

Disability Discrimination Order (Northern Ireland)
2006

Draft Disability Action Plan

For Belfast District Council (Shadow)

August 2014

Foreword

As the democratically elected body representing the people of Belfast, it's important for us to be conscious of the Disability Discrimination Act 1998 when carrying out our functions and providing civic leadership.

"Promoting good relations" is one of the council's strategic objectives in its corporate plan – this means that all Services/Departments include the promotion of equality (incorporating disability and the Disability duties) and good relations in their annual business plans and set out the actions they are taking to achieve this objective.

We are fully committed to fulfilling our statutory obligations in compliance with Section 49A of the Disability Discrimination Act 1995 (as amended by the Disability Discrimination (NI) Order 2006) which places new duties on public authorities to:

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

The council's Disability Action Plan (hereinafter referred to as 'the Plan') sets out how we propose to positively meet these new duties.

The council exists to serve the people of Belfast and to provide civic leadership on issues of concern to the people who live and work in the city.

We will ensure that all councillors and council employees are aware of the DDO disability duties. We will take the lead to ensure that the necessary resources are made available for preparing councillors and employees to deliver the actions set out in this Plan. We wish to ensure that the Disability Action Plan is implemented effectively in the true spirit of our commitment to the DDO duties.

Lord Mayor

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 us, in carrying out our functions, to:

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

Under Section 49B of the DDA 1995, Belfast District Council (Shadow) 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 Lord Mayor and Chief Executive of Belfast District Council (Shadow), we are committed to the fulfilment of these disability duties in all parts of our organisation and have set out how we intend to do this in our 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 provide 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 report to the Equality Commission on the implementation of this plan as well as carrying out a five yearly review of this plan.

We are committed to consulting with disabled people when implementing and reviewing the council's disability plans.

- 1.3 We will undertake a planned programme of communication and training on the disability duties for all staff and Councillors. This training will coincide with our induction training, refresher training and Councillor training on disability. Training timescales are evidenced in the Plan.

Responsibility for implementing, reviewing and evaluating 'the Plan' and the point of contact within the Belfast District Council (Shadow) will be:-

Name: Stella Gilmartin/Lorraine Dennis
Title: Equality and Diversity Officers
Address: City Hall, Belfast BT1 5GS
Telephone number: (Freefone) 0800 0855412
Email: gilmartins/dennisl@belfastcity.gov.uk
Textphone: (028) 9027 0405
Website: www.belfastcity.gov.uk

This Disability Action Plan can be obtained from us in alternative formats, including large print, Braille, audio cassette, easy read, or on computer disc, plain language, and and/or language, please contact the above person to discuss your requirements. You can also download it from our website. Our website is accessible (we work towards level AA of the W3C Web Content Accessibility Guidelines 1.0).

- 1.4 We confirm our commitment to submitting an annual progress report on the implementation of this plan to the Equality Commission and carrying out a five year review of this plan, or plans submitted to the Equality Commission over the five year review period.

A copy of 'the Plan', our annual progress to the Equality Commission and our five year review of this plan will be made available on our website www.belfastcity.gov.uk

2. Our role and function

** (To be updated once new Council arrangements are in place)

2.1 Outlined below is the range of functions of Belfast City Council

We perform six principal roles within our local area:

- a civic leadership role in providing a vision for Belfast and its people, working in partnership with others and investing for the future to ensure a better quality of life for our citizens,
- the direct provision of a number of services and facilities;
- the promotion of the arts, tourism, community and economic development, equality and good relations;
- regulating and licensing certain activities relating to environmental health, consumer protection and public safety;
- representation on a number of bodies and boards including education; and
- consulting on issues relating to functions conducted by other government bodies and agencies on issues such as planning, water, roads and housing.

2.2 In performing the above roles we provide:

- facilities for recreational, social and cultural activities including leisure centres, community centres, parks, sports grounds and places of entertainment;
- street cleansing services;
- waste collection and disposal services;
- burial grounds;
- grant aid to support the arts, good relations, community development and the promotion of tourism and economic development;
- administration and regulation of matters relating to the environment, public health and public safety such as building control, noise pollution and consumer protection;
- licensing and regulation of street trading, places of entertainment, amusement centres, sex establishments, lotteries, cinemas and petroleum stations; and
- the making and regulation of bye-laws.

2.3 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; and
- procure goods and services.

2.4 We have adopted a wide range of policies to support and implement the above statutory functions and provision of services and facilities.

3. Public life positions

** (To be updated once new Council arrangements are in place)

3.1 The Council does not have direct control over public life positions; however we do have people from various sections of the community sitting on council groups, for example:

- Good Relations Partnership
- Section 75 Consultative Forum;
- Arts & Disability Working Group (Waterfront Hall);
- Friends of Botanic and Falls Parks;
- Friends of Belfast Zoo;
- Friends of Waterworks;
- Travellers Group;
- Youth Forum;
- Belfast Policing & Community Safety Partnership;
- BCC Migrants Forum
- BCC Faith Forum

4. Commitment to the effective implementation of the Disability Action Plan

4.1 We are committed to the effective implementation of all aspects of the Plan in all parts of the organisation. Overall responsibility for determining policy on how this will be

achieved lies with our Councillors. Day-to-day responsibility for carrying out the policy lies with the Equality and Diversity Officer, who reports through the Good Relations Manager to the Corporate Management Team and the Assistant Chief Executive who are ultimately responsible for the oversight and implementation of administrative arrangements to ensure that the Council complies with our disability duties. The Equality and Diversity Officer reports work to the Disability Access Group chaired by the Director of Parks and Leisure monthly.

- 4.2 Progress on meeting the objectives of 'the Plan', including those relating to the disability duties will be monitored and reported upon at the most senior level within the organisation. The Equality and Diversity Officer will ensure 'the Plan' will be monitored and reported on annually. All Disability Action Plan reports will proceed through the council reporting mechanisms and to Corporate Management Team.
- 4.3 We will include a formal progress report on meeting the objectives in our annual report to the Equality Commission which is submitted through the standard Committee reporting procedure.

5. Internal arrangements

** (To be updated once new Council arrangements are in place)

5.1 We have 51 Councillors elected for a four year period. They currently meet monthly in full session and more frequently in committees. The principal committees under Belfast City Council are:

- Strategic Policy and Resources Committee;
- Development Committee;
- Health and Environmental Services Committee;
- Licensing Committee;
- Parks & Leisure; and
- Town Planning Committee.

A range of council departments support these committees.

5.2 The Chief Executive oversees the work of the departments through the Corporate Management Team.

5.3 The Chief Executive is responsible for the delivery of the strategic direction set by the Council and through the Corporate Management Team has oversight of the management of services and the longer term planning and allocation of resources.

5.4 Statutory responsibility for the effective implementation of the Disability Duty lies with the council.

5.4.1 The Chief Executive and the Corporate Management Team are responsible for ensuring that the council's decisions are implemented and for overseeing administrative arrangements to make sure 'the Plan' is implemented effectively. Our Equality and Diversity Officer will support this work and act as our main point of contact. Currently, our Equality and Diversity Officer s can be contacted on: gilmartins@belfastcity.gov.uk and Lorraine Dennis dennisl@belfastcity.gov.uk.

5.4.2 Chief Executive's Department, Good Relations Unit, City Hall Freepost BEL4010, Belfast District Council (Shadow),

Freephone 08000855412
Text phone number: 028 9027 0405
Email: gilmartins/dennisl@belfastcity.gov.uk
Website: www.belfastcity.gov.uk

5.4.3 The Equality and Diversity Officer will report regularly to the Good Relations Manager and regular progress reports are sent to the Good Relations Partnership, Corporate Management Team and the Strategic Policy and Resources Committee.

5.4.4 We place great importance on disability issues and have established a Disability Working Group chaired by the Director of Parks and Leisure. This group comprises senior representatives from each department including the Equality and Diversity Officer.

6. Annual report

6.1 The annual report will be included in our Annual Report to the Equality Commission on the implementation of an Equality Scheme but will also be available as a stand alone document.

6.2 A copy of the annual report will be made available on our website. You can also download it from our website. Our website is accessible (we work towards level AA of the W3C Web Content Accessibility Guidelines 1.0).

7. Five year review

7.1 We will carry out a five year review of the Plan in accordance with guidelines from the Equality Commission for NI.

8 Consultation

8.1 We are committed to carrying out consultation in accordance with the guiding principles set out in the Equality Commission guidelines and recognise the need for such consultation to be timely, open and inclusive.

8.2 We are keen to seek the views of disabled people on this revised and updated Plan. We will:

- consult our AA list (a list of consultees identified in our Equality Scheme);
- present the Plan to the council's consultative forum which includes representatives from disability organisations; and
- inform attendees at our bi annual disability related event.

8.3 The anticipated outcomes of this robust consultation exercise are to:

- identify barriers faced by disabled people in public life and specifically any barriers they've encountered when dealing with us;
- identify past examples where we have not promoted positive attitudes towards disabled people and identify future opportunities to promote positive attitudes;
- set priorities and identify solutions to take remedial action; and
- monitor and review how effective these measures have been.

8.4 When consulting on any matter relating to the duties, we will work with representative groups, individuals with disabilities and Section 75 groups on the best way to get their views. This may take the form of face to face meetings, advisory groups, surveys, consultative panels, internet discussions and other methodologies identified as best practice. Consultee responses to the consultations and our response will be recorded. All consultees will receive a copy of our response to their comments.

8.5 We will place 'the Plan' on our website asking for feedback from individuals and organisations.

8.6 As part of the consultative process, we will remove barriers by making sure documents are available in alternative formats, including large print, Braille, audio cassette, computer disk, easy read, and plain language. This will be

done in a timely fashion and we'll establish the basis for dialogue and engagement with disabled people during the life of 'the Plan'.

- 8.7 We'll develop best practice in communicating with young disabled people as well as looking at additional dimensions which create multiple identities such as ethnicity, age, gender, sexual orientation and religious belief.
- 8.8 We believe that it's important for disabled people to be involved in the implementation, monitoring and review of the Plan. The initiatives we want to implement will be developed and submitted within 6 months from 1 April 2015. We are keen to hear your views and comments and will update our actions in line with your feedback.

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

** Action Measures for the New Council will be identified once the new arrangements are in place.

Promote positive attitudes towards disabled people

- A range of Equality and Disability Training programmes
- Induction Programmes
- Selection & Recruitment Training
- Disability Awareness Training
- Developing our website
- Workplace policies and reasonable adjustments;
- Targeted recruitment policies;
- Accessibility policies;

- Equality screening exercises

Encourage the participation of disabled people in public life

- Workplace policies
- Recruitment policies
- Accessibility policies
- Policy screening
- Disabledgo Project
- Consultative Forum and other Stakeholder groups

For further details of the full range of measures previously undertaken by the council, contact the Equality and Diversity Officer (see page 5 for contact details).

10. Action Measures

Objectives and the initiatives we want to implement will be developed and submitted within 6 months from 1 April 2015:

Signed
Chief Executive