

Department for Social Development

Disability Action Plan

2014 - 2017

Alternative formats

For information on obtaining this publication in large – print, disk, audio cassette, Braille format or in another language, please contact:

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: This paper is also available to download from the Department's website - www.dsdni.gov.uk

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Foreword

We are pleased to present the Department's Disability Action Plan 2014 -2017. This plan sets out what the Department will do to fulfil our obligations in respect of our disability duties under Section 49A of the Disability Discrimination Act.

We are committed to fully implementing our disability duties and will allocate the resources necessary to ensure that this Plan can be effectively implemented. The plan will be communicated to all staff together with the provision of all necessary guidance and training.

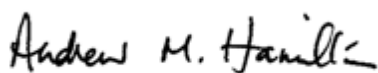
We will monitor progress through an annual report, which will be published on our website and also be given to the Equality Commission NI.

Minister:



Mervyn Storey MLA

Acting Permanent Secretary:



Andrew Hamilton

1. Introduction

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 Social Development 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.

These are collectively referred to as the 'disability duties' and this Plan sets out the actions which the Department will take to meet these obligations.

Under Section 49B of the DDA 1995, the Department for Social Development is also required to submit a Disability Action Plan to the Equality Commission, showing how it proposes to fulfil these duties in relation to its functions.

The Department for Social Development, when reviewing its Disability Action Plan, is committed to carrying out a consultation in a meaningful manner to help inform and improve the Plan.

The first point of contact for enquiries about this Plan is:

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: **028 9082 9569**



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2. About the Department

The Department for Social Development's Mission is 'Together, tackling disadvantage, building sustainable communities'.

The Department comprises of:

- The Resources and Social Policy Group (RSPG);
- The Urban Regeneration and Community Development Group (URCDG);
- The Social Security Agency (SSA) and
- Communication, Policy and Strategic Support (CPSS).

In supporting and helping disabled people, the Department

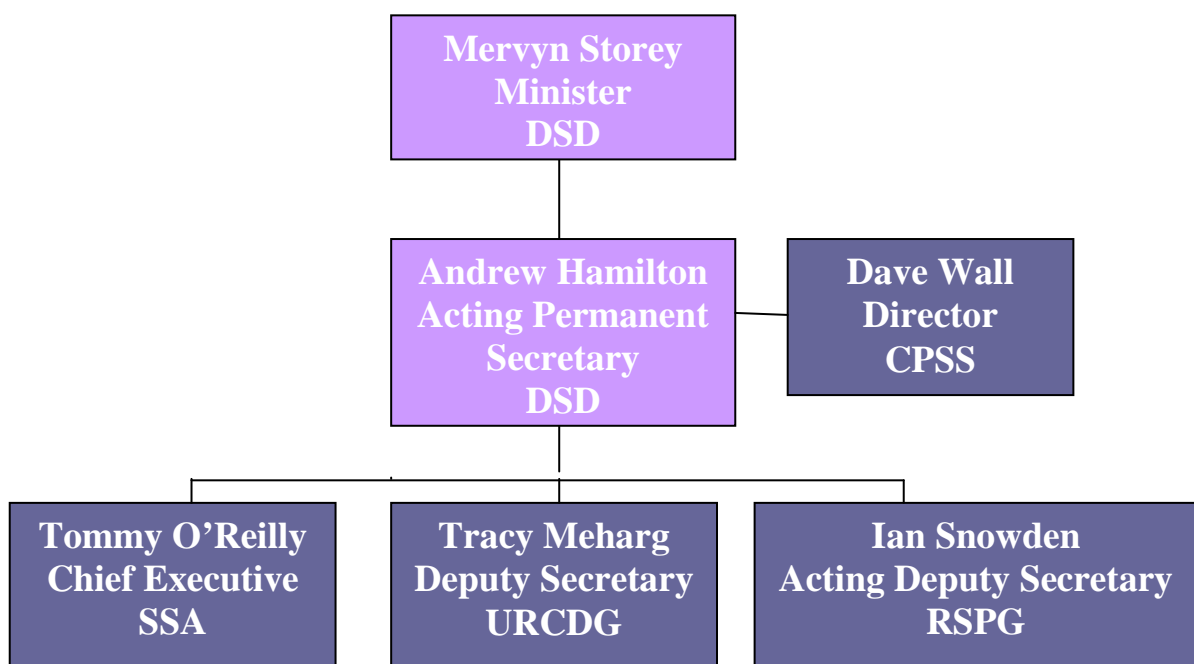
- improves the uptake of benefits by directly targeting people who may be entitled to Attendance Allowance and State Pension Credit and broadcasting an advertising campaign to focus on carers of those potentially entitled to disability benefits;
- provides funding to the Supporting People Programme which is administered by the Northern Ireland Housing Executive. The Programme provides grant funding to 120 housing support providers to deliver housing support services to over 23,000 vulnerable people, including people with a disability, to help them live as independently as possible;
- invests, through the Department's Voluntary and Community Unit, in the region of £14m annually in supporting the wider voluntary and community sector who in turn are involved in delivering services to disabled people; and
- consults with Disability Groups while developing public realm schemes. Belfast City Centre Key Stakeholders Working Group offers opportunities for disabled people to contribute to the new inclusive designs for the streetscape as part of the Belfast Streets Ahead Phase 3 Project in Belfast City Centre.

The Departmental Management Board is chaired by the Permanent Secretary and includes the Deputy Secretaries for

RSPG and URCDG; the Chief Executive of the Social Security Agency, the Director of Financial Management and two Independent Board Members. The Board provides corporate leadership to the Department and takes ownership for the Department's performance.

The organisational chart below summarises the structure of the Department:

Department for Social Development Organisational Chart



3. Departmental Functions

Outlined below is the range of functions of the Department for Social Development.

Resources and Social Policy Group

Responsibilities include:

- corporate finance and negotiating and managing the allocation and control of the Department's resources;
- personnel and support services;

- social security, pensions and child support policy and legislation separate from, but administered in parity with, the corresponding legislation and services in Great Britain;
- housing policy and legislation;
- overseeing the private rented sector in Northern Ireland;
- providing advice and guidance relating to Housing Benefit;
- oversight and funding of the Northern Ireland Housing Executive, which also administers housing benefit to the rented sector and the Supporting People Programme on behalf of the Department;
- securing funding to meet the needs of the housing programme delivered primarily through the Housing Executive and registered Housing Associations;
- child maintenance services, including the promotion of financial responsibility and the provision of information and advice;
- sharing some responsibility for the Appeals Service (NI) with the Courts Service; and
- the Department's Internal Audit function.

Urban Regeneration and Community Development Group

Responsibilities include

- the overall strategy for tackling social, economic and physical regeneration of cities, towns and urban areas in Northern Ireland;
- overall policy for the voluntary sector and community development across Northern Ireland departments;
- a range of social and charities legislation;

- overseeing the work of the Charities Commission (Northern Ireland); and
- all European Union issues which affect the Department, including the Peace III programme;
- providing funding to voluntary and community organisations who are involved in delivering services to disabled people.

The Social Security Agency:

- assesses and pays social security benefits accurately and securely;
- gives advice and information about these benefits;
- supports people by helping them move closer to work;
- handles benefit reviews and appeals;
- prevents and detects benefit fraud, prosecutes offenders and recovers any benefit which has been paid incorrectly;
- recovers benefit which has been paid in compensation cases;
- assesses people's financial circumstances if they are applying for legal aid; and
- provides services to clients in Great Britain.

Communication, Policy and Strategic Support:

Responsibilities include

- Leading on cross cutting issues including Equality, Human Rights, tackling poverty and Shared Future;

- Assisting business areas through expert support, guidance and advice on a range of corporate and business related functions which include :
 - Statistical research analysis and evaluation; and
 - Communications.

Further information on the work of the Department can be accessed on its website at <http://www.dsdni.gov.uk>

4. Encouraging Participation in Public Life

Public Life Positions

The Department currently has responsibility for four Non-Departmental Public Bodies. These are:-

- NI Housing Executive;
- Charities Commission for NI;
- Charities Advisory Committee; and
- Vaughan's Trust.

The DSD Minister makes appointments to the first three bodies, and the Department runs the appointment process in line with the Commissioner for Public Appointments Code of Practice for Ministerial Public Appointments in Northern Ireland. Options for removing the Vaughan's Charity Trustees from government oversight are currently being explored, and DSD will be making no further appointments of trustees.

Involvement in working groups

The Department actively encourages participation in its working groups established for consultation and engagement purposes. The Department's responsibilities in this area would include:

- Housing;
- Urban Regeneration;

- Social Security Benefits; and
- Child Maintenance.

Examples of groups would include the Social Security Agency's Customer Representative Group, Belfast City Centre Key Stakeholder Working Group for Belfast Streets Ahead and Child Maintenance Service Stakeholder Forum.

5. Action Measures

Outlined in the attached Plan are the actions which the Department proposes to take until 2017, with associated targets and timescales.

We will regularly review and develop the Plan, and will identify additional measures throughout the life of the Plan. Additionally, in light of the Executive's Decision to reduce the number of Departments, a Disability Action plan will need to be developed for the new Department for Communities

6. Annual Reports/Review

The Department will submit an annual progress report on the implementation of this plan to the Equality Commission. This will be contained within the Department's Section 75 Annual Report, due for completion and referral to ECNI every August. The Department will also carry out a five year review of this Plan.

Annex B

Action measures to promote positive attitudes

	Action Measures	Performance Indicators	Timescale
1	To promote positive attitudes towards disabled people in the Department	The number of staff who have completed mandatory Diversity training in each business year of the period of the Plan. (This is an ongoing activity as all staff must complete this training once every three years).	March 2017
		The number of education and awareness sessions delivered to managers. <i>(Throughout the year, Attendance Management Unit, including the Disability Liaison Officers (DLOs) raise awareness of the role of the line manager in considering and putting in place reasonable adjustments under DDA/DDO to ensure the Department meets responsibilities under DDA and DDO).</i>	March 2017
		The number of cases that require DLOs advice, guidance and support.	March 2017
		The number of corporate documentation (both internal and external) containing positive and proportionate reference to people with a disability.	April 2014-March 2017

Annex B

Action measures to promote positive attitudes

	Action Measures	Performance Indicators	Timescale
2	To raise awareness of people with autism	Promotion, organisation and delivery of autism awareness training for all frontline services.	March 2015
	To raise awareness of people with disabilities	The number of staff completing online disability awareness training course. <i>(It will be mandatory for all frontline staff, new entrants and existing staff who are new to frontline work, to complete the course).</i>	April 2014- March 2017

Annex B

Action measures to promote participation in public life

	Action Measures	Performance Indicators	Timescale
3	To include disabled people as members of Belfast City Centre Key Stakeholder Working Group for Belfast Streets Ahead Phase 3 Project. This will offer opportunities for disabled people to contribute to the new inclusive designs for the streetscape in Belfast City Centre.	1) Review membership of Group 2) Encouragement of members to nominate disabled people to attend/represent their organisation 3) Monitoring of Group membership	March 2015 March 2017
4	To encourage disabled people to be members of the Child Maintenance Service Stakeholder Forum.	1) Review membership of Forum 2) Encouragement of members to nominate disabled people to attend/represent their organisation 3) Monitoring of Forum membership	March 2015 March 2017
5	To encourage more disabled people to apply for the NIHE Board, Charities Commission NI and the Charities Advisory Committee.	1) Reflect best practice on diversity 2) Notify disability representative groups when advertising appointments 3) Monitoring of numbers of disabled people applying	In line with board members appointments.