



Northern Ireland Authority for Utility Regulation

Five-Year Disability Action Plan

2018-23

Revised Draft 2018-23

*This document is available upon request in accessible formats such as Braille, large print, disc, audio cassette
And in minority languages to meet the needs of those who are not fluent in English

1.1	<p>Introduction</p> <p>Under Section 49A of the Disability Discrimination Act 1995 (DDA1995) (as amended by Article 5 of the Disability Discrimination (Northern Ireland) Order 2006), the Utility Regulator 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, the Utility Regulator is also required to submit to the Equality Commission a Disability Action Plan showing how it proposes to fulfil these duties in relation to its functions.</p>
1.2	<p>As the Chief Executive and Board, we are committed to implementing effectively the disability duties and this disability action plan. We will allocate all necessary resources (in terms of people, time and money) in order to implement effectively this plan and build appropriate objectives and targets relating to the disability duties into corporate and annual operating plans.</p> <p>We will also put internal arrangements in place to ensure that the disability duties are complied with and this disability action plan 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>The Utility Regulator is committed to consulting with people with disabilities in the implementation and any subsequent review of this plan. Responsibility for implementing, reviewing and evaluating this disability action plan will lie with:</p> <p>Name: Jenny Pyper Title: Chief Executive Address: Northern Ireland Authority for Utility Regulation</p>

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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.

1.3 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.

A copy of this plan, our annual progress to the Equality Commission and our five year review of this plan will be made available on our website www.uregni.gov.uk

1.4

Functions

Statutory Duties and Background

The Northern Ireland Authority for Utility Regulation (“Utility Regulator”) was first established in 1992, (known at that time as Offer NI) following privatisation of the Northern Ireland electricity industry. With the development of the natural gas industry, the Utility Regulator’s role was extended in 1996 to cover gas. From April 2007 we also became the economic and customer service regulator for Northern Ireland’s water and sewerage industries.

The Utility Regulator is a non-ministerial government department. It is not a policy-making department, however its role is to ensure that the utility industries in Northern Ireland are regulated and developed within the strategic policy parameters by Ministers. The Utility Regulator needs to maintain close contact and positive collaboration with a number of companies acting in the energy and water sectors. Equally we need such collaborations with governmental organisations, including those involved in the management of the environment and in the development of Northern Ireland's social and customer-facing policy and structures.

Principal Activities

The Utility Regulator exercises its broad range of functions in line with statutory duties set out in the Energy (Northern Ireland) Order 2003 as amended by Article 3 of the Water and Sewerage Services (Northern Ireland) Order 2006. Briefly, the Utility Regulator has a number of principal statutory objectives:

Water & Sewerage Sector:

- To protect the interests of consumers in relation to the supply of water by water undertakers and the provision of sewerage services by sewerage undertakers, wherever appropriate by facilitating effective competition between persons engaged in, or in commercial activities connected with, the supply of water and the provision of sewerage services;
- To secure that the functions of a water undertaker and of a sewerage undertaker are properly carried out as respects every area of Northern Ireland; and
- To secure that companies holding appointments as relevant undertakers are able (in particular, by securing reasonable returns on their capital) to finance the proper carrying out of the functions of such undertakers.

Electricity Industry:

To protect the interests of consumers of electricity supplied by authorised suppliers, wherever appropriate by promoting effective competition between persons engaged in, or in commercial activities connected with, the generation, transmission or supply of electricity.

Gas Industry:

To promote the development and maintenance of an efficient, economic and co-ordinated gas industry in Northern Ireland.

The Utility Regulator sets out in its Corporate Strategy and Annual Forward Work Programme its policy aims and objectives, and uses these statements/plans to further publicize the manner in which it intends to carry out its functions.

1.5

Public Life Positions

We are governed by a Board (“the Authority”), made up of a Chairman, five non-executive members and the Chief Executive. The Board is responsible for the overall strategic direction of the organisation and ensuring that it meets its legal obligations.

The Department of Finance (DoF) re-appointed Dr Bill Emery as Chairman of the Authority with effect from 1 July 2018 for a further five year term.

The Utility Regulator appointed Jenny Pyper as its Chief Executive and she took up post on 1 November 2013.

The non-executive members of the Board who commenced appointment for a period of three years effective from 1 January 2011 and re-appointed for a term of five years effective 1 January 2014 (as confirmed by DoF) are William Cargo and Richard Rodgers. Additional appointments of Teresa Perchard

for a period of 5 years, effective from 1 September 2013, and Jonathan Carlton and Alex Wiseman for a period of five years became effective from 1 November 2015.

2.

Previous Measures

Outlined below are the key measures, which the Utility Regulator has already taken to promote positive attitudes towards people with disabilities and encourage the participation of such people in public life.

- Promoting the services of the Utility Regulator and consulting with groups representing those with disabilities (voluntary & community sector groups), other public authorities and mainstream political parties
- Consulting with groups representing those with disabilities on how the Utility Regulator consults and engages with them and how improvements can be made
- Publishing accessible consultation documents
- Ensuring access requirements are made available for members of the public with disabilities to take part in public consultation
- Fully complying with the requirements of the Disability Discrimination Act and associated Codes of Practice
- Ensuring services and premises are fully accessible
- Providing alternative formats for publications on request
- Offering employment opportunities based on experience, rather than minimum academic qualifications
- Advertising positions widely (including organisational website) and including a welcome/positive action statement
- Supporting a two-year employment support placement for a disabled individual.

- Promoting disability awareness through a formal training programme attended by all staff and Board members
- Providing awareness training for staff members participating in recruitment & selection processes
- Discussing issues relating to Section 75 and disability discrimination with recognised trade union through joint negotiation and consultation arrangements
- Designating harassment advisors as part of discipline and grievance policies
- Designing a corporate style guide in respect of fonts etc for all corporate publications and letters which was issued to all staff
- Installing emergency evacuation chairs and training staff in their use
- Providing deaf awareness guidance to all staff and to new staff on induction.

3.

Action Measures

Outlined below are the measures which the Utility Regulator proposes to take over the period (2018-23) of this disability action plan, together with performance indicators or targets.

Measures	Timescale	Performance Indicators/target
<p>We will continue to develop and provide staff (and Board) awareness workshops with on-going equality training & specific guidance on disability equality legislation and awareness. Equality training will commence at induction stage and be continuous thereafter.</p> <p>Priority on the above workshop will be given to those staff engaged in recruitment panels and to those individuals dealing with consultation papers.</p>	<p>On-going</p>	<p>100% adherence of staff in post by the completion of the 5 year review period.</p>

<p>We will provide equality screening training for key staff.</p>	<p>Training was provided to key staff in 2014/15 and HR staff have attended refresher training on an ongoing basis. Key staff will attend refresher training in 2018/19.</p>	<p>Achieved - key staff are adequately trained and competent in the screening process outlined in the Utility Regulator's Equality Scheme (s75).</p>
<p>We will work with NIPSA to maintain training of at least one Harassment Officer.</p>	<p>On-going</p>	<p>Staff aware of independent Harassment Officer available of they feel they are needed.</p>
<p>We will train all existing and new staff on the Utility Regulator's revised Equality Scheme submitted to the Equality Commission in 2018</p>	<p>By 2020 and on-going.</p>	<p>100% adherence of staff in post by the completion of the 5 year review period.</p>
<p>We will continue to fulfil the role otherwise fulfilled by an Equality Working to discuss Section 75 & Disability Discrimination issues with Staff Representatives through the NIPSA Joint Negotiation and Consultation Committee</p>	<p>On-going</p>	<p>Part of TUS Staff Representatives remit.</p>
<p>We will keep under review internal and external communications processes and consider areas for improvement in accessibility for people with disabilities.</p>	<p>On-going</p>	<p>Revised Communication policy. New website and intranet launched in 2016 & 2017 respectively.</p>

<p>We will review our consultation procedures which will include consideration of how we consult with all kinds of consumers.</p>	<p>On-going</p>	<p>Review took place in 2012 and implemented thereafter.</p>
<p>We will continue to maintain our website to ensure conformity with Web Content Accessibility Guidelines.</p>	<p>On-going</p>	<p>New website launched 2016/17, meeting accessibility guidelines.</p>
<p>We will keep under review the accessibility of our communications and information.</p>	<p>On-going</p>	<p>New Communications Strategy launched in 2017.</p>
<p>We will review of accessibility of Organisational Communications Strategy. We will produce accessible corporate documents which will be available and up-to-date via the Intranet.</p>	<p>On-going</p>	<p>Organisational Communications Strategy 2017 in place. Staff Communications Policy and Procedure available on the Intranet. Awarded Crystal Mark for clarity of Corporate Strategy 2015-19.</p>
<p>When carry out an annual monitoring review of “personal details” profile of staff members, we will include a statement inviting staff who may have acquired a disability, to discuss the issue and any attendant matters confidentially with our Human Resources Department.</p>	<p>On-going</p>	<p>January 2017 exercise to fresh monitoring information on disability to ensure our statistical profile is up-to-date and reflective of current staff was carried out.</p>
<p>We will continue upon request, to provide publications from the Office in alternative formats, such as audiotape and Braille.</p>	<p>On-going</p>	<p>Feedback from consultees.</p>

<p>We will provide text service and sign language interpreters where required for our public meetings and consultation exercises.</p>	<p>On-going</p>	<p>Feedback from consultees.</p>
<p>We will continue to place positive action measures in recruitment & selection activities. Additional support will be provided to disabled candidates, e.g. sign language interpreters, note takers, additional time.</p>	<p>On-going</p>	<p>Feedback from candidates.</p>
<p>Evacu-chairs were installed for the building and training was provided for a group of staff. UR will maintain training of at least two staff.</p>	<p>On-going</p>	<p>Staff trained and aware of evacu-chairs.</p>
<p>We will continue to liaise with Autism Adult Service and maintain staff/manger training in Autism awareness</p>	<p>Ongoing</p>	<p>Complete all staff training and awareness delivered in 2016 and included in UR Health and Wellbeing programme. Support for staff member and line manager ongoing with Northern Trust HSCNI.</p>
<p>We will promote an open and inclusive culture in the Utility Regulator which displays respect for those with mental illness.</p>	<p>October Annual World Mental Health Day and on-going</p>	<p>Mental health awareness will be promoted in line with World Mental Health day and at least two activities or training throughout year.</p>
<p>We will engage with staff to make reasonable adjustments for staff suffering from mental health illness and seek specialist medical advice to support staff.</p>	<p>In response to individual cases.</p>	<p>Evidence of engagement with staff and specialist medical advice to inform decisions.</p>

<p>We will promote the services of the EAP Inspire and work with relevant health agencies to provide appropriate information about the prevalence of mental ill health in Northern Ireland, how this impacts on the workplace and the benefits of creating a mentally healthy, resilient workplace.</p>	<p>On-going</p>	<p>Provision of current information leaflets, display of posters and articles posted on the intranet. Promotion of current local and national initiatives- “Change Your Mind” campaign.</p>
<p>Mental health training will be provided for all staff and mandatory training for managers and at least 4 staff trained and accredited in mental health first aid.</p>	<p>2018 and on-going.</p>	<p>All staff and managers will receive appropriate training 2018 and refresher training at least every 3 years. Mindful Manager, First Aid and Resilience training delivered in year 1.</p>
<p>We will implement reasonable adjustment (RA) measures to recruitment & selection processes by inviting applicants to speak to us about required RA and providing training on RA duties to all employees involved in recruitment and selection.</p>	<p>By 2019 and on-going.</p>	<p>Staff sitting on selection panels training in RA duty.</p>
<p>We will provide training to all front-facing staff on disability etiquette and relevant legislation dealing with disability and the provision of goods and services. This training will give focus to customers dealing with mental ill health concerns.</p>	<p>By 2020 and on-going.</p>	<p>All Corporate Services and other staff involved with public consultations or dealing with calls from public will be provided with training.</p>

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CHAIR

CHIEF EXECUTIVE

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