

Northern Ireland Assembly Disability Monitor



MONDAY 2 NOVEMBER 2009

**Centre on Human Rights for
People with Disabilities**

**For further information, please contact Hannah Russell,
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A. Last Week's Assembly Business

- **Assembly was in recess 26 October to 2 November 2009**

B. This Week's Assembly Business

- **Committee for Employment and Learning: Briefing from the Royal National Institute for Blind People**
- **Committee for Social Development: Fuel Poverty**

C. Written Answers to Questions, Week ending 30th October 2009

CULTURE, ARTS AND LEISURE

- **Blind and Partially-Sighted People**
- **Blind and Partially-Sighted People**

EMPLOYMENT AND LEARNING

- **Autism**

ENVIROMENT

- **Blind and Partially-Sighted People**
- **Blind and Partially-Sighted People**

FINANCE AND PERSONNEL

- **Partially-Sighted and Blind People**

HEALTH, SOCIAL SERVICES AND PUBLIC SAFETY

- **Diabetes**
- **Asthma**
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SOCIAL DEVELOPMENT

- **Disabled Facilities for NI Housing Executive Tenants**
- **Disability Living Allowance**

B This Week's Assembly Business

Wednesday 4 November 2009

Committee for Employment and Learning

Briefing from the Royal National Institute for Blind People. In attendance:

- Bernie Jenkins, Campaigns Officer
- Barry Macaulay, Senior Manager for Campaigns, Education and Sport
- A representative of Eye Matter

Thursday 5 November 2009

Committee for Social Development

Fuel Poverty – Assembly Research and Library Services Briefing

C Written Answers to Questions, Week Ending 30 October 2009

CULTURE, ARTS AND LEISURE

Blind and Partially-Sighted People

PJ Bradley (SDLP) asked the Minister of Culture, Arts and Leisure what steps have been, or will be, taken by his Department to ensure that the same level of service is provided to blind and partially-sighted people as that provided to fully-sighted people. (AQW 1986/10)

Minister of Culture, Arts and Leisure: The Department of Culture, Arts and Leisure is committed to Promoting Social Inclusion and removing the barriers which exist that exclude people from full participation in the culture, arts and leisure sector.

DCAL has developed corporate guidance on producing information in accessible formats. In ensuring equality of opportunity in accessing information, the guidance refers specifically to people with sensory and learning disabilities and commits my Department to providing documents on request, in alternative formats. DCAL's internet site is also enabled with Browsealoud software. This software reads web pages aloud for people who have difficulty reading on line.

The Department of Culture, Arts and Leisure is represented on the Accessibility & Inclusion Priority Action Group, chaired by the Royal National Institute of Blind People (RNIB), tasked with taking forward some of the key components of the UK Vision Strategy. As a result of this engagement a number of key personnel from my department will undertake RNIB training during November in appropriate communication techniques for the blind and partially sighted population.

Blind and Partially-Sighted People

Peter Weir (DUP) asked the Minister of Culture, Arts and Leisure what provision is made by his Department to make documents accessible to blind and partially-sighted people.(AQW 2115/10)

Minister of Culture, Arts and Leisure: The DCAL Equality Scheme sets out how the Department of Culture, Arts and Leisure proposes to fulfil its obligations under Section 75 of the Northern Ireland Act 1998. The Department of Culture, Arts and Leisure is committed under the scheme to ensure that the information and services that DCAL provides are made as accessible and equitable as possible.

To support this commitment the Department of Culture, Arts and Leisure has developed a staff Guide to Making Information Accessible. The purpose of this Guide is to strive to achieve best practice in ensuring that DCAL business areas provide a diverse range of customers, stakeholders and citizens with accessible information as quickly and effectively as possible.

The Guide recognises the needs of blind or partially sighted people and commits to providing documents in a wide range of alternative formats such as large print, Braille and audio alternative formats.

EMPLOYMENT AND LEARNING

Autism

Paul Butler (Sinn Fein) asked the Minister for Employment and Learning what plans he has to develop a strategy for people with autism (i) to allow them to gain access to employment; (ii) to train Social Security and Jobs and Benefits staff to understand and meet the needs of people with autism; and (iii) to ensure that the new Employment and Support Allowance is not failing people with autism. (AQW 1859/10)

Minister for Employment and Learning: In responding to this question from Paul Butler, the Department for Employment and Learning has responsibility for delivering the Employment Service, mainly through its staff in the Jobs and Benefits Offices throughout Northern Ireland. The Department for Social Development, through its staff in the Social Security Agency has responsibility for administering the new Employment Support Allowance.

(1) The Department for Employment and Learning is aware of the employment needs of all its customers with disabilities including those with Autistic Spectrum Disorder. The Department administers the Pathways to Work programme which is an innovative approach to helping people with health conditions and disabilities including those with Autistic Syndrome Disorder. The programme is a work focused approach delivered by specially trained Advisers who help new claimants on Incapacity Benefit and Employment and Support Allowance to consider their work options and provides the help and support they require to seek and obtain appropriate employment. This programme is also available on a voluntary basis to those already in receipt of Incapacity Benefit. Pathways to Work eligible customers may also volunteer to participate in the Department's Steps to Work Programme.

The Department for Employment and Learning's Disablement Advisory Service (DAS) provides a range of employment programmes to meet the needs of individuals with disabilities, including Autistic Spectrum Disorder. These include Access to Work (NI), Workable (NI), New Deal for Disabled People, Job Introduction Scheme, Work Preparation Programme and Condition Management Programme.

With regard to the DAS programmes listed above, the particular programme that is appropriate for each individual is discussed and agreed with a Pathways Personal Adviser based in local Jobs and Benefits Offices/Jobcentres across Northern Ireland.

(2) All of the Pathways Advisers are trained in Disability Awareness and indeed, Autistic Syndrome Disorder is specifically covered as part of the training programme they undergo before commencing work as an Adviser. This training is delivered by Occupational Psychologists from the Occupational Psychology Service Team who, together with a team of Disability Programme Managers, provide ongoing advice, support and assistance to the Pathways Advisers.

For its part, the Social Security Agency delivers training to its frontline staff as part of a mandatory customer service training for all staff to help meet the needs of its wide range of customer groups. Additional training in dealing with people who have a disability is provided for

staff working in areas such as the Disability and Carers Service and the Employment and Support Allowance Centre through Disability Action. The Agency cannot provide training for staff within Social Security Offices and Jobs and Benefits Offices in how to deal with specific disabilities due to the prohibitive level of funding required to implement this.

(3) The Social Security Agency provides a range of channels for those who need to access Employment and Support Allowance these include a telephony service, clerical claim forms, face to face service for vulnerable customers who need assistance, as well as the opportunity for a nominated representative to be appointed to engage on behalf of a vulnerable customer.

In conclusion, DEL's employment programmes and services are delivered on a pan-disability basis and are open to people with a wide range of disabilities, including ASD. DEL will continue to monitor and evaluate programmes and services to ensure the continued provision of a valuable and professional service to all of the disabled clients who are seeking help to find and retain employment.

ENVIROMENT

Blind and Partially-Sighted People

Peter Weir (DUP) asked the Minister of the Environment what provision is made by his Department to make documents accessible to blind and partially-sighted people. (AQW 2045/10)

Minister of the Environment: The Department of Environment, under Section 49B of the Disability Discrimination Act 1995 (DDA), submitted a Disability Action Plan to the Equality Commission for Northern Ireland which shows how it is fulfilling the duties provided in the DDA. The Department, in consultation with various representative groups from the disability sector, produced a 'Guide to Making Information Accessible' for staff which helps to ensure that information provided to the public is available in a range of formats which meet the needs of people with disabilities. This Guide is

reviewed annually which includes consultation with those groups who represent blind and partially sighted people.

The Department of Environment includes on all its publications the statement that 'this document is available in alternative formats, please contact us to discuss your requirements'. The Department, on request, can produce documents in Braille, Digital Daisy and large print formats to meet the needs of blind and partially sighted people. It can also produce tactile maps, plans and diagrams.

The Departmental of Environment website is designed to meet central government standards covering both accessibility and presentation. In accessibility terms this means it complies with the World Wide Web Consortium (W3C) guidelines.

Blind and Partially-Sighted People

PJ Bradley (SDLP) asked the Minister of the Environment what steps have been, or will be, taken by his Department to ensure that the same level of service is provided to blind and partially-sighted people as that provided to fully-sighted people. (AQW 2086/10)

Minister of the Environment: The Department of Environment, under Section 49B of the Disability Discrimination Act 1995 (DDA 1995), submitted a Disability Action Plan to the Equality Commission for Northern Ireland which shows how it is fulfilling the duties provided in the DDA. The Department, in consultation with various representative groups from the disability sector, has produced a 'Guide to Making Information Accessible' for staff which helps to ensure that information provided to the public is available in a range of formats which meet the needs of people with disabilities. This guide is reviewed annually.

The Department of Environment includes on all its publications the statement 'this document is available in alternative formats; please contact us to discuss your requirements'. The Department of Environment, on request, can produce documents in Braille, Digital Daisy, audio and large print formats to meet the needs of blind and partially sighted people. It can also produce tactile maps, plans and diagrams. The Departmental website is designed to meet central government standards covering both accessibility and presentation.

In accessibility terms this means it complies with the World Wide Web Consortium (W3C) guidelines and offers Browsealoud service which converts text to speech.

Planning Service has made available an official to visit a visually impaired member of the public to explain the policy implication of a planning document to note any concerns raised and record any comments offered. Planning Service has undertaken public information days to help explain new policies in a draft Planning Policy Statement and has used workshops and other external arrangements to draw in the views of the public and the community sector including representatives of disability groups.

The Department of Environment also provides funding to Disability Action for the administration of two schemes: The Access Service which provides technical advice and information towards the creation of a built environment which is accessible to everyone; and Community Access Grants Scheme which helps to improve access to existing facilities provided by voluntary and community organisations for people with disabilities.

To ensure that people with disabilities have equal access to private hire vehicle services at no additional cost, the Department introduced the Disability Discrimination (Private Hire Vehicles) (Carrying of Guide Dogs etc) Regulations (NI) 2008 which requires licensed private hire vehicle drivers and operators to permit the carrying of an assistance dog without additional charge when it accompanies a disabled person. Legislation is currently being prepared which will place a legal duty on drivers of public service buses to assist people with disabilities, including the visually impaired, to board and alight from the bus.

NI Environment Agency has produced Mediascapes voice over scripts for several of its Parks. It hopes to launch these on the Mediascapes web-site in the near future to allow downloads from the site to GPS compatible mobile phones.

FINANCE AND PERSONNEL

Partially-Sighted and Blind People

Peter Weir (DUP) asked the Minister of Finance and Personnel what provision is made by his Department to make documents accessible to partially sighted and blind people. (AQW 1922/10)

Minister of Finance and Personnel: All of the Department of Finance and Personnel's publications are available in alternative formats, including Braille and large print, upon request.

HEALTH, SOCIAL SERVICES AND PUBLIC SAFETY

Diabetes

Sue Ramsey (Sinn Fein) asked the Minister of Health, Social Services and Public Safety if the Health and Social Care Trusts have any plans to introduce a managed clinical network for diabetes. (AQW 1536/10)

Minister of Health, Social Services and Public Safety: A regional paediatric diabetes clinical network is in place and the Western HSC Trust has also introduced a managed clinical network for adults with diabetes. There are no current plans for other adult networks at this time.

The development of further networks will be a matter for the HSC Board to take forward in conjunction with the relevant Trusts.

Asthma

Alastair Ross (DUP) asked the Minister of Health, Social Services and Public Safety how many people are currently diagnosed with asthma. (AQW 1751/10)

Minister of Health, Social Services and Public Safety: The total number of GP-registered patients recorded on the asthma disease register of the Quality & Outcomes Framework (QOF) of the General Medical Services contract, as at 31 March 2009 is given in Table 1.

Table 1: Number of patients on the asthma disease register.

	Number of patients on Asthma Register ¹
As at 31 March 2009	104,527

Source: Payment Calculation and Analysis System (PCAS).

¹The QOF asthma register is defined as those patients with asthma, excluding patients with asthma who have been prescribed no asthma-related drugs in the previous 12 months.

Asthma

Alastair Ross (DUP) asked the Minister of Health, Social Services and Public Safety how many asthma clinics currently operate in Northern Ireland. (AQW 1752/10)

Minister of Health, Social Services and Public Safety: Information on the number of asthma clinics currently operating in Northern Ireland is not available.

Asthma

Alastair Ross (DUP) asked the Minister of Health, Social Services and Public Safety how many people diagnosed with asthma currently attend an asthma clinic. (AQW 1753/10)

Minister of Health, Social Services and Public Safety: Information on the number of people diagnosed with asthma that currently attend an asthma clinic is not available.

SOCIAL DEVELOPMENT

Disabled Facilities for NI Housing Executive Tenants

Jim Shannon (DUP) asked the Minister for Social Development (i) how many applications have there been for disabled facilities for NI

Housing Executive tenants; and (ii) how much money was allocated for this purpose, in each of the last three years. (AQW 1764/10)

Minister for Social Development: The number of adaptations for disabled facilities for Housing Executive tenants and the amount of expenditure for these adaptations in each of the last three years is as follows:

2006/07 –

Number of adaptations 7498
Total expenditure £14m

2007/08 -

Number of adaptations 6416
Total expenditure £16.4m

2008/09 -

Number of adaptations 5602
Total expenditure £16.9m

The Housing Executive allocates resources for disabled facilities in response to demand and in line with need.

Disability Living Allowance

Lord Morrow (DUP) asked the Minister for Social Development how many people currently in receipt of Disability Living Allowance are (i) alcohol dependent; and (ii) drug addicted, in each constituency. (AQW 1960/10)

Minister for Social Development: The information is not available in the format requested. Data is published on a Northern Ireland wide basis on what is known as the main disabling conditions for DLA recipients at <http://www.dsdni.gov.uk/index/publications/dla.htm>. However, it cannot be deduced from these figures how many customers are in receipt of DLA due to dependency upon alcohol or addiction to drugs. Entitlement to this benefit is not dependent on a

diagnosis or medical condition but relies instead on the care and/or mobility needs arising.