



Ulster-Scots Agency
Boord o Ulstèr-Scotch

Disability Action Plan
(May 2021)

**Drawn up in accordance with Sections 49A and 49B of
the Disability Discrimination Act 1995**

**as amended by the Disability Discrimination
(Northern Ireland) Order 2006**

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Access to information

As part of our commitment to promoting equality of opportunity and good relations, we want to ensure that everyone is able to access the documents we produce. We would therefore be happy to provide any of the information in this document in alternative formats on request.

Contact details

All comments, requests and queries about anything in this document should be addressed to:

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CONTENTS

		<u>Page</u>
1	Introductory statement	4
	The disability duties	4
	About us	4
	Public life positions	5
	Statement of commitment	5
2	Previous measures	7
3	Action measures: May 2021	8
	Summary table	11
4	Consultation	16
5	Publication	16
6	Appendix 1	

1. INTRODUCTORY STATEMENT

The disability duties

1.1 Under Section 49A of the Disability Discrimination Act 1995 (DDA 1995) as amended by Article 5 of the Disability Discrimination (Northern Ireland) Order 2006, the Ulster Scots Agency is required, when carrying out its 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 disability duties’).

1.2 Under Section 49B of the DDA 1995, the Ulster Scots Agency is also required to submit to the Equality Commission a disability action plan showing how it proposes to fulfil these duties in relation to its functions.

1.3 This disability action plan will be subject to consultation over a 12 week period concluding 3rd August 2021 and will outline the actions which will be undertaken over the next four years.

About us

1.4 The Ulster-Scots Agency has been given the legislative remit of the “promotion of greater awareness and use of Ullans and of Ulster-Scots cultural issues, both within Northern Ireland and throughout the island”.

1.5 The aims of the Ulster-Scots Agency are to promote the study, conservation, development and use of Ulster-Scots as a living language; to encourage and develop the full range of its attendant culture; and to promote an understanding of the history of the Ulster-Scots.

1.6 The Agency was established as a part of the North/South Language Body set up under the Belfast Agreement of 1998. The other part of the Language Body is Foras na Gaeilge which has responsibility for the development of the Irish (Gaelic) language. Each of these agencies has its own Board whose members together constitute the Board of the North/ South Language Body.

1.7 The Agency is jointly funded by the Department for Communities in Northern Ireland and the Department of Tourism, Culture, Arts, Gaeltacht, Sport and Media in the Republic of Ireland and is responsible to the North/South Ministerial Council.

1.8 The Agency has its main office in Belfast with a regional office in Raphoe, Co. Donegal.

Public life positions

1.9 Within the context of the duty to encourage people with disabilities to participate in public life, we acknowledge our role in ensuring that people with disabilities are aware of opportunities available and provide access to information.

1.10 In addition, we acknowledge that the disability duties relate not only to formal public appointments but also to the way in which people with disabilities contribute to or are involved in policy decision making or decisions relating to the way in which public authorities carry out their functions. We therefore, as a matter of course, consider ways to encourage people with disabilities to participate in any consultative, discussion or working groups we may establish in the course of our work.

Statement of commitment

1.11 The Chairman and Chief Executive of the Ulster Scots Agency, wholeheartedly commit to implementing effectively the disability duties and this disability action plan. We will allocate all necessary resources (in terms of people, time and money) in order to implement this plan effectively and, where appropriate, build objectives and targets relating to the disability duties into corporate and annual operating plans.

1.12 We have already put in place appropriate internal arrangements to ensure that the disability duties are complied with and that the disability action plan is implemented effectively. We will ensure the effective communication of the updated plan to staff and provide all necessary training and guidance for staff on the disability duties and the implementation of the updated plan.

1.13 We are committed to engaging effectively with people with disabilities in the drafting, implementation, monitoring and review of this disability action plan and to ensuring that consultation is inclusive and targeted. We will ensure that appropriate methods are used for all consultation (in line with the guiding principles set out in the Equality Commission guidance on Section 75) and that a period of at least 12 weeks is allowed.

1.14 The Board will be responsible for the effective implementation of this disability action plan. The Chief Executive will be accountable to the Board for the implementation, review and evaluation of the plan. The HR/Office Manager will be the point of contact in relation to the plan; contact details are –

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1.15 We confirm our commitment to submitting an annual progress report on the implementation of this plan to the Equality Commission and carrying out a further review in three years time.

1.16 A copy of this plan and related equality documents are available on our website at:

<http://www.ulsterscotsagency.com/about-us/corporate-publications/>

Keith Gamble

Ian Crozier

Chairman

Chief Executive

2. PREVIOUS MEASURES

2.1 Prior to the publication of our disability action plan, we have already taken a number of actions to promote positive attitudes towards people with disabilities and encourage the participation of people with disabilities in public life, including –

- **Access to information**

We ensured that all information about Agency initiatives and Board meetings were fully accessible to people with disabilities. We have also regularly reviewed the accessibility of our website.

- **Access to services**

We have considered innovative ways of encouraging participation by people with disabilities in our various projects, for example providing access vehicles to transport people with disabilities to Agency events.

2.2 Over and above the specific action measures as set out below, as a result of the development of the disability action plan, we commit to the following general mainstreaming procedures –

- **Policy screening**

We will adopt a mainstreaming approach to ensure that consideration of the disability duties is incorporated into the development of all policies at the appropriate stages and becomes central to policy decision making. We have revised the screening template we use in relation to screening policies under Section 75 of the Northern Ireland Act 1998 to include a further question relating to the disability duties.

- **Policy review**

We will review our existing policies to determine whether there are opportunities to better promote positive attitudes towards people with disabilities and encourage the participation of people with disabilities in public life.

- **Awareness raising**

All staff and Board Members will be made aware of the disability duties, the disability action plan and our commitment to the successful implementation of the plan. We will provide training for all staff

involved in the implementation and/or monitoring of the plan and we will include awareness training on disability duties in induction courses.

▪ **Consultation**

In order to encourage people with disabilities to participate in any consultative, discussion or working groups we will establish, from time to time, procedures to ensure that any new opportunities will be brought to the attention of organisations representing the views of people with disabilities and placed appropriate information on our website.

3. ACTION MEASURES

3.1 As part of the development of this disability action plan, we undertook desk research into action measures adopted by other similar organisations and discussed potential further action measures. As a result of this process, we have developed a range of action measures which we propose to take over the next three years, together with timescales and performance indicators and/or targets. These are described below and summarised in the table on page 11.

Communication

3.2 We consider that, in order to promote positive attitudes towards people with disabilities, we must consider what appropriate and effective measures we can take as regards our external and internal communication policies, practices and procedures. Over the next four years we will:

- review the accessibility of our website on an annual basis and explore opportunities to increase accessibility to people with disabilities;
- consider the application of Plain English to our public documents and corporate standards;
- display positive messages and images of people with disabilities externally on Agency Website and communications with stakeholders and the public and communications with our staff.

Access

3.3 We consider that, in order to promote positive attitudes to people with disabilities, we should ensure that their needs are taken into account, as a

matter of course, wherever our work is carried out. Over the next four years we will:

- review the locations where our public events are held and ensure that they are fully accessible to people with disabilities;
- ensure that a signer is available at public events, where appropriate;
- raise awareness among staff of the need to provide information on parking for people with disabilities when planning public events;
- include emergency evacuation procedures in relation to people with disabilities in Health and Safety training, equality / disability training and Induction training;
- Provide information in alternative formats where available.

Training and awareness raising

3.4 We consider that one of the key methods of promoting positive attitudes to people with disabilities is to raise awareness among staff so that they can ensure that disability issues are taken into account in every aspect of our work and can influence other organisations with which they come into contact to do the same. Over the next four years we will:

- provide refresher training for all staff (at least bi-annually) to promote awareness and commitment to disability equality;
- provide disability awareness training to all Board Members as part of their induction;
- engage with specialist disability organisations to determine the range of training and support the organisations can provide to the Agency when specific training is required for either an individual with a disability or the colleagues of the individual with the disability.

Employment

3.5 We acknowledge that in order to effectively implement the disability duties, we must ensure disability equality in the way we employ people with disabilities. Over the next five years we will:

- Awareness sessions delivered to managers in considering and putting in place reasonable adjustments under DDA;
- ensure all reasonable adjustments for staff are completed in a timely manner and are appropriately monitored;
- Offer mentoring opportunities for people with a disability.

Consultation and engagement

3.6 As stated above, we are committed to engaging effectively with people with disabilities in the implementation, monitoring and review of this disability action plan. In order to ensure the appropriate levels of engagement, we will:

- review and update the list of consultees with whom we consult on disability issues.

Monitoring

3.7 We acknowledge that this disability action plan will only be effective if we continually evaluate the impact of the measures listed above and keep the action plan under review so that we can respond to changing situations. Over the next five years we will:

- review all monitoring procedures to ensure that information about people with disabilities is captured accurately and in sufficient detail.

Summary

3.11 The table overleaf summarises the action measures, timescale and performance indicators and/or targets we will employ over the next five years in order to fulfil the disability duties in relation to our functions. All performance indicators will be collected and evaluated on an annual basis in June of each year.

Theme	Measures	Timescale	Performance indicators/ targets
1. Communication	1.1 Review the accessibility of the Agency website and explore opportunities to increase accessibility to people with disabilities.	Annually, commencing May 2021	Complaints/feedback from users.
	1.2 Consider the application of Plain English to public documents.	May 21 – May 25	Complaints/feedback from users.
	1.3 Display positive messages and images of people with disabilities externally on Agency Website and communications with stakeholders and the public and communciations with our staff.	Images to be displayed on a continuing basis.	The number of external publications that included positive messages and images of people with a disability that compile with GDPR and Safeguarding.

Theme	Measures	Timescale	Performance indicators/ targets
2. Access	2.1 Review the locations where public events are held and ensure that they are fully accessible to people with disabilities.	Access to new venues to be considered as they arise.	Number of venues approved.
	2.2 Ensure that a signer is available at public events, where appropriate.	As and when required.	Number of occasions when signer is required.
	2.3 Raise awareness among staff of the need to provide information on parking for people with disabilities when planning public events.	Continually basis May 2021 – May 2025	Number of occasions when information is provided.
	2.4 Include emergency evacuation procedures in relation to people with disabilities in Health and Safety training, equality / disability training and Induction training.	To be included in training modules.	Number of staff trained.
	2.5 Provide information in alternative formats where available.	As and when required	Number of alternative formats produced.

Theme	Measures	Timescale	Performance indicators/ targets
3. Training and awareness raising	3.1 Provide refresher training for all staff to promote awareness and commitment to disability equality.	Refresher training to be completed by October 2021 and repeated every two years.	Number of staff trained.
	3.2 provide disability awareness training to all Board Members as part of their induction;	Within 6 months of appointment.	Number of Board Members trained.
	3.3 Engage with specialist disability organisations to determine the range of training and support the organisations can provide to the Agency when specific training is required for either an individual with a disability or the colleagues of the individual with the disability.	On-going Avail of support as required.	Number of organisations contacted. Number of specific training events.

Theme	Measures	Timescale	Performance indicators/ targets
4. Employment	4.1 Awareness sessions delivered to managers in considering and putting in place reasonable adjustments under DDA	As required.	Number of line managers attending sessions.
	4.2 ensure all reasonable adjustments for staff are completed in a timely manner and are appropriately monitored;	As required	Review appropriateness of adjustments in accordance with schedule agreed with staff member
	4.3 Offer mentoring opportunities for people with a disability	As required	Number of mentoring opportunities availed of

Theme	Measures	Timescale	Performance indicators/ targets
5. Consultation and engagement	5.1 Review and update the list of consultees who are consulted on disability issues.	May 2021 – May 2025	Number of consultees contacted and number who respond.

Theme	Measures	Timescale	Performance indicators/ targets
6. Monitoring	6.1 Review all monitoring procedures to ensure that information about people with disabilities is captured accurately and in sufficient detail.	May 2021 - May 2025.	Number of changes to monitoring procedures.

4. CONSULTATION

4.1 This draft disability action plan will be the subject of consultation over a period of at least 12 weeks, ending on 3rd August 2021.

4.2 During this period we will draw attention to the consultation process by contacting organisations and individuals who may have an interest in the issues contained within the plan and by publicising the availability of the document on our website.

4.3 Arrangements will be put in place to ensure that the consultation document and any associated reports can be made available in hard copy and alternative formats on request on a timely basis.

4.4 At the end of the consultation period, we will review all feedback and use this to develop the final plan.

5. PUBLICATION

5.1 The updated disability action plan will be published on our website. We will notify consultees, stakeholders and staff of the availability of the action plan.

5.2 The disability action plan and any associated reports will be made available in hard copy and alternative formats on request in a timely manner (usually within 4-6 weeks).

Please note, this list is indicative not exhaustive and will be reviewed on an annual basis.

ADAPT Northern Ireland
Age NI
Altram
An Gaelaras
Antrim and Newtownabbey Borough Council
Archbishop of Armagh
Ardachaidh
Ards and North Down Borough Council
Armagh Observatory & Planetarium
Armagh, Banbridge and Craigavon Borough Council
Arts & Business Northern Ireland
Arts Council of Northern Ireland
Barnardo's NI
Belfast City Council
Belfast Music Society
Bishop of Down & Connor
BlackieRiver Community Groups Association
British Council
Bryson Charitable Group
Carers Northern Ireland
Causeway Coast and Glens Borough Council
Cedar Foundation
Children in Northern Ireland
Children's Law Centre
Chinese welfare Association
Clough & District Community Association
Colmcille Development Officer
Commissioner for Older People NI
Community Places
Cultúrlann MacAdam Ó Fiaich
Democratic Unionist Party
Department of Foreign Affairs
Derry City and Strabane District Council
Development Trusts NI
Disability Action
Disability Sports NI
Education Authority
Electoral commission NI
Equality Coalition
Equality Commission for Northern Ireland
Evangelical Alliance

FDA (First Division Association)
Federation of Small Businesses
Fermanagh and Omagh District Council
Foyle Women's Information Network
Gairm
Glentoran Community Trust
Guide Dogs for the Blind Association
Here NI
Heritage Lottery Fund
Ilex Limited
Independent
Information Commissioners Office Northern Ireland
Insight Mystery Shopping
Institute of Ulster-Scots Studies
Irish Congress of Trade Unions
Irish News
Laganside Corporation
Left Field Sports Consultancy
Libraries NI
Library & Information Services Council NI
Limavady Borough Council
Linen Hall Library
Lisburn and Castlereagh City Council
Local Government Staff Commission for Northern Ireland
Magherafelt District Council
Mencap Northern Ireland
Mid & East Antrim Council
Mid and East Antrim District Council
Mid Ulster District Council
Moyle District Council
Multi-Cultural Resource Centre
Museums Association
National Museums NI
Newry, Mourne and Down District Council
Ni Community Relations Council
North West Community Network
Northern Ireland Agricultural Producers' Association
Northern Ireland Anti-Poverty Network
Northern Ireland Association for Mental Health
Northern Ireland Blind Sports
Northern Ireland Council for Ethnic Minorities
Northern Ireland Council for Voluntary Action

Northern Ireland Local Government Association
Northern Ireland Museums Council
Northern Ireland Public Services Alliance
Northern Ireland Rural Development Council
Northern Ireland Rural Women's Network
Northern Ireland Screen
Tourism NI
Northern Visions
Office of the NI Commissioner for Children & Young People
Pobal
Queen's University Belfast
Rainbow Project
Royal Institution of Chartered Surveyors
Royal National Institute for Deaf People NI
Royal National Institute of Blind People
Save the Children
SDLP
SDLP Headquarters
Sense NI
Sinn Fein
Social Democratic and Labour Party
Special Olympics Ulster
Sport NI
St Mary's University College
Statutory Advisory Councils
The Baha'i Council for Northern Ireland
The Green Party in Northern Ireland
The National Deaf Children's Society
The Representative Church Body
Traditional Unionist Voice
Training for Women Network Ltd
Ulster Coarse Fishing Federation
Ulster Unionist Party
Ultach Trust
University of Ulster
Volunteer Now
Wheelworks
Women's Information Group
Women's Resource and Development Agency
Women's Support Network
Youth Council for Northern Ireland
Youthnet