



Northern Ireland
Assembly

The Northern Ireland Assembly Commission **Disability Action Plan 2016-2021**



Alternative Formats

You can access and read this document on our website:

<http://www.niassembly.gov.uk/about-the-assembly/corporate-information/policies/disability-action-plan1/>

If you require this document in an alternative format such as Braille, audio CD/MP3, easy read, computer disc and/or another language please contact us to discuss your requirements:

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Foreword by the Speaker

For this Assembly to effectively conduct its business it is fundamentally important that it hears from every part of our community. The Assembly Commission itself recognises that it is vital to our own interests to ensure that the Assembly reaches out and is accessible to the entirety of our society. That is not without its challenges within an organisation delivering an array of different services to a variety of people, particularly within a listed building. However, it is a challenge we must meet



The Speaker

to encourage greater numbers of people with disabilities as elected Members and staff and if we want this Assembly to meaningfully engage with constituents and groups who wish to raise the issues which matter to them.

This Disability Action Plan forms part of our overarching equality and good relations programme and impacts on the Commission's priorities, activities and strategy. It has been developed by working closely with a wide range of disability organisations. While like other organisations we have statutory obligations, the Assembly Commission is clear that we should aim to lead by example in promoting positive attitudes and encouraging the participation of disabled people in public life. This Action Plan is therefore a further step forward in that work.

Robin Newton

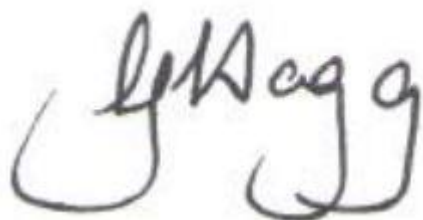
Foreword by the Clerk/Chief Executive

This Disability Action Plan confirms the Northern Ireland Assembly Commission's commitment to fulfilling the statutory obligations in compliance with Section 49A and 49B of the Disability Discrimination Act 1995 (as amended by the Disability Discrimination (NI) Order 2006). This Act places duties on public authorities, when carrying out their functions, 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.

The action plan is about more than just compliance: it demonstrates our commitment to mainstreaming disability issues and placing them at the core of what we do. The Commission's corporate strategy includes an aim to ensure that the Assembly and its work is accessible to all, and this action plan will play an essential part in achieving that aim, helping us to prioritise disability issues across the organisation.

A handwritten signature in black ink, appearing to read 'J. Hegg'. The signature is written in a cursive style with a large initial 'J'.

1. Introduction: Background to Disability Duties

1.1 The Disability Duties

The “disability duties” on public authorities came into force on 1 January 2007 as part of a series of changes to the Disability Discrimination Act 1995 (as amended by Article 5 of the Disability Discrimination (NI) Order 2006).

Under Section 49 of the Disability Discrimination (NI) Order 2006, referred to as “the disability duties”, the Assembly Commission, when exercising their functions, must have due regard to the need:

- **to promote positive attitudes towards disabled people, and**
- **to encourage participation by disabled people in public life.**

1.2 The disability duties require the Assembly Commission (the Commission) to submit to the Equality Commission for Northern Ireland (ECNI) disability action plans (DAPs) showing how it proposes to fulfil the disability duties in relation to its functions.

2. Previous Assembly Commission Disability Action Plans

2.1 The Assembly Commission has submitted three DAPs to the Equality Commission for Northern Ireland 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, and 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/>

2.2 Progress on all DAPs can be viewed via the Assembly 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/>

2.3 A five-year review of Disability Action Plans (DAPs) was published by the Assembly Commission which covered the period 15 December 2007-31 March 2013.

<http://www.niassembly.gov.uk/globalassets/documents/corporate/disability-action-plan/five-year-review-of-disability-action-plans.pdf>

A further five-year review of Disability Actions Plans will take place in 2018 to cover the period 1 April 2013- 31 March 2018.

2.4 A full public consultation on the draft Disability Action Plan 2016-21 was held for 14 weeks, from 16 March 2016 to 10 June 2016 – this included two additional weeks to allow for the Easter period. The consultation documents were published on the Assembly intranet and Assembly website, and an invitation to respond was issued to the Commission's equality and disability consultees; Assembly

Members; party support staff; Secretariat staff; and members of the Assembly Commission's External Disability Advisory Group.

Advertisements were placed in the Belfast Telegraph, the Newsletter and the Irish News, and social media was used to inform people that the consultation was under way.

3.0 Corporate Strategy for the Northern Ireland Assembly 2012-17 (revised 2015) and Commission Equality Scheme

3.1 When the Assembly Corporate Strategy was originally developed it had been intended that it would cover the final three years of the 2011-15 Assembly mandate and the first year of the 2015-19 mandate. However, the passage of the Northern Ireland (Miscellaneous Provisions) Act 2014 had the effect of extending the 2011-15 Assembly by a further year which meant that equality timelines were no longer in alignment with the corporate strategy.

3.2 The final two years of the Corporate Strategy 2012-2017 will now span two mandates, 2011-16 and 2016-21. This issue was raised with the Equality Commission for Northern Ireland regarding the corresponding timings of the Assembly Commission Equality Scheme and other relevant strategies. The Equality Commission agreed that it was content for the Assembly Commission Equality strategies to cover the period 2016-2021 to take account of the additional year. The current draft Disability Action Plan therefore covers the period 2016- 2021.

4.0 Disability Action Plan 2016 – 2021

4.1 The Assembly Commission is fully committed to the effective implementation of the Disability Action Plan. All necessary resources in

terms of people, time and finance will be made available for this purpose.

- 4.2 The Commission will ensure the effective communication of the Disability Action Plan to all staff and will provide training and guidance for staff in relation to their responsibilities.
- 4.3 The Commission is committed to engaging effectively with people with disabilities (including staff), and their representative groups, in the consultation, development, implementation and review of this Disability Action Plan.
- 4.4 The point of contact in relation to the consultation, implementation, review and evaluation of this Disability Action Plan is the Equality and Good Relations Unit. Contact details for the unit are available at page 2.

5.0 Functions of the Assembly Commission

The primary function of the Commission is 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.

- 5.1 The Commission's responsibilities do not include:
- The work of the Assembly as a legislature and scrutinising body;
 - The functions and work of the Northern Ireland Executive, Ministers or Departments.
- 5.2 The Commission is chaired by the Speaker and consists of five other Assembly members.
- Chairperson, The Speaker: Mr Robin Newton
Mr Jim Wells, DUP

Mr Alex Maskey, Sinn Féin
Mr Ross Hussey, UUP
Mr Alex Attwood, SDLP
Mr Stewart Dickson, Alliance Party

6. Staff and Visitors to the Assembly

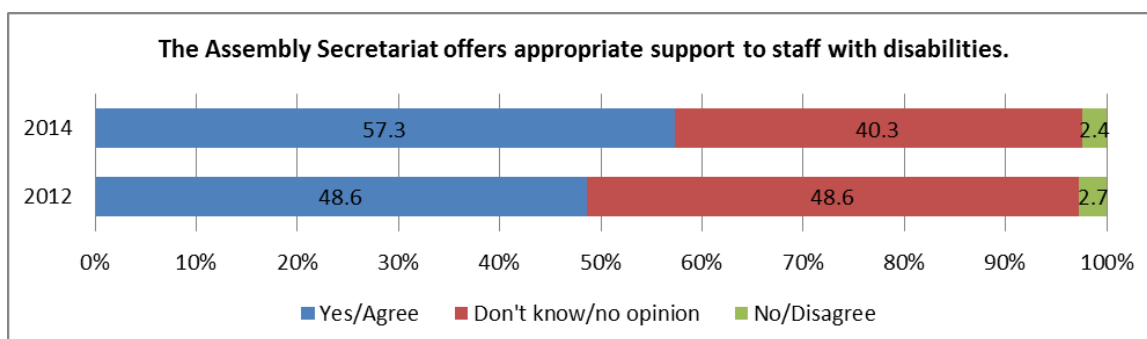
6.1 Assembly Commission staff

The Assembly currently employs approximately 370 permanent staff. In response to the 2014 Staff Disability Audit, 12 staff members declared that they have a disability which equates to 3.2% of staff.

Staff Survey

In November 2014 a staff survey was issued to staff within the Northern Ireland Assembly Secretariat. The findings of the survey were also compared with those of previous staff surveys.

It was found that the proportion of staff who said that they believe that the Assembly Secretariat offers appropriate support to staff with disabilities increased by 8.7 percentage points from 48.6% in 2012 to 57.3% in 2014 (35.1% in 2010).



6.2 Visitors to Parliament Buildings

From January 2011 to October 2015, the total number of people on record as having visited Parliament Buildings is 346,156.

This number represents the total number of visitors attending a diverse range of events, functions, guided tours and schools' education programmes. The Northern Ireland Assembly does not, however, keep a record of the number of public visitors attending Plenary sessions, Committee meetings or using the public dining facilities during Recesses.

The Assembly Commission currently holds the yearly total number of visitors broken down into functions, functions with tours, tours with hospitality and education programmes. (See table 1 below).

Table 1

Visitors to the Assembly 2011-2015

	<i>Functions & Tours</i>		<i>Education Programmes</i>	
	<i>Number of Groups</i>	<i>Number of Visitors</i>	<i>Number of Groups</i>	<i>Number of Visitors</i>
2011	1304	53371	576	18185
2012	1546	64208	587	17502
2013	1595	56521	520	17664
2014	1745	54633	476	16197
2015*	802	34394	393	13481
Total	6992	263127	2552	83029

**Period 1 January to 16 November 2015.*

7. Consultation

- 7.1 A public consultation on the draft Disability Action Plan 2016-21 was held for 14 weeks, from 16 March 2016 to 10 June 2016. This included two additional weeks to allow for the Easter period. The consultation documents were published on the Assembly intranet and Assembly website, and an invitation to respond was issued to the Commission's equality and disability consultees; Assembly Members; party support staff; Secretariat staff; and members of the Assembly Commission's External Disability Advisory Group. Advertisements were placed in the Belfast Telegraph, the Newsletter and the Irish News, and social media was used to inform people that the consultation was under way.
- 7.2 As well as conducting a formal public consultation, as part of pre-consultation, the Equality and Good Relations Unit discussed the development of the draft plan with the External Disability Advisory Group. This group comprises a range of external disability organisations and was set up by the Equality and Good Relations Unit in 2009 to facilitate engagement on disability issues. Members include: *Autism NI; Mencap; Disability Action; Jordanstown School for Deaf and Visually Impaired Children; National Autistic Society; Rights, Empowerment, Action and Lobbying (REAL) Disability Network; Multiple Sclerosis Society; Cedar Foundation; and Leonard Cheshire Disability.*
- 7.3 Group members suggested some additions to the plan at pre-consultation stage: training for front-line staff on dealing with people with brain injury; and better promotion at front desk of disability services on offer at Parliament Buildings. These actions have been included in the action plan.
- 7.4 One response was received to the public consultation, from the Cedar

Foundation User Forum - this is attached at Annexe 4 of the action plan. Some of the points raised by the forum are addressed by actions already included in the action plan; for example, actions with regard to mental health issues and to improved accessibility of information on the Assembly website for all users. Other actions proposed by the forum have been added to the action plan; for example, the addition of a glossary to the action plan, and a masterclass to help staff to improve their skills in working with people with communication difficulties, with a focus on the needs of people with acquired brain injury.

- 7.5 In its response to the public consultation on the Draft Good Relations Action Plan, Disability Action suggested that an event be held in Parliament Buildings to mark the International Day of Persons with Disabilities (3 December). As this event highlights disability, this suggestion has been included as an action in the Disability Action Plan.

8. Monitoring and Review

- 8.1 The action plan sets out the actions that the Commission plans to take forward over the next number of years. This plan will be kept under review and will be treated as a fluid document to which other actions can be added throughout its lifespan.
- 8.2 Throughout the lifespan of the Disability Action Plan, meetings will take place with policy leads to ensure adherence to the actions and timeframes outlined within the plan. These meetings will contribute to reviewing the action plan. Meetings will also be held twice a year with the Assembly's External Disability Advisory Group at which the plan will be reviewed and progress on it will be discussed.
- 8.3 We are committed to monitoring and reviewing our policies and

practices through the process of equality screening to ensure that we continue to deliver an effective service to people with disabilities. Progress towards the targets in this action plan will be incorporated into equality updates to the Commission Secretariat Management Group (SMG) and reported on annually to the Equality Commission.

- 8.4 The Equality and Good Relations Unit will be responsible for the day-to-day monitoring of the Assembly Commission's compliance with the disability duties and for the reporting on progress to the Equality Commission.
- 8.5 The Commission will report on the Disability Action Plan annually to the Equality Commission for Northern Ireland through its annual equality progress report. In addition, secretariat staff will provide papers to the Senior Management Group and/or the Commission relating to progressing actions contained within the DAP.
- 8.6 The Assembly Commission will carry out another five-year review of this Disability Action Plan in 2018. This five-year review will be submitted to the Equality Commission for Northern Ireland following approval by the Assembly Commission.

9. Opportunities to Participate in Public Life

- 9.1 The Commission has certain duties under Part II of the DDA with regard to a number of public life positions e.g. the Northern Ireland Public Services Ombudsman (NIPSO). A full list of these positions is available on request.
- 9.2 An external Disability Advisory Group comprising representatives from various disability organisations was established in November

2009. The group meets twice a year and provides advice on many issues affecting disabled people, particularly with regards to improving access to Parliament Buildings and the services provided by the Assembly Commission.

- 9.3 In 2016, the Northern Ireland Assembly will work with the National Assembly for Wales and the Flemish Parliament to make a joint application to Erasmus+ to deliver a trans-national youth project. This project will focus on engagement with disenfranchised groups and will give young people the opportunity to actively participate in democratic life. If the application is successful, the recruitment process will be designed to promote the opportunity to people with a disability.

10. Proposed Action Measures

- 10.1 On the following pages we have outlined targets and actions we propose to take in the coming years. For this action plan, we have included a column entitled 'Origin of Measure'. This will give the reader an indication as to whether the action is new or whether it builds on a previous measure or initiative.
- 10.2 This document will be a 'fluid' document which will be kept under review and therefore can be updated as necessary. We will continue to engage with organisations and individuals representing the interests of people with disabilities.

11. Structural changes to increase participation

- 11.1 The Disability Action Plan sets out a number of actions which will be taken forward throughout the life of the plan in order to:

- **to promote positive attitudes towards disabled people, and**

- **to encourage participation by disabled people in public life.**

11.2 These actions will be in addition to those covered by reasonable adjustments provisions in the Disability Discrimination Act.

We wish to thank all those who helped us as we have worked to meet the targets in our previous Disability Action Plans. We look forward to continued working with people with disabilities and their representative organisations as we begin to implement our fourth Disability Action Plan.

Glossary

ADHD	attention deficit hyperactivity disorder
DAP	disability action plan
DCAL	Department of Culture, Arts and Leisure
DDA	Disability Discrimination Act
ECNI	Equality Commission for Northern Ireland
EQIA	equality impact assessment
IS Office	Information Services Office
NAS	National Autistic Society
NIPSO	Northern Ireland Public Services Ombudsman
SMG	Secretariat Management Group (Assembly)
TUS	Trade Union Side
RaISe	Research and Information Services (Assembly)

ANNEXE 1

DISABILITY ACTION PLAN 2016 – 2021

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

The action plan is broken down into six categories:

- 1) Staff Training
- 2) Representation
- 3) Communication, Consultation and Engagement
- 4) Outreach and Education
- 5) Structural changes to increase participation and accessibility
- 6) Awards and Accreditation

1. Staff Training

Action Measure	Planned outcome/measurement	Lead	By when	Origin of Measure
Ensure staff receive training and guidance on disability equality legislation and disability awareness	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Design or acquire online e-disability training for staff through the Assembly's Moodle system. 	Learning and Development Team	May 2017	Builds upon a previous action with new measures added.
	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Mandatory training provided to all staff following establishment of e-disability training programme. 	Learning and Development Team	Sept 2017	Builds upon a previous measure
	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Monitoring of records to ensure that each member of staff receives training 	Learning Co-ordinators	Sept - Dec 2016	Builds upon a previous measure
	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> All staff made aware of the revised Equality Scheme and Disability Action Plan through e-learning training and direct communication to staff via intranet and email. Key awareness messages delivered through a range of information materials, eg, leaflets, flyers and posters. 	Learning and Development Team and Equality and Good Relations Unit.	Sept – Dec 2017	Builds upon a previous measure
	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Quality assurance of equality training packages and provision of feedback on any equality training courses. 	Learning and Development Team.	Jan – March 2018	Builds upon a previous measure
	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Evaluate training to determine if course objectives were met and staff knowledge of the disability duties has increased through the staff iTrent system, through, for example, completed questionnaires. 	Learning and Development Team.	Jan – March 2018	Builds upon a previous measure
	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Provide specific training sessions for staff on mental health issues. Examples of training programmes include: 	Learning and Development Team	Ongoing	Builds upon a previous measure

Action Measure	Planned outcome/measurement	Lead	By when	Origin of Measure
	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ○ Building Personal Resilience; ○ Mood Matters; and ○ Living Life to the Full. 			
	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ● Provide auditory and visual awareness programmes to front-line staff ● Provide opportunities for staff to obtain Level 1 sign language training ● Consider scope for provision of level 2 sign language training 	Learning and Development Team	2016-17 2016-17 2016-18	Builds upon a previous measure
	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ● Provide a masterclass for staff to improve their skills in working with people with communication difficulties, with a focus on the needs of people with acquired brain injury 	Learning and Development Team	2016-17	New measure
	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ● Deaf awareness training to be provided to all frontline staff as required. ● Autism awareness training to be provided to relevant staff, including refresher training for the Assembly's appointed Autism Champions as required. (See Louder Than Words Charter Mark and Access Award (NAS) Standards and at annexes 2 and 3) 	Facilities	As required	Builds upon a previous measure

2. Representation

Action Measure	Planned Outcome/Measurement	Lead	By when	Origin of Measure
Continue to hold meetings of the external Disability Advisory Group	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Continue to hold meetings twice a year, or as agreed by the group. • Review current membership with a view to developing a list of additional representatives to be invited to participate on the group. 	Equality and Good Relations Unit	Ongoing/ September 2016	Group established in 2009
Erasmus+ Application for future youth engagement project	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Apply to Erasmus+ for funding for a second youth engagement project. • If successful in securing funding, design recruitment process to promote the opportunity to people with a disability. • If successful in securing funding, set target for number of participants with disabilities 	Education Service	2016	New but builds on previous initiative
Explore concept of Parliament for People with Disabilities	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Develop concept with Disability Groups • Hold regional Parliaments • Submit Paper to Speaker • Final Parliament to be held in Assembly Senate Chamber • Consider hosting yearly event 	Outreach/ Disability Groups	2017	New

3. Communication, Consultation and Engagement

Action Measure	Planned Outcome/Measurement	Lead	By when	Origin of Measure
Provide guidance for visitors and staff on further disability access arrangements in relation to participation in Assembly business and events, eg, Committees, Plenary Session, seminars.	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Deliver regular Committee Witness Training (4 per year) Incorporate familiarisation of Parliament Buildings access arrangements 	Outreach	Ongoing	New
	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Develop Q&A guide for disability arrangements for visitors to Parliament Buildings, covering events, Committee meetings, Plenary sittings, Gallery rules, etc. Issue guidance to Disability Advisory Group for feedback 	Equality and Good Relations to lead, with input from Events, RaISe and Committees	December 2016	New
	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Develop guidance for staff organising events, including Committee stakeholder events, seminars, receptions, etc. Include checklist of issues to consider, including signage, accessibility, presentation, etc. Issue guidance to Disability Advisory Group for feedback 	Equality and Good Relations to lead, with input from Events, RaISe and Committees	June 2017	New
Sign language	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Develop proposals to progress a sign language policy, and include consideration of DCAL's work on sign language Work with relevant agencies in the development of this policy and stakeholders Present proposals to the Assembly Commission 	Equality and Good Relations Unit	2016	New
	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Gather information on practice in other legislatures as regards sign language 	Parliamentary Services	30 April 2016	New

	provision for Plenary debates and Committee meetings			
	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Continue to arrange, where appropriate and by prior arrangement, for a sign language interpreter to be in the Public Gallery to provide service during a relevant debate Continue to arrange, where appropriate and by prior arrangement, for a sign language interpreter to attend relevant committee meetings Develop guidance on when it is appropriate to arrange the services of a sign language interpreter for use in the Public Gallery (in line with the scheduled development of a sign language policy) 	Parliamentary Services	Ongoing	Builds on an existing measure
Provision of Braille business cards	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Provide the Speaker and Deputy Speakers with Braille business cards. 	Speaker's Office	For next mandate (2016-21)	Builds on an existing measure
Committee Gallery Rules	<p>In January 2016, rules for visitors to Committee Galleries were amended to enable building users with a disability to use electrical devices if required.</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> Keep rules under review 	Committees	Annually	New
Continue Assembly Community Connect training to people with disabilities	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Deliver bespoke 'How the Assembly Works' sessions to disability groups on request Deliver training regionally on request 	Outreach	Ongoing	Builds on an existing measure
Continue to use web-based material to promote positive attitudes towards disability	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Continue to provide web-based videos showing how to access Parliament Buildings Monitor/respond to any customer complaints/compliments in relation to access to information about services 	Facilities	Ongoing	Builds on an existing measure

Employer-supported volunteering	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Continue to work with Business in the Community to identify and offer volunteering opportunities to staff 	Human Resources Office	Continuous	Introduced in 2012
Conduct annual exercise to encourage staff to provide anonymous information to assist with monitoring and reporting on disabilities in the workplace	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Annual disability survey issued each year to collect statistical data in order to calculate numbers and percentages of staff who have a disability 	Human Resources Office	March 2016 and annually thereafter	Builds on an existing measure
Ensure that customer satisfaction surveys are carried out that allow for a review of findings by disability	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Visitor survey to include an additional question on access Survey to be issued three times a year Monitor survey responses for compliments/complaints Identify action points as required 	Equality and Good Relations Unit, in conjunction with RaSe, Events and Outreach	Survey conducted three times a year	Builds on an existing measure
Increase the level of accessible/inclusive information so that users with a disability can access digital services and information as independently as possible and make informed choices	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <u>Outcome:</u> Users with a disability are aware of the availability of accessible information and services and can make use of them Develop and implement an accessible information guidance to improve access to information for users who have a disability. The guidance will accompany the Digital First Strategy. <u>Measurement:</u> Feedback from users via website feedback mechanisms, surveys, and feedback from other partnerships and networks. The above will be published in the NI Assembly Commission's (the Commission) annual Section 75 report to the Equality Commission. 	Communications Office / IS Office Communications Office	Ongoing Sept 2016	Builds on an existing measure

Digital First EQIA	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • <u>Outcome:</u> Improve our understanding of any issues and needs that may impact Digital First • <u>Measurement:</u> Regular consultation with and feedback from partnerships, formal and informal networks that will assist us in assessing and monitoring products and services in relation to equality issues and their impact. • Compliments and complaints received about services will also be used to help identify the impact of good practices and any adverse impact of existing practices. • The above will be published in the NI Assembly Commission's (the Commission) annual Section 75 report to the Equality Commission. 	Communications Office	Ongoing	Digital First EQIA undertaken from July to October 2015
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4. Outreach and Education

Action Measure	Planned Outcome/Measurement	Lead	By when	Origin of Measure
Education for Special Needs Schools	<p>The Education Service conducts focus groups on behalf of Assembly Committees. The Research and Information Service (RaISe) has developed a framework for selecting a broad cross-section of the youth population. The framework will continue to ensure that children who attend special schools participate in every focus group.</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> Continue to engage with special schools through focus groups. (At least one special school will always be included in the focus group sample) 	Education Service/RaISe	Ongoing	Builds on an existing measure
	<p>The Education Service has a continued engagement with special schools, several of which make repeat bookings to visit the Assembly. Staff from the service also conduct outreach visits to several of these schools. Services are advertised to every special school in Northern Ireland.</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> Continue to engage with special schools Continue to advertise Education Service to every special school in Northern Ireland and encourage an increase in the number of special schools participating in the Education programme each year. (12.5% of special schools participated in the Education programme in 2014-15 – 5 out of 40) 	Education Service	Ongoing	Builds on an existing measure

	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Monitor the number of outreach and inward visits involving special schools. 			
Youth Congress	<p>Approximately 90 young people took part in the annual sitting of the Northern Ireland Youth Congress in the Assembly Chamber on 25 November 2015. Participants came from across Northern Ireland and included young people with a range of special educational needs (ADHD, Asperger's syndrome, autism). Young people from Mencap also participated in the debate.</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> Explore possibility of hosting another Youth Congress at Parliament Buildings (subject to necessary approvals). 	Education Service	2016/17	New
Films	<p>The Education Service has created a number of short films which aim to explain the work of the Assembly to young people and encourage them to engage with its work. Videos have been subtitled to broaden the appeal of the resources to young people who have hearing impairments.</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> Continue to make available subtitled short films Subtitle any future short films 	Education Service	Ongoing As required	Builds on an existing measure
Continue to provide support to Assembly Charity of the Year	<p>The Assembly's Charity Policy notes the charitable purposes listed in the Charities Act (Northern Ireland) 2008, which include relief of those in need by reason of disability.</p> <p>Positive Futures, the leading local charity for people with a learning disability, acquired brain injury or autistic spectrum condition, is the chosen charity for the Sept 2015-June 2016 period</p>	Outreach	Ongoing. New charity year begins September every year.	Builds on an existing measure

	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Facilitate regular meetings of Charity Fundraising Group • Facilitate regular meetings with Charity of the Year • Host minimum of two events per year involving Assembly and Charity of the Year. • Facilitate year-round collection points to raise money for charity 			
Regular meetings with Section 75 groups to inform reviews of Engagement	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Engagement Strategy reviewed with Disability Action Group 	Outreach	Annually	Builds on an existing measure
Continue to work with disability organisations through Assembly Community Connect	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Deliver accessible training within Parliament Buildings and around NI (Monthly 'How the Assembly Works' and 'Insight into' training during session, and four regional 'Get Involved' conferences across NI) • Develop bespoke programmes and projects for disability groups by working with disability groups to tailor training and resources to make them more accessible 	Outreach	Ongoing	Builds on an existing measure
Mark the International Day of Persons with Disabilities (3 December)	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Host an event at Parliament Buildings to mark International Day of Persons with Disabilities 	Outreach	2016	New measure

5. Structural changes to increase participation and accessibility

Action Measure	Planned Outcome/Measurement	Policy Lead	By when	Origin of Measure
Review of access audits as per standards 4, 5 and 8 of Access Award (NAS) Standards	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Review access audits as per standards 4, 5 and 8 of Access Award (NAS) Standards (see annexe 3) Continue to follow and review health and safety procedure 	Facilities	Ongoing	Builds on an existing measure.
Fire Evacuation - explore potential options to provide or upgrade lift(s).	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Initial meetings with Architect and Fire Officer have taken place to explore options. Alternative proposals will be provided for consideration at a future meeting of the Commission. 	Facilities	Work to be completed during 2016, subject to approval	New
Maintain signage	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Maintain quality of: <ul style="list-style-type: none"> Pictorial signage images; Braille signage and other signage in Parliament Buildings Tactile 'tour map' of Parliament Buildings; Add additional signage as required (including at reception) 	Facilities	Ongoing	Builds on an existing measure
Web publishing training for staff - Training is provided to Assembly Staff on the use of the content management system used to publish to the Assembly website. Part of this training includes accessibility issues.	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <u>Outcome:</u> Improved accessibility of information/content on the Assembly website for all users. <u>Measurement:</u> Monitor and assess accessibility of information/content on the Assembly website. <p>The above will be published in the NI Assembly Commission's (the Commission)</p>	Communications Office	Ongoing	Builds on an existing measure

	annual Section 75 report to the Equality Commission.			
Accessibility web publishing guidance for staff	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • <u>Outcome:</u> Improved accessibility of information/content on the Assembly website for all users. <p>Formal guidance will be developed by the Web Manager</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • <u>Measurement:</u> Monitor and assess accessibility on our website. <p>The above will be published in the NI Assembly Commission's annual Section 75 report to the Equality Commission.</p>	Communications Office Sept 2016	Ongoing Sept 2016	Builds on an existing measure
Monitor and assess accessibility of our website Undertake assessment exercise and address issues of inaccessibility	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • <u>Outcome:</u> Improved accessibility • <u>Measurement:</u> Website accessibility of recognised standard. (Level AAA of the W3C Web Content Accessibility Guidelines 2.0) • Monitor and assess accessibility on our website. • The above will be published in the NI Assembly Commission's annual Section 75 report to the Equality Commission 	Communications Office	Ongoing	Builds on a previous measure
Increase the number of disabled parking bays in upper car parks.	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Increase the number of upper car park disabled parking bays above the required minimum under DDA. Extra spaces were provided in December 2015. 	Facilities	Keep under review	Builds on an existing measure

Consideration of access/egress requirements from ground floor to lower ground floor	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Investigate potential options to provide ramped access from ground floor to lower ground floor level and removal of current lift. 	Facilities	Work to be undertaken in 2016, subject to approval	Builds on an existing measure
Review existing layout of Assembly Chamber and previous options to improve accessibility	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Potential options provided for consideration by the Assembly Commission 	Facilities	Keep under review	Builds on an existing measure
Consideration of options for provision of automatic opening of corridor doors	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Investigate options and clarify the requirements in relation to escape routes, potential for access control, etc. Option study to be provided for consideration by the Assembly Commission 	Facilities	Work to be undertaken in 2016 (subject to approval)	New
Consideration of alterations to counter in Members' Bar to provide serving area for wheelchair users	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Potential layout with provision for wheelchair users at low level to be provided for the Assembly Commission 	Facilities	Work to be undertaken in 2016 (subject to approval)	New
Maintenance of access items for members of the public	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Regular checks throughout the year on items, including iPad, Braille tour map and changing places facility. Continue to promote accessible tours and facilities (including at reception) 	Facilities	As required	Builds on an existing measure
Continue to participate in Guaranteed Interview Scheme (GIS), which offers a guaranteed interview to applicants with a disability who meet the essential criteria for the post.	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Continue to offer scheme for internal and external recruitment exercises. Continued provision of disability section in application form whereby an applicant can indicate whether they wish to apply under the Guaranteed Interview Scheme for that particular role and the basis on which they qualify for the scheme. (NB, the scheme will 	Human Resources Office	Continuous	Introduced in December 2011

	only apply if there are shortlisting criteria for the post.)			
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6. Awards and Accreditation

Action Measure	Planned Outcome/Measurement	Policy Lead	By when	Origin of Measure
Maintain Action on Hearing Loss Award	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Undergo assessment as required to indicate that standards have been met (See standards attached at annexe 2) 	Facilities	As required	Award first received in 2011
Maintain Autism Award	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Continue to meet standards as outlined at annexe 3) 	Facilities	As required	Award first received in 2012
Continue to proactively raise awareness of work of the Assembly through Equality Commission	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Continued participation in speaking events, and contribution to any relevant articles/activity by Equality Commission 	Equality and Good Relations Unit	As required	Builds on an existing measure

Reporting and Monitoring

Issue Identified	Action	Planned outcome/measurement	Lead	Timeline
Regular monitoring of progress against identified actions	Provide progress update to SMG and the Assembly Commission every year	Every year, following liaison with business areas, provide summary of directorate activity to SMG/Commission, charting progress against targets and including any additional actions.	Equality and Good Relations Unit	Annually
	Report to the Equality Commission annually on progress	As part of annual report to the Equality Commission, provide full update of directorate activity against action plan targets.	Equality and Good Relations Unit	31 August every year

Annexe 2

Louder Than Words Charter mark

Standard 1

- Train Staff to communicate with Customers Deaf Awareness Training to be given to all frontline staff, Health & Safety/internal trainers and to be incorporated in induction courses. Peripheral staff to have basic deaf awareness briefings.
- Staff Accessing Further Information Staff working with deaf colleagues to have basic work based sign course and line managers of deaf staff to have received deaf awareness training Staff working with text phones to be trained in their use.

Standard 2

- Have Clear and Visible Deaf Awareness Polices. Equal Opportunities Policies to include deaf/disabled staff.
- Communication and Support Provision
- Accessibility of Policies and Communication
- Communication of Polices Any customer charters / policies to include deaf/disabled staff. Availability of policy. Customer Charters and internal policies must be easily available and in plain English.

Standard 3

- Provide Clear information about your products and services. Information must be easy to read and conform to plain English guidelines. (See attached leaflet)
- Written Information
- Web Based Information Website/intranet needs to be accessible and any video clips or audio components to have a text alternative
- Training, videos/promotional videos, and materials 100% of new videos to be subtitled. 100% of new videos aimed at deaf and disabled people to have sign language insert.

Standard 4

- Use appropriate equipment and maintain it correctly Deaf and hard of hearing staff must be assessed for equipment and provided with it as necessary.
- Text phones and Text - Relay Text phone must not be on answer-phone. 80% of customers must be satisfied with the equipment provided, e.g. text phones and induction loops
- Loop system Induction loops must be provided in 25% of meeting rooms, 50% of customer counter points and at main reception points. . Induction loops must be tested every 3 months and text phone at least every six months. Loop signs must be displayed wherever a loop sign is installed. Text phone numbers must be advertised on headed paper and on leaflets.

Standard 5

- Create a good listening environment.
- Signage must be clear, visible and well lit. 80% of customers must be satisfied that background noise levels are low, that signage is clear and lighting levels good enough for lip-reading. Visual alternatives must be provided for any audible announcements

Standard 6

- Produce and follow clear health and safety procedures
- Evacuation plans must be clear, visible and easy to read. . 100% of deaf staff that cannot hear the fire alarm must have a vibrating pager. Flashing lights to be installed in remote areas where customers are left on their own.

- 100% Health and safety officers aware of issues around evacuation of deaf staff. Lifts to be equipped with either an amplified telephone or a notice advising of evacuation procedures.

Standard 7

- Meet requests for communication support whenever possible 100% of key staff must be able to book communication support. 100% of the communication support you use must be registered with CACDP or SASLI (for Scotland). Organisations must offer a range of communication support including interpreters, lip speakers, note takers and speech to text or palantype. 100% of deaf and hard of hearing staff to be assessed for communication support as appropriate.
- Different forms of Language Service Professionals (LSP's) 80% of customers must be satisfied with the communication support provided.

Standard 8

- Be comfortable and familiar with the service Text Relay provides. Staff must know how to use Text Relay Service. Text Relay service should be included in customer materials.

Standard 9

- Consult customers and staff Customers and staff should be surveyed on an annual basis to check satisfaction with services offered. An Action Plan should be drawn up to ensure that concerns raised are dealt with
- Surveys

Standard 10

- Be open about your employment practices
- Job description in plain English
- Recruitment and selection - Communication support must be available for 100% of interviews for deaf and hard of hearing candidates (as required). Internal job and promotion opportunities must be accessible to deaf and hard of hearing staff.
- Training and development - Line managers and teams of deaf and hard of hearing staff must have face-to-face deaf awareness training. Communication support must be offered to deaf and hard of hearing staff for all training courses. Deaf staff must be satisfied with any communication support provided for training courses.
- Appraisal and promotion
- Reasonable adjustments - 100% of deaf and hard of hearing staff should have Access to Work (or equivalent) assessment. At least 60% of staff should be satisfied with communication between them and their line manager.

Annexe 3

Access Award (National Autistic Society) Standards

- **Standard 1. Train staff to communicate with customers**
Training its staff in autism awareness is the first step to an organisation being truly autism aware and meeting the needs of all people.
- **Standard 2. Have clear and visible disability policies**
It is important that an organisation's policies do not discriminate in any way against people with disabilities in particular autism. They must address the needs of people with autism to ensure that they have the same access to information and to employment as other people.
- **Standard 3. Provide clear information about your products and services.**
Any materials that an organisation produces about its products and services need to be accessible to all persons. This includes brochures, leaflets, forms, fact sheets and videos. Some people may find it easier for information to be provided in plain English, online or through pictures etc.
- **Standard 4. Create a good listening environment**
At reception, customer service points and meeting rooms, steps must be taken to reduce background noise where possible. It would be beneficial if a quiet room could be provided in the event that if someone needs a quiet moment prior to attending a meeting or event.
- **Standard 5. Produce and follow clear health and safety procedures**
Fire, smoke and lift alarms must be accessible to all persons. Guidance should be provided in advance advising
- **Standard 6. Meet request for communication support whenever possible.**
Communication support needs to be provided both for customers and staff.
- **Standard 7. Be comfortable and familiar with the services which NAS and Autism NI provide**
- **Standard 8. Consult customers and staff.**
To ensure that an organisation is providing the best service to all customers, service users, staff and job applicants, it is important that it regularly consults with them. This can be done either by running focus groups or by sending questionnaires. The areas consulted on should include quality of autism awareness, ease of accessing information and quality of any communication support provided.
- **Standard 9. Be open about your employment practices.**
Job opportunities should be accessible to people with autism. Care should be taken to ensure that job description and application forms are in plain English and without jargon or acronyms. All internal vacancies should be clearly displayed on notice boards and Intranets. Interviews for people with disabilities must be provided with the appropriate communication support as requested. Well before the

interview, it should be established whether the candidate requires special assistance, and if so, what type.

- **Standard 10. Has Consideration been given to sensory issues**
Policies, procedures, local protocol & guidelines, planning and practise take into account the nature of sensory differences in people with autism



Northern Ireland
Assembly

ANNEXE 4

**Northern Ireland Assembly Commission
Draft Disability Action Plan 2016-2021**

Consultation Response Form

The Northern Ireland Assembly Commission welcomes your views on the proposed content of the Assembly Commission Draft Disability Action Plan 2016-21, which can be downloaded [here](#):

Please return your completed response form by **10 June 2016**, by email or post, to:

Email: equality@niassembly.gov.uk

Post: Equality and Good Relations Unit
Room 26, Parliament Buildings
Ballymiscaw
Stormont
BELFAST
BT4 3XX

Telephone: 028 9041 8377

Textphone: 028 9052 1209

Alternative Formats

If you require this document in an alternative format such as Braille, audio CD/MP3, easy read, computer disc and/or another language, please contact us to discuss your requirements.

Consultee details

Name	The Cedar Foundation User Forum
Name of Organisation (if applicable)	The Cedar Foundation

In line with the Assembly Commission's commitment to openness and transparency, all responses will be treated as public and may be published on the Assembly website as part of the consultation process.

If you are content for your name, or the name of your organisation, to be published alongside your response, please tick this box:

If you do not tick this box, your response will be treated as anonymous.

Question 1: Do you have any comments on any of the proposed actions in category 1, Staff Training?

(Pages 18-19 of Action Plan)

Top down approach / ensure management buy in.

E-learning approach- can everyone use/have access to this?

Will e-learning be backed up with Classroom learning.

Need to include Brain Injury and communication difficulties training.

Need to have an awareness of mental health issues.

Question 2: Do you have any comments on any of the proposed actions in category 2, Representation?

(Page 20 of Action Plan)

Need to make language in documents/meetings understandable

Question 3: Do you have any comments on any of the proposed actions in category 3, Communication, Consultation and Engagement? (Pages 21-24 of Action Plan)

Need to ensure that it takes into account all types of disabilities
Make sure that people know where to go to get the information

Question 4: Do you have comments on any of the proposed actions under category 4, Outreach and Education? (Pages 25-27 of Action Plan)

n/a

Question 5: Do you have any comments on any of the proposed actions under category 5, Structural Changes to Increase Participation and Accessibility? (Pages 28-30 of Action Plan)

In line with DDA ring fencing posts for people with disabilities.

Question 6: Do you have any comments on any of the proposed actions under category 6, Awards and Accreditation? (Page 31 of Action Plan)

n/a

Question 7: Do you have any other comments on the draft action plan?

It would be good to have a glossary listing all abbreviations.

Thank you for taking the time to respond to this consultation

Consultation Responses and Freedom of Information

The Northern Ireland Assembly Commission will usually publish a summary of responses following the completion of the consultation process. If you are content for your name, or the name of your organisation, to be published alongside your response, please inform us at page 2 of the form; otherwise we will publish your response anonymously. Any automatic confidentiality disclaimer generated by your IT system will be taken to apply only to information in your response for which confidentiality has been specifically requested.

If we are asked to disclose responses under freedom of information legislation, we will take any requests for confidentiality into account. However, confidentiality cannot be guaranteed. We will handle appropriately any personal data you provide in accordance with the Data Protection Act 1998. For further information about confidentiality of responses, please contact the Information Commissioner's Office or visit their website at <https://ico.org.uk/>