
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 Northern Ireland Library Authority is required when carrying out its duties to have due regard to:

- The need to promote positive attitudes towards people with disabilities; and
- The need to encourage participation by people with disabilities in public life (‘the disability duties’).

Under Section 49B of the DDA 1995, the Northern Ireland Library Authority is also required to submit to the Equality Commission a Disability Action Plan showing how it proposes to fulfil these duties in relation to the functions for which it is responsible.

The Northern Ireland Library Authority is for the remainder of this document referred to as Libraries NI.

2. Confirmation of Commitment

Libraries NI is fully committed to the effective implementation of this Disability Action Plan. All appropriate resources in terms of people, time and finance will be made available for this purpose. Objectives and targets pertaining to the Authorities duties in relation to equality and disability discrimination are included in the Authorities Corporate and Business Plans.

Libraries NI will ensure the effective communication of this Disability Action Plan to all staff and will, where necessary, provide training and guidance for staff in relation to their responsibilities. We will put appropriate internal arrangements in place to monitor compliance with this Disability Action Plan and review this plan on a regular basis.

The contact in relation to the implementation, review and evaluation of this Disability Action Plan is the **Director of Business Support**.

Libraries NI Disability Action Plan will be made available in an alternative format (such as in large print, in Braille, easy read or on computer disc) and/or language on request. Please contact the **Head of Strategic Marketing and Communications** to discuss your requirements.
3. Functions of Libraries NI

The Northern Ireland Library Authority: Libraries NI is a statutory body set up under the Libraries Act (NI) 2008. It became responsible for the management and delivery of the public library service from 1 April 2009 and delivers a range of a range of high quality library and information services for everyone in Northern Ireland including:

- Access to public library buildings and mobile vehicles.
- Access to a variety of information sources including visual and audio.
- Free public access computers.
- Access to collections of special interest material e.g. local history.
- Advice on information sources
- Reader development
- Access to cultural information
- Arts events

4. Consultation

Libraries NI considers it essential to consult with interested parties and people with disabilities to ensure that our Disability Action Plan is relevant to their needs.

Libraries NI undertook a public consultation exercise in 2010/11 with a closing date of 8 April 2011 and has revised the Action Plan accordingly to incorporate relevant comments and recommendations made during the consultation exercise.

Libraries NI will continue to develop good working partnerships with people with disabilities and those who work on their behalf. We will endeavour to establish relationships with organisations representing the wider disability sector.

Libraries NI is committed to carrying out all consultations in an open, timely and inclusive manner and in accordance with the guiding principles set by the Equality Commission and other bodies working in the field of disability.

5. Review

Libraries NI will produce an annual progress report on the implementation of this Action Plan and carry out a review of this Plan in line with any review of our Equality Scheme.

A copy of this Plan, as well as the annual progress reports and any review report will be made available on the Libraries NI website at: www.librariesni.org.uk.
6. Previous Measures

As Libraries NI is a comparatively new organisation (1 April 2009) it has had little opportunity to develop its’ approach to enhancing and improving disabled access to date. However a great deal of progress has been made by the legacy organizations (Education and Library Boards) from which Libraries NI has been established and Libraries NI will continue to build on this.

While under the management of the Education and Library Boards substantial efforts were made to improve accessibility to both the physical estate and the services provided through public libraries. A range of disability access improvement schemes were undertaken at existing libraries to provide full accessibility by way of access ramps, passenger lifts, automated doors etc. New build projects and major refurbishment projects had disabled access provisions incorporated as fundamental design requirements resulting in buildings which offered facilities to cater for a range of disabilities such as hearing and sight difficulties as well as physical access.

In addition to the physical estate adjustments to service delivery were made with various materials being available in a range of formats (written, visual and audio), specialist equipment such as large font keyboards were provided to allow full accessibility to IT services and partnerships were developed with organisations providing specialist services to disabled customers e.g. RNIB talking books.

In support of these physically orientated measures further steps were taken as follows:

Section 75 awareness training for staff  
Disability awareness training for staff  
Equal opportunities policy in place and reviewed

Recruitment

Best practice is applied to all Recruitment and Selection procedures operated by Libraries NI. The options of receiving applications in alternative formats and the facilitation of special needs are available to all applicants. Additionally, as the assessment and selection process proceeds through the various stages, reasonable adjustments will be made to meet the needs of applicants with disabilities.

Monitoring

While applicants are invited during the recruitment process, to declare any disability they may have, Libraries NI is aware that current staff may develop disabilities, or wish to declare existing disabilities, during the course of their employment. For this reason staff are facilitated to declare any disability so that reasonable adjustments can be made to facilitate them within the workplace.

Action Measures

Outlined below are the current measures, which the Libraries NI proposes to take over the period from April 2011 together with targets. It should be noted that Libraries NI may vary or add to these measures as appropriate to meet changing needs.
<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Measures</th>
<th>Time-scale</th>
<th>Performance Indicators/Targets</th>
<th>Owner</th>
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<tbody>
<tr>
<td><strong>7.1</strong> Commitment</td>
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<tr>
<td>7.1.1 Libraries NI will establish relationships with group consisting of representatives of people with disabilities, to assist and guide all future consultation exercises and implementation of the actions within this plan.</td>
<td>Ongoing</td>
<td>Relationships to be established and maintained where they already exist.</td>
<td>Terry Heron</td>
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<td>7.1.2 Identify barriers faced by people with disabilities in accessing and utilising public library services.</td>
<td>April 2011</td>
<td>Consultation exercise undertaken in a range of mediums to ascertain the views of interested parties.</td>
<td>Terry Heron</td>
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<td></td>
<td>March 2012</td>
<td>The views of interested parties published and considered as part of the annual review process.</td>
<td>Terry Heron</td>
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<td>7.1.3 Identify opportunities for the Libraries NI to promote positive attitudes towards people with disabilities.</td>
<td>Ongoing beginning 2010/2011</td>
<td>Consultation exercise undertaken in a range of mediums to ascertain the views of interested parties.</td>
<td>Terry Heron</td>
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<td>7.1.4 As part of the policy development process, to assess the implications for the disability duties when carrying out screening in accordance with the Equality Scheme.</td>
<td>Ongoing</td>
<td>Policy review carried out in line with Section 75 requirements.</td>
<td>Terry Heron</td>
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<td><strong>7.2</strong> Service Delivery</td>
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<td>7.2.1 Ensure that all policies are screened to highlight requirements in relation to disability access.</td>
<td>Ongoing</td>
<td>All service policies screened and impact taken into consideration.</td>
<td>Helen Osborn</td>
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<td>7.2.2 Ensure that new duties are taken into account when designing any future training/educational programmes.</td>
<td>Ongoing</td>
<td>Training/educational programme revised in line with new duties.</td>
<td>Pauline Martin</td>
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<td><strong>Training and Development</strong></td>
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<td>7.3</td>
<td>S1</td>
<td>Provide all staff with awareness training in duties and responsibilities under the DDA 1995 and update as required.</td>
<td>2011/2012</td>
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<th><strong>Recruitment and Selection</strong></th>
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<tr>
<td>7.4</td>
<td>S1</td>
<td>Ensure disability issues are taken into account in all recruitment procedures.</td>
<td>Ongoing</td>
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</table>

|   | S2 | Ensure that job opportunities are available to applicants with disabilities. | Ongoing | All applicants invited to identify assistance required as a result of their disability. | Terry Heron/Mary Walker |

|   | S3 | Ensure that successful job applicants who need adaptations and support within the working environment are facilitated. | Ongoing | Physical arrangements in place to facilitate applicants with disabilities. | Terry Heron/Mary Walker |

|   |   | Interpretation facilities available on demand. | Ongoing | Copies of corporate literature available in alternative formats from website and on demand in other mediums | Terry Heron/Mary Walker |

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<th><strong>Communication</strong></th>
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<tr>
<td>7.5</td>
<td>S1</td>
<td>Ensure that all customer information is provided in relevant format/s.</td>
<td>On request</td>
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|   |   | Needs identified on an ongoing basis. | Annually | Helen Osborn/Glenn Beattie |

|   | S2 | Ensure equality of access for customers/staff for all ICT services | When required | Requests, action taken and equipment provided documented. | Helen Osborn |

<p>|   | S3 | Maintain accessibility of the Libraries NI website at current level and to ensure that it continues to be Browsealoud | Ongoing | Measures to ensure compliance with best practice identified and implemented. | Helen Osborn |</p>
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<tr>
<th>Section</th>
<th>Task Description</th>
<th>Status</th>
<th>Description</th>
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<tr>
<td>7.5.4</td>
<td>Review Internet/Intranet site(s) to ensure accessibility by members of the public and internal staff.</td>
<td>Ongoing</td>
<td>Demonstration of compliance with Northern Ireland Equality Commission guidance on accessible website design. Helen Osborn</td>
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<td></td>
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<td></td>
<td>Website review completed and actions implemented.</td>
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<td>7.5.5</td>
<td>Include photography in corporate publications and within our Internet and intranet systems using positive imagery of people with disabilities accessing Library services.</td>
<td>Ongoing</td>
<td>Inclusion of positive imagery on corporate publications where appropriate. Helen Osborn/ Glenn Beattie</td>
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<td>7.5.6</td>
<td>Include a clear public statement and commitment within Annual Report and Corporate and Business Plans to encourage participation by people with disabilities.</td>
<td>Ongoing</td>
<td>Copy of statement included in Annual Report and Corporate and Business plans. Irene Knox</td>
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<td>7.6</td>
<td>Physical Environment</td>
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<td>7.6.1</td>
<td>Ensure that all Libraries NI owned or managed premises and other infrastructure are accessible.</td>
<td>Ongoing</td>
<td>Audit or update audits of premises in line with DDA requirements. Desi Miskelly/ Terry Heron</td>
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<td>7.7</td>
<td>Monitoring and Reviewing</td>
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<td>7.7.1</td>
<td>Review the operation of existing services in conjunction with people with disabilities and their representatives to identify any barriers to access for this group.</td>
<td>Ongoing</td>
<td>Development of customer feedback systems. Terry Heron</td>
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<td></td>
<td></td>
<td>Ongoing</td>
<td>Assessment of customer feedback. Terry Heron</td>
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</table>
7.7.2 Ensure that, where possible, disability monitoring information is collected in respect of users of Libraries NI services. Ongoing Monitoring system established. Terry Heron

7.7.3 Measure Libraries NI performance against Action Plan targets and take appropriate action where these targets are not met. Annually Monitoring report produced quarterly and actions taken. Terry Heron

7.7.4 Conduct an annual review of Disability Action Plan for approval by the Libraries NI Board and for submission to the Equality Commission. Annually Annual Review produced and approved by Board. Terry Heron

Annual review submitted to Equality Commission.

8 **Communication Arrangements**

8.1 Libraries NI will identify appropriate methods of communicating this Action Plan to people with disabilities, including learning disabilities, within Northern Ireland.

8.2 Information about the Action Plan will be highlighted on the Libraries NI website, in publications and through direct communication with key organisations working in the field of disability.

8.3 A copy of the Disability Action Plan will be posted on the Staff Intranet.