

**Northern Ireland Commissioner for Children and Young people
 (NICCY)
 Disability Action Plan June 2007**

	<p>Introduction</p> <p>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), the Northern Ireland Commissioner for Children and Young People (NICCY) is required when carrying out its functions to have due regard to the need to:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Promote positive attitudes towards disabled people; and • Encourage participation by disabled people in public life ('the disability duties'). <p>Under Section 49B of the DDA 1995, NICCY is also required to submit to the Equality Commission a disability action plan showing how it proposes to fulfill these duties in relation to its functions.</p>
1.2	<p>As Children's Commissioner and Chief Executive of NICCY, we are committed to implementing effectively the disability duties and this disability action plan. We will allocate sufficient resources in order to implement effectively this plan and where appropriate, build objectives and targets relating to the disability duties into corporate and annual business plans.</p> <p>We will also put in place appropriate internal arrangements to ensure that the disability duties are complied with and this disability action plan is 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.</p> <p>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.</p>



1.3	<p>Consultation</p> <p>NICCY completed their consultation process in January 2008 and would like to take this opportunity to thank each party for their time and input.</p> <p>Following the consultation process, NICCY has considered the responses made by all parties and these have been fully taken into account in developing this final version of our Disability Action Plan.</p>
1.4	<p>Responsibility for implementing, reviewing and evaluating this disability action plan and the point of contact within NICCY will be:-</p> <p>Name: Gerry Campbell Title: Chief Executive Address: Millennium House 17-25 Great Victoria Street Belfast BT2 7BN</p> <p>Telephone number: 028 9031 1616 Fax number: 028 9031 4545 Email gerry@niccy.org</p> <p>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 the above person to discuss your requirements.</p>
1.5	<p>We confirm our commitment to submitting an annual progress report on the implementation of this plan to the Equality Commission and carrying out a five year review of this plan, or plans submitted to the Equality Commission over the five year review period.</p> <p>A copy of this plan, our annual progress to the Equality Commission and carrying out a five year review of this plan will be made available on our website http://www.niccy.org/.</p>



<p>1.6</p>	<p>Functions</p> <p>The Commissioner for Children and Young People for Northern Ireland’s principal aim is to ‘safeguard and promote the rights and best interests of children and young people’. While the detailed powers are set out in the legislation, they may be grouped under three main areas as follows:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Promoting children’s rights and their participation - NICCY will be guided by the United Nations Convention on the Rights of the Child. • Complaints and legal action - the Commissioner can deal with individual complaints from children and young persons, or their parents/ guardians about any services that impact on those under 18 years old (or under the age of 21 for those with a disability or cared for by a Health and Social Service Trust). • Research and enquiries - NICCY bases all its work on evidence. The Commissioner has the power to undertake general enquiries and to carry out research into issues where she believes children and young people are being adversely affected.
<p>1.7</p>	<p>Public Life Positions</p> <p>The Commission is a ‘corporation sole’. NICCY also has two governance committees; an Audit and an Ethics committee. These committees are the only public life positions open to adults within the organisation. Each committee has three external members.</p> <p>With regard to young people and children NICCY has an established Youth Panel. This is a representative forum providing the Commissioner with the views and opinions of children and young people in Northern Ireland which supports the office of the commissioner in its work.</p> <p>The panel's aim is to provide advice to NICCY and to train and assist children and young people so that they can take an active and full part in the work of NICCY including, for example:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • consultation and participation in and discussion on issues affecting children and young people in Northern Ireland



- recruiting of NICCY staff

There are 18 members of the panel representing different community backgrounds, different abilities and disabilities, and different ethnic groups. The members are also drawn from across Northern Ireland.

NICCY is committed to recruiting and developing a diverse yet inclusive panel. Currently disabled children and young people are well represented within this group with 17% of those on the panel declaring some form of disability.



2. **Previous Measures**

Outlined below are the key measures which the Northern Ireland Commissioner for Children and Young people (NICCY) has taken already to promote positive attitudes towards disabled people and encourage the participation of disabled people in public life.

Promoting Positive attitudes towards disabled people

Staff Training

NICCY has provided all staff with training in relation to our duties under Section 75 and carried out additional Disability Awareness training. NICCY has also gone beyond the statutory training obligation and has recently undertaken a programme of training events on mental health as part of our commitment to being an Employer of Choice.

Youth Panel-Disability Awareness Training

All members of the Youth Panel have undergone Disability Awareness training to promote positive attitudes towards disabled young people and children. The Youth Panel has also received general Section 75 training, whilst approximately one third has received equality training for recruitment and selection purposes which includes specific training regarding disability issues.

Disability Awareness training is one of many learning events open to Youth Panel members. All such events contribute to our Youth Panel members' ability take an active and full part in the work of NICCY.

Accessibility

NICCY has developed an Accessibility policy to reinforce our commitment to making information as accessible as possible and to ensure that thought is given to providing information in a format appropriate to meeting a range of information needs, including:



- People with hearing impairments
- People with sight impairments
- People with learning difficulties
- People with literacy difficulties
- People with physical disabilities

All our public documents are available in alternative formats – Braille, large print, computer disk, plain language, easy read and audio cassette.

In terms of information distribution NICCY continually reviews and develops new methods of distribution to ensure that our information is accessible to everyone in Northern Ireland. Some examples of alternative communication channels include:

- Talking Newspapers
- Belfast Telegraph Deaf/Talkabout column
- Distribution of NICCY information to GP surgeries, libraries, Post Offices and CAB

NICCY staff are directed to the Accessibility policy when organising meetings and events involving members of the public, such as exhibitions, launches, seminars, conferences, focus groups etc to make sure that information is provided in an equitable and accessible manner.

Positive Imagery

NICCY already promotes a positive image of disabled children and young people by its use of imagery within our publications. Positive images of disabled children and young people have consistently featured within our publications.

Our staff

NICCY is committed to ensuring that the composition of our workforce is representative of the wider population. Currently disabled people are well represented amongst our staff with 8% of employees declaring some form of disability.



NICCY also offers a workplace programme to allow young people to gain work experience within our office. We have successfully supported disabled young people through this scheme.

NICCY has in place a Managing Disability policy in order to maximize the contribution that disabled employees make to NICCY and to promote disability awareness thus reducing stereotypical assumptions and attitudes towards disabled people. The Managing Disability Policy emphasises the need to consider reasonable adjustments to disabled staff. The policy allows disabled staff to consider taking a more flexible approach to their working hours in order to accommodate their individual needs.

NICCY Research

The NICCY Research, Policy and Service Review Team have been actively seeking the views of disabled children and young people in a number of its research programmes. The team consults with disabled groups and NGOs in order to facilitate the participation of a wide range of disabled people in their work.

NICCY Legal and Complaints team

NICCY's Legal and Complaints team deals with complaints from children and young people and/or their carers about the services they receive or the way they are treated.

The Legal and Complaints team offer a flexible service to enable all Disabled children and young people to access their services. Disabled children and young people can contact the team via an accessible web based form. The team will also tailor their service to meet the needs of the individual, for example organising a home visit when this is the best option for a disabled child or young person.

Over 36% of all legal and complaint cases in the last 12 months have come from disabled children and young people and/or their carers.



Encourage the participation of disabled people in public life

Governance Committees Recruitment

As stated above NICCY has a very limited number of public life positions for adults. However in terms of the recruitment process for our governance committees NICCY already has in place a robust open recruitment procedure with an emphasis on making these positions accessible to all.

All committee posts are advertised widely in the press and on the NICCY website which is fully accessible to all disabled people. In addition all recruitment information can be requested in alternative formats and disabled applicants may submit their application in a format of their choice.

Youth Panel Recruitment

Disabled Children and young people are strongly represented on the Youth Panel and this is due to the NICCY Participation team's inclusive approach to recruitment.

The Participation team successfully liaises with Disability interest groups alongside youth umbrella organisations such as *Youthnet* and the *Youth Forum* in order to publicise vacancies on the panel. These organisations then successfully disseminate information about the Youth Panel through their extensive email networks. To date this approach to recruiting for the Youth Panel has resulted in disabled children and young people having a strong voice within NICCY.

3. **Action Measures**

Outlined in the attached Appendix A are the measures which we propose to take over the next five years of this disability action plan ending in 2012, together with performance indicators and targets



Appendix A – Measures

The table below outlines measures to be taken by NICCY to promote positive attitudes towards disabled people and encourage the participation of disabled people in public life.

Measures	Timescale	Performance indicators/targets
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Provide training to all NICCY staff and Governing Committees on the disability duties. 	March 2008	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> All staff and governing committee members trained by end of March 2008.
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Incorporate awareness training regarding the disability duties into the induction process. 	December 2007	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> All new staff to be inducted from December 2007 onwards will receive awareness training.
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Assess the implications of the disability duties when carrying out policy screening in accordance with the equality scheme. 	Ongoing	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> New duties built into policy screening form.



Measures	Timescale	Performance indicators/targets
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Assess feasibility of ring fencing one of our 8 annual work placement opportunities for a young person with a disability. 	<p>March 2008</p>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Positive Work placement Feedback analysis from a young person with a disability included in Business plan.
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Conduct research into economic feasibility of advertising in specialist disability publications to increase accessibility of NICCY Public life vacancies. 	<p>March 2009</p>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Report produced detailing results of feasibility study
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Conduct research into ways of strengthening links with disability umbrella bodies to encourage more disabled people to apply for/participate in public life positions. 	<p>March 2009</p>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Report produced detailing results of research.



Measures	Timescale	Performance indicators/targets
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Ensure NICCY statement detailing our commitment to interview all candidates who meet essential criteria is included in all future Governance Committee recruitment advertisements. 	<p>To be implemented in next Committee Recruitment Drive.</p>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Next Governance Committee vacancy advertisement will include the positive statement.
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Monitor reasonable adjustments we have made for disabled interviewees. 	<p>March 2008</p>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Report produced detailing results of monitoring.
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Continue to conduct annual confidential monitoring survey to determine the number of disabled staff and extend this monitoring to include Governance Committee members. 	<p>March 2008 & Ongoing</p>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Report detailing results of monitoring survey produced.



Measures	Timescale	Performance indicators/targets
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Continue to maintain accessibility of website in line with NICCY Accessibility Policy and RNIB recommendations. 	Ongoing	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Website will meet with standards as laid out by Accessibility Policy.
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> In recognition of the value and contribution of our disabled staff we will assess the feasibility of creating a <i>Working from Home Policy</i> in addition to the existing <i>Managing Disability Policy</i>. If feasible such a policy will provide further flexibility for employees managing a disability. 	September 2007	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Research completed and policy created if found to be viable for a small organisation like NICCY.



Measures	Timescale	Performance indicators/targets
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Continue to include photography in our publications and website using positive imagery of disabled people. Review situation annually to ensure positive portrayal and avoid tokenistic inclusion of disabled people. 	Ongoing	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> NICCY Publications and website will regularly include photography and other positive imagery of disabled people.
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Continue to monitor representation of disabled children and young people on the NICCY Youth Panel. 	Ongoing	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Disabled Young people and children will be well represented on the Youth Panel.
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Continue to ensure information regarding NICCY Youth Panel Vacancies reach a wide range of disabled young people and children. 	Ongoing	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> NICCY will receive a positive response from disabled young people and children once information regarding vacancies on the Youth Panel has been disseminated.



Measures	Timescale	Performance indicators/targets
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Continue Disability Awareness training for all members of the NICCY Youth panel and look into increasing this training in future. 	Ongoing	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Youth Panel members with and without disabilities will have undergone disability awareness training and will be equipped to help eliminate ignorance and prejudice towards disabled people in the wider community.
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> The NICCY Research, Policy and Service Review Team will continue to actively seek the views of disabled children and young people in its research programmes. The team will continue to consult with disabled groups and NGOs in order to facilitate the participation of a wide range of disabled people in their work. 	Ongoing	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Disabled Children and young people will have had the opportunity to participate in discussion on issues affecting children and young people in Northern Ireland.



Measures	Timescale	Performance indicators/targets
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> NICCY's Legal and Complaints team will continue to monitor the percentage of complaints received from children and young people and/or their carers with special needs and other disabilities to ensure they are well represented by the team. 	Ongoing	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Team continues to receive a high percentage of complaints from children and young people and/or their carers with special needs and other disabilities.

Signed by:

Patricia Lewsley

Patricia Lewsley
Commissioner

Gerry Campbell

Gerry Campbell
Chief Executive

