



DISABILITY ACTION PLAN 2008 - 2011

Name of Public Authority: Chief Electoral Officer for Northern Ireland

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**This report can be found on the EONI website www.eoni.org.uk
and is available in a range of alternative formats on request.**

1. 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 Chief Electoral Officer is required, when carrying out his 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').

1.2 The Chief Electoral Officer is committed to implementing effectively the disability duties and this disability plan. He will allocate all necessary resources (in terms of people, time and money) in order to do this and where appropriate, build objectives and targets relating to the disability duties into corporate and annual business plans.

He will also put appropriate internal arrangements in place to ensure that the disability duties are complied with and that this disability action plan is effectively implemented, including:

- effective communication of the plan to staff;
- necessary training and guidance for staff.

1.3 He confirms his commitment to submitting an annual progress report to the Equality Commission on the implementation of this plan as well as carrying out a five yearly review of this plan or any other plans submitted to the Equality Commission over the five year review period. More frequent reviews may be undertaken.

1.4 A copy of this plan, the annual progress report and the five year review of this plan will be made available on the Electoral Office website – www.eoni.org.uk

1.4 **Functions**

Outlined below are the four key business areas within which all the Chief Electoral Officer's functions are based:

- Elections
- Registration
- Corporate Governance
- Central Services

The Electoral Office for Northern Ireland exists to support the Chief Electoral Officer in the performance of his statutory duties set out in the Representation of the People Act 1983 and other primary and subordinate legislation.

1.5 **Public Life Positions**

Although the Chief Electoral Officer has no direct responsibility for appointments to public life positions he will, within the boundaries of the statutory framework under which he operates, do what is possible to ensure that people with disabilities are not disadvantaged when standing as candidates in elections for which he has responsibility.

2. **Previous Measures**

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

- Accessibility initiatives including improved access to office premises, re-location of polling places to provide better access for those with disabilities and the provision of statutory forms in plain English and in other formats.

- Reasonable adjustments including provision of ‘selector devices’ , large print notices at elections for the visually impaired and revised working practices and procedures.
- Equality awareness training for all permanent staff with a public interface role.
- Policy Consultation – interest groups representing people with disabilities are included in all relevant consultations.

3. Action Measures

Annex A outlines the measures which the Chief Electoral Officer proposes to take over the period 1 June 2007 to 31 May 2012 of this disability action plan, together with performance indicators and targets. These measures were reviewed in November 2008.

Signed by:



November 2008

Douglas Bain CBE TD Advocate
Chief Electoral Officer for Northern Ireland

14 November 2008

ANNEX A

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

Measures	Timescale	Performance Indicators/target	Comments
1. As far as reasonably practical ensure that all Electoral Office premises are DDA compliant.	By 31 December 2008	All premises DDA compliant.	Accessibility audits are to be carried out by professional advisors (WYG). The Belfast Area Office was relocated in March 2008 with fully accessible entrance and Counter. New automatic door was installed at St Anne's House in March 2008.

Measures	Timescale	Performance Indicators/target	Comments
2. Carry out a fundamental review of the polling station scheme taking particular account of the needs of persons with disabilities and the changes that will be required as a result of the closure of schools.	Ongoing	1. Achievement by publication of new scheme. 2. Effectiveness to be assessed by survey conducted during next major election following publication and by feed back from interest groups.	Legislation did not permit EONI to carry out a fundamental review of the scheme. However, a review of premises is ongoing in advance of the 2009 elections. A new "Restricted access polling station scheme" is to be available for June 2009 elections. A draft Polling Station Scheme was published for consultation September 2010
3. Roll out of new electoral registration forms recently awarded crystal mark by the Plain English Campaign.	Summer 2007	Achievement	All forms prepared by EONI are submitted for crystal mark.

Measures	Timescale	Performance Indicators/target	Comments
4. Regularly meet with Disability Action, RNID, RNIB and other groups representing people with disabilities.	Ongoing	To meet on a quarterly basis.	
5. Encourage electoral registration by those with disabilities through Electoral Registration Week 2007 themed on those with disabilities.	October 2007	Level of media coverage Feedback from 'customers'	Completed successfully
6(a) Press NIO to remove common law rules on mental incapacity in accordance with the provisions of the Electoral Administration Act 2006 (b) Promote awareness of the changes amongst relevant stakeholders including those	Ongoing from Summer 2007 During 3 months after commencement of	Request to NIO by 1 July 2007	Achieved. Legislation implemented from 1 July 2008. Many media opportunities were created. New booklet prepared to publicise changes and how EONI facilitates those with disabilities.

Measures	Timescale	Performance Indicators/target	Comments
enfranchised by them.	new provisions.		
7. Dependent on outcome of election pilots in GB consider the use of candidate's photographs and coloured party emblems on ballot papers.	2008 - 2009	Dependent on outcome of pilots	No pilots planned at present.
8. Election material and information to be made available on audio tape and braille.	To be prepared for each election	Achievement	Will be in place for June 2009 election.

Measures	Timescale	Performance Indicators/target	Comments
<p>9(a) Press NIO to extend types of photographic ID acceptable for electoral purposes to include Translink War Disabled and Blind Persons Smartpasses;</p> <p>(b) Raise awareness of the changes amongst those affected by them.</p>	<p>Late 2007</p> <p>Within three months of legislative change</p>	<p>Achievement</p>	<p>In legislation from 1 July 2008 and will be implemented for June 2009 election.</p> <p>Relevant pressure groups were advised of the additions. Electoral Commission asked to include information on these in future advertising campaigns.</p>
<p>10. Review staff selection procedures to encourage the participation of disabled people in the recruitment process.</p>	<p>By 31 March 2008</p>	<p>Recruitment process in line with 'best practice'.</p>	<p>Candidates with disabilities now just have to meet essential qualifications in order to be short listed for posts. Extra information provided in applicant pack.</p>

Measures	Timescale	Performance Indicators/target	Comments
11. Translation of certain forms/notices for European Election 2009 into a range of languages and Easyread	By April 2009	Electors with learning disabilities better able to understand procedures - guided by post election surveys and feedback from interest groups	Information poster and instructions on how to complete ballot paper were translated into Polish and Portuguese , and provided in Easyread, for European elections on 4 June 2009