

Changing The Future



Disability Action's Strategic Plan 2008 - 2013



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Message From The Board

Disability Action's Board recognises the challenges we will face over the life of this strategy. The dynamic and ever-changing environment of the community and voluntary sector challenges us to steer the organisation through a raft of specific and general strategies, key of which are the further Review of Public Administration, the Programme for Government and Budget and the welcome return of devolved government.

The key challenge in all of these areas is the need to embed disability issues in the mainstream of policy, practice and provision and to provide disabled people with increasing opportunities to contribute their views and experiences to assist in the building of a fair and inclusive Northern Ireland society.

For too long disabled people have been seen as objects of charity to be given to, rather than having the opportunity to give. This strategy will see us build “unlikely” alliances, recognising how issues of diversity and multiple identity effect everything we do and will see us continue to support disabled people to speak for themselves. As we move into the second decade of the 21st Century we will support disabled people to increasingly demand that their rights are recognised, respected and met.

We look forward to working with disabled people, their families and supporters, our board, our members, central and local Government, the private and NGO Sectors and in particular with our staff, our most valuable resource in delivering this innovative and exciting plan.

Background

Disability Action is a pioneering Northern Ireland charity, working with and for people with disabilities. Now in our twenty second year, we work with our members to provide information, training, transport, awareness programmes and representation for people regardless of their disability, whether that is a physical, mental, sensory, hidden or learning disability.

More than one in five (300,000) people in Northern Ireland has a disability and the incidence of disability has traditionally been higher here than in the rest of the United Kingdom. Over one quarter of all families here are affected by disability issues.

As a campaigning body, we work to bring about positive change to the social, economic, political and cultural life of people with disabilities and consequently our entire community. Our range of services is provided from a network of four local offices, with 85 staff and 250 volunteers.

Our Mission

Disability Action works to ensure that people with disabilities attain their full rights as citizens by:

- Supporting Inclusion
- Changing Attitudes
- Influencing Government Policy

These comprise the corporate objectives of the organisation to which we have added another internally focussed objective which is:

- Organisational Development

Our Values

The core values of Disability Action centre around respect for the dignity and individuality of disabled people and are:

- Supporting the rights and inclusion of disabled people.
- Identifying and addressing unmet needs.
- Ensuring that the principles of accessibility, equity and integrity underpin all our work.
- Recognising diversity as a strength.
- Seeking ways of working with others in a range of partnerships.
- Being accountable to our stakeholders.
- Providing and promoting cultures where staff/volunteers are respected, supported and feel valued.
- Continuously improving all aspects of organisational performance and practice.

Strategic Review

As part of our review of the last plan, our Mission Vision and Values statements were examined to test their applicability to the 2008/13 plan. This examination took the form of staff group and manager meetings and discussions with a sample of member groups and key stakeholders.

Discussion on the mission statement focussed on whether there was a need:

- To advocate for families and carers as well as disabled people.
- To focus on issues of citizenship rather than solely on disability.
- To introduce equality and inclusion as key elements of our work.
- To simplify our language.
- To formally refer to a partnership working approach.

SWOT

An assessment of the organisation's **Strengths** centred around people – our members, staff, committees, volunteers and supporters; our knowledge and technical expertise; the focus on issues, not specific impairments; our direct contact with hundreds of disabled individuals and their families; our contacts/networks and our strong reputation and brand.

Opportunities identified included beginning to move to a rights based approach to service delivery; the legislative framework on equality and human rights; the increasing demands of disabled people and their families; changing government strategies; and a growing recognition of the issue of multiple identity.

Weaknesses included an over reliance on statutory funding; the restrictions imposed by the external environment; our limited attractiveness to non-statutory funders; while **Threats** centred on the outturn of the Review of Public Administration and the future funding environment.

PESTLE

Political and **Economic** issues identified included the return to devolved government; changes in political leadership in the UK; changing labour force demographics, particularly the issue of increased migration; reductions in the size and contribution of the public sector and salaries and conditions of employment.

Sociological and **Technological** issues focussed on our aging population; disabled people living with increasingly complex of support needs and an associated reliance on Assistive Technology.

Legislative and **Environmental** issues included human rights and equality law; European directives on age, sexual orientation and other issues of disadvantage; poverty; ethical procurement; energy conservation and fair and organic trade.

Our Members

Disability Action's membership has remained at approximately 200 over the life of the last strategy. It comprises organisations of the following types:

- Northern Ireland Branches of UK Organisations
- Northern Ireland Regional Organisations
- Branches of Regional Organisations
- Small Local Groups

The majority of Disability Action's member organisations fit into the third and fourth categories and are voluntary organisations in the true sense of the word – run by volunteers, with no paid staff, no grant support and relying on small, local fundraising activities.

Repeatedly they answer the question, “Why are you a member of Disability Action?” by stressing their appreciation of an accurate, timely information source and the networking and campaigning opportunities we provide.

Our Members and Their Needs

A key element of our new strategy must be the development of a range of new, innovative sustainable services to our membership and we recognise the need to ensure that these organisations are central to our development work.

We need to recognise that each section of our membership has different needs which Disability Action must also address. Some of the work on behalf of these sectors has already been initiated through the development of issue specific groupings but this work will be intensified over the incoming 5 year period.

Finally in this theme, Disability Action must find ways to support the development of non-impairment specific groups of disabled people believing in their rights and prepared to demand them.

Our Networks and Alliances

Over the last five years, Disability Action has developed a number of strategically significant networks and alliances. These have been created without the identification of additional staff or other resources to support them.

A significant organisational decision was made in terms of the Assembly All-Party Working Group on Disability. When the Assembly was suspended on 14th October, 2002, the All-Party Working Group on Disability moved to Disability Action's headquarters and we continue to provide the secretariat for the group which we now see returning to Stormont. This new plan will see the re-establishment of the All Party Working Group on Disability and its associated development.

In the last few years we have also developed and supported the Children with Disabilities Strategic Alliance, a network of all the disability organisations involved or interested in children's issues and services. This is a good example of partnerships working as Children Northern Ireland, Disability Action's equivalent in the children's sector, now co works with us on this alliance.

Our Networks and Alliances

Our latest network is the Disability and Social Care Forum (DSCF) which is currently in its formative stages providing a platform for non-government organisations delivering social care services for disabled people.

For the last five years, Disability Action has been the lead partner of Diversity Matters and Diversity Works, two innovative projects as part of the European Equal programme. This is for us a model of best practice in partnership working with public, private and non-government sector representatives to achieve relevant and challenging targets.

Strategic Priorities 2008 - 2013

Supporting Inclusion

Existing Programmes

We will maintain the delivery of these current programmes and ensure their development

- **Membership Support**
- **Transport**
- **Employment**
- **Information**
- **Mobility**

New Areas of Work

We will develop and deliver new and innovative programmes that encourage disabled people's active participation in society.

- **Rural Development**
- **Housing**
- **Education**
- **Independent Living**
- **Partnerships with Health & Social Care Trusts**

Changing Attitudes

Existing Programmes

We will maintain the delivery of these current programmes and ensure their development

- **Training**
- **Access**
- **Community Development**
- **Equality and Human Rights**
- **E- learning**
- **Business Support**
- **Campaigning and lobbying**

New Areas of Work

We will develop and deliver new and innovative programmes that encourage disabled people's active participation in society

- **Projects with Business and Trade Unions**
- **Curriculum Development**
- **Education for Mutual Understanding**
- **Children's Issues**
- **Research**

Influencing Government Policy

Existing Programmes

We will maintain the delivery of these current programmes and ensure their development

- **All Party Working Group on Disability**
- **Promoting Social Inclusion**
- **Children with Disabilities Strategic Alliance**
- **Disability and Social Care Forum**
- **Equality and Human Rights**

New Areas of Work

We will develop and deliver new and innovative programmes that encourage disabled people's active participation in society. We will work on issues of:

- **UK Coalition on Disability**
- **European Disability Forum**
- **Social, Economic and Political Champions**
- **Multiple Identity**
- **Political Participation**

Organisational Development

Existing Programmes

We will maintain the delivery of these current programmes and ensure their development

- **Ensuring Organisational Sustainability**
- **Staff Learning and Development**
- **ICT**
- **Developing and Improving the Quality of Services**
- **Marketing and Communication**

New Areas of Work

We will develop and deliver new and innovative programmes that encourage disabled people's active participation in society.

- **New Networks & Alliances**
- **The North West Centre**
- **Mentoring Services**

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