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**Communities**

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

# **Equality Action Plan 2022 - 2025**

September 2023



# Equality Action Plan 2022 - 2025

1. Section 75 of the Northern Ireland Act 1998 requires public authorities to have due regard to the need to promote equality of opportunity and to have regard to the desirability of promoting good relations across the nine equality categories outlined in the Act.
2. The Department for Communities encourages equality of opportunity and good relations to be central to policy development, implementation, review and service delivery. This consideration extends to all areas of work from high level strategy to practical and operational policies across the core Department.
3. In accordance with the Department's Equality Scheme, it is required to submit to the Equality Commission for Northern Ireland (ECNI) a yearly Progress Report and Equality Action Plan showing how it has fulfilled its equality duties in relation to its functions. A copy of this Plan and our annual progress report to the Equality Commission will be made available on our website <https://www.communities-ni.gov.uk>.
4. This document sets out the Department's response to our Audit of Inequalities, aligned to our current Business Plan objectives. The audit gathers and analyses information across the Section 75 categories to identify the inequalities that exist for service users and are listed under the "Inequalities" column in the Plan.

The Equality Action Plan (EAP) is a living document and progress will be measured annually with opportunities to amend the plan, should this be necessary, during each monitoring cycle.

5. In addition to our service users, our staff deserve to be treated with dignity and respect and can expect to experience equality of opportunity and good relations in the workplace. Similarly, every member of staff shares a responsibility to promote equality of opportunity and good relations with their co-workers and service users. The work of the Department's Diversity and Inclusion Group, the role of our Diversity Champion, Children's Champion and Racial Equality Champion aim to support staff to understand their responsibilities in valuing differences and advancing equality of opportunity to ensure an inclusive and welcoming environment.
6. The point of contact in relation to the consultation, implementation, review and evaluation of this Equality Action Plan is the DfC Equality Unit – email [Equality.unit@communities-ni.gov.uk](mailto:Equality.unit@communities-ni.gov.uk).

## Accessibility statement

7. Any request for the document in another format or language will be considered. Please contact [Equality.unit@communities-ni.gov.uk](mailto:Equality.unit@communities-ni.gov.uk).

## Poverty and Disadvantage

Objective <sup>1</sup>	Action Measure	Target/Milestone	Inequalities
Deliver a co-designed, cross departmental Anti-Poverty Strategy to seek to address the causes and impact of poverty.	Develop and publish an Anti-Poverty Strategy to address poverty based on Objective Need	Within 12 months of the restoration of a functioning Executive, issue the draft Anti-Poverty Strategy for public consultation (subject to Executive approval).	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>- <b>Children</b> are more likely to be living in poverty than the population as a whole.</li> <li>- <b>People with dependents or caring responsibilities</b> are more likely to be economically inactive and unable to access the labour market.</li> <li>- <b>Women</b> may experience barriers to employment and economic participation.</li> <li>- <b>People from an ethnic minority</b> background may experience greater impacts associated with poverty as a result of less developed social and economic networks and poorer job security.</li> </ul>
	To develop and publish a new Fuel Poverty Strategy aligning with other Government strategies and priorities.	By 31 December 2024 to have developed, in consultation and engagement with stakeholders a new fuel poverty strategy for NI for approval by the Executive.	
Deliver a Social Security System which supports the reduction of poverty.	To ensure the relevant legislation is in place for social security, child maintenance, pensions and Welfare Mitigations.	By 31 March 2023 to have taken forward the relevant legislation in relation to social security, Welfare Mitigations, child maintenance, pensions and the ongoing delivery of the Welfare Reform Programme through the legislative process within the prescribed timelines. (subject to Executive approval).	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>- <b>Older people</b> may experience social isolation and income poverty.</li> <li>- <b>People with a disability</b> and/or health conditions may experience barriers of economic participation, social isolation and poverty.</li> </ul>
	Welfare Reform Mitigations and supporting legislation - develop detail of any new recommendations agreed in principle by the Executive.	By 31 March 2023 to have shared and progressed agreement on recommendations in respect of Welfare Reform Mitigations by the Executive.	
	Continued stakeholder engagement via Disability Consultative Forum to identify customer journey improvements.	Quarterly meetings.	

<sup>1</sup> See DfC Business Plan 2022/23

## Poverty and Disadvantage

Objective <sup>1</sup>	Action Measure	Target/Milestone	Inequalities
	Reinstatement of regular stakeholder engagement forum for older people to seek feedback on services and support provided, in order to inform continuous improvement.	June 2022	
	Continued effort to improve State Pension Credit uptake, including review of communication products, taking forward any actions on findings from PSU research.	By March 2023	
	Continuation of State Pension Administration Exercise, which has paid out £5.4m in arrears to date, to ensure pensioners receive their full entitlement.	By March 2023	
To deliver a Child Maintenance Service.	<p>To ensure 9 out of 10 parents are paying their child maintenance.</p> <p>To have at least 85% of applications proceeding to payments within 12 weeks.</p> <p>To achieve monetary value of error rates less than 1% on Child Maintenance Assessments.</p>	By 31 March 2023	
To deliver the Make the Call Wraparound Service.	To connect with 30,000 customers in 2022/23 to ensure they are receiving the benefits and support to which they are entitled.	By 31 March 2023	

## Poverty and Disadvantage

Objective <sup>1</sup>	Action Measure	Target/Milestone	Inequalities
Deliver the Health Transformation Project.	To assess and implement recommendations from a number of independent reviews on the Health Assessment Service to ensure people with disabilities and health conditions are provided a high level of service and any barriers to service are removed.	March 2023	
	To introduce multi-channel delivery of health assessments.	August 2023	
	To introduce an online application process for PIP, introducing a digital channel for application.	December 2024	
To work collaboratively towards sustainable anti-poverty interventions which build community wealth and address objective need.	Develop and promote interventions to address place-based deprivation and poverty and the hardship caused by food poverty and problem debt.	By end March 2024 to have finalised policy recommendations following consultation and seek approval to commence legislation drafting for a NI Debt Respite Scheme.	
		By 31 March 2024 to have completed the sectoral engagement exercise and initiated a full consultation on the People and Place review of place-based deprivation aligning with the Anti-Poverty Strategy and Action Plan. (subject to Minister being in-situ).	
		By March 2024 to have agreed a Departmental Action Plan on Community Wealth Building.	
		By 31 March 2023 to have funded 260 applications encompassing over 300 organisations under the People and Place Strategy, across 65 geographical areas targeting a population of approximately 290,000.	

## Poverty and Disadvantage

Objective <sup>1</sup>	Action Measure	Target/Milestone	Inequalities
		By 31 March 2023 to work collaboratively with statutory and third sector partners to deliver holistic responses to food insecurity across all Council areas.	
		By 30 September 2023 to have agreed final evaluation report from SIB to include recommendations for future advice provision.	
	To provide an additional £4m Hardship Grant to councils to provide financial support to the most vulnerable in their district to deal with the impact of the cost-of-living crisis to be used in the 2023/24 year.	By March 2024.	
To ensure access to good quality, independent, confidential advice, as a means to alleviate issues and inequalities such as poverty, housing, welfare, debt, as well as legal rights of workers and minorities.	<p>To engage with the advice sector on a fundamental refresh of policy and funding frameworks to determine the long term advice needs and priorities.</p> <p>To maintain funding to the independent advice sector to provide free accessible quality advice on a range of issues including social security, debt, immigration, appeals and tribunal representation.</p>	<p>By March 2024 to have developed a fresh policy and outcomes framework to support commissioning of new programmes to support the Voluntary and Community Sector.</p> <p>By March 2024.</p>	
To incentivise, support and enhance community empowerment through an innovative and sustainable community and voluntary sector.	<p>To undertake a review of the Department's current suite of regional and sub-regional infrastructure programmes which support the voluntary and community sector.</p> <p>To ensure refreshed programmes are relevant to the needs of the sector.</p>	By 31 March 2024 to have commenced activities of the key commitments and immediate priorities identified within the Delivery Plan.	

## Poverty and Disadvantage

Objective <sup>1</sup>	Action Measure	Target/Milestone	Inequalities
To improve the financial wellbeing of women and people with disabilities.	<p>Implementation of the NI Delivery Plan for Financial Wellbeing.</p> <p>The Plan was published in March 2022 and includes commitments related to providing gender-specific financial educational initiatives and the development of specific initiatives aimed at people living with poor mental health.</p>	By 31 March 2024 to have commenced activities of the key commitments and immediate priorities identified within the Delivery Plan and to work with partners to reflect emerging strategic and operational thinking, new priorities, and changes to the regulatory or policy landscape.	
To provide access to cultural activity for young people.	<p>To continue to fund the Creative Learning Centres education programme through NI screen to boost digital creative skills among young people.</p> <p>Through NI Screen, to continue to provide enhanced access to Into Film educational resources, cultural activity and careers information.</p> <p>Future Screens NI to provide 20 placements for unemployed young people living in deprived areas to gain both skills and experience of working in a creative business matched to their interest, for example in games, animation, VR, AR or film and broadcast.</p>	<p>To reach a minimum of 7200 young people and 2970 teachers per annum until 2025 with a minimum of 70% of activity delivered in schools serving areas of deprivation.</p> <p>To reach a minimum of 198 schools per annum until March 2025 serving areas of deprivation.</p> <p>By March 2025</p>	



## Social Inclusion

Objective <sup>1</sup>	Action Measure	Target/Milestone	Inequalities
To continue the promotion of social inclusion in respect of disability; older people; gender; and sexual orientation through the delivery of co-designed policy and cross-departmental strategies.	Develop and publish a:		
	Disability Strategy to promote social inclusion of disabled people;	Within 12 months of the restoration of a functioning Executive, issue draft Disability Strategy for public consultation (subject to Executive approval).	- <b>LGBTQI+</b> people are often invisible, underrepresented or there is a lack positive role models or imagery used.
	Gender equality strategy to promote equality and social inclusion between men and women;	Within 12 months of the restoration of a functioning Executive, issue draft Gender Equality Strategy for public consultation (subject to Executive approval).	- <b>LGBTQI+</b> people report that they encounter discrimination on a wide range of issues.
	Sexual Orientation/LGBTQI+ Strategy to promote social inclusion of LGBT people; and	Within 12 months of the restoration of a functioning Executive, issue draft Sexual Orientation / LGBTQI+ Strategy for public consultation (subject to Executive approval).	- The evidence base for an effective assessment of inequality and relative disadvantage by sexual orientation and gender identity is deficient and has major gaps.
	Active Ageing Strategy for post 2022 (subject to Ministerial approval) to promote the social inclusion of older people.	By 30 June 2022 deliver a virtual Strategic Insight Lab to provide strategic direction for the Active Ageing Strategy.	- Almost one in five LGBT people (18%) who were looking for work said they were discriminated against because of their identity while trying to get a job.
		By 30 September 2022 hold a virtual Prioritisation Lab to prioritise key recommendations for the Strategy.	- One in eight LGBT people (12 per cent) avoid going to the gym or participating in sports groups because of fear of discrimination and harassment.  - Almost one in five LGBT people (18 per cent) have experienced homelessness at some point in their lives.  - Lack of LGBT safe emergency accommodation for LGBT people fleeing homophobia, transphobia, domestic abuse or sexual violence.

## Social Inclusion

Objective <sup>1</sup>	Action Measure	Target/Milestone	Inequalities
	DfC will:	31 March 2025	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>- <b>Older people</b> are more likely to feel events are influenced by outside factors, making it beyond an individual's control to shape the events of their life.</li> <li>- <b>Older people</b> experience difficulty in accessing:                             <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>- services</li> <li>- appropriate accommodation</li> <li>- digital exclusion.</li> </ul> </li> <li>- <b>Older people</b> (state pension age) are more likely to be providing informal care than working age adults. As people age there is an increasing risk of long standing illnesses which can impact on mobility and independence.</li> <li>- <b>Disabled people</b> have significantly lower personal wellbeing than people without a disability.</li> <li>- <b>Disabled people</b> may need extra support to live independently.</li> <li>- <b>Disabled adults</b> are less likely to be employed than non-disabled adults. This Disability employment gap is higher in NI than elsewhere in the UK.</li> </ul> <p>The Disability employment gap is wider for:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>- disabled men</li> <li>- older (aged 50 to 64) disabled people</li> <li>- disabled people with no qualifications.</li> </ul>
	- increase LGBTQI+ visibility by increasing diversity in its online imagery and language including in its public-facing offices.		
	- lead research and insight into so-called conversion therapy to understand the local prevalence and impact of such practices. This will inform development of legislation and other necessary actions to ensure the practice ends.	31 March 2023	
	- work with departments and authorities regarding development of an evidence base on sexual orientation and gender identity.	31 March 2025	
	- will be a full participant in Pride events and will increase its visibility as the provider of services that are LGBTQI+ friendly.	Annual through to 31 March 2025	
	- implement section 19 of the Employment Act NI (2016) to provide for gender pay gap reporting in NI (subject to available resources).	31 March 2025 (subject to available resources and sitting Executive)	
	- lead on co-ordinating the NI Executive's input to the UK State Party responses to CEDAW commitments and the Istanbul Convention.	31 March 2025	

## Social Inclusion

Objective <sup>1</sup>	Action Measure	Target/Milestone	Inequalities
	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>- take action to raise awareness via UN International Day of Older Persons and Positive Ageing Month events and increase DfC's visibility as the provider of services that are age friendly.</li> </ul>	Annual through to 31 March 2025	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>- <b>Disabled people</b> are more likely than non-disabled people to be:                             <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>- working in lower-skilled occupations</li> <li>- self-employed</li> <li>- working part-time (and subsequently less hours)</li> <li>- working in the public sector</li> <li>- temporarily away from work.</li> </ul> </li> <li>- <b>Disabled people</b> of all ages face delays in securing occupational therapists and funding to ensure their homes are adapted to meet their needs, especially in the private market.</li> </ul>
	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>- take action to raise awareness via UN International Day of Persons with Disabilities events and increase DfC's visibility as the provider of services that are disability friendly.</li> </ul>	Annual through to 31 March 2025	
	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>- lead on co-ordinating the NI Executive's input to the UK State Party responses to CRPD reports and recommendations.</li> </ul>	Annual through to 31 March 2025	
	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>- facilitate work placements within DfC for disabled people as part of International Job Shadowing Day.</li> </ul>	Annual through to 31 March 2025	
To improve access to arts and cultural venues across N Ireland.	<p>To work in collaboration with the Disability Sector, the Department of Agriculture, Environment and Rural Affairs, local Councils and the NI Museums Council, to deliver a capital grant programme aimed at:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>- improving access at arts, cultural and active recreation venues for people with disabilities by removing physical barriers;</li> <li>- making arts, cultural and active recreation facilities more inclusive, by improving the qualitative experience, to all sections of society, particularly people with a disability; and</li> <li>- increasing participation in arts, cultural and active recreation activities by people with a disability.</li> </ul>	31 March 2023	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>- <b>People with a disability</b> and/or health conditions may experience barriers of economic participation, social isolation and poverty.</li> <li>- Adults with a disability were less likely to visit a place of historic interest in 2017/18 (45%) than those who do not have a disability (58%).</li> <li>- Based on current data, there is under representation of <b>women, young people, people with a disability and ethnic minorities</b> in public appointments.</li> <li>- Accessibility to arts, cultural, heritage and active recreation and venues and activities by <b>people with disabilities</b> and <b>older people</b>.</li> <li>- Less participation in sport and physical activity by <b>females, older people</b> (over 45), <b>racial group, marital status</b>, people with a <b>disability</b> and people with <b>dependants</b>.</li> </ul>

## Social Inclusion

Objective <sup>1</sup>	Action Measure	Target/Milestone	Inequalities
Supporting sport and physical activity to be more inclusive and diverse while reducing the barriers to participation.	<p>To recover pre-pandemic Continuous Household Survey participation rates in sport and physical recreation for females, people living with disabilities and ethnic groups.</p> <p>Activation of 'Active Living' - the Department has launched Active Living a new Strategy for Sport and Physical Activity, which has been co-designed with input from Government Departments, Councils, community groups and the wider sports sector. The Strategy seeks to address equality, participation rates and inclusion as key themes, which will be delivered collaboratively, through an action plan, with a range of partners.</p>	31 March 2023	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>- Under-representation of <b>women</b> in community development and leadership roles in public decision-making.</li> <li>- <b>Women</b> may experience barriers to employment and economic participation.</li> <li>- People with <b>dependents</b> or caring responsibilities may be more likely to be economically inactive and unable to access the labour market.</li> <li>- People from an <b>ethnic</b> minority background may experience greater impacts associated with poverty as a result of less developed social and economic networks and poorer job security.</li> </ul>
To ensure the boards of our Arm's Length Bodies reflect the rich diversity of our society by drawing members from the widest pool of talent.	<p>To engage with a wide range of groups and individuals, who act for those who are under-represented in public appointments, to raise awareness of opportunities.</p> <p>To engage with the Commissioner for Public Appointments NI to keep abreast of good practice developments.</p> <p>To appoint a diversity champion in each public appointment competition.</p> <p>Offer of the Guaranteed Interview Scheme for those with a disability.</p> <p>Provision of reasonable support to help public appointees carry out their duties, as well as being offered support during the appointment process.</p>	Per competition through to 31 March 2025.	<p>Those living in areas of highest social deprivation are more likely than the rest of NI to suffer from:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>- <b>Disability</b> and/or long term health inequalities;</li> <li>- Lower level of educational and skills attainment; and</li> <li>- Higher levels of economic inactivity.</li> </ul>
To improve access to our State Care Monuments.	<p>To develop an accessibility plan to improve future access to State Care Monuments, where possible.</p> <p>Accessibility considerations to be part of all capital development projects at State Care Monuments.</p>	31 March 2024	

## Social Inclusion

Objective <sup>1</sup>	Action Measure	Target/Milestone	Inequalities
Increase the participation and influence of women in community development.	<p>Developing Women in the Community Programme:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>to provide women with the skills, knowledge and confidence to become influencers in their own areas;</li> <li>to take on leadership roles; and</li> <li>to provide access to new opportunities, whilst simultaneously addressing the barriers that prevent women from civic engagement.</li> </ul>	By 31 March 2024 70% of participants will become involved in their community.	
Uniting Communities using sport and creativity to build good relations between young people from different community backgrounds.	<p>To continue to rollout delivery of the TBUC Uniting Communities Programme in Lurgan/Portadown and South Belfast until December 2023.</p> <p>Commence delivery of TBUC Uniting Communities Programme in 2 new areas, Black Mountain/Castle and Causeway, in 2023/24 with further rollout to follow into 2025 (Subject to budget).</p>	<p>31 December 2023</p> <p>2023/24</p>	
To support an inclusive workplace in which diversity is truly valued.	<p>To support the delivery of the DfC Diversity &amp; Inclusion Strategy on key people initiatives as advised by the Diversity &amp; Inclusion Champion.</p> <p>Support the expansion of Mental Health First Aiders to additional business areas across the Department.</p> <p>Support for Carers: Staff Support Network and online Toolkit. Supporting the NICS in becoming a member of Employers for Carers.</p> <p>Each One to Reach One Mentoring.</p> <p>Develop and implement a Neurodiversity Toolkit.</p>	<p>31 March 2023</p> <p>31 March 2023</p> <p>31 March 2023</p> <p>31 March 2023</p> <p>31 March 2023</p>	

## Economic Inactivity and Employment

Objective	Action Measure	Target/Milestone	Inequalities
Increase and incentivise participation in the labour market and wider society through targeted, sustainable interventions, delivering these alongside community-based partners and other sectors.	Deliver the Harkin Summit, building greater awareness of disability employment challenges and creating a legacy for NI.	By 30 June 2022 to have successfully delivered the Harkin Summit.	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>- <b>people with a disability</b> and/or health conditions may experience barriers of economic participation, social isolation and poverty.</li> <li>- <b>Disabled adults</b> are less likely to be employed than non-disabled adults. This Disability employment gap is higher in NI than elsewhere in the UK.</li> <li>- <b>people with dependents</b> or caring responsibilities may be more likely to be economically inactive and unable to access the labour market.</li> <li>- <b>young people (18-24 year olds)</b> have the lowest working age employment rates and the highest rates of unemployment and economic inactivity.</li> <li>- <b>Adults aged 50-64</b> are at higher risk of economic inactivity.</li> <li>- <b>Women</b> especially those with dependents or caring responsibilities may be more likely to work part time or in temporary employment.</li> <li>- <b>Women</b> are more likely to be economically inactive.</li> </ul>
		By 31 March 2023 to have completed an evaluation of the Harkin Summit Project.	
	Develop and co-design fresh policy, interventions and labour market provision that support those with disabilities to move closer, find, retain and progress in employment.	By 31 May 2022, to have extended Workable NI using a grant process and extended Access to Work NI contracts for 9 months.	
		By 30 June 2023 to have developed detailed design for new In Work Support provision to launch by April 2024.	
		Launch a new Disability and Work Strategy, aligned to an overarching Disability Strategy for NI, within 12 months of the restoration of a functioning Executive. (Subject to Ministerial approval).	
	Develop an 'Employer Standard' for NI within 12 months of the restoration of a functioning Executive that encourages and supports inclusive employment practices. (Subject to Ministerial approval).		

## Economic Inactivity and Employment

Objective	Action Measure	Target/Milestone	Inequalities
	<p>Provide approximately £11m of assistance through a suite of programmes that will support those with disabilities and/or health conditions secure and/or retain employment including:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>- Employment Support</li> <li>- Access to Work (NI)</li> <li>- Workable (NI)</li> <li>- Condition Management Programme</li> <li>- European Social Fund Projects (ends March 2023).</li> </ul> <p>These programmes support people with a range of disabilities progress towards, move into and remain in employment thus contributing to addressing Economic Inactivity and Unemployment and the Disability Employment Gap.</p>	<p>31 March 2023</p>	
	<p>Deliver a range of labour market provision to help and support young people, long term unemployed and those with a health condition to get closer, find, retain and progress in employment.</p> <p>As part of the Employability NI Programme established to design, procure and implement a fresh suite of employability provisions/ initiatives to support people into meaningful employment, the Labour Market Partnership (LMP) model has been developed to build collaborative, multi-agency partnerships to improve employability outcomes.</p>	<p>Support up to 7000 individuals through the Labour Market Partnership Initiative by 31.03.2023 (dependent upon funding position in 2022-23).</p>	

## Economic Inactivity and Employment

Objective	Action Measure	Target/Milestone	Inequalities
	<p>The JobStart Scheme is aimed at young people aged 16-24 to help them to gain the skills and experience they need to find and remain in employment.</p> <p>The Scheme has been tailored to meet the specific needs of young people who have a disability by increasing participation time up to 9 months to allow for any reasonable adjustments and sufficient time to make their JobStart opportunity a worthwhile quality experience.</p>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• 1,697 participating in the Scheme by 31 March 2023.</li> <li>• 75% of surveyed young people agree that they have been able to improve their employability skill as a result of participation in JobStart.</li> <li>• 75% of surveyed young people agree that JobStart has helped to improve their confidence and motivation.</li> <li>• 60% of JobStart young people move into work, education or training within 13 weeks of opportunity ending.</li> </ul>	
	<p>The Work Experience Programme offers high quality 2 – 8 week placement opportunities through to job ready unemployed people thereby improving their overall chances of moving towards or into sustained employment. Support for childcare costs is available for people on placement to support those with dependent children, and additional support is available for people with a disability or health condition.</p>	<p>To achieve a 30% into employment, apprenticeship or education rate for 2-8 week Work Experience Placements participants within 13 weeks of participation from Apr 22-Mar 25.</p>	
	<p>Opportunity Guarantee is a strand of the Work Experience Programme which offers 13 week placements for young people (16-24) with a guarantee of an interview or apprenticeship at the end of the placement.</p>	<p>To achieve a 35% into employment, apprenticeship or education rate for Opportunity Guarantee participants within 13 weeks of participation from Apr 22-Mar 25.</p>	



## Economic Inactivity and Employment

Objective	Action Measure	Target/Milestone	Inequalities
	<p>The Adviser Discretion Fund provides funding to remove barriers to employment, self-employment, progressing towards or into employment or increasing hours of employment. This includes funding for upfront childcare costs to remove this as a barrier to employment for people with dependent children.</p>	<p>20% of customers who receive an ADF award will enter employment or progress within employment (including increasing hours of employment or re-starting their self-employed business) within 13 weeks of receiving the award from Apr 22-Mar 25.</p>	

## Culture

Objective	Action Measure	Target/Milestone	Inequalities
Lead on the New Decade, New Approach (NDNA) commitments to develop and deliver an Irish Language Strategy and an Ulster Scots Language, Heritage and Culture Strategy and to lead on the NDNA commitment to introduce a Sign Language Bill to the Assembly to broaden the inclusion of communities.	Develop and publish an Irish Language Strategy and an Ulster Scots Language, Heritage and Culture Strategy and progress Sign Language Legislation onto the Assembly Legislative Programme.	Within 12 months of the restoration of a functioning Executive, to launch public consultation on the draft Irish Language Strategy and the draft Ulster Scots Language, Heritage and Culture Strategy (subject to Executive approval).	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>- <b>Older people</b> (65 and over) and <b>Protestants</b> less knowledge of the Irish Language.</li> <li>- <b>Young people</b> (16-24), <b>males</b> and <b>Catholics</b> less knowledge of the Ulster Scots Language.</li> <li>- Accessibility to information and services for Deaf British Sign Language and Irish Sign Language users.</li> </ul>
		Within 12 months of the restoration of a functioning Executive submit a Sign Language Bill to the Assembly Primary Legislation Programme (subject to Executive approval).	

## Housing

Objective	Action Measure	Target/Milestone	Inequalities
Continue to ensure citizens have access to good quality, affordable and sustainable homes that are appropriate for their needs.	Deliver a Housing Supply Strategy to ensure citizens have access to good quality, affordable and sustainable homes.	By 30 June 2023: <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>Finalise Housing Supply Strategy (subject to Executive approval);</li> <li>Establish appropriate governance arrangements for Strategy delivery; and</li> <li>Produce first Action Plan.</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li><b>People with a disability</b> may need extra support to live independently.</li> <li><b>Older People</b> may need extra support to live independently.</li> <li><b>Disabled</b> people are also more likely to live in poor housing conditions than households with no disabled members.</li> <li><b>Younger People</b> may need extra support to live independently</li> <li>Survivors of Domestic Abuse may need extra support to live independently.</li> <li>Differentials in the housing outcomes of people of different <b>gender</b>.</li> <li>Lengthening waiting times for social housing have been uneven, disproportionately affecting applicants from other religions and Catholics.</li> <li>Lower proportions of Black residents and those from the EU Accession countries are in home ownership and among minority ethnic and migrant groups there is a higher prevalence of private renting.</li> <li>Tied accommodation conditions for migrant workers are often poor, residents isolated and overcrowded and often have little general understanding of their rights.</li> </ul>
		By 31 March 2023 commence research work to better understand the housing experiences of Section 75 groups, with reference to multiple identities and intersections between different equality categories. Improving the evidence base will be a key priority within the first Action Plan and will be the context for this research.	
Drive new innovative solutions to increase total Housing Supply using capital grant and loan-finance, and by leveraging other sources of funding and assets including best use of public land.	Increase housing supply and affordable options across all tenures to meet housing need and demand.	By 31 March 2023 deliver 1,950 social home starts.	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>Lengthening waiting times for social housing have been uneven, disproportionately affecting applicants from other religions and Catholics.</li> <li>Lower proportions of Black residents and those from the EU Accession countries are in home ownership and among minority ethnic and migrant groups there is a higher prevalence of private renting.</li> <li>Tied accommodation conditions for migrant workers are often poor, residents isolated and overcrowded and often have little general understanding of their rights.</li> </ul>
		By 31 March 2023, provide a recommendation to Minister on the revitalisation of the Housing Executive and the commitment to tackle the investment challenge.	
		By 31 March 2023 provide 4,700 Energy Efficiency interventions in 3,100 homes through the Affordable Warmth Scheme.	
		By 31 March 2023 deliver 1,000 intermediate homes helping first time buyers, who tend to be among the younger age groups, and those on low incomes to access home ownership.	
		By 31 March 2023, deliver 15 over 55's intermediate homes, which will support those in this age group to move to accommodation which better meets their needs.	

## Housing

Objective	Action Measure	Target/Milestone	Inequalities
To enable vulnerable people to live independently in the community.	To work with the NIHE to develop and publish a new 3 Year Supporting People Strategy by December 2022, the purpose of which is the provision of housing support services to vulnerable people to enable them to live as independently as possible in the community.	By 31 March 2023, to ensure that the NIHE has implemented year one actions in its three-year strategy for the Supporting People Programme.	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>- Access to quality transit and settled sites for Irish Travellers is limited.</li> <li>- Access to appropriate accommodation for Irish travellers is limited.</li> <li>- Racial attacks on people from minority ethnic communities' homes is a critical concern, with implications for the safety of the home.</li> </ul>
To provide a fairer and more transparent system of assessing housing need and allocation of social housing.	<p>The Department to work with NIHE to implement 18 of the 20 proposals from the Fundamental Review of Social Housing Allocations.</p> <p>To complete further research on the 2 remaining proposals concerning intimidation points and interim points, as Minister has asked that victims of violence who do not currently receive such points should be considered.</p> <p>The Department and NIHE will monitor the implementation of these changes to ensure they make the allocation process and waiting times more fair, transparent and effective for all people in need.</p>	<p>By September 2023 to ensure that the NIHE has implemented Phase 1 of proposal implementation.</p> <p>By September 2024 to ensure that the NIHE has implemented Phase 2 of proposal implementation.</p>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>- Anecdotal evidence identified an increased rate of family breakdown due to young people's sexual orientation resulting in homelessness.</li> <li>- <b>LGBTQ+</b> people are more likely to feel harassed and fearful they will be a victim of hate crime.</li> <li>- Single, divorced and separated people experienced poorer housing conditions than married people, especially in the private rented sector, with divorced and separated people having the highest incidence of non-decent homes.</li> </ul>
To make the Private Rented Sector a safer and more secure housing option for a wider range of households including the most vulnerable in our society.	Following the introduction of the Private Tenancies Act, to bring forward subordinate legislation to introduce energy efficiency, improved notice to quit, tenancy deposit limits electrical and other safety matters for all tenants in private rented sector accommodation.	31 March 2025	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>- Households with <b>dependants</b> are more likely to live in overcrowded social housing homes.</li> </ul>

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Objective	Action Measure	Target/Milestone	Inequalities
To support the provision of appropriate, cost effective facilities for Travellers living in NI.	To oversee the adaptation of the Housing Needs Assessment methodology to facilitate the assessment of Traveller specific accommodation needs.	By 30 November 2023 to ensure that NIHE has completed research to identify a new Housing Needs Assessment methodology to facilitate the assessment of Irish Traveller specific accommodation needs.	
	To oversee a strategic review of all NIHE Traveller sites to identify options for their future improvement or replacement.	By 31 March 2024 to ensure that NIHE has completed a strategic review of all existing NIHE Traveller sites.	
To support the provision of accommodation for foreign Nationals who settle in Northern Ireland.	To work with the NIHE to identify properties and provide accommodation to Afghan Nationals settling in Northern Ireland.	By 31 March 2024 to resettle 150 Afghan Nationals in Northern Ireland.	

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