



Annual Report 2005-2006

Chairperson's Statement

Achievements and Performance

During this year Disability Action (NI) provided services that directly supported over 40,000 people throughout Northern Ireland. Highlights include the provision of 35,048 passenger door-to-door trips, supporting 581 people on employment related programmes and responding to over 18,500 information requests. The company has continued to lobby statutory organisations in order to develop policy and has responded to 155 consultations which will have a positive impact on disabled people's lives.

Financial Review

Net incoming resources for the year ended 31 March 2006 were £54,643 represent an increase of £11,628 over 2004/2005.

The main source of income was government grants but the 2005/2006 results show a continuing trend of increases in the non grant element of overall income. This reflects both success in the development of social economy activity and increasing Government commitment to the tendering out of services.

Future Plans

In 2006/7 Disability Action will be celebrating 20 years of providing a high level of service to people with disabilities. We will continue to work towards our corporate objectives in order to create a fully inclusive society for people with disabilities throughout Northern Ireland.

A major initiative for Disability Action in the immediate future will be the development of a Centre on Human Rights of Disabled People. This is designed to empower disabled people to access their human rights and there by enhance their overall self-confidence and contribution to society.

Ken Roulston
Chairperson

Services and Projects Updates

Access

Following the implementation of the Disability Discrimination Act Part III, the Access Unit continues to increase awareness and influence attitudes amongst those who have responsibility for the design and management of the built environment. Recent projects undertaken include a major review of progress made by the various Health & Social Services Boards, Trusts and Agencies towards compliance with the access provisions of the DDA. During the combined local and Westminster elections of May 2005 the Access Unit undertook a 'Polls Apart' survey of access to the electoral system.

Members

We continue to work with our members, gathering opinion on issues that affect people with disabilities in Northern Ireland. Disability Action's new website now has a members section which aims to enable members to share knowledge and keep up-to-date with developments in the sector.

Information & Policy

The Policy and Information Unit continues to provide a valuable service to customers. The number of queries rose to over 18,500, 3,000 more than in the previous year. Information requests ranged from holiday information to rights under the Disability Discrimination Act. Almost half of the queries received related to customers seeking information on benefit entitlement or seeking assistance with an existing claim. Information Officers assisted claimants to obtain in excess of £1 Million of benefit payment.

Career Advancement Programme

Year 2 of the CAP commenced in October 2005 with 30 participants. In the second year of this programme all 30 participants are on target to achieve at least one accredited qualification in either ICT or Personal Development. Qualifications being worked towards are a City and Guilds Personal Development Award Level 2, and British Computer Society qualifications Equalskills and ECDL.

Transport Service

Disability Action's Group Transport Service completed 991 journeys throughout the reporting period and carried 8,076 passengers. 35,048 door-to-door transport trips were completed throughout Belfast. The extension of the service to South and East Belfast has meant an increase in the number of journeys overall.

Mobility Centre

This year has seen a considerable increase in the volume of assessments undertaken by the Mobility Centre. We are now completing on average 750 assessments per year. Our driving school is being developed and we are trying to cover most regions of Northern Ireland. We undertook 745 lessons this year and we are hoping to double this figure for the 2006-2007 year.

Employment Support

Ongoing demand for Employment Support places in the year 2005-2006 saw increased recruitment when the programme was reopened to referrals. The average number of employees supported during 2005-2006 was 180. Disability Action ensured that the views of service users were represented in consultations on issues which affect their lives, particularly this year in terms of NI Civil Service recruitment. Across the year staff have been working with a high number of complex and challenging legal issues, making employers

Training Support

The Training Support caseload at the end of March 2006 was 390 with 297 new trainees referred to the Training Support Service and supported during the period April 2005 – March 2006. The Training Support Service plays a key role in meeting the needs of disabled people participating in mainstream training. Using a focused individual approach, a range of support is offered to trainees when starting, participating and on leaving Jobskills. The range of support can include benefit information and advice, placement support and exit options. Staff offer individual support covering a wide range of interpersonal development work. 37% of trainees secured employment or moved onto further training on leaving Jobskills.

Support Works

Support Works provides support to 30 trainees with complex support needs participating in mainstream training across Northern Ireland. During the year participants achieved a range of qualifications, including Essential Skills Level 1 Literacy and Numeracy, Word Processing Level 1, ASDAN Workright certificate, and the CITB Health & Safety certificate. 4 trainees progressed to NVQ level 2 and 2 have gained employment. Staff have also worked with the Training Support team to develop a Best Practice Guide for practitioners working with young people with disabilities.

Work Preparation Programme

Disability Action has been delivering the Work Preparation Programme in the Derry and Strabane Targeted Initiative areas since September 2004. During the reporting period 30 participants completed the programme. Seven were successful in gaining employment and another 13 benefited from the training with positive outcomes including voluntary work and further training. All participants benefited from personal development and capacity building.

Community Development

Community Development's main activity was the establishment of the Step-ability Partnership. The objective of the partnership is to develop a support structure to enable people with disabilities and their carers to avail of opportunities to develop their educational and training skills. The Unit also worked in partnership with the Anti-Poverty Network to carry out a consultation on poverty and disability, the findings of which were presented by two representatives from the Disability Alliance in London to a UK wide conference.

Diversity Works

Key success for the period was the establishment of an effective team and the maintenance of a successful partnership. The participation of three employers in the diversity management pilot and the five community based groups is also key to the future success of the programme. Diversity Works as the secretariat, has established a leadership role within the transnational partnership.

Focus Consultancy

Training delivery has continued strongly during the year, with a major training programme being delivered Belfast City Council. Training was delivered to approximately 1,400 people across Northern Ireland. A new e-learning project for Diversity training is under development, with the aim of having a fully developed training programme in place by the end of 2007. Disability Awareness Training remains the most popular course in Focus's portfolio of training needs.

Fundraising

Fundraising highlights during this period included the Gala Ball at the Europa Hotel in February. The event was sponsored by Northgate Information Systems and raised £25,000. A number of challenge events were also held, notably two sponsored Tandem Skydives and a Firewalk. Collectively these events raised £16,000. During this period Disability Action was nominated as Ulster Bank Staff Charity Fund, Charity of the Year and a Mobile Assessment Unit was purchased by the Fund at a cost of £43,000.

Contact Us:

Disability Action

Portside Business Park

189 Airport Road West

Belfast

marketing@disabilityaction.org

BT3 9ED

Telephone: 028 9029 7880

Texphone: 028 9029 7882

Fax: 028 9029 7881

Email:

Website: www.disabilityaction.org

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