

# **CSC(NI) DISABILITY ACTION PLAN CONSULTATION SUMMARY OF RESPONSES REPORT**

## **INTRODUCTION**

1. This report outlines the development of the Northern Ireland Civil Service Commissioners' Disability Action Plan 2018-22; the consultation on the draft Disability Action Plan from 6 July 2018 - 7 September 2018; and the changes made to the Action Plan made as a result.
2. Commissioners would like to thank those who participated in the consultation process and for taking time to make their views known.

## **BACKGROUND**

### **Civil Service Commissioners**

3. Civil Service Commissioners are independent of Government and the Northern Ireland Civil Service (NICS). They are appointed under, and derive their powers and responsibilities from, the Civil Service Commissioners (NI) Order 1999. Commissioners are appointed on merit following public advertisement by fair and open competition and bring to the job wide experience from the public, private and voluntary sectors.

### **Commissioners' role**

4. Civil Service Commissioners are independent of Government and the NICS and are appointed on merit following public advertisement and fair and open competition. Commissioners for Northern Ireland were first appointed in 1923 and currently derive their powers and responsibilities from the Civil Service Commissioners (Northern Ireland) Order 1999.
5. The primary role of the Civil Service Commissioners is to regulate appointments to the NICS to ensure these are made on merit on the basis of fair and open competition. Appointments to the NICS must be made in line with the expectations set out in the Recruitment Code. Commissioners may also hear appeals from existing civil servants under the NICS Code of Ethics.
6. As a public authority, we are committed to fulfilling our obligations to promote equality of opportunity and good relations under Section 75 of, and schedule 9 to, the Northern Ireland Act 1998 and to fulfil our disability duties under Section 49A of the Disability Discrimination Act 1995 (DDA 1995) (as amended under the Disability Discrimination Order (NI) 2006). Our Equality Scheme and Action Plan and Disability Action Plan set out how our obligations will be fulfilled.

## **DEVELOPMENT OF COMMISSIONERS' DISABILITY ACTION PLAN**

7. Commissioners first submitted their Disability Action Plan showing how they proposed to fulfil the duties in relation to their functions to the Equality

Commission for Northern Ireland (ECNI) in 2007. Subsequent Disability Action Plans were submitted thereafter. A review of Commissioners' Disability Action Plan 2012-17 concluded that the Commissioners' 2012 Disability Action Plan was appropriate and proportionate and had been effective to allow the Commissioners to fully comply with their disability duties and that the disability duties had been mainstreamed in the Office of the Civil Service Commissioners for Northern Ireland. Consequently, Commissioners agreed to update their Disability Action Plan with a number of minor revisions to:

- reflect the updated ECNI Disability Action Plan template for Public Authorities;
  - update the points of contact and reflect any developments since the last Action Plan was published in 2012; and
  - update the action measures with timescales to cover the period 1 April 2018 - 31 March 2022.
8. Commissioners agreed to consult on their draft Disability Action Plan with representative Equality organisations and stakeholders including the NICS Disability Working Group.

## CONSULTATION PROCESS

9. On 6 July 2018, the Civil Service Commissioners issued a consultation document to seek views on the updated Disability Action Plan. Consultees were invited to consider if the actions and key measures in the Disability Action Plan adequately addressed Commissioners' commitment to fulfil their disability duties under Section 49A of the Disability Discrimination Act 1995 (DDA 1995) (as amended under the Disability Discrimination Order (NI) 2006). The consultation closed on 7 September 2018.
10. Consultees were invited to consider each of the following:
- (i) Do you believe the actions and key measures in the Disability Action Plan will have a positive impact to promote positive attitudes towards disabled people?
  - (ii) Do you believe the actions and key measures in the Disability Action Plan will have a positive impact to encourage the participation of disabled people in public life?
  - (iii) Are there any actions and/or measures **not identified** in the Disability Action Plan which you feel should be included?
  - (iv) Are there any actions and/or measures **identified** in the Disability Action Plan which you feel should not be included?

Consultees were also invited to make any other comments about the Disability Action Plan that had not been covered by the above questions.

11. The consultation on Commissioners' draft Disability Action Plan ran from 6 July 2018 - 7 September 2018. Two Individuals submitted written responses to the consultation. A list of those who were invited to participate and those that did participate in the consultation process is attached at **Annex A**.
12. As part of their consultation, Commissioners met with the NICS Disability Working Group and NICS HR on 19 September 2018 and engaged in discussion on NICS recruitment processes and issues for disabled applicants.
13. The consultation feedback from respondents included comments which:
  - sought Commissioners' support for the NICS to implement positive action recruitment for persons with disabilities;
  - invited Commissioners to consider engagement with NICS HR on the feasibility of the Commissioners' Office offering a placement under the NICS Disability Work Placement Scheme; and
  - proposed that Commissioners should seek assurances that face-to-face training on disability (particularly for recruitment panel members) had been undertaken in the NICS.

One respondent also suggested that Commissioners should broaden their engagement with Disability organisations to include stakeholder input from across physical, sensory, learning and mental health organisations. Some of the issues raised in the consultation fell outside of the remit of Commissioners; other feedback related to minor drafting revisions to the Action Plan.

14. After detailed consideration of the views and comments received, Commissioners have updated their Disability Action Plan to include:
  - a heading 'Statement of Commitment' above the paragraph confirming Commissioners' commitment to implement effectively the disability duties and Disability Action Plan;
  - an overview of the consultation process in developing Commissioners' Disability Action Plan; and
  - a target to seek opportunities for engagement with Disability organisations to represent and include the broad range of disability issues.
15. In relation to the comment received seeking positive action for recruitment of those with disabilities, Commissioners, at their meeting with the NICS Disability Working Group and NICS HR, invited the NICS to consider opportunities in relation to Commissioners' provisions for appointments made by exception to the Merit Principle and submit proposals regarding suggested amendments to the Recruitment Code. Commissioners look forward to future engagement with the NICS on these matters.
16. In addition, Commissioners, through their statutory audit and review function, engage with NICS HR and note that NICS HR, following its review of Recruitment and Selection Training, plan to revise this training. Commissioners also continue

to engage with the NICS Permanent Secretaries and NICS HR on diversity and inclusion in the NICS. Commissioners will also invite the NICS to present to them an update on the NICS Disability Work Placement Scheme.

17. The Disability Action Plan was finalised in November 2018 and is available on the Commissioners' website at [Commissioners' Disability Action Plan](#). Commissioners will keep the Disability Action Plan under review during the lifetime of the document.
18. Civil Service Commissioners would like to thank those who participated in the consultation process and for taking time to make their views known.

**LIST OF THOSE WHO PARTICIPATED IN THE CONSULTATION PROCESS**

- Mr Ronnie Armour, NICS Disability Champion
- Individual response from a Civil Servant

**LIST OF THOSE INVITED TO PARTICIPATE IN THE CONSULTATION PROCESS**

A:Gender	Include Youth
Action on Hearing Loss	Indian Community Centre
Afro Community Support Organisation Northern Ireland (ACSONI)	MENCAP
Age NI	Men's Advisory Project
Al-Nisa Association Northern Ireland	Mindwise
Alzheimer's Society	NICS Department of Finance, Strategic Equality Branch
An Munia Tober	NICS Disability Champion/ NICS Disability Working Group
AutismNI	NI Muslim Family Association
Baha'i Council for Northern Ireland	NIPSA
Barnardos	Northern Ireland Association for Mental Health
Belfast Butterfly Club	Northern Ireland Council for Ethnic Minorities
British Deaf Association Northern Ireland	Northern Ireland Deaf Youth Association
Bryson Intercultural	Northern Ireland Gay Rights Association (NIGRA)
Cara-Friend	Northern Ireland Human Rights Commission
Carers Northern Ireland	Northern Ireland Youth Forum
Children in Northern Ireland (CiNI)	NSPCC Divisional Office
Children's Law Centre	Opportunity Youth
Chinese Chamber of Commerce	Parenting Forum NI
Chinese Welfare Association	Parents Advice Centre
Commissioner for Older People NI	Polish Association Northern Ireland
Craigavon Travellers Support Committee	Praxis Care
Cruse Bereavement Care Northern Ireland	Queer Space
Disability Action	Rape Crisis and Sexual Abuse Centre
Down's Syndrome Association	Relate Northern Ireland
Embrace	RNIB Northern Ireland
Employers For Disability NI	Sai Pak Chinese Community Project
Equality Coalition	Samaritans
Equality Commission for Northern Ireland	The Nexus Institute
FDA	The Northern Ireland Filipino Association
FPA N.I	The Rainbow Project
Gay and Lesbian Youth Northern Ireland	Wah-Hep Chinese Community Association
Gingerbread NI	Youth Action Northern Ireland
HERe NI	Youth Council for Northern Ireland