



Special EU Programmes Body
Comhlacht na gClár Speisialta AE
Special EU Schemes Board

DISABILITY ACTION PLAN

2020 - 2025

CONSULTATION OUTCOME REPORT

Dec 2020

A hard copy of this document, or a copy in a different format, can be provided on request by contacting:

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1. Introduction and background

The Special EU Programmes Body (SEUPB) has concluded a public consultation on its draft Disability Action Plan. The plan sets out the actions it proposes to take forward over the next five years.

The consultation ran from 5 June 2020 to 28 August 2020 and this report has been produced to highlight the comments received during the consultation period and the SEUPB's response to these comments.

The Body would like to take this opportunity to thank all those who participated in the consultation. This invaluable input and expertise has helped to shape the Disability Action Plan.

2. Consultation

A full public consultation was launched on 5 June 2020 and closed on 28 August 2020. Ten Equality Stakeholder organisations were emailed directly, attaching a letter informing them of the consultation arrangements and enclosing the draft Disability Action Plan, together with a Response Form. The consultation documents were also made available on the Body's website, advertisements were placed in the Belfast Telegraph, the Irish News, the News Letter and the Irish Independent. The documents were additionally available in hard copy and in alternative formats upon request.

A full copy of the draft Disability Action Plan issued for consultation can be requested. The final Disability Action Plan can be found on the Body's website: <https://seupb.eu/consultations>

3. Responses received

A total of seven written responses were received from:

1. Archways
2. Autism NI
3. Fighting Blindness
4. Mencap
5. The Irish Society for Autism
6. The Royal National Institute of Blind People (RNIB)
7. The Cedar Foundation (Easy Read)

A summary of the issues raised on the draft Disability Action Plan, and the Body's response, can be found at **Annex A**.

4. Next steps

Following the feedback received during the consultation, the Body has reviewed the draft action plan and will publish the final Disability Action Plan in December 2020.

The Disability Action Plan will be reviewed on an annual basis (an annual report will be submitted to the Equality Commission) and may be added to, or amended over its 5-year lifespan, as more information becomes available or priorities change.

Annex A

Special EU Programmes Body consultation Disability Action Plan (DAP) 2020-2025 Consultation responses and Body comments			
Response ref.	<i>Issue</i>	<i>Comment / Recommendation</i>	<i>Action taken / comments</i>
1	Mencap		
1.1	Do you agree with SEUPB's action measures to promote positive attitudes towards disabled people that have been included in the draft Disability Action Plan?	<p>No</p> <p>Mencap broadly agrees with and welcomes the measures outlined in this Plan to promote positive attitudes towards disabled people. However, we believe these proposals need to be further strengthened with the following amendments (see below).</p>	
1.2	Staff training and awareness raising	<p>The measures concerning staff training and awareness raising are very positive, particularly the commitment to providing all employees and office holders with 'refresher training every year.' This could help keep staff up to date with the latest policy developments and information regarding learning disability.</p> <p>However, it would be important that learning disability is explicitly referenced and included in the core training curriculum. There is a lack of awareness among the wider public about learning disability, including what is meant by the term 'learning disability' and a poor understanding of people's capabilities. This can result in misconceptions and poor attitudes which leads to the serious inequalities that people with a learning disability continue to face. In our experience, disability awareness training often places greater emphasis on wheelchair users or people with sight and hearing impairments.</p>	

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1	Mencap	<p>It would therefore be essential for staff to receive training specifically on learning disability which covers topics such as what constitutes a learning disability, reasonable adjustments, accessible communication and unconscious bias. Wherever possible, people with a learning disability should be involved in the preparation and delivery of such training, including contributing with their own expertise and lived experiences. In addition to providing staff with greater knowledge of learning disability, this also helps achieve greater attitudinal change and promotes inclusiveness.</p> <p>It is also important that the measures detail how the training will be evaluated and reviewed. This would help assess the training outcomes and identify areas where further training could be provided. It could also be beneficial if the training is co-developed with some of the named partners and equality stakeholders identified in section 6 of the Plan.</p> <p>Recommendation 1: Mencap NI recommends that the Plan specifically include annual staff training on learning disability which is co-designed/delivered by those with lived experience.</p> <p>Recommendation 2: Mencap NI recommends that the Plan detail how its disability training will be evaluated and reviewed.</p> <p>Recommendation 3: Mencap NI recommends the inclusion of a measure which commits to proactively engage with the Plan's named partners and equality stakeholders in respect to the design, delivery and review of its staff disability training.</p>	<p>Recommendation 1: SEUPB will ensure that any training provider engaged will deliver training to staff and office holders on <u>all</u> aspects of disability equality legislation and disability awareness, encompassing both seen and unseen disabilities, specifically including learning disability. It will be expected and checked that the learning provider has developed a robust, comprehensive and researched based curriculum, ideally in cooperation with those living with disabilities and/or in conjunction with relevant equality stakeholders. This training will initially be delivered to all SEUPB staff over the first six months of 2021 and refreshed every 3 years, as per the recommendation of ECNI.</p> <p>Recommendation 2: SEUPB agrees to include in the Plan that training will be evaluated and reviewed by attendee feedback forms.</p> <p>Recommendation 3: SEUPB outsource their training needs and requirements to accredited providers. The Body agrees to ensure that all providers engaged, deliver training which is robust, comprehensive and evidence-based. Ideally the training modules will have been developed, designed and delivered in conjunction with other relevant equality stakeholders.</p>

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1	Mencap		
1.3	Recruitment and selection	<p>The measures aimed at ensuring the SEUPB's recruitment process and work environment are accessible to disabled people are particularly welcome. This includes, for example, measure 3.2 which states that the SEUPB will 'provide details of publicly advertised vacancies to the Disability Employment Service and other disability agencies and consider all requests for reasonable adjustments as part of the selection process'. Engaging with the disability sector in this way would help more disabled people become aware of such opportunities, and the sector could also advise the SEUPB on improving the accessibility of its recruitment.</p> <p>However, these measures could be amended to proactively provide reasonable adjustments in the recruitment process. Instead of the onus being on the applicant to request reasonable adjustments, we would suggest they be made available as an integral part of the recruitment process. This could include for example, ensuring applications are available in an accessible / Easy Read format and ensuring interviews are held in accessible locations. Proactively providing such measures would make it clear that applications from disabled people are welcome.</p> <p>To help the SEUPB attract and retain employees with a learning disability, and promote positive attitudes towards people with a learning disability as a result, a measure should be included specifying that it will sign up to the Disability Confident government scheme. This scheme provides employers with guidance on supporting disabled people with accessible recruitment, work placements and permanent employment. Successfully implementing the scheme and becoming a 'Disability Confident Leader' would demonstrate commitment to disability equality and would help with other parts of the Plan including improving staff knowledge of learning disability and producing accessible materials.</p> <p>A further way to promote positive attitudes towards disability is to include people with a learning disability in the interview process. This helps increase their visibility in public roles, highlighting the skills, talent and insight they</p>	

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1	Mencap		
		<p>contribute. Mencap NI can provide training on good practice in involving people with a learning disability in the recruitment process.</p> <p>Recommendation 4: Mencap NI recommends that the measure on accessibility in the recruitment process be amended so that reasonable adjustments are provided proactively throughout the process, instead of being available upon request.</p> <p>Recommendation 5: Mencap NI recommends that a measure be included which commits to participation by SEUPB in the Disability Confident employment scheme.</p> <p>Recommendation 6: Mencap NI recommends that a measure be included which provides for people with a learning disability to form part of the SEUPB's interview process.</p>	<p>Recommendation 4: The Body welcomes applications from disabled people and commits to making reasonable adjustments and to providing alternative formats upon request. SEUPB currently implements reasonable adjustments as and when required for existing employees with disabilities</p> <p>Recommendation 5: The Body commits to considering the Disability Confident employment scheme and to bringing the matter before the Senior Management Team for their assessment on whether this is a viable option for the Body to participate in.</p> <p>Recommendation 6: The make-up of SEUPB interview panels are merit based. Membership is based on the skillset of the panel members, their knowledge of the subject matter at hand, and the competency level of the role being recruited for. Under relevant equality legislation, SEUPB must also have due regard to the gender split and community background of panel members.</p>
1.4	Communication	<p>The measures within section 2 of the Plan are very welcome in terms of improving the accessibility of the SEUPB's internal and external communications, as well as promoting a more positive image of disabled people.</p> <p>To help meet the aim of section 2.1 in ensuring the website is 'perceivable, operable, understandable and robust' for all users,' a measure could be included to develop more webpages and online content in an Easy Read format. The website and its online content should also be written using plain language that is easy to understand. These important steps would help many</p>	

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1	Mencap	<p>people with a learning disability better understand the written information available.</p> <p>Likewise, a measure which specifies that more SEUPB material will be produced in an Easy Read format would be very helpful, especially considering that many young people with a learning disability access SEUPB's programmes.</p> <p>It is welcome that measure 2.4 commits to the 'Provision of information to staff of national disability awareness days through staff internal newsletter.' As the Plan states, this measure could helpfully raise awareness of the disability issues these occasions highlight, as well as any associated events. However, the SEUPB could further its aim of promoting positive attitudes towards disabled people by proactively engaging with national disability awareness days on an ongoing basis. This could involve participating in any associated events and producing external materials which help promote positive images of disabled people in partnership with equality stakeholders and disabled people who participate in the SEUPB's programmes.</p> <p>Recommendation 7: Mencap NI recommends that measure 2.1 be amended to specify that the website will contain webpages and content that is available in an Easy Read format, and that the website as a whole will be written using plain language.</p> <p>Recommendation 8: Mencap NI recommends that a measure be included which specifies that the SEUPB's internal and external materials will be made available in Easy Read format.</p> <p>Recommendation 9: Mencap NI recommends that measure 2.4 be amended to provide that the SEUPB will proactively engage and participate in national disability awareness days.</p>	<p>Recommendation 7: The SEUPB's website is written in as accessible language as possible given the nature of the work of the organisation, including specialist technical guidance to funded projects. Where appropriate, Easy Read format of key documents will be provided upon request.</p> <p>Recommendation 8: Easy-Read formats of key documents will be provided where appropriate, upon request.</p> <p>Recommendation 9: The SEUPB commits to building awareness by publicising relevant disability awareness days. The Body will advertise these days in its staff e-zine.</p>

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1	Mencap		
1.5	Accessibility	<p>Measure 2.7 (now measure 2.8 in final Disability Action Plan) which commits to ensuring 'that all SEUPB co-ordinated events meet the needs of disabled people' is very welcome. However, it would be advantageous if this measure could provide further detail on the reasonable adjustments which should be put in place to help the SEUPB's events be more accessible to people with a learning disability.</p> <p>This would include ensuring that events are delivered using accessible language and that jargon and specialist information is avoided. Likewise, while it is encouraging that the measure commits to ensuring 'event literature are available in alternative formats upon request', it would be helpful if Easy Read was specifically included. Again, this kind of reasonable adjustment should be provided proactively to further promote inclusiveness and make it clear that disabled people are welcome to participate in these events.</p> <p>Other reasonable adjustments would include ensuring that events are not overly formal, or structured and that any event facilitators have received training on learning disability. The Plan should also provide for a greater range of events, some of which could be co-developed and co-delivered by the young people with a learning disability who avail of opportunities through the SEUPB's programmes. This would highlight the positive impact these programmes are having for young people with a learning disability and further promote positive attitudes towards disabled people.</p> <p>Recommendation 10 (numbered as recommendation 13 in Mencap's consultation response document): Mencap NI recommends that measure 2.7 be amended to detail the reasonable adjustments which will be provided to help people with a learning disability have greater access to the SEUPB's events.</p> <p>Recommendation 11 (numbered as recommendation 14 in Mencap's consultation response document): Mencap NI recommends a measure be included which provides for a greater variety of SEUPB events, including opportunities for young people with a learning disability to co-design and co-deliver some events.</p>	<p>Recommendation 10: All SEUPB events are held in accessible locations and information is available in alternative formats upon request.</p> <p>Recommendation 11: Where appropriate, the SEUPB would seek to provide opportunities for young people with a learning disability to co-design and co-deliver relevant project events.</p>

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1	Mencap		
1.6	Programming	<p>It would further benefit the Plan if measures were included which specifically focus on improving accessibility and boosting the participation of people with a learning disability within the SEUPB's programmes.</p> <p>For example, reasonable adjustments should be built into the initial design of programmes, with programme officers being appropriately trained on how and when these adjustments may be required. This could help, for example, to ensure that the Value for Money calculation makes provision for the needs of programmes which involve young people with a learning disability. This includes the higher staff to participant ratio, the increased contact hours and the fact that these programmes may need longer timescales to effectively complete their objectives.</p> <p>This issue could be addressed by improving programme officers' understanding of the barriers people with a learning disability face. A measure should therefore be included which specifies that programme officers will receive annual training in learning disability awareness. This could help them understand the reasonable adjustments that programmes involving people with a learning disability require, as well as furthering their knowledge of the overall issues around learning disability and the immense value these programmes can therefore bring.</p> <p>Recommendation 12 (numbered as recommendation 15 in Mencap's consultation response document): Mencap NI recommends a measure which requires reasonable adjustments to be built into the initial design of programmes.</p> <p>Recommendation 13 (numbered as recommendation 16 in Mencap's consultation response document): Mencap NI recommends a measure which requires programme officers to receive annual learning disability awareness training.</p>	<p>Recommendation 12: The SEUPB does assess all projects with regards to equality/inclusion.</p> <p>Recommendation 13: The SEUPB will arrange training for all staff and office holders over the first six months of 2021. This will cover <u>all</u> aspects of disability equality legislation and disability awareness, encompassing both seen and unseen disabilities. The training will be refreshed every 3 years, as recommended by the Equality Commission of Northern Ireland.</p>

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1	Mencap		
1.7	Do you agree with SEUPB's action measures to encourage participation by disabled people in public life that have been included in the draft Disability Action Plan?	<p>No.</p> <p>*While we do generally support and welcome the measures within this Plan to encourage the participation of disabled people in public life, they need to be further expanded to help the SEUPB more effectively achieve this aim.</p>	Specific comments addressed at 1.8 and 1.9.
1.8	Participation in public life, Recruitment and Support Measures for Disabled Staff: Co-Production	<p>Providing people with a learning disability with opportunities to have a developmental role in the SEUPB's work would have many benefits. These could include, for example, shaping programmes to better suit people with a learning disability, helping disabled people have greater visibility in public life, and providing an opportunity for sharing knowledge and lived experience. These benefits have clearly been recognised by the SEUPB as section 7 of the introduction to this Plan states that it will 'continue to encourage the participation of disabled people via direct recruitment to the Body and when seeking volunteers from relevant government departments for Monitoring Committees and Steering Committees for the Programmes'. This positive action should be incorporated as a specific measure in the Plan, ensuring that places on these committees are allocated to people with a learning disability, for example, who are current or previous participants of SEUPB programmes.</p> <p>In order to facilitate this, reasonable adjustments including accessible materials should be provided within the Committees' work. Establishing this good practice on an ongoing basis will help increase staff's awareness of disability issues and could help promote a more positive image of people with a learning disability both internally and externally.</p> <p>Recommendation 10: Mencap NI recommends that a measure be included which provides that people with a learning disability will form part of the SEUPB's monitoring and steering committees, including any volunteers chosen from relevant government departments.</p>	<p>The Body currently consults publically on its programmes and plans – it will continue to do so.</p> <p>Recommendation 10: Membership of the Monitoring Committees and Steering Committees is comprised of representatives from the Body's Accountable Departments in Northern Ireland, Ireland and the Scottish Government who provide match-funding for the programmes. The Body welcomes the participation of disabled people in these roles.</p> <p>Furthermore, Audit & Risk Assurance Committee roles are professional roles and members are appointed based on professional qualifications. The Body welcomes applications from professionals both with and without a disability.</p>

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1	Mencap		
		<p>Recommendation 11: Mencap NI recommends that a measure be included which details the reasonable adjustments that will be provided to help people with a learning disability participate in the monitoring and steering committees' work.</p>	<p>Recommendation 11: The Body has no control over which individuals from the accountable Departments self-select to the Committees. Should a volunteer with a disability from one of the Body's accountable Departments be nominated to the Monitoring and/or Steering Committee, reasonable adjustments will be provided as required.</p>
1.9	Employment	<p>In addition to improving the accessibility of the recruitment process as detailed in section 1.2 of this response, it is Mencap NI's view that the Plan should be amended to outline specific employment opportunities the SEUPB could provide people with a learning disability.</p> <p>Given that only 6% of adults with a learning disability are in paid work there is a pressing need for initiatives which improve their access to employment. It would therefore be very encouraging if internships, work placements and meaningful paid employment opportunities within the SEUPB could be provided in this Plan. These opportunities should be available across a variety of work areas and roles, and be tailored to the applicant's preferences.</p> <p>The Plan should also outline how many employment opportunities would be available each year, their duration and who they would be appropriate for. In order to ensure the effectiveness and appropriateness of such opportunities, the SEUPB should work closely with the disability sector, including its equality stakeholders when developing them. Mencap NI provides free Learning Disability Awareness training, facilitated by people with a learning disability, to employers who offer paid work or voluntary placements to people with a learning disability.</p> <p>Recommendation 12: Mencap NI recommends a measure which details the internship, work placement and paid employment opportunities the SEUPB will make available to people with a disability / learning disability.</p>	<p>Recommendation12: The Body does not currently run an internship programme or a work placement programme. It is a relatively small organisation with limited job roles. All of our paid employment opportunities are advertised widely and open to all sectors of the community to apply. The Body will always facilitate any reasonable adjustment that is requested in terms of disability either at the recruitment and selection stage or for an existing employee. During the lifespan of this DAP, the Body commits to considering the possibility of launching a work placement scheme which would provide opportunities for people with disabilities to join the workforce.</p> <p>The SEUPB welcomes applications for employment from people with disabilities, and currently has a number of employees with disabilities, providing reasonable adjustments as and when required.</p>

Response ref.	Issue	Comment / Recommendation	Action taken / comments
1	Mencap		

Response ref.	Issue	Comment / Recommendation	Action taken / comments
2	The Cedar Foundation – Response to Easy Read version of draft Disability Action Plan and Consultation Document		
2.1	Do you think our plans will help people think about disabled people in a good way?	The plan is trying to encourage opportunity, inclusivity and promote disability.	Noted.
2.2	Do you think our plans will help disabled people take part in public life? This means joining in with our work and decisions.	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Is there clear monitoring/evaluation of the Plan that will be disseminated to the public/stakeholders to demonstrate the impact of the plan? Involving People with disabilities on decisions that will impact them is essential, they are experts by experience and the outcome of the decision will be more meaningful Clarity on how the plan has been co-produced with all stakeholder including people with disabilities – Does SEUPB have a co-production Strategy? 	<p>Post the evaluation of all received consultation responses, a final Disability Action Plan is to be published by the Body in December 2020. This will be available to download at www.seupb.eu; as will be the Annual Report which the Body submits to the Equality Commission. The Annual Report will monitor how the Body is performing against each measure detailed in the Disability Action Plan.</p> <p>The Body does not have a specific co-production strategy however, significant pieces of work are regularly put out to public consultation. This was the case with the draft Disability Action Plan. It was also sent directly to ten Equality Stakeholder organisations. Seven responses were received from 'disability organisations'. These responses are being</p>

Response ref.	Issue	Comment / Recommendation	Action taken / comments
2	The Cedar Foundation – Response to Easy Read version of draft Disability Action Plan and Consultation Document		
			considered and updates may be made to the final Disability Action Plan adopted by the Body.
2.3	Do you think anything is missing from our plan?	<p>TRAINING</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Will people with disabilities be involved in delivering the disability awareness training? • Recruitment, the panel to include all disabilities including hidden, will a disabled person participate on the recruitment panel? • 4 workers to be trained in Equality Training – is this to deliver the training to other staff or is this a proportionate number of staff that will be trained and therefore you could use a %? • Is the emotional health & wellbeing mandatory for all staff? <p>COMMUNICATING</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Would be beneficial to list the alternate formats available eg easy read, brail, audio, picture etc... • Disability Awareness Days – could promote as part of corporate social responsibility – Charity of the Year, staff fun runs/walk, cake sale. 	<p>The SEUPB currently outsource its training needs and requirements to accredited providers. At this stage, it is unknown who will actually deliver the disability awareness training to SEUPB staff, however the Body is open to this task being undertaken by people with disabilities.</p> <p>In light of the current situation regarding Covid-19, and its longer term implications, it would not be prudent for additional external visitors to participate in any forthcoming interview processes. The make-up of SEUPB interview panels is merit based. Membership is based on the skillset of the panel members, their knowledge of the subject matter at hand, and the competency level of the role being recruited for. Under relevant equality legislation, SEUPB must also have due regard to the gender split and community background of panel members.</p> <p>4 staff members will be trained to carry out equality screening. Equality training will be delivered to <u>all</u> SEUPB staff.</p> <p>The SEUPB's Human Resources Department ensures that information and support on "emotional health and well-being" is provided to all employees via regular e-mails and relevant training courses. All staff receive a monthly newsletter by e-mail from the organisation's Employee Assistance Programme provider and each employee has full access to the Employee</p>

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2	The Cedar Foundation – Response to Easy Read version of draft Disability Action Plan and Consultation Document		
			<p>Assistance Programme. This includes a counselling service and a useful App which contains a range of articles and advice.</p> <p>The Body agrees to listing the alternative communication formats available going forward.</p> <p>The SEUPB commits to building awareness by publicising relevant disability awareness days and to sending information to all staff about these. The Body will also advertise these days in its staff magazine.</p>

Response ref.	Issue	Comment / Recommendation	Action taken / comments
3	Archways		
3.1	Do you agree with SEUPB's action measures to promote positive attitudes towards disabled people that have been included in the draft Disability Action Plan?	Yes	
3.2	Do you agree with SEUPB's action measures to promote positive attitudes towards disabled people that have been included in the draft Disability Action Plan?	Yes	

Response ref.	Issue	Comment / Recommendation	Action taken / comments
3 Archways			
3.3	Are there any action measures not included that you feel should be included?	<p>In relation to recruitment and support measures for disabled staff. Consideration might be given to more proactive measures around the inclusion of employees with disabilities. For example, mentoring programmes; or engagement with specialist initiatives to provide opportunities for people with intellectual disabilities (see example https://downsyndrome.ie/what-we-do/ability-programme/).</p>	<p>The Body commits to considering mentoring programmes and engagement with specialist initiatives to provide opportunities for people with intellectual disabilities. These matters will be brought before the Senior Management Team for their assessment on whether they are viable options for the Body to participate in.</p> <p>The SEUPB welcomes applications for employment from people with disabilities, and currently has a number of employees with disabilities, providing reasonable adjustments as and when required.</p>
3.4	Any other general comments	<p>The Action plan is well thought out and comprehensive, well done to everyone involved.</p> <p>The following are just some additional thoughts that might be useful in looking at its implementation (see table below).</p> <p>In relation to staff training and awareness – to give attention to the quality and nature of training provided. Organisations should be cautious that training not become a check box exercise on requirements and obligations - it should instead provide an opportunity to inform and enthuse participants; challenge perceptions and provoke discussion. Consideration might be given to awareness programmes/ training that involve people with disabilities themselves.</p> <p>In relation to Communications - Recognising the already excellent work of the SEUPB Communications team. Disability actions in relation to the website should perhaps not just be to meet required accessibility standards, but rather to work to provide a platform that is accessible and engaging to all</p>	<p>The Body notes these comments and commits to engaging a high quality training provider, preferably one that involves people with disabilities in the development and delivering of the training.</p> <p>The Body's website is written in as accessible language as possible given the nature of the work of the organisation, including specialist technical guidance to funded projects. The Body is working towards full compliance with the international accessibility standard, WCAG</p>

Response ref.	<i>Issue</i>	<i>Comment / Recommendation</i>	<i>Action taken / comments</i>
3	Archways		
		- through for instance, provision of core content and materials in 'easy to read' format or the use of a range of different visual medium.	<p>2.1 AA, or its European equivalent, EN301 54. The SEUPB has conducted an independent audit of the accessibility of the website and is working through the recommendations with its supplier at the moment.</p> <p>Where appropriate, Easy Read format of key documents will be provided.</p>

Response ref.	Issue	Comment / Recommendation	Action taken / comments
4	Autism NI		
4.1	Do you agree with SEUPB's action measures to promote positive attitudes towards disabled people that have been included in the draft Disability Action Plan?	Yes	
4.2	Do you agree with SEUPB's action measures to promote positive attitudes towards disabled people that have been included in the draft Disability Action Plan?	Yes	
4.3	Are there any action measures not included that you feel should be included?	<p>Autistic individuals may have trouble with communicating, interacting socially and sensory sensitivities. Each individual experiences' autism in a unique way thus there is the potential for misunderstanding and misinterpretation of the behaviour of an autistic individual.</p> <p>With specialist 'accredited training' a range of individuals/agencies can be made more aware of the issues facing the autism community and therefore be better equipped to provide informed support/adjustments. There needs to be a continued commitment to ongoing accredited training across agencies.</p>	The Body notes these comments and commits to engaging a high quality training provider, who will deliver training to all SEUPB staff and office holders, specifically referencing autism as both a seen and unseen disability.
4.4	Any other general comments	<p>In Northern Ireland the prevalence of autism in the school aged population is now 1 in 24. This means there has been a tremendous increase in the demand for services and support for autistic individuals and their families. For many their social and communication disability requires adaptations if evidence-based outcomes are to be successfully achieved.</p> <p>The consultation documents highlight measures, which are conformable rather than innovative, it is not obvious how progress towards achieving these outcomes will directly impact autistic individuals. For example, will autistic individuals be better off in regard to use of services or employment?</p>	The Body notes these comments and thanks Autism NI for their response. Documentation can be made available, upon request, in alternative formats including braille, large-print, audio or easy-read. This measure will assist autistic individuals in becoming aware of and understanding the work of the SEUPB.

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4	Autism NI		
		Autism NI overall, advocates a system that from the earliest opportunity promotes ambition for autistic individuals and gives them similar opportunities to others. There is a need for a system/s that understands and supports, allowing autistic individuals to enjoy good emotional and mental health.	Furthermore, the Body commits to considering further the possibility of engaging in Government initiatives such as the Disability Confident employment scheme which, if implemented, would directly impact autistic individuals in a positive way.

<i>Response ref.</i>	<i>Issue</i>	<i>Comment / Recommendation</i>	<i>Action taken / comments</i>
5	Fighting Blindness		
5.1	Do you agree with the SEUPB's action measures to promote positive attitudes towards disabled people that have been included in the draft Disability Action Plan?	Yes	
5.2	Do you agree with the SEUPB's action measures to promote positive attitudes towards disabled people that have been included in the draft Disability Action Plan?	Yes	
5.3	Any other general comments	We imagine that many of service users and clients may address concerns that have arisen specifically as a result of the Covid-19 health crisis. Whilst the action plan does not specifically cover this, it may arise that consultation with said group may reveal additional needs or considerations.	The Covid-19 health crisis was referenced in a limited way in the consultation responses that the Body received. However, since the beginning of the crisis the SEUPB has provided

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5	Fighting Blindness		
			comprehensive guidance and support to all projects on how to mitigate against the impact of COVID-19; addressing, as much as possible, all their issues and concerns. SEUPB staff also continue to work with them on a daily basis, to provide as much support as they can. As a result of all these efforts, no projects have, to date, been lost due to the crisis.

Response ref.	Issue	Comment / Recommendation	Action taken / comments
6	The Irish Society for Autism		
6.1	Are there any action measures not included that you feel should be included?	Autism specific training for all staff.	The Body notes this comment and commits to engaging a high quality training provider, who will deliver training to all SEUPB staff and office holders, specifically referencing autism as both a seen and unseen disability.
6.2	Any other general comments	In the aftermath of Covid 19 consideration should be given to how we provide services and which type of service can [give] us confidence and security that vulnerable people or those with specific needs are receiving first class quality services.	The SEUPB's Disability Action Plan is not Covid specific but the Body has been working with projects throughout 2020 to ensure 'Covid cover' and the sustainability of operations.

Response ref.	Issue	Comment / Recommendation	Action taken / comments
6	The Irish Society for Autism		
		<p>Are we satisfied that people are given the opportunity to participate in developing service[s] suitable to their needs?</p> <p>How will we improve integration and acceptance as a priority after Covid 19[?].</p>	<p>The SEUPB is a funding body and not a service provider. The programmes currently funded are PEACE IV and INTERREG VA. All applications are assessed for equality; namely that consideration has been given to EU and national Equality Strategies and that the project will offer equality of opportunity to all sections of the communities in the eligible area.</p> <p>There is a specific focus on disability under the INTERREG Health theme. The objective of this is:</p> <p>Through collaboration on a cross-border basis, improve the health and well-being of people living in the region by enabling them to access quality health and social care services in the most appropriate setting to their needs. It will result in an increased number of 'episodes of care' delivered on a cross-border basis.</p> <p>The relevant output is:</p> <p>Develop two new cross-border area community support services to support 4,000 disabled people who are socially isolated</p> <p>Under this element, SEUPB funds 2 projects:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> · Need to Talk project, Lead Partner RNIB · ONSIDE project, Lead Partner Disability NI. <p>In the PEACE IV programme, there is one project that specifically targets and works with young disabled people - HEROES project, the</p>

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6	The Irish Society for Autism		
			Lead Partner is Mencap. The objective for this theme (CYP 14-24 years) is to enhance the capacity of children and young people to form positive and effective relationships with others of a different background and make a positive contribution to building a cohesive society. Output: Phase One - 3,400 young people aged 14-24 years who are most marginalised and disadvantaged completing approved programmes that develop their soft skills and a respect for diversity. Phase Two will target 4,000 young people.

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7	RNIB		
7.1	Are there any action measures not included that you feel should be included?	We particularly welcome the assurance that all SEUPB co-ordinated events meet the needs of disabled people. In particular, the availability of literature being made available in alternative formats.	The Body thanks RNIB for this comment and confirms that, in addition providing key documents in alternative formats upon request, it will also now list the alternative communication formats available.