

Disability Action Plan 2020-2023

FOREWORD

BY THE CHAIR AND CHIEF EXECUTIVE OF THE LABOUR RELATIONS AGENCY

The Labour Relations Agency has embraced the Disability Discrimination Act 1995 not only in terms of the duties that we must observe as a public authority but also in terms of the intentions and spirit of the Act. We set high standards for ourselves in shaping the support we provide to our staff and to our many service users which is reflected in our values.

We recognise the important contribution that disabled people make to the workplace, to society and to the economy of Northern Ireland as a whole. We will continue to look for opportunities within our own remit and in working with others to promote positive attitudes, encourage participation and remove any barriers where these exist. On that basis we have no hesitation in recommending this Plan to our stakeholders and we look forward to working with you in delivering on our commitments as contained within it.

The Agency would like to extend thanks to the many individuals and groups that have helped us in formulating this Plan, in particular Kevin Oakes from the Equality Commission for Northern Ireland (the Equality Commission) for his valuable advice and assistance. We are also indebted to the North West Forum of People with Disabilities for their invaluable input.



Chair

Marie Mallon



Chief Executive Officer

Tom Evans

DISABILITY ACTION PLAN

Labour Relations Agency

1.0 Introduction

1.1 Under Section 49A of the Disability Discrimination Act 1995 (DDA 1995) (as amended by Articles 49A and 49B of the Disability Discrimination (Northern Ireland) Order 2006), the Labour Relations Agency (the Agency) is required, when carrying out its functions, to have due regard to the need to:

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

Under Section 49B of the DDA 1995, as amended by Articles 49A and 49B of the Disability Discrimination (Northern Ireland) Order 2006, the Agency is also required to prepare a plan, commonly known as a 'Disability Action Plan' (DAP), which shows how the Agency proposes to fulfil these requirements in relation to its functions.

1.2 The Agency is committed to fulfilling all of its duties in respect of disability and the actions contained within this DAP. The Agency will take all the necessary steps (in relation to people, time and money) in order to effectively implement this plan and where appropriate, build objectives and targets relating to the disability duties into corporate and annual business plans.

This is the fifth DAP to be produced by the Agency. This action plan follows on from the 2015-2018 action plan and outlines how the Agency intends to implement a number of meaningful actions which we believe will impact positively on disabled staff and users of our services. The Agency will ensure the effective communication of the plan and the provision of necessary

training and guidance for the Board and staff of the Agency on the disability duties and the implementation of the DAP

Having submitted an annual report to the Equality Commission on the implementation of the 2015-2018 plan, the Agency will submit further annual reports as well as carrying out a three-yearly review of this plan. The Agency will also consult with disability advocates and stakeholders when implementing and reviewing its plans.

The responsibility for implementing, reviewing and evaluating this DAP and the point of contact within the Agency is:-

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If you require this plan in an alternative format (such as large print, Braille, easy read, on audio cassette or on memory stick) and/or alternative language, please contact the Agency on 03300 552 220 or info@lra.org.uk

Requests to produce the plan in alternative languages or formats will be met where a need has been identified or upon request.

1.3 A copy of this plan will be made available on our website www.lra.org.uk

In addition, all of our employees will receive a copy of the DAP together with all necessary guidance and we will highlight how their duties and responsibilities assist the Agency in meeting its obligations.

2.0 Who we are and what we do

2.1 The Agency is an executive Non-Departmental Public Body sponsored by the Department for the Economy. It was established in 1976 under the Industrial Relations (Northern Ireland) Order 1976 and continued by the Industrial Relations (Northern Ireland) Order 1992.

2.2 The Agency's purpose is to improve employment relations, promote best employment practice and resolve workplace disputes through the delivery of quality, confidential, impartial and independent services.

2.3 The Agency provides services to those engaged in industry, commerce and the public services in Northern Ireland. Our services include:

- advice and assistance on all aspects of employment relations and employment practices;
- comprehensive conciliation, arbitration and mediation services aimed at resolving individual and collective disputes.

2.4 These services are available to employers, employers' associations, individual employees, trade unions and other organisations or individuals who require assistance with any question relating to employment relations or employment matters.

3.0 Actions to date

3.1 Outlined below are the key measures which the Agency has already taken to promote positive attitudes towards disabled people and encourage the participation of disabled people in public life.

3.2 Promoting positive attitudes towards disabled people

- the Agency makes its DAP available to all employees, stakeholders and customers;
- the Agency is committed to accessibility and the provision of user-friendly facilities for disabled service users;
- the Agency provides a range of employment-related information in accessible formats;
- wider access to provision of staff training on specific disability areas is promoted within the Agency;
- the Agency provides interpreters for attendees at its meetings and events, on request.

3.3 Encourage the participation of disabled people in public life

- the Agency considers the inclusion of disabled people at all of its events;
- the Agency makes adjustments in its recruitment procedures and working arrangements to encourage the participation of disabled people in its selection exercises and in working with them;
- the Agency engages with Disability Employment Services to participate in the Access to Work (NI) Programme;
- the Agency welcomes applications from suitably qualified persons, regardless of disability, in its recruitment advertisements for staff and Board members.

4.0 Action measures

- 4.1 The action measures to be taken by the Agency to promote positive attitudes towards disabled people and encourage the participation of disabled people in public life are detailed in **Appendix 1**.
- 4.2 Delivery of the actions within the DAP will form part of the normal business planning and management processes.
- 4.3 The actions identified within this DAP will be mainstreamed within the Agency's overarching business plans. Initial disability actions will be referenced in the Agency's Business Plan by October 2020.
- 4.4 They will be implemented and maintained over the lifetime of this DAP (July 2020 to June 2023) and assessed against the performance indicators or targets identified. Progress against this will be monitored through the performance management arrangements
- 4.5 The Agency will review and update this plan on a live basis and the disability actions contained will be reflected within its overarching business plans. All plans will be referenced within the three-year review for submission to the Equality Commission.

5.0 Staff Disability Equality Working Group

- 5.1 A staff Disability Equality Working Group was established during 2019 and an initial meeting was convened by April 2019.
- 5.2 The purpose of this working group was to facilitate staff in the identification and design of disability actions which are both meaningful and impactful to colleagues and the Agency's service users and to support the development of the DAP.

5.3 A Disability Champion will be appointed at Board level.

6.0 Consultation

6.1 The Agency is committed to carrying out meaningful consultation and to obtaining feedback and suggestions in the development and review of its DAP.

6.2 An external consultation exercise on this DAP will be completed prior to implementation.

6.3 Consultation with disability advocates will ensure that disabled people can assist the Agency in:

- identifying barriers faced by disabled people in participating in public life and specifically how barriers they have encountered in relation to their contact with the Agency's services and facilities can be overcome;
- monitoring and making decisions in respect of the DAP and in reviewing the effectiveness of measures taken.

7.0 How this plan will be published

A final draft of this DAP will be published on the Agency's website within three calendar months following a public consultation period of twelve weeks. Consultees identified within the Agency's Equality Scheme will be notified by email following publication of the plan.

LABOUR RELATIONS AGENCY					
DISABILITY ACTION PLAN 2020-2023					
Action		Outcome	Responsibility	Timescale	Performance Indicators/ Target
1.	<p>Provide training to Board, managers and staff on disability issues and raising awareness of the social model of disability</p> <p>To work with disability organisations such as the North West Forum of People with Disabilities to develop and provide training and awareness sessions which are delivered by disabled people</p>	<p>Increased Board, managers and staff awareness of disability issues within the Agency</p> <p>Board, managers and staff have positive attitudes towards disabled people</p> <p>Board, managers and staff have a better understanding of the challenges and barriers faced by disabled people</p> <p>Increased participation by disabled people in public life</p>	Director of Corporate Services	To be maintained and refreshed over the lifetime of the Disability Action Plan 2020-2023	Disability Equality Training sessions to be facilitated by the North West Forum of People with Disabilities by May 2021
2.	<p>Extend the use of the staff 'quiet room' facility to disabled visitors including visitors with a disability</p> <p>Ensure accessibility of future accommodation in James House, Belfast and a future Regional Office</p>	The building/s and any meeting facilities are accessible and user friendly for all and the benefits of a 'quiet room' facility are available to all users of our premises	Director of Corporate Services	By December 2020	<p>Practical arrangements for extending use of 'quiet room' documented by December 2020</p> <p>Review of meeting room facilities completed and report prepared for consideration by Senior Management by December 2020</p>
3.	Sign up to Just a Minute [JAM] ^[1] initiative and become a JAM card friendly business	Staff have increased awareness of supporting people with learning difficulties and autism	Director of Corporate Services	To be maintained over the lifetime of the Disability Action Plan 2020-2023	The Agency has registered as a JAM card friendly business and all staff to have completed the

APPENDIX I

		People with a learning difficulty, autism or communication barrier are able to tell us in a very simple and discreet manner when they need 'Just A Minute'			necessary e-learning training by December 2020. In addition, up to 15 customer facing staff in the Business Support Team (BST) and Workplace Information Service (WIS) will also participate in face to face JAM training by December 2020 33 staff, including Agency Temporary staff had completed the JAM e-learning training and an on-line test by November 2019.
4.	Revise processes around key services to include a protocol where possible to proactively seek advance information from service users regarding any adjustments they might need prior to accessing the service	Events, seminars, workshops and meetings are accessible to all service users	Director of Employment Relations Services	By October 2020	Protocol included within revised documentation and relevant forms and processes activated by October 2020
5.	To work with disability organisations to identify and facilitate potential work placement opportunities for the Agency	Increased awareness of disability issues within the Agency Positive attitudes of staff towards disabled people Increased participation in public life of disabled people	Director of Corporate Services	Over the lifetime of the Disability Action Plan 2020-2023	Initial placement plans agreed by May 2021

6.	Ensure that the redesigned Agency website takes account of the needs of disabled people in accessing information and services	The Agency website makes best use of available technology and reflects a best practice approach in providing access to information and services for disabled users	Director of Corporate Services	To be maintained over the lifetime of the Disability Action Plan 2020-2023	Achievement of AA ^[2] website accreditation by February 2021
7.	In line with the Agency's participation in the Every Customer Counts ^[3] initiative, complete an audit of the accessibility of our services and premises	The Agency facilities and services are accessible for all potential customers, including those who have a disability and meets the appropriate audit accessibility requirements	Director of Corporate Services	By March 2021	Accessibility audit to be completed by March 2021
8.	In line with the Agency's commitments under the Mental Health Charter ^[4] ; promote its principles through our Advisory services	Staff and customers have improved knowledge and understanding of The Mental Health Charter objectives and principles	Director of Employment Relations Services	Over the lifetime of the Disability Action Plan 2020-2023	Initial sessions to be facilitated by June 2021
9.	Provide further staff training in Mental Health, particularly to those staff delivering frontline services	Increased staff awareness and knowledge of mental health issues	Human Resources	Over the lifetime of the Disability Action Plan 2020-2023	Additional staff training sessions to be completed by March 2021
10.	Consider signing up to The Disability Confident Scheme ^[5] as part of the Agency's revised recruitment policy	The Agency recruits and retains the very best talent, drawing from the widest possible pool and helps to positively change attitudes, behaviours and cultures through being Disability Confident and employing disabled people	Human Resources	Over the lifetime of the Disability Action Plan 2020-2023	Labour Relations Agency has registered and participates in The Disability Confident Scheme by December 2020

[1] JAM, which stands for 'Just A Minute', is a social innovation from NOW Group, an organisation that supports people with learning difficulties and autism into employment. It was their service users who said they would like a discreet way of telling people that sometimes they need a little extra time and patience.

[2] 'AA' audit and accreditation informs all our site visitors that we have taken the time to ensure they have a pleasant experience on the Agency website.

[3] The Agency has committed to the 'Every Customer Counts' initiative; we tell our customers that accessible services are important and that we welcome reasonable adjustment requests.

[4] 'Mental Health Charter' - the Agency will undertake to promote good mental health by putting five charter commitments in place which will be beneficial to the Agency, staff members and the whole community in Northern Ireland.

[5] 'Disability Confident' is creating a movement of change, encouraging employers to think differently about disability and take action to improve how they recruit, retain and develop disabled people.

