



## **Royal College of Psychiatrists in NI (RCPsychiNI) Response to: DfC Consultation on Disability Action Plan 2025-30**

### **1.0 Introduction about RCPsychiNI:**

The Royal College of Psychiatrists (RCPsych) is the statutory body responsible for the supervision of the training and accreditation of Psychiatrists in the UK and for providing guidelines and advice regarding the treatment, care, and prevention of mental and behavioural disorders. Among its principal aims are to improve the outcomes for those with mental illness and to improve the mental health of individuals, families and communities.

The College has approximately 450 Members in Northern Ireland (including Doctors in training) who provide the backbone of the local Psychiatric service, offering acute and community treatment, as well as specialist care and consultation across a large range of settings.

This response is submitted on behalf of the Devolved Council of the Royal College of Psychiatrists in Northern Ireland.

### **2.0 Substantive Response/Comments:**

We welcome the opportunity to comment on this Consultation concerning the Department for Communities' responsibilities concerning the Disability Discrimination Act 1995 (as amended). Specifically, the Consultation concerns Section 49A, the Disability Duties, (promoting positive attitudes towards disabled people and encouraging participation by disabled people in public life) and Section 49B submitting a Disability Action Plan, demonstrating how it is proposed to fulfil these duties.

We broadly support what is included in this Consultation. However, there are a number of points we would like to make.

Mental Health and Learning Disabilities are often difficult to recognise, as they do not have the obvious symptoms and appearance associated with Physical Health disabilities. It is also difficult for people with a Mental Health and Learning Disability to describe their disability and symptoms. Impairments due to concentration, mood, motivation, thought processes, cognitive impairment and other causes need to be understood and recognised - otherwise people will put

their own personal and often mistaken interpretation on what is in fact a disability.

It is also important to recognise that many people will have a mixture of disabilities - especially Mental Health, Learning and Physical Health disabilities.

We endorse all of the points in the Action Plan, but have some specific comments about some of them.

**Action Measure 2:** Raising awareness of Mental Health and Learning Disabilities is important. However, it needs to help educate the public, employers and Civil Service about the nature of these disabilities and what they look like - rather than just offering general statements about mental disorders.

**Action Measures 4 & 5:** Representation on Boards of Arm's Length Bodies is important and the steps suggested are very positive. Also welcome is the participation in working groups for Consultation and engagement purposes - for Urban Regeneration.

**Action Measure 7:** Mental Health Disability has been left out of this measure **and must be included.**

**Action Measures 8 & 9:** The Sign Language Bill is very important and especially also for people with a Mental Health and Learning Disability.

**Action Measures 10 & 11:** Implementation of the expanded Universal Credit and Employment and Support Allowance (ESA) and Finance Support needs to take account and cognisance of the nature of the presentation of Mental Health and Learning Disabilities during the assessments. This will need detailed practical training of staff.

**Action Measures 12, 13, 14:** We strongly support all systems that enable people with a Learning and Mental Health Disability to obtain employment. There needs to be in place training opportunities and sheltered employment schemes to help prepare people for taking up jobs. Also, where people have given up their benefits and then have had to withdraw from their job, it is essential that the original benefits are provided again quickly. There also needs to be detailed practical training and support for employers and Disability trained staff to support the employee.

**Dated: 29th May 2025**



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- on behalf of RCPsych NI**

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