



**The Department of Agriculture & Rural
Development's Review of Support
Arrangements for Less Favoured Areas in
Northern Ireland**

**Disability Action's Response
April 2009**

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INTRODUCTION

- 1 Disability Action is a pioneering Northern Ireland charity working with and for people with disabilities. We work with our members to provide information, training, transport awareness programmes and representation for people regardless of their disability; whether that is physical, mental, sensory, hidden or learning disability.
- 2 21% (369,390) of adults and 6% (105,540) of children in Northern Ireland has a disability and the incidence is higher here than in the rest of the United Kingdom. Over one quarter of all families here are affected
- 3 As a campaigning body, we work to bring about positive change to the social, economic and cultural life of people with disabilities and consequently our entire community. In pursuit of our aims we serve 45,000 people each year.
- 4 Our network of services is provided via our Headquarters in Belfast and in three regional offices in Carrickfergus, Derry and Dungannon.
- 5 Disability Action welcomes the opportunity to respond to this draft and to aid our response has put the relevant page/paragraph of the draft in brackets at the end of our comments.

SPECIFIC COMMENTARY

- 6 Disability Action welcomes the information on alternative formats but is disappointed that contact details do not include a textphone or dedicated SMS number to enable deaf people equal access to the Policy and Economics Division. (cover letter page 1 & consultation document)
- 7 We further welcome the Department's offer to consult by other means and commend this approach to other public authorities. (page 5)
- 8 Disability Action believes that a full EQIA should have been undertaken and published as part of this consultation to recognise the Department's statutory obligations and its commitment to equality. (page 201, 10)

- 9 The Department should note that whether they identify themselves or not, 75% of older people have a disability. (page 209, para 10.3, bullet point 1)
- 10 We note that this evaluation contains no analysis of issues of multiple identity. (pages 201 – 210, chapter 10)
- 11 As far as Disability Action is aware, the Department is committed to Equality Impact Assessment Axis 2 of the NIRDP 2007 – 2013 and that this EQIA is long overdue. (page 258: Equality & Rural Proofing Considerations: bullet point 1)
- 12 In relation to the four options, Disability Action would make the following points:
 - Option 1: Withdrawal of the Scheme should not be pursued as it negatively impacts on both Catholics and Protestants.
 - Options 2 and 3 appear to present significant negative impacts and as a non-agricultural specialist, Disability Action is unable to reach comprehensive decisions on these options.
 - Option 4 is the option provided in most detail and to the non-specialist appears to be the option favoured by the Department.
- 13 Disability Action therefore supports none of the options and our only comment is that a sliding scale of support with highest for Severely Disadvantaged Areas and lesser for Disadvantaged Areas, should be developed to ensure equal treatment for all.

CONCLUSION

- 14 Disability Action has welcomed the opportunity to contribute to this important consultation