



Northern Ireland Assembly Commission Draft Disability Action Plan 2021-25

Consultation Response Form

The Northern Ireland Assembly Commission welcomes your views on the proposed content of its Draft Disability Action Plan 2021-25, which can be read or downloaded on the Northern Ireland Assembly website:

[Read the Draft Disability Action Plan 2021-25 or download a PDF version of the Plan](#)

Please return your completed response form by **5 November 2021**, by email or post, to:

Email: equality@niassembly.gov.uk

Post: Equality and Good Relations Unit
Room 417, Parliament Buildings
Ballymiscaw
Stormont
BELFAST
BT4 3XX

Telephone: 028 9041 8377

Textphone: 028 9052 1209

Alternative Formats

If you require this document in an alternative format such as Braille, audio CD/MP3, easy read, computer disc and/or another language, please contact us to discuss your requirements.

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In line with the Assembly Commission's commitment to openness and transparency, all responses will be treated as public and may be published on the Assembly website as part of the consultation process.

Your involvement with this consultation will require the processing of your personal data. The Assembly Commission is committed to compliance with the UK GDPR and Data Protection Act 2018 (DPA). As such we treat your information with appropriate security measures to ensure that:

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- Your personal information is not shared outside the organisation unless you have explicitly agreed to it. (see q2 below)
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1. If you are content for us to process your personal information, please tick this box:

X

2. If you are content for your name, or the name of your organisation, to be published alongside your response, please tick this box:

If you do not tick this box, your response will be treated anonymously.



Consultation response submitted by
TILII

November 2021



**The Northern Ireland Assembly Commission
Draft Disability Action Plan 2021-2025**

Our Telling It Like It Is project is a group of adults with a learning disability who are keen to have their voice heard. Originating out of the resettlement agenda and part funded by Belfast; South-Eastern and the Western Health & Social Care Trust, groups operate within local communities and hospital settings. TILII are highly experienced in delivering training, undertaking research, contributing to public consultation processes and delivering workshops and presentations at events. TILII recently facilitated a review of day services across their peer group who receive support from the Belfast Trust. TILII members also deliver a professional and efficient Easy Read service (TILII Translates) to all sectors, as part of our commitment towards improving access to information for all. This response was developed and collated using the views of 48 TILII members (8 of which currently reside in a hospital).

Question 1: Do you have any comments on any of the proposed actions in category 1, Staff Training? (Actions 1.1 to 1.6 on Pages 15-17 of the PDF version of the Action Plan)

TILII members feel it is important that any member of staff who will meet someone with a disability should have training in Human Rights, since Human Rights include being treated with dignity, fairness, equality, and respect. This will help raise awareness and improve staff's knowledge, including their communication skills with people who have a learning disability.

TILII agree that training for a diverse range of disabilities should be included from auditory to visual awareness as stated. Twenty-one TILII members suggested that the Assembly should not only consider sign language classes but also Makaton, which is specific sign language designed for people with a learning disability. TILII members provide staff training and suggested that having people who are experts by experience to facilitate some of the training for staff would be a good way for staff to learn what it is like to have a disability.

They further thought that the suggestion of Masterclasses focusing on a range of conditions from dementia, chronic fatigue, acquired brain injury, autism, depression, and mental health issues was a great idea and it also demonstrated that the Assembly are working to be fair and equitable to a diverse range of people with different conditions.

TILII also agreed with the idea of the Assembly linking the master classes to national awareness days. They felt that not only would this help to raise awareness, but also provide a positive best practice approach for other organizations and hopefully encourage others to follow their lead.

All TILII members said that the Jam Card should have already been signed up to and the reason they gave was it would demonstrate the Assembly's willingness to become a disability friendly organization.

All TILII members agree with the need for websites to be accessible and many organisations have had this for years. Therefore, all TILII members agree with revising the website. However, TILII also would note that having a website that people with a disability can use is important, but the information on the website also needs to be accessible. Otherwise, this feels a little tokenistic.

Question 2: Do you have any comments on any of the proposed actions in category 2, Representation? (Actions 2.1 to 2.4 on Pages 18-19 of the PDF version of Action Plan)

All TILII members agreed you should be engaging with external disability advisory groups and they should be made up of a range of disability expertise. They agreed that it is vital to inform providers about the work of the Assembly and to get service providers' input. However, they want to remind the Assembly that it is also vital that you get the input of service users who have a range of disabilities as they are experts by experience and should be involved in any work that affects their life. It will also demonstrate that the Assembly recognizes that people with disabilities are part of their local communities and can contribute in a meaningful way to society.

All TILII Members said that having young people with disabilities as member of a youth assembly was a great idea. They went on to say that involving people at a young age would help them to understand the important work of the Assembly, as well giving them the opportunity to share their own views. Having a voice is important so they can help affect positive change. It is important that people of all ages who have a disability are given the opportunity to share their opinions and views.

All TILII members agreed that the Assembly Chamber should be made accessible to all and TILII members felt a forward-thinking government should have this in place. TILII members did note that with older buildings it may take money and work to do this. Thirty-four TILII members said they like Stormont Buildings and the current design which explains the age and history but felt more could and should be done to make it accessible. However, nine TILII members felt strongly that any structural changes needed to increase accessibility should be kept in line with the original design, feel and look of the building.

Question 3: Do you have any comments on any of the proposed actions in category 3, Communication, Consultation and Engagement? (Actions 3.1 to 3.10 on Pages 20-24 of the PDF version of Action Plan)

All TILII members agreed that staff should be kept up to date on the progress of the new Disability Action Plan as it will raise staff awareness of the work the Assembly Commission is doing around issues that affect people with a disability. They further suggested updates should also be reported to the public, so they are aware of any progress and understand what the Assembly Committees are doing around the wider issues that affect people with a disability.

TILII really liked the idea of mystery visitors to the Parliament Buildings to give feedback on the services and facilities provided for people with a disability. Twenty-three TILII members said they would like the opportunity to be a mystery visitor themselves. They highlighted that it should be people with a diverse range of disabilities, including learning disabilities so they can give real feedback on the tour.

TILII agree with the suggestion of a visitor survey and understand that it will help to get a better picture of the visitor experience but highlighted that it needs to be in accessible formats so everyone can contribute their opinions after their visit to the Parliament Buildings.

TILII agree that the work of the Committees should be accessible to all including people with a disability. TILII agreed that the Committees should review consultations to ensure that they are inclusive and provided in assessable formats so people with disabilities can be meaningfully involved. TILII members said they were lucky as through ARC NI, they are empowered to take part in consultations. However, TILII said they know without this support, they would not always be able to take part because the consultations are not always in plain English or Easy Read format. Some TILII members also said that you need to consider other ways of highlighting consultations, as without ARC NI they would not always know there are consultations on different subjects. They suggested, newspapers, radio and TV campaigns should be used as well as the internet. TILII also suggested there should be groups of people with disabilities in different council areas that are kept informed that can also feed their opinions to a regional group. This way consultations and any other important issues could be raised.

Creating an accessible website is a great idea and will help people to understand, as well as raise awareness of, what facilities for disabled people are available at

Parliament Buildings. TILII also agree that you should include links to accessible information.

TILII agree with the idea of promoting positive attitudes towards people with disabilities through images on the Assembly website and in their publications, but TILII members want to ensure that it is not tokenism. By including people with a learning disability in Committees then real-life images with actual positive stories and achievements would be available with consent in place. This will meaningfully demonstrate how people with lived experiences are contributing to the Assembly, rather than just getting an image that looks positive with no substance behind it.

Question 4: Do you have comments on any of the proposed actions under category 4, Outreach and Education? (Actions 4.1 to 4.8 on pages 25 -27 of the PDF version of Action Plan)

All TILII members think it is a good idea to create a short video promoting tour accessibility at Parliament Buildings and to make sure it is updated as and when any new facilities or changes are made.

The idea of autism and dementia friendly tours was also received well by all TILII members. Some TILII members who have autism said it is important to make sure you ask people with autism to test out the tours to make sure everything has been considered and done appropriately.

TILII also agreed that the Assembly should be engaging with Special Schools to get young peoples' views. They also agreed with the idea of a conference every two years for teachers to provide awareness and understanding of education services. Nineteen TILII members went further and said it should be extended to include parents/carers and the young people themselves having the opportunity to attend the conference to keep everyone informed.

Question 5: Do you have any comments on any of the proposed actions under category 5, Structural Changes to Increase Participation and Accessibility? (Actions 5.1 to 5.3 on page 28 of the PDF version Action Plan)

All TILII members thought the provision of opportunities for people with a disability to develop their skills and confidence in the workplace and gain meaningful work experience at Stormont was a great idea. Twenty-four TILLI members went further and said it needs to have the option that if someone does well in the placement, that there are opportunities for permanent employment.

As spoken about earlier in some of the above answers participation and accessibility is vital across all work undertaken by the Assembly. This will ensure everyone will not only be able to access the building but can also actively participate in Committees and have their voice heard.

Question 6: Do you have any comments on any of the proposed actions under category 6, Awards and Accreditation? (Actions 6.1 to 6.3 on page 29 of the PDF version of Action Plan)

TILII think it is a great idea for the Autism Friendly Award and Louder than Words Charter Award standards to be met and achieved by the Parliament Building to show they are committed to being open and friendly to people with autism and people who are deaf. All TILII members felt that the Assembly should not just consider signing up to the Disability Confident Scheme, but rather they should just sign up to it now. This will help increase staffs' understanding of disability issues and ensure that, as employers, you can enable disabled people to have the opportunity to fulfill their full potential.

Question 7: Do you have any comments on any of the proposed actions under category 7, Monitoring and reporting? (Actions 7.1 to 7.3 on pages 30 to 31 of the PDF version of Action Plan)

All TILII members agreed the Assembly should report on the progress of the Disability Action Plan. They felt once a year was sufficient. TILII also agreed it was a good idea that the findings of the monitoring reports went to the Equality Commission as these are the best people to independently confirm if progress is

being achieved. TILII felt that the reports should also be published for the public as everyone should be made aware if you are meeting your commitments to the plan.

Question 8: Do you have any other comments on the draft action plan? Please enter any additional comments you may have here

TILII just want to reiterate that everyone should have a voice and having a group which includes people with disabilities in each Council area will ensure their voices are heard and then they can be fed back to a regional group that in turn feeds back to the appropriate Assembly Committee. Also, where possible Assembly committees should consider inclusion of people with disabilities to ensure they get the voice of their peers heard.

Thank you for taking the time to respond to this consultation

TILII members would like to thank you for giving them this opportunity to respond.