Department of Finance

Section 75 Action Plan 2018 – 2023
Alternative Formats

You can access and read this document on our website: https://www.finance-ni.gov.uk/dof-departmental-equality-scheme

If you require this document in an alternative format such as Braille, audio CD/MP3, easy read, computer disc and/or another language please contact us to discuss your requirements:

Write to: Strategic Equality Branch
Department of Finance
Room 26
Dundonald House
Upper Newtownards Road
Belfast
BT4 3SB

Telephone: 028 9052 0836

Text Relay: 18001 028 9052 0836

SMS: 07989 451970

Email: equality@finance-ni.gov.uk
1.0 INTRODUCTION

1.1 Section 75 of the Northern Ireland Act
Section 75 of the Northern Ireland Act 1998 requires public authorities 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 outlined in the Act. The Equality Commission NI recommends that public authorities develop action plans, relevant to their functions, to promote equality of opportunity and good relations.

1.2 Functions of the Department of Finance
The Department of Finance (DoF) has a wide range of functions but primarily administers the financial business of the Northern Ireland Executive and provides a support service to the rest of the Northern Ireland departments.

Outlined below are the Department’s range of functions:

- The strategic oversight of the expenditure managed by Northern Ireland departments;
- Providing Human Resource (HR) services and policies to support the management of the NI Civil Service (NICS) workforce;
- A range of common corporate services, primarily to NICS departments, in the areas of HR, training, finance, ICT, property management, legal and statistical services, and procurement;
- Providing momentum, focus and structure to public sector reform;
- The policy and operational delivery of the Northern Ireland rating system;
- Delivery of the NI Direct programme; and
- Land and Property Services (LPS). LPS functions are to:
  1. Maintain a domestic rating assessment system.
  2. Collect rates on behalf of central government and district councils.
  3. Maintain a domestic and non-domestic rating assessment
  4. Record legal interests in land and provision of land registration and mapping services in Northern Ireland.
  5. Provide land information service for conveyancing purposes.
6. Collect and manage spatial data in Northern Ireland for use by the public and private sectors.

7. Deliver a valuation, estate management and property data service to the public sector.

The Department also has one Agency, Northern Ireland Statistics and Research Agency (NISRA), which:

- Provides a statistics and social research service to NI Departments, Agencies and Non-Departmental Public Bodies to assist in policy making, monitoring and evaluation.

- Administers the system for the civil registration of births, marriages and civil partnerships, adoptions and deaths in Northern Ireland and production of summary statistics and population estimates.

- Administers marriage laws.

- Plans, undertakes and reports on the decennial census of population.

1.3 **NICS People Strategy**

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 have developed a People Strategy for everyone in the NICS.

This three-year People Strategy includes actions to build the capacity of the NICS. We have placed diversity and inclusion at its centre and the Strategy includes 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.

1.4 **Outcomes Framework**

This Section 75 Action Plan also has relevance to the Outcomes Framework as detailed in the [Outcomes Delivery Plan 2018-19](#), in particular:
Outcome 3: We have a more equal society
Outcome 6: We have more people working in better jobs
Outcome 8: We care for others and we help those in need.
Outcome 9: We are a shared, welcoming and confident society that respects diversity.
Outcome 11: We connect people and opportunities through our infrastructure.

1.5 **About this Action Plan**
The actions the Department proposes to take, over the next five years, to address known areas of inequalities areas are detailed in this Action Plan. It has been developed following a review of our audit of inequalities which was carried out to inform our previous action plan.

1.6 **Next Steps**
The Department will monitor progress on the delivery of its action measures and update the plan as necessary during its lifetime to ensure that it remains effective and relevant to its functions and duties. We will also report formally to the Equality Commission as part of our Annual Progress Report.
DOF Section 75 Action Plan 2018-23

Policy Area: Human Resource Management

Strategic Objectives:

- Develop and implement policies and procedures to support NICS departments in meeting their business objectives
- Effectively manage and develop our people and resource DoF effectively to support the delivery of business objectives

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Inequality</th>
<th>Action</th>
<th>Performance Outcome</th>
<th>Timescale</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Under-representation of Protestants in General Service administrative and junior management grades and of Protestants and Catholics in some grades in the Professional and Specialist groups in the NICS compared to the NI labour market (Religious belief).</td>
<td>Use of positive action advertising statements to encourage applications from under-represented groups. Other actions will be considered as part of an outreach/marketing strategy which will be developed in consultation with organisations representing under-represented groups.</td>
<td>Representation of both communities in line with what would be expected through the Review of Fair Participation in the NICS (the “Article 55 Review”).</td>
<td>Continuous until the next review in 2019.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Under-representation of males/females in some occupational groups/grade levels in the NICS compared to the NI labour market (Men and women generally).</td>
<td>Use of positive action advertising statements to encourage applications from under-represented group. Other actions will be considered as part of an outreach/marketing strategy which will be developed in consultation with organisations representing under-represented groups.</td>
<td>Representation of each gender in line with what would be expected through the Review of Gender in the NICS.</td>
<td>Continuous until the next review in 2019.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Under-representation of staff from ethnic minorities.</td>
<td>Actions required will be identified as part of a new Marketing &amp; Outreach Strategy which will be developed during 2018/19 in consultation with organisations representing under-represented groups. Actions will be taken according to the timetable set out in the strategy. The DoF Racial Equality Champion (REC) will engage with business areas to ensure that all policies and operational practices of the Department and its agency take account of the aims and principles of the Racial Equality Strategy 2015-25. REC will also continue to engage externally, outside DoF, with Racial Equality Subgroup (chaired by TEO), Belfast Migrant Forum (chaired by Belfast City Council) and Intercultural Interest Forum (chaired by Bryson Intercultural), to assist with any consultation.</td>
<td>Representation in line with what would be expected through the Review of the NICS workforce.</td>
<td>According to timescale set out in Marketing &amp; Outreach Strategy. Ongoing.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Support for transitioning staff (Men and women generally).</td>
<td>Develop transgender guidance for managers and staff.</td>
<td>Transgender guidance in place to ensure managers are aware of how to appropriately support transitioning staff and that staff are aware of the support they can expect.</td>
<td>By 31st March 2019.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Data Gaps on Section 75 profile of NICS workforce (Racial group; Persons with a disability; Persons with dependents; Sexual orientation).</td>
<td>Obtain data from staff on ethnicity, disability, dependents and sexual orientation.</td>
<td>Increase in data held on HRConnect for existing staff in relation to ethnicity, disability, dependents and sexual orientation.</td>
<td>By 31\textsuperscript{st} March 2019.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>---</td>
<td>---</td>
<td>---</td>
<td>---</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Job opportunities for the long-term unemployed and those leaving education (All S75 categories).</td>
<td>Lot 1 Contractors (General Job Roles) under the Framework Agreement for the provision of Agency workers to recruit a minimum of 15% of AA and AO job roles from the long-term unemployed and those leaving education, as per contract specification.</td>
<td>15% of AA and AO job roles recruited from the long-term unemployed and those leaving education.</td>
<td>By 31\textsuperscript{st} March each year.</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>
**Policy Area:** Services to the Citizen

**Strategic Objective:**
- Deliver high quality, efficient and effective services to the citizen, NICS departments and the wider public sector

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Inequality</th>
<th>Action</th>
<th>Performance Outcome</th>
<th>Timescale</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Access to Government Services (Age; Persons with a disability).</td>
<td>Digital Inclusion Programme activities, including Digital Learning Day, Get Online Week and Spring Online Week, and similar initiatives with organisations to encourage digital participation. The Go ON NI programme highlights the benefits of being online, and brings together all the initiatives, places and tools to help and encourage off-liners to become internet beginners. How-to guides, internet access points, schedules of tuition and training – are all available at <a href="http://www.nidirect.gov.uk/go-on">www.nidirect.gov.uk/go-on</a></td>
<td>Year on year increase in internet usage for those aged 50-64 and 65+. Annual total of 10,000 citizens reached through all Go ON NI Programmes in liaison with the LibrariesNI Network, SCNI and BITC and including the Digital Assist Steering Group partners.</td>
<td>By 31st March each year.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>Increased working relationships and working in partnership with organisations represented on the Digital Assist Steering Group, to deliver bespoke training, awareness and information sessions. Continuing working relationships with Age Friendly, Belfast City Council and inroads into other organisations.</td>
<td>Quarterly DASG meetings. A fifth of overall Go ON NI target remit (i.e. 2000 citizens) to be specifically reached through this group.</td>
<td>By 31st March 2019.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Connectability Programme to continue as part of the DoF Go ON NI programme: specific IT sessions to be delivered for those with a mental or physical disability or to those caring for a disabled person. Provided across ten groups initially on a programme plan.</td>
<td>Evaluation of IT sessions whereby increased Digital Skills enable engagement with government services and financial capability online as required.</td>
<td>By 31st March 2019.</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>---</td>
<td>---</td>
<td>---</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Engage with Autism NI on further training/awareness and review signage and communications. Share good practice with other public facing areas of the department. Introduce the JAM (Just a Minute) card to the NICS.</td>
<td>People with a learning difficulty, Autism or a communication barrier supported in accessing government services.</td>
<td>By 30th June 2019. By 31st March 2019.</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Accessibility of Stormont Estate Play Park (Persons with a disability).</td>
<td>A new inclusive play park to be built at Stormont Estate.</td>
<td>A play park that is suitable for children of all abilities.</td>
<td>By 31st March 2019.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Take-up of housing benefit, low income rate relief, rate rebate disabled person’s allowance and lone pensioner allowance (Marital Status, Age, Persons with a disability, Persons with dependents).</td>
<td>Outreach activity and updating of literature. The introduction of a ‘digital first’ approach for use by claimants to the new Rate Rebate scheme alongside a suite of support options for those who may have difficulty interacting with a digital interface, including help and assistance being available at <a href="http://www.nidirect.gov.uk/go-on-ni">www.nidirect.gov.uk/go-on-ni</a>. This should benefit to customers who have faced difficulties in the past, including those who have found it difficult to access services during normal office opening hours.</td>
<td>Uptake in benefit each year from those vulnerable groups entitled to financial assistance.</td>
<td>By 31st March each year.</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>
Law in NI treats unmarried fathers differently from married and unmarried mothers *(Marital Status).*

| Consider amendments to current laws. | Take forward recommendations on parent/child contact emerging from The Lord Chief Justice Review which was published in September 2017. | TBC – legislative amendments in this area are conditional on a Minister/Executive being in place. |

Related documents:

- Autism Strategy 2013–2020