



Department for
**Employment
and Learning**
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A REPORT ON THE OPERATION OF AN EQUALITY SCHEME

5 YEAR REVIEW

SEPTEMBER 2016

This report covers a review of the operation of an Equality Scheme for the period 2011-2016.

This document is available in an accessible format if required, eg Braille, large print, audio cassette or in a minority ethnic language.

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Reporting Template

EQUALITY COMMISSION FOR NORTHERN IRELAND

Public Authority Five Year Review Report

This report template includes a number of self assessment questions under the twelve key elements of an equality scheme. Please enter information at the relevant part of each Section in the template and ensure that it is submitted to the Commission electronically (by completing this template) **and** in writing, with a signed cover letter from the Chief Executive or, in his/her absence, the Deputy Chief Executive (or equivalent).

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Executive Summary

Please provide some main conclusions in terms of:

a) To what extent has your public authority's approved scheme provided a workable basis for mainstreaming the need to promote equality of opportunity and good relations into policy-making over the past five years?(Enter text below)

The Department for Employment and Learning 's Equality Scheme was approved by the Northern Ireland Equality Commission in September 2011, and has provided the Department with a framework for the mainstreaming of equality issues into new and existing policies and services. Over the five year period of review the Department gave priority to promoting equality of opportunity and to good relations, and ensuring fair and inclusive delivery of its programmes and services. Throughout the period of review the Department strived to integrate all aspects of equality and other policy proofing considerations, into its policy and decision making processes. The Department has established a strong record of mainstreaming equality, and observance of the equality scheme has helped to ensure that equality factors were prominent considerations during the development of new and existing policies.

Throughout the period under review equality considerations have been mainstreamed into the Department's planning process, including corporate and operational plans, and regular internal assurance statements that require approval by senior management.

The process of screening and the robustness of decisions taken have continued to develop and improve throughout the Department. The need for the collection and use of data from a variety of sources to inform screening decisions is now

embedded in the process. Also, increasing use of informal discussions with Section 75 representative groups has proved of value to screening findings.

The Department's Equality Unit was responsible for coordination for most of the Department's Section 75 'activity'. The Unit supported managers and staff throughout the Department, guiding them through their equality responsibilities and ensuring that the equality duties were to the fore in all policy considerations.

In April 2012 the Department introduced 'Shared Future Policy Proofing', which was subsequently applied to all significant new policies and business cases. The purpose of this process was to determine whether proposals were likely to contribute positively to a shared society or inadvertently reinforce existing divisions (in which case mitigating measures would need to be considered). Public authorities are already required to carry out good relations proofing under Section 75 of the Northern Ireland Act 1998. This is limited, however, to only three of the Section 75(1) categories, namely between persons of different religious belief, political opinion and racial group. In comparison, Shared Future Policy Proofing is concerned with promoting sharing or engaging together for all nine of the Section 75(1) categories; this is separate and different to the Equality screening required under Section 75 of the Northern Ireland Act 1998. Furthermore, the current requirements are limited in scope in that, while they acknowledge the existence of divisions and/or diversity and the need to encourage respect, they do not explicitly promote sharing or discourage separation in terms of how people access facilities or services.

Shared Policy Proofing is additional to our existing legislative responsibility. To comply, the impact of all major policies and business cases were assessed to determine the extent to which they promote sharing or separation in terms of how people live, learn, work, play, or access goods, facilities or services. Shared Future Policy Proofing aimed to provide decision-makers with wider understanding of the impact of potential decisions, and thus ensure better-informed policy.

b) What key lessons have been learnt over the past five years in terms of effectively implementing the approved equality scheme?

(Enter text below)

- Senior Management commitment to compliance with equality duties and implementation of the Department's Equality Scheme - evidenced by mainstreaming of equality considerations throughout all business areas.
- Benefits to policy-making from early and effective engagement and consultation with stakeholders, particularly where undertaken at an early stage.
- Maintenance of a dedicated Equality Unit to provide ongoing advice and support to assist integration of equality considerations across the various business areas in the Department.
- Consultations should be focused upon appropriate individuals and stakeholder groups to avoid 'consultation fatigue', and to encourage meaningful feedback.

c) What more needs to be done to achieve outcomes for individuals from the nine equality categories?

(Enter text below)

- Continuation of on-going efforts to develop appropriate data monitoring systems to enable assessment of policy impacts and outcomes.

- Maintenance of equality and diversity initiatives, such as information bulletins, information seminars to promote awareness of equality duties - particularly, for those with a direct role in delivering the Equality Scheme and action measures.
- Consideration should given to equality/diversity initiatives with an internal focus, to promote inclusion issues as they affect staff in the Department

1. A general introductory statement specifying the purpose of the scheme and the public authority's commitment to the statutory duties.

Schedule 9.4 (1) of the Northern Ireland Act 1998 requires DEL as a designated public authority to set out in an Equality Scheme how it proposes to fulfil the duties imposed by Section 75 of the Act in relation to its relevant functions. The Department's Equality Scheme, which was approved by the Equality Commission for Northern Ireland in September 2011, is intended to meet this statutory requirement. It is both a clear statement of our arrangements for fulfilling the Section 75 statutory duties and our plan for their implementation. The Equality Scheme also articulates our commitment to meeting Section 75 obligations in all parts of our organisation and to the allocation of necessary available resources in terms of people, time and money to ensure the effective implementation of our Equality Scheme.

1a) To what extent were senior management involved in ensuring scheme compliance over the 5 year period and what further steps could be undertaken to ensure effective internal arrangements?

Prompts – Identify any changes to arrangements for managing scheme implementation, and what were the lessons learnt in terms of enablers and impediments to monitoring scheme implementation?

(Enter text below)

During the period under review equality was mainstreamed into the Department's planning processes, and senior management took the lead in ensuring that equality was an integral part of departmental business. Overall responsibility for the effective implementation of our equality lay with the Minister for Employment and Learning, and the Department's Permanent Secretary was accountable for the development, implementation, maintenance and review of the equality scheme. Also, the Department's regular assurance statement included an assurance by senior management that all business areas within the Department were compliant with the requirement to undertake equality screening and EQIA's where appropriate, on all new policies and amendments to policies as required by Section 75.

1b) Outline annual **direct** expenditure of resources to ensure that the statutory duties were complied with, in terms of staff and money over the past 5 years, and comment on the extent that all necessary resources were allocated.

Prompts – Identify costs related to equality unit staff, use of consultants, allocation of budgets to training/publications/ research, extent of in-year bids and/or reallocation of resources. What were the

*lessons learnt in terms of enablers and impediments to monitoring resourcing? What could the public authority do in future to ensure effective allocation and monitoring of necessary resources?
(Enter text below)*

The Department's Equality Unit consisted of two full-time members of staff, including a Staff-Officer and Deputy Principal who reported to a Principal Officer with overall responsibility for Equality among a wider range of responsibilities. The table below shows staff costs and costs of research directly commissioned by the Equality Unit (see section 2a).

Year	Full Time staff	Staff costs £	Research costs £	Total £
2011/12	2	92,000	-	92,000
2012/13	2	92,000	10,000	102,000
2013/14	2	92,000	7,000	99,000
2014/15	2	92,000	-	92,000
2015/16	2	92,000	-	92,000

(Staff costs based upon grade averages for NICS)

Equality screening was undertaken by respective business areas within the Department, with the Equality Unit providing advice and guidance as required. The expenditure shown above therefore relates only to staffing costs directly associated with the Equality Unit and does not include any costs arising from Section 75-related activities or related research undertaken by business areas throughout the wider Department.

In addition to expenditure associated with above activities, the Department incurred other costs arising from training activities, such as diversity and disability awareness training which was provided to all of the Department's staff. Such training continues to be provided for new staff and as refresher training for

existing staff, as required. Also, more specific training has been provided for staff in the Equality Unit. All costs arising from this training were met by a central HR budget and are not included in the amounts above.

2. An outline of how the public authority intends to assess its compliance with the Section 75 duties and for consulting on matters to which a duty under that section is likely to be relevant.

2a) Outline impacts and outcomes (for the public authority and/or individuals from the nine equality categories) over the past five years and what further steps could be undertaken to build on these or address underreporting?

Prompt – Were outcomes delivered for all of the nine equality categories? Were annual progress reports critically reviewed before or after submission to the Commission? What examples of good practice from other public authorities could be adopted?

During the period under review the Department's Equality Scheme provided the basis for assessment of equality implications relating to all its policies and programmes. Equality assessment became an integral component of the policy development process, and new policies were routinely 'screened' to determine their potential impact upon the promotion of equality of opportunity and the promotion of good relations within the terms of Section 75 of the Northern Ireland Act 1998.

Throughout the period under review the Department attempted to deliver social change by addressing the needs of those who were considered to be among the most disadvantaged groups in society. Equality-related outcomes were successfully delivered for people in each of the Section 75 groups, including for example:

- The Department introduced an agreed joint policy with the Social Security Agency to provide translation and interpretation facilities for customers from a minority background whose first language was not English. Front-line staff in Jobs & Benefits Offices and JobCentres were given access to a telephone interpreting service that provided a 3-way telephone interpreting service. This service was used to deliver translations in a broad array of languages, including Polish, Lithuanian, Slovak, Czech, Ukranian, Russian, Hungarian, Bulgarian, Spanish, Portuguese, Cantonese, Mandarin and Arabic among other languages.
- In July 2012 the Department introduced the Youth Employment Scheme (YES), which aimed to help young people aged 18-24 years old, who were experiencing proportionately greater unemployment than other groups during the economic downturn. The programme was effective in engaging with 5,500 employers, and assisted more than 3,400 young people to move into employment.
- A Further Education Pilot initiative for disabled students, entitled 'Work First' was delivered by the Department's Disability Employment Service along with the Further Education sector (initially three colleges - the Northern, North Western, and Southern Regional Colleges) and employers to provide opportunities for students with disabilities to gain employment and participate more fully in the labour market. This was subsequently extended to include Greenmount College. Between September 2015 to March 2016, a total of 30 students participated on the

project, of which 24 received work placements and 6 secured permanent paid employment.

Annual Reports to the Equality Commission

Annual Reports to the Equality Commission were produced by the Department's Equality Unit, which co-ordinated inputs from all business areas across the Department. The reports were reviewed and cleared by senior officials, prior to final approval by the Permanent Secretary. These reports provided a regular source of information to help identify and disseminate on-going equality activity and examples of good practice across the Department.

Sharing of Good Practice

Throughout the period under review the Department participated in several inter-departmental groups that provided valuable opportunities for discussion and sharing of information on equality related matters. In particular, the cross-departmental Equality Practitioners Group (EPG), which met approximately quarterly, proved to be a particularly important forum for discussing issues of mutual concern and sharing information and good practice. This forum has helped the Department to refine and improve screening and consultation practices.

Several further examples of good practice are described below.

- In November 2012, the Department's Equality Unit funded a two-year contract with the Rainbow Project to increase employers' awareness of their responsibility in terms of equality in the workplace, and further encourage them to embrace the importance of having a work environment which is welcoming to those who are lesbian, gay and bisexual. Two thousand employers with at least 10 employees were identified with the support of the Equality Commission. These employers were sent information packs detailing the scope of the project with a target uptake of

400 employers, and by the end of the project 398 employers had taken part. Seminars were held in a range of venues including Belfast City Hall. The seminars employed a variety of approaches to engage with employers. For example, outside agencies were used to further promote the benefits of embedding equality and diversity practices within workplace policy and practice; also links were established with key business agencies, such as Legal Island to help increase the reach of the project. Eighty employers accepted the offer of additional training and consultancy support on a range of policies and practices regarding LGB people and sexual orientation. The Project helped to enable organisations, many for the first time, to educate their staff teams about sexual orientation issues, and also to empower staff with the language and confidence to speak about sexual orientation issues within the workplace.

- The Department acted as Managing Authority for the European Social Fund Programme (ESF) 2007-2013 for NI, and was represented on an Equality Working Group established by DFP to take forward the theme of 'equality and good relations' - which was a cross-cutting theme underpinning all EU Structural Funds Programmes in Northern Ireland. The Equality Working Group was required to ensure that the activities funded by the programmes gave due consideration to equality, as laid out by the programmes' respective strategies.
- The Department introduced a series of new practices designed to promote greater equality and diversity among applicants to competitions for public appointment positions, including; use of public media to publicise competitions; engaging with diversity bodies: varying the essential eligibility criteria; and clarifying and streamlining the application process. A departmental website introduced a link to benefits information and advice for persons who might be reluctant to apply for or accept a Public Appointment for fear it might affect entitlement to benefits. Also, a

Feedback request was issued to everyone who requested an application form for a Public Appointment to help identify potential barriers to applying for a public life position.

2b) Outline the number of equality scheme related consultation exercises undertaken by your authority over the past five years. Set out the number and percentage related to screening exercises and to EQIAs and indicate the extent that your scheme helped you to engage with external stakeholders.

Prompt – Identify your authority’s most and least successful means of consultation in relation to s75 categories. Why were some means of consultation more or less successful in relation to particular equality categories?

(Enter text below)

Over the period of review the Department carried out 15 equality scheme-related consultation exercises (listed at Annex A). This represents around 34% of the policies and programmes that were subject to equality screening (listed at Annex B) over the same period. Written correspondence was the principal mode of consultation, however other methods of communication, and combinations of methods, were undertaken in some instances including for example, informal meetings with stakeholders, roadshows, and formal forums involving representative bodies and individuals affected by policies. All of the consultation exercises elicited stakeholders’ views, however written communication produced proportionately fewest responses from Section 75 representative groups.

2c) Indicate if your list of consultees was amended during the 5 year period and what further steps could be taken to develop your level of engagement and consultation?

Prompt - Outline the extent your authority did or did not move away from formal consultation and on what criteria was any such consultation targeted? To what extent were requests to be included and/or objections from those not included in the consultation process received and how were these addressed?

Equality / Section 75 Consultee List

The Department's list of consultees was collated from several sources including: a list of organisations included in the Equality Commission's Guide to the Statutory Duties; organisations suggested by OFMDFM; relevant organisations identified by departmental business areas; and, organisations suggested by contacts in other Departments, including equality officials and other policy colleagues. In addition, the list of consultees is routinely updated on a quarterly basis, and also upon receipt of ad hoc requests from interested individuals and organisations.

Methods of Consultation

A majority of the Department's consultations adopted direct written communication as the principal method of consulting with stakeholders. However, some consultation exercises adopted other methods, or a combination of methods to communicate with stakeholders. For example:

- In its capacity as Managing Authority for the NI European Social Fund (ESF) Programme (2014-2020) the Department engaged in an extensive

series of pre-consultations to seek views on the delivery of the (ESF) programme. Engagement was initially facilitated through a Consultative Partnership Group which was established in September 2012 with partners representing business and trade unions, the Equality Commission, research and education, the voluntary and community sector, economic and social partners, environmental interests, the Agrirural Forum, urban concerns and local government. In considering proposed activity for inclusion in the draft ESF Programme, DEL also engaged directly with a wide range of other stakeholders, including informal meetings with local government representatives, and representatives from the Community and Voluntary sector. Feedback was received from the sector with regard to how future ESF funding could best be utilised, within the constraints of EU regulations.

In addition, the Department organised a series of information road shows throughout Northern Ireland, held in each of the 11 new council areas between 13 October and 7 November 2014. A total of 580 people from approximately 290 organisations attended the events.

- As part of the consultation on a Review of Apprenticeships in Northern Ireland, the Department launched a call for submissions relating to the review on 4 September 2013. The purpose of this call was to further build the evidence base underpinning the Apprenticeship Review and to seek the views of key stakeholders on the best way forward. To augment this formal call for submissions the Department also hosted five stakeholder events to provide opportunities for direct engagement with key shareholders and to promote discussion of their views and opinions on the proposed way forward for the apprenticeship model and brand. Valuable information was obtained during the consultation period ,which closed in April 2014. A report on consultees' responses was published in May 2014.

2d) To what extent did your authority consult directly with directly affected individuals as well as with representative groups, particularly in relation to young people and those with learning disabilities, and was this sufficient?

Prompt – How effective was your authority at providing feedback to consultees as a result of consultation exercises? What were the lessons learnt in terms of enablers and impediments to consulting directly with affected individuals? What could your authority do in future to provide effective consultee feedback?

(Enter text below)

During consultation exercises the Department has sought to elicit the views of both individuals and stakeholder groups affected by its policies and programmes. This was recently evidenced by the consultation on the Review of Youth Training, which was launched in November 2014 with consultation closing in February 2015. When he launched the review of apprenticeships and youth training, the Minister for Employment and Learning gave a commitment that alongside an expert panel, the review would be informed by stakeholder forums. The Minister also invited members of the Assembly Committee for Employment and Learning to attend stakeholder forums which he hosted, to inform the Department's ongoing review of youth training. These stakeholder forums included a group specifically for young people, which met at Belfast Metropolitan College, and focused exclusively upon the views and opinions of young people directly affected by the review.

The Department's Employment Strategy for People with Disabilities also involved extensive engagement with both stakeholder groups and individuals with a broad range of disabilities. The Department and the local disability sector have a long

standing positive working relationship, and building upon this, convened a strategic working group, including key representatives from the sector, in 2013. This group played an important role in representing the interests of people with disabilities, which helped to influence the development of the Department's Employment Strategy for People with Disabilities. In addition to this representative group, the Department also elicited views and opinions from individuals directly affected by the strategy. This was facilitated by a number of positive engagement events, targeted primarily at people with disabilities but also including support workers, community and voluntary sector organisations, and employers. More than 300 people, most of whom had a disability, attended these events.

Also, a separate event, targeted at employers, was organised, to help gain an understanding of the issues faced or perceived by employers, when recruiting and supporting people with a disability.

During the period of review the Department has consistently provided feedback to those participating in consultations, as outlined in the Equality Scheme. Feedback was mainly provided in the form of written reports.

3. The authority's arrangements for assessing and consulting on the impact of policies adopted or proposed to be adopted on the promotion of equality of opportunity.

3a) Outline and discuss the number of policies your authority subject to screening over the past five years, setting out the number and percentage of 'policies screened in' on the basis of equality considerations and the percentage 'screened in' on the basis of the good relations duty.

Prompt - What were the lessons learnt in terms of enablers and impediments to screening in terms of, screening criteria and priority factors? Are there any other criteria which could usefully be included? What lessons are there regarding responsibility for screening at regional level and subsequent screening of local policy? What could your authority do in future to ensure effective screening arrangements? Set out in an appendix a list of all policies screened out during scheme implementation.

(Enter text here)

Forty-four policies, programmes or pieces of draft legislation were equality – screened during the period of review. All were screened-out for Equality Impact Assessment . These are listed at Annex B.

Equality screening has become well established and uniformly acknowledged by staff as an integral part of policy development. Feedback from staff indicates that the Department’s screening form, which is based upon a template from the Equality Commission, has proved to be helpful in identifying potential equality considerations at an early stage. The Department’s Equality Unit was often consulted by policymakers seeking advice or reassurance, on completion of screening forms. This system has worked effectively, although it is acknowledged that staff training on equality awareness should be refreshed going forward.

3b) To what extent did your authority’s consideration of the screening criteria **not** identify equal opportunity implications on any of s75 categories, but for which consultees then highlighted problems?

Prompt –Identify the extent the collection of quantitative and qualitative data informed screening processes. Outline the extent

consultations with representative groups produced data to inform the screening process which was not otherwise available to your authority. Outline any difficulties in identifying policies and equality implications using the definition of policy set out in the Guide to the Statutory Duties.

(Enter text below)

In general, Section 75 Screening appropriately identified equality implications. However, the limited availability of up to date, quantitative information was the most frequently difficulty cited by officials engaged in screening. This difficulty affected some Section 75 categories more than others, such as sexual orientation and political opinion for example. Also, feedback from officials indicated that in some cases, pre-consultation discussions with stakeholders helped to pre-empt potential equality problems that were addressed early, before policies were further developed.

3c) Outline over the past five years how many EQIAs your authority commenced as a result of i) initial screening and ii) as a result of screening new/revised policies subsequently, and discuss the extent that your authority has become more effective at identifying equality of opportunity dimensions in its policies.

Prompt – Were changes made to the screening process?

Outline any examples of any changes made to policies to better promote equality of opportunity and/or good relations, rather than to address any perceived differential impact, as a result of screening policies that were ‘screened out’?

(Enter text below)

Over the period of the past five years no EQIAs were undertaken as a result of initial screening or as a result of screening undertaken on new/revised policies at a later point in time.

Regarding the Department's ability to identify equality dimensions affecting its policies, our experience indicates that staff are accustomed to the screening process and use of screening forms - which has been assisted through experience and training. Feedback from those involved in screening indicates that staff have a broad understanding of the screening process, and are aware of potential equality of opportunity considerations associated with policy. As indicated at 3(b) there was also an awareness of how early communication with stakeholders could assist in pre-empting potential equality problems.

3d) Outline over the past five year period the percentage of your authority's initial EQIA timetable that reached i) stage 6 of the EQIA process i.e. decision making, and ii) stage 7 of the EQIA process i.e. annual monitoring & publication of results, and indicate the extent that your authority has become more effective at progressing EQIAs.

Prompt – Explain any slippage that occurred and what was done to rectify it. To what extent did you notify representative groups of this slippage and what was their reaction? What were the lessons learnt in terms of enablers and impediments to monitoring EQIAs?

(Enter text below)

No EQIAs were undertaken during the period of the review.

4. The authority's arrangements for monitoring any adverse impact of policies adopted by the authority on the promotion of equality of opportunity.

4a) To what extent were sufficient arrangements put in place to collect data relating to the nine equality categories to monitor the impact of policies and what could your authority do in future to develop monitoring arrangements?

Prompt - What were the lessons learnt in terms of enablers and impediments to monitoring and developing new/additional quantitative data over the past five years? Did your authority consult its own employees or collaborate with other authorities to collect data? Did your authority engage with representative groups to develop monitoring arrangements?

(Enter text below)

The Department acknowledges that monitoring and evaluation are key elements of the policy and programme development process. Regular monitoring procedures and a rolling schedule of policy and programme evaluations were well established within the Department throughout the period under review.

The Department published bespoke reports on major evaluations studies and also routinely published figures on the uptake of the Department's programmes and services; these figures included a breakdown by the equality dimensions of gender, community background and religion, and were regularly published in an annual Labour Market Bulletin and also in occasional articles published on the Department's website.

In relation to the collection of data, the Department in partnership with NISRA identified a need to produce more detailed sub-regional and sub-group statistics from household surveys. Following an in-house feasibility study, it was found that by combining data from four existing core Northern Ireland household surveys such statistics could be produced. As a result, statistics on labour market and other demographic factors were generated with both greater geographical detail and smaller sampling errors than before. Going forward, this offers a potential to produce more robust estimates of employment, unemployment and inactivity rates as well as age, sex, religion and ethnicity.

5. The authority's arrangements for publishing the results of equality impact assessments and of monitoring any adverse impact of policies adopted by the authority on the promotion of equality of opportunity.

5a) Indicate the number of reports published outlining the results of EQIAs and monitoring over the past five years, and outline what your authority could do in future in relation to improving the publication of EQIA results and monitoring.

Prompt – Identify the number of reports that were provided in alternative formats. What were the lessons learnt in terms of enablers and impediments to publishing the results of EQIAs and monitoring?

(Enter text below)

No EQIAs were undertaken during the period of the review.

6. A commitment that in making any decision with respect to a policy adopted or proposed to be adopted by it, that the public authority shall take into account any equality impact assessment and consultation carried out in relation to the policy.

6a) In terms of the number of EQIAs that reached stage 6 i.e. decision making to what extent were mitigation measures and alternative policies adopted?

*Prompt - Outline the extent to which your authority produced EQIAs that did **not** identify adverse impact on any of s75 categories, but which consultees then gave an indication of adverse impact of s75 category and/or proposed mitigation measures or alternative policies.*

(Enter text below)

No EQIAs were undertaken during the period of the review.

6b) To what extent did consideration of EQIAs and consultations contribute to a change in policy, as opposed to policy decisions which would probably have been made in any event by your authority?

Prompt - Set out any key examples. What were the lessons learnt in terms of enablers and impediments to making a decision and

taking into account an EQIA and consultation? What could your authority do in future to ensure decision making effectively takes these issues into account?

(Enter text below)

No EQIAs were undertaken during the period of the review.

With regard to consultations during the period of review, the Department regularly published reports presenting responses received from consultees, and also identified where responses had resulted in changes or amendment of policy. Importantly, feedback from officials also acknowledged the value of early engagement or 'pre-consultation' discussions with stakeholders in some instances. Such engagement helped to pre-empt potential equality issues and enabled early consideration of issues that may otherwise have presented difficulties at a later stage in the development of policies. Examples of such early engagement with stakeholders are detailed at 2(c).

7. The authority's arrangements for training staff on issues relevant to the duties.

7a) To what extent were sufficient arrangements put in place to develop and deliver a training programme in accordance with scheme commitments?

Prompt - Was the training programme focused on the initial period of scheme implementation or did it effectively cover all five years? To what extent were outside trainers from representative groups used in designing or delivering training? Was focused training for staff in management and roles associated with aspects of scheme implementation provided on an ongoing basis?

(Enter text below)

Departmental staff of all levels undertook equality and diversity training throughout the period under review. The principal training provider was the Centre for Applied Learning (CAL), Enterprise Shared Services, which is the sole provider of generic training to the Northern Ireland Civil Service (NICS).

Focused training was provided for key staff who were directly engaged in the implementation of equality scheme commitments, including for example, those staff involved in research and data collection, policy development, service design, conducting equality impact assessments, consultation, monitoring and evaluation. The suite of equality training provided by CAL included courses such as: 'An Introduction to Section 75 and Schedule 9' ; 'Equality Impact Assessment (EQIA) Workshop' ; and 'Public Consultation and Engagement' .

All staff undertook mandatory diversity training, via an e-learning package entitled 'Diversity Now' which concerned diversity in the workplace. This course,

which was developed by the NI Civil Service for all Departments, must be undertaken as a refresher course on a three-year cycle. Also, all of the Department's front line staff who interact with the public, were required to undertake mandatory Disability Awareness training.

Other internal initiatives included information seminars to raise awareness of equality and disability duties that were delivered to staff by the Department's Equality Unit, and staff updates on relevant Section 75 activities provided through internal communications.

7b) Have all staff received awareness training and what could your authority do in future to deliver an effective training programme?

Prompt – Does the authority have evidence that over the past five years staff understood their role in implementing the scheme? What were the lessons learnt in terms of enablers and impediments to communication and training?

(Enter text below)

DEL ensured that Section 75 training was provided to all staff involved in the delivery of the Department's Equality Scheme, and staff were also encouraged to update and refresh their knowledge through the uptake of formal training opportunities and attending relevant events, such as external seminars and conferences.

In addition, bespoke training courses with a special focus were delivered to staff delivering front-line services. For example, Disability and Health Awareness training was delivered to staff in both the Jobs and Benefits Offices and Job Centres. This was intended to provide staff with greater awareness and understanding of the particular needs and potential support required by customers who presented with disabilities and health conditions, including mental health conditions. This initiative was delivered by Supported Employment Services (SES), a consortium of disability organizations contracted by the Department to deliver specialist disability programmes.

8. The authority's arrangements for ensuring and assessing public access to information and to services provided by the authority.

8a) To what extent were sufficient arrangements put in place to ensure and assess public access to information and to services provided by the authority?

Prompt - Was an audit of information provision undertaken? To what extent did you provide accessible formats without specific requests? What were the lessons learnt in terms of enablers and impediments to ensuring and assessing public access to information and to services? What could your authority do in future to ensure equality of opportunity in public access to information and to services?

(Enter text below)

During the period under review the Department met the commitments of its equality scheme to ensure equality of opportunity in accessing information, and providing information in alternative formats on request, where reasonably practicable. The Department's website and its publications clearly stated that key published documents would be made available in other languages or formats upon request. In practice, the demand for alternative languages and formats was low. Also, the website was redesigned to improve the content and accessibility of information for all customers. The changes were well received by both internal and external customers.

Initiatives were also taken to improve immediate access for customers to the Department's front-line services. A policy was agreed and jointly introduced with the Social Security Agency to provide translation and interpretation facilities for customers from a minority background whose first language was not English. Front-line staff in Jobs & Benefits Offices and JobCentres were given access to a telephone interpreting service that provided a 3-way telephone interpreting service. This service was used to deliver translations in a broad array of languages, including Polish, Lithuanian, Slovak, Czech, Ukrainian, Russian, Hungarian, Bulgarian, Spanish, Portuguese, Cantonese, Mandarin and Arabic among other languages.

Going forward, the new Department for the Economy will operate a Text Relay System to provide improved accessibility to staff for deaf and speech impaired customers. The service enables staff to receive text- to-voice messages from deaf and speech impaired callers, and also enables staff to communicate via voice- to- text calls.

9. The authority's timetable for measures proposed in the scheme.

9a) Outline the extent to which measures set out in the original timetable have been implemented. Any detailed information should be included as an appendix to the report.

Prompt – Update any progress previously reported as underway or delayed. Has a mechanism been developed to report by exception i.e. on specific issues that have not been progressed?

(Enter text below)

The Department has met its commitments to provide an annual progress report to the Equality Commission, implement its training plan relating to equality, and communication of the commitments as set out in its Equality Scheme.

9b) If your authority was to be reconstituted in the next five years what would be the main scheme actions/equality considerations that an incoming authority should address? Any detailed information should be included as an appendix to the report.

Prompt – Outline what arrangements could be put in place to transfer equality scheme knowledge.

(Enter text below)

The NI Executive gave a commitment in the Stormont House Agreement to reduce the number of government departments from twelve to nine. As a result, the Department for the Economy (DfE) was established in May 2016. DfE

combines the functions of the former Department of Enterprise, Trade and Investment and the Department for Employment and Learning, with the exception of the Employment Service which is now part of the Department for Communities. Both of the former Departments have long established Equality considerations as an integral part in the process of programme and policy development. Practices are also in place within DfE to enable Equality Staff to progress the Department's equality agenda, and to assess any new considerations that may need to be addressed.

10. Details of how the scheme will be published.

10a) Were scheme commitments in this section delivered and what evidence supports this view?

(Enter text below)

The stated commitments in the publication of DEL's Equality Scheme were met. All bodies on the Department's list of consultees were notified of the draft and final versions of the Equality Scheme, which were also published on the Department's website and made available on request from the Department's Equality Unit. Also, staff were informed of the content of Equality Scheme via articles in an internal ezine.

11. The authority's arrangements for dealing with complaints arising from a failure to comply with the scheme.

11a) Outline the number and nature of complaints received by your authority, and what your authority could do in future to develop its complaints handling process and learn from complaints.

Prompt – Outline the nature of complaints and scheme element e.g. screening, consultation. What effect did complaints have on the operation of your scheme?

(Enter text below)

The Department's Equality Scheme sets out the procedure for dealing with complaints arising from a failure to comply with the scheme.

During the period of the review a total of three complaints were received. Each of the complaints was investigated in accordance with the Equality Scheme, and none were upheld. The Department responded to each of the complainants with details of the respective investigations and associated outcomes.

12. A commitment to conducting a review of the scheme within five years of its submission to the Equality Commission and to forwarding a report of this review to the Equality Commission.

12a) What has been your authority's experience of conducting this review? To what extent has the Commission's guidance been useful in undertaking the review?

(Enter text below)

This review was conducted with input from all of the Department's business areas, and with cognizance of the Equality Commission's guidance. The process has provided a helpful overview of our achievements, and going forward, will also help to inform the implementation of the new Equality Scheme for the Department for the Economy.

Department for Employment and Learning's Equality Scheme-related Consultations on Policies, Programmes and Draft Legislation, 2011- 2016

Frequency of student support payments

New further education strategy for Northern Ireland

Part-time and postgraduate student finance

Review of youth training consultation

Draft disability action plan 2014-16

Zero hours contracts

Sharing parental rights - extending flexibility at work

Review of the conduct of Employment Agencies and Employment Business Regulations (Northern Ireland) 2005

Review of Apprenticeships in Northern Ireland consultation

NI European Social Fund (ESF) Programme 2014-2020 Investment for growth and jobs programme consultation

Employment Law Review

Implementation of EU Directive - extension of parental leave entitlement

A strategy for those not in education, employment or training (NEET)

Higher education strategy consultation

Tuition fees consultation

**Department for Employment and Learning's Policies,
Programme and Draft Legislation subject to Equality Screening
during 2011- 2016**

Title of policy subject to screening	Screening decision? e.g. screened in, screened out, mitigation, EQIA
Regional Strategy for Widening Participation in Higher Education	Screened out
Steps to Work Efficiency Saving	Screened out
Staff Re-deployment Policy	Screened out
The Jobseeker's Allowance (Work Experience) (Amendment) Regulations (Northern Ireland) 2012	Screened out
The Student Fees (Qualifying Persons and Courses) (Amendment) Regulations (Northern Ireland) 2011	Screened out
Education (Students Loans) (Repayment) (Amendment) Regulations (Northern Ireland) 2012	Screened out
The Students Fees (Amount) (Amendment) Regulations (Northern Ireland) 2012	Screened out
Departmental Workforce Plan 2011 –15	Screened out
Departmental Redeployment Policy	Screened out
Employer Support Programme	Screened out
Steps to Work Step Ahead 50+	Screened out
Steps to Work First Start	Screened out

Steps 2 Success	Screened out
The Student Fees (Qualifying Persons and Courses) (Amendment) Regulations (Northern Ireland) 2013	Screened out
The Education (Student Support) (No.2) Regulations (Northern Ireland) 2009 (Amendment) (No.2) Regulations (Northern Ireland) 2012	Screened out
Extension of the powers of the General Teaching Council for Northern Ireland	Screened out
Provision of free English (ESOL) classes for asylum seekers	Screened out
Potential changes to rights for working parents, parental leave directive	Screened out
Shared future Policy Proofing	Screened out
Review of Additional Support Fund for Students with Learning Difficulties and/or Disabilities	Screened out
Learner Access and Engagement Programme	Screened out
Review of Additional Support Fund for Students with Learning Difficulties and/or Disabilities	Screened out
Employer support Programme	Screened out
Industrial Training Levy (Construction Industry) Order (Northern Ireland) 2014	Screened out
Review of Apprenticeships	Screened out
Review of unfair dismissal qualifying period	Screened Out
Review of Consultation Periods for Collective Redundancies	Screened out
Economic Inactivity Strategy	Screened out
Potential changes to systems for resolving workplace disputes	Screened out

Review of the Conduct of Employment Agencies and Employment Businesses Regulations (Northern Ireland) 2005	Screened out
Shared Parental Leave and Pay. Extension of Right to Request Flexible Working	Screened out
Employment Law Review	Screened out
The Youth Employment Scheme	Screened out
European Social Fund Programme 2014 - 2020	Screened out
Departmental support for PhD students from outside the UK to study in Northern Ireland	Screened out
The Industrial Training Levy (Construction Industry) Order (Northern Ireland) 2014	Screened out
Shared Parental Leave and Pay (including provisions for time off to attend antenatal appointments and pre-adoption meetings, extension of adoption leave and pay to prospective adopters and surrogate parents)	Screened out
Extension of Right to Request Flexible Working	Screened out
Review of the Conduct of Employment Agencies and Employment Businesses Regulations (Northern Ireland) 2005	Screened out
The NI Employment Strategy for People with disabilities	Screened out
The New Further Education Strategy for Northern Ireland	Screened out
Developing modern, efficient and effective employment tribunals	Screened out
Departmental Workforce Plan 2015/16	Screened out
Economic Inactivity Strategy - "Enabling Success"	Screened out
Assessments of the budget reductions on policy areas 2015-2016	Screened out

