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DRAFT for CONSULTATION

Disability Action Plan

2021 – 2025

May 2021

Background

This Disability Action Plan is a statement of the Council's commitment to and proposals for fulfilling the statutory obligations in compliance with Section 49A of the Disability Discrimination Act 1995 (as amended by the Disability Discrimination (NI) Order 2006).

This places duties on public authorities when carrying out their functions to have due regard to the need:

- to promote positive attitudes towards people with disabilities, and
- to encourage participation by people with disabilities in public life

The Plan outlines how disability issues can be more effectively mainstreamed, thus ensuring that they are central to the whole range of policy decision-making within the Council.

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1. Introduction

1.1 Section 49A of the Disability Discrimination Act 1995, as amended by the Disability Discrimination (NI) Order 2006, requires the Council in carrying out its functions to have due regard to the need:

- to promote positive attitudes towards people with disabilities, and
- to encourage participation by people with disabilities in public life

1.2 The Council is committed to the fulfilment of its disability duties in all parts of its organisation and has set out how it intends to do this in this Disability Action Plan, which covers the period 2021-2025.

1.3 The Council will undertake as appropriate a planned programme of communication and training on the above two disability duties.

2. Purpose of the disability action plan

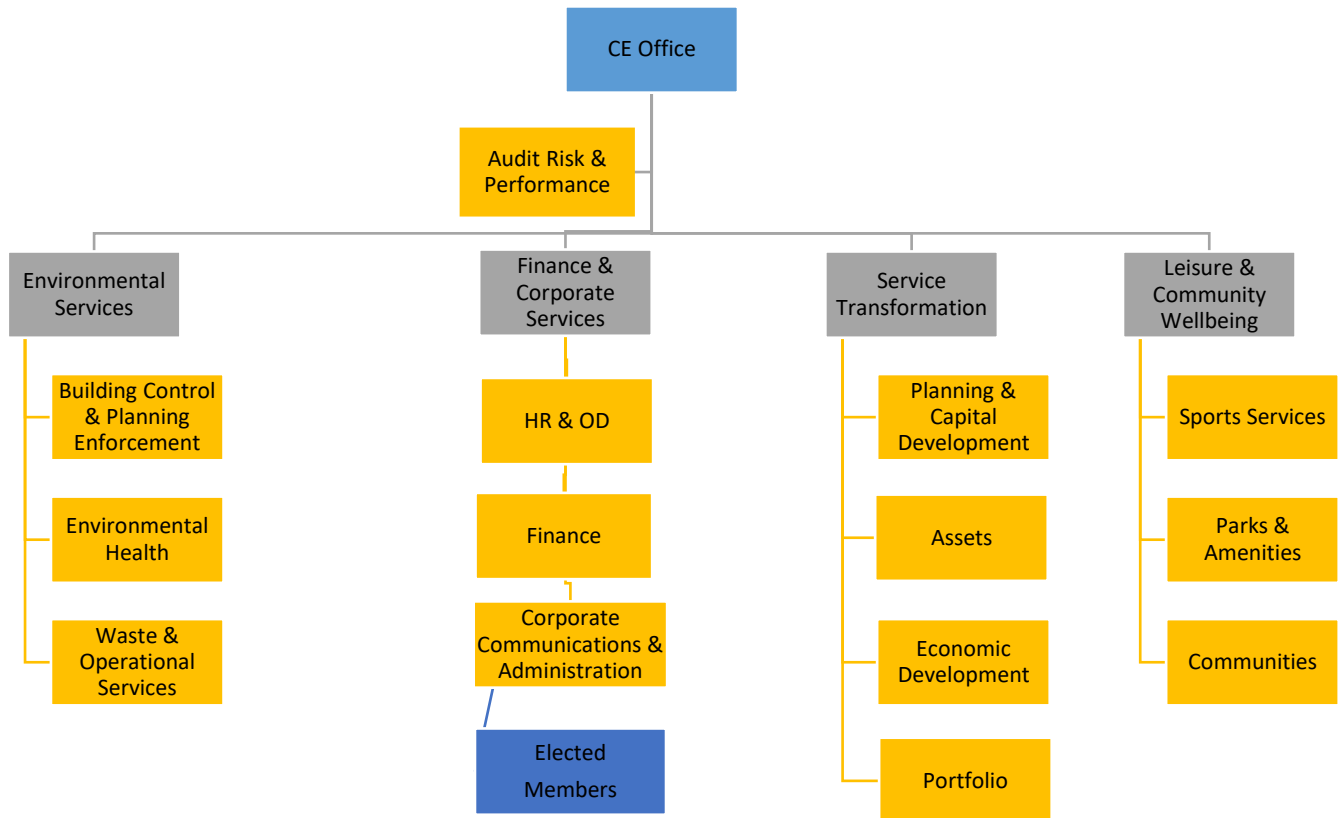
2.1 This Plan sets out how the Council proposes to fulfil the disability duties in relation to its functions.

3. Lisburn & Castlereagh City Council – role and functions

3.1 The roles and functions of Council cover the following:

- the direct provision of services and facilities;
- a representative role on a number of bodies and Boards; and
- a consultative role in relation to functions conducted by other Government bodies and agencies.

3.2 In the performance of the above roles the Council carries out functions across many areas, see organisation chart below with Service Areas listed:



3.3 To enable the Council to provide the above services and perform its functions, it must levy an annual rate and has the power to:

- acquire and dispose of land;
- borrow money;
- employ staff; and
- procure goods and services.

3.4 To support and implement the above statutory functions and provision of services and facilities, the Council has adopted a wide range of policies.

4. Public life positions for which the Council has responsibility

4.1 The Council does not have responsibility for public appointments but has some responsibility regarding other public life positions, for example, in respect of representation on a range of external bodies. Examples of such external bodies include:

- ARC 21
- Belfast Region City Deal Engagement Forum
- Belfast Regional Tourism Partnership
- Lagan Rural Partnership
- Lagan Valley Regional Park

- Lisburn & Castlereagh Housing Liaison Forum
- Peace IV Partnership
- Strategic Community Planning Partnership.

Where Council has an opportunity to influence the make-up of bodies on which it is represented in terms of ensuring representation of disabled people, it will endeavour to do so.

- 4.2 The Equality Commission has emphasised that ‘public life’ should be defined as including any group or committee that has a role in influencing public policy or service delivery. It can therefore include any consultative group, focus group, working group, committee, or community group that provides an opportunity for people to give their views to inform public policy or service development. Where Council is setting up or involved in such groups, it will ensure that efforts are made to raise awareness of opportunities for disabled people to participate and that their participation is actively encouraged and facilitated.
- 4.3 Council will also ensure that any community group we facilitate or fund is encouraged to take steps to involve disabled people in their work and decision making.

5. The commitment of Council to the effective implementation of the Plan

- 5.1 The Council is committed to the effective implementation of the Plan. Responsibility for determining policy on how this will be achieved lies with the Elected Members.
- 5.2 Day to day responsibility for carrying out the policy determined by the Elected Members lies with the Chief Executive and he will be responsible for the implementation of administrative arrangements to ensure that the disability duties are complied with by the Council. As part of its strategic corporate planning process, the Council will build objectives and targets relating to the disability duties into corporate and business plans. These will be reflected at all levels of planning including individual employee objectives and in annual plans.
- 5.3 Progress on meeting objectives, including those relating to the disability Duties, will be monitored and reported on at the most senior level within the organisation. Achievement of objectives will also be monitored annually by the equality officer.
- 5.4 A formal report of progress on meeting the objectives relating to the disability duties will be included in the Council’s annual report to the Equality Commission.

6. Internal arrangements

6.1 Lisburn & Castlereagh City Council consists of 40 elected representatives who meet monthly in full session. There are also seven standing committees, these are:

- Capital Projects
- Corporate Services
- Development
- Environmental Services
- Governance & Audit
- Leisure and Community Development
- Planning.

7. Effective engagement

7.1 The Council is committed to engaging with people with disabilities in the implementation, monitoring and review of this Plan.

8. Annual report

8.1 The Council will prepare an annual report on the implementation of its Plan. This report will be included as part of the Council's annual report to the Equality Commission on the implementation of the Equality Scheme of Council.

8.2 A copy of the Equality Scheme annual report will be made available on the Council's website and, on request, can also be made available in alternative formats.

9. Five year review

9.1 The Council will carry out a review of its Plan (within five years), following guidance from the Equality Commission for NI.

10. Consultation

10.1 Council is committed to carrying out meaningful consultation and involvement of those with disabilities in both the development and review of its Disability Action Plan. By so doing Council is keen to bring about change for people with disabilities, and their carers, by proactively taking measures in response to the disability duties.

10.2 The Council has sought to ensure the involvement of people with disabilities by consulting with representative groups at both regional and local levels, as well as talking to, and meeting with individuals with a disability, or carers.

Consultation is viewed therefore as an on-going process to facilitate the duties.

- 10.3 The groups at a local and regional level that we will consult with will include Disability Action, Mencap, Employers for Disability, RNIB, RNID, IMTAC, Cedar Foundation and Disability Sports NI as well as all other relevant organisations.
- 10.4 The draft plan will be advertised on the council's website and through other relevant media eg. social media, where responses will be sought from both individuals and organisations.
- 10.5 To help promote equality of opportunity in accessing information, relevant information will be provided in alternative formats on request, where reasonably practicable. Consideration will also be given, as necessary, as to how best to communicate information to certain groups e.g. young disabled people or disabled people who do not have English as a first language.
- 10.6 The Council believes it is important that people with disabilities and groups are involved in all stages of the plan and we will continue to seek their views to help ensure that any activity the Council is undertaking continues to promote the two disability duties.

11. Action measures

- 11.1 The Council already undertakes a number of measures to promote positive attitudes towards people with disabilities and encourage their participation in public life as a result of the duties under Section 75. By way of example these include:
 - All policies are screened to assess potential impact on the nine designated groups, including those with a disability.
 - Council has in place an Elected Member Diversity Champion and an Officer Diversity Champion.
 - Council continues to work with government departments as well as the statutory, voluntary and community sectors, to progress a range of initiatives for various groups locally, inclusive of those with a disability.
 - Council is a member of Employers for Disability NI and has utilised them to provide training across a broad range of disabilities for staff.
 - Council routinely considers the needs of people with disabilities in our communications and engagement work so that they can access information and services and participate fully in council run activities and initiatives.

11.2 **Appendix 1** details the measures which Lisburn & Castlereagh City Council intends to take in order to implement the disability duties for the forthcoming period. Progress against these will be reviewed annually and reported in the annual report to the Equality Commission.

11.3 The actions in this plan are in addition to those that Council undertakes routinely to ensure that it meets the commitments in its Section 75 Equality Scheme and obligations under the Disability Discrimination Act.

12. How the disability action plan will be published

12.1 Once finalised and approved after consultation this Plan will be available by contacting:

Equality Officer
Lisburn & Castlereagh City Council
Civic Headquarters
Lagan Valley Island
Lisburn
BT27 4RL

Tel: 028 9244 7300 (switchboard)
Text phone: 028 9250 9508
E-mail: equality.officer@lisburncastlereagh.gov.uk

12.2 The availability of the Disability Action Plan will be notified through a range of media and can be accessed on the Council's website at:

<https://www.lisburncastlereagh.gov.uk/>

12.3 The Council will, through ongoing work with people with disabilities, including learning disabilities, find appropriate ways of communicating the Plan. The Plan will be available in alternative formats on request.

12.4 The Plan will be highlighted through all relevant methods including meetings with relevant groups and individuals.

12.5 Employees will be made aware of the Plan and be able to access it through the staff intranet. This will help ensure they know their responsibilities as well as the overall responsibilities of Council regarding the Plan.

Appendix 1 – LCCC Disability Action Plan 2021-2025

1 Policy development and reporting			
<i>Action Measure</i>	<i>Responsibility</i>	<i>Impact</i>	<i>Timescale</i>
1.1 Continue to ensure disability is included in all equality screening of policies/projects/plans.	Heads of Service and all relevant officers.	Disability issues highlighted and mainstreamed at an early stage of policy development.	Ongoing
1.2 Add Disability Duties to equality screening template	Equality officer	Will ensure staff consider whether their policy/project/plan provides an opportunity to promote positive attitudes or encourage participation	2021-2022
1.3 Prepare an Annual Report to the ECNI on implementation of the Plan. Progress report publicised on Council website	Equality Officer Input from Heads of Service	Achievements/progress reported and shared Public informed about what Council has done	Annually – according to ECNI timetable, usually 31 August.
1.4 Include a disability focus in quarterly Departmental Management Team/Equality Officer meetings.	Equality Officer to attend DMT meetings on a rolling basis.	Departments have regular opportunity to consider how they are implementing relevant actions in the DAP and to report achievements or discuss ideas	Meetings held quarterly.
1.5 Report progress on implementation of action plan to staff	Equality Officer	Staff kept up to date. Good practice and achievements shared.	Annually following submission to Equality Commission

2 Awareness & Understanding			
Action Measure	Responsibility	Impact	Timescale
2.1 Include Disability Duties in all general equality awareness training for staff and Elected Members	Equality Officer HR and Organisational Development Unit Member Services	Staff and elected members will understand why we have duties and what they are designed to achieve	Ongoing
2.2 Council's responsibility in relation to DDA duties to be referenced in all induction training for new staff and elected members	Equality Officer in association with Human Resources & Organisational Development Unit.	New staff will have basic awareness of the duties and know how they might be relevant to their role	Ongoing – in all scheduled induction training
2.3 Include disability duties in equality screening training for relevant staff	Equality Officer in association with Human Resources & Organisational Development Unit. All relevant officers.	Increased awareness of disability issues and potential to deliver on the disability duties across Council functions	A programme of training to be agreed and undertaken annually as required.
2.4 Provide targeted awareness training for staff who are identified as having the potential to deliver on Council's DDA duties, eg, managers, communication staff, those who organise consultations or engage with external groups	Equality Officer in association with Human Resources & Organisational Development Unit. Relevant managers/officers.	Opportunities identified to promote positive attitudes and encourage participation across the range of Council functions and action implemented accordingly	Training to be identified on an annual basis and delivered as required.

<p>2.5 Share relevant information and promote disability support services to staff, eg, via intranet or social media for both professional and personal use</p>	<p>Equality Officer HR Corporate Communications & Admin</p>	<p>Staff more aware of disability issues and more disability confident and more likely not to have prejudiced attitudes towards disabled people</p>	<p>Ongoing</p>
<p>2.6 Carry out survey of staff/Elected Members to assess knowledge of Disability Duties and to gauge attitudes to disability/disabled people</p>	<p>Equality Officer with Heads of Service support Member services in relation to Elected Members</p>	<p>Assessment of levels of prejudice or misunderstanding gained that can be addressed through training etc</p>	<p>First survey in 2021-2022 Repeat in final year of plan to assess change over time</p>

3 Promotion & Engagement			
Action Measure	Responsibility	Impact	Timescale
3.1 Identify relevant opportunities and encourage participation of disabled people through targeted promotion	Council, senior officers and other relevant officers in relation to their area of work Equality Officer to advise	People with disabilities are provided with more opportunities to participate and influence Council activities and decision making.	Ongoing, as appropriate, as part of business planning.
3.2 Ensure disabled people and representative groups are targeted proactively in all council consultations and engagement events/initiatives	Heads of Service and Managers with support from Equality Officer	More disabled people have their views reflected in consultation feedback which informs decision making.	Ongoing - in consultation or engagement plans
3.3 Continue to work with disabled individuals and their representative groups.	Relevant staff in relation to their services/Equality Officer	Engagement with disability support groups informs policy and service delivery.	Ongoing
3.4 Explore development of a Disability Forum or formal consultative group – to include representation from relevant Council officers and functions (eg, Age Friendly, Community Planning) If feasible, run as a pilot.	Equality Officer	A formal mechanism would demonstrate Council's strategic commitment to consulting with disabled people as well as assisting management and staff in better meeting disabled citizen's needs.	Feasibility to be considered in year 2 of plan (2022-2023)
3.5 Explore setting up an internal Disability Forum for staff	HR and Organisational Development/Equality Officer	Would demonstrate Council's commitment to meeting disabled staff's needs	Feasibility to be considered in 2021-2022

		<p>Increased awareness of disabled people's issues</p> <p>Opportunities for disabled staff to share experience to improve service delivery and to contribute to policy making within Council</p>	
<p>3.6 Participate in or mark annual Disability days/events, eg, Mental Health or Autism Awareness, International Day of People with Disabilities</p>	<p>Equality Officer HR and Organisational Development Corporate Communications & Admin</p>	<p>Demonstrates Council commitment</p> <p>Increases staff awareness</p> <p>Opportunities for disability groups and disabled people to contribute to and influence Council activities</p>	<p>Plan developed in 2021-2022</p> <p>Ongoing for identified days as feasible</p>

4 Communication and Accessibility			
Action Measure	Responsibility	Impact	Timescale
4.1 Active consideration of potential to include positive images of individuals with a disability in Council promotional material and publications.	Corporate Communications & Admin Relevant officers who have a role in producing materials/publications Equality officer to advise	Disabled people portrayed in a positive role and the promotion of positive attitudes towards people with disabilities.	Review of potential opportunities in 2021-2022 Ongoing thereafter
4.2 Ensure features or articles about disability, profiles/case studies of disabled people, information on how Council facilitates disabled people, etc, are regularly included in key Council publications, eg, City Matters and on social media	Corporate Communications & Admin. Relevant officers who provide content for publication. Equality officer to advise	Citizens more aware of disability issues and aware of what disabled people can do. Disabled people more encouraged to access Council services and facilities.	Initial plan developed in 2021-2022 Included in annual communications planning thereafter
4.3 Review Council website and communications to ensure that information about the Disability Duties is well promoted	Corporate Communications & Admin in conjunction with Equality Officer	Disabled citizens, visitors and others more likely to respond to consultations or participate in Council activities	Initial review completed by the end of 2022
4.4 Keep under review the accessibility of the Council's website and communication methods/policies generally.	Corporate Communications & Admin and other relevant officers.	Information (and consequently services) accessible for those with disabilities. Disabled people more likely to be able to respond to	Annual review or as part of overall communications accessibility review as appropriate

		consultations and have a say in service development, etc	
4.5 Consider adopting Equality Commission Every Customer Counts initiative which includes an accessibility self-audit tool and supporting guidance for front line services	<p>Equality Officer to promote to Heads of Service and instigate pilot</p> <p>Heads of Service to consider for front line services</p>	<p>Accessibility issues can be identified and addressed.</p> <p>Disabled people more likely to be encouraged to access Council premises and participate in Council business and services</p>	ECC initiative to be piloted in year 1 of plan and rolled out if feasible