Third Disability Action Plan

2019-2022

May 2019

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), Ulster University 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 University 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.

As Vice Chancellor of Ulster University, I am committed to implementing effectively the disability duties and this disability action plan. The University will ensure that within available resources (in terms of people, time and money) action is taken to implement effectively this plan and where appropriate, build objectives and targets relating to the disability duties into corporate and annual operating plans.

The University will also put appropriate internal arrangements in place to ensure that the disability duties are complied with and this disability action plan effectively implemented. It will ensure the effective communication of the plan to staff and provide all necessary training and guidance for staff on the disability duties and the implementation of the plan.

I confirm the University's 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 University will also consult with disabled people when implementing and reviewing the plan. This will enable it to:

- identify and address any barriers disabled people may face during consultation with the University;

- identify opportunities for the University to promote positive attitudes towards disabled people; and

- monitor and review the effectiveness of measures taken, and the proposals outlined in the action plan.

Responsibility for developing, implementing, reviewing and evaluating this disability action plan and the point of contact within Ulster University will be: -

Ms Angela Getty,
Section Lead: Equality, Diversity and Inclusion,
People and Culture Directorate,
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If you require this plan in an alternative format (such as large print, in Braille, audio, easy read) and/or language, please contact Angela to discuss your requirements.

I confirm the University's 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 in 2022, or plans submitted to the Equality Commission over the five-year period.

A copy of this plan, the University's annual progress to the Equality Commission and its five-year review of this plan will be made available on the University's

website (ulster.ac.uk/hr/employee-benefits/equality-diversity/strategies-and-action-plans).

Functions

The University's Five and Fifty Strategic Plan (2016-2034), sets out the University's values, vision and mission, strategic priorities and themes and provides the overarching framework within which the University will take forward the best interests of its staff and students. The Five and Fifty Strategic Plan was adopted in October 2016 and is available at:

ulster.ac.uk/fiveandfifty

Public Life Positions

The range of public life positions (as defined by the guidance) over which Ulster University has responsibility for are as follows:

- University Council;
- University Senate;
- Convocation;
- University Committees, working groups and consultative groups;
- Students' Union Council;
- Students' and Students' Union clubs, societies and sabbatical officers;
- Students' Union Board of Trustees;
- University Staff Disability Network; and the
- Alumni Association.

In addition, the University responds to requests from outside bodies for representation on various committees/boards. In the past this has included:

- Health and Social Care Trusts;
- Local Councils;
- Professional Bodies;

- Government Committees/Working Groups (e.g. DEL);
- Boards of Governors; and
- Editorial Boards.

Action Measures

Measures completed within the second disability action plan are now considered to be <u>mainstreamed</u>.

Outlined below are <u>new</u> measures that the University proposes to take over the period 2019 – 2022, together with performance indicators, timescales and allocated responsibility.

For simplicity, and in order to make this document more user-friendly, this action plan has adopted a high-level, thematic approach.

Section A: Actions to encourage disabled people to participate in public life

Positive action measure 1: Scope the possibility of introducing a supported employment placement scheme for disabled people.

Rationale: Create more opportunities to enable more disabled people to work at Ulster University.

Output A: Partnerships established with disability groups in the vicinity of each campus 2020.

Outcome A: Increased numbers of disabled people participating in University life.

Output B: Recommendations for formal scheme based on pilot scoping exercise.

Outcome B: Increased numbers of disabled people participating in University life.

Timescale (Year): 2020

Person Responsible: Director of People and Culture.

Output C: Supported placement scheme implemented.

Outcome C: Placement scheme informs scoping exercise for implementing ring-fenced posts for disabled people.

Timescale (Year): 2021

Person Responsible: Director of People and Culture.

Positive action measure 2: Research project - Masters level (MBA) research project to investigate promotional opportunities and aspirations of Disabled Staff at Ulster University.

Rationale: Lack of current evidence to describe the experience of disabled staff at Ulster University and their aspirations of leadership.

Outputs: Research report provides benchmark data for the most appropriate model for leadership/ development for disabled staff.

Outcome: Targets developed to improve experiences of disabled staff.

Timescale (Year): Dec 2019

Person Responsible: Director of People and Culture.

Positive action measure 3: Include a tailored welcoming statement to encourage disabled people to apply for a position on University Council, as appropriate.

Rationale: Lack of representation of disabled people on governing committees. 5% of Ulster University staff are disabled.

Outputs: Appropriate welcoming statement included in future application rounds for Council.

Outcome: Disabled people are represented on governing committees.

Timescale (Year): 2020

Person Responsible: University Secretary.

Positive action measure 4: Facilitate/host a 'Demystifying public appointments' half day workshop at Ulster University in Coleraine/Magee.

Rationale: Encourage more disabled people to put themselves forward to serve on the Boards of our public bodies.

Outputs: Training session delivered by the Commissioner for Public Appointments.

Outcome: Disabled staff encouraged to put themselves forward to serve on the Boards of Public Bodies.

Timescale (Year): 2019

Person Responsible: University Secretary/ Provosts.

Positive action measure 5: Work with the National Association of Disabled Staff Network (NADSN) to implement a peer mentoring scheme to support the Staff Disability Network's Chair and Co-chair to develop the role.

Rationale: The Staff Disability Network offers disabled staff the opportunity to help formulate, advise and provide feedback on, and where appropriate participate in University initiatives to encourage greater participation of disabled people in all walks of University life. However, it is currently under-utilised. 4.9% of staff have disclosed a disability. 13.3% of disabled staff are members of the Staff Disability Network.

Output A: Incoming Chair and Co-chair assigned mentors.

Outcome A: Membership of the Staff Disability Network increases from 13% of disabled staff to 20% of disabled staff.

Output B: Frequency of Staff Disability Network meetings increases from once a year, to once a quarter.

Outcome B: Members of the Staff Disability Network participate more fully in policy development.

Timescale (Year): 2019

Person Responsible: Director of People and Culture.

Positive action measure 6: Develop a regional Disabled Staff Network for Higher Education.

Rationale: The Staff Disability Network offers disabled staff the opportunity to help formulate, advise and provide feedback on, and where appropriate participate in, University initiatives to encourage greater participation of disabled people in all walks of University life. However, it is currently under-utilised. 4.9% of staff have disclosed a disability. 13.3% of disabled staff are members of the Staff Disability Network.

Outputs: Regional Disabled Staff Network informs the national disability agenda in Northern Ireland and in the U.K.

Outcome: Disabled staff in higher education participate more fully in public life.

Timescale (Year): 2021

Person Responsible: Director of People and Culture.

Positive action measure 7: Develop a 'Wellbeing Strategy' in conjunction with stakeholders including the Trade Unions:

Eight Managing Employee Wellbeing courses provided for managers

Eight Resilience courses provided for staff

All Faculties complete Wellbeing surveys

Rationale: The absence due to psychological illnesses account for 40% of the total absence and 52% of chronic absences for 2017/18. 40% of staff feel that the University is interested in their wellbeing (Staff Survey, 2017).

Output: Wellbeing Strategy provides a framework for improving health and wellbeing at Ulster University.

Outcome A: Wellbeing Strategy in place.

Timescale (Year): 2019

Person Responsible: Director of People and Culture.

Outcome B: Decrease number of days lost due to sickness absence relating to psychological illness by 15% for period 2016/17 to 2019/20.

Timescale (Year): August 2020

Person Responsible: Director of People and Culture.

Outcome C: Increase percentage of staff reporting that they feel the University is interested in their wellbeing to 50%.

Timescale (Year): Next Staff survey (date to be determined).

Person Responsible: Director of People and Culture.

Positive action measure 8: Sign up to the Equality Commission for Northern Ireland's Mental Health Charter.

Rationale: The Wellbeing Strategy will have a focus on improving mental health and will encourage the participation of those with mental health disabilities. 40% of staff feel that the University is interested in their wellbeing (Staff Survey, 2017).

Output A: Mental health Training programme developed.

Outcome A: University signed up to Equality Commission for Northern Ireland's Mental Health Charter.

Timescale (Year): 2019

Person Responsible: Director of People and Culture.

Output B: Join 'Every Customer Counts'.

Outcome B: Decrease number of days lost due to sickness absence relating to psychological illness by 15% for period 2016/17 to 2019/20.

Timescale (Year): August 2020

Person Responsible: Director of People and Culture.

Positive action measure 9: Deliver two simultaneous short courses to encourage prospective students with Autism Spectrum Disorder (ASD) to transition to university:

'Coping with University Life using Mindfulness and Sensory Strategies' course for young people with social communication difficulties.

'Transition to Higher Education using Mindfulness and Sensory Strategies' course for families of prospective students with ASD.

Rationale: Prospective students and Post Primary students with ASD struggle with the prospect of going to university and the transition to academic and social life.

Output A: Students complete CPPD modules: "Coping with University Life using Mindfulness and Sensory Strategies".

Outcome A: Feedback from training evaluation indicates that prospective students and their families have developed skills and resources to support independence in and transition to third level education.

Output B: Parents/ guardians complete module: "Transition to Higher Education using Mindfulness and Sensory Strategies".

Outcome B: Feedback from training evaluation indicates a reduction in perceived barriers into higher education.

Outcome C: Tailored support mechanisms created in line with the Access to Success Strategy.

Timescale (Year): July 2019 –September 2019 (annually)

Person Responsible: School of Life and Health Sciences, School of Art, Student Support, Middletown Centre for Autism and Centre for Flexible and Continuous Learning.

Positive action measure 10: Develop an ASD drop-in group to promote participation in University life.

Rationale: Students with Autism/Asperger's Syndrome (ASD) struggle with the transition to academic and social life.

Output A: Campus group meets fortnightly on a Wednesday afternoon.

Outcome A: Encourages clear transition to University while having an opportunity to socialise and participate in University Life.

Output B: Monitoring system established to ascertain attendance from students registered with Student Support and students that have not declared a disability.

Output C: Workshops promoted on various platforms University wide.

Outcome B and C: Participation measured to establish changes in demand and effectiveness of this intervention.

Timescale (Year): September 2019 – April 2020. Workshops to be run annually thereafter.

Person Responsible: PVC Campus Life.

Positive action measure 11: Deliver a series of workshops for relevant staff within the Employability department and School Placement coordinators to facilitate students with ASD in obtaining and retaining job placements.

Workshops will concentrate on:

Enhancing confidence in working with or helping to prepare for interview students with ASD.

Helping placement coordinators and careers staff develop an understanding. of what behaviours of Social Communication Difference (such as Autism) may look like in the workplace.

Increasing understanding of the experience of Autism in work.

Rationale: Anecdotally, students with ASD find it difficult to obtain and retain work placements.

Output A: AccessAbility Advisers within Student Experience and Wellbeing review RAR for second year students who have ASD, focussing on placement support.

Output B: All Accessibility Advisers contact students in their caseload who have ASD requesting that they attend a placement review.

Output C: Students with ASD prepare effective CVs, prepare for interview, and obtain and maintain suitable placements.

Output D: Placement outcomes are reviewed by AccessAbility Advisers at the beginning of the students' final year.

Outcome A B C and D: Improved placement outcomes identified for students with ASD.

Timescale (Year): Second semester of 2020. Thereafter, annually in Semester 2.

Person Responsible: PVC Campus Life.

Positive action measure 12: Implement a formal mechanism to ensure that both 'Disabled Student' seats are filled on Student Council each year.

Rationale: In 2018, the Students' Union (SU) ring-fenced two 'Disabled Student' seats within the Student Council structure, to encourage engagement from disabled students in influencing University and SU policy and activity. These were open to all self-defining disabled students. These seats comprised 2.6% of the SU Council; the SU Council comprises 0.3% of the student body.

Outputs: Maintain consistent representation of self-defining disabled students on Student Council.

Outcome: Increased involvement of Disabled Students in policy setting within the SU.

Timescale (Year): Elections October 2019

Person Responsible: Membership Director (Students Union).

Positive action measure 13: Create and support a student network to offer the opportunity for all disabled students to meet, socialise and influence University and Students' Union and national policy.

Rationale: Currently there is no mechanism for disabled students to meet with the 'Disabled Student Councillors' to influence University and Students' Union and national policy.

Output A: Student Network is established.

Output B: Network meets at least twice a year.

Output C: Numbers of students attending network meetings recorded, to ascertain 'participation' baseline.

Outcome: Increased occasions where disabled student can influence Students' Union policy.

Timescale (Year): 2019

Person Responsible: Membership Director (Students' Union).

Positive action measure 14: Survey disabled students to find out which sporting activities they would like to see offered by the Sports Union and Students' Union.

Rationale: In 2017/18, 9.5% of Sports Union members at Jordanstown and Belfast campuses have declared a disability, 9.7% of members at Coleraine campus have declared a disability and 16.8% of members at Magee campuses have declared a disability.

Output A: Survey Report outlining student preferences.

Output B: Report influences internal planning.

Output C: Tailored range of activities offered to students.

Outcome: Increase participation of disabled students in influencing Ulster University Students' Union sports and societies.

Timescale (Year): June 2019

Person Responsible: Membership Director (Students' Union).

Positive action measure 15: Develop and disseminate a feedback form for Freshers' Fayres to ascertain the effectiveness of measures already adopted to make activities more accessible to students with disabilities.

Rationale: Anecdotally, disabled students are less likely to attend and participate in Ulster University Students' Union activities during Welcome and Freshers' Week.

Outputs: Report on feedback from Freshers' Fayres.

Outcome: Feedback informs planning for next Freshers' Fayres.

Timescale (Year): September 2019. Thereafter, following each Freshers' Fayre.

Person Responsible: Membership Director (Students' Union).

Section B: Actions to promote positive attitudes towards those with a disability

Positive action measure 16:

Develop and deliver training and guidance on the disability duties and the disability action plan.

Review and where necessary update existing awareness training.

Rationale: Lack of understanding of the disability duties. 49% of respondents to the Academic Staff Disability Awareness Survey 2017 indicated that they had heard of the Disability Duties.

Outputs: Training sessions provided to staff on the disability duties.

Outcome A: Increase percentage of academic staff who have heard of the Disability Duties to 70% in the next Disability Awareness Survey.

Timescale (Year): 2022

Outcome B: Increased understanding of the disability duties demonstrated through training evaluations.

Timescale (Year): 2020

Person Responsible: Director of People and Culture.

Positive action measure 17: Develop and implement comprehensive annual disability awareness training programme for staff. Prioritise training according to the results of the Academic Staff Disability Awareness Survey.

Rationale: Academic Staff Disability Awareness Survey 2017: Compared with 2011, the proportions of respondents who felt that input on specific disabilities was 'Very important' and 'important' increased, regardless of disability type. The most significant increase (+12.2%) was for input on 'Autistic Spectrum Disorder / Asperger's Syndrome'.

Outputs: Training programme delivered annually.

Outcome: Improved attitudes towards disabled people identified in Staff Disability Surveys.

Timescale (Year): 2019 -2022

Person Responsible: Director of People and Culture.

Positive action measure 18: Facilitate disability equality training for staff, with a view to improving attitudes towards disabled people.

Rationale: Disability equality training has not been offered to staff previously. Various external providers (e.g. the Inclusive Mobility and Transport Advisory Committee, the Omnibus Partnership) now offer this type of training, using trainers with disabilities.

Outputs: 2 training sessions provided for staff each year (1 on Coleraine/Magee campus, 1 on Belfast/Jordanstown campus).

Outcome A: Improved knowledge of disability equality issues identified in training evaluation.

Timescale (Year): 2019

Outcome B: Improved attitudes towards disabled people identified in Staff Disability Survey.

Timescale (Year): 2022

Person Responsible: Director of People and Culture.

Positive action measure 19: Develop and deliver communications plan to re-launch/raise awareness of this guidance, to support staff to engage with disabled people.

Rationale: 76% of respondents to the academic staff disability awareness survey (2017) indicated that they are familiar with the University's guidelines for positive communication and disability language etiquette.

Outputs: Rebranded guidance circulated to all staff and students and available on website.

Outcome: Increase percentage of staff reporting within the Staff Survey that they are aware of the guidelines to 90%.

Timescale (Year): 2022

Person Responsible: Director of People and Culture.

Positive action measure 20: Continuous learning: Encourage student officers and representatives to develop their understanding and awareness of disability issues/equality throughout the year, by attending regular training on disability issues and support services within the University.

Rationale: Perceived requirement to improve knowledge and understanding of disability issues amongst student officers and student representatives.

Output A: Record attendance through Continuous Professional Development records and ascertain baseline of involvement.

Output B: Training evaluations assessed to ascertain effectiveness of learning events.

Outcome A and B: Improved knowledge of disability issues amongst student officers and representatives.

Timescale (Year): 2019/20

Person Responsible: Membership Director (Students' Union), President Students' Union.

Positive action measure 21: Develop disability awareness campaigns informing students of resources available to support them to engage in and achieve their academic goals.

Rationale: Students are reluctant to disclose disabilities.

Output A: Dyslexia Awareness campaign.

Timescale (Year): 2-8 Oct 2019

Output B: World Mental Health Day campaign.

Timescale (Year): 10 Oct 2019

Output C: International Day of Persons with Disabilities campaign.

Timescale (Year): 3 Dec 2019

Output D: Workshops promoted on various platforms University wide.

Outcome: Impact of campaigns assessed via changes to disclosure rates.

Timescale (Year): After each campaign

Person Responsible: Head of Student Support.

Section C: Supporting actions

Positive action measure 22: Training for newly recruited and returning staff on understanding and implementing reasonable adjustment recommendations for students with disabilities.

Rationale: Lack of training on Disability Legislation, the Special Educational Needs and Disability (Northern Ireland) Order 2005 (SENDO) and implementation of reasonable adjustments for newly recruited and returning academic staff. 84% of respondents to the Academic Staff Disability Awareness Survey 2017 indicated that they had heard of SENDO. The proportion of respondents who felt that input on 'Advice on implications of SENDO legislation' is very important was greater (+8.6%), compared with 2011.

Output A: A suite of webinars will be available on a secure log-in section for staff on the Student Support Website. Staff will view the webinars as part of the Ulster University Induction or return after long periods of leave.

Outcome A: Academic staff will be aware of and implement SENDO, therefore students will not be disadvantaged.

Output B: All newly recruited staff and returning staff complete the suite of webinars.

Outcome B: In the next Disability Awareness Survey, increase awareness of SENDO legislation from 84% to 100%.

Timescale (Year): 2018/19

Person Responsible: Head of Student Support.

Positive action measure 23: Make the DAP available to all staff, students and stakeholders.

Rationale: The DAP is a living document. All staff and students should be aware that it exists and that they can inform the actions within it.

Output A: Regular all- staff/student emails to increase awareness of the disability duties and DAP.

Outcome A: All staff and students know where to locate information about the DAP.

Output B: DAP available on website

Outcome B: Staff and students understand the two disability duties and their responsibilities under them.

Timescale (Year): Once DAP confirmed March 2019

Person Responsible: Director of People and Culture.

Positive action measure 24: Review use of the term 'disclosure' concerning disability. Consider using alternatives such as 'declaration'.

Rationale: On 6 February 2018, 5% of staff considered themselves to be disabled. However, the Northern Ireland Census 2011 indicates that 20% of the NI population is disabled; this suggests that either our disability data is incomplete or that disability is under-reported.

Outputs: Amended monitoring question throughout all relevant documentation.

Outcome A: Increase declaration rates to 20%, so that the percentage of staff declaring a disability is in line with expectation, compared with the local population (Census 2011).

Timescale (Year): March 2019

Person Responsible: Director of People and Culture.

Outcome B: Improved accuracy of data.

Timescale (Year): 2022

Person Responsible: Director of People and Culture.

Positive action measure 25: Fundraising campaign in support of _Mind Your Mood_ initiatives to improve students' mental well-being. Fundraising activity includes community fundraising participation in the Belfast marathon, the inter-campus cycle and a range of other events.

Rationale: 80% of students in UK universities experience some form of mental health issue (National Union of Students, 2015), suggesting the need for universities to do more to support this emerging need.

Outputs: Improved funding support for student mental health initiatives provided by / through Student Support as part of _Mind Your Mood._

Outcome: Improved students' mental well-being.

Timescale (Year): This is annual fundraising activity.

Person Responsible: Development & Alumni Relations Office.

Positive action measure 26: Work with Development and Alumni Relations Office and Student support to create a Communications/Public Relations (PR) plan to raise awareness of the fundraising effort and support services available through Mind Your Mood (MYM).

Rationale: Increase awareness of and access to mental health support.

Output A: Communications plan.

Output B: Press release.

Output C: Social media schedule.

Output D: Integrating lead academics in the field of mental health.

Output E: Campaign Banner on the phase 1 upgrade of Insight.

Outcome A B C D and E: Social media reach and press coverage.

Timescale (Year): 2018/19 academic year

Person Responsible: Lee Campbell (PR lead).

Positive action measure 27: Proactive efforts to further enhance relationships across all faculties to identify and showcase research or teaching that directly impacts on disability in society e.g. patient care, policy influence, attitudinal studies, participation, recovery/rehabilitation/diagnostics etc.

Rationale: Increase awareness of Ulster University thought leadership and academic expertise relating to disability.

Outputs: Enhanced focus on patient/societal outcomes and impact of relevant research.

Outcome: Social media and press coverage of civic impact in action.

Timescale (Year):

- 2018/19 as content becomes available.
- 2018 enhanced stakeholder focus in absence of NI Executive.

Person Responsible: Director of Marketing & Communications.

Positive action measure 28: Public Relations, Marketing and Digital Communications working with Information Services Directorate (ISD) to define new standards, processes and templates for mass email communications.

Rationale: ALL STAFF EMAILS; some issues identified for visually impaired audiences.

Outputs: Revised processes, protocols and templates developed with and for ISD colleagues.

Outcome: Better use of staff emails as an information channel alongside the established communications channel: Insight.

Timescale (Year): 2018/19

Person Responsible: Director of Marketing & Communications.

Section D: Actions facilitating the delivery of the DAP

Positive action measure 29: Ensure that the Equality, Diversity and Inclusion (EDI) Strategy Implementation Group has as one of its Terms of Reference:

Review, develop and report on the DAP.

Rationale: The Disability Duties Review Group was suspended in 2012. The Equality Commission for Northern Ireland recommends the establishment of cross-departmental working group to support the implementation of the disability duties.

Outputs: Regular meetings of the EDI Strategy Implementation Group to oversee development and implementation of the DAP.

Outcome A: Increased engagement/buy-in throughout all functions.

Outcome B: Action plan is delivered.

Timescale (Year): 2019

Person Responsible: Director of People and Culture.

Section E: Monitoring and evaluating the DAP

Positive action measure 30: Monitor and review progress against targets on an annual basis. Submit annual monitoring report to the Senior Leadership Team and within the Section 75 Annual Progress Report.

Rationale: Statutory requirement

Outputs: Annual monitoring report to the Senior Leadership Team. Annual monitoring report included and within the Section 75 Annual Progress Report.

Outcome: Action plan is reviewed annually using a traffic light system and updated as necessary. Any slippage is addressed.

Timescale (Year): Annually by 31 August

Person Responsible: Director of People and Culture

Positive action measure 31: Perform five-year review of DAP.

Rationale: Statutory reporting requirement.

Outputs: Five-year effectiveness review of DAP submitted to the Equality Commission for Northern Ireland.

Outcome: Effectiveness review informs next DAP.

Timescale (Year): 2022

Person Responsible: Director of People and Culture.

Signed by:

P. Bartholomew

Professor Paul Bartholomew

Vice Chancellor