

CIVIL SERVICE COMMISSIONERS FOR NORTHERN IRELAND

DISABILITY ACTION PLAN

1 April 2018 to 31 March 2022

CIVIL SERVICE COMMISSIONERS FOR NORTHERN IRELAND DISABILITY ACTION PLAN

1.1 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 Civil Service Commissioners for Northern Ireland are required when carrying out their 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').

Under Section 49B of the DDA 1995, the Civil Service Commissioners are also required to submit to the Equality Commission for Northern Ireland (ECNI) a **disability action plan** showing how they propose to fulfil these duties in relation to their functions.

1.2 Statement of Commitment

As Chairperson of the Civil Service Commissioners, I confirm that we are committed to implementing effectively the disability duties and this disability action plan. The Office of the Civil Service Commissioners 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.

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

Commissioners confirm their commitment to submitting an annual report to the Equality Commission on the implementation of this plan as well as carrying out a review of this plan. We also confirm our commitment to consult with disabled people when implementing and reviewing our plans.

Responsibility for implementing, reviewing and evaluating this disability action plan and the point of contact within the Office of the Civil Service Commissioners will be:

Secretary to the Civil Service Commissioners
Office of the Civil Service Commissioners
Room 105, Stormont House
Stormont Estate
Belfast
BT4 3SH

Tel: 028 90523568
Email: info@niccommissioners.org

If you require this plan in an alternative format (such as large print, Braille, audio cassette or in a language other than English) please contact the Secretary (contact details above) to discuss your requirements.

Commissioners confirm their commitment to submitting an annual progress report on the implementation of this plan to the ECNI. We will also undertake a four year review of the Action Plan or plans submitted to the ECNI over the period of 1 April 2018 - 31 March 2022.

A copy of this plan, the annual progress report to the ECNI and review of the plan will be made available on our website: <http://www.niccommissioners.org>.

1.3 Development of the Disability Action Plan 2018-2022 and Consultation

The Civil Service Commissioners' statutory responsibilities and main functions are set out below. In developing their Disability Action Plan, Commissioners sought to carry out consultation in a meaningful manner and invited representative Equality organisations and stakeholders including the NICS Disability Working Group to comment and provide feedback on Commissioners' draft Disability Action Plan. A report of the Consultation Summary of responses to Commissioners' draft Disability Action Plan will be made available on Commissioners' [website](#).

1.4 Functions

The Commissioners' main purpose is to perform regulatory functions in relation to open recruitment to the Northern Ireland Civil Service (NICS) at all levels.

Commissioners are responsible for ensuring appointments to the Northern Ireland Civil Service (NICS) are made on merit on the basis of fair and open competition. Commissioners also have a role in hearing appeals made by existing civil servants under the NICS Code of Ethics. The Civil Service Commissioners' statutory responsibilities and main functions are set out below.

The Civil Service Commissioners for Northern Ireland currently derive their powers from Orders made by the Secretary of State. The Civil Service Commissioners (Northern Ireland) Order 1999 sets out the principle that – "... a person shall not be appointed to a situation in the Civil Service unless... the selection ... was made on merit on the basis of fair and open competition." The Order gives Commissioners the responsibility to maintain this important principle, known as 'The Merit Principle'.

The Order provides for Commissioners to discharge their responsibilities by:

- publishing and maintaining a Recruitment Code setting out the essential principles and procedures on which recruitment to the NICS must be based;

- making General Regulations prescribing certain Exceptions to the principle of selection on merit on the basis of fair and open competition;
- approving the procedures for appointment through open competition to senior positions in the NICS;
- auditing the recruitment policies and practices followed by Departments and Agencies in making appointments to the NICS to ensure that they meet the Commissioners’ requirements in regard to the Merit Principle; and
- requiring Departments and Agencies to publish information about their recruitment activity.

Under the terms of the Civil Service Commissioners (Northern Ireland) Order 1999, Commissioners also have the power to consider, and make decisions on, appeals to them under the NICS Code of Ethics which is published by the Department of Finance. The Order requires Commissioners to publish, annually, a report on the number of appeals they received under the Code of Ethics, together with a summary of each appeal.

1.5 Public Life Positions

Commissioners are appointed on merit by the Crown, following public advertisement by fair and open competition. There are currently three Commissioners who bring a wide range of experience from the public, private and third sectors, and they report annually on their work. Commissioners are supported by a small Secretariat team funded by the Northern Ireland Office headed by the Secretary to the Civil Service Commissioners.

Commissioners are an Arm’s Length Body of the Northern Ireland Office and do not have responsibility for making appointments to public life positions.

Commissioners will seek at every opportunity to encourage participation by disabled people in public life in carrying out their statutory functions.

2.0 Previous Measures

The impact of Commissioners’ work is constrained by their clearly defined remit and ‘constitution’ – the primary impact of the Commissioners’ influence is on the recruitment activities of the NICS.

Outlined below are the key measures that Commissioners have already taken to promote positive attitudes towards disabled people and to encourage the participation of disabled people in public life.

Promoting positive attitudes towards disabled people

- Commissioners and Secretariat staff have received equality and disability awareness training in accordance with our Equality Scheme. The need for refresher training is considered annually.

- Specialist training has been provided for Commissioners involved in recruitment and selection panels.
- The website is accessible to people with disabilities and publications are available in alternative formats upon request.

Encourage the participation of disabled people in public life

- Commissioners have proactively engaged with the Equality Commission, Disability Action and the NICS disability working group.
- Commissioners regularly engage with the NICS Permanent Secretaries and senior officials and encourage the NICS, in accordance with the Recruitment Code, to consider how best to facilitate disabled people in fair and open competition with others.
- Commissioners will use their influence with the NICS to ensure that diversity considerations, including the needs of disabled people, are properly considered by recruitment panels.
- Commissioners require the NICS to publish statistical summaries, in a format which Commissioners may specify, of all recruitment activity during the publication period, including analyses by all categories covered by Section 75 of the Northern Ireland Act 1998, including disabled people.

3.0 Action Measures

Commissioners are not a body corporate and their primary function is to ensure that appointments to the NICS are made on merit, on the basis of fair and open competition. Taking account of their remit and 'constitution', Commissioners have endeavoured to consider fully their disability duties which they believe they are able to take within their narrow statutory role. The **action measures** over the period of this Disability Action Plan from 1 April 2018 to 31 March 2022, together with performance indicators or targets, are outlined in the table below.

Signed by:



DEIRDRE TONER
Chairperson
Civil Service Commissioners for Northern Ireland

DISABILITY ACTION PLAN: ACTION MEASURES

The following measures aim to promote positive attitudes towards disabled people and encourage participation of disabled people in public life for the period 1 April 2018 - 31 March 2022.

Action	Timescale	Performance Indicator/ Target	Outcome / Impact
Publish the Commissioners' Disability Action Plan	By Autumn 2018	Commissioners' Disability Action Plan will be submitted to the Equality Commission and published on the OCSC website.	The general public and key stakeholders will be aware of Commissioners' commitment to the disability duties and implementation of their Disability Action Plan.
Produce an annual report in line with statutory requirements	Annually	Monitor and review the disability action plan annually and submit progress against the Disability Action Plan annually to the ECNI in the Section 75 Annual Progress Report	Key stakeholders will be aware of Commissioners' commitment to the disability duties and progress against implementation of their Disability Action Plan.
Commissioners' Recruitment Code outlines the principles to be followed to ensure appointments to the NICS are made on merit on the basis of fair and open competition. The Code promotes equality of opportunity for all groups of people including disabled people.	Ongoing	All NICS Departments and Agencies are required to adhere to the Code. Any revisions to the Commissioners' Recruitment Code are subject to equality screening.	NICS and general public are aware of the Commissioners' expectation in relation to the principles to be followed to ensure that appointments to the NICS are made on merit on the basis of fair and open competition.
	Annual	Monitoring of NICS adherence to the Code through Commissioners' audit and assurance requirements, including NICS annual statement of compliance submitted to Commissioners.	

Action	Timescale	Performance Indicator/ Target	Outcome / Impact
Commissioners require NICS to provide statistical summaries and analysis for all categories covered by Section 75, including people with disabilities in line with the requirements of Appendix C of the Recruitment Code.	Annual	Commissioners publish a commentary on the NICS annual statistical summaries and analysis in their annual report.	NICS, Commissioners and general public are informed by a strong evidence base in relation to monitoring data for all Section 75 Groups including disabled people.
Engagement with the NICS to encourage the importance of diversity and inclusion in recruitment-related matters	Ongoing	Commissioners have regular engagement with NICS Permanent Secretaries and senior officials and use their influence to encourage and support employment of people with disabilities and seek regular feedback on new initiatives within the NICS.	The NICS are encouraged to proactively engage and take outreach action and initiatives to attract candidates, and advance the recruitment-related agenda for diversity, inclusivity and equality of opportunity to target and address under-representation of those S75 groups, including those with disabilities.
	Autumn 2018	Commissioners will include a themed discussion on diversity and inclusion in the NICS at their Annual meeting with Permanent Secretary's Group during 2018/19.	
	Ongoing	Commissioners will use their influence with the NICS to ensure that diversity considerations, including the needs of disabled people, are properly considered by recruitment panels.	
Ensure equality and disability awareness training is provided to Commissioners, and Secretariat staff.	Ongoing	All Commissioners and staff are trained and this will continue on an ongoing basis for new Commissioners and staff as they take up appointment.	Commissioners and the Secretariat will enhance their knowledge and understanding of disability duties and obligations under equality and disability legislation.
	Ongoing	Commissioners and staff will seek opportunities to engage with a range of Disability organisations.	

Action	Timescale	Performance Indicator/ Target	Outcome / Impact
	Annually	The need for Refresher training will be reviewed annually.	
Ensure specialist training is provided for Commissioners and Secretariat staff involved in recruitment and selection panels.	As required, and at least every two years.	All Commissioners and relevant staff attend regular training on recruitment processes and practices within the NICS.	Commissioners and staff enhance their knowledge and understanding of various strands and elements of the recruitment and selection processes and, in particular, emerging legislative changes and relevant case law.
Ensure Commissioner and Secretariat recruitment and selection procedures are inclusive to those with disabilities.	Ongoing	NIO sponsor unit to consider as part of arrangements for competitions to appoint new Commissioners.	Commissioners' Office promotes the positive benefits of supporting and employing people with disabilities
		Secretariat to consider the secondment process is inclusive when developing job specifications and advertising for future staff.	
Ensure compliance with the statutory disability duties is embedded in the Commissioners' strategic and annual business planning process.	By Autumn 2018	Update Commissioners Strategic Priorities 2015-19, Annual Business Plan 2018/19 and Risk Register 2018/19 to specifically include compliance with the statutory disability requirements.	Commissioners, staff, key stakeholders and the general public will be aware of Commissioners' commitment to the disability duties.