Department of Finance
An Roinn Airgeadais
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Department of Finance

Section 75 Action Plan

Disability Action Plan

(2018-2023)

Consultation Report

October 2018

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1. Introduction

1.1 This report details the Department of Finance's Section 75 Action Plan 2018-23 and Disability Action Plan 2018-23, developed after public consultation between 15 March 2018 and 15 June 2018. The report outlines the consultation feedback and the changes we have made as a result.

1.2 We acknowledge the commitment of those who responded and we would like to thank each respondent for taking the time to do so.

2. Consultation feedback and the Department's response.

2.1 The Department received 4 responses. Two were from Northern Ireland Civil Service staff (one from the Department of Finance and one from the Department of Justice) and 2 were from organisations (Autism NI and the Grand Orange Lodge of Ireland).

Section 75 Action Plan

What we asked:

2.2 We asked:

- Have the appropriate inequalities in relation to the functions of the Department of Finance been identified? If not, please tell us why?
- Do you broadly agree that the measures in the Draft Section 75 Action Plan will have a positive impact on the Section 75 groups? If not, please explain why not, and add any further comments.
- Do you have any other general comments on the Draft Section 75 Action Plan?

What you said and what we did:

2.3 The **two responses from NICS staff** agreed that appropriate inequalities in relation to the functions of the Department had been identified. They also

broadly agreed that the measures identified will have a positive impact on Section 75 groups.

2.4 **Autism NI** advised that currently inequalities regarding access to services, external and internal training for the workforce and families, as well as public awareness of Autism, are supported by the failure of past disability legislation to recognise Autism. They noted, as a result of the Autism Act (NI) 2011, the legal requirement upon all public bodies to take account of the social and communication barriers faced by individuals with Autism in accessing public services and public facilities.

2.5 The Department's public facing business areas will engage further with Autism NI for training and advice, for example to improve its signage and communications. We are also working with NICS colleagues to introduce the JAM ('Just a Minute') card across the NICS so that staff providing services will be aware of it and what support users may need.

2.6 We will assist the NICS Disability Working Group in their consideration of a support network for members of staff who have, or have a family member with, Autism or another disability.

2.7 **The Grand Orange Lodge of Ireland** commented on the lack of representation of Protestants at certain grades within the NICS and on efforts to address the imbalance being limited to encouraging under-represented groups to apply for job vacancies. They remarked that positive action advertising appears to be the only tangible measure which has been utilised to address these imbalances and went on to state this should be but one component of a much wider strategy. They made a number of recommendations to address this issue.

2.8 Our Section 75 Action Plan details that other actions will be considered as part of an outreach/marketing strategy. Future recruitment activity into the NICS is unknown but the NICS is working to review and develop a new Marketing and Outreach Strategy. This will include measures to increase the

volume of applications from under-represented groups. NICS will consider the actions suggested by the Grand Orange Lodge of Ireland when developing this Strategy.

Summary:

2.9 We have updated our Section 75 Action Plan to:

- include the actions detailed at 2.5 - 2.6 in relation to access to services and support for people with Autism, linking this to our role in implementing the Autism Strategy and Action Plan; and
- make clear that the Marketing and Outreach Strategy will be developed in consultation with organisations representing under-represented groups.

2.10 We have also taken this opportunity to reference in our Section 75 Action Plan the link to DoF's role in implementing the Racial Equality Strategy 2015-2025.

2.11 The Section 75 Action Plan can be found at: https://www.finance-ni.gov.uk/publications/equality-scheme. We will regularly review the plan, updating it with new actions as required.

Disability Action Plan

What we asked:

2.12 We asked:

- Do you broadly agree that the measures in the Draft Disability Action Plan will have a positive impact? If not, please explain why not, and add any further comments.
- Do you have any other general comments on the draft Disability Action Plan?

What you said and what we did:

2.13 There was broad consensus that the action measures in the Disability Action Plan will have a positive impact. A **NICS Staff Member** commented they agreed with the action plans and the outcomes sought but that the success will depend on the effectiveness of training and guidance, highlighting in particular the area of reasonable adjustments. Another **NICS Staff Member** related poor management attitudes in relation to the same area and therefore highlighted the need to promote positive attitudes towards disabled staff and amongst managers who have been in post for a number of years, not just focus on training for new members of staff.

2.14 There is guidance available, currently being revised, for staff and managers in relation to reasonable adjustments. NICS HR Learning and Development also intend to develop a modular training package. The revision of the existing guidance will be completed before this is developed and we will therefore update the Disability Action Plan in due course.

2.15 Our Disability Action Plan also includes a measure that the DoF Diversity Network will work with people with disabilities to raise disability awareness. There have been a number of positive articles on Departmental News recently and we will continue to look for opportunities to promote the positive contribution of people with disabilities and the issue of reasonable adjustments.

2.16 We will support the NICS Disability Work Placement Scheme, which went live in April 2016, offering a range of structured placements for individuals with disabilities. NICS HR will work with the Disability Champion to increase participation across Departments, with a greater range and volume of meaningful placements provided to individuals.

2.17 Further to the response from **Autism NI**, the DoF Diversity Network has members with a specific interest in autism. Articles have recently been published on Departmental News in relation to hidden disability lanyards to help

airport staff discreetly support those with hidden disabilities (such as Autism, Dementia or Alzheimer's) and on the work of Assistance Dogs NI to improve the quality of life for some children with an Autism Spectrum Condition.

2.18 Network members will continue to look at ways to share information on autism and take forward ideas on DoF participation in World Autism Awareness Day.

2.19 An issue was also raised by a **NICS member of staff** in relation to addressing the categorisation of some DoF buildings as not DDA accessible. Although the Department does not consider any of its buildings to be non-DDA accessible, as above, the Disability Action Plan does include action on the issue of reasonable adjustments.

Summary:

2.20 We have updated our Disability Action Plan to:

- Show that the guidance on reasonable adjustments is being revised.

We will update the DAP when further plans are in place in relation to the development of reasonable adjustments training. Other actions detailed above are covered by existing measures.

2.21 The Disability Action Plan 2018-23 can be found at https://www.finance-ni.gov.uk/publications/disability-action-plan-0. We will regularly review the plan, updating it with new actions as required.