



The Youth Council for Northern Ireland Review of Disability Priorities for 2007-2008

Background

As part of a series of changes to the Disability Discrimination Act 1995, the Youth Council for Northern Ireland (YCNI), when exercising its functions, must have due regard to the need to promote positive attitudes towards disabled people, and to encourage participation by disabled people in public life.

These new duties came into force on the 1st January 2007. During the period January 2007- March 2007 the YCNI undertook a mapping exercise to identify work it already carries out to promote positive attitudes towards disabled people and encourage their participation in public life, and consider the actions to be prioritised over the forthcoming year. This exercise identified the following priorities for the YCNI during 2007/08:

1. To document and share the good employment practice developed by YCNI.
2. To lobby DE/ESA to implement good practice in relation to DDA and/or safe guard existing good practice across RPA affected bodies within education.
3. To advocate organisations in receipt of grant aid to raise awareness of the value and importance of including people with disabilities on their committees and decision making panels and facilitating the inclusion of young people with disabilities in service provision.
4. To accredit and agree a roll-out strategy for Disability and Youth Work training for youth work practitioners.
5. To assess need and, where necessary, deliver staff awareness training.
6. To consider when developing new policies (or modifying existing policies) if the policy:
 - i. Discourages disabled people from participating in public life or fails to promote positive attitudes towards disabled people;
 - ii. Provides an opportunity to better promote positive attitudes towards disabled people or encourage their participation in public life.

Review of 2007/2008 Priorities

In April 2008 a review of the 2007/2008 priorities was carried out by the YCNI and the following developments noted.

The YCNI has **documented the good employment practice** it has developed in light of specific needs of employees. Available in the appendix of this report, this material has been published on the YCNI website and will inform **ongoing lobbying** of DE/ESA to implement good practice in relation to DDA and/or safe guard existing good practice across RPA affected bodies within education. In light of the work and Article 5 of the Disability Discrimination (Northern Ireland) Order 2006 the YCNI has now identified the need to review its Disability Discrimination Code of Practice.

During 2007/2008 extensive work was underway to develop a new funding policy for **Core/Infrastructure/Programme Funding Schemes for Regional Voluntary Organisations (RVYOs)**. On implementation of this policy work will be undertaken to advocate organisations in receipt of grant aid to raise awareness of the value and importance of including people with disabilities on their committees and decision making panels and facilitating the inclusion of young people with disabilities in service provision.

YCNI Officers have worked with both Disability Action and Youthnet's Disability Consortium **to develop a training programme which would further develop understanding of disability issues in the youth sector**. It has been the intention of the Youth Work Training Board (YWTB) to have such as programme as an integral part of its suit of training opportunities for youth work practitioners. The YWTB understand that the consortium are considering how best training on this important area should be packaged and delivered and currently await their advice. The aim to accredit and agree a roll-out strategy for Disability and Youth Work training for youth work practitioners will remain a priority for YCNI during 2007/2008. The YWTB wish to work in partnership with the Disability Consortium to address this priority and will welcome further discourse with them.

Staff training needs were assessed and the need for etiquette and language training as well as training to raise awareness of the DDA duties was identified. Training providers have been contacted and appropriate training will be put in place during 2008/2009.

During 2007/2008, **a number of policies were screened**. During this process the YCNI assessed the impact of the policy on the Council's obligation to have due regard to the need to promote positive attitudes towards disabled people and encourage their participation in public life. The following outcomes were recorded and disseminated for public consultation.

Name of Policy	Assessment of Impact in Relation to DDA Duties
YCNI Strategic Plan 2004 - 2007	Strategic Plan 2004-7 helps to actively promote positive attitudes towards disabled people, particularly young people with disabilities and encourage their participation in public life. Current initiatives which are directly targeted towards under-represented groups provide a key vehicle for this.
Funding Policy 1998 - 2006	At the present time the Council is not wholly satisfied that its existing policy meets its obligations and so has put in motion a process of change, in particular to widen its pool of applicants from eligible RVYOs. The development of the new policy will consider if the policy discourages disabled people from participating in public life or fails to promote positive attitudes towards disabled people and/or provides an opportunity to better promote positive attitudes towards disabled people or encourage their participation in public life.
Child Protection Policy	Not relevant as the policy is applied uniformly.
International Work	Direct targeting of disability groups has resulted in an increased uptake from this sector.
JEDI (Joined in Equity, Diversity and Interdependence)	This is a core function of JEDI with a number of initiatives specifically addressing this policy area.
Youth Work Training	The work helps to meet our obligation. For example, the Training Board is currently developing a Level 3 training programme for youth workers who work with young people with a disability.
Funding Policy 2007-2010	

DDA priorities for 2008/09

As an outcome of this review, the following DDA priorities have been identified for the YCNI during 2008/09:

1. To review the YCNI Disability Discrimination Code of Practice in light of Article 5 of the Disability Discrimination (Northern Ireland) Order 2006.
2. To lobby DE/ESA to implement good practice in relation to DDA and/or safe guard existing good practice across RPA affected bodies within education.
3. To advocate organisations in receipt of grant aid to raise awareness of the value and importance of including people with disabilities on their committees and decision making panels and facilitating the inclusion of young people with disabilities in service provision.
4. To accredit and agree a roll-out strategy for Disability and Youth Work training for youth work practitioners.
5. To deliver staff awareness training.
6. To consider when developing new policies (or modifying existing policies) if the policy:
 - iii. Discourages disabled people from participating in public life or fails to promote positive attitudes towards disabled people;
 - iv. Provides an opportunity to better promote positive attitudes towards disabled people or encourage their participation in public life.

Appendix

Good Employment Practice Developed by YCNI

In 1995, in response to the DDA, the Youth Council reviewed its practice in relation to the employment of disabled people.

As a result of this review, a Code of Practice was drawn up which documented Council's commitment to the promotion and provision of equality of opportunity, and its recognition of the unique contribution of each individual employee, irrespective of disability. The purpose of the Code was to identify the actions necessary to eliminate discrimination on the grounds of disability in all areas of the Council's operation.

The Code sets out the practical steps which the Youth Council would undertake in relation to:

- Recruitment practices
- Induction procedures
- The working environment – including access and health/safety arrangements
- Access to training
- Opportunities for promotion
- Discipline and dismissal procedures.

The YCNI has consulted with Disability Action, the Disablement Advisory Service in relation to adjustments to premises, special equipment and advice/guidance for employing disabled people.

The Youth Council, with other tenants in Forestview, negotiated with the landlord on the installation of an access ramp, disabled toilet facilities, and the installation of a suitable lift operation mechanism.

In consultation with disabled employees, the Council has provided relevant aids to assist employees in carrying out their duties

The YCNI has responded to requests from employees who become disabled [on a short-term or longer basis] for adjustments to their working arrangements. Where deemed relevant the Council has put in place flexible working arrangements (including periods of home-working) and appropriately adapted facilities and equipment to facilitate employees' participation in daily working life. All arrangements have been subject to relevant health and safety risk assessments

The YCNI recognizes the value of the employment practice in terms of developing and equality culture in which all employees are treated with dignity and respect regardless of their disability.