

## Disability Action Plan 2022-25

### Consultation Comments and Responses Table

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

Consultee comments	Response
Every staff member within the NI Assembly should receive Disability Awareness Training at induction and refreshed every 3 years, to include - Physical, Sensory, Learning Disability, Autism, Brain Injury, Communication with hidden disabilities. <i>(relates to action 1.1)</i>	Noted.  The Disability Action Plan 2022-25 has been updated at point 1.1 to include training every 3 years.
Staff need to be aware that some disabilities are not visible and that everyone should be treated equally. <i>(relates to action 1.4)</i>	Training on hidden disabilities will be included in the staff training.
It is important that any member of staff who will meet someone with a disability should have training in Human Rights, since Human Rights include being treated with dignity, fairness, equality, and respect. This will help raise awareness and improve staff's knowledge, including their communication skills with people who have a learning disability. <i>(relates to action 1.1)</i>	Noted.  Disability training as noted at 1.1 of the Disability Action Plan 2022-25 will include the importance of being treated with dignity, fairness, equality, and respect.
Agree that training for a diverse range of disabilities should be included from auditory to visual awareness as stated. It is suggested that the Assembly should not only consider sign language classes but also Makaton, which is specific sign language designed for people with a learning disability. <i>(relates to action 1.2)</i>	The Assembly Commission recognises the importance of Makaton and in 2018 two 'Introduction to Makaton' workshops were delivered to Assembly Commission staff.
Having people who are experts by experience to facilitate some of the training for staff would be a good way for staff to learn what it is like to have a disability.	The Assembly Commission's Learning & Development team are always keen to engage with facilitators who can raise disability awareness for staff. In relation to the provision of training, we currently engage a range of trainers from the disability sector to deliver awareness

	<p>training across the organisation. We also have a range of staff volunteers within the organisation that champion awareness. Currently we have Mental Health First Aiders and Autism Champions who receive regular training support in their roles. As part of the Assembly Commission's Learning &amp; Development Strategy we are keen to build collaboration and shared knowledge within Assembly Commission teams and will explore this area further. We also hope to create a 'knowledge hub' that will be able to host useful resources for staff.</p>
<p>The suggestion of Masterclasses focusing on a range of conditions from dementia, chronic fatigue, acquired brain injury, autism, depression and mental health issues was a great idea and it also demonstrated that the Assembly are working to be fair and equitable to a diverse range of people with different conditions. <i>(relates to action 1.4)</i></p>	<p>Noted.</p>
<p>Agree with the idea of the Assembly linking the master classes to national awareness days. Not only would this help to raise awareness, but also provide a positive best practice approach for other organisations and hopefully encourage others to follow their lead. <i>(relates to action 1.4)</i></p>	<p>Noted.</p>
<p>The Jam Card should have already been signed up to as it would demonstrate the Assembly's willingness to become a disability friendly organisation. <i>(relates to action 1.5)</i></p>	<p>Noted.</p> <p>As outlined at 1.5 of the Disability Action Plan 2022-25, the Assembly Commission will join the JAM (Just a Minute) Card Friendly organisation in year 1 of the Disability Action Plan 2022-25.</p>
<p>Agree with the need for websites to be accessible and many organisations have had this for years. Therefore, agree with revising the website. However, would also note that having a website that people with a disability can use is important, but the information on the website also needs to be accessible. Otherwise, this feels a little tokenistic. <i>(relates to action 3.9)</i></p>	<p>Noted.</p> <p>In the Disability Action Plan 2022-25, an action is included at 3.9 to take account of opportunities to improve the website and address potential barriers, this will include access to information.</p>

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

Comments	Response
Using a coproduction framework to have a youth assembly inclusive of disability and set up a Parliament for people with disabilities is a great idea.	Noted.
When making the Assembly Chamber more accessible involve people with disabilities in this process from the get go. <i>(relates to action 2.4)</i>	Noted.
<p>Agree you should be engaging with external disability advisory groups and they should be made up of a range of disability expertise. Agree that it is vital to inform providers about the work of the Assembly and to get service providers' input.</p> <p>However, the Assembly should also be reminded that it is also vital that you get the input of service users who have a range of disabilities as they are experts by experience and should be involved in any work that affects their life. It will also demonstrate that the Assembly recognises that people with disabilities are part of their local communities and can contribute in a meaningful way to society. <i>(relates to action 2.4)</i></p>	<p>Noted.</p> <p>The Assembly Commission will consult with people with disabilities, as appropriate, throughout the lifespan of the Disability Action Plan 2022-25.</p>
Having young people with disabilities as members of a youth assembly was a great idea. Involving people at a young age would help them to understand the important work of the Assembly, as well giving them the opportunity to share their own views. <i>(relates to action 2.2)</i>	Noted.
Having a voice is important so they can help affect positive change. It is important that people of all ages who have a disability are given the opportunity to share their opinions and views.	Noted.
The Assembly Chamber should be made accessible to all and was felt a forward-thinking government should have this in place.	Noted.

<p>It is noted that with older buildings it may take money and work to do this. Thirty-four consultees from an organisation said they like Stormont Buildings and the current design which explains the age and history but felt more could and should be done to make it accessible. However, nine consultees felt strongly that any structural changes needed to increase accessibility should be kept in line with the original design, feel and look of the building. <i>(relates to action 2.4)</i></p>	<p>Noted.</p>
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**Question 3:** Do you have any comments on any of the proposed actions in category 3, Communication, Consultation and Engagement?

Comments	Response
All of the proposed actions are positive; however, it will be essential that you involve people with disabilities in the planning, implementation, review and launch of all of these actions. Be transparent and publish the findings, if people did not find the building accessible state what will be done and when (accountability). <i>(relates to action 7.1)</i>	Noted.  As outlined at 7.1 of the Disability Action Plan 2022-25 a report on progress on the Plan will be presented to the Secretariat Management Group (SMG) every six months and the Assembly Commission every year. These six-monthly update reports will be published on the Assembly website to ensure transparency and to allow the public to track progress on the implementation of the Disability Action Plan 2022-25.
Agreed that staff should be kept up to date on the progress of the new Disability Action Plan as it will raise staff awareness of the work the Assembly Commission is doing around issues that affect people with a disability. <i>(relates to action 3.1)</i>	Noted.  This reflects action 3.1 in the Disability Action Plan 2022-25.
Updates should also be reported to the public, so they are aware of any progress and understand what the Assembly Committees are doing around the wider issues that affect people with a disability. <i>(relates to action 7.1)</i>	As noted above a report on progress on the Disability Action Plan 2022-25 will be presented to SMG every six months and the Assembly Commission every year. These six-monthly update reports will be published on the Assembly website to ensure transparency and to allow the public to track progress on the implementation of the Disability Action Plan 2022-25. This will include updates from Committees.
Really liked the idea of mystery visitors to the Parliament Buildings to give feedback on the services and facilities provided for people with a disability. <i>(relates to action 3.2)</i>	Noted.
Twenty-three consultees from an organisation said they would like the opportunity to be a mystery visitor themselves. They highlighted that it should be people with a diverse range of disabilities, including learning disabilities so they can give real feedback on the tour. <i>(relates to action 3.2)</i>	The Assembly's Equality and Good Relations Unit will implement this action with support from disability organisations and note your interest in participation.
Agree with the suggestion of a visitor survey and understand that it will help to	Noted.

get a better picture of the visitor experience but highlight that it needs to be in accessible formats so everyone can contribute their opinions after their visit to the Parliament Buildings. <i>(relates to action 3.3)</i>	It is anticipated that the Assembly Commission's Good Relations Action Plan 2022-25 will contain an action to ensure that the Visitor Survey is mainstreamed across services, using digital formats in addition to the current paper methods, which interface with the public in order to collect data to inform access and service provision. Surveys will be provided in accessible formats.
Agree that the work of the Committees should be accessible to all including people with a disability. Agree that the Committees should review consultations to ensure that they are inclusive and provided in assessable formats so people with disabilities can be meaningfully involved. Some consultees from an organisation said they were lucky as through ARC NI, they are empowered to take part in consultations. <i>(relates to action 3.7)</i>	Noted.
However, consultees from an organisation said they know without this support, they would not always be able to take part because the consultations are not always in plain English or Easy Read format. Some consultees also said that you need to consider other ways of highlighting consultations, as without ARC NI they would not always know there are consultations on different subjects. They suggested, newspapers, radio and TV campaigns should be used as well as the internet. Consultees also suggested there should be groups of people with disabilities in different council areas that are kept informed that can also feed their opinions to a regional group. <i>(relates to action 3.7)</i>	Noted.  This relates to 3.7 of the Disability Action Plan 2022-25 and your comments will be forwarded to Committees staff to consider when the action is being implemented.
Creating an accessible website is a great idea and will help people to understand, as well as raise awareness of, what facilities for disabled people are available at Parliament Buildings. <i>(relates to action 3.8)</i>	Noted.  This is reflected at action 3.8 of the Disability Action Plan 2022-25.

<p>Some consultees also agree that you should include links to accessible information.</p> <p>Some consultees agree with the idea of promoting positive attitudes towards people with disabilities through images on the Assembly website and in their publications, but some consultees want to ensure that it is not tokenism. By including people with a learning disability in Committees then real-life images with actual positive stories and achievements would be available with consent in place. This will meaningfully demonstrate how people with lived experiences are contributing to the Assembly, rather than just getting an image that looks positive with no substance behind it. <i>(relates to action 3.9)</i></p>	<p>Noted.</p> <p>Your comments will be forwarded to the Assembly Commission's Communications Office to consider as part of the review of images used in Assembly communications as reflected at 3.9 of the Disability Action Plan 2022-25.</p>
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**Question 4:** Do you have comments on any of the proposed actions under category 4, Outreach and Education?

Comments	Response
Young people with disabilities/additional needs attend mainstream school too. This cohort of young people should be included too. Not all young people with Disabilities attend Special School. Talk/consult with the young people, they may have improvement ideas (coproduce) Again, why is parliament only talking to special school teachers? This should be broader. <i>(relates to action 4.5)</i>	The Education Service engages with schools from all sectors. Young people with disabilities who attend mainstream schools participate in the general Education Service programme, which is advertised to all schools at the beginning of every academic year, by mailshot, email and through the C2K Noticeboard (schools network provider). Young people with disabilities also participate in mainstream school focus groups for Assembly Committee consultations. The Assembly Commission does not know if young people within a mainstream class have disabilities but by having the target of including at least one special school in the cohort of schools participating in a focus group exercise, it increases the probability of participation by young people with disabilities.
It is a good idea to create a short video promoting tour accessibility at Parliament Buildings and to make sure it is updated as and when any new facilities or changes are made. <i>(relates to action 4.1)</i>	Noted.
The idea of autism and dementia friendly tours was also received well by all members within a consultee organisation. Some members who have autism said it is important to make sure you ask people with autism to test out the tours to make sure everything has been considered and done appropriately. <i>(relates to action 4.3 and 4.4)</i>	Noted.  This will be completed as part of action 4.3 and 4.4.
A member organisation agreed that the Assembly should be engaging with Special Schools to get young peoples' views. They also agreed with the idea of a conference every two years for teachers to provide awareness and understanding of education services. <i>(relates to action 4.5 and 4.7)</i>	Noted.
Nineteen consultees from an organisation went further and said it should be extended to include parents/carers and the young people themselves having the opportunity to attend the conference to keep everyone informed. <i>(relates to action 4.7)</i>	The Education Service Teacher Training Programme is offered to teachers from all schools to increase teachers' knowledge about how the Assembly works and raise awareness of the educational resources produced by the Education Service, which can be used in the classroom. The content



	<p>of this programme would not be pitched at the right level for young people, who will benefit more from participating in the Assembly Education Service's programme for schools. All schools receive an invitation to participate in that programme at the start of every academic year, via a postal mailshot and notification on the C2K Noticeboard, to which all schools and teachers have access. Programmes for special school groups are tailored to meet the needs of the particular group, in partnership with teachers. Parents/carers would be welcome to join a group, subject to school policy. In addition, the Assembly's Public Engagement Team provides a programme that informs people about how to engage with and participate in the work of the Assembly and that programme would be open to groups of parents/carers and, indeed, young people.</p>
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**Question 5:** Do you have any comments on any of the proposed actions under category 5, Structural Changes to Increase Participation and Accessibility?

Comments	Response
Parliament should engage with organisations and people with disabilities, they will have suggestions, what is working, what is not and potential solutions. <i>(relates to action 2.1)</i>	Noted. Business areas will engage with organisations and people with disabilities as the actions at 2.1 are implemented.
<p>All consultees of an organisation thought the provision of opportunities for people with a disability to develop their skills and confidence in the workplace and gain meaningful work experience at Stormont was a great idea.</p> <p>Twenty-four consultees of an organisation went further and said it needs to have the option that if someone does well in the placement, that there are opportunities for permanent employment. <i>(relates to action 5.1)</i></p>	<p>Noted.</p> <p>The Assembly Commission is an equal opportunities employer and is committed to the principle that recruitment should be solely on the basis of merit. All permanent vacancies will be advertised externally and we welcome applications from all eligible applicants, irrespective of religious belief, political opinion, race, age, gender, disability, marital status, sexual orientation or people with dependants or without.</p> <p>The Guaranteed Interview Scheme (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 role, the applicant will be invited to interview.</p> <p>If an assessment or test is used as a shortlisting tool then applicants applying under GIS will not be required to complete the assessment or test and will be offered a guaranteed interview, provided that they demonstrate in their application form that they meet the essential criteria for the role.</p>
As spoken about earlier in some of the above answers participation and accessibility is vital across all work undertaken by the Assembly. This will ensure everyone will not only be able to access the building but can also actively	Noted.

participate in Committees and have their voice heard. <i>(relates to action 5.2)</i>	
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**Question 6:** Do you have any comments on any of the proposed actions under category 6, Awards and Accreditation?

Comments	Response
Evidence how you have maintained the awards and publish this - accountability. Include research other awards available. <i>(relates to action 6.1/6.2)</i>	Noted.  In order to attain accreditation, the Assembly Commission must meet certain standards and are audited against these by the National Autistic Society (NAS) and Action on Hearing Loss. The accreditation for these awards detail what is required of us to fulfil them. The accreditations are available on the Assembly website at: <a href="#">/autism-and-the-assembly/</a> and <a href="#">/louder-than-words/</a>
It is a great idea for the Autism Friendly Award and Louder than Words Charter Award standards to be met and achieved by the Parliament Building to show they are committed to being open and friendly to people with autism and people who are deaf. <i>(relates to action 6.1)</i>  The Assembly should not just consider signing up to the Disability Confident Scheme, but rather they should just sign up to it now. <i>(relates to action 6.3)</i>	Noted.  The use of the word “consider” has been removed at 6.3 of the Disability Action Plan 2022-25.
This will help increase staff understanding of disability issues and ensure that, as employers, you can enable disabled people to have the opportunity to fulfil their full potential.	Noted.

**Question 7:** Do you have any comments on any of the proposed actions under category 7, Monitoring and reporting?

Comments	Response
When publishing the review of action plan on assembly website should contact the Membership of the Assembly Commission's External Disability Advisory Group and let them know.	Noted.
<p>The Assembly should report on the progress of the Disability Action Plan. They felt once a year was sufficient. It was a good idea that the findings of the monitoring reports went to the Equality Commission as these are the best people to independently confirm if progress is being achieved.</p> <p>Reports should also be published for the public as everyone should be made aware if you are meeting your commitments to the plan. <i>(relates to action 7.1 and 7.2)</i></p>	<p>Noted.</p> <p>Reports are published, and will continue to be published on the Assembly website at the following link <a href="#">/disability-action-plans/</a></p> <p>Monitoring reports for Disability Action Plans are, and will continue to be, submitted to the Equality Commission for Northern Ireland once a year as part of the Annual Equality Progress Report. Previous reports submitted to the Equality Commission can be found on the Assembly website at the following link <a href="#">/equality-and-good-relations/</a></p>

**Question 8:** Do you have any other comments on the draft action plan?

Comments	Response
Everyone should have a voice and having a group which includes people with disabilities in each Council area will ensure their voices are heard and then they can be fed back to a regional group that in turn feeds back to the appropriate Assembly Committee.	Noted.
Also, where possible Assembly committees should consider inclusion of people with disabilities to ensure they get the voice of their peers heard. ( <i>relates to action 3.7</i> )	Committees of the Assembly endeavour to ensure as diverse a range of stakeholders as possible are given the opportunity to engage with them on their scrutiny of legislation, policies and strategies. To help achieve this, information on the work programme of committees, including how to contact a committee about making a written or oral submission, can be found on the committee website. Committees also use social media and the three main Northern Ireland newspapers on specific issues, such as legislation and committee inquiries, in order to highlight how members of the public can engage with them on these matters. In addition, the Assembly Commission's Engagement team work closely with committee officials to ensure the appropriateness of the engagement process including accessibility to events and written materials.