

Members Statement – 20th October 2017

“Deputy Le Clerc’s update on the Disability and Inclusion Strategy has done little to give confidence to disabled islanders that sufficient progress is being made with the Strategy’s key projects. In addition, the surprise announcement that the development of equality legislation might change from the current phased approach, whilst laudable in aspiration, is worrying in terms of the effect this approach may have in causing yet further delays to the already long overdue disability discrimination legislation. The existing delays have stretched the resources of the GDA to breaking point.

Four years on from the Strategy being unanimously passed yet the legislation is nowhere near completion. Awareness raising to change attitudes (the main objective of the Strategy) has been limited and lacks a proper plan to achieve the immediate effective and appropriate action required by the UN Convention. Work to develop the business plan for the Equality and Rights Organisation (ERO) has only just started and the extension of the UN Convention to Guernsey is still years away.

Whilst we acknowledge progress has been made with certain projects, a lack of human and financial resource continues to hold back progress with the key projects. We are pleased to hear further resource has been sourced to assist the legislation project and we have confidence in the abilities of the individuals concerned. However, the total resource is still only equivalent to $\frac{3}{4}$ of a civil servant..

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

The rights of our members are our prime concern. These delays have impacted on the health and ability of the GDA which, in turn, may impact our ability to influence and shape the Strategy’s projects. These projects should by now have had far greater effect on the lives, and life chances, of disabled islanders.

The GDA, through past generous financial support, none of which has come from the States, and through the tenacious and diligent work of our volunteers and paid staff, has been able to provide substantial high quality research, advice and support in all areas of the Strategy.

Our Executive Director, Karen Blanchford, attends Project Team meetings and a multitude of other sub-committee meetings and, by liaising with our member groups, the GDA fulfills a full and active communication and consultation role. This close consultation with bodies representing disabled people is actually a requirement of the Convention.

It is difficult for the GDA to raise funds. Grant givers are often only willing to fund organizations providing direct services to individual disabled people. This stance is difficult to swallow when I sincerely believe the GDA is providing a service of incomparable value – the chance for thousands of people affected by disability to have their voices heard and their rights acknowledged, promoted and protected.

This level of consultation, and indeed, this level of voluntary and charitable financial support, cannot go on forever. With the Strategy now mooted to be perhaps two years behind schedule, the GDA may 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 developing the legislation and establishing the ERO amongst many other equally important areas. But, unless further funding is forthcoming we will have no option.”

Notes:

GDA Guernsey Disability Alliance

The Guernsey Disability Alliance was formed in 2008 and is a collective voice for individual disabled islanders, their family members, carers and more than [40 member-charities-list](#).

Their mission is equality of opportunity for disabled islanders and carers in Guernsey. We want to change how Guernsey thinks about disability.

- We campaign for greater respect for the rights and dignity of disabled islanders and carers.
- We influence policy and practical change in a manner consistent with the UN Convention on the Rights of Persons with Disabilities.
- We engage and empower our members so that their individual voices are heard

Website: www.disabilityalliance.org.gg

Facebook: www.facebook.com/GuernseyDisabilityAlliance

Twitter: [@GDA_Disability](https://twitter.com/GDA_Disability)