

GDA members update

Robin Le Prevost, Chair, GDA

20th October 2017

Following the statement by Michelle Le Clerc in the States earlier this week and a subsequent statement to the media clarifying their position on the progress of the Disability and Inclusion strategy the GDA Chair, Robin Le Prevost issued the following response;

The GDA has been campaigning for the Disability and Inclusion Strategy for nigh on ten years, it is fair to say that progress has been patchy at best and infuriatingly dormant at times.

Following a resolution in the States in 2013 to press ahead with gaining the UN Convention on the Rights of Persons with Disabilities and with the responsibility laid on the old Policy Council we were frustrated by a lack of resources and intellectual clarity which ultimately led to the failure of this important initiative.

Re-invigorated in 2016 and now under the leadership of the ESSC, who are handling this infinitely better than their predecessors, we have been working closely within the Project Team tasked with putting the legislation in place together with a number of other workstreams. Human and financial resource has again dogged the project but progress has been made in some major areas although the establishment of the Equality and Rights Organisation is lagging and is a crucial part of this whole strategy especially as ESSC, to their credit, are considering broadening the remit of the Discrimination legislation. However as such we remain very wary of anything which could inadvertently delay our central policy.

Another area of concern to us is that whilst some progress has been made in raising awareness on the impact of introducing such legislation and the Disability and Inclusion strategy as a whole, specifically in the area of employment, precious little if indeed anything at all has been done to raise awareness amongst the general public or in areas such as goods and services. Waiting for the legislation to happen is not a pre-condition of such activity and that activity would demonstrate, especially to our members, that progress

is being made and more than that is tangible. I have to say sadly that our members are increasingly feeling frustrated, even angry, at the perceived lack of urgency with this initiative and this reflects badly on the States as a whole.

Whilst the wellbeing of our members is our prime concern there is an impact on the GDA itself. The GDA, through generous financial support, has been able to provide substantial high-quality research in all areas of the project and with our Executive Director able to attend Project Team meetings and a multitude of other sub-committee meetings and liaising with our member groups the GDA play a full and active role in shaping and building this strategy. However our current funding cannot go on forever and with the Strategy now mooted to be perhaps two years behind schedule the GDA is going to be forced to withdraw (from April next year) from full-time pro-active engagement to a reduced reactive role. This is highly regrettable at such a crucial time of vetting the legislation and establishing the ERO amongst many other equally important areas but unless further funding is forthcoming we will have little option.

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