

Northern Ireland Local Government Officers'
Superannuation Committee

Consultation Document

Disability Action Plan
(draft)

June 2007

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1 Introduction

- 1.1 Under Section 49A of the Disability Discrimination Act 1995 (DDA 1995) (as amended by Article 5 of the Disability Discrimination (Northern Ireland) Order 2006), NILGOSC 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').
- 1.2 Under Section 49B of the DDA 1995, NILGOSC 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.

2 Commitment

- 2.1 As Chair and Secretary of NILGOSC, we are committed to implementing effectively the disability duties and this disability action plan. We 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.
- 2.2 We will also put appropriate internal arrangements in place to ensure that the disability duties are complied with and this disability action plan effectively implemented. We 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.
- 2.3 We confirm our commitment to submitting an annual report to the Equality Commission on the implementation of this plan as well as carrying out a five yearly review of this plan, or plans submitted to the Equality Commission over the five year review period.
- 2.4 Furthermore NILGOSC is also committed to consulting with appropriate representative groups during the implementation and review of this plan in order that the views and needs of disabled people are taken into consideration.
- 2.5 Responsibility for implementing, reviewing and evaluating this disability action plan and the point of contact within NILGOSC will be:
- Contact: Jennifer Campbell, Equality Officer
Address: NILGOSC, Templeton House, 411 Holywood Road, Belfast, BT4 2LP
Telephone: 028 9076 8025
Typetalk: 18001 028 9076 8025 (for people using a textphone)
Fax: 028 9076 8790
Email: info@nilgosc.org.uk
- 2.6 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 Jennifer to discuss your requirements.
- 2.7 A copy of this plan will be made available on our website www.nilgosc.org.uk/equality.htm

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3 Functions

- 3.1 NILGOSC is the pension scheme for the employees of over 200 public sector organisations in Northern Ireland including the 26 councils, the non-teaching staff of schools, colleges, education and library boards and the University of Ulster, the Northern Ireland Housing Executive, Translink and many housing associations.
- 3.2 NILGOSC is managed by a Committee appointed by the Department of the Environment. The Department also make the pension scheme legislation. NILGOSC staff undertake the administration of the Scheme rules as a service to the employers in the Scheme. Each employer in the Scheme is also responsible for complying with the Scheme rules.
- 3.3 NILGOSC has 5 departments, led by a manager reporting to the Deputy Secretary.
 - 3.3.1 The Secretary is the Chief Executive and Accounting Officer responsible to the Committee and to the Accounting Officer of the Department of the Environment. The Secretary is responsible for the strategic direction of the Committee.
 - 3.3.2 The Deputy Secretary is responsible to the Secretary for the overall operational management of the organisation and assisting the Secretary and Committee with strategic issues.
 - 3.3.3 The Pensions Administration section provides a service to our active members and deferred pensioners by registering new employers to the scheme, recording new members and their subsequent employment history, providing information about benefits, and calculating and paying retirement and leavers' entitlements.
 - 3.3.4 The Payroll section pays monthly pensions, deals with pensioner queries and deals with dependents pensions.
 - 3.3.5 The Finance section supports the other sections within financial matters as well as collecting employer and employee contributions and controlling the investment of the pension fund.
 - 3.3.6 The Information Systems section provides IT support to the whole organisation and undertakes testing and data entry.
 - 3.3.7 The Administration section also provides services to the whole organisation. In particular a human resource function, equality advice, filing, secretarial and reception services.
- 3.4 NILGOSC performs 2 principal roles:
 - The administration of the Local Government pension scheme in compliance with the Local Government Pension Scheme Regulations (Northern Ireland) 2000.
 - To manage and maintain a fund out of which the benefits of the scheme are met.
- 3.5 In performance of the above roles NILGOSC carries out functions in the following areas:
 - The admittance of eligible employing organisations to the Scheme
 - Collection and investment of income
 - Calculation and payment of Scheme benefits

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- Assessment of eligibility for Scheme benefits under the regulations
 - Provision of information to all stakeholders.
- 3.6 To support and implement the above functions and provision of services NILGOSC has discretion within a number of policy areas:
- Administration of the Local Government pension scheme within the framework set out in the legislation. A major element of this policy is the method of communication with our stakeholders.
 - Investment of net income
 - Matters relating to employment
 - Matters relating to the procurement of goods and services.
- 3.7 The Committee has no discretion over the terms of the pension scheme as set out in the regulations.

4 Public Life Positions

- 4.1 NILGOSC does not have direct control of public life positions. The Management Committee, consisting of a chairman, five members nominated by employers' organisations, and five members nominated by employees' organisations is appointed by the Department of the Environment every four years. However, we acknowledge that the disability duties relate to more than formal appointments but also to the way in which NILGOSC carries out its functions.

5 Previous Measures

- 5.1 Outlined below are the key measures which NILGOSC has already taken to promote positive attitudes towards disabled people and encourage the participation of disabled people in public life:

5.1.1 Promoting positive attitudes towards disabled people

- Candidates applying for vacancies are made aware that assistance is available if they are having difficulty complying with the recruitment process. Those applicants who are shortlisted are encouraged to let us know if there are any special requirements needed in order to accommodate them at interview and/or test.
- NILGOSC has involved, and taken advice from, Disability Action in order to assess and support the needs of a member of staff. This included the implementation of the Access to Work Scheme and purchase of equipment to assist the employee in the performance of their duties.
- Publications such as the Membership Guide, Retirement Guide and Annual Report and Accounts detail that the information can, on request, be made in alternative formats such as large print, audio cassette and alternative languages.
- A communications leaflet has been issued to all members and pensioners this invites those who prefer/require an alternative form of communication to advise us accordingly. Requests are recorded on the administration database and communications to the individuals are tailored accordingly. This has included the use of talking payslips, publications being made in large print and the availability of a text-phone number.

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- In the first year of the implementation of the NILGOSC Equality Scheme staff attended an equality conference, which included a session delivered by Disability Action. In the second year further training, which focused on disability issues was delivered to all staff.
- NILGOSC also holds some monitoring data in relation to disability for those applying for vacancies as well as for staff. This information will be used to inform an impact assessment on employment policies which will include, among other things, an assessment of our current recruitment procedure.

6 Action Measures

6.1 Outlined below are the measures, which NILGOSC proposes to take over the period of this disability action plan (dates), together with performance indicators or targets.

Measure		Timescale	Performance Indicators/Targets
1.	Include an update in the annual Equality Report to the Equality Commission on progress under this action plan	Annually	Report submitted to ECNI
2.	Update Equality Commission on any changes to the action plan	On-going/as and when necessary	Updated action plan submitted to ECNI.
3.	Provide specialist training for managers, front of house staff and those involved in recruitment and selection	By Dec-08	More positive attitudes & skills. Managers aware of legislative requirements & issues which may impact on staff attendance and their ability to carry out full range of duties
4.	Provide training to all staff on disability awareness and on the disability equality legislation	By Dec-09	Raised awareness, improved understanding among staff. Induction training expanded to include the new disability duties
5.	Review recruitment & selection procedures to ensure needs of disabled applicants are taken into account and consider advertising vacancies directly with disability organisations.	By Mar-08	Advice sought from local representative organisations, list of contacts established, barriers identified and appropriate adjustments implemented.
6.	Monitor any reasonable adjustments made for disabled applicants and staff	On-going	More accessible interview/testing process and working environment.

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Measure		Timescale	Performance Indicators/Targets
7.	To provide & support learning and development needs of staff with disabilities	On-going / as and when necessary	Assessment of needs completed & advice sought where necessary from appropriate sources/organisations. Disabled staff enabled to be fully engaged within organisation & have more accessible working environment.
8.	Pension scheme information and communications provided in accessible format.	On-going	Specific communication needs of members, pensioners etc are modified as appropriate.
9.	Ensure, where possible, publications promote positive images and statements about disabled people.	Members Guide - at next review date. Retirement Guide by Sept-07 Annual Report & Accounts by Sept-08	More positive images of disabled people in publications.
10.	Review of website and Intranet to ensure it is accessible to those with disabilities	By Dec-09	Improved access to information available on internet
11.	Ensure Communication Policy complies with the Disability Duties and specific requirements of S75 groups are taken into consideration	By 31 st March 2008	Communication Policy been issued in draft, consulted with members and published.

7 Publication of Disability Action Plan

- 7.1 The draft plan will be issued for consultation for a period of two months after which the comments received will be evaluated and appropriate amendments made to the plan. The draft plan will also be submitted to the Equality Commission by 30th June 2007 and they will be kept informed of any revisions to the plan.
- 7.2 The final Disability Action Plan will be published widely. It will be made available on our website www.nilgosc.org.uk/equality.htm, highlighted through the use of press releases and by notifying those who were consulted on the draft plan as well as any others who respond to the consultation exercise. The plan will also be publicised to all NILGOSC employees.
- 7.3 The final plan will be subject to periodic review and open to continuous improvement and will be made available in alternative formats (such as in large print, in Braille, on audio cassette, easy read or on computer disc) and/or language on request.

Signed: _____

Chair

Secretary