



NORTHERN IRELAND AUDIT OFFICE

Disability Action Plan 2016 – 2021

Section 1: Introduction

1.1 Introductory Statement

Under Section 49A of the Disability Discrimination Act 1995 (DDA 1995) (as amended by Article 5 of the Disability Discrimination (Northern Ireland) Order 2006), Northern Ireland Audit Office (NIAO) is required when carrying out its functions to have due regard to the need to:

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

Under Section 49B of the DDA 1995, NIAO is also required to submit to the Equality Commission a **disability action plan** showing how it proposes to fulfill these duties in relation to its functions.

1.2 Commitment

The Comptroller and Auditor General (C&AG) as head of the NIAO, is committed to implementing effectively the disability duties and this disability action plan. NIAO 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.

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

The NIAO is committed to full and meaningful consultation on its Disability Action Plan. It recognises the importance of consultation in all aspects of the implementation of its statutory duties. It affirms that all consultation will be carried out in accordance with the guiding principles set out in the Equality Commission's 'Promoting positive attitudes towards disabled people and encouraging the participation of disabled people in public life'. In particular, it will conduct all consultations in a timely, open and inclusive way in accordance with the Equality Commission's guidance.

The NIAO has consulted in the preparation of this review of its original plan with its own staff and a range of disability organisations. The NIAO will continue to consult as widely as possible to ensure that any organisation or group which has a legitimate, particular interest in its work and/or likely impact of its policies on its disabilities duties will be included in the process of engagement.

Responsibility for implementing, reviewing and evaluating this disability action plan and the point of contact within the NIAO will be:

Name: Brandon McMaster
 Title: Director of Corporate Services
 Address: Northern Ireland Audit Office, 106 University Street, Belfast BT7 1EU
 Telephone number: 028 9025 1077
 Fax number: 028 9025 1015
 Email: equality@niauditoffice.gov.uk

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

1.3 Review

NIAO confirms its 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 NIAO plan, our annual progress to the Equality Commission and the five year review of the NIAO Disability Action Plan will be made available on our website: http://www.niauditoffice.gov.uk/index/corporate-documents/corporatedocuments_equality.htm

1.4 Functions

Our purpose is to promote better use of public money through independent professional scrutiny underpinned by our commitment to integrity, equality, openness and innovation to make a difference for the people of Northern Ireland. In fulfilling this purpose, we have set two key strategic priorities:

- Supporting Change, Innovation and Improvement in the Public Sector; and
- Transforming our business

Our main activities are:

Financial Audit	Forming an opinion on financial statements; assessing whether expenditure is regular and in accordance with the intentions of the Assembly when it granted the money; & providing assurance on the Accounting Officers' Governance Statement.
Public Reporting	Independently examining and reporting to the

	Northern Ireland Assembly on whether public bodies spend taxpayers' money economically, efficiently and effectively. Examination, assessment and reporting on district council performance improvement responsibilities. Providing public bodies with constructive advice in the form of good practice reports across a range of areas.
Governance and Fraud Prevention and Detection	Helping public bodies improve their corporate governance, financial control and risk management arrangements, and assisting in the prevention and detection of fraud by conducting and reporting on data matching exercises.
Support to the Northern Ireland Assembly and the public	Working closely with the Public Accounts Committee on evidence sessions based on our reports; providing support to Departmental committees; and responding to enquiries from elected representatives and citizens.
Comptroller function	Authorising the issue of public funds from the Consolidated Fund for Northern Ireland.

1.5 Public Life Positions

Under the provisions of the Northern Ireland Act 1998 the Office of the Comptroller and Auditor General (C&AG) for Northern Ireland is a Crown appointment made on the nomination of the Northern Ireland Assembly. The C&AG for Northern Ireland retains office unless removed by a resolution of the Northern Ireland Assembly and supported by at least two thirds of its members. Under the provision of the Audit (Northern Ireland) Order 1987 the C&AG is a Corporation sole. The current C&AG for Northern Ireland is Kieran Donnelly.

The Northern Ireland Audit Office supports the C&AG in fulfilling his responsibilities. Certain NIAO staff are also designated by the Department of the Environment, with the consent of the C&AG, as local government auditors. Local Government auditors are mainly responsible for the audit of Northern Ireland Local Government Bodies.

The Comptroller and Auditor General and the Northern Ireland Audit Office are wholly independent of Government. As a direct result of maintaining this independence, neither the C&AG nor NIAO has responsibility for any public life positions in relation to external organisations. Internal appointments include Non-Executive positions in the governance structures of the NIAO.

Section 2: Action Measures

Outlined below are the measures which we propose to take over the period 01 September 2016 to 31 August 2021 of this disability action plan, together with performance indicators or targets.

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

Training and Guidance	Timescale	Performance Indicators
Measures		
Training on Disability Equality Legislation and disability awareness and etiquette to be included within the Equality Training programme	September 2016 onwards (The Equality Training Programme will be revised and included in the Corporate Training Programme)	Delivered to all employees and officer holders as required.

Leadership	Timescale	Performance Indicator
Measures		
Build on existing training to ensure that leadership and management training includes training on disability equality	September 2016 onwards (The Equality Training Programme will be revised and included in the Corporate Training Programme)	Staff and Management are aware of the specific duties placed upon public sector organizations in relation to disability equality
A member of NIAO staff is trained in and responsible for equality compliance, including disability equality.	December 2016	Visible ownership of equality and diversity issues

Involving Disabled people	Timescale	Performance Indicator
Measures		
To continue to ensure recruitment and selection procedures comply with best practice and are accessible to all	On-going at the outset of each recruitment drive	To encourage applications from disabled people
Employee Engagement	December 2017	Meaningful employment

Forum to explore a short-term placement disabled person(s)		opportunity identified for a disabled person(s)
Continue to ensure equality of opportunity in the workplace, through Recruitment and Selection, Learning and Development, Service provision and policies.	On-going through policy review, training plan formulation and service provision review	Create an environment where all staff are valued and encouraged to develop to their full potential

Policies and strategy	Timescale	Performance Indicator
Measures		
Annual Review of Progress on Disability Action Plan	Annually	Produce a report on Disability Action plan and submit to Equality Commission Publish the review report on our website
Ensure all internal and external communication is in line with current best practice on accessibility	On-going	All communication tools are presented in plain language and accessible to all.
To continue to equality screen policies and consult as widely as possible to ensure that any organisation or group which has a legitimate, particular interest in its work and/or likely impact of its policies on its disabilities duties will be included in the process of engagement.	On-going	Policies are inclusive and accessible for all

Corporate Service Delivery	Timescale	Performance Indicator
Measures		
To proactively assess equipment needs and ensure that the appropriate equipment is available and procurement of same where appropriate	Ongoing	Users have equipment that meets their individual needs

Signed by:

Chair

Comptroller and Auditor General