

Disability Action Plan

April 2022 - March 2025

Disability Discrimination Order
(Northern Ireland) 2006



1. Introduction

1.1

Section 49A of the Disability Discrimination Act 1995 (DDA 1995) (as amended by the Disability Discrimination (Northern Ireland) Order 2006), requires Invest NI 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').

Section 49B of the DDA 1995 also requires Invest NI to submit to the Equality Commission a **Disability Action Plan** showing how it proposes to fulfil these.

1.2

Rose Mary Stalker (Chair) and Kevin Holland (Chief Executive) of Invest NI, are committed to discharging the disability duties and implementing this Disability Action Plan. Invest NI will therefore:

- deploy people, time and money to put this plan into action and build objectives and targets on disability duties into corporate and annual operating plans;
- put in place internal arrangements to ensure that the disability duties are complied with and this disability action plan effectively implemented;
- ensure the effective communication of the plan along with training and guidance to staff on the disability duties and the plan;
- submit an annual report to the Equality Commission on the progress of the plan, updating it accordingly and carry out a review every three years;
- carry out timely, open and inclusive consultation in accordance with Equality Commission guidelines.

Pamela Marron will co-ordinate, review and evaluate the plan and is the point of contact within Invest NI.

She can be contacted at:

Invest Northern Ireland
Bedford Square, Bedford Street,
Belfast, BT2 7ES

Direct T: +44 (0) 28 9069 8273

Email: pamela.marron@investni.com

Text Relay Number: 18001 028 9069 8273

If you are calling using a text phone
from outside the UK please call:

T: +44 151 494 1260

T: (0)28 9069 8273

Should you require this plan in an alternative format (including Braille, disk, audio cassette or in minority languages to meet the needs of those whose first language is not English) then please contact the above person.

1.3

A copy of the plan is available at www.investni.com

1.4

Functions of Invest NI

Invest Northern Ireland, a Non Departmental Public Body sponsored by the Department for the Economy (DfE), was formed in April 2002 as the main economic development organisation in Northern Ireland to help businesses, principally in manufacturing and tradable services, to compete internationally and by attracting new investment.

We offer companies a single point of contact for high-quality services, expert advice and support for growth particularly in strategy, research and development, people management, e-business, energy management and exports.

Our primary focus is to

“Support wealth creation in Northern Ireland as an enabler and catalyst to grow innovation, exports, productivity and employment throughout the business base, resulting in increased living standards for all.”

There are four client facing groups - **Business Solutions, Regional Business and Sector Development** and **International Business** – which work together with client companies and are supported by **Finance and Operations, Strategy, Communications** and **Human Resources**.

1.5

Public Life Positions Invest NI is responsible for making appointments to the following publicly owned body

- NI-CO

Over the duration of this plan, Invest NI will review its range of public life positions and how it can best encourage those with disabilities to participate in those positions.

Rose Mary Stalker
Chair

Kevin Holland
Chief Executive

2. Previous Measures

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

Our headquarters building in Bedford Square, Bedford Street was designed, built and operates to best practice guidelines following consultation with Disability Action.

- A text relay number is printed on all publications and on our website to ensure accessibility to our offices and staff. Staff also include a text relay number on their email footer.
- Publications are produced in all alternative formats on request.
- A Signer (English/Irish language as requested)/interpreter is present on request. Invitations for events will also include a request for details of any special requirements.
- Equality Co-ordinators have been appointed within each division to assist with the implementation and main streaming of our equality obligations. These co-ordinators participate in additional Section 75 related training, in addition to the mandatory equality and disability training for all staff, on an annual basis, to ensure they are aware of the latest legislation.
- Chapter 5 of the Invest NI Equality Scheme sets out our commitment to equality training and raising awareness. In April 2019, all staff completed online equality and disability learning modules. This will be repeated on an annual basis.
- All programmes have been reviewed under the Accelerating Entrepreneurship and Business Development Solutions Equality Impact Assessments (EQIAs) to ensure that they are accessible to those with disabilities.
- We have also completed EQIA's on our Communications and Access Process, Recruitment and Selection and Corporate Plan, which are all available on our website.

Promoting positive attitudes towards disabled people

- During the development of our website, we ensured that the pages within the site are accessible and conform to level Double-A (AA) of the W3C's "*Web Content Accessibility Guidelines 1.0*" to make web content accessible to people with disabilities. We are working towards Triple A standard and this is an action within our Digital Strategy.
- We have most recently delivered Dignity training to all staff during 2019, in accordance with our Equality Scheme, which has raised awareness of our responsibilities concerning people with disabilities. This will continue on an annual basis.
- We have ensured that all HQ Facilities Staff have received training on how to provide an inclusive customer facing service for people with disabilities.
- We have also held specific training on Disability Awareness and the disability duties, again most recently in 2019. This training will also be provided on an annual basis going forward. This training has also been provided to external companies who carry out services on our behalf.
- Our building is fully accessible to encourage the participation of people with disabilities in our everyday activities. Accessibility is not only provided in terms of statutory provision, but also in terms of training our staff in meeting the needs of all our customers. For example, we participate in the JAM scheme. The JAM Card (an abbreviation of 'Just A Minute'), is a credit card-sized plastic card that people with learning

disabilities/difficulties can carry and use to alert staff in retail outlets, public/private transport providers and other areas of public life that the card-holder needs 'Just A Minute' of patience and time. We have placed signage on the front entrance of our building highlighting our participation in the scheme and our reception staff have been trained accordingly.

Encourage the participation of disabled people in public life

Our approach is based on these principles:

- Everyone has the right to equal access to information.
- When we make information available in a format that an individual or group prefers we will do it quickly and for free.
- All our documentation is made available in alternative formats to help encourage people with disabilities to apply for and participate in public life positions and we feature welcome statements for people with disabilities in our job advertisements.
- We make sure that people know how and where to get the information they need. For example nibusinessinfo.co.uk provides information of specific interest to disabled entrepreneurs and includes links to relevant organisations.
- When we cannot provide preferred formats we will make the information available in other ways. For example, we can arrange face-to-face meetings to pass on information; give an oral briefing; or give staff time to help customers understand and complete forms.
- We also, where reasonably possible, provide interpreters and signers for those who would wish to attend any of our business advice interviews or events.
- Some people may need help from a supporter who would come with them when we are providing information to them and we will make all reasonable adjustments to allow for this. We have also accommodated carers who need to travel with a disabled person participating in one of our events or Trade Missions and we will continue to do so.
- Car parking is provided on site for staff who have a disability.
- We carry out positive recruitment practices including a welcoming statement on all job advertisements, which state that we particularly welcome applicants with a disability.
- Our HQ building is fully accessible and has been previously reviewed by the Disability Action Access Consultant. Toilets for people with disabilities are provided on all floors and a designated fire evacuation lift is available for emergency exit.
- We also seek to make reasonable adjustments for any member of staff declaring a disability and have made numerous adjustments to date to encourage recruitment as well as the retention of employees with disabilities. These include remote working, reduced hours, flexible working patterns and participation in the Workable Programme.
- All employees have undergone equality training to raise awareness of the issues surrounding Section 75 and equality of opportunity.

Disability organisations linked to from nibusinessinfo.co.uk.

- Access to Work NI (nidirect)
- Action Mental Health
- Action on Hearing Loss
- Business in the Community
- Cedar Foundation
- Disability Action
- Disability employment service (nidirect)
- Leonard Cheshire Disability
- Local Benefits Office/Job Centre
- Mencap
- MindWise
- Now Project
- Prince's Trust
- Royal National Institute of Blind People (RNIB)
- Stepping Stones
- Supported Employment Solutions
- The Clanrye Group
- The Disabled Entrepreneurs Network
- The Orchardville Society
- Ulster Supported Employment Limited (USEL)
- Willowbank Community
- Young Enterprise Northern Ireland

Content approvers and associated guide titles

- Karen Smith, Disability Action - Starting a business: advice for people with a disability
- Terry Park and Barbara Gibson, Disability Employment Service - Support if you employ someone who is disabled.

In addition, the Equality Commission assists with the review of the following guidance and nibusinessinfo.co.uk also links to them from the best practice information:

- Prevent discrimination and value diversity
- Implement an equality plan
- Managing and supporting employees with mental ill health
- Equal pay – the law and best practice

Case studies

- Starting a business as an entrepreneur with a disability - Little Grooming pet studio (video)
- Running a business as an entrepreneur with a disability - Omagh Music Academy (video)
- Developing an equality plan - Interface (video)
- Developing an equality plan for your business - Equality Commission (video)
- Managing and supporting employees with mental ill health - Allen & Overy (video)

Organisation names - Business Support Finder

- Mood Matters in the Workplace – AWARE
- Workable NI - Action on Hearing Loss
- Information Outreach Service – Action on Hearing Loss
- Employment Advocacy Service, Disability Action
- Workable NI, Disability Action
- Job Match, Disability Action

Organisation names – Events Finder

- Employers for Disability NI
- Equality Commission NI
- Mind Change

3. Action Measures

These measures in our Disability Action Plan will be taken between April 2020–March 2023.

Measures to promote positive attitudes towards disabled people and encourage their participation in public life.

Actions:	Outcomes and Performance Indicators:	By When:	Responsibility:
Invest NI will review all new promotional and information materials (internal and external).	To portray disabled people constructively.	As new materials are commissioned.	Corporate Communications Team
Raise awareness with all staff regarding the Disability Discrimination Act and our Disability Action Plan, through updates in staff magazine.	Staff have an improved awareness of the disability duties and our Disability Action Plan, helping to promote informed and positive attitudes towards disabled people. A questionnaire to be introduced in order to assess a baseline understanding which we will seek to improve year on year throughout the life of this plan.	Annually	Equality Team
We will feature innovative best practice used by Client Companies (which could be adopted by others), in our internal communications and on nibusinessinfo.co.uk	Staff are better informed and enabled to promote best practice amongst Client Companies. Annual call to client facing staff to request details of any relevant companies whose best practice could be featured as a case study. Number of page views on disability information related pages to be reviewed on an annual basis, with a view to increasing readership by 5% year on year.	Ongoing. Case study of 'Allen and Overy' sharing best practice of managing mental health in the workplace, is now available on nibusinessinfo.co.uk Annual review of page views.	Equality Team and nibusinessinfo.co.uk Team.

<p>Ensure training is provided to employees on the disability equality legislation. The training modules include:</p> <p>Disability equality legislation:</p> <ol style="list-style-type: none"> 1. Understanding of employer and employees duties and responsibilities under the DDA 2. Understanding of employer and employees understand their duties and responsibilities under the disability duties (in addition to the DDA) 3. Organisations equal Opportunities policies and procedures 4. Understanding of the DDO specific disability duties <p>Disability awareness and etiquette training:</p> <ol style="list-style-type: none"> 1. Promoting positive attitudes of disabled people 2. An explanation of the barriers faced by disabled people in society (including attitudinal and environmental factors) 3. An understanding of the social model of disability 4. Addresses issues around the use of appropriate language <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Challenges stereotypes/misc onceptions about disabled people. 	<p>All staff are trained on our obligations under the Disability Discrimination Act legislation including our Executive Leadership team and Board.</p> <p>100% rate of staff trained required. This is monitored by the training team and the Director of any member of staff who has not completed training is advised accordingly. Follow up action is conducted until 100% training is achieved.</p> <p>All staff to obtain 100% in the training evaluation test.</p>	<p>All staff have been trained to date and this will continue for new staff as they enter into the organisation as an integral part of their induction. Refresher training will take place annually.</p>	<p>Equality Team/Learning and Development Team</p>
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<p>Provide inclusive service to customers with hearing impairments incorporating the most modern means possible.</p>	<p>Courses on sign language are periodically offered to staff and members of the Facilities Management team.</p> <p>Our text relay numbers have been added to all email footers and business cards.</p> <p>Ensure zero complaints relating to accessibility.</p>	<p>Courses will continue to run on an ongoing basis depending on demand.</p> <p>We will continue to upgrade our services as technological advances become available.</p>	<p>Equality Team/Learning and Development Team</p>

Actions:	Outcomes and Performance Indicators:	By When:	Responsibility:
<p>Ensure all HQ Facilities Staff have received training on how to provide an inclusive customer facing service for people with disabilities.</p>	<p>Staff have an improved awareness of the disability duties and our Disability Action Plan, helping to promote informed and positive attitudes towards disabled people. The training will include a learning evaluation with a 100% pass rate.</p>	<p>Annually</p> <p>This will continue for new staff coming into the organisation.</p>	<p>Learning and Development Team</p>
<p>Ensure our recruitment and selection procedures are inclusive and encouraging to those with disabilities to participate in recruitment trawls and assessment centres.</p>	<p>We advertise positions within the Employers for Disability Bulletin Board, as well as via the mainstream press.</p> <p>We include welcome statements in all our job advertisements to encourage those with disabilities to apply for jobs within the organisation.</p> <p>As well as welcoming statements we of course make reasonable adjustments to our recruitment practice, for example assessment centre papers are provided in larger font and additional time is granted for applicants with disabilities who request it.</p>	<p>Monitoring of applicants will continue to be reviewed annually.</p> <p>This can be amended at any time and is anticipated to be particularly useful at return to work interviews following a period of sickness absence</p>	<p>Human Resources Team</p>

Actions:	Outcomes and Performance Indicators:	By When:	Responsibility:
<p>We will offer staff with disabilities the opportunity to complete a 'tailored adjustment agreement' which provides a living record of reasonable adjustments agreed between a disabled employee and their line manager.</p>	<p>This will ensure that both parties have an accurate record of what has been agreed and minimises the need to re explain reasonable adjustments every time an employee changes jobs, is relocated or assigned a new manager within the organisation.</p> <p>This document also provides employees and their line managers with the basis for discussions about reasonable adjustments at future meetings.</p> <p>We have also established a Disability Network Group amongst staff which allows us to collate feedback and inform forward planning and future initiatives in relation to their specific needs.</p>	<p>Ongoing. This can be amended at any time and is anticipated to be particularly useful at return to work interviews following a period of sickness absence.</p> <p>Our Disability Network was established in 2023 and forms part of our Environmental Social and Governance Strategy</p>	<p>Line Managers</p>
<p>Ensure our buildings are easily accessible to all those with disabilities for both staff and visitors. To include colour coded areas to assist individuals with Autism.</p>	<p>Ongoing audits are completed by the HQ facilities team to ensure compliance with best practice recommendations. Target is 100% compliance.</p> <p>Staff with disabilities are given car parking spaces in our basement.</p>	<p>Ongoing and fully implemented via the Communications and Access EQIA which is available on our website.</p>	<p>Facilities Management Team and Equality Team</p>

<p>We participate in schemes such as JAM (Just a Minute) to assist those with learning difficulties who require a little more time to communicate.</p> <p>Our reception staff are aware of this initiative and we advertise our participation at the entrance to the building.</p>			
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Actions:	Outcomes and Performance Indicators:	By When:	Responsibility:
<p>Encourage those with disabilities to participate in the public life positions through welcome statements and placing these advertisement within the Employers for Disability bulletin as well as Regional Press.</p>	<p>We will seek to encourage people with disabilities to become involved in public life positions within our remit, (currently the NICO Board).</p>	<p>As every new Board position becomes available.</p>	<p>Corporate Co-Ordination Team and Equality Team</p>
<p>Encourage those with disabilities to consider starting their own business.</p> <p>We will seek to encourage people with disabilities to consider becoming entrepreneurs and tailor the advice available to overcome barriers experienced by those with disabilities.</p> <p>We will showcase those individuals with disabilities who have started their own business and can inspire others to do the same.</p>	<p>We include case studies featuring a number of disabled entrepreneurs which have been used as marketing material on the nibusinessinfo.co.uk website. See 'Section two - Case Studies' for details.</p> <p>Aim to increase number of case studies on an annual basis, (dependant on available material).</p>	<p>These case studies are featured on the nibusinessinfo.co.uk website and we will review annually in order to ensure the current best practice is available.</p>	<p>Equality Team/ Regional Business Team/Corporate Communications</p>



Invest Northern Ireland
Bedford Square
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Belfast
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