



**Habinteg** Housing Association (Ulster) Ltd

Disability Discrimination Order (Northern Ireland) 2006

# Disability Action Plan

April 2007

## Alternative Formats

This Disability Action Plan can be obtained from us in alternative formats including large print, Braille, audiocassette and computer disc. You will also be able to download it from our website which is accessible. We have achieved W3C x HTML 1.0, W3C C88 and W3C WAI – A WCA 1.0 in the development of our website.

This version of our plan is printed in Arial Font Size 14.

If you want this document in an alternative format, please use the contact detailed below.

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## Forward

As a registered Housing Association and a leading provider of social housing in Northern Ireland for people with and without disabilities, it is important for us to be aware of the Disability Discrimination Act 1998 when carrying out our functions and delivering our vision *'Homes for All'*.

We are fully committed to fulfilling our statutory obligations in compliance with Section 49(A) of the Disability Discrimination Act 1995 (as amended by the Disability Discrimination (NI) Order 2006). It places new duties on public authorities to:

- promote positive attitudes towards people with disabilities
- encourage participation by people with disabilities in public life.

This Disability Action plan will set out how we propose to fulfil this obligation.

We will further ensure that all of members of our Board of Management, sub-committees, staff team and Residents' Forum are aware of the new disability duties and we will ensure that our Disability Action plan is implemented in full. We plan to consult fully with all of these internal groups, and with people with disabilities and their representative groups when undertaking our five-yearly review of this plan.

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# 1 Introduction

- 1.1 Section 49(A) of the Disability Act 1995 (as amended by the Disability Discrimination (NI) Order 2006) requires us in carrying out our functions to:
- promote positive attitudes towards people with disabilities
  - encourage participation by people with disabilities in public life.
- 1.2 We, the undersigned, as Chairman and Chief Executive of Habinteg Housing Association (Ulster) Ltd. we are committed to the fulfilment of these disability duties in all parts of our organisation and have set out how we intend to do this in our Disability Action Plan. We will allocate all necessary resources (in terms of people, time and finance) in order to implement this plan effectively and where appropriate, build objectives and targets relating to the disability duties into our annual Business Plan.
- 1.3 Habinteg will make effective internal arrangements to ensure that our disability duties are complied with throughout the whole organisation and that this Disability Action Plan is fully implemented.
- 1.4 We will undertake a planned programme of communication and training on the disability duties for all staff and Board Members. This training will coincide with our induction training, Staff Conferences, refresher training and Board Member training on Disability. Timescales are detailed in the plan.

**Signed**

.....  
**George Harkness**  
**Chairman**

.....  
**David Duly**  
**Chief Executive**

## **2 Purpose of the Disability Action Plan**

2.1 The purpose of this plan is to demonstrate how we propose to fulfil the disability duties in relation to our functions.

## **3 Background to Habinteg Housing Association (Ulster) Ltd**

3.1 **Habinteg Housing Association (Ulster) Ltd** is a registered housing association established in 1977. To date we have provided over 1500 homes throughout Northern Ireland for people with and without disabilities on XX integrated housing schemes. We are a leading provider of housing for people with disabilities in Northern Ireland, our name deriving from an amalgamation of the words 'Habitation' and 'Integration'. In addition to our integrated schemes we have XX supported housing schemes managed in partnership with voluntary and statutory agencies.

Our vision as an organisation is to provide *'Homes for All'*.

Our mission statement is to

*'...provide sustainable neighbourhoods of flexible, accessible homes for all, with high quality housing and support services.'*

We have a strong value base including:

*Empowerment, Honesty, Integrity, Quality, Responsiveness, Commitment, Demonstration of Continuous Improvement*

Habinteg has achieved the *Investors in People* four times since 1997, and Charter Mark three times since 1999.

## **4 Public Life Positions at Habinteg**

The range of public life positions for which Habinteg Housing Association (Ulster) Ltd has responsibility are as follows:

- Board Members
- Office Holders
- Co-opted Sub-committee members
- Residents' Forum members
- Stakeholder organisations with which we work in partnership.

## **5 Commitment to the implementation of the Disability Action Plan**

5.1 We are committed to the effective implementation of all aspects of the Disability Action Plan throughout our organisation. Overall responsibility for the determining the policy on how effective implementation is achieved will be determined by our Board of Management, led by the Chairman. The Chief Executive will provide direction and Guidance to both the Board of Management and staff

team with the assistance of the Housing Quality Officer who will have day-to-day responsibility for implementation of the policy relating to this area. The Housing Quality Officer will report to the Senior Managers on a regular basis. Senior Managers will have ultimate responsibility for overseeing and implementing administrative arrangements to ensure that the Association complies with its Disability Duties.

- 5.2 Integral to Habinteg's business planning process is the annual review of our Vision, Mission Statement and Aims by Senior Managers. The development of smart objectives, target setting and monitoring also forms a key element of our business planning process. This is reflected at all levels of the strategic planning process. How targets are met and objectives are delivered is monitored and reported at the most senior level in the organisation. The progress on the Disability Action Plan will be monitored and reported on through the Senior Management Team, sub-committees and ultimately to the Board of Management.
- 5.3 A formal progress report on how we meet our objectives in relation to Equality generally and our Disability Duty specifically will be included in our annual report to the Equality Commission for Northern Ireland.

## **6 Habinteg's internal structure**

- 6.1 We currently have 13 Board members. The official positions of Chairman, Vice-chairman, Secretary and Treasurer are elected at Board level annually. There are four sub-committees in place which oversee the work of the staff in the core business functions of:
- Housing Management
  - Development
  - Finance
  - Audit
- 6.2 The Chief Executive oversees the work of each team through the Senior Management Team.
- 6.3 The Chief Executive is responsible for the strategic direction of Habinteg and, through the Senior Management Team oversees the management and delivery of services and the longer term planning and allocation of resources.
- 6.4 Statutory responsibility for the effective implementation of the Disability Duty lies with the Association.
- 6.4.1 The Chief Executive and Senior Management Team are responsible for ensuring that decisions taken at the most senior level are implemented, and for overseeing administrative arrangements to ensure the Disability

Discrimination Order 2006 is implemented effectively. Our Housing Quality Officer will support this work and will be the main point of contact in this regard. Details can be found under 'Alternative Formats' at the start of this document.

- 6.4.2 The Housing Quality Officer reports to the Chief Executive and Senior Management Team on a regular basis.
  - 6.4.3 In addition, the Housing Quality Officer will represent the Association externally at the Improvement Forum and Equality Co-ordination Group which are co-ordinated by the Northern Ireland Federation of Housing Associations (NIFHA).
  - 6.4.4 Our Organisational Chart can be found at Appendix 1. This document demonstrates the level at which responsibility for implementation of our Disability Duty rests, as previously detailed, as well as giving an overview of the Association as a whole.
- 6.5 There are four teams in the organisation, each led by a Senior Manager / Officer within the organisation, detailed below together with the core functions of each team.

#### **6.5.1 Housing Management Team led by Deputy Chief Executive**

This is the largest team in Habinteg comprising 49 staff members, including at Senior Management level the Deputy Chief Executive, two Housing Managers who job share, one Area Manager in the North West Office, and one Maintenance and Asset Manager. We have eight Housing Officers, one Acting Housing Officer, one Assistant Housing Officer, a Housing Quality Officer and a Maintenance Officer. There are nine staff employed within the team in Administrative / Clerical / Reception roles. The Human Resources Officer is also placed within the Housing team. Integral to the Housing Management team is our Community Assistant role (we have 18) which provides a residential / peripatetic housing management service to the residents on Habinteg's integrated schemes. The team delivers housing management services to customers including rent setting, accounting and arrears recovery; allocation of new and existing dwellings; response, cyclical and planned maintenance; adaptations; resident participation.

#### **6.5.2 Development Team led by Development Manager**

This team comprises the Development Manager, three Development Officers and two administrative staff members and is responsible for the delivery of Habinteg's development programme providing new housing stock to the Association.

### **6.5.3 Finance Team led by Finance Manager**

This team comprises the Finance Manager, Officer and two Assistant Officers and is responsible for the delivery of an efficient and effective financial and Information Technology service to the Association and its customer base.

### **6.5.4 Secretariat led by Personal Assistant (PA) to Chief Executive**

This team provides the secretarial service to the Association which involves typing, filing and administrative support. The team comprises the PA to the Chief Executive, two full-time officers and one part-time officer.

## **7 Effective Engagement**

We are committed to engaging with people with disabilities throughout all aspects of our work and also through the implementation of this plan. This will be undertaken through the existing structure we have in place internally and externally through the means described under 'Consultation'.

## **8 Reporting**

We confirm our commitment to submitting an annual progress report on the implementation of this plan to the ECNI.

## **9 Five Year Review**

Five yearly reviews of our plan will be conducted in consultation with the ECNI.

## **10 Consultation**

10.1 We are committed to conducting consultation in accordance with the guiding principles set out in the Equality Commission's guidelines. Further we recognise that consultation should be timely, open and inclusive.

10.2 We are keen to seek the views of people with disabilities on a number of levels when implementing our Disability Action Plan. To this end, we will:

- 10.2.1 seek to engage people with disabilities and the organisations representing disability at development stage;
- 10.2.2 consult with those organisations and groups as listed in our Section 75 Equality Scheme;
- 10.2.3 present our plan to our Residents Forum which includes Habinteg residents with disabilities;

- 10.2.4 consult as wide a range of representative groups and organisations as possible, both independently and in conjunction with the joint working process with which we are involved through NIFHA.
- 10.3 The outcomes we anticipate achieving through effective consultation are:
  - 10.3.1 identifying any further barriers of which we are not currently aware faced by people with disabilities residing on or visiting Habinteg schemes or visiting Habinteg's offices.
  - 10.3.2 identifying past incidences when we may not have promoted positive attitudes towards people with disabilities and identify opportunities in the future when positive attitudes towards people with disabilities may be promoted;
  - 10.3.3 identify priority areas for remedial action;
  - 10.3.4 monitor and review progress on any action taken.
- 10.4 In consulting on matters relating to these duties, Habinteg will work with representative groups, individuals with disabilities and Section 75 groups on how best to obtain their views on key matters. This may be through surveys, meetings, consultative panels or other methods identified as best practice.
- 10.5 Results of any consultation will be recorded and published to all parties involved in the process, with comment invited.
- 10.6 We will advertise any consultation activity as widely as possible to awareness raise and encourage involvement by groups or individuals with an interest in our work.
- 10.7 A copy of this plan will be available on our website with an invitation to visitors to the site to submit their comments on the plan.
- 10.8 Documentation will be available in alternative formats on request.
- 10.9 We will research and develop best practice in the communication techniques used to reach out to young people with disabilities, as well as researching additional dimensions including ethnicity, age, gender, sexual orientation, religious belief and political opinion.
- 10.10 We will continue to work jointly through NIFHA with other housing associations to publicly consult on our Section 75 Equality and Disability Duties.

## 11 Action Measures

### Background & Introduction

Habinteg has had a strong focus on meeting the needs of people with disabilities since it was founded in 1977. As stated in our introduction, the word 'Habinteg' comes from an amalgamation of

two words 'Habitation' and 'Integration' with direct reference to the integration of disabled people into the community. Since being founded as an organisation, our Board of Management and staff team, led by our Chief Executive, have worked tirelessly to achieve this original vision. Our first scheme completed shortly after we were founded comprises 14 dwellings, nine of which are constructed to meet the needs of people who are wheelchair dependent. This figure represents a very high proportion of wheelchair accommodation to that of general family and is a formula which has proven to be successful in that area. Most other integrated schemes include between 18 and 25% of wheelchair accommodation ensuring that integration of people with disabilities is core to our housing provision. All of our accommodation, including general family, is wheelchair accessible at ground floor level meaning wheelchair users on schemes can visit their neighbours in general family accommodation. We construct all of our general family accommodation to *Lifetimes Homes* standards.

12.1 In addition to the provision of integrated schemes throughout Northern Ireland, we have undertaken work in the following areas to promote positive attitudes towards people with disabilities:

- 11.1.1 provision of services for people with disabilities in our offices and in Habinteg dwellings.
- 11.1.2 Disability Awareness training
- 11.1.3 interview skills training
- 11.1.4 Habinteg policies
- 11.1.5 Disability Discrimination Act Audits with Major Repairs works
- 11.1.6 wheelchair access provided at all Habinteg office and common room facilities and to the ground floor of all Habinteg dwellings
- 11.1.7 a champion of disability Rights on our Board of Management
- 11.1.8 use of positive images of people with disabilities in our promotional materials
- 11.1.9 positive images of people with disabilities reflected in Habinteg literature, correspondence, written and promotional materials.

11.2 We further encourage the participation of disabled people in public life:

- 11.2.1 attendance at Disability Awareness Fairs;
- 11.2.2 stakeholder representation on Board of Management;

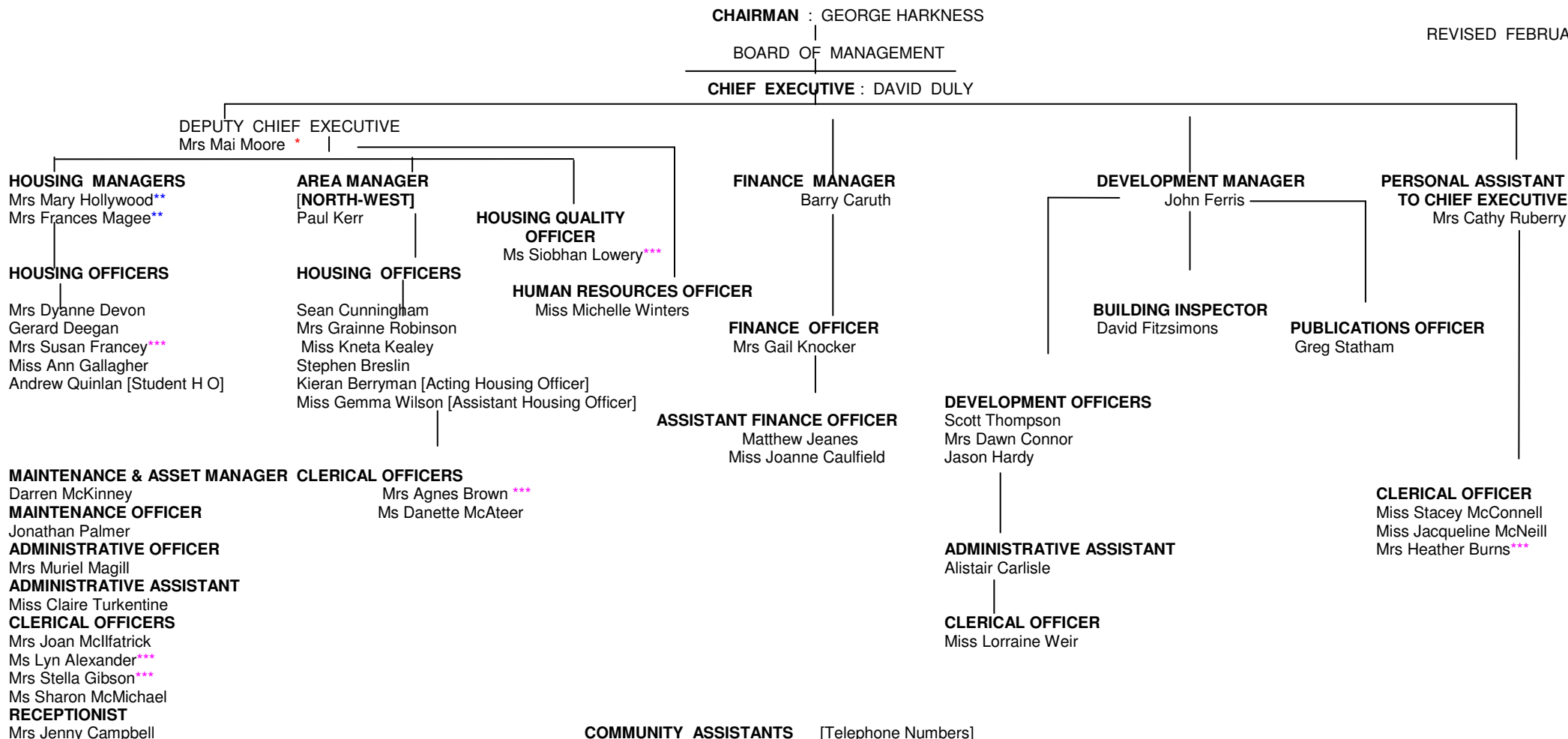
- 11.2.3 recruitment, selection and employment policies are in place which will promote the fair and equitable employment of people with disabilities
- 11.2.3.1 support given to all members of the Habinteg Residents' Forum including those members who have disabilities;
- 11.2.4 support given to staff for volunteer opportunities such as the Special Olympics. One volunteer from Habinteg who has a disability was allocated volunteering duties to match his skills and personal interests;
- 11.2.5 we welcomed a television crew into our office building to film a 'Day in the life' feature on a member of staff with a disability, hence promoting the integration of people with disabilities in the workplace.
- 11.2.6 Use of *Ariel font size 14* in all of our correspondence.

11.3 Outlined in the table overleaf are the measures which we propose to take over the period of this Disability Action Plan, together with performance indicators and targets

## Action Measures

1	Review how Habinteg's nominated charity is chosen with a view to involving staff in the agreement of new charities.	[March 2007].
2	Research further volunteering opportunities for staff in line with our Corporate Social Responsibility Policy	[January - December 2007].
3	Work closely with Joint Management partners who represent the needs of people with disabilities to identify action Habinteg can take to promote positive attitudes towards people with disabilities and encourage the participation of people with disabilities in public life.	Ongoing
4	Embed the disability duties into our consultation with customers processes through our Residents' Forum and customer survey structures.	December 2007
5	Continue to maintain accessibility of website at current level and explore further accessibility formats as they arise.	Ongoing
6	Review new internal information system site to ensure accessibility.	Ongoing
7	Include regular features about disability in <i>Habinteg News</i> (Habinteg publication for all residents).	Annually
8	Include regular features about disability in ' <i>In the Bag</i> ' (internal staff publication).	Four-monthly
9	Continue to include photography in publications and our online systems using positive imagery of people with disabilities using Habinteg services.	Ongoing
10	Promote awareness of our new duties under the Disability Discrimination Order as part of the induction and training programme for Board Members and staff.	Ongoing

<b>11</b>	Explore work experience opportunities for people with disabilities within Habinteg.	Ongoing
<b>12</b>	Undertake DDA Audits as part of our programme of Major Repairs at Habinteg schemes and facilities.	Ongoing
<b>13</b>	Promoting our Disability Duties to Consultants and Contractors to encourage similar commitment.	December 2007



**MAINTENANCE & ASSET MANAGER** Darren McKinney  
**MAINTENANCE OFFICER** Jonathan Palmer  
**ADMINISTRATIVE OFFICER** Mrs Muriel Magill  
**ADMINISTRATIVE ASSISTANT** Miss Claire Turkentine  
**CLERICAL OFFICERS** Mrs Joan McIlfratrick, Ms Lyn Alexander, Mrs Stella Gibson, Ms Sharon McMichael  
**RECEPTIONIST** Mrs Jenny Campbell

**CLERICAL OFFICERS** Mrs Agnes Brown, Ms Danette McAteer

**COMMUNITY ASSISTANTS** [Telephone Numbers]

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Duke St.	Mrs Margaret Lunn	[028] 9045 9410	and Gelvin Gardens		" 7131 8481
Strabane	Paul McNulty	[028] 7188 2660	Farland Way,		[028] 2076 8214
Enniskillen	Conal O'Donnell	[028] 6632 4068	Old City Court	Mrs Margaret Cunningham	[028] 7127 9932
Ballycastle		[office not manned]	and Inch View		[office not manned]
Castle Gardens	Lawrence Quinn	[028] 8775 3305	Old School Lane	Ms Miriam Ward	[028] 7135 7085
Brian's Well Road	Jacqueline Duffy	[028]	River Court, Londonderry	Tony O'Hara	[028] 7136 6141
Limavady	Mrs Donna Reid	[028] 7776 8880	St Eithnes Park, "		

\* Senior Officer in Chief Executive's absence      \*\* Job Share      \*\*\* Part-time

Paul Kerr, Sean Cunningham, Grainne Robinson, Knetta Kealey, Agnes Brown, Danette McAteer, Stephen Breslin, Kieran Berryman and Gemma Wilson are based at the Association's Londonderry office

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