



**AGRI-FOOD
& BIOSCIENCES
INSTITUTE**

**Disability Action Plan
1 September 2021 –
31 August 2026**

Alternative Formats

You can read and download this document from our website. Go to:

www.afbini.gov.uk

On request this document can also be made available in alternative formats including:

- Large Print
- Easy Read
- Audio CD/MP3
- Braille
- Computer Disk
- Other Languages

To request an alternative format or additional copies, please contact:

Fiona Campbell
Head of Human Resources
AFBI Headquarters
18a Newforge Lane
Belfast
BT9 5PX

Telephone: 028 9025 5060

Fax: 028 9025 5035

Email: fiona.campbell@afbini.gov.uk

Web: www.afbini.gov.uk

Foreword

AFBI is committed to the promotion of equality of opportunity and to creating and sustaining an environment that values and celebrates the diversity of its staff. We are pleased to present the Agri-Food and Biosciences Institute's (AFBI) Disability Action Plan, which sets out the actions we propose to take forward over the next five year period 2021 – 2026.

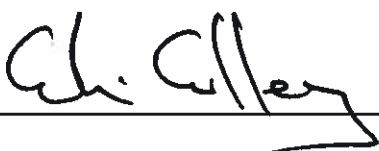
This is AFBI's third disability action plan aligned with our commitments under Section 49A of the Disability Discrimination Act (DDA) 1995. We continue to ensure that there is disability equality across all aspects of our business, in how we treat our customers, staff and all those who use our services.

The action plan links to Strand 5 of AFBI's People Strategy which focuses on values, diversity and inclusion in an increasingly challenging environment. AFBI 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.

Recent times have witnessed monumental change and created a challenging environment for our staff. Like many organisations we are adapting to working in this new world. We have invested in mental health support services for staff through e-learning programs and awareness campaigns. This will ensure that we are providing a modern, accessible and rewarding environment for our staff, and enabling them to develop to their full potential in a culture which they enjoy.

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

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.



Chairman, AFBI

Date: 24th March 2022



Chief Executive, AFBI

Date: 24-03-2022

Index **Page**

1. Introduction4

2. Our Roles and Functions.....5

3. Report on Progress6

4. Proposed Action Measures6

Includes:

Proposed Action Measures Tables.....8

Useful Links.....11

2. Our Roles and Functions

The Agri-Food and Biosciences Institute (AFBI) is Northern Ireland's largest provider of agri-food science. It provides vital support to an industry which is a key economic driver within Northern Ireland while delivering wider societal benefit in areas such as environmental protection and food safety.

As a non-departmental public body (NDPB) sponsored by the Department of Agriculture, Environment and Rural Affairs (DAERA). AFBI science plays a crucial role in providing the underpinning statutory and analytical testing, research and development work, emergency response capability and expert scientific advice required to support the various work programmes of our sponsoring department and the wider requirements of our agri-food industry.

AFBI also supports the wider needs of industry and will assist in progress towards the Northern Ireland Economic Strategy, the Northern Ireland Executive's Programme for Government outcomes, and DAERA's 'Green Growth' strategic direction.

Against a backdrop of global and local challenges, the need for science has never been greater. AFBI is very well placed to contribute to meeting these challenges through our work which centers on our three key themes of:

Leading

improvements in the agri-food industry



Protecting

animal, plant and human health



Enhancing

the natural and marine environment



1. Introduction

A disability is defined as “a physical or mental impairment which has a substantial and long-term adverse effect on a person's ability to carry out normal day-to-day activities.”

Under Section 49A of the Disability Discrimination Act 1995 (DDA 1995) (as amended by the Disability Discrimination (Northern Ireland) Order 2006), AFBI 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, AFBI 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. We will ensure this Action Plan is effectively communicated to our staff and that we continue to consult and meet with disabled people to hear their views when reviewing the implementation of the plan.

Like many other organisation’s, AFBI are adapting to working in this new world of remote working which has brought both accessibility challenges and opportunities for individuals with disabilities. While we have identified a number of benefits regarding accessibility through technology, there are also concerns about isolation and lack of social interaction. There is a greater and much needed focus on Mental Health associated with the increased anxiety and stress this period has brought for a lot of people.

As we adapt, we will continue to support staff with disabilities – whether by providing information, training and advice to support and guide our staff and line managers on how to best support staff with disabilities, or by continuing to provide access to our new and developing buildings and infrastructure.

Day to day responsibility for monitoring progress towards the targets outlined in the Disability Action Plan lies with the Executive Management Team supported by the Human Resources Branch.

In this Disability Action Plan we have set out the actions we will take forward that link to other legislative obligations impacting on the lives of disabled people.

3. 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 Institute's website alongside our Annual Progress Report.

As required by the DDA (1995), the Institute will also carry out a five year review of its plan and submit it to the Equality Commission.

4. Proposed Action Measures

On the following pages we have outlined the measures which we propose to take over the next five years, together with performance indicators and or targets. Benchmarking to ensure best practice compliance was carried out with similar organisations.

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.

AFBI is committed to monitoring and reviewing policies and practices to ensure that the disability duties are being met at all times. Monitoring the progress of this action plan will be incorporated into the six monthly report to the AFBI Board on equality issues and annually to the Equality Commission.

Performance indicators and or targets are set out in the plan, some are specific, while others are more general reflecting the nature of AFBI's work and the challenges.

PROPOSED ACTION MEASURES

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

Staff Training

Proposed Actions:		
1. Ensure all managers and staff are aware of their legislative responsibilities under DDA and Section 75.		
Performance Indicators(PI)/Targets (T)	By When:	Responsibility:
1.1 All staff to undertake Equality and Diversity Training as part of their Induction. Training includes information about disability; equality legislation and bullying and harassment (T).	Ongoing action as staff join AFBI	Learning & Development Unit and Line Managers.
1.2 All staff to undertake refresher Equality and Diversity Training on a rolling basis (T).	Every 3 years	Learning & Development Unit.
1.3 All interview panels trained in Criteria Based Interviewing techniques which includes the legislation regarding reasonable adjustments for disabled candidates. One to one sessions can be facilitated as part of a reasonable adjustment request (T).	As and when required and refreshed every 3 years.	Learning & Development Unit.
1.4 Increase awareness of neurodiversity in the workplace by providing training for line managers (T).	June 2022	Learning & Development Unit.

Communication

Proposed Actions:		
2. Provision of information that is easy-to-access and understand.		
Performance Indicators(PI)/Targets (T)	By When:	Responsibility
2.1 Provide written and web-based information in alternative/accessible formats as and when required (PI).	Ongoing.	Human Resources & Head of Corporate Communications.
2.2 Encourage users (from Consultee list) to review the AFBI website for accessibility (PI).	March 2022	Head of Human Resources.
2.3 Inform staff of AFBI's Disability Action Plan (DAP) and targets via the Intranet and Newsletters (PI).	Publish DAP following approval from EMT.	Head of Human Resources.
2.4 Improve staff awareness about disability issues through the diversity calendar of events/communications, to be agreed by the Health and Wellbeing Group (T).	Quarterly	Human Resources.

Consultation & Engagement

Proposed Actions:		
3. Improve how we consult and engage with people with disabilities, this includes our own staff and those who use our services.		
Performance Indicators(PI)/Targets (T)	By When:	Responsibility:
3.1 Further review our consultees list and ensure that is representative of all relevant disability groups, and ask their preferred consultation methods for future policy reviews (T).	June 2022.	Head of Human Resources.
3.2 Maintain and or further develop the links with USEL (or similar organisations) for opportunities for inclusive employment for people with a disability (PI).	June 2023	Learning & Development Unit.
3.3 Continue to provide applicants with an opportunity to indicate any reasonable adjustments which may be required to assist them during the recruitment process (PI).	Ongoing	Head of Workforce Planning.
3.4 Equip line managers with the knowledge and skills to effectively manage staff and identify potential welfare issues, through advertised e-learning courses for line managers (T).	Quarterly	Learning & Development Unit.
3.5 Provide health and wellbeing support for staff via the employee assistance programs in place (PI).	Ongoing	Head of Human Resources.
3.5 Monitor the number of persons with a disability in AFBI's employment (T).	Establish what data is available via HRConnect, June 2022	Head of Human Resources
3.6 Review AFBI's Stress Management Policy and associated risk assessment (T).	April 2022	Head of Human Resources

Accessibility & Facilities

Proposed Actions:		
4. Review and monitor the accessibility of AFBI facilities and explore opportunities for improving access.		
Performance Indicators(PI)/Targets (T)	By When:	Responsibility:
4.1 Continue to review existing and new-build premises accessibility and provide reasonable adjustment to not only ensure compliance with legislation but maximise accessibility to the AFBI estate for our employees, customers and visitors. (PI).	31 March 2026	Head of Human Resources and Head of Estate Unit.
4.2 Ensure that any planned building projects outlined in the DAERA - AFBI Estate Strategy comply with disability standards (PI).	Ongoing in line with AFBI's Estate Strategy	Head of Estate Unit
4.3 Work with Occupational Health to review the nature of staff related cases being dealt with by Inspire and amend support services and communications available to staff to address ongoing key issues (T).	June 2022	Head of Human Resources.
4.4 Work with the Department of Finance (DoF) Central Procurement Directorate to ensure all AFBI contracts with suppliers and contractors have a commitment to Equality and Diversity (PI).	Ongoing	Head of AFBI Procurement

Useful links

- Action Mental Health: www.amh.org.uk
Twitter: @amhni
Facebook: @amhni
Tel: 02891 828494
- Attention Deficit Disorder NI (ADD-NI): www.addni.net/
Email: hello@addni.net
Tel: 028 90812222
- Autism NI: www.autismni.org/
Email: info@autismni.org
Twitter: @AutismNIPAPA
Facebook: :AutismNI
Tel: 028 9040 1729
- Inspire Workplaces: <http://www.inspirewellbeing.org/workplaces>
Email: hello@inspirewellbeing.org
Twitter: @InspireWBGroup
Facebook: <https://www.facebook.com/inspireWBGroup>
Tel: 0808 800 0002
- Carers Northern Ireland: www.carersuk.org/northernireland
Email: info@carersuk.org
Twitter: @CarersUK
Facebook: www.facebook.com/CarersUK
Tel: 028 9043 9843
- Disability Action: www.disabilityaction.org
Email: hq@disabilityaction.org
Twitter: @disabilityni
Facebook: @disabilityaction
Tel: 02890 297880
- Equality Commission for Northern Ireland: www.equalityni.org
Twitter: @EqualityCommNI
Tel: 02890 500 600
- Mencap NI: www.mencap.org.uk/northern-ireland
Email: helpline.ni@mencap.org.uk
Twitter: @Mencap_NI
Facebook: @MencapNI
Tel: 0808 808 1111

- Mindwise: www.mindwisenv.org/
Twitter: @MindwiseNV
Facebook: @MindWisenv
- Orchardville Society: www.orchardville.com
Email: info@orchardville.com
Twitter: @OrchardvilleNI
Facebook: @OrchardvilleNI
Tel: 02890 732326
- Royal National Institute of the Blind: www.rnib.org.uk
Twitter: @RNIB
Facebook: @rnibuk
Tel: 030 3123 9999
- Royal National Institute for the Deaf: www.rnid.org.uk
Email: informationline@hearingloss.org.uk
Twitter: @RNID
Facebook: @rnid
Tel: 080 8808 0123
- The Cedar Foundation: www.cedar-foundation.org
Email: info@cedar-foundation.org
Twitter: @cedarfoundation
Facebook: @CedarFoundation
Tel: 02890 666188
- Ulster Supported Employment Limited: www.usel.co.uk
Twitter: @usel182
Facebook: @uselcompany
Tel: 02890 356600

