

## THE OFFICE OF THE POLICE OMBUDSMAN FOR NORTHERN IRELAND

**DISABILITY ACTION PLAN**

# July 2013

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| \*This document is available upon request in accessible formats such as Braille, large print, disc, audiocassette and in minority languages to meet the needs of those who are not fluent in English. |

DISABILITY ACTION PLAN 2013- 2018

The Office of the Police Ombudsman for Northern Ireland (OPONI)

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| 1.1 | **Introduction**  Under Section 49A of the Disability Discrimination Act 1995 (DDA1995) (as amended by Article 5 of the Disability Discrimination (Northern Ireland) Order 2006), the Police Ombudsman for Northern Ireland is required, when carrying out his 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 Office of the Police Ombudsman for Northern Ireland is also required to submit to the Equality Commission a **disability action plan** showing how it proposes to fulfil these duties in relation to its functions. |
| 1.2 | As Police Ombudsman and Chief Executive, we 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 build appropriate objectives and targets relating to the disability duties into corporate and annual operating plans.  We will also put 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. |
|  | The Office of the Police Ombudsman is committed to consulting with people with disabilities in the implementation and any subsequent review of this plan. Responsibility for implementing, reviewing and evaluating this disability action plan will lie with: -  Name: David Moorehead  Title: Human Resources Manager  Address: The Office of the Police Ombudsman For Northern Ireland  New Cathedral Buildings  11 Church Street  Belfast BT1 1PG  Telephone number: 028 9082 8632  Fax number: 028 9082 8610  Email: hr@policeombudsman.org  Textphone: 028 9082 8756  If you require this plan in an alternative format (such as in large print, in Braille, on audio cassette, easy read or on computer disc) and/or language, please contact the above person to discuss your requirements. |
| 1.3 | We confirm our commitment to submitting an annual progress report on the implementation of this plan to the Equality Commission and carrying out a five year review of this plan, or plans submitted to the Equality Commission over the five year review period.  A copy of this plan, our annual progress to the Equality Commission and our five year review of this plan will be made available on our website [www.policeombudsman.org](http://www.policeombudsman.org) |
| 1.4 | Functions  Statutory Duties and Background  The Police Ombudsman for Northern Ireland was established by the Police (Northern Ireland) Act 1998. The Office was established on 6 November 2000 by virtue of Statutory Rule 2000 No 399, Police (Northern Ireland) Act 1998 (Commencement) order (Northern Ireland) 2000. The Office is a Non Departmental Public Body (NDPB) of the Department of Justice (DOJ). The Office is not governed by a Board but is headed by a Police Ombudsman as a Corporation Sole who is appointed by Royal Warrant and serves for a period of seven years. The Office is constituted and operates independently of the Department of Justice, the Northern Ireland Policing Board (NIPB) and the Police Service of Northern Ireland (PSNI). The Office is accountable to the Northern Ireland Assembly and required to give due regard to any guidance by the DOJ. The Office complies with the corporate governance and accountability framework arrangements (including *Managing Public Money Northern Ireland)* issued by the Department of Finance and Personnel (DFP) and DOJ.  Principal Activities  The Office of the Police Ombudsman for Northern Ireland provides an independent impartial police complaints system for the people and the police of Northern Ireland. It investigates complaints against the Police Service for Northern Ireland, the Belfast Harbour Police, Larne Harbour Police, the Belfast International Airport Police and Ministry of Defence Police in Northern Ireland and the Serious Organised Crime Agency when its staff operates in this jurisdiction.  The Office investigates complaints about the conduct of police officers and where appropriate makes recommendations in respect of criminal, disciplinary and misconduct matters. The Office also investigates matters of public interest, and all grave or exceptional matters referred to it and reports as appropriate. In addition the Office publishes reports and makes policy recommendations aimed at improving policing within Northern Ireland.  The Office also provides statistics for management purposes to the Police Service of Northern Ireland, the Northern Ireland Policing Board and the Justice Minister.  THE POLICE (NI) ACT 1998 DIRECTS THE POLICE OMBUDSMAN TO:   * exercise his powers in the way he thinks best calculated to secure:   + the efficiency, effectiveness and independence of the complaints system;   + the confidence of the public and of members of the police force in that system; * observe all requirements as to confidentiality; * receive complaints and other referred matters and to decide how to deal with them; * investigate complaints, referred matters and matters called in for investigation by the Police Ombudsman; * receive and record policy complaints and refer them to the Chief Constable; * make recommendations to the Director of Public Prosecutions (DPP) for criminal prosecution; * make recommendations and directions in respect of disciplinary action against police officers; * notify the Secretary of State, NIPB and Chief Constable of the outcome of certain complaints, referred matters and any investigation which the Ombudsman initiates without a complaint; * report to the Justice Minister annually.   THE POLICE (NI) ACT 2000 DIRECTS THE POLICE OMBUDSMAN TO:   * carry out inquiries as directed by the Secretary of State; * supply statistical information to the NIPB.   THE POLICE (NI) ACT 2003 DIRECTS THE POLICE OMBUDSMAN TO:   * investigate a current practice or policy of the police if   + the practice or policy comes to his attention under the Act,   + and he has reason to believe that it would be in the public interest to investigate the practice or policy.   The Office sets out each year in its Corporate Statement and Annual Business Plan its policy aims and objectives, and uses these statements/plans to further publicise the manner in which it intends to carryout its functions. |
| 1.5 | **Public Life Positions**  As a Non-Departmental Body, the Office of the Police Ombudsman for Northern Ireland does not have responsibility for public life position. The Office of the Police Ombudsman for Northern Ireland does not have any statutory Advisory Panels or consultative panels. However, in all its consultative processes and in the research which it carries out under the Police (NI) Act 2003 it will encourage participation of and promote positive attitudes to people with disabilities. |
| 2. | **Previous Measures**  Outlined below are the key measures which the Office of the Police Ombudsman for Northern Irelandhas already taken to promote positive attitudes towards people with disabilities and encourage the participation of such people in public life.   * Developed an awareness workshop which provided staff with specific training and guidance on Disability Equality legislation. * Conducted a review of external communication processes resulting in the creation of a dedicated section on the Office of the Police Ombudsman’s public website for people with disabilities. * Created an ‘easy read’ pamphlet on the police complaints system in order to improve information access and understanding to people with a learning disability. * Initiated subscription to Browse Aloud for the Office of the Police Ombudsman’s public website. Browse Aloud is a software enhancement which enables improved accessibility to the Office’s website for people with dyslexia, learning difficulties and mild visual impairments. * Made available portable Induction Loop facility for investigators interviewing people with hearing impairments. * In association with the Northern Ireland Policing Board, the Office conducted research into the views and experiences of people with learning disabilities in relation to policing arrangements in Northern Ireland. A significant research report was published in August 2011. * Provided details on the attitudes of complainants with disabilities in Equality Monitoring Report 2012. |
| 3. | **Action Measures**  Outlined below are the measures which the Office proposes to take over the period (*insert details of the timescale of plan*) of this disability action plan, together with performance indicators or targets. |

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| **Measures** | **Lead** | **Timescale** | **Performance**  **Indicators/target** |
| * We will develop a training programme for customer facing staff in how to effectively identify and appropriately deal with complainants that may have mental health issues. | HR Manager & Training Officer. | 2014/15 | * All disabilities are identified as early as possible to ensure investigation is not hindered. |
| * We will review the Office’s public website in terms of accessibility. | Director of Information | 2014/15. | * Monitor any complaints received from the public relating to disability access. |
| * We will publish a half-yearly article in Disability Action Ezine to raise awareness about the role of the Office. | Director of Information | 2013 and ongoing. | * Feedback from Disability Action. * Increase the awareness of the Office among disability advocates. |
| * We will monitor satisfaction levels from service users with disabilities and investigate where levels of satisfaction are below what might be reasonably expected. | Director of Research & Performance. | 2013 and ongoing | * More representative levels of satisfaction from service users with disabilities. |
| * We will consider creating a website-based video including signage and audio explaining the police complaints system and how to make a complaint about police. | Director of Information | 2014/15 | * Will consult with Action Hearing Loss about the possibility of creating a video including signage and audio to meet the needs of those with visual and hearing impairments. * Increase awareness of the Office among people with disabilities by improving accessibility of information. |
| * The Office will liaise with the PSNI to share information about the progress of actions arising from the research report published by the Office and the Northern Ireland Policing Board on the views and experiences of people with a learning disability in relation to policing arrangements in Northern Ireland. | HR Manager | 2013/14 | * Improved exchange of information. |
| * The Office will develop a checklist for frontline customer service staff to aid the detection of service users with a learning disability to improve their customer experience. | HR Manager | 2013/14 | * Improved satisfaction levels from service users with a disability. |
| * The Office will promote greater awareness of services available from the Office to people with a learning disability through their representative organisations. | HR Manager & Director of Information. | 2013/14 | * Improved access to services. |
| * We will create an investigator forum on Insite (internal website) to enable investigators from all teams to share experiences and learning opportunities for dealing with people with disabilities. | Director of Information | 2013 and ongoing | * Sharing of information between investigators to learn from previous experiences. |

Dr Michael Maguire Adrian McAllister

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