



Habinteg
Housing Association (Ulster) Ltd

DISABILITY ACTION PLAN 2021 - 2026

Alternative Formats

This Disability Action Plan can be obtained from us in alternative formats including large print, Braille, audio, audio description or alternative language. 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.

Our website is also fitted with innovative Browsealoud accessibility software. Clicking on the logo (*it appears top right on our website*) opens the Browsealoud toolkit which provides speech, reading and translation to websites, facilitating access and participation for people with Dyslexia, Low Literacy, English as a Second Language and those with mild visual impairments.

This version of our plan is printed in Arial Font Size 14, as recommended as a minimum by the Royal Institute for the Blind (RNIB) for readers who are partially sighted or otherwise visually impaired.

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

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Foreword

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 1995 (as amended by Article 5 of the Disability Discrimination (Northern Ireland) Order 2006) when carrying out our functions and delivering our vision *'Homes, Lives, Communities'*.

We are fully committed to fulfilling our statutory obligations in compliance with this legislation. It places duties on public authorities to:

- promote positive attitudes towards disabled people; and
- encourage participation by disabled people in public life ('the disability duties').

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

We will further ensure that all members of our Board, sub-committees, staff team and Residents' Panels are aware of our 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 disabled people and their representative groups when undertaking our five-yearly review of this plan.



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1. Introduction

1.1 Under Section 49A of the Disability Discrimination Act 1995 (DDA 1995) (as amended by Article 5 of the Disability Discrimination (Northern Ireland) Order 2006), Habinteg Housing Association (Ulster) Ltd (hereafter referred to as 'Habinteg' or 'the Association') 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, Habinteg is also required to submit to the Equality Commission a Disability Action Plan showing how it proposes to fulfill these duties in relation to its functions.

1.2 We, the undersigned, as Chairman and Chief Executive of Habinteg, are committed to implementing effectively the disability duties and this disability action plan.

We will allocate all necessary resources (in terms of people, time and money) in order to implement effectively this plan and where appropriate, build objectives and targets relating to the disability duties into corporate and annual operating plans.

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

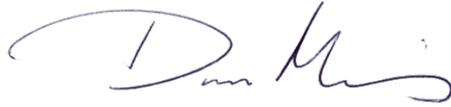
We will promote our Disability Action Plan at the earliest opportunity throughout the organisation and ensure our staff are fully aware of our commitment and the responsibilities required of them as employees

1.3 We confirm our 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.

A copy of this plan, our annual progress report to the Equality Commission and our five year review of this plan will be made available on our website <http://www.habinteg-ulster.co.uk/equality-matters>



Neil McIvor
Chairman



Darren McKinney
Chief Executive

Responsibility for reviewing and evaluating this disability action plan and the point of contact within the Association will be:

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2. Background and Functions

Habinteg Housing Association (Ulster) Ltd, founded in 1976, is a registered housing association in Northern Ireland. Habinteg plans, develops and manages housing schemes in both urban and rural areas throughout the region and works with a number of partner organisations in providing supported housing projects.

Habinteg's Vision - 'Homes | Lives | Communities' encapsulates the Association's central aim of providing housing which combines a range of dwelling types - family houses, apartments and bungalows - in order to appropriately meet the needs of the widest range of users, including older persons and persons with a disability.

Partnership projects include sensitively designed housing with care schemes, temporary accommodation for people who are homeless, and housing initiatives for people with additional support needs.

- The Association has over 2400 units of housing at over 100 locations across Northern Ireland and 18 partnership projects.
- Work is overseen by a voluntary Board and executed by over 90 full time members of staff.
- The majority of staff work from our Hollywood offices. These offices houses the departments of Asset Management, Development, Executive Support, Finance and Homes & Communities.
- There is also a North West regional office, which houses Asset Management, Development, Executive Support and Homes and Communities staff.
- A number of residential staff are based at our larger housing schemes.

The **main** functional areas of the Association are:

- **Asset Management** (including planned, cyclical / response maintenance and servicing)
- **Development** (including managing a capital budget in the purchase and disposal of land and property)
- **Finance** (including the delivery of efficient and effective financial processes in the borrowing and investing of money on behalf of the Association)
- **Homes and Communities** (including housing allocation, rent collection, arrears, voids, anti-social behaviour, tenant engagement, and community involvement)

We also have staff working in the following support areas of:

- **Communications** - publication and communication of all significant internal and external communications and publications on behalf of the Association.
- **Executive Support** - Corporate Support to the Chief Executive and Board
- **Health and Safety and Compliance** – ensuring that the Association is equipped and adhering to the relevant Health and Safety legislation
- **Human Resources** - providing advice and support to staff, ensuring that the Association is adhering to all relevant recruitment and selection and employment legislation and practice.
- **I.T.** - maintains the Association's computer networks and systems, including installing and configuring hardware and software, and solving technical problems for the Association and its staff.
- **Procurement** - overseeing the appropriate procurement of goods and services
- **House Sales** - overseeing the sale of dwellings to sitting tenants, where this is applicable.

All of the above work is overseen by a voluntary Board and comprises a Chairperson, Vice chairperson, Treasurer, Honorary Secretary and up to six other members. The Board meets bi-monthly including holding an Annual General Meeting when new members may seek election and when a third of existing members who wish to continue to serve as members are obliged to seek re-election.

3. Public life positions

The range of public life positions over which Habinteg has responsibility for, are as follows:

- **Board Members**
- **Office Holders**
- **Co-opted Committee members**
- **Residents Forum/Residents Regional Panel members**
- **Stakeholder organisations in which we work in partnership.**

4. Key measures to date

Habinteg has a strong focus on meeting the needs of people with disabilities. The word 'Habinteg' comes from the words 'Habitation' and 'Integration' with direct reference to the integration of disabled people into the community.

The Board and staff team, led by our Chief Executive, have worked tirelessly to achieve this original vision. The Association's first completed scheme, completed in 1981, 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 needs 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 new build 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.

Promoting positive attitudes towards disabled people

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:

- We continue to work closely with occupational therapists to carry out minor and major adaptations to our properties to help our tenants and/or members of their household to have a better quality of life and remain in their home;
- We have offered to make and/or responded to the need for reasonable adjustments to be made for disabled people visiting our offices;
- All staff members who are recruited by Habinteg are required to complete an equality and diversity e-learning module as part of their induction. This is in addition to a face to face meeting, also as part of their induction, with the Quality and Performance Manager who outlines Habinteg's equality duties including disability duties under Section 75 of the Northern Ireland Act 1998;
- All relevant staff have completed internal recruitment and selection training, facilitated by HR with emphasis on our policy and procedures including legislation, our recruitment process, short-listing, before the interview and at the interview;

- All employees have completed online Unconscious bias training to challenge their own biases and to gain practical techniques for making conscious and objective decisions;
- We are a JAM friendly business - All staff members undergo JAM (Just a Minute) awareness to help ensure they are equipped to provide excellent customer service to people with learning difficulties, communication barriers and hidden disabilities.
- We continue to equality screen all revised and new internal policies and procedures;
- We carry out disability audits, where necessary, as part of Planned Maintenance works;
- Wheelchair access is provided at all main Habinteg offices and common room facilities and to the ground floor of all Habinteg dwellings;
- We use positive images of people with disabilities in Habinteg literature, correspondence, written and promotional materials;
- We submitted a nomination to promote for our partnership scheme Millburn Road with INSPIRE in the Legal Island Equality and Diversity Awards 2021 and won Best Disability Initiative;
- We continue to complete Annual Equality Progress Reports to the Equality Commission NI outlining our progress in adhering to our equality duties;
- We updated or introduced a number of policies and procedures that promote positive attitudes towards people with disabilities. These included:
 - Revising and updating our Equal Opportunities Policy and renaming it our Equality and Diversity Policy;
 - Revising and updating our Work Life Balance Policy and Procedures;
 - Amalgamating our Children and Vulnerable Adults policies and updating these under a new Safeguarding Policy and Procedures;
- We provided mental health and well-being online training to all employees to promote positive wellbeing in the workplace, to remove the stigma surrounding mental health and to encourage employees to ask for help when they need it;
- We provided Absence Management training for managers – this training incorporates how to manage cases relating to employees with disabilities and making reasonable adjustments.

Encourage the participation of disabled people in public life

- We have been involved in training work placements in partnership with MENCAP and North West Regional College (NWRC) for young people with a disability, who have enrolled on the Transition programme at NWRC. The training is designed to help the young person build skills and confidence to help get a job. When on placement the young person is supported by a key worker from MENCAP. To date we have provided work placements for 3 young people with learning disabilities/difficulties.
- We have reviewed our recruitment, selection and employment policies to ensure that they continue to promote the fair and equitable employment of people with disabilities;
- Support is provided and given to all members of the Habinteg Residents' Regional Panels, other resident/tenant groups and individuals including those members who have disabilities;
- We use *Arial font size 14* in all of our correspondence as well as the choice of larger print, audio version or other alternative formats on request;
- We incorporate the ReachDeck Digital Inclusion Toolbar on our website, helping users to read and translate online content, listen to content and access support tools for visual impairments and hidden disabilities.
- We have carried out a 5 year review and update of our Equality Scheme, including Easy Read version, in accordance with the Equality Commission guidance, legislation and feedback from consultees.



5. Disability Action Plan Measures 2021-26

Measures to promote positive attitudes towards disabled people and encourage the participation of disabled people in public life

Training	<p>1. Measure: Equality and Diversity e-Learning training module for all new employees.</p>	<p>Performance/Intended outcome: New employees are made fully aware at the outset of their employment of our disability duties. This forms part of their induction.</p>
	<p>Timescale indicators/target: When a new employee joins the Association.</p>	
	<p>2. Measure: One to one briefing session on equality duties facilitated by Quality and Performance Manager (QPM) with new employees.</p>	<p>Performance/Intended outcome: Further emphasis is placed on our equality and disability duties to new employees, by referring to our Equality Scheme and Disability Action Plan and explaining their responsibilities as an employee. This one to one session with the QPM forms part of the induction of all new employees.</p>
	<p>Timescale indicators/target: When a new employee joins the Association.</p>	
	<p>3. Measure: Refresher training for existing employees on equality and disability duties.</p>	<p>Performance/Intended outcome: All employees are reminded of and are kept up to date on our equality and disability duties</p>
	<p>Timescale indicators/target: Every three years or as and when legislation or best practice necessitates this.</p>	
<p>4. Measure: Recruitment and Selection Training for all relevant staff.</p>	<p>Performance/Intended outcome: All relevant staff are fully trained and equipped to ensure that all recruitment and selection policies, procedures and practices are adopted and implemented fairly and appropriately.</p>	
<p>Timescale indicators/target: All existing relevant staff and when a new staff join.</p>		

Training	<p>5. Measure: Unconscious bias e-learning for all employees.</p>	<p>Performance/Intended outcome: Employees are aware of their own biases and address these biases by gaining practical techniques for making conscious and objective decisions.</p>
	<p>Timescale indicators/target: All current employees and when a new employee joins.</p>	
	<p>6. Measure: Train Mental Health First Aiders.</p>	<p>Performance/Intended outcome: To support employees by having internal trained mental health first aiders, as a first point of contact for those living with a mental ill health condition.</p>
	<p>Timescale indicators/target: By March 2022.</p>	
	<p>7. Measure: Sign up to, adopt, implement the Mental Health Charter - principles / work-plans</p>	<p>Performance/Intended outcome: To demonstrate our commitment to promoting awareness and understanding of mental health, lowering stigma and supporting employees.</p>
	<p>Timescale indicators/target: By March 2022.</p>	
<p>8. Measure: Safeguarding Officers.</p>	<p>Performance/Intended outcome: To have a dedicated internal Safeguarding Officer to report any safeguarding concerns of vulnerable adults and children and ensure appropriate safeguarding arrangements are in place.</p>	
<p>Timescale indicators/target: As soon as possible.</p>		

Policies & Procedures	<p>9. Measure: Review all external and internal policies, practices and procedures.</p>	<p>Performance/Intended outcome: Promotion of positive attitudes towards disabled people, through our policies and procedures, with due regard to the inclusion and encouragement of participation of people with disabilities.</p>
	<p>Timescale indicators/target: When new policies, procedures/practices are introduced or existing ones are revised.</p>	

Policies, Procedures & Practices	<p>10. Measure: Provide housing which combines a range of dwelling types in order to appropriately meet the needs of the widest range of users, including older persons and persons with a disability.</p>	<p>Performance/Intended outcome/s: Disabled People are supported to live independently in their home and the communities where they belong. We are enhancing inclusive living experiences for all our customers.</p>
	<p>Timescale indicators/target: Develop 10% of new build housing schemes to wheelchair standard Develop all new build to Lifetime Homes Standard The Association will advise tenants on the timescales associated with their adaptation work and will update them accordingly.</p>	<p>To continue to work collaboratively with Occupational Therapists to meet the needs of individuals who require adaptation work to their home so they can remain in their own home or are transferred to another home that better meets their needs.</p>
	<p>11. Measure: Promote equality of opportunity for disabled people to participate in the workplace. Make reasonable adjustments and provide any support to assist employees who require this.</p>	<p>Performance/Intended outcome: Disabled people are supported in contributing to society. Increased applications from disabled people Our employees are provided with the necessary equipment, support and reasonable adjustments to carry out their job in a suitable and safe environment. (To continue to work in partnership with Disability Action to provide and sustain employment for disabled people and require support to continue to work. It also provides an Employee Assistance Programme and Occupational Health service to help employees who may be experiencing health issues).</p>

<p>12. Measure: Continue to equality screen all internal policies, procedures and practices to ensure all nine main category groups, including people with a disability/disabilities are not negatively impacted.</p>	<p>Performance/Intended outcome: All internal policies and procedures embrace equality and diversity and promote a culture of fairness and inclusion</p>
<p>Timescale indicators/target: As / when a new or revised policy and/or procedure has been updated or requires updating due to legislation or best practice.</p>	
<p>13. Measure: Annual Employee Declaration of Disabilities Process.</p>	<p>Performance/Intended outcome: To increase the completion of disability monitoring information of employees and provide the necessary support and reasonable adjustments required.</p>
<p>Timescale indicators/target: By March 2022.</p>	
<p>14. Measure: Encourage the participation of people with disabilities on Habinteg’s Board, Committees and tenant participation structures.</p>	<p>Performance/Intended outcome: Representation at Board level and other influencing platforms which demonstrate increased participation of those with disabilities.</p>
<p>Timescale indicators/target: As soon as possible and in place by March 2022</p>	

Communication	<p>15. Measure: Review of accessibility of the Association’s website for people with disabilities</p>	<p>Performance/Intended outcome: Our website remains accessible, including, where available, the introduction of new features that increase and promote accessibility, particularly for those users with disabilities.</p>
	<p>Timescale indicators/target: Annually or as necessary.</p>	
	<p>16. Measure: Equip our new offices with facilitates for customers and employees with disabilities.</p>	<p>Performance/Intended outcome: Full range of features - loop system, text-phone, accessible signage etc. to encourage participation of customers and employees with disabilities.</p>
	<p>Timescale indicators/target: By October 2022.</p>	
Communication	<p>17. Measure: To continue to promote positive images of people with disabilities in Habinteg literature, correspondence, written and promotional materials.</p>	<p>Performance/Intended outcome: That positive images will emphasise the value of the lives of people with disabilities, their dignity and strength and the contribution they make to society.</p>
	<p>Timescale indicators/target: Ongoing</p>	
Communication	<p>18. Measure: JAM (Just A Minute) card* awareness for all employees. *allows people with learning difficulties or communication barriers to discreetly alert others that they may need a little extra time and patience).</p>	<p>Performance/Intended outcome: New employees are made fully aware of the Association’s commitment and expectation on them as employees to exercise the ‘Just a Minute’ initiative.</p>
	<p>Timescale indicators/target: When a new employee joins the Association.</p>	

Partnership Working	<p>19. Measure: Build on partnerships with statutory organisations providing services for tenants /residents with disabilities:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Health & Social Care Trusts • Inspire • Harmoni • Action Mental Health • Occupational Therapists • NI Housing Executive • Other Housing Associations 	<p>Performance/Intended outcome: Our tenants/residents receive all the support they need/are entitled to, to enrich their lives and the communities in which they live. For e.g.</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Continue to work closely with NIHE to identify applicants with disabilities early in the design process. • Continue to work closely with OTs regarding requests for adaptations to assist tenants/residents with disabilities to remain in their own homes. • Continue to work closely with all joint management partners to provide appropriate accommodation and support for those with disabilities.
	<p>Timescale indicators/target: Ongoing.</p>	



Neil McIvor
Chairman



Darren McKinney
Chief Executive



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