



DIABILITY ACTION PLAN

To promote positive attitudes towards disabled people

To encourage the participation of disabled people in Public Life

Effective from 1st September 2021 to 31st August 2024

Alternative Formats

English: This Disability Action Plan can be made available in minority ethnic languages, on request, to meet the needs of those not fluent in English.

This Disability Action Plan can be obtained from Newington Housing Association in alternative formats including large print, Braille, electronically, or on disk.

If you would like a copy in an alternative format, please contact:

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Introduction

Under Section 49A of the Disability Discrimination Act 1995 (DDA 1995) (as amended by Article 5 of the Disability Discrimination (Northern Ireland) Order 2006), Newington Housing 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, the Association is also required to submit to the Equality Commission a Plan showing how it proposes to fulfil these duties in relation to its functions.

Commitments

The Chair and Chief Executive are committed to effectively implementing the Disability Duties and this Plan.

Mainstreaming the Duties

Newington Housing Association is committed to successfully mainstreaming the Disability Duties throughout the organisation.

Resources

In order to deliver the actions detailed within this Plan, the Association is aware that additional resources will have to be allocated. Newington Housing Association is committed to allocating all reasonable, additional resources (in terms of people, time and money) required to implement this Plan.

Internal Arrangements

Newington Housing Association will put appropriate internal arrangements in place to ensure that the Disability Duties are complied with and the Plan is successfully implemented.

Our CEO, Anthony Kerr will have operational responsibility for ensuring the implementation and monitoring of the Plan. Regular and Annual Progress Reports will be provided through the normal reporting structures.

Training

Newington Housing Association is committed to providing training for staff and office holders on Disability Equality legislation and Disability Awareness.

Reporting Arrangements

Newington Housing Association confirms its commitment to submitting Annual Progress Reports on the implementation of this Plan to the Equality Commission and carrying out a

review of this Plan in line with current review arrangements for Section 75 of the Northern Ireland Act 1998. This will ensure the alignment of Section 75 and disability duties.

A copy of this Plan, the Association's Annual Progress Reports and review of this Plan will be made available on the Association's website www.newingtonha.co.uk

Background

Newington Housing Association (1975) Limited was established in 1976. The Board of Management of the housing association membership currently comprises the Chair and 11 other members appointed by the Management Committee. Appointments are made in accordance with the Associations Rules, public appointments system and are for a period of a maximum of 9 years. The housing association reflects a range of interests, representing the interests of users of the service.

Newington Housing Association is a community-based housing association with 718 units of accommodation, operating exclusively within North Belfast. The Association provides mainly general needs housing, but also provides accommodation for older people, singles and provides accommodation for homeless people in partnership with Depaul Ireland.

Newington Housing Association is a part of a Group Structure with Apex Housing Group. Newington Housing continues to be registered as a Housing Association with the Department for Communities and operates as an independent Housing Association with its own staff and Board of Management.

Newington Housing Association employs 19 full time and 2 part time members of staff.

Newington Housing Association *Vision, Mission & Values*

Vision

'Building Communities'

Mission

To work with our partners to provide homes and services in safe, diverse, vibrant and confident communities.

Values

Partnership

We will work and engage with others to achieve results and provide solutions.

Accountability

We will be open and transparent in what we do and maintain the highest standards of governance.

Community

We will focus on the needs of the community as well as the individual. We will work with others to nurture respect and promote inclusion in all the communities we serve.

Quality

We will continue to provide high quality homes, services and support and will strive to continuously improve.

Value for Money

We will ensure that our resources are used to obtain the best outcomes in the most effective and efficient way.

Functions & Responsibilities

1.7 The main functions of Newington Housing Association are:

- To provide affordable and good quality housing for those in need
- To provide an efficient, equitable and effective housing service for the associations tenants
- To develop new quality and affordable housing
- To offer effective housing advice to applicants and prospective applicants

Public Life Positions

The public life positions which exist in the Association are Non-Executive Director posts.

The Association is aware that there is currently an under representation of disabled people in public life positions.

Report on Progress

We will submit a progress report to the Equality Commission each year on the implementation of this Disability Action Plan. We will also publish it on the website alongside our Annual Report of Progress.

As required by the DDA, the Association will also carry out a review of our Equality Scheme every five year and submit it to the Equality Commission.

Proposed Action Measures

On the following pages we have outlined the actions we propose to take in coming years along with targets and timescales. We will review and update this Plan on a regular basis and will continue to engage with key organisations and individuals representing the interests of people with disabilities.

We are committed to monitoring and reviewing our policies, procedures and practices to ensure that we continue to deliver an effective service to people with disabilities.

When working with disabled people we are committed to making the necessary changes in how we conduct our meetings to ensure meaningful participation by all involved.

The Association will recognise and takes into account the varying needs of people with different disabilities. Newington Housing Association will also address the needs of people with multiple identities, such as ethnic minority women with disabilities, children and older people with disabilities etc. and will take account of these in the implementation of the action plan.

NHA Disability Action Plan Objectives 2021 – 2024

Outlined below are the action measures which the Association proposes to take from September 2021 until the end of August 2024. We will regularly review and develop the Plan and will incorporate additional measures (when required) throughout the live of the Plan.

1) COMMUNICATION

- **Accessible website and social media platforms**
- **Ensure the effective use of Signage and Positive Imagery**
- **Audit of materials/guides in collaboration with people with a disability**
- **Improve opportunities for a person with a disability to communicate with the Association, other statutory bodies and all relevant external agencies**

We will:

- 1.1 Regularly review and update our website and social media platforms to promote disability awareness, positive attitudes towards people with a disability and encourage the participation of disabled people in public life.
- 1.2 Use effective signage and positive imagery to promote inclusion for all.
- 1.3 Continue to carry out positive engagement with specialist disability organisations.
- 1.4 Review our Complaints Policy and procedures and other feedback mechanisms to ensure a quality service to tenants and other service users.
- 1.5 Ensure that surveys are complete to ensure our service standards are being maintained and are easily accessible to all.

- 1.6 Improve opportunities for a person with a disability to effectively communicate with us, other statutory agencies, etc.
- 1.7 Ensure that all relevant staff are competent in using the new facilities incorporated within our newly constructed office accommodation (i.e. text phone, induction loops systems, etc.
- 1.8 Seek the views of staff on the content and implementation of this Disability Action Plan and disability equality generally.
- 1.9 Provide updates and advise to disabled tenants on changes to welfare reform and other key and relevant legislation.
- 1.10 Continue to promote take up the use of NHA's disabled adaptation service, ensuring it is easily accessible to all and monitor take up of the service at least annually.
- 1.11 Ensure all internal and external communications, information, publications, policies, etc. can be provided in alternative formats.

2) TRAINING

- **Design and evaluate training in collaboration with people with a disability**
- **Provide training for managers and staff in managing stress**
- **Ensure people with a disability have full access to training and development opportunities**
- **Include at least one relevant disability issue each year at team meetings**
- **Invite key disability speakers to at least one event per year.**

We will:

- 2.1 Ensure all staff have full access to training and development opportunities.
- 2.2 Provide new/refresher training on Disability Equality legislation and Disability Awareness to all board and staff members every 2 -3 years and invite key disability speakers.
- 2.3 Ensure all new staff have received information about disability awareness during initial staff inductions.
- 2.4 Continue partnership working arrangements with other local RSL's (i.e., NIHE and other Housing Association's), NIFHA and CIH to deliver shared training.

3) PARTICIPATION AND ENGAGEMENT

- **Promote interest from people with a disability on project groups, committees, etc**
- **Customer/staff surveys**
- **Engage with disability sector**
- **Facilitate the involvement of disabled people in the work of the Association**
- **Increase staff declarations (where appropriate)**
- **Appoint a Disability Champion**

We will:

- 3.1 Carry out annual exercises to encourage staff to declare disabilities/long term health conditions and ensure consideration is given to the implementation of all identified reasonable adjustments.
- 3.2 Provide support to those within the community and voluntary sector who promote initiatives for disabled people, etc.
- 3.3 When hosting internal or external events ensure that:-
 - ❖ Presentation and promotion materials are easily readable
 - ❖ Signage is clear
 - ❖ Handouts are in accessible formats
 - ❖ Venues are easy to reach, fully accessible and are chosen to ensure that they are welcoming environments
 - ❖ Delegates are made aware of fire evacuation policies, location of toilets, etc.

- 3.4 We will encourage people with disabilities to become involved at all levels within our organisation (i.e., BOM, etc.).
- 3.5 Encourage all tenants and staff to submit articles for Tenant Newsletters and other relevant publications.
- 3.6 Promote participation from people with a disability on our Tenant Forum, focus group sessions, local residents committees, etc.
- 3.7 Improve online access for tenants who have a disability.
- 3.8 Appoint a Disability Champion.

4) RECRUITMENT AND RETENTION

- **Provide placement opportunities**
- **Provide work shadowing**
- **Seek to increase number of applications from people with a disability**
- **Establish a mentor programme**
- **Support employees to manage their physical, mental and financial wellbeing**

We will:

- 4.1 Provide information and support staff on specific disabilities/long term health conditions.
- 4.2 Establish best practice in the recruitment and employment of disabled people.
- 4.3 Support employees to manage their physical, mental and financial wellbeing (i.e. effectively manage stress, etc.).
- 4.4 Where possible, provide work placements, shadowing and mentor programmes and encourage applications and take up to these from people with a disability.

5) OTHER LEGAL, STATUTORY & BEST PRACTICE MEASURES

- **Ensure we report on all findings**
- **Meet all legal and statutory requirements**
- **Ensure we adapt (when necessary) to ensure best practice relating to the services we deliver to all our tenants and service users**

We will:

- 5.1 Deliver requirements of UN Convention on the rights of persons with disabilities.
- 5.2 Review policies to identify and assess any significant issues relating to the two disability duties.
- 5.3 Engage with organisations and disabled people to promote positive attitudes towards disabled people and encourage participation by disabled people in public life.
- 5.4 Ensure representation at joint consultation events hosted by the Equality Commission, NIHE and other statutory agencies, Northern Ireland Housing Association, etc.
- 5.5 Collaborate on outreach activities with disability groups to raise awareness of public appointments.
- 5.6 Ensure the delivery of our new build developments are designed and constructed to meet current and future long-term needs of disabled people.

Timescale for the implementation of the Action Measures

Newington Housing Association intends to ensure the above measures are fully incorporated into our day-to-day activities over the next three years and acknowledges of the need to monitor progress in relation to the implementation of the Disability Action Plan. This is to ensure that the disability duties are being met.

An annual review of the plan will go some way towards monitoring and reviewing the Plan. This will help to develop targets and key performance indicators for the next year whilst detailing any significant outcomes relevant to the review period.

Some of the performance indicators may include circulating information to tenants asking for comments in communications sent out by the Association.

Appendix 1:

Measures to be taken to Implement Disability Duties

<i>Actions</i>	<i>Outcomes</i>	<i>Main Lead Responsibility</i>	<i>Timetable</i>	<i>Annual update on actions taken</i>
<u>Communication</u>				
1.1 - Regularly review and update our website and social media platforms to promote disability awareness, positive attitudes towards people with a disability and encourage the participation of disabled people in public life.	To promote disability awareness, positive attitudes, and participation by all.	All relevant staff	2021 - 2024	<u>Y/1 (Sept. 21 – Aug. 2022)</u> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • <u>Y/2 (Sept. 22 – Aug. 2023)</u> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • <u>Y/3 (Sept. 23 – Aug. 2024)</u>
1.2 - Use effective signage and positive imagery to promote inclusion for all.	To promote disability awareness, positive attitudes, and participation by all.	All staff	2021 - 2024	
1.3 - Continue to carry out positive engagement with specialist disability organisations.	Continue to formalise links with disability	BOM & SMT	2021 - 2024	

	groups that offer guidance and advice.			
1.4 - Review our Complaints Policy and procedures and other feedback mechanisms to ensure a quality service to tenants and other service users.	Review feedback/findings and use info. acquired as a tool to improve work practices and service delivery.	BOM & SMT	2022/23	
1.5 - Ensure that surveys are completed to ensure our service standards are being maintained and are easily accessible to all.	Monitor, review, collate and action findings from all surveys to identify any barriers to accessing NHA's services.	SMT	2021 - 2024	
1.6 - Improve opportunities for a person with a disability to effectively communicate with us, other statutory agencies, etc.	Incorporate facilities within our newly constructed office which will	SMT/All staff	2021 - 2024	

	remove any remaining barriers to tenants seeking to engage or communicate with us or others.			
1.7 - We will ensure that all relevant staff are competent in using the new facilities incorporated within our newly constructed office accommodation (i.e. text phone, induction loops systems, etc.	Provision of training for frontline staff will ensure effective use of new technology and systems, which will improve customer experience and complement/enhance service delivery standards.	SMT/All relevant staff	Nov. 2021	
1.8 - Seek the views of staff on the content and implementation of this	Conduct a staff consultation event relating to	CEO/SMT	Sept. 2021	

Disability Action Plan and disability equality generally.	this DAP and implement any conclusions/recommendations as a result of this.			
1.9 - Provide updates and advise to disabled tenants on changes to welfare reform and other key and relevant legislation.	<p>Ensure tenants effected by changes in legislation are fully aware of how any such changes may directly or indirectly affect them.</p> <p>By providing adequate training to staff on changes that effect residents and/or and the wider community, better support mechanisms and appropriate</p>	SMT/All relevant staff	2021 - 2024	

	<p>referrals can be made.</p> <p>To ensure disabled tenants have easy access to partner organisations that provide advice and support (i.e., Independent Welfare Advisor, Family Support Hubs, North Belfast Advice Partnership and other community and voluntary sector organisations, etc.).</p>			
<p>1.10 - Continue to promote take up the use of NHA's disabled adaptation service, ensuring it is easily accessible to all and</p>	<p>Promotion of service via digital platforms and within NHA's publications will</p>	<p>All relevant staff</p>	<p>2021 - 2024</p>	

<p>monitor take up of the service at least annually.</p>	<p>ensure tenants are fully aware of the service and that it is fully utilised.</p> <p>All adaptations installed will be carried out in an unintrusive and timely manner and as per policy and DfC guidelines.</p> <p>Continue to complete and review findings of all Post Tenancy Visits to ensure tenant's new accommodation fully meets their needs.</p> <p>NHA will monitor take up and performance delivery relating</p>			
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	to this service and compile a report on at least an annual basis.			
1.11 - Ensure all internal and external communications, information, publications, policies, etc. can be provided in alternative formats, when require or requested.	Ensure all service users are aware of availability of all publications, policies, correspondence, etc. can be made available, on request, in alternative formats.	All staff	2021 - 2024	
<u>Training</u>				
2.1 - Ensure all staff have full access to training and development opportunities.	<p>To ensure all staff develop their knowledge and themselves personally.</p> <p>To ensure best practice.</p>	CEO/SMT	2021 - 2024	<p><u>Y/1 (Sept. 21 – Aug. 2022)</u></p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • <p><u>Y/2 (Sept. 22 – Aug. 2023)</u></p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • <p><u>Y/3 (Sept. 23 – Aug. 2024)</u></p>

	To enhance NHA's service delivery standards to tenants and the wider community.			•
2.2 - Provide new/refresher training on Disability Equality legislation and Disability Awareness to all board members and staff every 2 - 3 years and invite key disability speakers where appropriate.	<p>To ensure all Board members and staff are up to date with relevant legislative requirements.</p> <p>To ensure staff are appropriately trained and equipped in identifying people with disabilities and be able to provide the necessary advice, guidance and support required.</p>	CEO/SMT	2021 - 2024	

<p>2.3 - Ensure all new staff have received information about disability awareness during initial staff inductions.</p>	<p>SMT will carry out all new staff inductions and emphasis the necessity to ensure NHA meet all requirements under Section 75 duties.</p> <p>All new staff will be trained in the use of NHA facilities and the availability of internal and external support mechanisms in place.</p>	<p>CEO/SMT</p>	<p>2021 - 2024</p>	
<p>2.4 - Continue partnership working arrangements with other local RSL's (i.e., NIHE and other Housing Association's), NIFHA and CIH to deliver shared training, good practice within the sector, etc.</p>	<p>To ensure service standards are maintained or improved upon.</p>	<p>SMT/All staff</p>	<p>2021 - 2024</p>	

	To acquire VFM, best use of shared resources, assist to identify good practice, etc.			
<u>Participation & Engagement</u>				
3.1 - Carry out annual exercises to encourage staff to declare disabilities/long term health conditions and ensure consideration is given to the implementation of all identified reasonable adjustments.	<p>To ensure staff receive the appropriate advice and support.</p> <p>To assist staff to avail of additional resources to allow them to undertake their general duties safely and unhindered.</p>	SMT/All staff	2021 - 2024	<p><u>Y/1 (Sept. 21 – Aug. 2022)</u></p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • <p><u>Y/2 (Sept. 22 – Aug. 2023)</u></p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • <p><u>Y/3 (Sept. 23 – Aug. 2024)</u></p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> •
3.2 - Provide support to those within the community and voluntary sector who promote initiatives for disabled people, etc.	Provision of direct support from NHA staff or via our	SMT/All staff	2021 - 2024	

	Community Investment Fund (i.e., financial support) to deliver local events or initiatives for people with disabilities.			
<p>3.3 - When hosting internal or external events ensure that:-</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Presentation and promotion materials are easily readable • Signage is clear • Handouts are in accessible formats • Venues are easy to reach, fully accessible and are chosen to ensure that they are welcoming environments • Delegates are made aware of fire evacuation policies, location of toilets, etc. 	<p>To ensure all literature is offered in different formats.</p> <p>When hosting events, ensure that facilities accommodate the needs of all attendees.</p> <p>Encourage tenants with disabilities, who wish to attend events, to inform the Association</p>	All relevant staff	2021-2024	

	of their specific needs and requirements, to promote positive engagement and customer experience.			
3.4 - We will encourage people with disabilities to become involved at all levels within our organisation (i.e. BOM, etc.).	To ensure all appointments to the Board are reviewed and monitored to identify gaps from under-represented groups and persons with disabilities.	BOM & CEO	2021-2024	
3.5 - Encourage all tenants and staff to submit articles for Tenant Newsletters and other relevant publications.	To encourage all tenants and staff member to be actively involved in the design and delivery of our publications.	SMT/All staff	2021-2024	

	To promote inclusion and active participation by all interested parties.			
3.6 - Promote participation from people with a disability on our Tenant Forum, focus group sessions, local residents committees, etc.	To ensure participation is open and accessible to all.	SMT/All relevant staff	2021-2024	
3.7 - Improve online access for tenants who have a disability.	To ensure tenants have access to our digital platforms (i.e. social media platforms, website, etc.) To build tenants capacity to access information online.	SMT/All relevant staff		

3.8 - Appoint a Disability Champion.	NHA will actively seek to appoint a Disability Champion from our existing tenant base.	CEO/SMT	By Dec. 2022	
<u>Recruitment & Retention</u>				
4.1 - Support employees with disabilities and long-term health conditions and ensure there are no barriers to career development opportunities.	Ensure NHA staff have access to advice, support and the relevant equipment to fulfil their day-to-day duties. This will be completed during individual annual staff appraisals and surveys.	CEO & SMT	2021-2024	<u>Y/1 (Sept. 21 – Aug. 2022)</u> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • <u>Y/2 (Sept. 22 – Aug. 2023)</u> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • <u>Y/3 (Sept. 23 – Aug. 2024)</u> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> •

	Ensure career development is not hindered due to a disability or long-term health issue.			
4.2 - Establish best practice in the recruitment and employment of disabled people.	Ensure the use disability networks to circulate adverts for employment vacancies, to ensure recruitment advertising reaches a wide audience.	BOM, CEO & SMT	2021 -2024	
4.3 - Support employees to manage their physical, mental and financial wellbeing (i.e., effectively manage stress, etc.).	Provide regular training and adhere to/ensure implementation of all relevant policies within the Association's current	CEO, SMT & All relevant staff		

	<p>Employee Handbook.</p> <p>To ensure access to external support mechanisms, if required.</p>			
4.4 - Where possible, provide work placements, shadowing and mentor programmes and encourage applications and take up to these from people with a disability.	Develop a mentoring programme and work in partnership with disability groups/organisations to attract those with a disability.	CEO & SMT	2021 -2024	
<u>Other Legal, Statutory & Best Practice Measures</u>				
5.1 - Deliver requirements of UN Convention on the rights of persons with disabilities.	To ensure all legislative requirements and legal obligations are met by NHA.	CEO & SMT	2021 -2024	<p><u>Y/1 (Sept. 21 – Aug. 2022)</u></p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • <p><u>Y/2 (Sept. 22 – Aug. 2023)</u></p>

	To adhere to the eight General Principles and all other associate Articles (1 – 50).			<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • <u>Y/3 (Sept. 23 – Aug. 2024)</u> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> •
5.2 - Continue to review policies to identify and assess any significant issues relating to the two disability duties.	SMT to ensure all Section 75 requirements are met/adhered to when reviewing all policies.	CEO, SMT & All relevant staff	2021 -2024	
5.3 - Engage with organisations and disabled people to promote positive attitudes towards disabled people and encourage participation by disabled people in public life.	<p>To strengthen current partnership working.</p> <p>To establish new links and partnerships to build positive relationships and networks.</p>	CEO, SMT & All relevant staff	2021 -2024	
5.4 - Ensure representation at joint consultation events hosted by the Equality Commission, NIHE and	To participate proactively at	CEO/SMT/All relevant staff	2021 -2024	

<p>other statutory agencies, Northern Ireland Housing Association, etc.</p>	<p>partnerships working events.</p> <p>To identify best practice and assist in any implementation within the organisation.</p> <p>To stay up to date with current policy, legislation, etc and to ensure all relevant measures are in place within the Association.</p>			
<p>5.5 - Collaborate on outreach activities with disability groups to raise awareness of public appointments.</p>	<p>Form partnership and strengthen links with local groups.</p>	<p>All relevant staff</p>	<p>2021 -2024</p>	
<p>5.6 - Ensure the delivery of our new build developments are designed and constructed to meet</p>	<p>Continue to complete and review all</p>	<p>BOM, SMT & All relevant staff</p>	<p>2021 -2024</p>	

<p>current and future long-term needs of disabled people.</p>	<p>findings from surveys carried out on new build schemes. This is to ensure standard are met and that the homes we provide meet all requirements of new tenants (i.e. allow them to live comfortably and unrestricted within their new homes).</p> <p>Complete Post Tenancy checks to ensure all existing facilities meet the new tenants requirements and to identify suitable adaptations, support mechanisms, etc.</p>			
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	to assist with the sustainment of their tenancies.			
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