



Department of
Education
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DEPARTMENT OF EDUCATION
DRAFT DISABILITY ACTION PLAN
2010 - 2013

We have made this Draft Disability Action Plan to show what we are doing to support people with a disability.

If you would like a copy of this plan in other formats ie

- **Large print**
- **Braille**
- **Audio Format**
- **Easy Read**
- **Other Languages**

Please contact us in any of the following ways:-



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Equality and Sectoral Support Team

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INTRODUCTION

1.1 Under Section 49A of the Disability Discrimination Act 1995 (as amended by Article 5 of the Disability Discrimination (NI) Order 2006), the Department of Education is required when carrying out its functions to have due regard to the need to:

- promote positive attitudes to people with a disability; and
- encourage participation by people with a disability in public life (“the disability duties”)

Under Section 49B of the DDA 1995, the Department of Education 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 Minister and Permanent Secretary of the Department of Education, we are committed to effectively implementing the disability duties and this disability action plan. We will allocate resources (in terms of people, time and money) in order to implement effectively this plan and build objectives and targets relating to the disability duties into corporate and annual operating plans.

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

This plan covers the period 2010 - 2013 and details the actions which the Department proposes to take over this period.

We are committed to engaging effectively with people with disabilities, and their representative groups, in the development, implementation and review of this plan.

To promote awareness of the draft Disability Action Plan, we will be providing information (in accessible formats) on how to obtain alternative versions of the Plan to organisations representing people with a disability, and people whose first language is not English or Irish.

Any comments on this plan should be sent to:-

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- 1.3 We confirm our commitment to submitting an Annual Progress Report on the implementation of this plan and in 2012 carrying out a five year review of Disability Action Plans submitted to the Equality Commission.

A copy of this plan, our latest Annual Progress Report and our five year review of Disability Action Plans will be available on our website

www.deni.gov.uk

FUNCTIONS

- 1.4 The Department of Education is responsible for the central administration of all aspects of education and related services – except for higher and further education which is the remit of the Department for Employment and Learning (DEL).

The Department's main areas of responsibility are in pre-school, primary, post-primary and special education; the youth service; the promotion of community relations within and between schools; and teacher education and salaries. Its primary statutory duty is to promote education and to ensure the effective implementation of education policy.

Its key functions include:

- advising ministers on the determination of education policy;
- framing legislation;
- accounting for the effectiveness of the education system;
- allocating, monitoring and accounting for resources; and
- evaluating and reporting on the quality of teaching and learning, and teacher education through the Education and Training Inspectorate.

The Department also aims to ensure that children, through participation at schools, reach the highest possible standards of educational achievement. In pre-school settings, schools and through the Youth Service the Department also promotes personal well-being and social development, so that children gain the knowledge, skills and experience to reach their full potential as valued individuals.

The structure of the education system in this jurisdiction involves nine non-departmental public bodies, which although operating independently, work closely with the Department of Education and are the ultimate responsibility of the Minister of Education.

Pending the establishment of ESA, these include:

- Belfast Education and Library Board
- South Eastern Education and Library Board
- Southern Education and Library Board
- North Eastern Education and Library Board
- Western Education and Library Board
- The Council for Catholic Maintained Schools
- The Council for the Curriculum, Examinations and Assessments
- The Staff Commission for the Education and Library Boards
- The Youth Council

The Education and Skills Authority (ESA) was to be established on 1 January 2010, replacing a number of existing education organisations. This has been delayed and while it remains our intention to establish the ESA as soon as possible, no date has been set. In view of this a convergence delivery programme will be taken forward, under the direction of the department's ESA Implementation Team. The programme will set out the mechanisms that will enable a range of services to move towards a regionally managed model.

The Department of Education co-operates closely with all government departments, particularly with Department for Employment and

Learning (DEL) which administers the higher and further education sector and Department of Culture, Arts and Leisure (DCAL).

The Department works alongside DEL in the area of teacher education and is involved with DCAL in broader educational issues.

In matters of children's welfare and wellbeing there is close co-operation with the Department of Health, Social Services and Public Safety.

PUBLIC LIFE POSITIONS

- 1.5 The Department makes appointments to a wide range of public and other bodies in the education sector. Many of these appointments are regulated by the Office of the Commissioner for Public Appointments (OCPA NI).

The Department remains committed to applying the principles of the OCPA NI Code of Practice to all the appointments it makes and paying due regard to the key principle that equality of opportunity and diversity must be inherent throughout the appointment process.

The Department had responsibility for public life appointments to the following organisations:

- Comhairle Na Gaelscolaíochta
- Council for Catholic Maintained Schools*
- Diocesan Education Committees of the Council for Catholic Maintained Schools

- Education and Library Boards:
 - Belfast*
 - North Eastern*
 - South Eastern*
 - Southern*
 - Western*

- General Teaching Council
- Council for Integrated Education
- Council for the Curriculum, Examinations and Assessment*
- Staff Commission for Education and Library Boards*
- Teachers' Salaries and Conditions of Service Committee (Schools)
- Youth Council*

* Pending the establishment of ESA

Other Appointments

- Governing Bodies of Certain Voluntary Grammar Schools
- Grant Maintained Integrated Schools - Board of Governors
- Middletown Centre for Autism Ltd
- Special Educational Needs and Disability Tribunal

ACTION MEASURES

- 1.6 In addition to continuing with the already established actions which are detailed in our original Disability Action Plan, the following measures detail the actions which we propose to take over the period of this plan.

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

| | Action Measures | Timescale | Performance Indicators |
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| 1 | Develop work with DHSSPS on speech and language therapy action plan to identify key areas for improvement and way forward for speech and language therapy services. | The DHSSPS two year action plan is to be issued for consultation in summer 2010. | Improved Speech and Language service that provides children and young people with timely, appropriate and effective services which will enhance ability of children with speech, language and communication difficulties to participate in education /public life. |
| 2 | Guidance to be issued on accessibility requirements for schools and school authorities under SENDO 2005. | While guidance is nearing completion, further revision may be required. | To embed accessibility to the curriculum, school information and the school's physical environment. |

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| 3 | Publicise awareness raising activities such as Deaf Awareness Week, Learning Disability Week etc | From October 2010 onwards. | Greater awareness amongst staff and the wider education sector of the scope of disability and the positive action that is being taken. |
| 4 | Gathering information on exemplars of good inclusive practice. | By March 2011 | Explore the gathering of information and case studies on examples of good inclusive practice in schools and organisations, including transition, and area learning collaboration. |
| 5 | To work with education and community/voluntary sector partners within the Anti-Bullying Forum to tackle the bullying of children and young people, including those with a disability. | On-going | To ensure that all schools have in place an effective approach to tackling all forms of bullying among pupils and that all pupils, and their parents, are confident their concerns about bullying will |

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| | | | be dealt with in an appropriate and timely manner. |
| 6 | To extend access to counselling support to pupils of post-primary age in special schools. | Implementation to commence early in the 2010/11 school year | To ensure equity of provision for all pupils of post-primary age. |
| 7 | Progress development of the Middletown Centre for Autism in collaboration with the Department of Education and Science. | On-going | The expansion of facilities and services for children with Autistic Spectrum Disorder to enable second tier educational assessment of children alongside the existing Training and Research services. |
| 8 | Develop capacity to meet Special Educational Needs of children through the medium of Irish. | Implementation to commence 2010/11. | To progress issues with Irish Medium Special Educational Needs Working Group/Think Tank |

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| 9 | Research to determine the extent to which it is feasible to develop curriculum assessment and high level diagnostic tools in Irish. | On-going | Identify the way forward for assessment of Special Educational Needs of children in the Irish Medium sector to enable appropriate and effective interventions to be put in place to meet Special Educational Needs. |
| 10 | Transitions to Adulthood through consideration to possible sharing of information between providers such as, ELBs, FE, HE, training providers Health Trusts and Juvenile Justice. | On-going | Enhanced collaborative working by providers to ease transition and meet the needs of young people |
| 11 | Progress action plan on transitions to adulthood in conjunction with DEL and DHSSPS | On-going | More effective and collaborative working between departments to identify areas for development in meeting young peoples needs. |

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| 12 | Development of an autism strategy and implementation plan | Draft strategy to be available by December 2010 | Children and young people on the autistic spectrum enabled to access education and realise full potential. |
| 13 | Review of Special Educational Needs and Inclusion | On-going | To draft detailed policy options for a revised Special Educational Needs and Inclusion policy, following analysis of responses to a formal consultation process. |
| 14 | Working with inter-departmental groups on a co-ordinated approach to tackling disadvantage encountered by persons with a disability. | On-going | Improved support for children and young people with a disability |
| 15 | Review arrangements for communication between schools and deaf or hard of hearing parents | By March 2011 | Raised awareness of support available. |

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| 16 | Community Relations, Equality and Diversity in Education Policy | Implementation expected early 2011 | Policy will promote improved relations by educating children and young people to develop self respect and respect for others, promote equality and work to eliminate discrimination for all Section 75 groups. |
| 17 | Training of DE frontline staff. | On-going | To have greater awareness of the needs of persons with a disability. |
| 18 | Review of induction material on the Department's Intranet site | By March 2011 | To ensure that material emphasises the requirements of positive disability duties. |
| 19 | Ensuring that corporate documentation contains positive and proportionate references to people with a disability. | By October 2010. | Greater awareness of disability issues and possible positive action measures that could be implemented. |

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| 20 | To promote positive attitudes within the Department towards persons with a disability | 2010/11 onwards | <p>Produce two articles per year for inclusion in the Department of Education staff magazine - <i>Edlines</i>.</p> <p>Engage with staff on the formation of a Disability Focus Group</p> |
| 21 | Raise staff awareness of the role of the Department's Disability Liaison Officer (DLO) (the main purpose of the DLO is to act as a point of contact in relation to any adjustments in the workplace) | Annually | Produce one article per year for inclusion in Edlines. |
| 22 | To ensure all reasonable adjustments for staff are implemented and completed in a timely manner | Within 8 weeks of request | That staff with a disability have the appropriate adjustments in place to facilitate their working requirements. |

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| 23 | The provision of additional disabled car parking spaces for staff and visitors within the Rathgael House Complex | By March 2011. | To facilitate easier access to the building for staff and visitors with mobility issues. |
| 24 | Compliance with the Disability Discrimination Act and the Disability Discrimination Order - within Rathgael House and Waterside House complexes (repairs and replacements) | On-going | Risk assessments are completed before Planned Preventative Maintenance commences to ensure buildings remain DDA compliant. |
| 25 | The Department's guidance on the process of transfer from Primary to Post-Primary schools | From September 2010 | Post-primary schools attempting to use independent assessment procedures or "Entrance Tests" within their admissions have been reminded they should be mindful of disability discrimination – as it is defined under the Disability |

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| | | | <p>Discrimination Act, 1995. If a pupil seeking admission to a school is defined as disabled under the terms of this Act, then the school will have a duty to make “reasonable adjustments” in relation to the arrangements it makes for determining admission.</p> <p>Post-primary schools planning to use “Entrance Tests have also been reminded that the Department, when it provided the Transfer Test, sanctioned CCEA to provide the test paper in a variety of formats designed for the needs of non-statemented children with dyslexia/dyspraxia.</p> |
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| 26 | Pastoral care and child protection | By March 2011 | The Education and Training Inspectorate will continue to report on pastoral care and child protection, including the completion of the SENDO proforma on all inspections. |
| 27 | Review inspection procedures | By March 2011 | The Education and Training Inspectorate will review existing inspection procedures to ensure that disability/inclusion is an integral aspect of the inspection process. |
| 28 | Together Toward Improvement | Summer 2010 | The Education and Training Inspectorate will disseminate Together Toward Improvement and Special Educational Needs performance indicators across the system to promote inclusion |

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| | | | and raise standards for all learners, including those with disability. |
| 29 | Staff development - Education and Training Inspectorate | By March 2011 | The Education and Training Inspectorate will commit to ensure their staff are trained in the evaluation of pastoral care and child protection and provided with information on disability legislation |
| 30 | Equality and Human Rights Screening of new or revised Policies | From September 2010 | When completing the Equality and Human Rights Screening form policy makers will be asked to consider the human rights implications of policies – including the United Nations Convention on the Rights of Persons with Disabilities. |

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| | | | Policy makers will continue to be required to consider the Disability Duties under section 49A of the Disability Discrimination Act 1995 (the 'DDA 1995'), (as amended by Article 5 of the Disability Discrimination (Northern Ireland) Order 2006) |
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Caitríona Ruane, MLA
Minister for Education

Paul Sweeney
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