

DEPARTMENT FOR EMPLOYMENT AND LEARNING

DISABILITY ACTION PLAN

1 APRIL 2007 – 31 MARCH 2008

JUNE 2007

1. Joint Introduction by the Minister and the Permanent Secretary

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 Department for Employment and Learning is required when carrying out its functions to have due regard to the need to:

- Promote positive attitudes towards disabled people; and
- Encourage participation by disabled people in public life ('the disability duties').

Under Section 49B of the DDA 1995, the Department for Employment and Learning 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.

1.2 As Minister and Permanent Secretary of the Department for Employment and Learning, we are committed 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 effectively this plan and where appropriate, build objectives and targets relating to the disability duties into corporate and annual operating plans.

We will also put appropriate internal arrangements in place to ensure that the disability duties are complied with and this disability action plan effectively implemented. We will ensure the effective communication of the plan to staff and to providing all necessary training and guidance for staff on the disability duties and the implementation of the plan.

We confirm our commitment to submitting an annual progress report to the Equality Commission on the implementation of this plan as well as carrying out a five yearly review of this or plans submitted to the Equality Commission over the five year review period. The Department will also consult with disabled people when implementing and reviewing its plans.

Responsibility for overseeing the implementation, review and evaluation of this disability action plan and the point of contact within the Department for Employment and Learning will be:-

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If you require this plan in an alternative format (such as large print, in Braille, on audio cassette, easy read or on computer disc) and/or language, please contact the above person to discuss your requirements.

- 1.3 A copy of this plan, our annual progress report to the Equality Commission and our five year review of plans will be made available on our website at www.delni.gov.uk



SIR REG EMPEY MLA
**Minister for Employment
and Learning**



AIDEEN MCGINLEY
**Permanent Secretary
Department for
Employment and Learning**

2. Functions

2.1 Outlined below is an overview of the Department.

Departmental Aim

The Aim of the Department for Employment and Learning is:

- To promote learning and skills, to prepare people for work and to support the economy.

Departmental Objectives

The associated objectives are:

- To promote economic, social and personal development through high quality learning, research and skills training; and
- To help people into employment and promote good employment practices.

Department's Four Key Areas of Activity

- (i) **SKILLS** – enhancing the provision of learning and skills, including entrepreneurship, enterprise, management and leadership.
- (ii) **RESEARCH AND DEVELOPMENT** – increasing the level of research and development, creativity and innovation in the Northern Ireland economy.
- (iii) **HELPING PEOPLE INTO WORK** – helping individuals to acquire jobs, including self-employment, and improving the linkages between employment programmes and skills development.
- (iv) **EMPLOYMENT RIGHTS, RESPONSIBILITIES AND REMEDIES** – the development and maintenance of the framework of employment rights and responsibilities.

Responsibilities

The Department has responsibility for:

- Employment services;
- Employment law, dispute resolution and labour relations;
- Further and Higher education, and adult learning;
- Careers and guidance services;
- Professional and Technical skills development and sector training initiatives;
- Student support and post-graduate awards; and
- Delivery of European funding.

2.2 Department's Customers

The Department's two main customer groups are:

- Individuals who are seeking to improve their levels of skills and qualifications or who require support and guidance to progress towards employment, including self-employment; and
- Businesses in both the public and private sectors.

2.3 Department's Main Partners

In implementing the four key areas of activity outlined above, the Department works closely with other Departments and bodies such as the Economic Development Forum.

In policy development terms, the Department works closely with DETI and Invest NI in delivering key elements of Northern Ireland's Economic Vision, in particular funding research and development, promoting innovation and creativity, supporting entrepreneurship and enterprise, facilitating knowledge and technology transfer between further and higher education and industry, and ensuring that people are equipped with the skills needed by employers, both local and further afield.

In delivering the substantial welfare reform agenda, the Department works alongside the Social Security Agency and in partnership with

the Department of Health, Social Services and Public Safety and the Health Service. The Department works with the Department of Education in developing and implementing major reforms to the education and training system for 14 to 19 year olds, including coherent careers guidance.

3. Public Life Positions

3.1 All public appointments in the Department are made, as far as practicable, in accordance with the Code of Practice for Ministerial Appointments to Public Bodies, published by the Office of the Commissioner for Public Appointments (Northern Ireland) and follow the guidance provided by the Central Appointments Unit. Further information, with details of actions taken or planned centrally in respect of the two disability duties, is contained in the Disability Action Plan for the Office of the First Minister and deputy First Minister.

3.2 The range of public life positions over which the Department for Employment and Learning has responsibility for, are as follows:-

- Appointments to the Board of Ulster Supported Employment Ltd (USEL)
- DEL appointed members to the Board of Governors of St Mary's University College
- Chairperson and members of the Governing Body of Stranmillis University College
- Governing Bodies of Further Education Colleges
- Chairperson and members of the Northern Ireland Higher Education Council
- Chairperson and 9 members of the Labour Relations Agency
- Certification Officer for NI

- Lay members of the Fair Employment Tribunal and Industrial Tribunals
- Reinstatement Committee for Reserve Forces in Civil Employment
- All appointments to the Industrial Court (NI)
- Chairperson and 16 members of the Construction Industry Training Board

4. Previous Measures

4.1 Outlined below are the key measures which the Department for Employment and Learning is already taking to promote positive attitudes towards disabled people and encourage the participation of disabled people in public life.

4.2 Promoting Positive Attitudes Towards Disabled People

Employment Service:

- **Pathways to Work**, a new and innovative approach for encouraging people with health conditions and disabilities to engage with the labour market has been available in Northern Ireland on a pilot basis since October 2005. The service is currently available to 30% of annual new and repeat claims to incapacity benefits. The Department has secured funds (c£11m) to enable it to complete the roll-out of Pathways to Work to the whole of Northern Ireland by April 2008.
- **Local Employment Intermediary Service (LEMIS)** is a community-based employment-focused initiative, available in Belfast, Londonderry and Strabane from 1 April 2007 which provides tailored assistance to help voluntary clients, including those with disabilities, overcome their personal barriers to employment. The Department will make £6m available over the next 3 years to enable the service to be delivered in the areas indicated above.

- As part of the development of a **Modernised Employment Service** the Department has developed a flexible, menu-based approach to provision, tailored to the individual's needs. Through this initiative, known as Steps to Work, the Department has extended the availability of its New Deal 25 + provision on a pilot basis to a wider group of clients, including those who have a current claim to Incapacity Benefit or Severe Disablement Allowance.

Apprenticeships:

- **Training for Success** – to help a supplier provide significant additional input of resources in terms of training time, equipment or support in order for the young person to benefit fully from the training, when appropriate:-
 - A funding supplement is available for participants with disabilities; and
 - Extra time will be made available to achieve the targeted qualifications.

Disablement Advisory Service:

The Disablement Advisory Service (DAS) operates a number of programmes to assist people with disabilities to prepare for, obtain and retain jobs. DAS services to people with disabilities are currently delivered through a team of 25 specialist Disablement Employment Advisers and 5 Access to Work Advisers who work in the Jobs and Benefits Office and JobCentre network throughout Northern Ireland. As part of the modernisation of the Employment Service, these staff will become integrated into the frontline service. DAS programmes include:

- **Workable (NI)**

This provides financial support to enable people with significant disabilities to become employed. It is operated through a number of Provider organisations, contracted by the Department.

- **Access to Work (NI)**

Access to Work is a flexible individually assessed programme providing financial assistance to help overcome some barriers faced by disabled people in accessing employment. Supports can include Special Aids and Equipment, Adaptations, Support Worker and Travel to Work.

- **Job Introduction Scheme**

The Scheme provides a six week job trial to enable a disabled person and a potential employer assess if employment might be appropriate

- **New Deal for Disabled People**

This voluntary programme aims to assist people who are on health-related benefits to find and retain work.

- **Ulster Supported Employment Ltd (USEL)**

USEL is a Non Departmental Public Body which provides sheltered employment for severely disabled people. Its manufacturing operation in North West Belfast produces beds and industrial sewing products, as well as providing other contract services such as packaging and CCTV security monitoring.

- DAS works in partnership with a range of disability organisations, individually and collectively, to obtain their views on DAS programmes and services and how these might be improved to better meet the needs of disabled customers.

Further and Higher Education:

Further Education (FE):

As designated public authorities Further Education Colleges will prepare their own Disability Action Plans. However, set out below are key measures for which the Department has responsibility:

- Funding under the **FE Funding Formula** for students with learning difficulties and/or disabilities.
- The **Additional Support Fund** provides assistance with the cost of technical and/or human support for students with disabilities eg signers, equipment etc.
- **Capital Funding** – allocated to improve physical access to Colleges. Since April 2000, DEL has allocated over £14.5m of capital funding to Colleges to improve access for people with disabilities. In 06/07 £943,000 has been set aside specifically aimed at improving access for people with disabilities.
- **Support Fund** (£2.7m in 06/07) – enables colleges to provide financial help to students whose participation in FE is inhibited by financial considerations including those students with a disability.
- Disabled persons are members of a number of FE college governing bodies.

Higher Education (HE):

- The Department is committed to improving the rights of and access to higher education by students with learning difficulties and/or disabilities.
- The Department pays the universities a widening access premium for students with disabilities. Disability premium is based on the number of full-time undergraduate students in receipt of Disabled Students Allowance (DSA). In the academic year 2006/07, the Department is allocating £374k for the disability premium.

- The Department makes available funding for disabled students to help pay the extra costs which may be incurred in attending a course of study, as a direct result of a disability. The DSA can help with the cost of a non-medical helper, major items of specialist equipment, travel and other costs. The following help is available:

Undergraduate Students

- Specialist equipment allowance: up to £4,905 for the whole course;
- Non-medical helpers' allowance: up to £12,420 per year;
- General disabled students' allowance: up to £1,640 per year.

Postgraduate students

- Disabled students' allowance: up to £5,915 per year.
- Through the Disabled Students Allowance, the Department funds the Register of Support Providers. This is a register of freelance professional and non-professional support workers who are recruited and trained to assist students with disabilities. The Register, which is administered by the University of Ulster, is available to all disabled students in the universities, university colleges and Further Education colleges with higher education provision.

The DSA budget for 2006/07 academic year is £2.5m. Entitlement is assessed by the Education and Library Boards and payment is made by the Student Loans Company.

- The Department is providing funding totalling £150k for the Queen's Let's Work project. This project is aimed at students and graduates with a disability. A specialist careers adviser offers individual careers guidance and information sessions, supports access to work placements and part-time work and provides workshops on job-skills and options after graduation.

Careers Service:

- Disability Awareness Training was provided for all Careers Service staff in 2005.
- Employs 94 Careers Advisers all of whom hold one of the professionally recognised qualifications that are necessary to work as a Careers Adviser. The promotion of equal opportunities in a guidance context is a core component of all of these qualifications, as well as the requirement to have an awareness and understanding of issues relating to equal opportunities.
- Careers Service is an all-age guidance service that provides impartial career guidance to people including those with disabilities in education, training and to the unemployed.
- In the delivery of careers guidance, Careers Advisers actively promote positive attitudes towards disabled people.
- Careers Advisers have an active role to play in the Transition Planning process of clients with Statements of Special Educational Need.
- The Careers Service has developed networks and partnership/referral arrangements with a number of organisations who act as advocates for young people with varying barriers to education, training and employment including Disability Action, Sensory Learning Support, Cedar Foundation, PAPA and Triangle.

European Social Fund:

- For the period 1 April 2007 to 31 March 2008 the Department has offered European Social Funds (ESF) to organisations involved in training people with disabilities under two EU Programmes. For the Programme for Building Sustainable Prosperity the Department has offered ESF assistance of £4,248,149 to 10 such organisations. Under the EQUAL Community Initiative for the same period the Department has offered £425,796 to four organisations developing innovative ways to create employment for people with disabilities. The period in question is the last year in which organisations offered assistance under the current programming period of 2000-2006

are entitled to incur and claim eligible expenditure. ESF assistance to successful applicants under the new programming period 2007-2013 is expected to commence in 2008.

4.3 Encourage The Participation Of Disabled People In Public Life

The key measures which the Department is currently taking to encourage the participation of disabled people in public life are as follows:

Public Appointments:

The Department continues to adhere to the Central Appointments Unit (OFMDFM) guidance for all its public appointments. The public appointments for which the Department is responsible are listed at Section 3.

Where under-representation is identified, including disabled people, the Department has targeted relevant representative groups in order to increase interest and participation in the selection process.

In 2006, the Department piloted the “Get on Board” programme. The purpose of the programme was to:

- Improve overall governance in the community and voluntary sector and in Public Bodies; and
- Improve the performance and skills of those involved in public service.

The aims of the programme include:

- Developing the pool of people in Northern Ireland who may be interested in Public Appointments, and give them the skills they will need to work effectively on a Board; and
- Improve diversity within Northern Ireland public bodies to better reflect the wider make-up of the Northern Ireland community

While not specifically targeted at disabled people, the programme is designed to encourage participation in public life by under-represented groups, including disabled people.

Disablement Advisory Service:

- The Disablement Advisory Service was engaged in formal discussion with the Department's Disability Liaison Group in a Strategic Dialogue and this involved participation on the group by people with disabilities as well as representatives from organisations that support people with disabilities.

Personnel:

- The Department positively utilizes the Employment Support Scheme and currently has 8 successful placements under the scheme. In the coming months 2 of the participants will become full staff members under the new arrangements to transfer to the Northern Ireland Civil Service.
- The Department's "Reasonable Adjustment Scheme" is actively promoted. This scheme provides a budget of £10K to facilitate reasonable adjustments for staff with disabilities.
- Guidance has been issued to all line managers on managing staff with disabilities.
- The Disability Discrimination Act and a definition of disability are included as part of the Department's on-line induction programme along with a guide to language surrounding disability.

5. Action Measures

Outlined in the annex are the measures which the Department proposes to take over the period of this disability action plan, together with performance indicators or targets.

DEPARTMENT FOR EMPLOYMENT AND LEARNING

DISABILITY ACTION PLAN 2007- 08

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

Measures	Timescale Indicators/target	Performance
<p>Employment Service:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Extend Pathways to Work for people with health conditions and disabilities to the whole of Northern Ireland. • Local Employment Intermediary Service (LEMIS) – Benefit recipients on Incapacity Benefit and Severe Disablement Allowance have been included in the priority client group. 	<p>Complete roll-out in 4 phases by April 2008.</p> <p>The new service will be available in the areas indicated from 1 April 2007 to 31 March 2010.</p>	<p>Achieve at least a 4% increase in off-flow from incapacity benefit measured 6 months after the date of claim.</p> <p>LEMIS providers will provide data in the form of a quarterly report to DEL re: participation and engagement with all Section 75 client groups.</p>

<p>Disablement Advisory Service:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • The Disablement Advisory Service (DAS) will provide disability awareness training for all Preparation for Work division staff who provide services directly to the public to ensure that they are aware of the general and specific needs of people with disabilities. • The Department will provide an Employment Advice service based in Jobs & Benefits Offices and Job centres to assist people with disabilities prepare to enter training, pre-vocational provision or employment. Advisers will work with people with disabilities to ensure that they are best prepared to engage or re-engage with the world of work. • Advisers will provide guidance and support service for people with disabilities to assist them find and keep appropriate work. This includes assisting people in work retain their present position. • Advisers will visit a range of employers, voluntary, community and statutory bodies to encourage them to engage with disabled people and to assist them move towards finding and keeping an appropriate job. • DAS will provide funding for provision to assist people with disabilities prepare for work and to find and/or keep an appropriate job. This provision provides a range of short and long term support to disabled people. The provision consists of: Employment Support/Workable (NI) 	<p>This will be delivered to new frontline staff.</p> <p>This service will be available on an ongoing basis.</p> <p>This service will be provided on an ongoing basis.</p> <p>Delivered on an ongoing basis.</p> <p>Provision of programme support will be delivered on an</p>	<p>Performance can be measured by the lack of number of complaints to the Department in relation to service provision to disabled people.</p> <p>The number of complaints about lack of or inappropriate services.</p> <p>The number of complaints relating to poor service.</p> <p>Performance measures include:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • number of registrations
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<p>– provides long term , often indefinite support; Access to Work – provides a flexible range of supports; Job Introduction Scheme – provides a job trial; New Deal for Disabled People – provides a Job Broking service for people in receipt of defined benefits; residential training; Ulster Supported Employment Ltd – an executive Non-Departmental Public Body, and Public match funding – to enable a range of voluntary sector organisations draw down European Union funding.</p>	<p>ongoing basis to meet the needs of individual customers. A budget of just over £10M is available for programmes. The provision is demand led and the costs are often dependent on the assessed needs of individuals and the costs are dependent on these needs. There are already over 1,200 people receiving long term, often indefinite,</p>	<p>on New Deal for Disabled People and 25% of these obtaining employment;</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • The results of a formal evaluation of Access to Work will give a range of performance information for this programme. • The percentage of people who enter employment with programme support and who sustain employment.
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<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • DAS will work in partnership with a range of disability organisations, individually and collectively, to obtain their views on DAS programmes and services and how these might be improved to better meet the needs of disabled customers. 	<p>support and the funding available for new participants is partly dependent on people leaving provision and freeing up resources for new participants. Some programmes have defined targets.</p> <p>Taking place on an ongoing basis.</p>	
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<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • DAS will work in conjunction with disability organisations to assist people with disabilities prepare for and to enter the world of work. • DAS will work with representatives of the disability sector and other stakeholders, including disabled people, to implement agreed recommendations from the report entitled A Strategic Review of Disablement Advisory Service (DAS) Programmes and Services. This report, which contains 44 recommendations, was prepared by a sub-group of the Department's Disability Liaison Group and had representatives from the disability sector, employers, trade unions and service users. 	<p>Ongoing</p> <p>This will take place on an ongoing basis.</p>	<p>The number of agreed recommendations implemented.</p>
<p>Further Education:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • The Equality Commission has asked each college to carry out a mapping exercise to identify measures that have already been taken to promote positive attitudes towards disabled people and encourage the participation of disabled people in public life. The Association of Northern Ireland Colleges (ANIC), in partnership with the Equality Commission, has begun the development of a framework document at a sectoral level. This framework will include the progress made by the Inclusive Learning Panel (a panel comprising of 	<p>Framework for Disability Action Plan – May 2007</p> <p>Mapping exercise – July 2007</p>	<p>Framework distributed to 16 Colleges.</p> <p>16 completed mapping exercises.</p>

<p>FE and HE Colleges, SKILL NI and the Equality Commission established to assist Colleges and Universities meet the requirements of the SEND Order), the FE Colleges' Learning Support Coordinators' Forum and other for a as appropriate. Colleges will be required to add details of any additional measures taken at a local level.</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Bespoke training on responsibilities under SENDO and other disability legislation will be delivered to the new FE governing bodies by the Learning and Skills Development Agency (NI) and/or ANIC. 	<p>College Disability Action Plans – February 2008</p> <p>To be delivered to all governing bodies by 31 March 08</p>	<p>Sectoral draft plan; completion of 6 draft College plans; consultation feedback reports on the draft plans; 6 completed Disability Action Plans</p>
<p>Higher Education:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • In the academic year 2007/08, the Department will be allocating some £390k for the disability premium payable to the universities. 	<p>Annual payment of the disability premium to the universities</p>	<p>Payment of the disability premium to the universities based on the number of full-time undergraduate students in receipt of Disabled Students Allowance.</p>

<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Through the Disabled Students Allowance (DSA), the Department will continue to fund the Register of Support Providers. <p>Personnel:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Two members of staff in each JobCentre/Jobs and Benefits Office are being trained in basic sign language to provide a welcome point to clients who use sign language. • The Department will provide awareness raising materials to all new and existing staff over the period of the Action Plan. The Department will also review its Disability Awareness Training in the light of the Disability Duties on Public Authorities before 31 March 2008. • Continued management of the Employment Support Scheme, including continued implementation of the process to allow ES staff to become NICS employees. • Continued promotion and usage of the Reasonable Adjustment Capital Budget. 	<p>Annual funding through DSA</p> <p>April 07 – November 07</p> <p>by 31 March 08</p> <p>April 07 onwards</p> <p>Budget of £10k for 07/08.</p>	<p>Continued uptake of support by students referred to the Register.</p> <p>Training delivered.</p> <p>Training updated and delivered.</p> <p>Budget utilised.</p>
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<p>European Social Fund:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> The strategic aim of the Programme is to help reduce economic inactivity and increase workforce skills. Objectives will be realised by two inter-related Priorities: Priority 1- helping people into sustained employment; and Priority 2 – improving workforce skills. Priority 1 will improve the employability of those groups experiencing significant employment gaps including people with disabilities and health conditions. Priority 2 will improve the qualifications and skills of workers without essential (basic) skills and low or no qualifications. Projects will be required to ensure that activities respond to the specific needs of participants with disabilities and health conditions. All activities funded will have gender equality and equal opportunities as a cross-cutting theme. 	<p>The new NI European Social Fund Programme 2007-13 is due to be launched in Sep 07. Budget for the 7 year period is £285m.</p>	<p>Programme Priorities have a range of performance targets, including a total of 89,100 participants of which 45,000 will be unemployed, long term unemployed or economically inactive and 44,100 employed; and 45% of participants with disabilities and health conditions.</p>
<p>Careers Service:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> To provide effective disability equality training (to include disability awareness and the promotion of positive attitudes) to Careers Service staff who are new entrants. 	<p>Disability awareness training will be delivered as part of staff induction training.</p>	<p>Training delivered.</p>

<ul style="list-style-type: none"> To produce a Joint DEL/DE strategy on Careers Education Information, Advice and Guidance (EIAG) for consultation. To include disability groups in this strategy consultation and in proposed Careers Guidance Stakeholder fora. 	<p>Strategy launched by Autumn 2007</p>	<p>Consultation with Stakeholders will commence on CEIAG issues after the launch of the Strategy.</p>
<p>Communications:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> The Department will carry out a review of its communications and marketing policies, in conjunction with disability groups, to ensure compliance with the new duties. 	<p>The review will be carried out during 2007/08</p>	<p>Revised policies in place.</p>
<p>Statutory Equality Duty:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> The Department will amend its Equality Screening guidance for staff to ensure that the new disability duties are addressed during the policy development process. 	<p>Guidance to be amended by end of July 2007</p>	