

Weathering the economic storm: local initiatives offer a silver lining

Everyone is aware of the recent and ongoing budget cuts. In light of their depth and reach, it is unlikely anyone will escape - with health, education, sports, and the arts all affected.

When the Review of Public Administration was initially outlined, savings of £400m over a 25 year period were anticipated. However in May it was announced the review would be set aside until 2015, despite £9m already having been spent on planning. A key aspect, the amalgamation of 26 local council authorities to 11 super councils, would potentially involve job losses and reductions in expenditure, in a bid to cut spending and make savings on a local level. Given the consideration to such a widespread significant change, it seems a little counter-productive that some councils have occasionally chosen to work with organisations based outside Northern Ireland, whilst several local organisations could have carried out the same work and likely at a fraction of the cost.

In 2008 and 2009 ADAPT contacted all councils to suggest a link with our Access400 database. Frequent readers will be familiar with Access400, for new comers, this is the online database that provides information on disability access at hundreds of arts, culture and community venues. In taking up our offer and establishing a website link to the database, not only local people but also visitors would have access to useful information. A small number of councils responded positively. Some were uninterested but a few had already or were in the process of working with other English based organisations to provide similar information for businesses and public venues within their respective council area. Even the least mathematically minded of us would recognise the potential cost implications of this measure.

At least 3 local councils have opted for this business partnership, with significant financial costs we can only ponder. Perhaps, in light of the economic climate, some of the

remaining councils may review their options, and consider if spending on services already provided in Northern Ireland is the most “prudent” of choices.

Arts and Disability Forum: supporting & developing disabled people's involvement in the arts

The Arts and Disability Forum (ADF) is now offering free membership to individual disabled people who have an interest in the arts. As a member you'll be able to get your voice heard by connecting with other disabled people for arts networking and campaigning. You'll be invited to events, offered ticket deals, and will receive members' updates via the ADF e-bulletin.



“The World of Crippen” exhibiting at ADF,
20th July - 12th August 2010

Meanwhile the current exhibition, ‘The World of Crippen’, will bring a chance to vote on the NI disability issue that most warrants a cartoon. And, disabled artists take note that the Arts & Disability Awards Ireland bursary scheme closing date is 9th August at 4pm. Grants of £5,000 (or equivalent in Euros) are available to support individual disabled artists in NI and the RoI working in any art form to produce new work. To find out more, contact the ADF on 9023 9450, email info@adf.ie or visit www.adf.ie.

Room hire available:

Community Arts Forum has a multipurpose area and desk space available for hire by groups and individuals. Contact Kate Muldoon on 028 9024 2910.

ADAPT NI would like to thank the Arts Council of Northern Ireland
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Welcome!

Issue 24 is the summer edition of ADAPToday: the voice of ADAPT bringing you news updates on the highlights of our recent work, what's happening in the arts and disability sectors, and information on developments in building equality and inclusion. In this issue we underline some of the reasons why business and service providers should take accessibility seriously. We've also included details of opportunities for disabled artists and a feature on disability hate crime to stimulate readers' views. Read on for all of this and more!

Inside This Issue

- * Top 5 Reasons to be accessible
- * Building Equality & Inclusion Grants
- * Disability Hate Crime: your views
- * Section 75 guidelines revised

Something for All: Disability Equality Training

One in five people in Northern Ireland have a disability. As a public authority, private business or any kind of service provider, this is a significant portion of your customers, visitors or service users. In order to ensure you are delivering to the highest standards, you should consider Disability Equality training.

ADAPT's training develops awareness and knowledge, equipping trainees with practical skills of customer needs. We support communication skills, and incorporate attitudinal dimensions of discrimination. We also offer succinct sessions in legal and statutory responsibilities and universal accessibility. Delivered by experienced facilitators, our training is relevant to all.

If you would like more information about ADAPT training, including an exciting new programme launching in September 2010, contact us.



ADAPT Training Participants

We hope you enjoy our newsletter!

As always, get in touch if you have any newsworthy ideas

ADAPToday is also available electronically and in large print – please contact ADAPT

ADAPT NI is the only local voluntary organisation with the sole purpose of promoting universal accessibility in cultural, arts and leisure venues by providing training, advice and support

Useful tips for businesses and service providers: ADAPT's Top 5 reasons to be accessible...

1. Reach more people

21% of the Northern Ireland population has a disability. Making your building and services accessible will not only attract disabled people themselves, but also their family and friends, which brings in additional revenue. An accessible venue, facilities and services will improve the experience of other customers who encounter similar access barriers i.e. parents with buggies or elderly people.

2. Small changes can make a Big difference

Small changes like allowing for adequate circulation space, providing assistance when needed, and offering accessible information such as large print or Braille will enhance your business' perspective and attract new clients and customers. These small or simple adjustments will improve customer's satisfaction in the services on offer.

3. It doesn't necessarily cost more

Adjustments to improve access to most buildings can be carried out at minimal or no cost. Many physical adjustments can be undertaken within maintenance plans; for example when redecorating think of colour contrast that will improve access for customers with visual impairments. Greater disability awareness amongst staff trained in customer care and etiquette can enrich the experience for all service users.

4. Customer loyalty

Disabled people frequently book services in advance and often return when they find the right facilities. If people feel welcome and enjoy the experience they will inform their friends and family, helping you to attract new customers.

5. Repercussions & liability

Since 1995 all service providers have a duty not to discriminate against people with disabilities, and since October 2004, the final provision on physical adjustments to

premises embedded in the Disability Discrimination Act (DDA) has applied to all service providers. The DDA sets targets perceived as minimum standards. These principles are likely to evolve with ongoing developments in legislation which improve rights for disabled people - Listen to your customers and stay a step ahead!

Good accessibility is simply good business!

Many organisations are actively pursuing a work plan to remove physical barriers that prevent inclusion and equality for disabled people.



Gracehill & Galgorm Community Centre carried out accessibility improvements supported by ADAPT's grants scheme

If your premises are still lagging behind and are in need of basic access adaptations, don't let budget constraints deter your commitment!

ADAPT can part fund adaptations including: ramps, lifts, unisex accessible toilets, way-finding signage, communication support including auxiliary aids and further features which will improve accessibility for people with disabilities.

Even if you have removed most physical barriers and are actively developing innovative ideas for building equality and inclusion - you should visit our website (www.adaptni.org) to find out how the Building Equality and Inclusion Grant Scheme can help.

We provide a range of professional support services including, Disability Equality Training, Consultancy and Access Audits

Disability Hate Crime: your thoughts?

It was announced last month that the Equality and Human Rights Commission would be launching an inquiry into how public bodies respond to incidents of disability hate crime in England, Wales & Scotland. This decision followed the release of a CPS report identifying increased numbers of cases, as well as more recent high profile cases.

Can Northern Ireland expect similar actions taken here? In July 2009, OFMDFM published a report into hate crime. The key findings were: disabled people experience hate crime in various ways, and statistics do not reflect people's experiences. Disabled people felt awareness amongst disability support organisations and the general public was low. In response to the report, the Head of Community Safety for the PSNI commented that the findings showed 'under-reporting was an issue' and that 'there is still a lot of work to be done in the area of Disability Hate Crime'.

One year on, the Annual Crime Figures for 2009-10 showed increases in both the number of incidents and total offences recorded, up by 31.8% and 46.4% respectively compared to 2008-09. These figures could be reflective of more widespread reporting and detection, with disabled people more aware of their rights and crime prevention authorities more alert to specific cases involving disability motivated crime.

Is it the case then that with people more aware of hate crime as a breach of their rights, they're more inclined to report occurrences? Are public bodies more alert than a year ago, and are proactive measures operating locally? If the Equality Commission for Northern Ireland has not applied similar pressure to public authorities as in Britain, is it because there is less need to do so...?

We want to hear your views (anonymously if preferred). Email or post on Patti's discussion forum & share your experiences or comments.



ADAPT promotes equality & inclusion through all our work

Access400 – limited stock still available

Our Access400 database and compact guidebook are the ideal resources for people who like to get out & about and appreciate the benefits of accessibility at culture, arts, and heritage and leisure sites. As summer is upon us, we all know too well that we can't rely on the weather - but you can rely on ADAPT's accessible information to help plan your social activities. The handy booklet includes details on parking, auxiliary aids and other facilities & services useful to people with disabilities. An essential tool for planning a variety of activities, from a day trip to a historic site to a quick dip at the local leisure centre! Copies available free of charge to people with disabilities, alternative formats are also available, please contact ADAPT.

Revised Guidelines on Section 75

In April this year, the Equality Commission NI issued new guidelines on Section 75 of the Northern Ireland Act. The guidelines aim to be more user-friendly and improve communication between the public authorities and those affected by the statutory duties. The Commission wants to ensure public authorities consult with the persons affected by their equality scheme in the process of developing it, monitoring & reviewing the progress of implementation. The new guidelines also encourage public authorities to remain focused on achieving results. Further details at: www.equalityni.org

We deliver capacity building initiatives including a youth arts festival and audience development projects