

DEPARTMENT FOR INFRASTRUCTURE (NI)



**Public Authority Statutory Equality and Good Relations Duties
Annual Progress Report 2023**

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Documents published relating to our Equality Scheme can be found at:

<https://www.infrastructure-ni.gov.uk/publications/department-infrastructures-equality-scheme>

Signature:



This report has been prepared using a template circulated by the Equality Commission.

It presents our progress in fulfilling our statutory equality and good relations duties, and implementing Equality Scheme commitments and Disability Action Plans.

This report reflects progress made between April 2022 and March 2023.

Alternative versions can be sought from the DfI Equality Unit by:

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PART A – Section 75 of the Northern Ireland Act 1998 and Equality Scheme

Section 1: Equality and good relations outcomes, impacts and good practice

- 1 In 2022-23, please provide **examples** of key policy/service delivery developments made by the public authority in this reporting period to better promote equality of opportunity and good relations; and the outcomes and improvements achieved.

Please relate these to the implementation of your statutory equality and good relations duties and Equality Scheme where appropriate.

1.1 General Section 75 and Outcomes Delivery Plan

The Department's overriding purpose is to connect people safely, support opportunities, and create sustainable living places through our infrastructure in order to have a positive impact on the daily lives of everyone living, working and visiting Northern Ireland. Our Business Plan outlines the programme of work and initiatives the Department has committed to, to ensure we deliver our objectives to connect people through our infrastructure.

i. Mainstreaming Equality across the Department

The DfI Equality Scheme has been in place since February 2021 and includes commitments to better promote equality of opportunity and good relations.

Our Equality Unit promotes DfI's statutory duty to consider equality when carrying out Departmental functions; provides advice / guidance to staff in relation to this; and leads work on equality related exercises, with input from across the Department as required.

To comply with the Equality Scheme, the Equality Unit has ensured that effective internal arrangements are in place so that section 75 is mainstreamed across the Department. Annex 1 summarises actions taken during this reporting period.

In order to develop staff understanding of section 75 related issues, and the needs of each section 75 category, officials throughout the Department attend equality related meetings both externally and internally. At these meetings officials share and receive best practice advice, consider emerging issues, and raise / resolve issues which could present an inequality for any section 75 category.

The Department is represented on the Statutory Forum between the NICS and ECNI to discuss and develop guidance and forms, and the promotion of equality

across Departments. Participation allows us to discuss issues and obtain advice from the Equality Commission (ECNI) on a regular basis. Direct contact with ECNI is also made on an ad hoc basis for specific advice.

Following the publication of the Department's Equality Scheme a Departmental Audit of Inequalities was completed. A draft Equality Action Plan was developed in the later stages of 2022-23 followed by a consultation which that ended on 23 June 2023.

'New Decade, New Approach' committed to developing a series of four cross cutting Social Inclusion Strategies – Anti-Poverty; Disability; Gender; and LGBTQI+. The development of the strategies has followed the co-design approach. DfI is a member of the Departmental Working Groups for each strategy, working alongside other Departments and the independent Co-Design Groups in developing these strategies. Due to a non-functioning Executive, work on the strategies has slowed. That said the Department was represented at the Gender Equality Strategy meetings on 27 September 2022, 24 October 2022 and at a workshop on 10 October 2022.

ii. **Diversity**

The Department is represented on the NICS Diversity Champions Network (DCN) which was established in 2015. The DfI **Diversity Champion** attends quarterly meetings of the DCN to promote and encourage diversity within the Department. The DCN has four thematic leads for Disability, Ethnic Minorities, LGBT and Gender.

The Department has provided input to the annual NICS Diversity Action Plan which include a range of actions to support each diversity theme.

The annual diversity calendar is accessible to all DfI staff on our intranet site. The intranet also has supporting articles to promote and support activities and celebrations including support for Pride month, International Women's Day, International Male's Day, the Boardroom Apprentice Scheme, and participation in the International Job Shadow Day with placement opportunities provided across DfI. The Department has also published a number of personal stories on disability and gender issues on its intranet site during 2022-23.

DfI has contributed to the development of the NICS Diversity Strategic Action Plan being led by The Executive Office (TEO). This covers progress towards meeting the Executive's commitments to Equality in Public Appointments. The Plan is still to be finalised after being delayed as a result of the pandemic but will undergo a 12 week consultation process.

iii. **Racial Equality Champion**

The Department's **Racial Equality Champion** continues to represent DfI at the NICS Racial Equality Champions Network. The DfI Champion works closely with the Racial Equality Unit in TEO, other NICS champions and the associated sub-group. The sub-group comprises those working with minority ethnic people and migrants to identify and tackle any barriers to addressing racial inequality. As well as attending meetings during this period, our Racial Equality Champion regularly inputs to exercises on Ethnic Equality Monitoring (EEM).

Departmental Racial Equality Champions work with the Racial Equality Subgroup, whose membership comprises of people working with or representing minority ethnic people and migrants, including representatives of refugees and asylum seekers, Northern Ireland Human Rights Commission and the Equality Commission for Northern Ireland. Meetings of this sub-group were held on 17 May 2022, 8 September 2022, 29 November 2022, 13 January 2023 (attendees included DfI Champion), and 9 March 2023.

Race Relations (NI) Order 1997 Review

The Department's Race Champion and the Equality Unit took part in the review of the Race Relations (NI) Order 1997 prior to consultation, providing comment and input to the proposals prior to the consultation, which went live on 27 March 2023. This review took place to ensure that new legislation is put in place that is fully fit for purpose. The consultation ended 18 June 2023.

Travellers

The Department has been preparing updated model conditions for licences for Traveller's sites. After carrying out a review the Department consulted on the revised draft Model Licence conditions in 2019 (for all caravan sites including Traveller sites).

Now that this process has completed the Department intends to publish the updated Model Licence Conditions in the coming months. In the meantime, the Model Licence Conditions published in 1992 (for holiday caravan sites) and in 1994 (for residential caravan sites) continue to remain in place.

Monitoring Minority Ethnic in the Public Sector

The Executive's Racial Equality Strategy, 2015-2025 and TEO research has highlighted that Ethnic Equality Monitoring (EEM) is an important step in addressing ethnic inequalities, and EEM is now being introduced across NICS to allow policy makers to ensure fair access to employment and service provision.

As a first step towards EEM, anyone who gathers or holds data on any form of ethnicity monitoring is being asked to report the details to the cross-departmental working group on EEM.

To address the lack of ethnic monitoring/data within the NICS, TEO have worked alongside Racial Equality Champions, NISRA and other bodies to develop a monitoring guide. During 2022 the DfI Racial Champion carried out a departmental scoping exercise on ethnic monitoring/data carried out by DfI, feeding this information back to TEO. DfI continued to work alongside TEO in developing the NICS guidance during 2022-23.

The Department's Analysis, Statistics & Research Branch (ASRB) met with the Equality Commission on 10 August 2022 to discuss the Travel Survey for Northern Ireland and what data ASRB hold.

The DfI intranet site publishes articles and personal stories to promote racial awareness.

iv. **Children's Issues**

The Department's **Children's Champion** acts as the senior point of contact for any issues relating to the impact of the Department's functions on children and young people. This includes input to the Children and Young People's Strategy, and related draft Programme for Government outcomes.

The Department funds a number of concessions which assist children and young people when using public transport. We also have a number of road safety initiatives

that specifically target children and young people. Further details of our initiatives or services affecting children and young people are set out within this report.

United Nations Committee on the Rights of the Child (UNCRC)

During this reporting period the Department's Children's Champion participated in the review of drafts of the United Nations Convention on the Rights of the Child (UNCRC) Report on List of Issues Prior to Report. He also participated in the Northern Ireland exercise to inform the periodic report to the UN Committee about the UK's progress in implementing the UNCRC.

v. **Mental Health Charter**

The NICS, including DfI, remains committed to the ECNI Mental Health Charter and its duty to protect the mental health of its staff. Awareness raising and support for mental health especially in recent years, has been promoted in the Department with intranet articles and online seminars. Staff are now able to avail of a new working pattern – hybrid working – which supports a mix of office and home working.

The Department is also committed to the “every customer counts, promoting accessible services” recommendations.

All staff have access to and receive regular updates from the NICS Health and Wellbeing Programme / NICS Well, overseen by the Occupational Health Service (OHS). During the reporting period DfI continued to publish articles in support of Mental Health and general health and wellbeing. This also included promoting specific events such as World Mental Health Day and Mental Health Awareness Week (2023 highlighted children's mental health).

vi. **Women and Girls**

The Period Products (Free Provision) Act (NI) 2022 requires DfI (and all other NICS departments) to make regulations specifying the departmental 'Public Service Bodies' required to ensure that period products are obtainable free of charge by persons in its premises who need to use them. A key aim of this legislation is to address period poverty.

DfI is proposing to specify Northern Ireland Water (NIW) and the Northern Ireland Transport Holding Company (NITHC) (Translink) as Public Services Bodies for the purposes of the Act. This will require them to establish and maintain arrangements to provide free period products in their premises for service users, visitors, and staff.

Departmental officials have drafted specification regulations and are preparing statutory guidance for NIW and NITHC on fulfilling their duties under the Act. This is in readiness for when arrangements are in place for the legislation to be made and consultation on the guidance in the manner required by the Act can be carried out.

Throughout the year officials have also participated in the TEO-led Free Period Products Inter-Departmental Working Group.

vii. **NI Water (NIW)**

NIW operates a Customer Care Register which offers a range of free additional services if a customer has a disability, is an older person, has a serious medical condition or needs extra help for any reason. The register is free and there are no qualifying requirements to join. NIW will prioritise these customers during an unplanned event. An outbound call is made to all our CCR customers each year to maintain integrity of our data.

In 2023, NIW has been working on the roll out of the JAM (Just a Minute) card initiative and by end June 2023 will have trained over 80% of employees in the programme which will support people with learning difficulties and autism.

1.2 Public Transport (including IMTAC)

Access to Transport

Many of the transport programmes funded by the Department are designed to remove barriers to travel that people, especially those with a disability, older people, and dependants (this includes dependants who may have a disability, and/or are younger or older), may face.

Initiatives and transport related programmes aimed at creating an inclusive / accessible transport system during this period, include the projects below.

a. Improved Station Facilities 2022-23

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- i. Translink's Ulsterbus Station and Depot Safety Upgrades Phase 1 project, which was completed during this reporting period, has implemented a range of safety improvement measures at 26 different locations across the Translink bus network. Improvements to segregation measures for operational staff and passengers, including traffic lining, pedestrian walkways, protective guardrails, and installation of vehicular access barriers have been made and all works are compliant with DDA standards to ensure a safe and inclusive customer experience.
- ii. Ballymartin P&R Phase 2 has been completed, providing 10 accessible parking bays and 2 level access points to the platform.
- iii. Lanyon Place Station – Replacement of Lifts & Escalators.
- iv. The construction of the new station at Yorkgate, which broke ground in July 2022 and is scheduled to be completed in Autumn 2024, will provide level access to the entrance of the building with passenger lifts provided to access the concourse, airbridge and both platforms. The station will have a clear obstacle free route, and access for all customers to parent changing and changing places facilities.
- v. Belfast Grand Central Station construction works, which commenced in early 2022, continued with final completion expected in 2025. Included will be enhancements to station facilities and surrounding areas including: spacious comfortable passenger seating waiting areas, enhanced public realm and widening of footways for greater levels of pedestrian priority, step free access to and from the station to cater for pedestrians with restricted mobility and visual impairments. Changing room facilities to include provision for disability access and baby changing rooms, toilet and changing facilities will accommodate those of both genders, and those from the transgender community. The project has adopted the new Social Value legislation released by the Executive which gives even more opportunity to create true and lasting benefits to the local area through commitments during the construction of this project. There has been continuous ongoing engagement with stakeholders and community representatives throughout the planning process and construction stages to-date. This engagement will continue with stakeholders throughout the project duration.
- vi. Translink have continued their Platform LED project during 2022-23 and have installed 1652 new LED light fittings, emergency lighting and SMART controls on

platforms at NIR's stations and halts across the network. These new systems contribute through the provision of accessible transport services/infrastructure, walking and cycling infrastructure.

- vii. Translink have delivered two Park and Ride facilities at Trooperslane opened May 2022 (230 spaces including 10 accessible parking spaces) and Ballymartin opened October 2022 (170 spaces including 26 accessible parking spaces).
- viii. An 'Enabling Sustainable Journeys' commission was completed and involved IMTAC as a stakeholder to develop proposals to better integrate sustainable transport.

b. New Buses

During 2022-23, the Department provided Translink with funding of £48.3m towards the purchase of new buses. Throughout 2022-23, a total of 314 vehicles were in various stages of progress across all bus projects. All of the new buses are compliant with the Public Service Vehicle Accessibility Regulations. These projects include 100 Zero Emission buses for Belfast Metro with full-service introduction completed in 2022, 44 Zero Emission Buses for Foyle Metro and the North Coast due to enter service in the summer of 2023 and 100 Zero Emission buses for Ulsterbus and Belfast Metro due to enter service late 2024, providing climate positive, clean air public transport.

c. Additional Train Carriages

During the calendar years 2022 and 2023, Translink has taken receipt of 21 additional rail carriages extending seven existing three carriage trains to six carriage trains – the last of these was received in the summer of 2022. All of the new carriages, which are now in service, are fully accessible to people with a disability or mobility issues. The funding for these carriages was provided by DfI at a total project value of £63.9m.

d. Transport Programme for People with Disabilities (TPPD)

The aim of this Programme is to improve accessibility to transport for those in urban areas with a disability who find it difficult to, or cannot access mainstream services.

Users of the programmes associated with the TPPD are those with a disability and / or those who are older.

The total amount of funding provided through TPPD in 2022-23 was just over £2.5m.

The programmes included in TPPD, and their respective usage during 2022-23, are shown in the following table:

Programme	Members	Data/usage
Disability Action Transport Scheme - is a specialised transport service for people operating in towns or cities with a population in excess of 10,000 who find it difficult or impossible to use public transport.	14,544 Active Users 2253	Number of trips delivered 71,751
Shopmobility - helps people who consider themselves to have mobility problems (whether through disability, illness or injury) to continue to get around city and town centres independently, with freedom, confidence and dignity by the provision of mobility equipment, e.g. motorised scooters, wheelchairs etc.	14,703 Active Users 2,796	Number of equipment loans to individuals 49,309
Easibus - established by Translink to provide accessible local bus services mainly, but not exclusively, for mobility-impaired people who could not avail of existing conventional services.	Membership not required for this scheme	Passenger Journeys/Trips 24,642

e. **Dial-a-Lift (DAL)/Rural Transport Fund**

DAL was originally set up with the primary objective of reducing social isolation for rural dwellers. It provides transport options for individuals living in rural areas who are unable to access, or have difficulty accessing, public transport. The main users of this scheme are those aged 60 and over and / or those with a disability.

During 2022-23 funding of almost £2.236m was provided by DfI to Rural Community Transport Partnerships (RCTPs) in 11 operational areas to help deliver DAL services.

The number of people who are eligible to use DAL services was 12,487 and of this number 4,094 users took 186,744 trips in 2022-23.

f. Concessionary Fares

The Concessionary Fares Scheme was established to support those most at risk of social isolation to access public transport through discounted bus and rail fares.

The following concessions are provided:

Free travel for:

- everyone aged 60 and over;
- people who are registered blind; and
- war disablement pensioners.

Half fare travel for:

- people with a disability who satisfy the relevant criteria (listed on application form); and
- children up to age 16.

With the exception of children who automatically receive half fare, those who satisfy any of these criteria can apply for the concessionary travel card i.e. a SmartPass, which entitles the holder to the relevant concessionary fare. On Glider Services, Half Fare Smart Pass holders can currently travel for free. This interim measure will remain in place whilst other ticketing options are explored.

The total costs (reimbursed by DfI) and number of journeys (claimed by Translink and other participating operators) taken under this scheme during 2022-23 are detailed in the table below. Again, the number of journeys has significantly reduced due to the impact of COVID-19:

Category	Cost £(000)	Journey numbers(k)
60+, Blind & War Disabled (full fare)	29,009	9,614
Half Fare Categories	805	522
Children	8,482	8,900
Administration Costs – overall	633	-
<u>Total</u>	<u>39,011</u>	<u>19,036</u>

The Department funds a number of concessions to assist children and young people when using public transport:

- YLink is a free travelcard for all 16-23 years olds in Northern Ireland. This offers 1/3 off all Translink bus and rail travel in Northern Ireland and up to 50% off

Enterprise journeys. Having a yLink card also provides exclusive discounts and offers from partner businesses;

- the Translink Proof of Age card is a flashcard available for under 16 year olds until 30 June, after their sixteenth birthday. On production of the card the bearer is able to obtain 50% off the full adult fare on local and Cross Border services; and
- the 24+ Student Railcard is available for free to students aged over 24 and in full-time education. The railcard offers 1/3 off cash and mLink single journeys, day return, weekly and monthly tickets and up to 50% off Enterprise fares.

g. Inclusive Mobility Transport Advisory Committee (IMTAC)

The role of IMTAC is to advise the Government and other relevant parties in Northern Ireland on issues that may affect the mobility of older people and / or people with a disability. IMTAC continues to be one of DfI's primary sources for obtaining advice about issues that affect people with disabilities and how they use our infrastructure and services.

IMTAC has provided advice on number of wider policy issues throughout government, including:

- co-chairing the co-design group charged with assisting the Department for Communities develop the new Social Inclusion Strategy on Disability;
- being an active stakeholder in the Bolder Vision for Belfast project;
- participating in a working group to enhance accessibility requirements for future vehicle procurement contracts for Translink; and
- worked with the Department and other organisations to develop the "Think Before You Park" campaign in order to tackle the issues created by pavement parking.

In addition, IMTAC has:

- continued to meet regularly with the Translink Accessibility Working Group, advising on a number of areas such as low floor and zero emission buses, removing the 24 hour notice period for disabled people using buses and coaches and the display of digital information at bus stops;
- sought and were awarded grant funding of £63k for 2022-23; and

- developed its work programme for 2022-23 with a priority to support Government, transport providers and others in the path to recovery from COVID-19.

The actions above made a significant contribution to the development of policy and services making travel more inclusive and accessible, especially for older people and people with a disability.

1.3 Policy Area – The management of flood risk and all publicly adopted roads and footways

The Department is responsible for the management of all publicly adopted roads and footways. Its main responsibilities include ensuring streets are maintained and are safe to use. It also plays an important role in seeing that any new works are completed to the appropriate standards and as far as possible the needs of those with a disability are considered within the design and development of a project.

Specific actions taken positively impacting on section 75 groups during this period were:

(i) 20 mph Speed Limit Scheme

The Scheme aims to improve road safety around schools when pupils are arriving in the morning and leaving in the afternoon.

During 2022-23 a further 112 schools were added to the part time '20 mph speed limit scheme' bringing the total schemes in place to 215. There is a review of provision currently being undertaken before additional part time '20 mph speed limits are provided.

(ii) Major Road Improvement Projects

All of the schemes undertaken should have a major positive impact on road safety, accessibility and connectivity for all road users including those who are vulnerable and / or socially isolated. In 2022-23 the A6 Dungiven to Drumahoe dual carriageway was under construction which opened to traffic on 6 April 2023. Other schemes in development include the A5WTC, York Street Interchange, A1 Junctions Phase 2, A4 Enniskillen Southern Bypass.

(iii) Roads Policy and Procedure Guides

The Department continues to review its roads engineering policy documents with a view to making them more accessible. The new format uses a larger font size, a

simpler paragraph numbering system and avoids the use of other barriers to accessibility such as boxes around text blocks.

All new Roads Policy & Procedure Guides and Director of Engineering Memorandum have been prepared in the new format and work is ongoing to redraft older versions into the new format.

(iv) Accessible Parking Bays – On-line Application Process

The Department has initiated a project to provide an on-line facility to allow people to apply for individual accessible parking bays. The on-line facility will make the process more efficient and secure by removing the need to complete and store a paper copy of the application form. The new on-line application process went live in March 2023.

(v) Flood Risk Management

The Department has continued to develop a number Flood Alleviation Schemes (FAS) identified in the Northern Ireland Flood Risk Management Plans as being Significant Flood Risk Areas (SFRAs). These include the Belfast Tidal FAS, Newry SFRA and Portadown SFRA FAS.

Reducing flood risk and providing more accessible, safer roads/streets goes some way to address barriers experienced by society in general. These actions have and will have a positive differential impact on those with a disability, older people and dependants.

1.4 Policy Area – Blue Badge

The Blue Badge scheme provides a range of parking concessions for people with severe mobility problems. A blue badge must be displayed to avail of the concessions. Use of the concessions associated with the blue badge scheme makes it easier for those with a severe mobility issue to park closer to their destination, therefore, making it easier to access facilities within the community.

Within this reporting period 46,342 blue badges were issued. A further 106 multiple badges were issued to support organisations.

1.5 Policy Area – Driving Theory Test

For candidates with a hearing/speech/visual impairment, the Department's Driver & Vehicle Agency (DVA) continues to allow for extra time; provides reader/recorder assistance; and/or provides information in accessible formats e.g. British Sign Language on-screen video; Lip Speaker; Sign Language Interpreter.

For candidates where English is not their first language, the questions and answer options can be read through headphones in the following languages: Portuguese, Turkish, Farsi, Cantonese, Arabic and Polish.

Video clips have replaced written scenarios in the car theory test, bringing the test up to date and making it more accessible for everyone. Research involving candidates with reading difficulties and disabilities showed that these learners felt more comfortable and confident with video scenarios as they were better able to process the information on screen.

The theory test online booking system has been subject to a comprehensive review and development to increase compliance with the Web Content Accessibility Guidelines WCAG 2.1.

DVA continues to work in partnership with the Driver & Vehicle Standards Agency (DVSA) in GB to engage with groups that represent those with learning difficulties and disabilities to facilitate these candidates when completing their driving theory test.

Liaison with representative groups has resulted in DVA adjusting tests to assist people with certain disabilities to allow them to take their tests in a manner more accessible to them.

1.6 Policy Area – Safe and Accessible Travel

(i) Community Interaction

The Department continues to deliver road safety behavioural change interventions and educational messages through its 'Share the Road to Zero' website and its associated Facebook and Twitter social media channels. Throughout the year these messages regularly address the main causes of road casualties, with drivers continuously reminded to give extra consideration to more vulnerable road users, particularly children, people with mobility issues, and older people.

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All campaigns for social media include subtitling to improve the messaging for those with hearing difficulties. The website 'Share The Road to Zero' has also been updated to comply with the new Accessibility legislation which came into force in 2020. In addition to social media activity, the Department also delivered various outdoor (bus advertising) road safety campaigns that specifically referenced older road users and children; namely in the pedestrian safety, distraction and anti-speeding campaigns.

In August 2022, advice on the use of mobility scooters was promoted via social media. This activity is scheduled to run again during the 2023-24 reporting period.

Last year's campaign to raise awareness with drivers on the dangers of parking on the pavement continued running on social media during August 2022. The campaign aims to show drivers how parking on the pavement can endanger all pavement users forcing them into oncoming traffic, with a specific focus on people with disabilities, older people, children and people pushing prams.

(ii) Road Safety Training – Special Schools

Now that the immediate threat of Covid 19 has diminished there has been a slight increase in the number of special schools opening their doors to visitors. However, staffing and budget pressures in the Department have prevented pro-active visits to special schools as initially planned. A new plan will be developed but this will be dependent on the staffing and financial resources available.

Special schools retain the right to refuse a visit should circumstances change. Officials will continue to contact special schools via telephone and email. Budget permitting, further resources will be developed.

These behavioural change activities/initiatives provide road safety information/advice to/about vulnerable groups to support those groups and drivers, make better more informed decisions when using the roads. This ensures better protection for the most vulnerable road users as well as a reduction in the number of people killed and seriously injured due to road traffic collisions. This work went some way to achieving Programme for Government (PfG) Outcomes in particular Outcome 4 – “we live long, healthy, active lives by contributing to a reduction in preventable deaths”.

(iii) Development of Cycling Infrastructure

DfI's Director for Active Travel has responsibility to take forward and deliver our commitment to increase the percentage of journeys made by walking, wheeling and cycling. An Advisory Group has been established, which includes IMTAC, to advise on strategic issues to assist in imbedding active travel as an integral part of the work of the Department. This group has been supplemented by the development of a Stakeholder group, the full membership of which has not yet been established.

The Department continues to work on developing a cycling infrastructure which will be primarily segregated, not only from traffic but also from pedestrians, to provide safe space for all.

During the reporting period, further progress was made on the Belfast Cycling Network Delivery Plan 2022-31 with schemes progressing at various stages of design and development. The Belfast Cycling Network demonstrates how the provision of segregated infrastructure can reduce conflict between users as well as accessible infrastructure for disabled and elderly people.

We have also continued to liaise with stakeholders, including IMTAC, Sustrans, Cycling UK and others in the development of active travel measures.

1.7 Policy Area – Communications with the Customer

The DfI Guide to Making Information Accessible assists staff when communicating with the public. The Guide provides information and recommendations on how to communicate effectively with a range of section 75 groups to ensure all have the opportunity to fully participate in our decision making. This is reviewed annually and published on the DfI intranet. It is also accessible on the Equality Unit's Departmental intranet page.

The Department also has both an Irish and an Ulster Scots Language policy which are reviewed annually, and circulated to staff for information. It is also accessible on the Equality Unit's Departmental intranet page.

The Department is committed to making its website accessible, in accordance with the Public Sector Bodies (Websites and Mobile Applications) (No. 2) Accessibility Regulations 2018. Following the last DfI website Accessibility Audit in August 2020 the

Accessibility Statement published on the Department's website on 19 October 2021 was updated in February 2023.

Our monitoring activities outline how the Department is working to ensure that its website is accessible to all and that any issues are identified and addressed.

DVA Services

During the year DVA received 5 complaints regarding the section 75 characteristics. Of these 1 related to gender and 4 to disability. All the complaints are now resolved.

Due to the COVID pandemic, DVA had to change the way in which it delivered many of its services with an increased focus on accessing services online.

In partnership with Age NI, DVA has developed arrangements to support older people who wish to engage with DVA on a range of services. DVA provided Age NI with background information relating to DVA services, mostly on Licensing and vehicle test booking; and briefed their case officer on how to access relevant online information. This has for example enabled Age NI to assist those wishing to check their MOT status online. (Age NI provides a free telephone advice service). This partnership has been positively received by Age NI.

The establishment of points of contact with Age NI, supports DVA and customers particularly during times when there were high volumes of queries on any specific matter. Age NI has also shared DVA's social media messages on its platforms to provide current information for older people who use the internet.

DVA considers all forms of communication, including social media and written formats, to ensure information reaches all citizens.

1.8 Policy Area – Public Appointments

There were no open public appointment competitions completed during the 2022-23 year. DfI will continue to encourage underrepresented groups to apply for public appointment opportunities advertised by the Department.

The Department takes part in the Boardroom Apprentice programme as one of approximately 56 host boards across the public and third sectors. Boardroom Apprentice is a 12-month unique board learning, development and placement programme which enables those who would like to serve on a public or third sector

board to learn and gain experience in a safe way before they take that step.

Boardroom Apprentice is about delivering diversity, creating change and achieving aspirations and seeks to enable a wider diversity of individuals to play their part within boardrooms across Northern Ireland.

The second DfI Boardroom Apprentice was appointed in September 2022 and the next appointment process is ongoing.

All public appointment recruitment is completed in accordance with the Commissioner for Public Appointments NI Code of Practice (2016).

1.9 Good Relations

Policy area – ‘Together: Building a United Community Strategy’ (TBUC)

DfI is not the lead in any of the seven TBUC headline actions. That said, our work supports the Urban Villages Programme and we contribute, through planning policies, to the development of shared spaces for all. Our public transport system is also crucial in helping people and communities connect with each other and with employment and other opportunities.

Shared Space and Strategic Planning Policy Statement (SPPS) ‘Planning for Sustainable Development’

The SPPS recognises that the planning system has an important role supporting Government with regards creating and enhancing shared spaces – specifically, through its influence on the type, location, siting and design of developments.

Councils are responsible for taking forward the development of local operational policy through new Local Development Plans (LDPs) and for the majority of planning decisions. These Plans contribute to the promotion of physical and social environments that support everyone, including children, older people and people with disabilities to have easy access to open space and the opportunity to participate in sport and outdoor recreational activity, or simply enjoy and have contact with nature.

The Department continues to engage, advise and support councils in the delivery of their local planning functions and to seek to ensure the two-tier planning system can operate as efficiently and effectively as possible for all stakeholders. Councils must

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take account of the Regional Development Strategy 2035, the SPPS and any other policies or advice in guidance issued by the Department.

The Department is also represented on the Good Relations Programme Board (GRPB), the TBUC Engagement Forum, the Inter-Departmental Interface programme Board and the Housing Thematic Subgroup. Planning Policy and Casework Directorate was represented at the Housing Thematic Subgroup on 26 May 2022 and 24 November 2022.

- 2 Please provide **examples** of outcomes and/or the impact of **equality action plans/** measures in 2022-23 (*or append the plan with progress/examples identified*).

N/A.

Following the publication of the Department's Equality Scheme in February 2021, an Audit of Inequalities on Departmental functions and activities was carried out in Autumn 2021.

Consultation on the associated draft Equality Action Plan ran from April – June 2023 after a delay due to uncertainty of the budget position. The Department is considering the responses received.

- 3** Has the **application of the Equality Scheme** commitments resulted in any **changes** to policy, practice, procedures and/or service delivery areas during the 2022-23 reporting period?

Yes.

Please provide any details and examples:

Equality Processes:

The Department's Equality Unit proactively encourages business areas to involve the Unit at an early stage. This seeks to ensure that equality issues are considered as early as possible; quality of content is improved; and directing business areas to a wide range of relevant data. This all contributes to a stronger evidence base to assess possible impacts and provide greater appreciation of the particular needs of the various section 75 groups within the policy development process.

The Equality Unit's intranet area includes links to generic information relevant to the department and direct colleagues to specific data where relevant. Every member of staff has access to "NINIS" online statistics and the DfI screening template includes a link to the Equality Commission's signposting document.

The Department has also been working with TEO on relevant ethnic data and ASRB meet with ECNI on the issue of data collection on 10 August 2022. The Audit of Inequalities found that s75 data in general for DfI was lacking and this is included as an action within the draft Equality Action Plan.

The Department's submission template to senior management includes a section on section 75 to ensure equality implications are considered and documented. The covering submission template to the Permanent Secretary for potential decisions under the Executive Formation Act also includes a section to record section 75 considerations.

In line with our Equality Scheme commitment to consider any good practice or guidance issued by ECNI, the Equality Unit shares relevant information and guidance with all staff, for example ECNI e-newsletters and updates from the Employers for Disability NI.

Age and Disability category:

Application of the duties ensured officials took into account people with learning difficulties, and older people when considering the removal of paper options, and/or removal of telephone numbers from DfI external communications.

Annual and quarterly audits / reviews on the accessibility of websites allow the Department's Communications Branch to make any necessary improvements to the DfI website.

3a With regard to the change(s) made to policies, practices or procedures and/or service delivery areas, what **difference was made, or will be made, for individuals**, i.e. the impact on those according to section 75 category?

Please provide any details and examples:

Disability category:

Research with Driving Theory Test candidates with reading difficulties and disabilities showed that these learners felt more comfortable and confident with video scenarios as they were better able to process the information on screen. The Driver Theory Test now includes video clips instead of written scenarios making it more accessible for everyone.

The theory test online booking system was subject to a comprehensive review and development to increase compliance with the Web Content Accessibility Guidelines WCAG 2.1. An Accessibility Statement, in compliance with the Public Sector Bodies (Websites and Mobile Applications) (No. 2) Accessibility Regulations 2018, was published on the site in September 2020 and most recently updated in February 2023. The Department's online systems continue to be reviewed to ensure accessibility is optimal.

All DfI staff were asked to renew their JAM ('Just A Minute') Card online training in this period as part of an NICS initiative.

Age and Disability category:

People with learning difficulties, and older people who are not proficient in IT, have other contact options of either phoning staff for information or advice or receiving

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communications in paper format ensuring their independence when availing of DfI services. For DVA services, Age NI can assist older people (see 1.7 above).

Community transport providers and the Shopmobility Schemes also maintain a telephone contact service with their members, often signposting them to other organisations who can provide help needed. The majority of those who have/will benefit from this service would be those are older and those with a disability.

3b What aspect of the Equality Scheme prompted or led to the change(s)? *(Keep all that apply)*

iii. As a result of analysis from monitoring the impact (please give details):

In 2020, the Department's website underwent an Accessibility Audit to ensure they met the WCAG 2.1 accessibility regulations (established September 2018). Issues were identified and remedial work required was detailed in the 2021 Accessibility Statement (<https://www.infrastructure-ni.gov.uk/departments-infrastructure-accessibility-statement>), The statement provides deadlines by which we will identify and fix accessibility issues, as well as on an ongoing basis. This statement was last updated on 28 February 2023.

Section 2: Progress on Equality Scheme commitments and action plans/measures

Arrangements for assessing compliance (Model Equality Scheme Chapter 2)

4. Were the section 75 statutory duties integrated within job descriptions during the 2022-23 reporting period? *(choose one option only)*

- Yes, some posts.

Please provide any details and examples:

- Paragraph 2.5 of the Department's Equality Scheme sets out that, where relevant, employees' job descriptions and performance plans reflect their contributions to the discharge of the section 75 statutory duties and implementation of the equality scheme.
- Given its functions in relation to section 75, relevant staff within the Department's Corporate Strategy and Performance Directorate (CSPD) have included Equality duties as part of their job descriptions. This is also reflected, as appropriate, in other business areas across the Department.
- section 75 duties are also reflected as objectives in the personal performance plans of relevant staff within CSPD, in particular the Equality Unit. These objectives are subject to an annual appraisal. Personal Development actions are developed and reviewed biannually to identify any new training requirements.

5. Were the section 75 statutory duties integrated within performance plans during the 2022-23 reporting period? *(choose one option only)*

- Yes, some posts

Please provide any details and examples:

- As outlined in Question 4.

6. In the 2022-23 reporting period were **objectives/ targets/ performance measures** relating to the section 75 statutory duties **integrated** into corporate plans, strategic planning and/or operational business plans? *(keep in all that apply)*

Yes. Through the work to prepare or develop the new corporate plan.

Please provide any details and examples:

The Department's annual Corporate Business Plan 2022-23 contains a commitment to section 75. section 75 considerations are also reported on during the business plan monitoring periods throughout the year.

Equality action plans/measures

7. Within the 2022-23 reporting period, please indicate the **number** of:

- Actions completed: 0;
- Actions ongoing: 0; and
- Actions to commence: 0.

Please provide any details and examples (*in addition to question 2*):

N/A.

A draft of the DfI Equality Action Plan is currently being consulted on (closing date 23 June 2023). The Department is now considering the responses received.

8. Please give details of changes or amendments made to the equality action plan/measures during the 2022-23 reporting period (*points not identified in an appended plan*):

- An Audit of Inequalities on Departmental functions and activities was carried out in the autumn of 2021. Unfortunately, consultation on the associated draft Equality Action Plan was delayed due to the uncertainty of the budget position.
- The draft Equality Action Plan, containing 14 actions identified during the Audit was published for a 12 week consultation from 3 April 2023 to 23 June 2023 and we are considering the responses received.

9. In reviewing progress on the equality action plan/action measures during the 2022-23 reporting period, the following have been identified: *(keep all that apply)*

- The 14 actions contained within the draft Action Plan outline how the Department will address identified inequalities that exist for its service users and those affected by its policies. Progress towards intended outcomes may be impacted by budgetary constraints.

Arrangements for consulting (Model Equality Scheme Chapter 3)

10. Following the initial notification of consultations, a targeted approach was taken – and consultation with those for whom the issue was of particular relevance: *(choose one option)*

- Sometimes.

11. Please provide any **details and examples of good practice** in consultation during the 2022-23 reporting period, on matters relevant (e.g. the development of a policy that has been screened in) to the need to promote equality of opportunity and/or the desirability of promoting good relations:

- No policies were screened in as at 31 March 2023, however screenings related to the Department's Budget EQIA 2023-24 (published for consultation 15 May 2023) commenced at the end of this period.

12. In the 2022-23 reporting period, given the consultation methods offered, which consultation methods were **most frequently used by consultees**: *(keep all that apply)*

- Focus groups (inc virtual);
- Questionnaires/Surveys;
- Internet discussions; and
- Other: leaflet drops, advertisement in national and/or local newspapers and online publications.

Please provide any details or examples of the uptake of these methods of consultation in relation to the consultees' membership of particular section 75 categories:

Due to COVID-19 restrictions in 2020-21, methods of consultations have continued to be more reliant on digital and virtual forms of communications. It is hoped that more face to face events can take place during 2023-24.

13. Were any awareness-raising activities for consultees undertaken, on the commitments in the Equality Scheme, during the 2022-23 reporting period? (*choose one option only*)

- No - As is standard practice, the quarterly screening report was circulated, and consultations emailed, to all those on our section 75 consultee list.

14. Was the consultation list reviewed during the 2022-23 reporting period? (*choose one option only*)

- Yes – It is reviewed annually.

Arrangements for assessing and consulting on the likely impact of policies (Model Equality Scheme Chapter 4)

15. Please provide the **number** of policies screened during the year (*as recorded in screening reports*):

- 24 screenings were carried out during this period which can be viewed at <https://www.infrastructure-ni.gov.uk/section-75-consultation-information#toc-114>

16. Please provide the **number of assessments** that were consulted upon during 2022-23:

- Policy consultations conducted with **screening** assessment presented: 3
- Policy consultations conducted **with an equality impact assessment** (EQIA) presented. 0
- Consultations for an **EQIA** alone. 0

17. Please provide details of the **main consultations** conducted on an assessment (as described above) or other matters relevant to the section 75 duties:

- Screening and consultation of the Department’s proposals to specify the Northern Ireland Transport Holding Company (Translink) and Northern Ireland Water as “Public Service Bodies” for the purposes of the Period Products (Free Provision) Act (Northern Ireland) 2022 was carried out in October/November 2022.

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- The Department carried out a section 75 screening in relation to an increase to the maximum taxi fare tariff and screened it out. An eight week consultation was carried out and officials prepared a synopsis of the responses and a paper on the way forward. A decision on any potential change to the taxi fares has been deferred in the absence of a Minister. The issue will be revisited in early Autumn if no Minister is in place.

18. Were any screening decisions (or equivalent initial assessments of relevance) reviewed following concerns raised by consultees? *(choose one option only)*

- An equality screening was carried out on the Draft Budget 2022-25 outcome for the Department, which identified the need for an Equality Impact Assessment. This was paused in the absence of an agreed budget (following the pausing of the Draft Budget 2022-25 consultation by DoF).
- Due to timing of budget allocations (December 2022) it was not possible to complete an equality impact assessment.
- The 2022-23 budget did not result in any cuts to services as all business areas were funded (except for Translink who met their pressures from their reserves).

Arrangements for publishing the results of assessments (Model Equality Scheme Chapter 4)

19. Following decisions on a policy, were the results of any EQIAs published during the 2022-23 reporting period?

N/A

Arrangements for monitoring and publishing the results of monitoring (Model Equality Scheme Chapter 4)

20. From the Equality Scheme monitoring arrangements, was there an audit of existing information systems during the 2022-23 reporting period? *(choose one option only)*

- Yes.

Please provide any details:

- The Department reviews all aspects of its websites regularly. Websites underwent an Accessibility Audit in 2020 to ensure they met the new WCAG 2.1

accessibility regulations. Work will continue on remediation work identified in the Department's Accessibility Statement.

- The Department will continue to carry out the work required as detailed in the Accessibility Statement published in 2021. A further audit of the website was undertaken in February 2023.
- The Department's Audit of Inequalities highlighted that whilst the Analysis, Statistics & Research Branch (ASRB) continues to collect data for section 75 groups with all surveys, they are limited in the analysis that they can undertake for categories such as ethnicity and sexual identity. This is due to the achieved sample size for each DfI survey (CHS, TSNI, etc) which means that a very small proportion of respondents identify as an ethnicity other than 'White' and sexual identity other than 'Heterosexual', which is difficult to determine a valuable analysis.
- However, the 2021 Census has now released information on Sexual Identity and Ethnicity by NI Overall and LGD and this will become available for smaller areas in subsequent data releases. ASRB intend to provide training to policy staff in order to use the table builder function for Census 2021 results when this becomes available.
- The Social Inclusion Strategies recommendations have also highlighted the lack of meaningful section 75 data and is a potential action emanating from each Strategies' Expert Advisory Panel's reports.

21. In analysing monitoring information gathered, was any action taken to change/review any policies?

- The Department continues to carry out the work required by WCAG 2.1 as detailed in the Accessibility Statement published on 19 October 2021, and subsequent reviews. The statement can be viewed on the DfI website at <https://www.infrastructure-ni.gov.uk/department-infrastructure-accessibility-statement>.

22. Please provide any details or examples of where the monitoring of policies, during the reporting period, has shown changes to differential/adverse impacts previously assessed:

- None.

23. Please provide any details or examples of monitoring that has contributed to the availability of equality and good relations information/data for service delivery planning or policy development:

Note: Due to the coronavirus (COVID-19) pandemic, data collection for surveys carried out by NISRA during 2020-21 moved from face-to-face interviewing to telephone mode which reduction in the number of questions. During 2021-22, telephone interviewing remained in place but sample sizes returned to normal levels and most questions were returned to the surveys.

- The Department has carried out various surveys linked to our services all of which has assisted and informed decision making and when carrying out screening analysis:
 - A new official statistics report on Public Transport Statistics 2021-22 was published on the 29 March 2023 and contains statistics on public transport operated by Translink in Northern Ireland and brings together information on public transport journeys, vehicles and staff. The report is available on the Departments website - <https://www.infrastructure-ni.gov.uk/publications/public-transport-statistics-northern-ireland-2021-22>. This report has been published in HTML and fulfils the latest accessibility guidelines.
 - The delay in receiving the TSNi 2017-2019 datasets and investigating the methodology changes in 2020 due to COVID-19 continues to have a knock on effect on the usual publication timetable of the TSNi reports. Results from 2020 and 2021 have been treated as standalone years and the 2021 Headline Report was published in March 2023 - <https://www.infrastructure-ni.gov.uk/publications/travel-survey-northern-ireland-tсни-headline-report-2021> and the 2020 TSNi In-depth Report was published in September 2022 - <https://www.infrastructure-ni.gov.uk/publications/travel-survey-northern-ireland-tсни-depth-report-2020> .
 - DfI currently has a number of question modules included in the Continuous Household Survey (CHS). Between four and five separate reports are published annually on topics such as Attitudes towards Walking, Cycling and

Public Transport, Attitudes towards eCars, Travel to/from School, Cycling in NI, Road Safety and Public Transport Journey Planning. Where possible, results for all CHS reports are broken down by gender, age group, urban/rural and by Local Government District (LGD).

- The Walking, Cycling and Public Transport in Northern Ireland 2021-22 report was published 24 November 2022. It contains information on satisfaction with walking, cycling and public transport facilities and willingness to walk and cycle short journeys, and attitudes towards cycling. Where possible results are broken down by gender, age group, urban/rural and by LGD and Multiple Deprivation Quintiles. The Excel tables report to accompany this report has recently been updated to include results for disability status.

This report was produced using new and updated statistical methods and published in a much more accessible format of HTML. The report can be found: <https://www.infrastructure-ni.gov.uk/publications/walking-cycling-and-public-transport-northern-ireland-202122>.

- A report on Travel to/from School by Pupils in Northern Ireland 2021-22 was published on 23 March 2023. The report presents data from the Continuous Household Survey in relation to the modes of travel used by children to go to school. The report is available on the Department's website at <https://www.infrastructure-ni.gov.uk/publications/travel-tofrom-school-by-pupils-ni-202122>.
- The Attitudes towards Electric Vehicles in Northern Ireland 2021-22 report was published 26 January 2023 and contains information on vehicle purchase influencing factors and people's attitudes towards electric cars. An accessible HTML report and accompanying Excel tables can be found on the Departmental website: <https://www.infrastructure-ni.gov.uk/publications/attitudes-towards-electric-vehicles-northern-ireland-20212022>.
- The Road Safety Strategy to 2020 Annual Statistical Report was published on the 29 September 2022, and this provides analysis of road collisions resulting in deaths and serious injuries with breakdowns available by age and sex. The report is available on the Department's website at <https://www.infrastructure->

[ni.gov.uk/publications/northern-ireland-road-safety-strategy-2020-annual-statistical-report-2022](https://www.ni.gov.uk/publications/northern-ireland-road-safety-strategy-2020-annual-statistical-report-2022)

The section also produces occasional problem profile reports, and the most recent of these was a detailed exploration of gender and road safety collisions.

- In addition, a number of online surveys and public consultations were conducted, including the Inconsiderate Parking Consultation which ended 18 March 2022. ([Inconsiderate Pavement Parking - Options Paper | Department for Infrastructure \(infrastructure-ni.gov.uk\)](#)).
- User Survey's for Community Transport Organisations Passengers and Drivers. Other statistical information can be found at <https://www.infrastructure-ni.gov.uk/topics/dfi-statistics-and-research>.

Staff Training (Model Equality Scheme Chapter 5)

24. Please report on the activities from the training plan/programme (section 5.4 of the Model Equality Scheme) undertaken during 2022-23, and the extent to which they met the training objectives in the Equality Scheme.

A range of section 75 training continued during the period:

- S75: An Introduction (mandatory e-learning) for all staff on the NICS training site rolled out in March 2022.
- The 'Focus on Screening' training for staff at grade 7 and above took place 14 June 2022.

(More training using the ECNI video on Screening was sent to staff in May 2023 to watch. To date 310 have confirmed completion).

- The Department continues to circulate links to webinars, including those delivered by ECNI and Employers for Disability.
- All staff have had access to various e-learning courses on mental health/resilience (personal and of others); disability; ASD awareness; and vulnerable users.
- The DfI Staff Induction package includes a section on Equality and S75, with relevant links to S75 information and training.

25. Please provide **any examples** of relevant training shown to have worked well, in that participants have achieved the necessary skills and knowledge to achieve the stated objectives:

- The DVA staff induction for new staff includes a NICS HR presentation on Diversity and Inclusion;
- 'Introduction to Human Rights e-learning' course has benefitted staff by raising awareness and understanding of human rights in the delivery of their duties and the work of the Department generally;
- Unconscious Bias e-learning course has promoted positive attitudes towards people with a disability;
- ASD e-course has given a good foundation to understanding the communication difficulties encountered by people on the spectrum;
- DfI staff refreshed their JAM ('Just A Minute') Card online training in this period as part of an NICS drive.
- This training has provided useful information for staff, particularly frontline staff to understand the needs of people with a disability when accessing public transport and other public facing services.

Public Access to Information and Services (Model Equality Scheme Chapter 6)

26. Please list **any examples** of where monitoring during 2022-23, across all functions, has resulted in action and improvement in relation **to access to information and services**:

- See 23 above for surveys carried out during the year;
- The Department's websites have undergone Accessibility Audits to ensure they meet WCAG 2.1 accessibility regulations;
 - Any issues identified are dealt with appropriately; and
 - As a result of these audits the Department has been reviewing its roads engineering policy documents with a view to making them more accessible.

Complaints (Model Equality Scheme Chapter 8)

27. How many complaints in relation to the Equality Scheme have been received during 2022-2023?

Please provide any details of each complaint raised and outcome:

- Three equality complaints were made under the Department's Equality Scheme during the reporting period. One related to a Penalty Charge Notice and another claimed Sex Discrimination in respect of how a claim was handled by the Department – neither complaint was upheld.
- The third complaint about how a request for a driving licence application (DL1) form in Irish was handled was upheld. As a result of this complaint DVA reviewed its staff guides and advised staff what should happen with regards correspondence in a different language, in line with the Department's Irish Language Policy. Equality Unit published an article on making information accessible 21 February 2023 which was followed by a Departmental wide email to all staff 7 March 2023 on the matter as well as providing links to that guidance and the DfI Language policies.
- Outside of the Equality Scheme complaints mechanism, the Driver's Vehicle Agency (DVA) received 5 complaints regarding section 75 characteristics via its own complaint procedures. Of these 1 related to gender and 4 to disability. All the complaints are now resolved.

Section 3: Looking Forward

28. Please indicate when the Equality Scheme is due for review:

- The Equality Scheme is not due for review until February 2026.

29. Are there areas of the Equality Scheme arrangements (screening/ consultation/ training) your organisation anticipates will be focused upon in the next reporting period?
(please provide details)

i. Issues identified in the Audit of Inequalities were in relation to:

- public and rural transport (people with disabilities, older people, women and younger people) - the Department is working with key stakeholders to explore measures to address these issues;
- road safety (younger people aged 16-24) – the draft Road Safety Strategy to 2030 was published 24 October 2022 after consultation, and has introduced new measures and targets to reduce the high rate of deaths and serious injuries impacting this group;
- pavement parking (people with disabilities, older people and people with dependants) - an options paper was launched in 2022 setting out possible options for dealing with the issue. The Department sought the general public's views on the issue and on the options suggested, including possibly dealing with vehicles parked across dropped kerbs. Following views officials are developing measures to address this issue and an information campaign to raise awareness is underway; greater integration of s75 duties into the Department's planning and decision making processes, and the s75 Equality training programme underway will go some way to embedding better equality practices; and
- the Department, like others, has limited equality data and is considering how best to improve this.
- Training is one area of focus in response to the ECNI Para 10 Investigation into Taxis in Bus Lanes. An extensive training programme was developed and rolled out in October 2021 covering three strands.
- Within this reporting period further training was carried out or commenced:
 - **section 75 Duties - A Focus on Screening** – for DfI staff at SO, DP and Grade 7 (and analogous) took place in June 2022 facilitated by ECNI; and

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- **S75 – An Introduction** – a mandatory (e-learning) course for all DfI staff – this was rolled out in March 2022; and
- A link to the ECNI “**Section 75 Screening training video for public authorities**” was forwarded to all staff in May 2023 and uptake is being monitored - to date 310 staff have confirmed watching this.

30. In relation to the advice and services that the Commission offers, what **equality and good relations priorities** are anticipated over the next reporting period? *(please keep any that apply)*

- Other:
 - I. Advice on the progression of the Equality Action Plan goals;
 - II. Advice on the review and development of a new Departmental Disability Action Plan.
 - III. We will also continue to seek advice on various issues encountered when screening (especially those linked to the current Budget), and developing guidance and policies, as necessary.

section 49A of the Disability Discrimination Act 1995 (as amended) and Disability Action Plans

1. Number of action measures for this reporting period that have been:

12

Fully achieved

3

Partially achieved

0

Not achieved

2. Please outline below details on all actions that have been fully achieved in the reporting period.

2 (a) Please highlight what **public life measures** have been achieved to encourage disabled people to participate in public life at National, Regional and Local levels:

Level	Public Life Action Measures	Outputs ¹	Outcomes / Impacts ²
National ³	To encourage more disabled people to apply for public appointments.	A Guaranteed Interview Scheme is considered in all competitions.	No public competitions were completed/held in 2022-23.
Regional ⁴	The Department will support IMTAC as a source of independent advice on the transport needs of disabled and older people to secure engagement with disabled people in the design and development of polices.	The IMTAC Work Programme for 2022-23 was agreed and published on 26 May 2022. The Programme for 2023-24 was agreed and published 31 March 2023. The programme reflects Government priorities.	Better informed decisions made by the Department on issues affecting those with a disability and older people when developing Strategies and designing schemes. The programmes include tasks relating to emerging from the pandemic, influencing strategy, policy and projects, supporting innovation in policy and service developments, promoting

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Level	Public Life Action Measures	Outputs ¹	Outcomes / Impacts ²
			engagement and developing as a Committee.
Local ⁵	-	-	-

2(b) What **training action measures** were achieved in this reporting period?

	Training Action Measures	Outputs ¹	Outcome / Impact ²
1.	Promoting positive attitudes towards people with a disability within the Department.	<p>The e-learning course 'Unconscious Bias' is mandatory for all staff, and new entrants will be asked to complete it by line managers.</p> <p>Introduction to section 75 e-course is recommended and available to all staff.</p> <p>A JAM card awareness refresher course was updated and circulated to staff to complete.</p> <p>Training being carried out as a result of the Paragraph 10 complaint on Taxis in Bus Lanes should also go some way to improve attitudes.</p>	<p>Staff have increased awareness of the issues faced by people with a disability in and out of the workplace.</p> <p>Also a greater understanding of disability legislation, disability duties and diversity within the NI Civil Service.</p> <p>The JAM card is one of a number of ways in which we are raising awareness of disability, learning difficulties and neurodiversity</p> <p>This should also go some way to improve attitudes and understanding of each member of staff's section 75 responsibilities.</p> <p>During this period the following staff training took place:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • S75: An Introduction (mandatory e-learning) for all staff on the NICS

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	Training Action Measures	Outputs ¹	Outcome / Impact ²
			<p>training site - rolled out in March 2022.</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> The 'Focus on Screening' training for staff at grade 7 and above, took place 14 June 2022. <p>(Note: More training using the ECNI video on Screening was sent to staff in May 2023 to watch. To date 310 have confirm completion).</p>
2.	Promoting positive attitudes towards people with a disability within the Department.	Information available on Intranet site which provides staff with a disability, and their line managers, with some practical advice and guidance.	Staff have access to online advice and information to assist colleagues who have, or have dependents with, a disability.
3.	Promoting positive attitudes towards people with a disability within the Department.	The Department continues to investigate training options and sources of guidance on best practice and disseminates these.	<p>Training information/opportunities, from ECNI and section 75 organisations, are disseminated widely across the Department.</p> <p>Staff are also encouraged to enrol on relevant internal NICS courses to ensure they are up to date on section 75 guidance.</p> <p>A Calendar that includes Diversity and Inclusion and Health and Wellbeing events available on the DfI intranet. The events are promoted on the DfI Intranet.</p>
4.	Increase awareness of the Disability Duties and disability legislation of those who hold a public life position.	Training package shared with all panel members on Boards of Arm's Length Bodies and specific	Increased awareness and understanding of the disability legislation and disability duties for Board members of Arm's

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	Training Action Measures	Outputs ¹	Outcome / Impact ²
		<p>training arranged as required.</p> <p>No public appointment competitions were held during 2022-23.</p> <p>Competitions offer a Guaranteed interview Scheme.</p> <p>Increased promotion of public appointment opportunities across all underrepresented groups.</p>	<p>Length Bodies.</p> <p>Increased awareness of appointment opportunities in this underrepresented group, and others.</p> <p>Five competitions used the Guaranteed Interview Scheme and it is anticipated that the scheme will continue for future competitions.</p> <p>The Departmental Board acknowledge the role of effective leadership in relation to S75 within the Department and support mainstreaming of the Equality duties.</p> <p>All staff and Independent Board Members are aware of their responsibilities.</p>

2(c) What Positive attitudes **action measures** in the area of **Communications** were achieved in this reporting period?

	Communications Action Measures	Outputs ¹	Outcome / Impact ²
1.	To provide road safety and active travel advice and guidance to all special schools in the north of Ireland on a yearly basis.	To provide road safety and active travel advice and guidance to all 36 special schools using show and tell demonstrations and fun activities, in keeping with the pupils' ability to learn.	<p>Staffing and budget pressures have prevented pro-active visits to special schools as initially planned this year. A new plan will be developed but this will be dependent on the staffing and financial resources available.</p> <p>Road Safety advice and guidance for children with special needs remains a priority</p>

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	Communications Action Measures	Outputs ¹	Outcome / Impact ²
			to the Department. Officials will continue to contact special schools via telephone and email. Budget permitting, further resources will be developed.
2.	The Department will review ways of ensuring that information on services is both inclusive and accessible.	The Department's Guide to Making Information Accessible is available on its internet site. It is reviewed annually and so reflects best practice.	Guidance developed for staff to ensure our internal and external communications are accessible to all. The document was reviewed and staff were sent a link to the updated version on our internet site at The Guide to Making Information Accessible in November 2022.
3.	The Department will review ways of ensuring that information on services is both inclusive and accessible.	<p>Websites underwent an Accessibility Audit in August 2020 to ensure they met the new WCAG 2.1 Accessibility Regulations (2018). A further Audit is scheduled for 2023. The Accessibility Statement was published on the internet 19 October 2021. This was updated in February 2023. Work will continue to ensure content is formatted correctly, reviewed, and updated as required.</p> <p>As well as the regulatory accessibility audit an independent audit of the DfI website is carried out by Sitemorse INDEX. The INDEX enables organisations to compare</p>	Accessible information on the functions of the Department is available for all members of the public.

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	Communications Action Measures	Outputs ¹	Outcome / Impact ²
		digital capability with their peers or competitors. Digital capability is assessed across Experience, Optimisation and Compliance.	
4.	The Department will review ways of ensuring that information on services is both inclusive and accessible.	One complaint was received in this period in relation to access to website information on the Department's services.	This is under investigation to ensure information on the functions/services of the Department is inclusive and accessible to the public.

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2 (d) What action measures were achieved to ‘**encourage others**’ to promote the two duties?

	Encourage others Action Measures	Outputs ¹	Outcome / Impact ²
1.	Promoting positive attitudes towards people with a disability within the Department.	<p>Links to newsletters from section 75 organisations e.g. ‘E-Male Matters’ and Employers for Disability (EfD) were placed on the staff intranet. Also articles/ items such as “Autism Awareness Month” and the Autism Awareness Factsheet; “Mental Health Awareness” week; EfD’s videos / advice; and other news from section 75 organisations were published on the intranet.</p> <p>Circulated information on equality related events and issues to equality representatives for further dissemination.</p> <p>The in-house newssheet (“InFocus”) includes items relating to disability issues, events and groups.</p>	<p>Staff are kept informed on disability issues.</p> <p>Staff have awareness of issues faced by those with various disabilities and their parents/guardians.</p>
2.	Promote and encourage the planning of well-designed places which are accessible and inclusive places for all.	<p>Identify measures and activities by working together with Strategic Design Group members to promote inclusive, successful, sustainable, well designed places which will have a positive impact on people’s lives.</p> <p>Members include central and local government, professional bodies, and community and voluntary bodies.</p>	<p>The Strategic Design Group (SDG) enables the sharing of knowledge, best practice and making connections etc. with the aim of promoting successful place making and promoting well designed places which are accessible and inclusive to all.</p>

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	Encourage others Action Measures	Outputs ¹	Outcome / Impact ²
3.	To nominate staff to represent the Department on relevant disability representative groups.	<p>DfI represented on Disability groups.</p> <p>Feedback provided on best practice to the Department's Equality Unit and other business areas.</p>	<p>Increased awareness and understanding of the disability legislation and disability duties.</p> <p>Ensures the Department is aware of any Disability related issues.</p>
4.	Demonstrate evidence of monitoring of this Plan [Disability Action Plan] and the Department's ongoing commitment to the Disability Duties.	<p>The Plan was reviewed, the status of the Action Measures updated and included with the Equality Progress reports to the Departmental Board.</p> <p>Annual Progress Report 2021-22 was sent to Equality Commission in September 2022.</p> <p>Three equality complaints were made under the Department's Equality Scheme during the reporting period. One related to a Penalty Charge Notice and another claimed Sex Discrimination in respect of how a claim was handled by the Department – neither complaint was upheld.</p> <p>The third complaint about how a request for a driving licence application (DL1) form in Irish was handled was upheld.</p> <p>During the year DVA received 5 complaints regarding the section 75 characteristics. Of these 1 related to gender and 4 to disability. All the complaints are now resolved.</p>	<p>The Departmental Board and Minister are kept informed of progress of DAP Action measures in line with requirements of the Equality Scheme.</p> <p>The complaints process tested.</p> <p>Staff guides were reviewed, and staff reminded of the processes for receiving/replying to correspondence in different languages, as set out in the Department's language policies.</p>

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2 (e) Please outline **any additional action measures** that were fully achieved other than those listed in the tables above:

	Action Measures fully implemented (other than Training and specific public life measures)	Outputs ¹	Outcomes / Impact ²
1.	Development of the detailed design and implementation for Belfast Rapid Transit to ensure the system is accessible to all.	<p>Engagement with disability organisations and groups in relation to detailed design and implementation of Belfast Rapid Transit (Phase 1), in particular accessibility issues around the design of the halts and vehicles used.</p> <p>Further engagement with the Belfast Rapid Transit Key Stakeholders Forum will take place as BRT phase 2 is developed.</p>	The introduction of Belfast Rapid Transit Glider services, which are more accessible, has led to an increase in patronage by older people and people with disabilities when compared to previous Metro services for the same routes.
2.	Driver & Vehicle Agency will help improve the mobility of 16 year old applicants who are in receipt of Personal Independence Payments by allowing them to apply for a driving licence up to two months prior to their 16 th birthday. Availability of this scheme is advertised on NI Direct and on the DL1 application form.	Annual uptake figures are provided in the Annual report to ECNI which is published on DfI website and the link sent to section 75 consultees for information.	6 licences were issued in this period. .
3.	To consider how to meet the transport needs of disabled people in the future.	<u>Performance Indicator 1:</u> In the period 1 April 2022-31 March 2023 one complaint was received by Disability Action. Their formal complaints	<u>Performance indicator 1:</u> Achieved.

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	Action Measures fully implemented (other than Training and specific public life measures)	Outputs ¹	Outcomes / Impact ²
		<p>procedure is detailed on the DA website.</p> <p><u>Performance Indicator 2:</u> This has been taken on by the Department of Health</p>	<p><u>Performance Indicator 2:</u> Will no longer be reported on by DfI.</p>

3. Please outline what action measures have been **partly achieved** as follows:

	Action Measures partly achieved	Milestones ⁶ / Outputs ¹	Outcomes/Impacts ²	Reasons not fully achieved
1.	Development of a new Accessible Transport Strategy (ATS) Action Plan.	Following the 2015 consultation on the draft ATS, a report detailing the responses to the consultation was published 11 May 2016.	The new ATS and Action Plan will address accessibility issues experienced by older people and people with a disability across the transport system.	Improvements in transport accessibility is being considered under Programme for Government Outcomes.
2.	Implementation of changes identified during the 2013 Review of Blue Badge scheme.	All but one of the recommendations has been implemented. The legislation for the second staged fee increase to achieve full cost recovery remains to be made. Legislation has been made for all other changes identified.	The changes to the Blue Badge Scheme in Northern Ireland are aimed at enhancing the service and ensuring the Scheme's uptake is targeted at those whose everyday lives can be greatly enhanced by the concessions they are entitled to.	<p>All changes recommended are implemented bar the second staged fee increase.</p> <p>This is still under consideration by the Department.</p>
3.	A review of the Blue Badge Scheme re-application process for	A report on the findings has been completed.	The Blue Badge Scheme in Northern	The report is under

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	citizens with life-long disabilities affecting their mobility.		Ireland enables Badge Holders to access services and facilities, through a range of parking concessions.	consideration by the Department.
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4. Please outline what action measures **have not been achieved** and the reasons why.

i) Action Measure not met: None.

Reason: N/A

ii) Action Measure not met: None

Reason: N/A

5. What **monitoring tools** have been put in place to evaluate the degree to which actions have been effective / develop new opportunities for action?

(a) Qualitative: No new monitoring tools have been implemented during this reporting year.

(b) Quantitative: No new monitoring tools have been implemented during this reporting year.

6. As a result of monitoring progress against actions has your organisation either:

- made any **revisions** to your plan during the reporting period: None. **OR**
- taken any **additional steps** to meet the disability duties which were **not outlined in your original** disability action plan / any other changes?

No.

If yes please outline below the Revised/Additional Action Measures and associated Performance Indicator

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7. Do you intend to make any further **revisions to your plan** in light of your organisation's annual review of the plan? If so, please outline proposed changes.

No.

¹**Outputs** – defined as act of producing, amount of something produced over a period, processes undertaken to implement the action measure e.g. Undertook 10 training sessions with 100 people at customer service level.

²**Outcome / Impact** – what specifically and tangibly has changed in making progress towards the duties? What impact can directly be attributed to taking this action? Indicate the results of undertaking this action e.g. Evaluation indicating a tangible shift in attitudes before and after training.

³**National** - Situations where people can influence policy at a high impact level e.g. Public Appointments.

⁴**Regional** - Situations where people can influence policy decision making at a middle impact level.

⁵**Local** - Situations where people can influence policy decision making at lower impact level e.g. one off consultations, local fora.

⁶**Milestones** - Outline what part progress has been made towards the particular measures; even if full output or outcomes/ impact have not been achieved.

Annex 1**Timetable for Measures to check compliance with the DfI Equality Scheme**

Para #	Measure	Lead responsibility	Timetable	Action status
2.7	Objectives and targets relating to the statutory duties will be integrated into the Department's corporate and operational business plans.	Equality Officer, All Directors.	Annually	To date (2023) lines have been provided for the DfI Plans.
2.9	S75 Annual Progress Report	Equality Officer/ Permanent Secretary	31 August (annually)	Ongoing.
2.13	Biannual progress reports to the Departmental Board, and Minister	Equality Officer	Biannually	Complete.
3.4	Review consultation list of S75 contacts annually	Equality Unit	Annually	Complete.
4.20	Quarterly publication of Screening Reports	Equality Officer	Quarterly	Complete.
4.34	Review of existing information systems to address, where possible, any gaps identified in monitoring.	Equality Officer ASRB	Within one year of Equality Commission approval of scheme.	DfI Equality Scheme published in 2021.
4.37	Notify consultees of publication of Annual Report.	Equality Officer	Annually by 30 September	Complete.
5.4	Check availability/ suitability of focussed training for key staff	Equality Officer	Annually	EQIA & section 75 courses. Following the para 10 investigation at DfI's request ECNI have been facilitating section 75 training for the Department.
5.5/6	Review/ organise /update training	Equality Officer	Annually	
5.10	Evaluation of Training	Equality Officer in conjunction with Human Resources.	Annually	
6.7	Review and update DfI Guide to Making Information Accessible	Equality Officer	Annually, November	Achieved.
6.14	Assessing access to public information and services	Equality Working Group and Equality Forum	Annually	Ongoing - updates are requested for biannual reports to the Board and this Report.
10.1	Review of Equality Scheme	Equality Officer	Within 5 years of Scheme approval.	Scheme published 2021.

Abbreviations

ATS	Accessible Transport Strategy
BRT	Belfast Rapid Transit
DATS	Disability Action Transport Scheme
DfC	Department for Communities
DfI	Department for Infrastructure
DoH	Department of Health
DE	Department of Education
DoJ	Department of Justice
ECNI	Equality Commission Northern Ireland
EQIA	Equality Impact Assessment
EWG	Equality Working Group
GRP	Good Relations Programme Board
IMTAC	Inclusive Mobility Transport Advisory Committee
NI	Northern Ireland
NICS	Northern Ireland Civil Service
PSNI	Police Service for NI
RNIB	Royal National Institute for the Blind
RCTP	Rural Community Transport Partnership
SIB	Strategic Investment Board
SPPS	Strategic Planning Policy Statement
S75	section 75
TBUC	Together: Building a United Community Strategy
TEO	The Executive Office
TPPD	Transport Programme for People with Disabilities