



Department of

**Finance**

An Roinn

**Airgeadais**

[www.finance-ni.gov.uk](http://www.finance-ni.gov.uk)

**Department of Finance**

**Section 75 Action Plan**

**Disability Action Plan**

**(2018-2023)**

**Consultation Document**

March 2018

## **TABLE OF CONTENTS:**

	<b>Page Number</b>
<b>1. Introduction</b>	<b>3</b>
<b>2. Background</b>	<b>6</b>
<b>3. Section 75 Action Plan</b>	<b>9</b>
<b>4. Disability Action Plan</b>	<b>17</b>

**Annex A: Draft Section 75 Action Plan 2018 - 2023**

**Annex B: Draft Disability Action Plan 2018 – 2023**

**Annex C: Consultation Response Questionnaire**

## 1. INTRODUCTION

- 1.1 Under Schedule 9 of the Northern Ireland Act 1998 the Department is required to submit an Equality Scheme, a statement of the Department's commitment to fulfilling its Section 75 statutory duties, to the Equality Commission. In order to demonstrate that the Department has paid due regard to the need to promote equality of opportunity and regard to the desirability of promoting good relations, the Equality Commission recommended that action measures should be developed. These action measures are recorded in the format of a 'Section 75 Action Plan'.
- 1.2 The current Section 75 Action Plan<sup>1</sup> was developed following our Audit of Inequalities in 2011 and was reviewed and updated each year as necessary. A review of our Audit of Inequalities was completed in 2017 and has informed the development of a new draft Section 75 Action Plan for the period 2018 - 2023.
- 1.3 In addition to the Section 75 Action Plan, this consultation period also provides an opportunity for us to review our Disability Action Plan which has been developed under Section 49(B) of the DDA 1995. Our current Disability Action Plan was originally published in 2013 and the action measures in it were extended until the end of the March 2018.<sup>2</sup>
- 1.4 A review of this Disability Action Plan has now been completed and a draft Disability Action plan for the period 2018 – 2023 has been developed and is enclosed with this consultation document. The Disability Action Plan demonstrates how the Department, when carrying out its functions, must have due regard to promote positive attitudes towards disabled people and encourage participation by disabled people in public life.

---

<sup>1</sup> <https://www.finance-ni.gov.uk/sites/default/files/publications/dfp/section-75-action-plan-updated-to-31st-march-2018.pdf>

<sup>2</sup> <https://www.finance-ni.gov.uk/sites/default/files/publications/dfp/dof-disability-action-plan-updated-to-31st-march-2018.pdf>

- 1.5 This consultation document reports the outcome of the review of the Audit of Inequalities conducted by the Department, the review of our Disability Action Plan and the proposed new Section 75 and Disability Action Plans. Both plans will cover the period 1 April 2018 – 31 March 2023 and will be updated or amended during their lifetime when required.
- 1.6 ***Pending the appointment of a Minister, the Department will work towards delivery of the targets specified in the Plans and within the limits of the financial and other resources allocated to the Department. Plans will be updated as new priorities and targets are approved by a new Minister and Executive.***
- 1.7 We would welcome your comments on both plans. When responding please indicate whether you are responding as an individual or representing the views of an organisation. A ‘Consultation Response Questionnaire’ has been provided at **Annex C** to assist in this process or you may respond in any format. Responses should be emailed to [equality@finance-ni.gov.uk](mailto:equality@finance-ni.gov.uk) or posted to:

Strategic Equality Branch  
Department of Finance  
Room 25  
Dundonald House  
Upper Newtownards Road  
BELFAST  
BT4 3SB

Telephone: 028 9052 0836  
E-mail: [equality@finance-ni.gov.uk](mailto:equality@finance-ni.gov.uk)

- 1.8 A hard copy of the consultation document, or a copy in a different format, can be provided on request. There are also text relay services available if required, see below:

Making a call from a textphone: Dial 18001 + 028 90 520836

Making a call from a telephone: Dial 18002 + 028 90 520836

Text Relay Assist can also set up the call for you – dial 0870 240 51 52 from a telephone.

- 1.9 The consultation will close on **FRIDAY 15<sup>th</sup> JUNE 2018**. Responses received after this date will only be considered in exceptional circumstances and with prior agreement from the Department.

## 2. BACKGROUND

### Section 75 Action Plan

- 2.1 Section 75 of the Northern Ireland Act 1998 (the Act)<sup>3</sup> requires public authorities, in carrying out their functions, to have due regard to the need to promote equality of opportunity and regard to the desirability of promoting good relations across a range of categories as outlined below:

*Section 75 (1):*

*In carrying out the functions as they relate to Northern Ireland there is a requirement to have due regard to the need to promote equality of opportunity between:*

- *persons of different religious belief, political opinion, racial group, age, marital status or sexual orientation;*
- *men and women generally;*
- *persons with a disability and persons without; and*
- *persons with dependants and persons without.*

*Section 75 (2):*

*In addition, without prejudice to the obligations above, in carrying out the functions as they relate to Northern Ireland the Department is required to have regard to the desirability of promoting good relations between persons of different religious belief, political opinion or racial group.*

- 2.2 The Equality Commission published guidance “Section 75 of the Northern Ireland Act 1998: A Guide for Public Authorities”<sup>4</sup> recommending that public authorities should undertake an audit of inequalities by examining their functions and how these relate to the promotion of equality and good relations. Specific actions to address the inequalities identified should then be set out in an action plan, and these actions should be linked to the corporate planning cycle. The Commission subsequently published “Advice to Public Authorities: Approaching an Audit of Inequalities” in March 2012<sup>5</sup>.

---

<sup>3</sup><http://www.legislation.gov.uk/ukpga/1998/47/section/75>

<sup>4</sup><http://www.equalityni.org/ECNI/media/ECNI/Publications/Employers%20and%20Service%20Providers/S75GuideforPublicAuthoritiesApril2010.pdf>

<sup>5</sup> [Advice to Public Authorities: Approaching an 'Audit of Inequalities'](#)

2.3 The Department carried out an Audit of Inequalities in 2011 in preparation for the last Section 75 action plan.<sup>6</sup> A review of this audit of inequalities was carried out in 2017 to assist with the development of the Department's draft Section 75 Action Plan 2018 - 2023.

### **Disability Action Plan**

2.4 Under Section 49 (A) of the Disability Discrimination Act 1995 (DDA 1995) as amended by Article 5 of the Disability Discrimination (Northern Ireland) Order 2006, the Department is required when carrying out its functions to have due regard to the need to:

- Promote positive attitudes towards disabled people; and
- Encourage participation by disabled people in public life.

2.5 Under Section 49(B) of the DDA 1995, the Department is also required to submit to the Equality Commission a disability action plan showing how it proposes to fulfil these duties in relation to its functions.

2.6 The disability duties, like the duties under Section 75, adopt the mainstreaming approach. Through equality screening tools the Department considers the effect of its policies, or likely impacts, and if there is an opportunity to better promote positive attitudes towards disabled people or encourage their participation in public life by making changes or introducing additional measures. The Department's current Disability Action Plan (DAP) was published in 2013, and will expire at the end of March 2018. A review of this plan has been carried out to inform our draft Disability Action Plan for 2018 – 2023.

---

<sup>6</sup> [Audit of Inequalities](#)

## **NICS People Strategy**

- 2.7 Whilst separate from our Section 75 Action Plan and Disability Action Plan, in the context of background, it is important to note our approach to Diversity and Inclusion across the NICS. Our vision is for a well-led, high performing and outcomes-focused NICS; a great place to work where everyone can reach their full potential; and an inclusive workplace in which diversity is fully valued. To deliver on that vision, we are developing a People Strategy for everyone in the NICS.
- 2.8 Through the development of this three-year People Strategy, we will include actions to build the capacity of the NICS. We are placing diversity and inclusion at its centre and the Strategy will include a range of actions that will help accelerate our ambition to have a truly inclusive workplace culture and to be a service that reflects the society we serve. Central to implementing the People Strategy will be a diversity and inclusion action plan. Specifically in relation to disability, we will develop a disability inclusion programme to increase representation at all levels.



### **3. SECTION 75 ACTION PLAN**

- 3.1 A review of the Audit of Inequalities was considered against each of the functions of the Department, drawing on the inequalities identified by each business area and reviewing the actions set out in previous Section 75 Action Plan.
- 3.2 The review identified that in a number of areas, inequalities have been addressed or reduced. However, we still have work to do and the draft Section 75 Action Plan for 2018-2023 sets out the actions that we will bring forward in this respect.
- 3.3 The following section summarises the findings of the 2017 Review of Inequalities for each function of the Department. It outlines the original area of inequality identified, the action taken by the Department to address this and the need for further actions as part of the Department's new Section 75 Action Plan.

#### **Function: Providing Human Resource (HR) services and policies to support the management of the NI Civil Service (NICS) workforce**

##### **Area of Inequality**

- Under-representation of Protestants in administrative and junior management grades in NICS compared to the labour market
- Under-representation of Protestants and Catholics in some grades in the Professional and Specialist groups in the NICS compared to the NI labour market
- Under-representation of males/females in some occupational groups/grade levels in the NICS compared to the NI labour market.

##### **Action taken to address this Inequality**

- 3.4 The Department has been using positive action advertising statements to encourage applications from under-represented groups and measures the

impact through continuous monitoring of recruitment exercises in addition to the Article 55 Reviews and Gender Reviews. There has been some positive progress towards reducing the degree of under-representation.

- 3.5 In relation to community background, the 2016 Article 55 Review<sup>7</sup> found that Protestants continue to be under-represented in the General Service grades of AO and EO although the gap is narrowing. In the 31 larger Professional and Specialist groups 20 have been assessed as having Fair Participation up from 19 in the last review in 2013.
- 3.6 The 2016 Gender Review<sup>8</sup> found that males are under-represented in the AA to EO grades while females are under-represented in the grades of Grade 7 and above in the General Service Group although in almost all grades the gap is narrowing. The first gender review of the NICS in 2010 found fair participation in 14 of the Professional and Specialist groups. The 2016 review found this figure had not changed.
- 3.7 The improvements in gender and community background have taken place despite the significant reduction in recruitment as a result of two embargoes (between February 2010 and November 2011 and November 2014 to April 2016).
- 3.8 The next major reviews of the community background and gender profiles of the NICS workforce will be carried out in 2019.

### **Outcome of Review of Inequalities**

- 3.9 Area of Inequality has reduced, but still exists. Actions have been added to the draft Section 75 Action Plan 2018-23 to address this.

---

<sup>7</sup> [NICS 2016 Workplace Review](#)

<sup>8</sup> [NICS 2016 Workplace Review](#)

### **Area of Inequality**

- Some S75 groups are under-represented in various grades across the NICS.

### **Action taken to address this Inequality**

- 3.10 The NICS Diversity Champions network has been set up to consider diversity and inclusion in the NICS and to advance awareness, knowledge and understanding of the issues. The objective is to ensure diversity and inclusion are firmly embedded within Departments and across the NICS in a way that embraces and values difference.
- 3.11 In 2015, the network developed a rolling 12 month Diversity Action Plan. Among the activities that have been delivered are:
- BME – engagement with sectors outside of Government;
  - LGB&T – a survey of NICS staff on attitudes to LGB&T issues and experiences of LGB&T staff. An NICS LGB&T staff network has been established;
  - Gender – the establishment of targets for female representation in the SCS i.e. the most senior grades of the NICS, the development of mentoring circles (groups of 10-12 female staff in the SCS feeder grades led by two members of the SCS);
  - Disability – a report of the experiences of staff with disabilities in the NICS in the areas of recruitment, career development and management support. The report included recommendations for action that are currently being considered.

### **Outcome of Review of Inequalities**

- 3.12 Area of Inequality still exists. Actions have been added to the draft Section 75 Action Plan 2018-23 to address this.

### **Area of Inequality**

- Equal Pay: Equal Pay Review for non-industrial staff below the Senior Civil Service to identify 'pay gaps' based upon the Equality Commission's guidelines of differences of 5% or more.

### **Action taken to address this Inequality**

- 3.13 As a result of the Comprehensive Pay and Grading Review in 2012 and 2013, a number of changes were made to the pay system for non-industrial staff within the Northern Ireland Civil Service including, for example, redressing relativities in scales, service-based assimilation to address length of service issues, shortening of pay scales, removing overlaps and new arrangements with staff promoted to the minimum of the next highest pay scale on promotion to remove leapfrogging.
- 3.14 The Northern Ireland Statistics and Research Agency (NISRA) produce an annual Equal Pay Report which is shared with Trade Union Side and any apparent anomalies are investigated by the Department to determine whether further action is necessary. NISRA also publish annual pay statistics on their website. The most recent report, published on 14 December 2017<sup>9</sup>, stated "there was no gap between male and female pay in the NICS – the median basic full-time equivalent salaries of male and female staff are equal. This has been the case for the last 3 years".

### **Outcome of Review of Inequalities**

- 3.15 Area of Inequality no longer exists.

### **Area of Inequality**

- Data gaps in relation to ethnicity, disability, dependants and sexual orientation.

---

<sup>9</sup> [Pay Statistics NICS 2017](#)

### **Action taken to address this Inequality**

- 3.16 We continue to collect ethnicity, disability, dependants and sexual orientation data from applicants and new appointees. Some information on the sexual orientation of staff has been gathered through a survey carried out for the NICS in November 2016 by the Rainbow Project. Although responses were anonymous, analysis of the survey provides an indication of the number of staff who are gay, lesbian or bisexual. The survey has led to the launch of an NICS LGB&T network. The People Survey which was issued in November 2017 also asks for information in relation to the data gaps.

### **Outcome of Review of Inequalities**

- 3.17 Area of Inequality has reduced, but still exists. Actions have been added to the draft Section 75 Action Plan 2018-23 to address this.

**Function: Providing legal, statistical, procurement, valuation and property services and support to NICS Departments and the wider public sector**

### **Area of Inequality**

- The law in Northern Ireland (and also in the rest of the UK) treats unmarried fathers differently from married and unmarried mothers.

### **Action taken to address this Inequality**

- 3.18 During 2015/16 the Lord Chief Justice initiated a Review of Civil and Family Justice and the work in relation to marital status will be combined with the work on any recommendations emerging from that Review.

### **Outcome of Review of Inequalities**

- 3.19 Area of Inequality still exists. An action is included in the draft Section 75 Action Plan 2018-23 to address this.

**Function: Improving access to public services and information through the NIDirect programme**

**Area of Inequality**

- elderly, socially excluded, and visually impaired persons have traditionally found it harder to access Government services via the Web Channel.

**Action taken to address this Inequality**

- 3.20 The Department's Digital Inclusion Programme aims to reduce barriers to citizen access to online public services. Go ON NI includes a specific programme of digital skills training for older people including the annual Silver Surfers' day, Spring Online Week and continued liaison with the Libraries Network.
- 3.21 Departmental officials participated in the (then) OFMDFM Disability Awareness Conference 2013 which invited service providers together with representatives of the disability sector to consider how current arrangements across NI meet the needs of people with disabilities. We were able to showcase Connectability, a digital inclusion project which has been running since 2011 which focuses on up-skilling individuals with disabilities in the use of IT and developing their confidence to recognise the benefits of online access for learning and leisure.
- 3.22 We work in partnership with local charities such as The Cedar Foundation, Action Mental Health, MS Society, Stepping Stones, NOW and Orchardville Society. These training sessions are still available to train people with disabilities using specialist equipment and facilities provided by these charities in the use of the Internet and specific online services including the NIDirect website. Disabled citizens are given one-to-one tuition over the course of the sessions, which are held across a range of suitable locations. A specific programme of digital inclusion training sessions was also carried out with RNIB in response to a request from the Stormont All Party Group on Visual Impairment.

- 3.23 Connectability remains part of the DoF Go ON NI programme. The DoF Go ON NI campaign can ensure that citizens have an option to continue their learning journey by enrolling on further IT courses. These courses can be specifically tailored to suit the needs of the individuals, including Silver Surfers Day and Spring Online Week.
- 3.24 A pilot project “Breezie – Bridging the Digital Divide”, using specialist software, took place for those in sheltered housing accommodation and those with early onset dementia. A pilot also commenced in partnership with Supporting Communities and the Health Trusts to provide specific IT training to carers.
- 3.25 Spring Online 2017 included working relationships with Deafblind and Action on Hearing Loss organisations to deliver bespoke requirements. A further Carers pilot with the South Eastern Trust also delivered bespoke IT training for carers.
- 3.26 DoF Digital Inclusion is represented at the Belfast City Council Age Friendly Forum which meets quarterly to address Technology and tackling loneliness and isolation amongst older people.
- 3.27 There is evidence of an upward trend in citizen access to online services:

<b>Internet Access</b>	<b>Age 50- 64</b>	<b>Age 65+</b>
2011/12	67%	35%
2012/13	72%	35%
2013/14	78%	38%
2014/15	86%	53%
<b>Internet Use</b>		
2015/16 *	72%	45%
2016/17	84%	43%

\* Please note that the statistics from 2015/16 onwards are not directly comparable with previous years' figures as they relate to those people aged 50-64 and those aged over 65 who use the internet as opposed to merely having access – we will be able to draw comparisons over the coming years.

### **Outcome of Review of Inequalities**

- 3.28 Area of Inequality has reduced, but still exists. Actions have been added to the draft Section 75 Action Plan 2018-23 to address this.

### **Department of Finance draft Section 75 Action Plan 2018 – 2023**

- 3.29 The draft Section 75 Action Plan 2018 - 2023 sets out the actions the Department proposes to take to address the inequality issues identified from the review of the audit of inequalities.
- 3.30 Full details of the measures in the draft Section 75 Action Plan can be found in **Annex A**. We will regularly review the plan, updating it with new measures as required throughout its lifetime.
- 3.31 The Department welcomes your comments on the proposed actions in the draft Section 75 Action Plan or your views on other ways in which the commitment to the Section 75 duties could be better demonstrated. A 'Consultation Response Questionnaire' has been provided at **Annex C** to assist with this process.



## 4. DISABILITY ACTION PLAN

4.1 The Department has carried out a review of its current Disability Action Plan (DAP). Reviewing the actions taken since 1 April 2013 to raise awareness and promote positive attitudes towards people with a disability has shown that many significant steps have been taken. A summary of these actions are detailed below.

- Employment Support Scheme – The NICS continues to provide placements under the Employment Support Scheme (although the Scheme is now closed to new placements.) We also continue to offer Employment Support workers on placement the opportunity to move to direct employment with the NICS.
- NICS Policy on reasonable adjustments - New guidance was put in place in 2014 to provide advice and support for line managers when dealing with requests from staff for an adjustment(s) in the workplace. The guidance highlights the issues to be considered, the importance of keeping records and where to look for additional support. It is also designed to help ensure that any requests for an adjustment in the workplace are handled effectively, efficiently and sympathetically to meet the needs of both the individual and the NICS.
- Welfare Support Service – Welfare Officers offer a support service to all staff and for those who are off on long-term sickness absence they offer rehabilitation services. This can help support staff who need adjustments within the workplace or wider support, e.g. through support organisations.
- Work experience opportunities for people with disabilities in the NICS:
  - A successful pilot placement with a client of Action Mental Health was facilitated in Corporate HR (now part of NICS HR) during 2013;

- Following consultation with departments, a pilot scheme was launched in January 2014 – 12 placements were facilitated and evaluation was very positive; and
  - A new scheme was developed, taking account of feedback and lessons learned from the pilot and was launched in April 2016. 26 people with disabilities are currently on placement in the NICS and we are encouraging more applications from a wider group of representative organisations.
- NICS WELL was launched in September 2012 and is now firmly established. NICS WELL is the corporate health and wellbeing programme for the Northern Ireland Civil Service. It is supported by an organisational Charter for Health and Wellbeing, a WELL Strategy, a WELL support Team, network Volunteer WELL Champions, WELL Roadshows and an interactive and innovative WELL website. Information and support is provided to staff and their families to help them maintain or improve their health and well-being.
  - Training: New entrants received classroom based diversity training as did some public-facing business areas. Online refresher training, 'Diversity Now' was rolled out in 2014 – the completion rate was over 95%. In addition, a range of new courses were made available through the Centre for Applied Learning (CAL):
    - NICS HR committed to developing a new modular equal opportunities and diversity training programme to replace the existing Diversity Now training. Each module of the new programme will focus on a specific aspect of equality and diversity including Dignity at Work, identifying and implementing reasonable adjustments in the workplace and unconscious bias. The Unconscious Bias training has been developed as an e-learning package, which was signed off by the Equality Commission, and is in the process of being rolled out to all staff.

- Supporting Vulnerable People e-learning was launched in 2015. This course is designed to assist front-line staff in supporting vulnerable people to access the services they need.
  - An Autism Spectrum Disorder (ASD) Awareness e-learning package was provided to us by the Northern Health and Social Care Trust in 2016 and was included in CAL's portfolio of courses.
  - The Positive Mental Health Toolkit for Line Managers was launched in December 2016. The need for this was identified by the NICS Occupational Health Service and a commitment was made in the 2014/15 NICS Annual People Plan to consider the role of Mental Health training to assist in the promotion of mental health within the NICS. It focuses on the vital role of the line manager in supporting staff and assisting them through difficult times.
- A NICS Disability Diversity Group was set up in March 2016, comprised of representatives from Corporate HR, Departmental HR, the Disability Employment Service and Departmental representatives with known disabilities from a range of Departments and grades. Disability Action and Action Mental Health also participated in an advisory capacity. The working group looked at a number of issues including:
    - The NICS position in relation to disability, particularly in relation to recruitment, career development and management support;
    - Areas of concern and issues related to disability;
    - Equality initiatives and trends or gaps in relation to disability;
    - How to champion and advance equality of opportunity in the area of disability;
    - How to assist the NICS diversity agenda in celebrating and promoting good practice and positive initiatives in the areas of equalities and disability; and
    - Considering specific training for disability management.

The agreed actions for NICS HR falling out of this work will be added to our new DAP for 2018-23.

- Departmental website – an accessibility audit was carried out and an accessibility and usability audit report published in May 2014. Several issues were identified and action was taken to address these.
- Land and Property Service (LPS) continued their engagement work to maximise the uptake of Disabled Person's Allowance rate relief:
  - 13/14 – 713 new awards
  - 14/15 – 1,204 new awards
  - 15/16 – 1,212 new awards
  - 16/17 - 870 new awards
- The LPS Rate Rebate Replacement Team (R3P) produced a Vulnerable Customer Engagement Strategy to prepare for the implementation of a new Rate Rebate scheme, being introduced as a result of Welfare Reforms. As part of this strategy the team engaged with key stakeholders such as Disability Action, Mencap, RNIB and RNID.
- The R3P Communications Team also, as part of their research, recommended to LPS senior management that all customer facing staff should complete the Supporting Vulnerable People e-learning package to help them assist vulnerable customers, particularly as the Rate Rebate scheme is a digital only scheme. A digital assistance paper was also produced outlining assistance that was being put in place to help customers, which involved considerable engagement with the voluntary and community sectors.
- GENI project – online access to genealogy records was launched on 31 March 2014. The new website utilised modern technologies and the user experience was transformed through the innovative use of technology. The site is fully compliant with the NICS guidelines for Accessibility and W3C's Web Content Accessibility Guidelines 1.0 which means that customers may avail of audible formats etc. to suit their individual requirements.

- Digital Inclusion Programme – a substantial number of activities to encourage people with disabilities to make more use of online services have been delivered during the period. In addition to the generic Go ON NI programme, in partnership with local charities/community groups, specific training sessions have been delivered for people with disabilities and carers to help increase the use of the Internet and specific online services including the NI Direct website. Disabled citizens have been given one-to-one tuition over the course of the sessions.
- The NICS Diversity Champions Network was established in late 2015 and a DoF Board level Diversity Champion was appointed to contribute to this network. The purpose of this role is to ensure that Diversity is actively promoted by senior leaders across all aspects, including Disability, and the group includes a Disability Champion.
- The DoF Diversity Advisory Group was established in 2015 – its remit is to raise awareness of Diversity within the Department of Finance, and identify opportunities for progress. The group meets regularly and has briefed the Departmental Board on priorities for Diversity. The group has taken these forward through a number of initial actions. The primary focus has been on building awareness and increasing staff engagement and understanding at all levels. Key actions include communicating introductory articles such as ‘What Diversity Means to Me’ and holding a series of DoF staff focus groups on diversity with the aim of engaging staff on the role of Diversity in the ‘NICS of the Future’.
- CPD worked with SIB to develop and implement the Buy Social Model for government contracts. The model was implemented for construction contracts in April 16 and for services contracts in October 17. The model places a requirement on contractors to provide targeted recruitment opportunities, training for the long-term unemployed and opportunities for people with a disability or learning difficulties. For example 10

people, recorded as having a disability, are currently placed in work or training as a result of this model from the following:

- NICS Cleaning, Catering and Ancillary Services Contract
  - NICS Postal Contract
  - NICS Temporary Workers Contract
- 
- NICS has signed up to the Equality Commission's Mental Health Charter signalling our commitment to promoting mental health in the workplace and to provide a healthy, inclusive and open workplace both for staff and for the public who use our services. NICS HR are in the process of developing a Mental Health Strategy in support of this.
  - At the time of writing, the Department is preparing to sign up to the Equality Commission's Every Customer Counts initiative, demonstrating our commitment to providing accessible services for all our customers.

#### **Department of Finance draft Disability Action Plan 2018 – 2023**

- 4.2 Following the review of our current Disability Action Plan, a new Plan has been developed for the period 2018-2023. Full details of the proposed measures in this draft Plan can be found in **Annex B**. We will regularly review the plan, updating it with new actions as required throughout its lifetime.
- 4.3 The Department welcomes your comments on the proposed measures in the draft Disability Action Plan 2018-2023. A 'Consultation Response Questionnaire' can be found at **Annex C** to assist with this process.