



Newry and Mourne District Council

Disability Action Plan

April 2011 – March 2013

This document is available in alternative formats including large print, audio , Braille and Irish language upon request

If you have any queries about this document please contact:

Colin Moffett
Equality Officer
Newry and Mourne District Council
Monaghan Row
Newry
County Down
BT35 8DJ

Tel: 028 3031 3081

Mob: 07739235332

Fax: 028 3031 3077

Email: Colin.Moffett@newryandmourne.gov.uk

This document is available in alternative formats on request and may be accessed on the Council's website:

www.newryandmourne.gov.uk

Foreword

This Disability Action Plan is a statement of Newry and Mourne District Council's commitment to and proposals for fulfilling the statutory obligations in compliance with Section 49A 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 regard to the need:

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

The Plan is also important because it outlines a plan for the more effective mainstreaming of disability issues, thus ensuring that they are central to the whole range of policy decision-making within the Council.

Councillor Mick Murphy
Mayor

Mr Thomas McCall
Clerk & Chief Executive

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1. Introduction

- 1.1 Section 49A of the Disability Discrimination Act 1995 (as amended by the Disability Discrimination (NI) Order 2006 requires the Council, in 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.
- 1.2 We are committed to the fulfilment of its disability duties in all parts of its organisation and this Disability Action Plan sets out how we intend to do this.
- 1.3 Our Council will undertake a planned programme of communication and training on the disability duties for all staff and Elected Members.

2. Purpose of the disability action plan

- 2.1 This Plan sets out how Newry and Mourne District Council proposes to fulfil the disability duties in relation to its functions.

3. Our role and functions

- 3.1 The Council performs five principal roles within its local area and district:
- the direct provision of a number of services and facilities,
 - the promotion of the arts, tourism, community and economic development,
 - the regulation and licensing of certain activities relating to environmental health, consumer protection and public safety,
 - a representative role on a number of bodies and Boards including Education and Health,
 - a consultative role in relation to functions conducted by other Government bodies and agencies on issues such as planning, water, roads and housing.

3.2 In the performance of the above roles the Council carries out functions in the following areas:

- the provision of facilities for recreational, social and cultural activities including leisure centres, community centres, parks, open spaces, sports grounds and places of entertainment
- street cleansing services
- waste collection and disposal
- the provision of burial grounds
- the provision of grant aid to support the Arts, community development and the promotion of tourism and economic development
- the administration and regulation of certain matters relating to the environment, public health and public safety including building control, food safety, statutory nuisance, dangerous buildings, air pollution, noise pollution, dog control, consumer protection and health and safety
- the licensing and regulation of street trading, places of entertainment, amusement centres, sex establishments, societies lotteries, cinemas and petroleum stations
- the making of bye-laws and regulation of same.

3.3 To enable us to provide the above services and perform our other functions, we must levy an annual rate. We have the power to:

- acquire and dispose of land
- borrow money
- employ staff
- procure goods and services.

3.4 Our Council has adopted a wide range of policies to support and implement the above statutory functions and provision of services and facilities.

4. Public life positions over which the Council has responsibility

4.1 Various members of the community play a role on Council groups, for example:

- Good Relations Forums
- Household Panel
- Irish Language Committee
- Ulster Scots Committee
- Community Safety Partnership
- Well Being Action Partnership
- Sportability Committee
- Arts, Museum and Sports Development Committees

4.2 The Council also appoints Elected Members to external organisations' committees, for example:

- Newry Gateway Committee
- Newry and Mourne Senior Citizens Consortium
- Southern Education and Library Board
- Southern Group Public Health Committee
- Southern Group Building Control Committee
- Southern Health and Social Services Council
- Newry Citizen's Advice Bureau
- Newry & District Community Services Council
- Confederation of Community Groups
- Board of Warrenpoint Harbour Authority
- Management Committees of Community Centres / Associations

5. The Council's commitment to the effective implementation of the disability action plan

5.1 We are committed to the effective implementation of all aspects of the Plan in all parts of our organisation. Overall responsibility for determining policy on how this will be achieved lies with the Elected Members. Day to day responsibility for carrying out the policy determined by the Elected Members lies with the Clerk and Chief Executive who will be responsible for the implementation of

administrative arrangements to ensure that the Council complies with our disability duties.

- 5.2 As part of its corporate planning process, the Council will build objectives and targets relating to the disability duties into corporate and business plans. These will be reflected at all levels of strategic planning within the Council including individual staff objectives and annual plans. Progress on meeting objectives, including those relating to the disability duties will be monitored and reported upon at the most senior level within the organisation. The Equality Officer will ensure the Disability Action Plan will be monitored and reported on annually. All Disability Action Plan Reports will be considered at the Council's Equality Committee.
- 5.3 A formal report of progress on meeting the objectives relating to the disability duties will be included in the Council's annual report to the Equality Commission for Northern Ireland.

6. Internal arrangements

- 6.1 Newry and Mourne District Council have 30 elected representatives (Councillors), elected for a four year period, who meet monthly in full session and more frequently in committees and sub-committees. Some of the main committees are:
- District Development Committee
 - Technical and Leisure Services Committee
 - Staff and Policy Committee
 - Equality Committee
- 6.2 The Clerk and Chief Executive oversees the work of the Council Departments through the Management Team, which together with the Elected Members create the corporate body of the Council.
- 6.3 The Clerk and Chief Executive is responsible for the strategic direction and advice to Council, and through the Management Team, oversight of the management of services and the longer term planning and allocation of resources.

6.4 The Council has six departments, each of which is headed by a Chief Officer (Director):

- **Administration:** responsible for the Council's Equality Scheme, Performance Management, Public Relations, Good Relations, PEACE III, Human Resources, District Policing Partnership, Community Safety Partnership, Registration, Legal Services, Markets, the issuing of property certificates, support services for official meetings held by the Council and support for elected members.
- **Building Control:** responsible for enforcement of Building Regulations including control of dangerous buildings, postal numbering and street naming, entertainment licensing, petroleum licensing and cinema licensing, street trading, places of marriage, amusement permits, and estate development.
- **District Development:** responsible for a wide range of services including community services, economic development, sports development, tourism, rural development, and Irish language development.
- **Environmental Health:** responsible for protecting the well being of the district in many areas including monitoring and evaluation of air quality, noise control, food safety, consumer protection, dog control and litter control.
- **Finance:** responsible for all aspects of the Council's finances, purchasing and all information technology issues.
- **Technical and Leisure Services:** responsible for refuse collection, waste disposal, leisure services, street cleansing, vehicle maintenance, building maintenance, public conveniences, grounds maintenance, cemeteries and engineering services.

- 6.5 The Council is committed to fulfilling the statutory responsibilities contained in its Disability Action Plan in all parts of its organisation. Overall responsibility for determining policy on how this will be achieved lies with the Elected Members.
- 6.6 Newry and Mourne District Council's mission statement, 'to provide leadership, services and facilities that reflect, in a sustainable way, the needs of the people and environment of Newry and Mourne', is compatible with its commitment to fulfilling the disability duties.
- 6.7 While the statutory responsibility for the effective implementation of this Disability Action Plan lies with the Council, the Clerk and Chief Executive will have responsibility for ensuring the policy as determined by the Elected Members is carried out. The Assistant Director of Administration (Equality) will be responsible for all issues in the day-to-day implementation of administrative arrangements to ensure the Disability Action Plan is implemented effectively.
- 6.8 Newry and Mourne District Council's Equality Unit, within the Administration Department, provides specialist support and advice to Council and Officers in matters relating to the promotion of equality of opportunity, good relations, performance improvement, communications, public relations and member services.
- 6.9 The Council's Equality Unit, managed by the Assistant Director of Administration (Equality), will directly support the work to implement the Disability Action Plan and the Equality Officer, one of the Council's Disability Champions, will be the main point of contact. Currently, our Equality Officer is Colin Moffett who can be contacted as follows:

Colin Moffett
Equality Officer
Council Offices
Monaghan Row
Newry
Co Down
BT35 8DJ

Tel: 028 3031 3081
Mob: 07739235332
Fax: 028 3031 3077
Email: Colin.Moffett@newryandmourne.gov.uk
Website: www.newryandmourne.gov.uk

- 6.10 The Equality Officer will be responsible for monitoring, reviewing and reporting on the implementation the Disability Action Plan. All Disability Action Plan Reports will be considered at the Council's Equality Committee.
- 6.11 A formal report of progress on meeting the objectives relating to the disability duties will be included in the Council's annual report to the Equality Commission for Northern Ireland.

7. Effective engagement

- 7.1 The Council is committed to engage effectively with disabled people in the drafting, implementation, monitoring and review of this Plan. Further information on how this will be done is outlined in Section 10 on Consultation.

8. Annual report

- 8.1 Our Council will prepare an annual report on the implementation of its Disability Action Plan. The annual report will be included as part of the Council's annual report to the Equality Commission on the implementation of our equality scheme.
- 8.2 A copy of the annual report will be made available on the Council's website.

9. Five year review

- 9.1 The Council will carry out a five year review of its plan, in consultation with the Equality Commission for NI.

10. Consultation

- 10.1 The Council is committed to carrying out consultation in a meaningful manner in the development of its disability duties. In doing so the Council is keen to bring about change for disabled people and we are therefore focussing on the issue of involvement and participation in preparing our Plan.
- 10.2 Specifically we are keen to seek the views of disabled people in relation to the development of the Plan. To do this the Council is actively engaged on a number of levels; firstly at a representative group level at the regional level and secondly, at the local level.
- 10.3 Consultation will be designed to ensure that disabled people can assist the Council by:
- identifying barriers faced by disabled people in participating in public life in general and specifically any barriers they have encountered in relation to their dealings with the Council
 - identifying circumstances in the past in which the Council has not promoted positive attitudes towards disabled people and by identifying opportunities in the future for the Council to promote such attitudes
 - setting priorities and identifying solutions as regards the taking of remedial action
 - monitoring and reviewing the effectiveness of measures taken
- 10.4 Our Council's initial Disability Action Plan (July 2007 - March 2009) was informed at regional level, whereby in partnership with the Local Government Staff Commission, a number of disability organisations were invited to a consultation event at Lagan Valley Island, Lisburn on 15 March 2007.
- 10.5 The importance of establishing dialogue and engagement with disabled people during the lifetime of the plan will be

crucial. At the local level, the Council invite local disability groups to comment on our Plan.

We also place press advertisements in local papers to allow individuals the opportunity to provide comments. In addition this Plan is placed on our website, seeking views from individuals and organisations.

10.6 Barriers to proper consultation continue to be removed by ensuring accessibility of documents in appropriate formats. Information will be made available on request, in a timely manner, in accessible formats including Braille, large print, disc and audio cassette. Consideration will also be given to how best to communicate information to young disabled people as well as considering additional dimensions such as ethnicity, age, gender, sexual orientation and religious belief.

10.7 The Council believes it is important that disabled people are involved in the implementation, monitoring and review of the Plan. Section 12 of this document lays out the initiatives the Council wishes to implement. We continue to seek views and comments on these actions and will consider amending them or including additional ones following comments we receive.

10.8 We may wish to further discuss the implementation of the Plan by meeting with:

- individuals
- advisory groups
- consultative panels
- internet discussion group
- telephone focus groups
- surveys

and other innovative ways of involving disabled people.

11. Action measures

11.1 As a result of actions undertaken to meet its statutory duties under Section 75 and during the period of the initial

Disability Action Plan (July 2007 – March 2009) and the most recent plan (April 2009 – March 2011) Newry and Mourne District Council has already taken a number of measures to promote positive attitudes towards disabled people and encourage their participation in public life.

These include:

- Creation of Council's Equality Unit – Established in June 2000, its role is to enable the Council to make decisions and deliver its services having recognised the impact of its actions in terms of promoting equality of opportunity, good relations, performance improvement, good communications and Member Services.
- Disability Liaison Officer – Post created in January 1985, with a role to provide participation opportunities for people with disability in sport and recreation to include participation in the Arts and all other Council activities i.e. access, training, employment.
- In conjunction with the Equality Commission for Northern Ireland, developing a strategy for the employment of persons with a disability. This was launched on 4 October 2005 and reviewed during 2010.
- In terms of recruitment the Council's interview guarantee scheme guarantees an interview to all people with disabilities who demonstrate that they meet the essential (i.e. minimum) criteria for a post. Where an assessment for the post is scheduled, applicants will be invited to participate.
- All interviewers participating in the Council's Recruitment and Selection process are aware of the Disability Duties.
- All current and proposed policies are screened in accordance with the Council's Equality Scheme to ensure they do not have adverse impact on any of the nine equality categories.
- Amending the Council's Section 75 equality screening proforma to reflect the Disability Duties.

- The Council currently has four employees through USEL (Ulster Supported Employment and Learning).
- In terms of service delivery, all Departments within Council must consider equality implications.
- A series of disability awareness training sessions and specialist disability training for employees and elected members. For example during the period 2009 – 2011 286 employees attended disability awareness training and 17 employees attended specialist deaf awareness training.
- Disability access audits have been carried out and subsequent alterations have been, and continue, to be made to the built environment to ensure access to Council facilities and services.
- A concessionary pricing scheme (Gold Card Scheme) operates at the Council's Leisure Facilities.
- Information is made available in alternative formats upon request
- Provision of an assisted bin collection scheme.
- Appointment of two Disability Champions – Colin Moffett, Equality Officer and Ciara Lowe, Disability Liaison Officer

11.2 As stated in 11.1, the Council already has a strategy for the employment of persons with a disability – the action plan of which was launched on 4 October 2005. This strategy was reviewed during 2010 and a copy of this is available upon request.

12. Timescale for the Implementation of the action measures

12.1 The table in section 13 outlines the timescale for the implementation of the action measures.

13. Disability Action Plan April 2011 – March 2013

Action measure	Expected outcome(s)	Indicator	Responsibility	Timeframe	Evaluation / monitoring method
Policy screening new and proposed policy	Mainstreaming of the Disability Duties	All new and revised policies are screened taking into consideration both Section 75 of the NI Act 1998 and the two Disability Duties.	Equality Officer / All line managers	Ongoing	Annual report to Equality Commission for Northern Ireland
Organise appropriate and relevant training, including disability equality training for all staff and Elected Members	Increased awareness of disability legislation and the disability duties. Building capacity and knowledge	90 people to have received training by March 2013 period (frontline staff and managers to be prioritised)	Equality Officer / HR Officer / Health & Safety Section	Ongoing	Evaluation sheets

Action measure	Expected outcome(s)	Indicator	Responsibility	Timeframe	Evaluation / monitoring method
	within the organisation including the specific needs of people with disabilities				
Specialist training for staff participating in Council's Recruitment and Selection process	Increased awareness of disability legislation and the disability duties	All staff participating as interviewers in the Council's recruitment and selection process have attended training	Assistant Director of Administration (Personnel)	Ongoing	Review of training data
Provide enhanced / specialist disability training to staff which will be delivered by the disability sector	Increased awareness among staff of the needs of service users with specific	A minimum of one session per year with 10 members of staff in attendance	Equality Officer / HR Officer	2011 / 2013	Evaluation sheets

Action measure	Expected outcome(s)	Indicator	Responsibility	Timeframe	Evaluation / monitoring method
	types of disabilities				
Council's Action Plan for the Employment of Persons with a Disability	<p>Disability Duties are embedded within the Council's recruitment and selection process</p> <p>Promotion of positive attitudes towards disabled people and increasing participation in public life</p>	<p>Implementation of Action Plan</p> <p>Action Plan reviewed</p>	Assistant Director of Administration (Personnel) / Assistant Director of Administration (Equality)	<p>Ongoing</p> <p>Plan to be reviewed October 2012</p>	<p>Action Plan implemented</p> <p>Action Plan reviewed</p>

Action measure	Expected outcome(s)	Indicator	Responsibility	Timeframe	Evaluation / monitoring method
To engage effectively with people with disabilities regarding Council Services	To assist people with a disability increase knowledge and understanding of Council Services and to improve relationships between Council and people with disabilities.	Council to engage through Council Officer visit to groups in addition to hosting a minimum of one visit by a disability groups per year	Equality Officer / Member Services Officer	Ongoing	Evaluation sheets / Customer survey
Customer Service Excellence	Greater understanding of customer needs – e.g. We make particular efforts to	Indicators to be: Award of Customer Service Excellence to the following Departments / Sections:	Assistant Director of Administration (Equality)	Ongoing	Customer Service Excellence Annual Independent assessment

Action measure	Expected outcome(s)	Indicator	Responsibility	Timeframe	Evaluation / monitoring method
	<p>identify hard to reach and disadvantaged groups and individuals and have developed our services in response to their specific needs (criterion 1.1.3)</p> <p>Improved communication – e.g. We provide our customers with the information they need in ways that meet their needs</p>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ▪ District Development ▪ Technical and Leisure Services <p>Maintain award of Customer Service Excellence to the following Departments / Sections:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> ▪ Administration ▪ Building Control ▪ Equality Unit ▪ Environmental Health ▪ Finance 			

Action measure	Expected outcome(s)	Indicator	Responsibility	Timeframe	Evaluation / monitoring method
	<p>and preferences, using a variety of appropriate channels (criterion 3.2.1)</p> <p>Improved access e.g. We make our services easily accessible to all customers through provision of a range of alternative channels (criterion 3.3.1)</p>				
Review Corporate and Departmental operational practices and procedures	Creating a learning environment	Mainstreaming of the new Disability Duties into	Equality Officer / Assistant Director of	Ongoing to March 2013	Actions to be included in annual report

Action measure	Expected outcome(s)	Indicator	Responsibility	Timeframe	Evaluation / monitoring method
	committed to continued improved service delivery	<p>Departmental operational service delivery</p> <p>Review of Assisted Bin Collection Scheme</p>	Administration (Equality) / Senior Officers	October 2011	to Equality Commission for Northern Ireland
Review Council's external and internal communication policies, practices and procedure	Increased access to Council services and publications for people with a disability	<p>Corporate documents fully accessible and offered in alternative formats upon request.</p> <p>Updated production of 'Concise Dictionary' to reflect key services including those relevant to</p>	<p>Assistant Director of Administration (Equality) / Equality Officer</p> <p>Assistant Director of Administration (Equality)</p>	<p>Ongoing</p> <p>October 2012</p>	Survey feedback

Action measure	Expected outcome(s)	Indicator	Responsibility	Timeframe	Evaluation / monitoring method
		people with disabilities			
Prepare annual report on the implementation of Disability Action Plan for submission to the Equality Commission for NI	Disability Action Plan monitored and reviewed	Report prepared and submitted within requested timeframe	Equality Officer	Annually	Report submitted (usually by 31 August) to Equality Commission for Northern Ireland

14. Targets

- 14.1 The Council is committed to monitoring and reviewing policies and practices to ensure that disability equality duties are being met. Monitoring the progress of this Plan itself is a significant element.
- 14.2 As part of this process, the Annual Review of the Plan will provide a part of the monitoring and review process and assist in drafting appropriate targets for the next period, whilst reporting on the achievement, or otherwise, of those set for the period of the Annual Review.
- 14.3 As indicated in section 12, the Council has included targets as an integral part of our Plan.
- 14.4 Some targets are very specific, whilst others are of a more general nature, thus ensuring the Plan is a realistic and proactive plan, not solely reactive. Some targets are not related to a specific time, as over the period, we want to ensure that the Council meets the practical needs of disabled persons and their carers on a timely basis.
- 14.5 The purpose of these targets is to provide a measure of how the Council is implementing their disability duties and to ensure we are focusing on their needs at a time when it is appropriate to have them addressed.

15. How the disability action plan will be published

- 15.1 Following submission to the Equality Commission for Northern Ireland, this Plan will be available by contacting:

Colin Moffett
Equality Officer
Newry and Mourne District Council
Monaghan Row
Newry
County Down
BT35 8DJ

Tel: 028 3031 3081

Mob: 07739235332
Fax: 028 3031 3077
Email: Colin.Moffett@newryandmourne.gov.uk

- 15.2 The availability of the Disability Action Plan will be advertised in the press, including disability specialist press, and can be accessed on the Council's website at:

www.newryandmourne.gov.uk

- 15.3 The Council will, through our ongoing work with people with disabilities and people with learning disabilities, find appropriate ways of communicating the Plan. The Plan will be produced in clear print and plain language, will be available in alternative formats on request, including large print, Braille, audio cassette and computer disc.
- 15.4 The Plan will be highlighted through press releases, advertisements, and meeting directly with people with disabilities, carers, disability organisations and representative groups.
- 15.5 In accordance with the Council's Bilingualism Policy, the Plan will be available in the Irish Language upon request. Consideration will also be given to requests to produce the Plan for people who speak a minority language.
- 15.6 In addition, all employees will receive a summary Plan and be provided with a full Plan on request.