



Habinteg
Housing Association (Ulster) Ltd

Disability Discrimination Order (Northern Ireland) 2006

Disability Action Plan



Alternative Formats

This version of our Disability Action Plan is printed in Arial Font Size 14 and can be viewed online in pdf format on our website. Please contact us if you require this material in an alternative format.

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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 1995 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 members of our Board, committees, staff team and Residents' Forum are aware of the 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 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.



Martin Turnbull
Chairman



David Duly
Chief Executive

April 2013

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. 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'. We have provided over 1800 homes, including almost 300 wheelchair user homes, and provided over 300 bed spaces of supported housing, more than 70 of these for wheelchair users, in 18 schemes developed with a range of experienced partner organisations.

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

Our Mission Statement reads

Habinteg provides accessible, sustainable, high quality housing

Our Values are

quality, responsiveness, commitment, integrity, diversity and the environment

Habinteg has achieved the *Investors in People* four times since 1997, Charter Mark three times since 1999 and we achieved Customer Service Excellence in 2012, retaining it in 2013.

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 Committee members
- Residents' Forum members
- Stakeholder organisations with which we work in partnership.

5 Commitment to implementation

- 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, led by the Chairman. The Chief Executive will provide direction and guidance to both the Board and staff team with the assistance of the Quality and Performance Manager who will have day-to-day responsibility for implementation of the policy relating to this area. The Quality and Performance Manager 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, Committees and ultimately to the Board.
- 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 15 Board members. The official positions of Chairman, Vice-chairman, Secretary and Treasurer are elected at Board level annually. There are five Committees in place which oversee the work of the staff in the core business functions of:
- Housing Management
 - Development
 - Finance
 - Audit
 - Nominations & Remunerations

- 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 Quality and Performance Manager will support this work and will be the main point of contact in this regard. Contact details can be found under 'Alternative Formats' at the start of this document.
 - 6.4.2 The Quality and Performance Manager reports to the Chief Executive and Senior Management Team on a regular basis.
 - 6.4.3 In addition, the Quality and Performance Manager 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 Director and or Senior Manager and detailed below together with the core functions of each team.

6.5.1 Housing Management Team led by Deputy Chief Executive / Director of Operations

This is the largest team in Habinteg comprising over 50 staff members including, at Senior Management level the Deputy Chief Executive/Director of Operations, Housing Managers and Area Manager, Maintenance Manager and Quality and Performance Manager. There are 11 Housing Officers, four Student Housing Officers, five Maintenance Officers and one Maintenance Assistant. There is also a Communications Officer and ten staff

employed in Administrative / Clerical / Reception roles - including a PA to the Deputy Chief Executive/Director of Operations. Integral to the Housing Management team is our Community Assistant role (we have 19) providing a residential / peripatetic 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 Director of Development

This team comprises; the Director of Development, the Development Manager, Planned Maintenance Manager, three Development Officers and one administrative staff member 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 Director of Finance and Corporate Services

This team comprises the Director of Finance and Corporate Services, the Finance Manager, Human Resources Manager, two Finance Officers, two Assistant Officers, two staff providing clerical / administrative assistance, an ICT Systems Administrator and IT Assistant. The Team 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 correspondence, filing and administrative support. The team comprises two job share PA's to the Chief Executive and three full-time officers.

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 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 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 our 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 is 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 a strong focus on meeting the needs of people with disabilities. As stated in our introduction, 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 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.

- 11.1 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;
 - 11.1.8 use of positive images of people with disabilities in our promotional materials;
 - 11.1.9 positive images of people with disabilities 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 the Board;
 - 11.2.3 Section 75 Equality Duty and Disability duties are standing items at sub committee meeting agendas;
 - 11.2.4 recruitment, selection and employment policies are in place which will promote the fair and equitable employment of people with disabilities;
 - 11.2.5 support given to all members of the Habinteg Residents' Forum including those members who have disabilities;
 - 11.2.6 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;
 - 11.2.7 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;
 - 11.2.8 use of *Arial font size 14* in all of our correspondence as well as the choice of larger print, audio version or other alternative format on request;
 - 11.2.9 we have a Corporate Responsibility Policy in place. In accordance with this policy, under the sub-header of 'People', we have committed to making "a distinct contribution to economic and social development by offering work experience placements particularly to

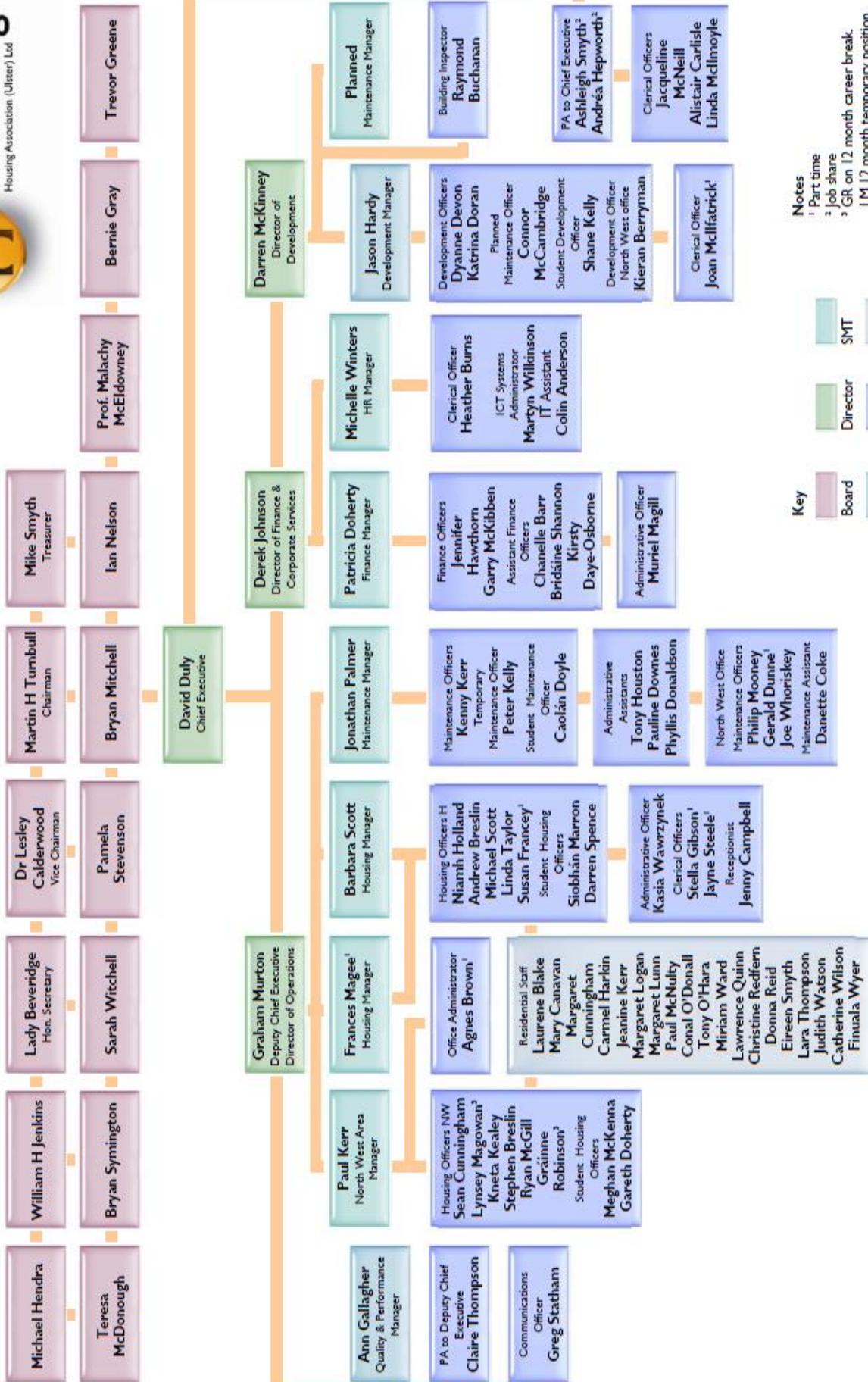
individuals from disadvantaged groups, where possible". This refers to members of the community who do not have the same opportunities for work experience as other people.

- 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] and ongoing
2	Research further volunteering opportunities for staff in line with our Corporate Responsibility Policy	[January - December 2007] and ongoing
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 No less that four-monthly review meetings
4	Embed the disability duties into our consultation with customers' processes through our Residents' Forum and customer survey structures.	December 2007 and ongoing
5	Continue to maintain accessibility of our website at its 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 on Staff Intranet	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
11	Explore work experience opportunities for people with disabilities within Habinteg.	Ongoing
12	Undertake DDA Audits as part of our programme of Major Repairs at Habinteg schemes and facilities.	Ongoing
13	Promoting our Disability Duties to Consultants and Contractors to encourage similar commitment.	December 2007 and ongoing

APPENDIX 1



Key

- Board
- Director
- Office staff
- Manager
- Residential staff

Notes

- ¹ Part time
- ² Job share
- ³ GR on 12 month career break.
- LM 12 month temporary position.

Chart updated April 2013



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