

# **DISABILITY ACTION PLAN**

Arts Council Northern Ireland

## **1.1 Introduction**

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 Arts Council of 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 Arts Council 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.

## **1.2**

The Arts Council of Northern Ireland is committed to implementing effectively the disability duties and this disability action plan. We will allocate resources (in terms of people, time and money) in order to implement 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 is effectively implemented. We will ensure the communication of

the plan to staff and provide the necessary training and guidance for staff on the disability duties and the implementation of the plan.

The Arts Council is committed to carrying out consultation in a meaningful manner in the development of its disability duties. In doing so the Arts Council is keen to bring about change for disabled people and we are therefore focusing on the issue of involvement and participation in preparing the Plan.

The following groups have agreed to be involved in the development of our Disability Action Plan. We have given them a choice on the level and method of their involvement.

- Steer Mental Health
- Mencap
- RNID
- Blind Centre/RNIB
- Adapt NI
- Open Arts
- the Arts and Disability Forum
- Artability
- the Arts for Older People Network
- Magherafelt Disability Forum

Several of the above are Arts Council clients and all are groups with which the Council has built up a good working relationship. In addition to the above we will also work towards involving individuals who deal with the Arts Council on disability issues, whether this is as artists, audience members or project participants.

In accordance with the recommendations in the Section 75 Guide, an executive summary of the Disability Plan will be sent to all consultees on our consultation list so they can decide whether or not they would like to obtain the full document or respond to the consultation. People on the consultation list who request alternative formats will be given information in the format of their choice.

Responsibility for implementing, reviewing and evaluating this Disability Action Plan and the point of contact within the Arts Council will be:

Amanda Leighton  
Research and Policy Officer  
MacNeice House  
77 Malone Road  
Belfast BT9 6AQ

Tel: 028 9038 5242  
Fax: 028 9066 1715  
Email: [aleighton@artscouncil-ni.org](mailto:aleighton@artscouncil-ni.org)  
Textphone: 18001 028 9038 5200  
Website: [www.artscouncil-ni.org](http://www.artscouncil-ni.org)

Following submission to the Equality Commission for Northern Ireland this Plan will be available in alternative formats, including large print, in Braille, on audio cassette, easy read, and computer disc. It will also be available as a download from our website. Please contact the above person to discuss your requirements.

### 1.3

The Arts Council of Northern Ireland confirms its commitment to submitting an annual progress report on the implementation of this plan to the Equality Commission and to carrying out, in 2012, a five year review of progress using the information submitted to the Equality Commission over the review period. A formal report of progress on meeting the objectives relating to the disability duties will be included in the Arts Council's annual report.

A copy of this plan, our annual progress to the Equality Commission and our five year review of plans will be made available on our website [www.artscouncil-ni.org](http://www.artscouncil-ni.org)

## 1.4 Functions

Outlined below is the range of functions of the Arts Council.

The Arts Council of Northern Ireland is a statutory body through which public funding for the arts is channeled. The functions of the Arts Council are:

- to develop and improve the knowledge, appreciation and practice of the arts;
- to increase public access to, and participation in, the arts;
- to encourage and assist: (i) the provision of arts facilities and events; and (ii) co-ordination and efficient use of resources for the arts;
- to assist the provision of administrative services and training for or by any body providing facilities for, or in connection with the arts;
- to advise the Department of Culture, Arts and Leisure and other government departments, local government and other bodies on matters relating to the arts and such other functions as are conferred on the Council by any other statutory provision.

In addition, the Arts Council has statutory functions under the National Lottery etc. Act 1993 and subsequent amending legislation. In performing its functions, the Arts Council's role can be summarised as follows:

- to allocate funds made available by central government and the National Lottery for the arts;
- to advocate the causes of the arts to central and local government and the public generally;
- to advise the public and private sector on artistic matters;
- to assist artists and arts-activists.

The Arts Council consists of 15 members appointed by the Minister of Culture, Arts and Leisure and is supported by a number of advisory

committees. The committees comprise Council members and co-opted members. The committees are:

- Audit
- Acquisitions
- Finance
- Lottery, Grants & Capital
- North/South
- Remuneration and Staffing
- Strategy

The Arts Council's mission statement is "to place the arts at the heart of our social, economic and creative life". This is stated in the Arts Council's five year strategy document 'Creative Connections' [2007 - 2012]. Supporting the work of the Council are the various departments within the Arts Council.

### Arts Development Department

The Department is led by an Arts Development Director and a Director of Operations. The main activity of the department is the administration of the Council's grant funding schemes for a range of artforms and practices which include: Visual Arts and Crafts; Architecture and Public Art; Community Arts; Literature and Language Arts; Youth Arts; Music; Traditional Arts; Drama and Dance; Voluntary Arts; Disability and Health. Specialist officers work closely with clients in developing the above sectors.

The Communications team helps promote the activities of the Council and its clients to the wider public. It has responsibility for the production of the Council's publications both printed and web based.

### Strategic Development Department

The Department is led by the Director of Strategic Development and has primary responsibility for the development of the 5-year

(Strategic) Arts Plan; 3–year (Corporate) Plan and the Annual Business Plan. The Department develops and implements the Council’s research programme, the outputs of which help determine future policy and direction. It leads on lobbying and advocacy work on behalf of the Council and the sector.

The Department is also responsible for overseeing the Council’s compliance with statutory requirements, for promoting inter-agency co-operation.

### Corporate Services Department

The Department is led by the Director of Corporate Services and provides administrative support across the organisation including finance, personnel and training, IT support and systems development and estates services. The Department is also responsible for servicing the Council and its Committees throughout the year.

## **1.5 Public Life Positions**

We do not have direct control over public life positions.

## **2. Previous Measures**

The Arts Council has already taken a number of measures to promote positive attitudes towards disabled people and encourage the participation of disabled people in public life.

The Arts Council works from the perspective of the social model of disability. This understands disability as a problem of exclusion from everyday life, requiring a change in society's values and practices in order to remove attitudinal and environmental barriers to participation. The Arts Council works in partnership with, and takes

advice from, disabled people. We see disability as an equality and inclusion issue. We carry out strategic development work in the Arts & Disability sector and we support measures towards universal accessibility, in recognition that changes made for disabled people impact positively on the whole population.

Arts & Disability is a general term to cover a broad range of arts practice embracing artwork by people with disabilities and activities involving disabled people as artists, participants and audience members. This approach is inclusive and aims to involve all sections of the community.

Disability Arts is a specific form of arts practice where disabled artists create work that reflects their identity and experience as disabled people.

Whilst the Arts Council primarily connects with Arts & Disability practice, we recognise the value and principles of Disability Arts practice. Although the Arts & Disability sector is still evolving, the Arts Council has made substantial investment to create new opportunities for disabled people involvement in the arts on their own terms, as artists, audience members, project participants and arts sector employees.

ACNI recognises that a high proportion of older people are disabled and that attitudinal and environmental barriers may adversely affect their engagement in the arts.

- Several Arts & Disability organisations are now regularly funded for core costs and a range of organisations have gained project funding for Arts & Disability projects through Arts Council lottery schemes.
- A three-year Accessibility Fund has enabled many arts venues to improve disability access.

- A Premium Payment of up to £3,000 each year per successful applicant organisation has improved Section 75 related access, with most of the money allocated to disability access.
- We have supported the Arts & Disability Equality Charter, a 'kite-marking' project developed by disabled people to encourage and reward arts venue practice that is inclusive of disabled people at all levels.
- We are about to launch a publication that is the result of commissioned research into barriers to disabled people's involvement in the arts. The research has produced a wide range of supportive evidence and a baseline to measure progress over subsequent years. The research surveyed 500 people and findings highlighted the following issues:
  - *Physical Barriers*  
The ease and cost of getting to and from the venue was viewed as a barrier by approximately a quarter of respondents. This means that disabled people either have to rely on family members to transport them, which can impact on their independence, or they have to rely on taxis and hence cost becomes an impediment to participation.
  - *Economic Barriers*  
Given that a high proportion of disabled people claim benefits, the cost of transport and parking impacts on the frequency of participation in the arts.
  - *Information/Awareness barriers*  
Access to information was shown to have an impact on identifying suitable arts events to attend. Observations were made that advertisements for events rarely state provision for people with disabilities.

- The Council, working with the Arts Council An Chomairle Ealaíon in the Republic of Ireland to establish a grant fund for individual disabled artists (the Arts & Disability Awards Ireland scheme). The two funding bodies have collaboratively encouraged the development of theatre captioning services; and developed a website giving Arts & Disability information for the island of Ireland.
- The Arts Council has supported Adapt NI to develop a training course for arts venue staff.
- The Arts Council is committed to effective communication with the public and strives to ensure that all of its services are available to the whole public, including disabled people. Events or conferences managed by the Arts Council, will provide delegates with information on individual access requirements, including communication support and access to information as well as physical access. Signage for the Arts Council's public events complies with advice on accessibility and legibility. Venues used for such events will include a loop system and are generally chosen for high levels of access.
- The Arts Council is a member of the Employers Forum on Disability and our staff members attend the Forum's briefing and training sessions.
- The Arts Council has a designated officer for Arts & Disability, to carry out specialist arts development work. This ensures that work by and with disabled people is represented in publications, websites, conferences, seminars and showcase events. The remit of the designated officer also includes arts by, with and for older people

### 3 **Action Measures**

The Arts Council intends to continue with the areas of work described under the heading 'Section 2 Previous Measures', unless the action described has now been completed, or unless funding for a particular scheme has now ended.

The following are the additional measures which the Arts Council intends to implement, over the period of this Disability Action Plan (June 2007 to May 2008), together with performance indicators or targets. All plans will be included in the Five Year Review to the Equality Commission.

<b>Action Measure</b>	<b>Performance Indicator</b>	<b>Time frame</b>	<b>Responsibility</b>
Publish and promote the disability equality scheme	Disability Action Plan posted on website and made available in a number of alternative formats	February 2008	Strategic Development
Produce an annual report in line with statutory requirements	Annual Report with formal report on progress against Disability Duties	November 2007	Strategic Development
Provide training on the disability duties to all staff. Training to be delivered by an appropriately skilled and experienced disabled trainer.	Increased awareness of disability equality issues amongst staff	2008	Corporate Services

Induction training for new staff to include equality awareness training on duties under Section 75 of the Northern Ireland Act and on the new disability duties.	Increased awareness of disability equality issues amongst staff	Ongoing	Arts Development/Strategic Development
Provide specialist training for line managers and Board members	Council is more informed on disability matters	2008	Corporate Services
ACNI will continue to work closely with third party training providers, such as Adapt NI, to encourage the development and take-up of disability-related training for and by arts venues	Increased awareness of disability issues amongst Arts Council clients.	ACNI will continue to facilitate ongoing programme	Arts Development
Ensure that our clients and other organisations promote positive attitudes towards disabled people by adopting principles, conditions, and	Require funded groups to adopt the principles of the duty by making it a condition of grant.	March 2008	Arts Development

policies that meet the duties outlined in the legislation.			
Review external and internal communication policies, practices and procedures from a disability equality perspective.	Ensure all communication activity takes account of disability equality	Ongoing	Communications
Review and amend ACNI S75 screening pro-forma to reflect new disability duties	Better promotion of equality for disabled people	Ongoing	Strategic Development
Continue to use and review statistical analysis to identify areas of performance that need improving, including client performance	A strong evidence base highlighting where disabled customers experience barriers to the arts.	Ongoing	Strategic Development
ACNI will 'disability proof' Artform policies to ensure no aspect of these discriminates against people with disabilities	Artform policies and grant schemes proofed for disability equality.	Ongoing	Strategic Development

<p>ACNI will undertake an evaluation of the Premium Payment Scheme to review its effectiveness and uptake of this Scheme and make recommendations</p>	<p>Evaluation of Premium Payment Scheme</p>	<p>March 2008</p>	<p>Strategic Development</p>
<p>Formulate a dedicated unit of questions for inclusion in the 2008/09 R.F.O. survey</p>	<p>Evidence bases that can be used to develop future policies</p>	<p>2008</p>	<p>Strategic Development</p>
<p>The Arts Council will continue to recommend the appointment of suitably qualified and experienced independent access consultants for all Arts Council funded capital projects .</p>	<p>Improved physical access to buildings by adopting BS8300. Following good practice through achieving excellence as set by OGC.</p>	<p>On commencement of project and at the end of each of the design stages a review will be carried out by an access auditor.</p>	<p>Arts Development /Capital project officer</p>