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

Under Section 49A of the Disability Discrimination Act 1995 (DDA 1995) (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.

**Commitment**

As Police Ombudsman and Chief Executive / Accounting Officer, 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 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 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 subsequent review of this plan. Responsibility for implementing, reviewing and evaluating this disability action plan will lie with: -

Name Paula Gillespie

Title Human Resources Manager

Address The Office of the Police Ombudsman for Northern Ireland

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If you require this plan in an alternative format (such as in large print, in Braille, on audit cassette, easy read or on computer disc) and / or language, please contact the person above to discuss your requirements.

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)

**Office of the Police Ombudsman for Northern Ireland - 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 06 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 the 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 (PSNI), ‘designated civilians’ working with the PSNI, Belfast Harbour Police, Larne Harbour Police, the Belfast International Airport Policy and Ministry of Defence Police in Northern Ireland. By virtue of the Serious Organised Crime and Police Act 2005 the Office also has responsibility for the investigation of allegations against members of staff of the National Crime Agency in Northern Ireland.

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 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 or 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 carry out its functions.

**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.

**Previous Measures**

Outlined below are the key measures which the Office of the Police Ombudsman for Northern Ireland has already taken through our previous Disability Action Plan to promote attitudes towards disabled people and encourage the participation of disabled people in public life

* A new website was commissioned which conforms to worldwide web content accessibility guidelines. This included Browse aloud software and ability to resize text.
* A web-site based video including signage and audio explaining the police complaints system and how to make a complaint about police was created.
* The Office placed an article in the Disability Action Ezine to raise awareness about the role of the Office.
* The Office developed a training programme for customer facing staff on how to effectively identify and appropriately deal with complainants that may have mental health issues.
* Other training interventions included those relating to Autism awareness and a suicide awareness workshop open to all staff.
* The Office continues to monitor satisfaction levels of service users with disabilities.
* In in-house ‘Diversity Now’ training course for all employees covered equality legislation, disability discrimination legislation and the importance of embracing diversity and promoting the importance of ensuring dignity and respect in the workplace.

Action Measures

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| --- | --- | --- | --- |
| Action | Lead | Timescale | Performance Indicator / target |
| **Leadership and Corporate Measures** |  |  |  |
| Review and report on progress made on the Disability Action Plan on an annual basis and submit an annual performance report to the Equality Commission | HR Manager | From August 2019 | Improved awareness of disability activity progress |
| To consider including a specific disability related question in the Equality section of the Staff survey | HR Manager / Director of Information | In line with timing of staff surveys | Findings reviewed and disability issues highlighted and appropriate measures / actions put in place. |
| **Communication** |  |  |  |
| Publish and promote the Disability Action Plan | HR Manager | Ongoing | Increased awareness of staff in relation to disability issues. |
| Review internal and external communications to ensure that disabled people are portrayed in a positive role | Director of Investigations (Investigation Support Team) | 2020 | Promotion of positive attitude towards disabled people. |
| To provide an article on the work of the Equality Working Group on InSite on a half yearly basis. | Head of Equality Working Group | With effect from April 2019 | To provide ongoing communication to staff |
| To provide opportunities for disability equality speakers to address staff via coffee and learn sessions | Learning & Development Officer | Ongoing | Promotion of positive attitude towards disabled people. |
| **Recruitment** |  |  |  |
| All members of staff involved in recruitment and selection to receive training in equal opportunities and fair employment practices | HR Manager / L&D Officer | Every 3 years | All staff due to participate on panels for the first time to receive appropriate training.  Refresher training for those trained every 3 years. |
| Recruitment and Selection Processes.  Inclusion of Guaranteed Interview Scheme | HR Manager | Ongoing | Consider all reasonable adjustments within the recruitment and selection process as appropriate. |
| **Training and Awareness Raising** |  |  |  |
| Provide relevant training to OPONI staff on disability issues | HR Manager / L&D Officer | Ongoing | Increased awareness among staff and promotion of positive attitudes towards disabled people.  Increased awareness of mental health issues. |
| Focus training activities on a specific aspect of disability each year to focus staff on relevant issues. | HR Manager / L&D Officer | From April 2019 | Increased awareness among staff and promotion of positive attitudes towards disabled people |
| Joining instructions for all courses, provided by OPONI to ask for adjustments to be identified to enable attendees to be able to participate fully in the course | L&D Officer | Ongoing | Implementation of reasonable adjustments |
| Provide information for line managers when a member of staff declares their disability;   * Update guidance on Reasonable Adjustments with input from Occupational Health * Include the above in training for managers, such as sickness absence training. | HR Manager | Ongoing | Ongoing support to staff in the workplace who declare their disability. |
| **Involving Disabled People** |  |  |  |
| Review disability access to OPONI Offices | HR Manager & Premises and Safety Officer | Ongoing | OPONI Offices are accessible to all including buildings, parking and toilet facilities. |
| Review monitoring procedures to ensure that information about disabled people is captured accurately and in sufficient detail | HR Manager | March 2020 | Improved understanding of the differing needs of our staff and candidates which can impact on future planning and decision making |
| To monitor and assess complaints from service users with a disability | Directors of Information and Investigations – Investigations Support Team | April 2020 | Data captured on through the complaints follow up questionnaires will be assessed on a regular basis to ensure complaints are addressed and handling arrangements are effective. |
| To seek the views of all OPONI Staff and recognised Unions on the implementation of the Disability Action Plan and disability equality generally. | HR Manager | October 2018 and ongoing. | Increased awareness among staff of duties of the Office. |
| To aid the development of Personal Emergency Evacuation Plans for relevant staff | HR Manager / Premises & Safety Officer | Ongoing | Invitation issued to staff annually inviting provision of confidential disability declarations to aid the development of PEEPs. |