation period lasted for 12

weeks until Friday 14 October, and was then further extended by one week on request.

- 2.2 The consultation documentation made clear that the commission wished to consult as widely as possible on the Draft Revised Disability Action Plan and with this objective in mind, the following actions were taken:
- 2.3 On the 25 July 2011 a postmaster was issued to all Secretariat staff detailing information regarding the consultation process, signposting staff to the document and detailing how to respond.
- 2.4 Copies of the consultation documents were distributed directly to the Commission's Section 75 consultees (see consultee list at appendix 1) and made readily available to the general public.
- 2.5 Advertisements were placed in the three main regional newspapers inviting the public to comment on the consultation report. These advertisements indicated that the consultation document could be made available in alternative formats on request.
- 2.6 The Disability Action Plan was sent to the Northern Ireland Assembly Disability Advisory Group on the 2 June for comments.
- 2.7 Information on the consultation was included in a newsletter which was distributed to all MLAs in September 2011
- 2.8 The Commission wishes to thank all consultees for their feedback.

3 Consultation Responses

- 3.1 The aim of this section is to summarise the feedback from consultees as part of the consultation process.
- 3.2 In total four responses were received by the Commission.
- 3.3 Consultation Responses:

Organisation	Comment	Response
Northern Ireland Assembly staff member	<p>There is very little here that would promote equality for disability:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> ▪ No guaranteed Interview Scheme ▪ Five point approach to ensure staff who have or develop a disability are kept in employment ▪ There are yearly interviews for staff with HR about disability issues not mentioned 	Noted.

Organisation	Comment	Response
Autism NI	<p>Following the implementation of the Autism Act (NI) 2011, there is now a requirement upon all Equality Schemes and Action Plans to be updated to take account of the social and communication barriers faced by individuals with ASD in accessing public services and public facilities, eg</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> ▪ Improved visual signage ▪ Clearly structured public areas delineated by function ▪ Assessments based upon social functioning, not merely mental and physical ability. 	Noted and recommendation accepted. Work has commenced to improve accessibility to Parliament Buildings for those with Autism, and The Commission looks forward to further engagement with representative groups in order to take this forward.
NI Assembly Human Resources	<p>As the training we currently provide is deemed to be adequate, I would suggest that the following wording more accurately reflects what we do at points 1 and 4 of the Action Plan:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> ▪ Point 1: As part of mandatory induction training on equality, all staff receive information regarding DDA issues as they apply in the workplace ▪ Point 4: Provision of ongoing information and advice to managers and staff on DDA issues 	Noted and recommendations accepted.
Disability Action	Disability Action believes that in preparing this Disability Action Plan the responsible officers within the Assembly Commission should have spoken directly to disabled members of staff and for example the disability related All Party groupings.	Noted
Disability Action	The aims should be numbered for ease of reference.	Noted and recommendation accepted.
	Aim 2 The second measure of success should be strengthened as considering comments is not enough.	Noted

Organisation	Comment	Response
	Aims 3, 4, 5, 6 Welcomed	Noted
	Aim 9 Timescales must be added. The website should be constructed to AAA standards as a commitment to full disability equality.	Noted
	Aim 10 This should be included in the Equality Action Plan, not this Plan.	Noted
	Aim 12 It is the statutory duty of the Assembly Commission under the Disability Discrimination Act 1995 to ensure access to Parliament Buildings consequently we believe that this aim should not be included in this Disability Action Plan.	Noted
	Aim 15 Fewer blind people use Braille. The Facilities Manager should consult RNIB regarding the most appropriate and inclusive format to use.	Noted
	<p>In relation to the list of consultees please note the following:</p> <p>ACOVO is now CO3</p> <p>Belfast Jewish Community is listed twice</p> <p>The list of Carers groups should be checked</p> <p>Children's Law Centre is listed twice</p> <p>The Equality Commission is listed twice</p> <p>Help the Aged NI no longer exists it is now Age NI</p> <p>The Indian Community Centre is listed twice</p> <p>There is a spelling mistake in the NI Council for Integrated Schools</p> <p>Oi Kwan Chinese Women's Group is listed twice</p> <p>PHAB Northern Ireland no longer exists</p> <p>RNID is now Action on Hearing Loss</p> <p>Skill Northern Ireland no longer exists</p>	Noted and recommendation accepted.

Organisation	Comment	Response
	Disability Action has welcomed the opportunity to make a submission. Disability Action looks forward to continued dialogue on this and other issues of major significance to people with disabilities throughout Northern Ireland	Noted

4 Conclusions

- 4.1 The Commission has carefully considered the findings of the consultation exercise. The Commission believes the additional actions and revisions suggested by consultees will have a beneficial effect. In light of the consultation comments received, the Commission has revised its Disability Action Plan.

Appendix 1: List of Organisations Consulted

- Action on Hearing Loss
- Age NI
- Alliance Party
- Al-Nisa Association NI
- An Munia Tober
- Association for Spina Bifida & Hydrocephalus
- Autism NI
- Aware Defeat Depression
- Baha'I Community of Belfast
- Bahai Council for NI
- Baha'I Council for NI
- Ballymena Inter-Ethnic Forum
- Barnardos
- Belfast Chinese Christian Church
- Belfast City Council Youth Forum
- Belfast Hebrew Congregation
- Belfast Islamic Centre
- Belfast Jewish Community
- Bulgarian Association NI
- Cara-Friend
- Care in NI
- Carers NI
- Carers Northern Ireland
- CCMS
- Children in Need NI
- Childrens Law Centre
- Chinese Chamber of Commerce
- Chinese Welfare Association
- Church of Ireland
- CO3
- Community Development & Health Network NI
- Craigavon Traveller Support Committee
- DARD
- DCAL
- DEL
- Department of Justice
- Derry Travellers Support Group
- Derry Well Woman
- DETI
- DFP
- DHSSPS
- Disability Action
- DOE
- Down's Syndrome Association
- DRD
- DSD
- DUP
- Early Years
- East Belfast Community Development Agency
- Employers Forum on Disability
- Equality Coalition
- Equality Commission for Northern Ireland
- Equality Forum NI
- Falls Community Council
- FPA
- Gingerbread Northern Ireland
- GMB
- Green Party
- Guru Nanak Dev Ji Sikh Community Association

- Hare Krishna Community
- Hungarian Community Association
- Include Youth
- Indian Community Centre
- Lasi (Lesbian Advocacy Services Initiative)
- Latino America Unida
- Lesbian Line
- Mandarin Speakers Association
- MENCAP
- Methodist Church in Ireland
- Mid Ulster International Cultural Group
- Multi-Cultural Resource Centre
- Newry & Mourne Senior Citizens Consortium
- Newtownabbey Senior Citizens Forum
- NI Anti-Poverty Network
- NI Council for Integrated Schools
- NI Filipino Community in Action
- NI Human Rights Commission
- NI Mediation Service
- NI Multicultural Association
- NI Muslim Family Association
- NI Somali Community Association
- NI Women's Aid Federation
- NI Youth Forum
- NIACRO
- NICEM
- NIC-ICTU
- NICVA
- NIPSA
- NISRA
- NIWEP
- North West Community Network
- Northern Ireland Association for Mental Health
- NSPCC
- NUS USI
- OFMDFM
- Oi kwan Chinese Women's Group
- Oi Wah Chinese Women's Group
- Oi Yin Women's Group
- Older Peoples Advocate
- Omagh Access Forum
- Omagh Ethnic Minorities Community Association
- Opportunity Youth
- Pakistani Community Association
- Polish Association NI
- Presbyterian Church in Ireland
- Probation Board for Northern Ireland
- Public Achievement
- RNIB
- Roman Catholic Church
- Rural Community Network
- Sai Pak Chinese Community Project
- Save the Children
- SDLP
- Sense NI
- Sikh Cultural Centre
- Sikh Women & Children's Association
- Sinn Fein

- Staff Commission for Education & Library Boards
- Staff Commission for Local Government
- Strabane Ethnic Community Association
- The Cedar Foundation
- The Community Relations Council
- The Egyptian Society of NI
- The Guide Dogs for the Blind Association
- The Rainbow Project
- Trademark
- Tuar Ceatha
- Tuar/Barnardos
- Tuar/Barnardos
- Ulster Scots Agency
- Ulster Teachers Union
- Ulster Unionist Party
- UNISON
- VOYPIC
- Wah-Hip Chinese Community Association
- Women of the World
- Women's Forum NI
- Women's Information Group
- Women's Resource & Development Agency
- Women's Support Network
- Youth Action NI
- Youth Council for Northern Ireland
- Youth Link Northern Ireland
- Youthnet

Appendix 2: Organisations who responded to the Consultation Exercise

- Autism NI
- Disability Action
- Northern Ireland Assembly Human Resources
- Northern Ireland Assembly staff member

