

DISABILITY ACTION PLAN

OFFICE OF THE CERTIFICATION OFFICER NORTHERN IRELAND

Introduction

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 Office of the Certification Officer for Northern Ireland is required, when carrying out its functions, 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').

Under Section 49B of the DDA 1995, the Certification Office 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.

1.2 As Chairman and Chief Executive of the Labour Relations Agency, charged with responsibility for providing the statutory support for the Certification Officer for Northern Ireland, 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 where appropriate, build objectives and targets relating to the disability duties into corporate and annual operating plans.

We will also put appropriate 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 on the disability duties and the implementation of the plan.

1.3 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. The Office of the Certification Officer will also consult with disabled people when implementing and reviewing its plans.

Responsibility for implementing, reviewing and evaluating this disability action plan and the point of contact the Office of the Certification Officer will be:-

Name: Mr John Bennett
Title: Assistant Certification Officer
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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.

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.nicertoffice.org.uk

1.4 Functions

Outlined below is the range of functions of the Certification Officer

- Maintaining lists of trade unions and employers' associations, and determining the independence of trade unions;
- Ensuring that trade unions and employers' associations keep proper accounting records, have their accounts properly and independently audited and submit annual returns; investigating the financial affairs of trade unions and employers' associations; ensuring that statutory requirements concerning the appointment and duties of auditors and the actuarial examination of members' superannuation schemes are observed; and dealing with complaints that a trade union has failed in its duty to secure that positions in the union are not held by certain offenders.

- Dealing with complaints by members that a trade union has failed to permit access to its accounting records;
- Dealing with complaints by members that a trade union has failed to maintain an accurate register of members;
- Dealing with complaints by members that a trade union has failed to comply with one or more of the provisions of the 1995 Order requiring it to hold secret postal ballots for electing its president, general secretary and members of its executive committee;
- Ensuring observance by Northern Ireland based trade unions of the statutory procedures governing the setting up, operation and review of political funds, approving the “contracting-in” rule and amendments for Northern Ireland members of trade unions based elsewhere (including Great Britain and the Republic of Ireland), and dealing with complaints about breaches of political fund rules or the conduct of political fund ballots, or the application of general funds for political objects;
- Ensuring that the statutory procedures for amalgamations, transfers of engagements and changes of name of trade unions and employers’ associations are complied with, and dealing with complaints by members about the conduct of merger ballots; and
- Dealing with complaints by members that there has been a breach or threatened breach of the rules of a trade union relating to: the appointment or election of a person to, or removal of a person from, any office; disciplinary proceedings including expulsion; balloting of members (other than in respect of industrial action); and the constitution or proceedings of an executive committee or decision making meeting.

1.5 Public Life Positions

The Certification Officer is appointed by the Department for Employment and Learning, after consultation with the Labour Relations Agency. His is a quasi-judicial role independent of both.

He is supported by a complement of four Labour Relations Agency (LRA) staff.

The Certification Officer has no responsibility for public life positions. The Office of

the Certification Officer Northern Ireland has no public life positions.

2 Previous Measures

The Certification Officer's supporting staff is provided from the LRA, by virtue of Article 69 of The Industrial Relations (NI) Order 1992.

These staff are wholly covered by the policies and practices of the LRA and are located within the same building as the LRA. Key measures include interpreter provision and disabled access, provided through the LRA.

The Certification Officer/Office is not in a position to encourage the participation of disabled people in public life, as there is no scope for such any such appointment in the unique dedicated staffing provision.

3 Action Measures

Outlined below are the measures we propose to take over the period of this disability action plan (1 July 2007 to 30 June 2008), together with performance indicators or targets. We will update this plan on an annual basis and all plans will be included within the Five Year Review to the Equality Commission,

Measures to promote positive attitudes towards disabled people and encourage participation of disabled people.

Measure	Timescale Indicator/target	Performance
Provide training and guidance to staff on: <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Disability equality legislation • Disability awareness and duties • Disability Code of Practice on Employment and Occupation 	31 December 2007	Employee training provided
Post-training: Establish a feedback mechanism whereby a disabled person can raise concerns in circumstances where an employee has not displayed positive attitudes towards him/her.	31 December 2007	Feedback mechanism to be operational by completion of employee training
Ensure specialist training is provided for staff involved in recruitment and selection panels.	Ongoing	Course attendance
Support any staff with disabilities in respect of training & development needs & career development opportunities.	Ongoing	Ensure Certification Office has a record system of where and when disabled staff take up training and development opportunities
Review communication policies & procedures in conjunction with LRA review	Ongoing	Policies & procedures revised and in place
Access	Regular audits of access to Certification Office	Clear access

Signed by

Chair

Chief Executive