

The Northern Ireland Assembly Commission
**Five Year Review of
Disability Action Plans**



5 YEAR REVIEW OF DISABILITY ACTION PLANS (DAPs) FOR THE NORTHERN IRELAND ASSEMBLY COMMISSION

1 INTRODUCTION

- 1.1 This report covers the 5 year review of the Disability Action Plans (DAPs) published by the Northern Ireland Assembly Commission (“the Commission”) for the period 15 December 2007 – 31 March 2013.
- 1.2 If you require this document in an alternative format (such as in large print, in Braille, on audio cassette, easy read or on computer disc) and/or another language, please contact Maria Bannon on telephone number 028 9041 8377/ 028 9052 1209 to discuss your requirements.

2 BACKGROUND

- 2.1 Since 1 January 2007, an amendment to the Disability Discrimination Act 1995 (DDA 1995) has required public authorities, when carrying out their functions to have due regard to the need to:
 - promote positive attitudes towards disabled people; and
 - encourage participation by disabled people in public life.
- 2.2 The Commission is also required to submit to the Equality Commission for Northern Ireland (ECNI) a DAP showing how it proposes to fulfil these duties (known as the Disability Duties) in relation to its functions.
- 2.3 The Commission has submitted three DAPs to the ECNI to show how it planned to fulfil these duties:
 - The first DAP covered the period 15 December 2007 – 30 June 2011, it is accessible via the following link:
<http://archive.niassembly.gov.uk/commission/disability/dap.htm>

- The second DAP covered the period 1 July 2011 - 30 June 2012, it is accessible via the following link:
<http://www.niassembly.gov.uk/ABOUT-THE-ASSEMBLY/Corporate-Information/Policies/Disability-Action-Plan1/Disability-Action-Plan-2011-12/>
- The third DAP covers the period 1 July 2012 – 30 June 2016, it is accessible via the following link:
<http://www.niassembly.gov.uk/ABOUT-THE-ASSEMBLY/Corporate-Information/Policies/Disability-Action-Plan1/Disability-Action-Plan-2012-2016/>

Progress on all DAPs can be viewed via the Commission's annual equality progress returns to the ECNI which can be accessed via the following link: <http://www.niassembly.gov.uk/ABOUT-THE-ASSEMBLY/Corporate-Information/Publications/Annual-Reports-to-the-Equality-Commission/>

2.4 All DAPs contain a commitment for the Commission to carry out a 5 year review of its DAPs. This current paper represents that review.

3 DEVELOPMENT OF DAPS

3.1 All three DAPs were developed in liaison with the ECNI for Northern Ireland and the Assembly Commission's business areas.

3.2 The three plans followed the ECNI's guidance, in particular the 2007 Equality Commission Guide for Public Authorities and the December 2009 Review Report on the Effectiveness of the Disability Duties.

3.3 All DAPs were signed off by the Speaker and the Director General of the Northern Ireland Assembly Commission. They contained a range of

measures to fulfil the Disability Duties and included associated timescales and performance indicators.

- 3.4 Public consultations were conducted to help inform all three DAPs. The measures were finalised after full 12 week consultations with Section 75 consultees. The final plans were circulated to staff and consultees and published on the Commission's website.

4 **ACHIEVEMENTS TO DATE**

4.1 **Overview**

The DAPs contained a number of measures covering the provision of training and guidance to employees and office holders on issues of disability, equality legislation and disability awareness. Other measures focused on the Commission's responsibilities and policies designed to meet our obligations under disability legislation which covers internal and external users.

In line with the Commission's Equality Scheme progress reports on the measures identified have been tabled at Commission meetings. In addition, individual activities and projects related to DAPs have also been tabled at Commission meetings. Updates on progress have been included in the Commission's Annual Progress Reports to the ECNI. These reports are also published on the Commission's website.

4.2 **Disability Action Plan Measures**

Progress of Disability Action Plan Measures as per Annual Reports to the Equality Commission for NI are shown at **Table 1**, overleaf

Reporting Period	Total Number of Action Measures	Fully Achieved	Partially Achieved	Not Achieved¹
2007 ²				
2008-2009	12	5 (42%)	4 (33%)	3 (25%)
2009-2010	21	15(71%)	6 (29%)	0 (0%)
2010-2011	10	7(70%)	2 (20%)	1 (10%)
2011-2012	14	5 (36%)	4 (28%)	5 (36%)

From the outset the timescales provided within the Disability Action Plans were aligned with the Corporate Strategy. This timescale does not align with the Section 75 Reporting Period (1 April – 31 March), and the ‘mismatched’ timescales have always led to the results in the annual report being distorted. Table 2 below shows the actual number of measures achieved.

¹ Each action measure has a number of underpinning related activities. Measures recorded as ‘not achieved’ mean that they were not achieved in their totality but that underpinning related activities pertaining to that particular measure were achieved. Some measures were also recorded as ‘not achieved’ as they were deemed as ‘on going’ as they covered the life of the plan. It is also important to note that any measures not completed within the stated timeframe were carried over to the next reporting period.

² Due to the short timescale between the establishment of the Assembly Commission following the restoration of the Assembly on 8 May 2007 and the statutory deadline of 30 June 2007 for the submission of the Disability Action Plan to the Equality Commission it was agreed that the Assembly Commission would submit the Disability Action Plan to the Equality Commission to meet the statutory deadline and then undertake a public consultation exercise. The consultation period ended on 14 December 2007 and the Commission’s first Disability Action Plan was enacted following this.

Table 2**Total Disability Action Measures/Activities Achieved 2008-2013**

Disability Action Plan	Total Number of Action Measures/ Activities	Fully Achieved	Not Achieved	Reason for non-achievement of action measures
2008-2011	32	31(97%)	Produce a three year review of the Disability Action Plan in conjunction with the review of the Northern Ireland Assembly Equality Scheme.	It was agreed with the Equality Commission that this would be a 5 year audit to bring it in line with the revised guidance for Equality Schemes. This represents the current paper.
2011-2012	24	23(96%)	Provide Briefing Guides for staff on the practical day-to-day implementation of DDA.	Carried over from 2011-2012 DAP due to establishment of an Internal Disability Group taking longer than envisaged.
2012-2016	16	14 (87.5%)	Provide Briefing Guides for staff on the practical day-to-day implementation of DDA Review Accessible Publications Policy.	The plan runs to 2016 and the outstanding actions are due to be completed prior to the end of this period.

4.3 Review of Staff Data**Annual Staff Disability Audit**

Since 2008 the Commission's HR Office has issued an annual staff disability audit to elicit the numbers of staff who wish to declare they have a disability. Results are dependent on staff with disabilities disclosing their disability. The table below indicates a decrease in staff numbers from 2010 to 2013 but a percentage rise in staff numbers declaring a disability.

Table 3

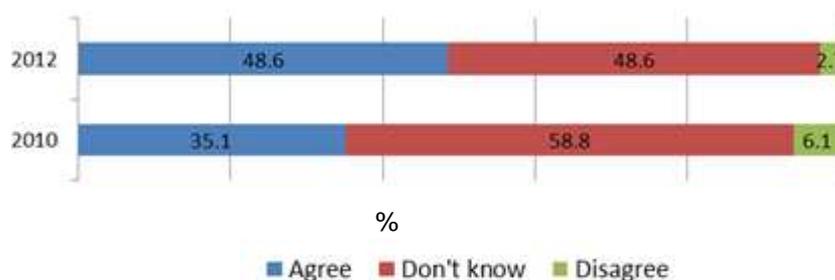
Annual Staff Disability Audit Figures 2007-2013

Year	Overall Staff Numbers	Staff numbers declaring a disability	% of staff with disabilities
2012-2013	389 staff	27 staff declared a disability	6.94%
2011-2012	401 staff	22 staff declared a disability	5.48%
2010-2011	411 staff	18 staff declared a disability	4.38%
2009-2010	293 staff	9 staff declared a disability	3.07%
2008-2009	139 staff	5 staff declared a disability	3.59%
2007-2008	96 staff	6 staff declared a disability	6.25%

Staff Survey

The Northern Ireland Assembly's Corporate Business Plan 2011/12 committed to undertaking a staff survey by 31 March 2012. Staff surveys were carried out to gather information about staff attitudes, including attitudes to equality and diversity and to identify trends. In February 2012 a survey was issued to Secretariat staff within the Northern Ireland Assembly. The findings of the 2012 staff survey were also compared with those of the 2010 staff survey. It was found that almost half of staff (48.6%) said that they believe that the Assembly Secretariat offers appropriate support to staff with disabilities, an increase of 13.5 percentage points on 35.1% in 2010.

The Assembly Secretariat offers sufficient/appropriate support to staff with disabilities



Staff Training

Diversity training, which includes disability equality legislation (including the Disability Duties) and disability awareness, has been delivered to all staff over the last five year period; tailored training has also been provided to staff.

Table 4

2008/2009	COURSE TITLE	NUMBER TRAINED
	Section 75 Disability Awareness	267
	Equality/Disability Workshops	23
	Diversity Training	17
2009/2010	COURSE TITLE	NUMBER TRAINED
	Equality and Disability Awareness training (EDA)	228
	Frontline Equality and Disability Awareness Training (EDA)	28
	Diversity Awareness Training	335
	Screening Training	19
	Equality Impact Assessment Training	14
	Equality and Good Relations Trainers Programme	2
2010/2011	COURSE TITLE	NUMBER TRAINED
	Equality (EDA)	110
	Disability Action Training	51
	Deaf Awareness Training	87
	Vision Awareness Training	59
	Diversity Training	60
2011/2012	COURSE TITLE	NUMBER TRAINED
	Autism Awareness Training	85
	Automated External Defibrillator Training	26
	Deaf Awareness Training	12
	Disability Action Training	16
	DSE Risk Assessment	9
	Enviromental Management Systems	17
	Equality Good Relations and Diversity Awareness	4
	First Aid at work	24

	First Aid at work refresher	2
	Foundation Training in Mediation for workplace Disputes (OCN Level 3)	2
	Manual Handles Training Certificate	2
	Visual Awareness Training (RNIB)	22

Staff Complaints

The Commission remains responsive to any disability related complaints received from staff and/or service users. No complaints have been received in the last five years.

4.4 External Disability Advisory Group

As a result of comments received as part of the 2008-2011 Disability Action Plan consultation, the Assembly committed to establishing an informal group of practitioners and representatives who would assist with the development and implementation of the Disability Action Plan.

In October 2009, invitations were sent to a broad variety of voluntary organisations across Northern Ireland, and invitations have since been extended to other groups that the Assembly have engaged with.

Current membership includes representatives from:

- The Cedar Foundation
- RNIB
- Action on Hearing Loss
- MENCAP
- Chest Heart and Stroke NI
- Leonard Cheshire
- Disability Action
- Real Network

- SENSE
- National Autistic Society
- Autism NI

The group meets four times a year, and notable outcomes that the group have contributed to include the installation of the ramps to the front of Parliament Buildings, the upgrade of the Assembly website, the revision of gallery rules, installation of the 'changing places' facility and changes to the processes when evacuating the building. The group have also participated in the pre-consultation of disability action plans, equality schemes and screening exercises.

The Assembly Commission acknowledges the valuable input that this group provides, and continues to review membership in order to ensure that membership is reflective of the range of voluntary organisations in Northern Ireland. Further information on the group, including previous minutes and details of membership and how to get involved with the group can be found here:

<http://www.niassembly.gov.uk/ABOUT-THE-ASSEMBLY/Corporate-Information/Policies/Disability-Advisory-Group/>

4.5 Website Redesign

In 2009 when specifying the project for the redevelopment of the Assembly website all policies and procedures in respect of legislation which impacted the site were considered. This included relevant legislation such as the Disability Discrimination Act and Equal Opportunities. The specifications for the frontend of the site (i.e. the design) and the backend (i.e. how we publish information to the site) included as one of their mandatory requirements that they met the AAA requirements of the World Wide Web Consortium's Web Content

Accessibility Guidelines. During the actual design process focus groups consisting of a range of stakeholders were asked for their opinions on the look and feel, features and functions that the website should include and the Assembly's Disability Advisory Group was briefed throughout and invited to provide their feedback.

Since its launch the site has included an "Accessibility" section <http://www.niassembly.gov.uk/Utility/Accessibility/>. This section states that accessibility is an on-going process and that the Assembly Web Team welcomes any feedback to help improve accessibility on the site. It also includes a number of different ways users can get in touch as well as other areas of accessibility on the site.

4.6 Autism Initiative

In November 2011, the Northern Ireland Assembly began making Parliament Buildings more accessible and friendly for people with autism. A group of adults and parents of children on the autistic spectrum came to Parliament Buildings on a 'mystery shopping' exercise. They arrived at the building assessed the access arrangements, welfare facilities, went on a tour and assessed how they were treated by staff. Following this a small number of staff, representing different business areas of the NI Assembly, visited the autism consultation group at the National Autistic Society in Belfast a few days later to listen to their opinions on the visit and recommendations for any improvements. A summary of the meeting can be accessed at this link <http://www.niassembly.gov.uk/Visit-and-Learning/Visiting/Autism-and-the-Assembly/Background/Appendix-B/> . The National Autistic Society advised the Assembly about their accreditation process which, in 2011, was going to be extended to cover public buildings. The Northern Ireland Assembly was delighted to

be the first organisation to agree to work towards the accreditation award.

The Northern Ireland Assembly became involved in all aspects of a pilot project and helped to develop the standard for public buildings to be rolled out across the UK.

The Assembly made physical changes to the building such as establishing a quiet room looking at our signage, for example, placing warning stickers on noisy hand dryers and symbols on toilet doors.

Autism awareness training was rolled out to front line staff in December 2011 and March 2012, with 90 staff attending training voluntarily. 10 Autism Champions were created and Champions received further training in September 2012. Autism Champions act as points of contact if anyone with autism needs assistance. The Assembly also produced an access video showing what to expect when someone arrives at the entrance to the Stormont Estate and makes their way up to Parliament Buildings. An autism consultation group helped with the content and direction of the video. This video is on the Assembly's autism webpage and it is a useful guide for anyone visiting Parliament Buildings. A page on the Assembly website providing information to visitors on the autistic spectrum has been developed and includes useful contacts, links, the access video, guidance and information on sensory issues that may be encountered. The link to the webpage is here:

<http://www.niassembly.gov.uk/Visit-and-Learning/Visiting/Autism-and-the-Assembly/>

The Assembly received the autism accreditation award from the National Autistic Society on 14 November 2012.



The Assembly will continue to review, update and improve any services to anyone on the spectrum to enhance their visit to Parliament Buildings.

Full information on disability access can be found at <http://www.niassembly.gov.uk/Visit-and-Learning/Visiting/Access-Information/Disabled-Access1/> and a pre-visit video for those with a disability or dependents visiting Parliament Buildings can be found at <http://www.niassembly.gov.uk/Visit-and-Learning/Visiting/Autism-and-the-Assembly/PB-Video/>

4.7 Louder than Words Charter Mark

On 24 May 2011 the “Louder than Words” charter mark was awarded to the Northern Ireland Assembly following a lengthy audit process, during which the organisation was required to demonstrate a commitment to improving access and services to deaf and hard of hearing people. The Northern Ireland Assembly became the first legislature in the United Kingdom to be awarded the prestigious Action on Hearing Loss “Louder

than Words” best practice charter mark. Some Assembly staff has undergone training in deaf awareness and communication tactics to ensure that they are able to recognise and facilitate the very particular needs of deaf and hard of hearing visitors. One of our tour guides is proficient in sign language and twenty members of staff recently attended basic sign language training. New equipment such as an upgrade to the hearing loop system, additional signage and the introduction of whispering tour equipment has been introduced. The Assembly undergoes an audit process each year in order to retain this charter mark. Since its first award the Assembly has retained this charter mark.

4.8 Physical Works

The Assembly Commission has recently completed a range of physical works aimed at improving access via the front door of Parliament Buildings. The work included new access ramps to each side of the front portico, raising the portico floor level to eliminate the step at the threshold, replacement of the front steps and handrails, automation of the double entrance doors and the replacement of areas of cobble stone paving with smooth granite walkways. All of the work was designed to complement the existing façade of the listed building and to comply with all relevant legislation. The cost to provide ramped access to the front of the building was £260k (excluding VAT and professional fees). The main objective of this project was to ensure that everyone is able to access Parliament Buildings via the primary entrance. The ramp was officially opened by the Speaker on 5 June 2013 with invited guests from the Disability Advisory Group and their member organisations.



Physical Access Audit

In 2010 the Northern Ireland Assembly commissioned access audits by Disability Action and RNIB. The audits looked at how physical access could be improved both internally and externally. The audits provided the Assembly with a range of recommendations which assisted in developing a programme of work that could be undertaken in the short term and longer term projects. As the Assembly is not responsible for the wider Stormont Estate the recommendations for their areas of responsibility were passed to the Department of Finance and Personnel for consideration. Working with them we were able to install additional drop kerbs etc. within the Estate and alterations to the bus shelters to make them more accessible.

Following the audits it was recommended that a changing places facility be provided. This facility was installed on the ground floor. This provides fully accessible public toilet facilities for people with profound and multiple learning disabilities. The changing places facility provides

a safe, clean and spacious environment and includes an adult-sized, height-adjustable changing bench, a hoist, a centrally placed toilet with room either side for carers, a screen or curtain to allow the person with disabilities and carers some privacy, wide tear off paper roll to cover the bench, a large waste bin for disposable pads and a non-slip floor.

Working closely with MENCAP we were able to ensure that we met the needs of all building users and visitors within the facility and we have advertised it's availability on the changing places website

<http://www.changing-places.org/>.

A 'spend area' has been created in the upper east car park for assistance dogs as the Northern Ireland Assembly welcomes assistance dogs onto the premises.

Deaf Alerter Fire Alarm Warning Messaging Systems are also available at the building. Any visitor who requires the use of one should ask at Reception for more information.

Along with the physical improvements highlighted, secretariat staff has undertaken training to encourage the promotion of positive attitudes (see 4.3).

Physical Access/Service Improvements 2005 – 2013

Table 5

Year	Area	Description
2006	All Areas	Alterations to handrails and staircases Alterations to lifts Installation of a new lift at the gift/coffee shop Alteration to disabled access
2006	Committee Rooms	Improvements were

		made to some of the existing induction loops
2006	East and west entrances	Improvements including work to the steps, modifications to handrails and modification to access controls
2008	Assembly Chamber	Created disabled access to the floor of the chamber from both entrances Wheelchair viewing gallery installed in the upper chamber
2008	External	Disabled parking spaces in upper car parks clearly marked
2008	Assembly Chamber	Access platform installed at the entrance to the viewing gallery
2009	Committee room	Committee room relocated from the first floor to the ground floor. New induction loop installed to provide better coverage
2010	Committee Room	Committee room relocated from the first floor to the ground floor. New induction loop installed to provide better coverage
2010	Ground floor	Creation of new disabled toilet on the ground floor beside the Assembly chamber
2010	External	Following access audits by Disability

		Action and RNIB additional drop curbs etc. installed throughout the estate.
2011	Café Recess	Creation of a disabled toilet within the cafe
2011	Ground floor	Changing places facility installed on the ground floor
2011	All Area	Parliament Buildings Awarded the 'Louder than Words' charter mark by Action on Hearing Loss
2012	All Areas	Parliament Buildings awarded the first National Autism Society (NAS) Access Award
2013	Ground Floor	Tour guide provided to all visually impaired visitors in braille showing historical and general information on Parliament Buildings and the Northern Ireland Assembly.
2013	External	Access ramps installed at the front of Parliament buildings

4.9 RNIB

Working in conjunction with RNIB, the Assembly produced a tour guide which provides, in braille, historical and general information on Parliament Buildings and the Northern Ireland Assembly. It also includes a tactile map of the entrance, Great Hall, Assembly and Senate Chambers, and tactile images of the front of Parliament Buildings, the Assembly logo, the ceiling of the Great Hall, the linen

damask wall covering of the Senate and an overview plan of the Assembly Chamber.

4.10 Visiting Parliament Buildings

Visitors attend Parliament Buildings for a variety of reasons, such as events, educational visits, tours, meetings.

A system is in place for visitors with disabilities attending events and/or education programmes whereby pre-visit information is collected, or pre-visit meetings are held to establish what adaptations are required to meet the needs of the visitor so as they can enjoy their visiting experience.

Since 2007 the number of special needs schools attending the Education Programme at Parliament Buildings has increased.

Table 6

**Participants with special educational needs attendance at
Assembly Education Programmes 2007-2012**

Dates	Special Needs Schools	Participant Numbers
1/12/07 to 30/6/08	5 schools	113 participants
01/7/08 to 30/6/09	9 schools	159 participants
1/7/09 to 30/6/10	14 schools	298 participants
1/7/10 to 30/6/11	13 schools	314 participants
1/7/11 to 30/6/12	15 schools	409 participants

4.11 Events and Exhibitions

Events and exhibitions continue to be held at Parliament Buildings on a regular basis, a significant number continue to be in relation to disability and disability arts. The Speakers Art Group during 2012 welcomed an exhibition by visual artist Maurice Orr which celebrated disability arts. The sound track for the exhibition together with multi-sensory interpretation provided an understanding of art through many senses, and a deeper understanding of disability access for all audiences. The London 2012 Olympic and Paralympic Unlimited programme also was displayed in the Great Hall of Parliament Buildings.



London 2012 commissioned 12 artists to each create a poster which represented the London 2012 Olympic and Paralympic Games. The London Organising Committee of the Olympic Games (LOCOG) worked with the Tate Gallery and the Plus Tate Group (a group of 19 regional galleries set up to broaden and deepen engagement in modern and contemporary art across the UK), who together compiled a list of over 500 artists for consideration. This long list was reduced to a final list of 12 by a panel comprising Nicholas Serota (Tate Director), Greg Nunn (LOCOG Director of Marketing and Brand), Tamsin Delon (Head of Art on the Underground), Judith Nesbit (Tate Head of National/International Initiatives), Carl Freedman (Counter Editions) and Ruth Mackenzie (Director of Cultural Olympiad). The 12 world leading artists who have designed official Olympic and Paralympic posters for the London 2012 Games are:

Olympic

Martin Creed, Arthea Hamilton, Howard Hodgkin, Chris Old, Bridget Riley, Rachel Whiteread.

Paralympic

Fiona Banner, Michael Craig Martin, Tracey Emin, Gary Hume, Sarah Morris, Bob and Roberta Smith.

The artists are all from the UK or are UK based and represent some of the UK's greatest talent in contemporary art, including four Turner Prize winners and eight artists who have represented the UK at the Venice Biennale. The images were unveiled on 4th November 2011 and are being shown at Tate Britain as part of the London 2012 Festival from 21 June 2012 to 21 September 2012.

The Northern Ireland Assembly is delighted to have secured the exhibition for display in the Great Hall, Parliament Buildings from 6 August 2012 until 14 September 2012.



4.12 Procurement

The Assembly Secretariat operates a delegated procurement model. Contracts below £25,000 in value are delegated to and then conducted by Directors or Senior Management in each directorate or their staff. The Secretariat's Procurement Office provides professional procurement advice and guidance on commercial matters and leads all procurement competitions for contracts above £25,000 in value.

Contract opportunities with values of over £25,000 are published on the NI Assembly website at <http://www.niassembly.gov.uk/ABOUT-THE-ASSEMBLY/Corporate-Information/Secretariat/Tender-Opportunities/> and eSourcingNI, the Northern Ireland Public Sector eTendering software solution. Suppliers delivering goods, services and works to the NI Assembly must comply with the Assembly's standard terms and conditions of contract which include clauses covering all applicable NI Law in relation to Equality duties and Disability Discrimination Legislation.

4.13 Charity of the Year 2012 - Action Mental Health

The Northern Ireland Assembly Commission nominated Action Mental Health³ as its first ever Charity of the Year. The Charity Policy was initially agreed in 2010, the implementation plan was agreed in 2012 and the first charity was launched in June 2012.

The Commission helped the Charity to facilitate a range of activities at Parliament Buildings to highlight the work of Action Mental Health <http://www.niassembly.gov.uk/News-and-Media/Press-Releases-2011->

³ Founded in 1963, Action Mental Health aims to enhance the quality of life and the employability of people with mental health needs or a learning disability in Northern Ireland

4.14 Northern Ireland Youth Assembly

During autumn 2009, informal meetings and workshops were held with a range of stakeholders including representatives of Section 75 groups to outline initial plans for the development of a youth assembly.

In early 2010, a youth panel of 30 young people aged 16-18 was created to work with the Assembly in developing a policy proposal for a youth assembly by March 2011. The recruitment process was designed with assistance from a number of organisations including the ECNI, the Commission for Children and Young People, the youth sector and representatives from disability groups. The Commission's guidance on consulting with and involving children and young people was used during the establishment of the Assembly's Youth Panel.

A launch was hosted by the Speaker at Parliament Buildings on 26 January 2010 and the opportunity for young people to nominate themselves for Panel membership was widely advertised on Facebook, local radio, by Bluetooth, and by mail / email to schools, youth organisations and representative of Section 75 groups.

At the launch, the Commissioner for Children and Young People welcomed the initiative and commented that, "We should toast the fact that young people have been involved in the design of the Youth Assembly. After all who better to ask about young people than young people themselves! " She also noted that the Assembly Commission "deserve credit for taking their time in developing the youth assembly and getting it right".

Two hundred and fifty-nine nominations were received. Of these one hundred were randomly chosen to attend a day long peer selection event in Belfast on 12 March 2010. Following a series of workshops, nominees elected 25 young people to the Panel. Five seats were reserved for young people with a disability who were appointed based the election results.

Youth workers, with expertise in this area, were brought in to work with the Youth Panel. The Youth Panel met with a wide range of groups in order to ensure that their proposals for a youth assembly would take account of the need to develop good relations. The draft report also emphasised the need to support those with disabilities/special needs, and to encourage applications from all sections of the community, as defined in Section 75. The Youth Panel recommended targeting groups that are under-represented to ensure that their views are heard.

The Assembly Youth Panel published a report on the creation of a Northern Ireland Assembly. The report was consulted upon between 11 May 2012 and 1 September 2012. The report is available at:

<http://www.niassembly.gov.uk/Visit-and-Learning/Youth-Assembly/Youth-Panel-Report/>

The Children's Commissioner, Patricia Lewsley-Mooney established the NICCY Participation Awards in 2011 to recognise and celebrate the participation and active engagement of young people in public life. They are open to all government departments, arm's length bodies and other public sector organisations.

The Northern Ireland Assembly Commission won a gold award in 2011 for the effective participation of young people on their Youth Assembly Panel.

At its February 2013 meeting the Commission confirmed its commitment to the establishment of a Youth Assembly for Northern Ireland. The Commission endorsed the approach to seek funding partners and ask OFMDFM to make a bid to the Executive on their behalf. The Commission further agreed to seek a youth sector partner to recruit and deliver the pilot Youth Assembly and committed to publishing the report on consultation, outlining the model for a future Youth Assembly.

4.15 Guaranteed Interview Schemes

In line with the ECNIs *Positive Action for People who are Disabled guidance* the Assembly Secretariat operates a Guaranteed Interview Scheme (GIS) for internal recruitment. The GIS has been developed for applicants with disabilities or those with a long term impairment or health condition, that is expected to last for at least 12 months and which means that they cannot meet all of the shortlisting criteria. In these instances, provided that they have demonstrated in their application form that they meet the essential criteria for the post, the applicant will be offered a guaranteed interview. GIS was introduced on 5 December 2012.

4.16 The DAPs have also helped to improve awareness of disability issues amongst staff and other stakeholders. Outcomes achieved against the current 2012-2016 action plan are detailed at Annex 1.

5. WAY AHEAD

- 5.1 The Commission is committed to building on the success achieved so far and will continue to improve accessibility to its services.

- 5.2 A rolling programme of training will ensure that staff continue to be aware of disability legislation, including the Disability Duties, and disability issues generally.

- 5.3 The Commission will continue to implement and monitor its current 2012-2016 DAP. This action plan is not exhaustive and further activities can be added at any time.

6. CHALLENGES AND OPPORTUNITIES 2016

- 6.1 The main challenge will be to sustain improvements achieved and to implement future planned activities in the face of increasing budgetary pressures.

- 6.2 A range of measures within the current DAP remains to be implemented. This can be evidenced at Annex 1. In addition access audit recommendations will continue to be implemented.

- 6.3 Whilst greater steps have been made in increasing staff knowledge and awareness of disability, we must not become complacent. We must continue to train and inform staff and stakeholders of issues and successes.

7. CONCLUSION

7.1 The Commission has made considerable progress during the period of the first two DAPs. The Disability Duties have been mainstreamed into the secretariat. The current financial climate means that we must work harder to sustain progress by ensuring that our services are as effective and efficient as possible in meeting the needs of people with disabilities. We must also continue to work with our staff and stakeholders to:

- Promote positive attitudes towards disabled people; and
- Encourage participation of disabled people in public life.

ANNEX 1

DISABILITY ACTION PLAN 2012 - 2016

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

OP = output measure

OC = outcome measure

Action Measures	Progress	Performance Indicator/Target	Responsibility
1. Ensure staff receive Section 75 and DDA mandatory training courses as part of induction training.	Ongoing	Mandatory training provided to all Secretariat staff. (OP)	Directors
		Monitoring of records to ensure that each member of staff received training. (OP)	Learning and Development Team
		All staff made aware of revised Equality Scheme and Disability Action Plan through Section 75 and DDA training. (OP)	Learning Co-ordinators
		Quality assurance of equality training packages and provision of feedback on any equality 'pilot' training courses. (OP)	Learning and Development Team
		Evaluate training to determine if course objectives were met and staff knowledge of Section 75 and the disability duties	Learning and Development Team

Action Measures	Progress	Performance Indicator/Target	Responsibility
		increased. (OC)	
	Complete	All front-of-house staff to receive autism awareness training. (OP)	Building Services/ Learning and Development Team
		Autism champions to be put in place. (OC)	Building Services / Learning and Development Team
		Relevant staff to receive sign language training. (OP)	Building Services / Learning and Development Team
2. Continue quarterly meetings of the External Disability Advisory Group	Complete	Review current membership of the group. (OP)	Commission and Corporate Support Unit (CCSU)
	Complete	Develop a list of additional disability representatives to be invited to participate in the external Disability Advisory Group. (OP)	CCSU

Action Measures	Progress	Performance Indicator/Target	Responsibility
	Complete	Agree terms of reference and work Plan with the group. (OP)	CCSU
	Ongoing	Further meetings to take place every quarter. (OP)	CCSU
<p>3. Continue quarterly meetings of the Internal Disability Group to include:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • current consultations; • barriers experienced by staff with disabilities; • identify how to overcome such barriers and • to make suggestions to the appropriate forum. <p><i>This list is an example and not exhaustive.</i></p>	Complete	Develop a forward work Plan. (OP)	CCSU
		Review membership of the group. (OP)	CCSU
<p>4. Promote positive attitudes towards people with disabilities within the Secretariat.</p>	Ongoing	Ensure that the staff magazine 'Life on the Hill' contains positive imagery of persons with a disability. (OP)	Communications Office

Action Measures	Progress	Performance Indicator/Target	Responsibility
	Ongoing	Produce one article per year for inclusion in 'Life on the Hill' on relevant disability issues, for example: (OP) <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • To advise on new legislation and employment law as it is introduced (OP), or • The Statutory Duties (OP), or • Article submitted by a staff member with a disability, or • Article submitted by the internal Disability Group (OP) <i>This list is an example and not exhaustive.</i>	Communications Office
5. Develop a website-based video for visitors prior to their visit to Parliament Buildings.	Complete	Video to be developed as a pre-visit tool to assist people with autism and other disabilities. (OP)	Building Services and Education Services.
		Video to include signage and audio to meet the needs of those with visual and hearing impairments. (OP)	Building Services and Education Services.
		Hold stakeholder meetings as and when required in the development of the video.	Building Services and Education Services.

Action Measures	Progress	Performance Indicator/Target	Responsibility
		(OP)	
		Run pilot of video on website requesting feedback. (OP)	Building Services and Education Services.
		Hold stakeholder meeting to sign off final feedback report.(OP)	Building Services and Education Services.
	Complete	Launch video and incorporate final version on website. (OC)	Building Services and Education Services.
6. Review Accessible Publications Policy	Complete	Complete a review of the publications policy and implement all required changes to ensure that NI Assembly publications promote positive attitudes towards people with disabilities.(OC)	Communications Office
	Ongoing	Monitor number of customer complaints in relation to access to information on services. (OP)	Communications Office
	Due October	Updated policy circulated to staff and disability organisations. (OC)	

Action Measures	Progress	Performance Indicator/Target	Responsibility
	2013	Annual review of Policy to be completed by March 2014, and annually thereafter. (OP)	Communications Office Communications Office
7. Record staff with disability on annual survey and conduct interviews with staff with disabilities as required	Ongoing	Annual disability survey issued each year. (OP)	HR
	Ongoing	Conduct interviews with staff with disabilities and take action as required. (OP)	HR
8. Recruitment and selection process	Ongoing	Consider all requests for reasonable adjustments within the recruitment and selection process and action as appropriate. (OP)	HR
	Complete	Implement a Northern Ireland Assembly guaranteed interview scheme. (OP)	HR

Action Measures	Progress	Performance Indicator/Target	Responsibility
9. Improve visual signage	Ongoing	Implementation of pictorial signage images. (OP)	Building Services
	Complete	Design a tactile 'tour map' of Parliament Buildings. (OC)	Building Services
	Ongoing	Monitoring of current braille signage and other signage to ensure quality and compliance with legislation. (OP)	Building Services
9.1 Provision of Braille business cards	Complete	Provide the Speaker and Deputy Speakers with Braille business cards. (OP)	Office of the Speaker
10. To make Parliament Buildings accessible to all	Complete	Continue to progress work on the installation of ramps at the front entrance of Parliament Buildings. (OP)	Building Services
	Complete	To achieve accreditation from National Autistic Society. (OC)	Building Services

Action Measures	Progress	Performance Indicator/Target	Responsibility
	Ongoing	Visitors' comments and feedback to be monitored. (OP)	
	Ongoing	Ensure staff and all building users are aware of video-conferencing facilities at Parliament Buildings. (OP) Monitor the number of times that the facility has been used. (OP)	Building Services
	Ongoing	Continue to promote the changing places facility and share our knowledge with other Government Departments. (OP) Visitors' comments and feedback to be monitored. (OP)	Building Services
11. Provide briefing guides for staff on the practical day-to-day implementation of DDA. Note: carried over from 2011-2012 Plan due to establishment of an Internal Disability Group taking longer than considered.	Complete	Hold 3 internal stakeholder meetings in development of guides. (OP)	CCSU
	2014	Consult relevant internal and external groups on draft guides. (OP)	CCSU

Action Measures	Progress	Performance Indicator/Target	Responsibility
	2014	Sign off final feedback report and circulate to consultees and stakeholder groups. (OP)	CCSU
	2014	Implement and monitor usage of guides over a six-month period to inform if any changes need to be made. (OP)	CCSU
	2014	Include guides as part of mandatory DDA training to all staff. (OC)	CCSU CCSU
	2014	Issue postmaster email to all staff directing them to the guides and how to use them.(OP)	

Action Measures	Progress	Performance Indicator/Target	Responsibility
12. Assembly website	Ongoing	Review site in terms of accessibility. (OP)	Communications Office
	Ongoing	Monitor number of complaints based on disability access to site. (OP)	Communications Office
13. Continue Implementation of access audits completed by RNIB, Disability Action, Action on Hearing Loss in programme of works and in prioritisation of recommendations	Ongoing	Regular updates will be provided to the Internal Disability Group and External Disability Advisory Group and additional audits will be carried out as and when required. (OP)	Building Services
	Ongoing	Feedback from the Internal Disability Group and External Advisory Group will be obtained and assessed against audit recommendations. (OP)	Building Services
14. Conduct autism audit	Complete	A full audit will be carried out by the National Autistic Society to ensure that Parliament Buildings meets the standards to achieve accreditation. (OP)	Building Services
	Complete	Achieve accreditation. (OC)	Building Services

Action Measures	Progress	Performance Indicator/Target	Responsibility
15. Continue review of Action on Hearing Loss 'Louder than Words' Charter Mark standards to ensure Assembly Commission is remaining compliant.	Ongoing	Complete annual checklist. (OP)	Building Services
16. Monitoring of reasonable adjustments made for witnesses giving evidence to Committees and sharing of learning from this.	Ongoing	Quarterly monitoring of reasonable adjustments made and sharing of learning as required.(OP)	Central Committee Office