

Minutes of the Meeting of the Disability Advisory Group held on Wednesday 21 March 2012 at 2.10pm in Room 274

Present: Mrs Maria Bannon (Chair)
Mr Peter Wilson (Cedar Foundation)
Lady Christine Eames (Leonard Cheshire)
Ms Patricia Bray (Disability Action)
Ms Joanne Sansome (REAL Network)
Ms Jenny Ruddy (Mencap)

Apologies: Mr Dermott Ferris
Mr Pascal McKeown (Mencap)

In Attendance: Ms Christine Dodson
Mr Richard Anderson
Ms Tracey Wilson
Ms Christine Watts
Ms Stephanie Mallon

1. Introduction

Mrs Bannon welcomed and thanked members for their attendance at the meeting and introduced Ms Joanne Sansome from the REAL Network. Apologies for Mr Dermott Ferris and Mr Pascal McKeown were given.

2. Access Update to Parliament Buildings

Ms Watts provided the group with an update on the work that has been carried out on improving the physical access to Parliament Buildings. The planning application for the installation of ramps at each side of Parliament Buildings has now been approved. It is expected that the work to install the ramps will commence next year.

3. Evacuation procedures update (PEEPS and GEEPS) from Building Services

Mr Anderson provided the group with an update in relation to the evacuation plans for staff who work in Parliament Buildings. Staff were contacted by email and asked to complete a questionnaire in confidence detailing any mobility issues that would require personal evacuation plans to be drawn up for them.

It is also planned to have the procedures and the sound of the fire alarm placed on the website as part of the pre-information video so as visitors to the building will be aware of evacuation procedures should the fire alarm sound while they are visiting Parliament Buildings.

Ms Sansome informed the group that while she attended university, part of the procedures used for her as a wheelchair user was that she provided security with her mobile phone number, in the event that a fire alarm would sound, security would ring her to find out where in the building she was, security would then go to her and assist her in evacuating the building. Mr Anderson agreed that this could be something they could look at as part of the evacuation procedures in the Assembly.

Mr Anderson and Ms Watts left the meeting

4. Accessible Publications Policy

Ms Wilson distributed a copy of the Accessible Publications Policy and guidance to members of the group. This policy has been previously distributed to members for consultation and comments/feedback has been incorporated into the version of the policy provided. Ms Wilson requested that the group take time to read through the amended version of the policy and forward any further recommendations or comments to her. It was agreed a copy of the guidance and the policy will be emailed out to members of the group in the near future.

ACTION: Ms Dodson to email guidance and policy on Accessible Publications to members of the group.

Ms Wilson left the meeting.

5. Tours Update

Mrs Bannon provided an update in relation to the tours. All mystery shopping tours that have been carried out have provided points of learning in various areas, mainly access. It is hoped in the near future that a session will be organised where all of the tour guides meet with various representatives from relevant organisations to provide a further 'mystery shop' of the tour, to provide step by step feedback. The group agreed to participate in any future arrangements.

6. Statutory Duties Update

Ms Bannon provided the group with an update in relation to the Northern Ireland Assembly's Statutory Duties. The current Disability Action Plan is now coming to an end, a new 4 year plan is presently being written. All the correct procedures are being adhered to in relation to consultation and feedback in respect of the plan. It is intended the Disability Action Plan will be submitted to the Equality Commission following Public Consultation over the Summer Recess during 2012. The plan will be sent out to members of the group for consultation and feedback.

A four year Good Relations Strategy has also been developed, it is intended that this Strategy will be submitted to the Secretariat Management Group, the Commission

and then will go out to public consultation. The group agreed to participate in the consultation of the Strategy.

7. Internal Disability Advisory Group Update

Ms Bannon informed the group that as a direct action coming out of the Disability Action Plan an Internal Disability Advisory Group has now been established. This group comprises of a number of members of staff from across all Directorates in the Secretariat that either; have a disability, are the carer of a person with a disability or have a keen interest in taking forward disability related issues. The Internal Group has just had their first meeting, discussion in relation to the terms of reference; purpose and focus of group are currently being devised. Following discussion it was suggested by the Group that a meeting between the internal and external disability groups would be beneficial.

Action: Ms Dodson to arrange joint meeting during Summer Recess

8. AOB

Youth Assembly

Ms Mallon provided the group with an update in relation to the Northern Ireland Youth Assembly. The final stages of the process are now being put into place, with the application and interview phase beginning. It is intended to hire based on potential not experience, achievement of tasks will be looked at as will good communication skills. People with disabilities will be a core component to the success of this project. Ms Stewart advised Ms Mallon to be mindful that when looking at good communication skills, people with Autism will rule themselves out from applying for a position unless there are adjustments made. Ms Mallon explained all applicants will have someone accompany them through the process to mitigate against any barriers foreseen.

Outreach

Ms Mallon gave an overview of outreach and activities currently taking place, she explained to the group that she would be the main point of contact within the Northern Ireland Assembly in respect of outreach programmes and initiatives. It was agreed that Ms Dodson will email contact details for Ms Mallon to the group.

Action: Contact details for Ms Mallon to be emailed to group.

Group housekeeping

Ms Bannon spoke to the group in respect of revising the name of the group, group membership, the frequency of meetings and other possible venues for future meetings. There is at times difficulty in securing suitable rooms for meetings to be held in Parliament Buildings, Ms Bannon requested the group consider having future meetings in other organisations. Mr Wilson requested that possible dates be emailed to him and he will confirm if the conference room in the Cedar Foundation is available. The group confirmed they will consider a possible change of name for the group, membership and frequency of meetings and will forward any suggestions via email to Mrs Bannon or Ms Dodson.

Action: Ms Dodson to email possible dates for the next meeting to Mr Wilson.

9. Date of Next Meeting

To be confirmed.

Meeting ended at 3.10pm

Maria Bannon
Equality Manager