



NORTHERN IRELAND AUTHORITY FOR UTILITY REGULATION SUSTAINABILITY

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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** More than one in five (300,000) people in Northern Ireland has a disability and over one quarter of all families here are directly affected by disability issues.
- 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 offer of alternative formats, however requests the Northern Ireland Authority for Utility Regulations to list the range available e.g. large print, audio cassette, Braille, computer disc etc.
- 7** Disability Action believes that the contact details in this consultation document should include a textphone number to enable deaf people the same access as those who are hearing.
- 8** Regarding the most vulnerable groups Disability Action recommends that the NIAUR takes cognisance of a person's multiple identity, for example, people with disabilities, have low incomes and many live in rural areas. (Figure 3.1)
- 9** Disability Action seeks further information on the NIAUR's future intentions regarding the limitations with the research in relation to those in fuel poverty to enable informed comment. (Item 3.36)

- 10 Regarding social and economic sustainability, whilst recognising the aim to achieve cost effective prices and best possible quality price trade off, Disability Action believes that the promotion of social inclusion and Section 75 objectives can't compete with stringent economic requirements but all three principles must be linked to socially include those historically disadvantaged in society. (Item 3.67)
- 11 Disability Action believes that the gathering of information and publishing of data can be justified. Additionally, Disability Action would recommend the NIAUR gather data on fuel poverty and low income families. This must be achieved through the active participation of individual vulnerable people and their representative organisations. (Item 6.10)
- 12 Regarding the giving of better information to customers Disability Action requests the NIAUR to amend the following statement "...be given sufficient information", to read "...be given sufficient **accessible** information". The range of alternative formats must include an easyread version. (Items 7.5-7.9)
- 13 Disability Action welcomes the planned public consultation on tariff structures however recommends that as well as the traditional written consultation the NIAUR must adopt other methods of consultation to ensure the active participation of vulnerable groups and their representative organisations. (Item 7.11)
- 14 In relation to consultation of market development Disability Action refers the NIAUR to paragraph 13 above. (Item 7.20)

CONCLUSION

- 15 Disability Action recognises the time and effort that have gone into producing this document for consultation and thanks the NIAUR for the opportunity to respond and looks forward to continued dialogue.