

Department of Finance



Public Authority Statutory Equality and Good Relations Duties Annual Progress Report 2022-23

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

<https://www.finance-ni.gov.uk/dof-departmental-equality-scheme>

Signature:

Jonathan R McNaught

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

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.

The Department of Finance (DoF) is one of nine (9) Departments within the Northern Ireland Civil Service (NICS). It aims to help the Northern Ireland Executive secure the most appropriate and effective use of resources and services for the benefit of the community. In pursuing this aim, the key objective of DoF is to deliver high-quality, cost-effective and efficient public services and administration within its areas of executive responsibility.

Reflecting its balance of responsibilities, this report considers the Department's contributions to equality outcomes in (1) the population in general, (2) the NICS and (3) the Department itself. It includes a separate section (4) updating on activities undertaken by the NICS Race and Ethnicity Champion (now a combined role with the DoF Racial Equality Champion).

1. Population-level

Land & Property Services (LPS)

Opportunities to develop and enhance outreach activity continued to be undertaken by LPS Revenues & Benefits (R&B) Directorate during 2022/2023. The online 'digital first' approach for Rate Rebate claimants with frontline telephony support is provided to assist citizens with their online rate relief application. For greater accessibility to information on services offered, LPS introduced the use of a QR code, enabling quicker linking to online content for customers at all LPS events.

LPS continues to build on external collaboration on the promotion of rate reliefs with a wide range of stakeholders such as the Northern Ireland Housing Executive (NIHE), Northern Ireland Federation of Housing Associations (NIFHA), the Landlords Association for Northern Ireland (LANI), DfC Make the Call. Information leaflets on Disabled Persons Allowance (DPA) was circulated to relevant groups such as Autism NI, Sunflower ASD Support Group, NOW Group and All About Us ASD Group. Similar approaches were taken on promoting Lone Pensioner Allowance (LPA) with leaflets circulating to Southwest Age Partnership, Be Safe Be Well Men's Shed, Older People North West and Southern Trust Promoting Wellbeing Division.

Outreach to minority ethnic stakeholder groups continues through the distribution of translated versions of the Rate Rebate Factsheet, with versions now available in Bulgarian, Lithuanian, Portuguese, Romanian, Polish and simplified Chinese (Mandarin). Translated materials were issued to 10 stakeholder groups supporting minority ethnic communities and to NI Housing Executive with its diverse customer base.

Digital Inclusion

During 2021/22, the majority of GO ON NI Digital Inclusion programme events were restricted to online training and informational sessions. Since then, the programme has seen a wholesale reintroduction of 'in-person' events held in conjunction with our partners at Libraries NI, Supporting Communities and other colleagues.

In tandem, the provision of a range of online services successfully developed during the Covid period has also continued throughout 2022/23, continuing our partnerships with Libraries NI and Supporting Communities. It is expected that this 'hybrid' approach, covering both physical and online training opportunities, will continue in future.

JAM Card

The JAM Card was created by participants of The NOW Group. It allows users with autism or a communication difficulty/disability, if they chose to do so, to discreetly inform a colleague or service provider that they need Just A Minute of patience. The NICS renewed its partnership with the NOW group in 2022 and a new promotional campaign to raise awareness and encourage all colleagues to complete the training is ongoing.

2. NICS wide

Context: Realignment of Human Resources

In November 2022, a realignment of NICS HR functions led to the formation of two separate and specialist HR functional areas:

- NICS HR – the NICS' HR shared services function, providing operational advice and service including employee relations, Occupational Health Service and Wellbeing and Learning; Resourcing, Civil Service Pensions and HR Business partnering; and
- Corporate HR - People and Organisational Development (People and OD) responsible for all HR policy (including those relating to employee relations, resourcing, industrial relations and pay and reward); NICS people strategy; workforce strategy and analytics; industrial relations framework; pay and reward; strategic litigation; and diversity and inclusion.

The HR Policy team within People and Organisational Development is responsible for developing and reviewing modern, effective policies covering the employee life cycle, enabling an innovative, ambitious, diverse and inclusive Civil Service. It works with a range of internal and external stakeholders to support departments in developing and delivering actions that embed diversity and inclusion across all aspects of people management and building an inclusive organisation.

NICS Diversity and Inclusion

The NICS diversity and inclusion strategy continues to be evidence based and driven by best practice from external benchmarking and by listening to our people. It is not focused on quick wins, instead, the NICS has optimised its strategy to promote diversity, tackle areas of under-representation and support inclusion by creating the architecture to achieve real and lasting change. Key data relating to the diversity of the NICS can be accessed at <https://www.nisra.gov.uk/publications/equality-statistics-northern-ireland-civil-service-2023-updated-2021-census-data>

DoF, in common with each NICS Department, has its own Diversity Champion (at senior level) who represents DoF in a central Diversity Champions Network (DCN). In addition to Departmental Diversity Champions, the NICS has appointed Diversity Champions for each of the four key themes: Gender, LGBTQ+, Race and Ethnicity and Disability. The thematic leads are powerful advocates and have been instrumental in establishing the NICS staff networks.

NICS Diversity Action Plan

The NICS Diversity Action Plan 2022/23, developed by the Diversity Champions Network and People and Organisational Development, identified key activities to be undertaken to improve diversity and inclusion within the organisation across the four themes of gender, disability, LGBTQ+, race and ethnicity, as well as cross cutting priorities.

Implementation of the plan was overseen by the Head of the Civil Service, Permanent Secretaries, the NICS Diversity Champions Network and People and Organisational Development, working in partnership with staff networks and stakeholder organisations.

In 2022/23 key achievements of the Diversity Action Plan include:

- Development and launch of initiatives to expand the Civil Service resourcing mix, including the Skills Academy and Graduate Management Programme. Additionally, in July 2022, the 15 nine-month work placement opportunities for young disabled people (aged 16-24) under the Job Start Scheme pilot concluded. DoF engaged with the Civil Service Commissioners and, as a result of an amendment to the Recruitment Code, approved by the Commissioners, nine of the successful participants were made permanent offers of appointment in the NICS, by way of exception to the Merit Principle.

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- Delivery of interventions to raise the profile of and embed diversity and inclusion, including: the launch of a new diversity and inclusion intranet hub; a new diversity and inclusion section of the NICS external recruitment site; and delivery of a range of webinars on disability, LGBTQ awareness and cultural competencies.
- Launch of a new socio-economic staff survey and external benchmarking of our practices with several diversity accolades being awarded, such as, Stonewall Silver Employer Award, Onus Gold Workplace Charter and the 2022 CIPD NI Award for best diversity and inclusion initiative.
- Ongoing development of active staff networks including the first joint network event hosted as part of National Inclusion Week 2022, the creation of an online presence for the Disability Staff Network and Race and Ethnicity Network, and the formation of a new student network for the 2022/23 cohort of students.
- Participation in important events to celebrate diversity including Belfast Mela, Pride, the Harkin International Summit, International Men's Day, International Women's Day, Black History Month, International Job Shadow Day and International Day for Persons with Disabilities.

NICS Advertising, Marketing and Outreach

Throughout the reporting period, work continued to promote the range of career opportunities available in the NICS and encourage the widest applicant pool by using a mix of advertising, communications and engagement and outreach activity.

Advertising campaigns employing a mix of traditional, digital, social and outdoor channels were developed to support NICS-wide Staff Officer and Deputy Principal recruitments as well as the Graduate Management and Student Placement programmes during 2022. Advertising channels included print, social media (e.g. Facebook and Instagram) and radio advertising (Spotify, radio and podcasts). A modern campaign-style website was developed to support the launch of the NICS' new Graduate Management Programme (September 2022) featuring video case studies from staff, highlighting the opportunities available within the NICS and the chance to play a part in improving life for our citizens.

There was also increased engagement with external organisations and participation in events to highlight the many benefits of working in the NICS and to showcase its diversity and inclusion journey, including:

- outreach sessions with the disability and minority ethnic sectors in conjunction with Northern Ireland Union for Supported Employment (NIUSE) and TEO's Racial Equality Unit to promote external recruitment competitions including: Staff Officer, Deputy Principal, Civil Service Skills Academy (May and June 2022) and the Graduate Management Programme (August 2022);

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- participation as an employer in the 4C UR Future initiative (an industry led social enterprise) which targeted 7500 Year 9 school pupils across Northern Ireland with the aim of helping them make more informed career choices through participation in interactive games and challenges;
- participation in Belfast Pride and Belfast Mela to promote the NICS as an inclusive employer; and
- the continued development of the NICS' relationships with local universities, Queens University Belfast (QUB), Ulster University (UU) and The Open University (OU), through participation in a range of activities, including in-person and online Careers Fairs

Economist Profession Diversity and Outreach

Challenges associated with the COVID-19 pandemic constrained the delivery and momentum of outreach activity of the Profession at that time. It did, however, continue to provide one year placements for students in the Department for the Economy and Department of Education in their sandwich year. The Profession continues to engage in other non-physical formats with universities, and through its recruitment activities to ensure maximum outreach and improve opportunities to recruit from a diverse pool of candidates as possible.

A Review of Workforce Management, carried out by the Profession and completed in March 2022, made a number of recommendations, including actions around the Profession restarting its outreach activity following the pandemic. These included actions to update its Outreach and Diversity Plan and to create a Profession Oversight team. The NICS Economist Profession Outreach and Diversity Working Group (ODWG) was established in August 2022, with a remit to develop and roll out an Outreach & Diversity Action Plan to promote a diverse representation, including greater gender balance, in the Profession and fulfil the NICS ambition to 'have a truly inclusive workplace culture and to be a service that reflects the society we serve.'

The ODWG began to undertake a desk-based research paper on "Growing a Diverse Economist Profession", which aimed to draw on existing information and data from a range of sources to provide a baseline and overview of the current economics uptake and potential pipeline for the future. A series of key stakeholder consultations provided input. The research paper will be published in the summer of 2023/24, and will further inform the Profession's Outreach and Diversity Action Plan on what actions should be undertaken.

Initial data on university uptake of economics, and discussions with local universities identified that the gender imbalance within the Profession reflects the pool of economics graduates within Northern Ireland. This is an issue that is also evident in Great Britain, where we are aware that the UK Government Economic Service (GES) has a similar gender balance to the NICS Economist Profession. Recognising this, the

Economist Profession Outreach and Diversity Action Plan will target school and university students and promote Economics as a career choice for female economists, and though we may not see the full benefits of this engagement immediately, it remains a strong commitment for the Profession moving forward.

Disability

The proportion of NICS staff with a declared disability in 2023 (5.7%) is lower than that for the comparator economically active population aged 16-64 years who have a disability (12.3%, subject to sampling error). The comparative figure for the UK civil service was 13.6%.

Employers for Disability Northern Ireland – Lead Partner Membership

Employers for Disability NI (EFDNI) is a network of employers from the public, private and voluntary sectors working together to promote training and employment opportunities, and accessibility for disabled people as employees and customers.

The NICS continues to be a Lead Partner of EFDNI and enjoys access to the range of services EFDNI provides, including independent and professional advice, guidance and support on disability issues for all NICS staff and managers, a conciliation service to help resolve disability-related issues and training to increase disability knowledge and awareness across the NICS.

As part of the NICS' commitment to diversity and inclusion and in order to attract a more diverse applicant pool for career opportunities in the NICS, the NICS continues to have a permanent presence on the Employers for Disability NI (EFDNI) online recruitment portal promoting and signposting to its weekly opportunities bulletin.

During 2022/23, EFDNI delivered a comprehensive programme of disability awareness session available to all staff in collaboration with People and Organisational Development and the Disability Staff Network.

A range of activities to encourage and promote NICS career opportunities to the disability sector were delivered during the year, including positive action advertising, targeted advertising and outreach information sessions for large volume recruitment competitions. The NICS continues to have a permanent presence on the EFDNI Jobs Bulletin Board which is an online career opportunities service circulated to disability organisations.

Guaranteed Interview Scheme

The Guaranteed Interview Scheme, which launched in January 2022, continued to be applied in appropriate external NICS recruitment competitions (at any grade and any discipline). A review of the scheme also commenced in 2023.

International Job Shadow Day

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Since 2018, the NICS has participated annually in International Job Shadow Day (IJSJ which offers work experience to disabled people). In 2022, 13 work placement opportunities were facilitated under the initiative. IJSJ is an opportunity to celebrate the valuable contribution that disabled people make to our workforce and economy, and to promote inclusion in the workplace for people with disabilities.

Harkin Summit

In June 2022, the Northern Ireland Executive, in partnership with the Harkin Institute, hosted the Harkin International Summit 2022. The event brought together leaders and activists across Business, Government, Philanthropy, the third and voluntary sector, and academia to highlight and address disability employment issues, showcase best practice, build relationships and challenge for change. DoF represented the NICS as an employer and supported the summit to promote its commitment to disability inclusion.

NICS Disability Champion/Disability Working Group/Autism Working Group

The People and Organisational Development team provides support to the NICS Disability Champion in their role as Chair of the Disability Working Group, which is a consultative group that promotes disability inclusion across the NICS. The group comprises members of the NICS Disability Staff Network, representatives from the disability sector and NIPSA and a number of departmental colleagues responsible for disability public policy.

The Disability Champion also chairs the NICS Autism Working Group whose overall aim is to help NICS autistic staff as well as those who are parents/carers of autistic individuals to deliver actions to raise awareness and understanding. In May 2022, the e-learning package *'Supporting Autistic People: an introduction'* (which was developed in conjunction with people with lived experience), was launched and in March 2023 Autism Acceptance Week was celebrated.

Disability Staff Network (DSN)

The Disability Staff Network provides an opportunity for colleagues to come together to share experiences, information, support and learning; to promote, celebrate and champion disability diversity and to provide a voice to disabled colleagues that will enhance their working lives, and contribute to a work environment where everyone feels supported and valued.

Since its formation in November 2020, the Disability Staff Network has continued to grow. The network supported the delivery of a programme of disability awareness training delivered by EFDNI and initiatives to mark International Day of Persons with Disabilities (IDPWD) 2022.

People and Organisational Development continues to support the DSN, providing funding to support its development, raise its profile and increase its membership.

LGBTQ+

The NICS is committed to being an LGBTQ+ inclusive employer and data published in 2022 indicated a 1.5 percentage point increase in the number of civil servants who identify as LGBTQ+ rising from 4.2% in 2021 to 5.7% in 2022. The number of applicants for permanent NICS jobs in the most recent reporting period (i.e. recruitment competitions with application closing date in 2021) who identified as LGBTQ+ also rose, from 6.4% to 7.6%.

Pride

The NICS celebrated Pride season 2022 through a series of internal and external communications and events, and participation in the Belfast Pride provided a valuable outreach opportunity for the NICS.

Stonewall Diversity Champions Programme/Workplace Equality Index

The NICS renewed its membership to the Stonewall Diversity Champions Programme and made a submission to the Stonewall Workplace Equality Index (WEI) in 2022 to externally benchmark its practices to ensure that they are LGBTQ+ inclusive. The NICS was awarded the Stonewall Silver Employer award as a reflection of progress and commitment to LGBTQ+ inclusion as part of the WEI.

NICS LGBTQ+ Staff Network

The NICS has a designated LGBTQ+ Champion whose role is to encourage a positive and LGBTQ+ inclusive workplace across the NICS. To raise awareness and understanding across the organisation, the Champion works closely with the LGBTQ+ Staff Network to deliver a series of events, communications and initiatives focusing on relevant health, wellbeing and lived experiences of colleagues.

People and Organisational Development continues to support the LGBTQ+ Staff Network, providing funding to support its development, raise its profile and increase its membership.

Gender

The NICS has implemented and continues to develop actions to support gender diversity; to seek to remove barriers to female progression; and to promote equal representation at every level of the NICS. By way of example, female representation across the NICS on 1st January 2023 was 50.1%, up from 47.9% in 2000 (closely matching wider society where women make up 49.1% of the economically active population).

Female representation at senior levels (i.e., Grade 5 and above) continues to improve. At 1st January 2023 it was 42.8% compared to 11.3% in 2000. By way of example, during the majority of the reporting period the representation on the DoF Board at Executive

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Director level, was 45.5% female (5 of 11), with the Board also incorporating 33.3% female Non-Executive Board Members (1 of 3).

The NICS delivered a number of initiatives to support gender diversity including events to celebrate International Men's Day and International Women's Day. The NICS also, for the first time, celebrated World Menopause Month.

The NICS Women's Network aims to promote a diverse and inclusive NICS with equal representation of women at every level of the organisation.

The Women's Network continues to grow and played a key role in the development of the menopause policy which was launched as part of International Women's Day 2022. The network delivered a range of virtual and in person events including a "Menopause Café" and virtual sessions with male and female seniors focusing on career progression and gender diversity.

People and Organisational Development continues to provide an annual budget to support the running of the Women's Network, raise its profile and increase its membership.

Diversity Mark

The NICS is a founding member of Diversity Mark NI which is the awarding body in the UK and Ireland for the Diversity Mark Accreditation. This accreditation recognises an organisation's commitment to diversity and inclusion, initially focussing on gender diversity. The Diversity Mark requires signatories to undergo an ongoing annual independent assessment to demonstrate the required standard of commitment to progressing diversity and inclusion and to develop an action plan with targets initially focusing on gender diversity.

In 2022, the NICS prepared its annual submission to Diversity Mark with an application for Silver Diversity Mark. We received notification in March 2023 that the application was successful, with the NICS now one of 18 organisations awarded this status out of Diversity Mark's 160 signatories.

Age

The NICS has an older age profile than the comparator economically active population aged 16- 64 years. In particular, at January 2023, the proportion of NICS staff aged 50 or over (42.4% of NICS staff) is just over one and a half times that of the economically active population (25.7%).

Pensions

During 2021-22 Pensions Division progressed a policy response to promote age equality and remove age discrimination in NI public service pension schemes as a consequence

of the ‘McCloud’ judgement. This judgement found that the transitional protections introduced by the UK Government alongside 2015 reformed public service pension schemes had discriminated against younger members in some schemes. Since the last progress report, Pensions Division has now progressed the legislation required to give effect to its policy commitments to age equality in response to the judgement. The NI Assembly has agreed 2 legislative consent motions for the remedy to address this age discrimination, which is contained in the provisions of the [Public Service Pensions and Judicial Offices Act 2022](#), to extend for devolved public service pension schemes in Northern Ireland. As a consequence of this legislation, since 1 April 2022 all public service pension scheme members are now members of the 2015 reformed schemes only and the previous age-related criteria for transitional protection has been removed. In addition, from 1 October 2023 all those who have been affected by the discrimination since the introduction of transitional protections on 1 April 2015 up until their removal at 1 April 2022 will now also be entitled to a choice at the point of retirement about how their pensionable service accrued within that period is calculated, with reference to the new requirements of the Public Service Pensions and Judicial Offices Act 2022, thus ensuring equal treatment is applied for all scheme members, regardless of age.

Race and ethnicity

Excluding from the analyses those cases where data on ethnicity was missing (2,261 staff, or 9.3% of NICS staff), at 1 January 2023 0.5% (120 staff) of NICS staff were from an ethnic minority (including members of mixed ethnic groups and the Irish Travelling Community). The proportion of NICS staff from an ethnic minority is 2.4 percentage points lower than from the economically active population (2.9%).

Belfast Mela

In summer 2022, a number of NICS departments, including DoF as Friends of Mela, once again supported the annual Belfast Mela. Mela offered an important in-person opportunity for the NICS, as an employer, to engage with minority ethnic communities and the public promoting the wide range of careers available. DoF published communications internally and on social media to celebrate Belfast Mela 2022.

To ensure all NI civil servants are aware of their roles and responsibilities in regard to the Racial Equality Strategy 2015-2025, NICSHR Learning and Development launched a Racial Equality e-learning package in June 2021, developed in conjunction with the Executive Office’s Racial Equality Unit in. The package includes key ideas, awareness and practical strategies for racial equality that can be incorporated into daily actions, policy decisions and communications.

Race and Ethnicity Network

The Race and Ethnicity network has continued to develop since it was established in August 2020. The network, supports colleagues from minority ethnic backgrounds, ensuring their uniqueness and individuality are valued and respected. The network is

also a platform to share experiences, raise concerns and share solutions where issues have been overcome.

The Race and Ethnicity Network continues to build its presence across the NICS and in 2022 launched a new online staff network page, accessible to all colleagues providing information on latest events, personal stories and a “Culture Corner”, which features recommended cultural books, podcasts and recipes. The network also delivered a programme of events and communication including a series of webinars to mark Black History Month 2022 and 12 virtual cultural competence awareness webinars.

People and Organisational Development continues to support the Race and Ethnicity staff Network, providing funding to support its development, raise its profile and increase its membership.

3. Departmental focussed

DoF Diversity Network

The DoF Diversity Network continues to promote diversity and inclusion across the Department and supporting specific location or topic related groups. This year DoF was represented at MELA which again had a large representation from the various DoF business areas; see later in this progress report. DoF also hosted all those from NICS taking part in PRIDE march and has signed up to the SistersIN mentoring programme. The network continues to consider where it can fill gaps in the work being undertaken by others such as NICSHR or specific DoF groups such as the Goodwood House Mental Health Group (see below).

Goodwood House Mental Health Group

The Goodwood House quiet room remains available for staff who are working in the office. It has been renamed “Hazy’s Haven” following the sad passing of Hazlette Benson – one of the Goodwood House Mental Health Groups founding members.

LPS Mental Health Hub

LPS continues to maintain a Mental Health Hub on its Intranet site with the main aim being to promote the message “It’s ok to talk”. The hub lists the Mental Health First Aiders and Health & Safety representatives in LPS locations. The hub also holds contact details for support services available within the NICS and contact routes for various help services. Posters with this information are displayed in all LPS offices.

4. NICS Race and Ethnicity Champion Update

In November 2022, the DoF Racial Equality Champion and NICS Race and Ethnicity Champion (one individual) joined the Executive Office (TEO) to take up role of Head of

Racial Equality Delivery Team, supporting colleagues on the implementation of the priorities from the Racial Equality Strategy 2015-2025 and aid the development of future policies. This has allowed more consistent messaging across NICS on race and ethnicity issues, and a co-ordinated approach to activities. Some of the activity highlights for 2022-23 are:

Internal Outreach – within NICS

- Previous DoF Racial Equality Champion updates to staff now upgraded to NICS Race and Ethnicity Champion updates to make communication and messages accessible for all NICS staff.
- Supported NICS HR Equality, Diversity and Inclusion team on its development of new Equality, Diversity and Inclusion eLearning bundle (e.g., Introduction to Diversity and Inclusion, as well as Equality and Diversity Essentials), which was launched in May 2023. During development, participated in a video on the theme of race and ethnicity used to support learning by staff.
- On 11th May 2022, NICS Race and Ethnicity Network collaborated with NICS LGBTQ+ Network, NICS Disability Network and NICS Women's Network, to mark National Day for Staff Networks, highlighting that the importance of staff networks cannot be underestimated in promoting inclusion, encouraging active allyship, and providing a sense of belonging and support for colleagues, where long-lasting friendships and bonds can be created.
- In May 2022, along with NICS Disability Champion, met with NICS Student Network to share their respective thematic work and to participate in a Q&A session.
- In October 2022, NICS Race and Ethnicity Network collaborated with NICS LGBTQ+ Network, NICS Disability Network and NICS Women's Network, to deliver a virtual fireside chat session aimed to celebrate inclusion and raise awareness of each of the four staff networks.
- To mark Zero Discrimination Day Event on 1st March 2023, NICS Race and Ethnicity Network collaborated with NICS Student Network, NICS LGBTQ+ Network, NICS Disability Network and NICS Women's Network to host a NICS event which informed attendees about Zero Discrimination Day. The event also informed attendees of what discrimination is and the many forms it can take, including discussion. Attendees also got to learn more about each NICS staff network.
- Delivered, in partnership with the minority ethnic sector, staff learning and development opportunities, including webinars for Black History Month (October) and Cultural Competence webinars (February to May), which were promoted and open to both NICS and UK Civil Service colleagues to register for attending.
- Wrote a NICS wide article to mark International Day for the Elimination of Racial Discrimination (21st March 2023).

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- Invited the Executive Office (TEO) Racial Equality Legislation Team, in April 2023, to speak at a public consultation event relating to the review of the Race Relations (NI) Order 1997 and introduction of Ethnic Equality Monitoring.

External Outreach – outside NICS

- Regular engagement with the Racial Equality Subgroup, most recently in January 2023.
- Continued outreach and engagement via social media - twitter account (@alfiecbwong). For example, the importance of understanding minority ethnic communities when using NI Census 2021 statistics.
- Raised concerns, including with Equality Commission for Northern Ireland, regarding misuse and misinformation of diversity data (in particular by media). Misuse of Ethnicity data would underestimate impact of decisions (e.g., funding, budget cuts, planning) when comes to supporting minority ethnic communities, if presence and visibility of already under-represented groups are diminished by human error.
- Represent NICS on Belfast Migrant Forum (chaired by Belfast City Council), Intercommunity Interest Forum (chaired by Bryson Intercultural) and Consultative Forum on Equality (chaired by NIHE).
- Attend regular Civil Service Race Forum meetings involving leads from all four UK nations.
- Member of the British National (Overseas) Advisory Group, supporting Northern Ireland Strategic Migration Partnership (NISMP), in respect of immigration scheme devised by the UK Government, for people from Hong Kong who are British Nationals (Overseas).
- Following the successful format of Black History Month, NICS Race and Ethnicity Champion and Network collaborated with the minority ethnic sector to deliver further learning and development opportunities to listen, to ask, to share and to learn; within these safe spaces for open inclusive conversation, civil servants across the four nations heard from our Indian, Chinese, Polish, Mexican and South American communities through a series of NICS Cultural Competence webinars delivered by lived experience speakers.
- Supported the Executive Office (TEO) colleagues with their launch in March 2023 of a public consultation on the review of the Race Relations (NI) Order 1997.
- Attended various events including:
 - Countering anti-ESEA racism series: What is Sinophobia?

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- Participated in QUB research on experiences of education among minority ethnic groups in Northern Ireland.
- ESEA Heritage Month - DLUCH's Hong Kongers BNO (Welcome) Programme & On Your Side Hate Crime Reporting Service.
- National Inclusion Week.
- Launch of the report commissioned by Belfast City Council with their partners in the Belfast Health and Social Care Trust and the Public Health Agency, that looks at the lived experience of people from minority ethnic backgrounds in Belfast.
- Launch of QUB Hearing Our Needs Research exploring mental health and emotional well-being needs of minority ethnic communities in NI.

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).

Please see appended S75 action plan with progress/examples identified.

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? (tick one box only)

Yes

No (go to Q.4)

Not applicable (go to Q.4)

Please provide any details and examples:

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:

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

As a result of the organisation's screening of a policy (please give details):

As a result of what was identified through the EQIA and consultation exercise (please give details):

- As a result of analysis from monitoring the impact (*please give details*):

- As a result of changes to access to information and services (*please specify and give details*):

- Other (*please specify and give details*):

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? (*tick one box only*)
- Yes, organisation wide
 - Yes, some departments/jobs
 - No, this is not an Equality Scheme commitment
 - No, this is scheduled for later in the Equality Scheme, or has already been done
 - Not applicable

Please provide any details and examples:

Job descriptions contain Section 75 statutory duties relative to the official's responsibility. For example, Central Support Team staff job descriptions contain objectives relative to their role in providing advice and guidance and promoting equality across the Department.

- 5 Were the Section 75 statutory duties integrated within performance plans during the 2022-23 reporting period? (*tick one box only*)
- Yes, organisation wide
 - Yes, some departments/jobs
 - No, this is not an Equality Scheme commitment
 - No, this is scheduled for later in the Equality Scheme, or has already been done
 - Not applicable

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Please provide any details and examples:

Under the NICS Performance Management Framework, Personal Performance Agreements contain targets and objectives which include statutory obligations relative to the official's responsibility. For example, specific Central Support Team staff PPAs contain objectives relative to their role in providing advice and guidance and promoting equality across the department.

In addition to ensure senior leaders demonstrate and are accountable for visible inclusive leadership and behaviours, a new diversity and inclusion related performance objective for Permanent Secretaries was introduced in 2022.

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? (*tick all that apply*)

- Yes, through the work to prepare or develop the new corporate plan
- Yes, through organisation wide annual business planning
- Yes, in some departments/jobs
- No, these are already mainstreamed through the organisation's ongoing corporate plan
- No, the organisation's planning cycle does not coincide with this 2022-23 report
- Not applicable

Please provide any details and examples:

The Department has annual Business Plans that provide detail on priority areas, objectives and associated targets.

Equality action plans/measures

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

| | | | | | |
|--------------------|-----------|------------------|-----------|----------------------|--|
| Actions completed: | See below | Actions ongoing: | See below | Actions to commence: | |
|--------------------|-----------|------------------|-----------|----------------------|--|

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

Due to the 'live' nature of the action plan, although some actions/activities are marked complete, they sometimes continue into other years i.e. some actions have been completed since its conception in 2018, with others ongoing as annual activities for the duration of the plan or spanning 2 or more years.

PART A

- 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*):

N/A. The Section 75 Action Plan 2018-23 was published in October 2018 following consultation. The plans are due for renewal later in 2023.

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

- Continuing action(s), to progress the next stage addressing the known inequality
- Action(s) to address the known inequality in a different way
- Action(s) to address newly identified inequalities/recently prioritised inequalities
- Measures to address a prioritised inequality have been completed

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: (*tick one box only*)

- All the time Sometimes Never

- 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:

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

- Face to face meetings
- Focus groups
- Written documents with the opportunity to comment in writing
- Questionnaires
- Information/notification by email with an opportunity to opt in/out of the consultation
- Internet discussions

PART A

- Telephone consultations
- Other (*please specify*):

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:

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

- Yes No Not applicable

Please provide any details and examples:

During and following the recent review of our Equality Scheme, awareness raising activity commenced and is ongoing e.g. Intranet articles.

14 Was the consultation list reviewed during the 2022-23 reporting period? (*tick one box only*)

- Yes No Not applicable – no commitment to review

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

[\[https://www.finance-ni.gov.uk/publications/type/impactassessments\]](https://www.finance-ni.gov.uk/publications/type/impactassessments)

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

| |
|----|
| 10 |
|----|

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

| | |
|--|--|
| | Policy consultations conducted with screening assessment presented. |
| | Policy consultations conducted with an equality impact assessment (EQIA) presented. |
| | Consultations for an EQIA alone. |

PART A

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

None.

- 18** Were any screening decisions (or equivalent initial assessments of relevance) reviewed following concerns raised by consultees? *(tick one box only)*

Yes No concerns were raised No Not applicable

Please provide any details and examples:

All feedback received from our equality consultees, including the Commission, is considered and appropriate amendments to the screening form completed. No decisions though were affected by those considerations.

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? *(tick one box only)*

Yes No Not applicable

Please provide any details and examples:

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? *(tick one box only)*

Yes No, already taken place
 No, scheduled to take place at a later date Not applicable

Please provide any details:

- 21** In analysing monitoring information gathered, was any action taken to change/review any policies? *(tick one box only)*

Yes No Not applicable

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Please provide any details and examples:

- 22** Please provide any details or examples of where the monitoring of policies, during the 2022-23 reporting period, has shown changes to differential/adverse impacts previously assessed:

N/A – ongoing monitoring of policies has not revealed any adverse impacts.

- 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:

NISRA Equality Statistics for the NICS: <https://www.nisra.gov.uk/publications/equality-statistics-northern-ireland-civil-service-2022>

https://www.nisra.gov.uk/system/files/statistics/NICS-Equality-Statistics-2023-Updated_2.pdf

Equality data from Census 2021 were published as part of the main statistics releases which took place in September 2022, December 2022 and March 2023. <https://www.nisra.gov.uk/statistics/2021-census/results/main-statistics>

A published Flexible Table Builder will allow users to create their own tables with multiple equality variables and at a variety of available geographies. NISRA consulted with the equality commission as well as a range of stakeholders in developing the outputs for Census 2021 and specifically around outputs in relation to equality and diversity.

Dr David Marshall of Northern Ireland Census Office attended and presented at the House of Commons Committee alongside Geraldine McGahey, Chief Commissioner of Equality Commission for Northern Ireland. This covered the Census in general as well as more specifically around how the census content and processes were developed with equality of access at the centre and how outputs would provide significant equality data for the whole of Northern Ireland.

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.

Staff in the Department undertook the following training provided by NICSHR Learning and Development during 2022-23:

| Course | Numbers of staff completed |
|--------|----------------------------|
|--------|----------------------------|

PART A

| | |
|--|-----|
| Buy Social (e-learning) | 0 |
| Disability Awareness for Frontline Staff (e-learning) | 7 |
| Domestic Abuse (e-learning) | 63 |
| Introduction to Human Rights (e-learning) | 5 |
| Introduction to Section 75 (e-learning) | 22 |
| Mental Health Awareness for Managers Managing Remote Teams (Webinar) | 9 |
| Mental Health Awareness for Staff Working at Home (Webinar) | 17 |
| *Positive Mental Health Toolkit for Line Managers (e-learning) | 4 |
| *Positive Mental Health Toolkit for Staff (e-learning) | 16 |
| Recruitment and Selection – Standards and Skills (Webinar) | 101 |
| Recruitment & Selection: Refresher Training for SCS (Webinar) | 6 |
| Scoring Social Value - Construction Contract (Webinar) | 5 |
| Scoring Social Value - Services and ICT Contract (Webinar) | 29 |
| Supporting Vulnerable People (e-learning) | 6 |
| Unconscious Bias (e-learning) | 57 |
| Supporting Autistic People (e-Learning) | 35 |
| Racial Equality NICS (e-Learning.) | 10 |

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:

Some qualitative feedback received on a number of the training programmes is:

Mental Health Awareness for Managers Managing Remote Teams (Webinar)

- A really worthwhile and valuable course that should be mandatory! Many thanks

PART A

- Experienced trainer who was able to modify content based on attendees areas of interest
- Very relevant & useful - should be mandatory for all Managers with staff

Mental Health Awareness for Staff Working at Home (Webinar)

- Great course which I have recommended to my colleagues, so I hope more of these are being planned. Some excellent tips provided!
- Really enjoyed this course and came away with some useful tips for managing my own stress!
- This was a good overview course with useful exercises to put into practice to cope during these times . I hope elements of it could be expanded upon in future content/courses (managing anxiety/depression, etc.)

Recruitment and Selection – Standards and Skills (Webinar)

- Good course and good skills and knowledge gained to be able to sit on forthcoming boards as a panel member. Good trainer.
- I found the course to be very helpful.

Recruitment & Selection: Refresher Training for SCS (Webinar)

- Perfectly Pitched
- Really useful refresher and well delivered. Very professional.

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**:

Complaints (Model Equality Scheme Chapter 8)

27 How many complaints **in relation to the Equality Scheme** have been received during 2022-23?

Insert number here:

| |
|---|
| 2 |
|---|

Please provide any details of each complaint raised and outcome:

1. Ex-NICS staff member alleged his Dignity at Work complaint was not handled in a manner consistent with our Equality Scheme. This was not accepted, subsequently the individual made a complaint to ECNI, which was rejected (ref SDI/417/22).
2. Current NICS staff member alleged changes to recruitment competition processes due to Covid did not comply with our Equality Scheme. This was not accepted, subsequently the individual made a complaint to ECNI, which was rejected (ref SDI/402/22).

Section 3: Looking Forward

PART A

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

A statutory 5-year review was completed in this 2022/23 reporting period, with the next review scheduled for 2026/27.

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)*

We will continue to focus on improvements to equality screening, the consideration and inclusion of relevant data, and implement any recommendations arising from the review of our Equality Scheme.

We will continue to review our processes relating to the NI Budget and provide opportunity for decision makers to review the equality implications in line with our Equality Scheme.

30 In relation to the advice and services that the Commission offers, what **equality and good relations priorities** are anticipated over the next (2023-24) reporting period? *(please tick any that apply)*

- Employment
- Goods, facilities and services
- Legislative changes
- Organisational changes/ new functions
- Nothing specific, more of the same
- Other (please state):

DoF Section 75 Action Plan 2018-23: Update on Progress during 2022/23

Policy Area: Human Resource Management

Strategic Objectives:

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

| Inequality | Action | Performance Outcome | Timescale | 2022/23 Update |
|---|---|--|---|--|
| Under-representation of Protestants in General Service administrative and junior management grades and of Protestants and Catholics in some grades in the Professional and Specialist groups in the NICS compared to the NI labour market (Religious belief) . | Use of positive action advertising (PAA) statements to encourage applications from under-represented groups. The NICS will develop and implement a NICS wide outreach plan, which will include a range of affirmative actions such as PAA and targeted outreach with the education sector and appropriate professional bodies as appropriate. | Representation of both communities in line with what would be expected based on the relevant comparator, through the Review of Fair Participation in the NICS (the “Article 55 Review”). | Continuous until the next review (due for publication 2023) | <p>ONGOING</p> <p>The NICS continues to meet its statutory obligations under the Fair Employment and Treatment Order (1998) by submitting an annual Fair Employment Monitoring Return. In addition, it continues to analyse recruitment competitions to monitor the profile of applications and the progress of all equality groups through each recruitment process.</p> <p>The latest workforce equality data indicates that the community background composition of the NICS is similar to that of its comparator population</p> <p>(NICS-Equality-Statistics-2023-Updated_2.pdf) nisra.gov.uk</p> |

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| Inequality | Action | Performance Outcome | Timescale | 2022/23 Update |
|--|---|--|--|---|
| | | | | <p>Preparation has commenced for the next Article 55 Review which is due to be submitted to ECNI in 2023.</p> <p>Throughout 2022/23 work continued to promote the range of career opportunities available in the NICS and encourage the widest applicant pool by using a mix of advertising, communications and engagement and outreach activity Further details are available in the Annual Recruitment Report Northern Ireland Civil Service Recruitment Report 2022 (nigov.net)</p> |
| <p>Under-representation of males/females in some occupational groups/grade levels in the NICS compared to the NI labour market (Men and women generally).</p> | <p>Use of positive action advertising statements to encourage applications from under-represented group.</p> <p>The NICS will develop and implement a NICS wide outreach plan, which will include a</p> | <p>Representation of each gender in line with what would be expected based on the relevant comparator, through the Review of Gender in the NICS.</p> | <p>Continuous until the next review due for publication (2023)</p> | <p>ONGOING</p> <p>The NICS continues to meet its statutory obligations under the Fair Employment and Treatment Order (1998) by submitting an annual Fair Employment Monitoring Return. In addition, it continues to analyse recruitment competitions to monitor the profile of applications and the progress of all equality groups through each recruitment process.</p> |

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| Inequality | Action | Performance Outcome | Timescale | 2022/23 Update |
|------------|--|---------------------|-----------|---|
| | <p>range of positive actions such as PAA and targeted outreach with the education sector and appropriate professional bodies as appropriate.</p> | | | <p>The latest workforce equality data indicates that the gender composition of the NICS closely matches that of its comparator population (NICS-Equality-Statistics-2023-Updated 2.pdf (nisra.gov.uk))</p> <p>Throughout 2022/23 work continued to promote the range of career opportunities available in the NICS and encourage the widest applicant pool by using a mix of advertising, communications and engagement and outreach activity Further details are available in the Annual Recruitment Report Northern Ireland Civil Service Recruitment Report 2022 (nigov.net)</p> <p>In the reporting period, the NICS made a submission to Diversity Mark as part of its commitment to externally benchmark its employment practices. As part of the accreditation, the NICS has as committed to an annual independent assessment and development of an action plan for the</p> |

PART A

| Inequality | Action | Performance Outcome | Timescale | 2022/23 Update |
|---|---|---|-----------|--|
| | | | | forthcoming year in terms of gender balance/diversity. |
| Under-representation of staff from minority ethnic backgrounds. | <p>The NICS will develop and implement a NICS wide outreach plan to attract under-represented groups.</p> <p>The DoF Racial Equality Champion (REC) will engage with business areas to ensure that all policies and operational practices of the Department and its agency take account of the aims and principles of the Racial Equality Strategy 2015-25. REC will also continue to engage externally, outside DoF, with Racial</p> | Representation in line with what would be expected through the annual review of the NICS workforce composition. | Ongoing | <p>ONGOING</p> <p>The NICS continues to analyse recruitment competitions to monitor the profile of applications and the progress of all equality groups through the recruitment process.</p> <p>Throughout 2022/23 work continued to promote the range of career opportunities available in the NICS and encourage the widest applicant pool by using a mix of advertising, communications and engagement and outreach activity Further details are available in the Annual Recruitment Report Northern Ireland Civil Service Recruitment Report 2022 (nigov.net)</p> <p>COMPLETE</p> <p>REC established a Departmental Racial Equality Network in August 2020 to promote awareness/share good practice. Feedback from the Racial Equality round-table event</p> |

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| Inequality | Action | Performance Outcome | Timescale | 2022/23 Update |
|--|--|---|---------------------------------|---|
| | Equality Subgroup (chaired by TEO), Belfast Migrant Forum (chaired by Belfast City Council) and Intercultural Interest Forum (chaired by Bryson Intercultural), to assist with any consultation. | | | shared with Network and Departmental Board to progress (including feedback shared with People and OD for consideration and incorporation into current and planned work programme). |
| Support for transitioning staff (Men and women generally). | Develop transgender guidance for managers and staff. | Transgender guidance in place to ensure managers are aware of how to appropriately support transitioning staff and that staff are aware of the support they can expect. | By 31 st March 2019. | COMPLETE NICS Trans Policy and Transitioning at Work Guide launched in March 2019. HOCS, together with a colleague from NICS LGBT Staff Network and a Stonewall representative took part in a video to launch the Policy and Guide. |
| Data Gaps on Section 75 profile of NICS workforce (Racial group; Persons with a disability; Persons with | Obtain data from staff on ethnicity, disability, dependents and sexual orientation. | Increase in data held on HRConnect for existing staff in relation to ethnicity, disability, dependents | Ongoing | ONGOING The NICS Employee Services Portal provides functionality for NICS staff to update their disability, dependents and sexual orientation information. |

PART A

| Inequality | Action | Performance Outcome | Timescale | 2022/23 Update |
|---|---|---|-----------|---|
| dependents; Sexual orientation). | | and sexual orientation. | | <p>In collaboration with NICS staff networks, DoF has published global articles encouraging existing staff to update equal opportunities monitoring information. Work is ongoing to improve the data completion rates.</p> <p>The latest annual “Northern Ireland Civil Service Equality Statistics” report 2023 reflects a decrease in the data missing for NICS staff in respect of sexual orientation, ethnicity and disability. NICS-Equality-Statistics-2023-Updated 2.pdf (nisra.gov.uk)</p> |
| Job opportunities for the long-term unemployed and those leaving education (All S75 categories). | The recruitment agency under Lots 1 and 2 (administration roles) and 6 (ancillary and industrial roles) of the new agency worker’s contract is required to recruit a minimum of 11.25% of new personnel who are long term | 11.25% of AA and AO job roles recruited from the long-term unemployed and | Ongoing | <p>ONGOING</p> <p>From 1st April 2022 - 31st March 2023, 209 AAs and AOs were placed on assignment from the long-term unemployed and those leaving the education sectors. Total AAs and AOs placed from April 2022 - 31st March 2023 was 1812. The recruitment agency achieved 11.52 %.</p> <p>The Economic Inactivity rate was 26.3% in Oct - Dec 2022, a decrease over both the quarter</p> |

PART A

| Inequality | Action | Performance Outcome | Timescale | 2022/23 Update |
|---|---|---|----------------|--|
| | <p>unemployed or have left education in an Administrative Assistant (AA), Administrative Officer (AO) or analogous role, as per the conditions of the contract.</p> | <p>those leaving education.</p> | | <p>and the year. In addition, the overall unemployment percentage in Northern Ireland increased very slightly to 2.5% which was back to a pre pandemic level however, this has since decreased again back to 2.4%</p> <p>To assist in this area the recruitment agency has continued to work with their contacts in the local unemployment offices etc. to signpost those looking for work, they have been working closely with the DFC, Universal Credit Services where they can signpost claimants to vacancies using their journal function in an attempt to assist those who are long term unemployed back into the workforce.</p> <p>The recruitment agency is attending job fairs again that are now taking place post COVID restrictions to target unemployed and those in/leaving education.</p> |
| <p>Job opportunities for those who have a disability; who are a</p> | <p>The recruitment agency under Lots 1 and 2 (administration roles)</p> | <p>3.75% of AA and AO job roles recruited from those who have</p> | <p>Ongoing</p> | <p>From 1st April 2022 - 31st March 2023, 18 AAs and AOs from the priority groups were placed on assignment.</p> |

PART A

| Inequality | Action | Performance Outcome | Timescale | 2022/23 Update |
|--|---|---|------------------|--|
| <p>looked after child/care leaver; and who are from a minority ethnic background</p> | <p>and 6 (ancillary and industrial roles) of the new agency worker’s contract is required to recruit a minimum of 3.75% of new personnel who have a disability; who are a looked after child/care leaver; or who are from a minority ethnic background in an Administrative Assistant (AA), Administrative Officer (AO) or analogous role, as per the conditions of the contract.</p> | <p>a disability; who are a looked after child/care leaver; and who are from a BAME community.</p> | | <p>Total AAs and AOs placed from 1st April 2022 was 1812. During 2022/23, 0.99% of the target was achieved.</p> <p>The recruitment agency is communicating with various disability support groups who have been assisting in promoting the available opportunities, promoting home working opportunities and safer registrations for vulnerable groups.</p> <p>In July 2022, the 15 nine-month placement work placement opportunities for young disabled people (aged 16-24) which commenced in 2021 under the Job Start Scheme pilot within DfC concluded. As a result of an amendment to the Recruitment Code, approved by the Commissioners, nine of the successful participants were made permanent offers of appointment in the NICS, by way of exception to the Merit Principle.</p> |

PART A

Policy Area: Services to the Citizen

Strategic Objective:

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

| Inequality | Action | Performance Outcome | Timescale | 2022/23 Update |
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| <p>Access to Government Services (Age; Persons with a disability).</p> | <p>A range of accessible Digital Inclusion Programme activities and events are promoted annually – however, these were severely impacted due to the Covid-19 situation since 2020/21, with delivery mainly via online mechanisms. They included, Get Online Week and Spring Online Week, and similar initiatives with other external organisations to encourage digital participation such as Safer Internet Day.</p> | <p>Increase in Digital skills and internet usage for those aged 50-64 and 65+.</p> | <p>By 31st March each year.</p> | <p>COMPLETE Previous survey information indicates that internet Use has increased for those age 50-64 and aged 65+ as follows: Age 50-64 2015/16 – 72% 2016/17 – 84% 2017/18 – 75% 2018/19 – 87% Unfortunately, no relevant NI stats have been available since 2019/20, although alternative data sets such as Lloyds Consumer Digital Index indicates that the UK as a whole has shown an increase of approx. 11% in the number of over 60’s going online especially in the 60- 65 age group from 2019. Well in excess of 10,000 Northern Ireland citizens have been reached through Go ON NI</p> |

PART A

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| | <p>Additionally, online training and informational opportunities were provided via our partners at LibrariesNI and Supporting Communities during the year. The Go ON NI programme focuses on the benefits of being online, and brings together all the initiatives, places and tools to help and encourage off-liners to become internet beginners.</p> <p>However, a number of 'in-person' events were possible during 2022/23 as the Team began to implement a new post-Covid outreach programme. Full details are all available at</p> | | | <p>Programmes over the years in liaison with the Libraries NI Network, Supporting Communities and Business in the Community (BITC), as well as including input from the Digital Assist Steering Group partners. All sessions and information were focused on those over age 50 or with a disability. It is estimated that some 2000 citizens have been trained annually through the Go On programme using LibrariesNI online facilities from 2019-2020.</p> <p>A specific Connected Devices project which commenced in 2021 was concluded during 2022. This project successfully enabled over 130 participants who had never previously used the internet to get online via the loan of a tablet device and free data. The majority of participants were from disabled, aged, economically disadvantaged and/or ethnically diverse backgrounds from across NI.</p> |
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| | www.nidirect.gov.uk/go-on | | | |
| | <p>Increased working relationships and working in partnership with a range of organisations represented on the Digital Assist Steering Group, to deliver bespoke training, awareness and information sessions. Continuing working relationships with Age Friendly, Belfast City Council and inroads into other organisations.</p> | <p>Quarterly DASG and ScamwiseNI meetings.</p> | <p>By 31st March each year.</p> | <p>ONGOING</p> <p>Participation in DASG and Scamwise continues.</p> <p>During 2022/23, of many aspects of this work were delivered through Go ON NI liaison with other key organisations as well as physical attendance at a range of informational events.</p> <p>Such events included ‘in person’ sessions at the South Belfast Wellness Fair - Holy Rosary Parish Hall in May 2022 (33 individuals) and Positive Ageing sessions in County Down – October 2022 (90+ individuals). A Lisburn Health and Wellbeing Day attracted 47 participants from mainly Carer and wider health backgrounds.</p> <p>In addition, ethnic minority communities were specifically covered at the hugely successful Belfast Mela (August 2022) as well as the Open Botanic events (Oct 2022) which enabled a digital inclusion outreach to more than 200 individuals.</p> |

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| | | | | <p>Go ON NI participation with Education Authority post-primary school application sessions and Safer Internet Day also resumed during this period at various centres across Northern Ireland and helped assist 60+ parents during the period Jan/Feb 2023.</p> <p>Furthermore, a series of Digital Learning sessions in Lurgan and the Southern Trust area in March 2023 focused on assisting some 24 adults with learning disabilities.</p> |
| | <p>Connectability Programme to continue as part of the DoF Go ON NI programme: specific IT sessions to be delivered for those with a mental or physical disability or to those caring for a disabled person. Provided across ten groups initially on a programme plan.</p> | <p>Evaluation of IT sessions whereby increased Digital Skills enable engagement with government services and financial capability online as required.</p> | <p>By 31st March 2020.</p> | <p>COMPLETE</p> <p>Now subsumed into the wider Go ON NI Programme.</p> |

PART A

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| | <p>Engage with Autism NI on further training/awareness and review signage and communications. Share good practice with other public facing areas of the department.</p> | <p>People with a learning difficulty, Autism or a communication barrier supported in accessing government services.</p> | <p>By 30th June 2019.</p> | <p>COMPLETE</p> <p>Autism NI delivered be-spoke training to NICS HR OHS and Welfare Staff. Further training arranged for Land and Property Services and General Registry Office staff.</p> <p>The Autism (Amendment) Bill passed in March 2022 seeks to strengthen current legislation and places considerable responsibility on all government departments and on the health and social care sector. In response to this, NICS HR Learning and Development Team and DoH worked continued to develop an e-learning package ‘Supporting Autistic People to assist in increasing colleague’s understanding of autism and enable them to provide necessary support within the workplace and in how we develop and deliver our services.</p> <p>2022/23 update - The e-learning package was co-produced with people who have lived experience of autism and launched on 31 May 2022.</p> |
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PART A

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| | Introduce the JAM (Just a Minute) card to the NICS. | | By 31 st March 2019. | COMPLETE Implementation planning began in early 2019. The NICS remains committed to being a JAM (Just a Minute) friendly organisation. In 2022, the NICS renewed its partnership with the NOW Group and a new promotional campaign is underway to complete the training. |
| Accessibility of Stormont Estate (Persons with a disability). | A new inclusive play park built at Stormont Estate. | A play park that is suitable for children of all abilities. | By 30 th June 2019. | COMPLETE Work is complete and the play park opened in June 2019. |
| | A new Changing Places toilet to be built at Stormont Estate. | A provide a Changing Places toilet that will enable people with complex needs to access the facilities they need to enjoy what Stormont Estate has to offer. | By 30 th April 2021 | COMPLETE The facility was opened by the Finance Minister on 26 April 2021. |

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| <p>Take-up of housing benefit, low income rate relief, rate rebate disabled person’s allowance and lone pensioner allowance (Marital Status, Age, Persons with a disability, Persons with dependents).</p> | <p>Outreach activity and updating of literature. The introduction of a ‘digital first’ approach for use by claimants to the new Rate Rebate scheme remains in place, alongside a suite of support options, including telephony for those who may have difficulty interacting with a digital interface, including help and assistance being available at www.nidirect.gov.uk/go-on-ni. This should benefit to customers who have faced difficulties in the past, including those who have found it difficult to access services during normal office opening hours.</p> | <p>Uptake in benefit each year from those vulnerable groups entitled to financial assistance.</p> | <p>By 31st March each year.</p> | <p>COMPLETE</p> <p>Through 2022/2023 networking activities, engagement has taken place with various stakeholders groups such as:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> - Autism NI, - Sunflower ASD Support Group, - NOW Group, - All About Us ASD Group, - Southwest Age Partnership, - Be Safe Be Well Men's Shed, - Older People North West, and - Southern Trust Promoting Wellbeing Division. <p>LPS Outreach Activities during 2022/2023 included attendance at the Balmoral Show from 11th – 14th May 2022, Belfast Mela 28th August 2022, a Positive Aging Event held by Lisburn & Castlereagh City Council and Ards & North Down Councils and the Antrim & Newtownabbey Senior Citizens Forum in October / November 2022 and a Libraries NI 'Give it a Go' Month in February 2023</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • These networking activities were used to promote a wide variety of LPS Rate Reliefs. • The number of applications for Disabled Persons Allowance (DPA) and Lone |
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| | | | | <p>Pensioner Allowance (LPA) continues to increase since the appointment of a dedicated LPS Outreach Manager in 2018. Figures for 2022-2023 indicate an increase of 21% in DPA applications and an increase of 24% in LPA figures.</p> |
| <p>Law in NI treats unmarried fathers differently from married and unmarried mothers (Marital Status).</p> | <p>Consider amendments to current laws.</p> | <p>Take forward recommendations on parent/child contact emerging from The Lord Chief Justice Review which was published in September 2017.</p> | <p>TBC</p> | <p>ONGOING</p> <p>Further work will be considered in the context of the work of the shadow Family Justice Board and taking account of existing legislative and other resource priorities.</p> |

DoF Disability Action Plan 2018-23: Update on Progress during 2022/23

| Measure | Performance Indicators/Target | Timescale | Intended Outcome | Responsibility | 2022/23 Update |
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| Awareness Raising and Training | | | | | |
| DoF Diversity Network to work with people with disabilities to raise awareness of disability e.g. showcase and promote the positive contribution of DoF staff with disabilities to the department. | Promotion articles/activities. Staff survey results. | 31 st March each year. | Promotion of positive attitudes towards people with a disability within the department. | DoF Diversity Network. | Ongoing outreach via multiple channels. |
| NICS Diversity Training Unconscious bias (e-learning) training to be completed by all staff but is mandatory for all new managers (EO2 and analogous and above). | Number of new staff trained. | Priority 1 training – within 0-4 months of appointment. | All new staff to know about the NICS Equality, Diversity and Inclusion policy and their responsibilities, including the disability duties. | Line managers and NICS HR | ONGOING The DoF Induction process includes Equality, Diversity and Inclusion. There is a NICS Online Induction package on the LInKS Learning Management System that automatically updates the learner's training records when this package has been completed. L&D Update 2022-2023 |

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| | | | | | <p>Learning products developed and released by NICSHR in 2022-2023 includes:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Supporting Autistic People eLearning replaced Autism Spectrum Disorder eLearning in 2022. • Racial Equality NICS eLearning. <p>Update 2022/23: To raise the profile of diversity and inclusion across the organisation, a new Diversity and Inclusion Hub and diversity section of the NICS recruitment website was launched in 2022. Work also progressed to develop a new Equality, Diversity and Inclusion Learning bundle which will include two new mandatory modules to be launched in May 2023.</p> <p>People and Organisational Development collaborated</p> |
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| | | | | | with the NICS Disability Staff Network and Employers for Disability NI (EFDNI) to deliver a comprehensive programme of disability awareness training to staff during 2022/23. |
| Revise Form and Guidance on Reasonable Adjustments | New Form and Guidance available to staff. | By 31 st March 2019. | Clearer process and guidance for staff on the reasonable adjustments process. | People and Organisational Development | COMPLETE Guidance issued to staff in September 2018 by NICS Disability Champion on passporting of reasonable adjustments. Update 2022/23 – a review of the form and guidance will be undertaken in 2023/24 as part of commitment to continuous improvement. |
| Front-line staff to be trained to deal with customers with a disability through completion of the following e-learning courses: | Number of staff trained. Customer surveys/feedback. | Priority 1 training (0-4 months) Complaints dealt with within customer | Improved service for customers with disabilities. | Line managers and customer service teams. | ONGOING NICS agreed to become JAM Card friendly and implementation planning began early 2019 with staff beginning training April 2019. |

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| <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Disability Awareness for front-line staff; • Autism Spectrum Disorder (ASD) awareness; • Supporting Vulnerable People <p>Induction for front-line staff to include 'Every Customer Counts'.</p> | | <p>service standards timescales.</p> <p>Customer surveys carried out every year.</p> | | <p>2022/23 update - The NICS remains committed to being a JAM (Just a Minute) friendly organisation. The NICS renewed its partnership with the NOW Group in 2022 and a new promotional campaign to encourage all colleagues to complete the training is ongoing.</p> <p>Training rolled out to support Every Customer Counts. Numbers trained are detailed at Question 24.</p> <p>Mandatory e-learning courses for disability awareness, autism awareness and supporting vulnerable people were rolled out to all LPS Revenue & Benefits staff in November 2018.</p> <p>Local inductions updated to include 'Every Customer Counts'.</p> |
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| <p>a wide range of disability organisations.</p> | <p>disability organisations.</p> <p>Feedback from participants and hosting managers.</p> | | <p>with a disability within the Department.</p> | <p>suspended until October 2022.</p> <p>People and Organisational Development co-ordinated the NICS' participation in the annual International Job Shadow Day (IJSJ) initiative which offered work experience opportunities to disabled people over a three-month period in late 2022.</p> <p>In July 2022, the 15 nine-month placement work placement opportunities for young disabled people (aged 16-24) under the Job Start Scheme pilot concluded. As a result of an amendment to the Recruitment Code, approved by the Commissioners, nine of the successful participants were made permanent offers of appointment in the NICS, by</p> |
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| | | | | | way of exception to the Merit Principle. |
| Review and implement the NICS Policy on reasonable adjustments in the recruitment and selection process in collaboration with people with a disability. | Monitoring information on applications from people with a disability and feedback on the reasonable adjustment process. | 31 st March 2019. | NICS' recruitment and selection procedures to provide equality of opportunity to people with disabilities so that they are encouraged to apply and compete for employment opportunities. | People and Organisational Development. | COMPLETE The review of this policy is now complete and the new version was uploaded onto the NICS Recruitment website on 19/3/19. 2022/23 update – as part of our commitment to continuous improvement a review will be taken forward in 2023/24. |
| Participation and Engagement | | | | | |
| Development of a NICS-wide Mental Health Strategy. | 1. Establish Mental Health forum (internal partners) to connect all NICS mental health activities. 2. Connected links developed with external partners (Inspire/Charity for | 31 st March 2023. | NICS has a cohesive approach to the delivery of mental health initiatives, and support services, from both internal and external partners. | NICS HR. | NICSHR commenced development of a NICS Health & Wellbeing Framework and are currently testing an organisational scoring tool with 2 Depts (DfC & DoF). It is intended that a revised organisational health and wellbeing diagnostic tool will then be used during a pilot of |

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| | Civil Service Servants) 3. Mental Health Strategy developed and implemented. | | | | the Framework with DfC & DoF, prior to rollout to the wider NICS. This Framework will include the ability to access a diagnostic tool, enabling the identification and implementation of a targeted approach in delivering a wider range of health and wellbeing initiatives and support services from internal and external partners. |
| Complete appointment plan for each new public appointment competition, focusing on diversity and steps to encourage applications from disabled people, and taking on board any recommendations or actions emanating from the TEO strategic diversity plan for public appointments. | Numbers of people with a disability applying for and being appointed to public life positions. | Plan to be completed at the time draft competition is being developed. | Encourage more disabled people to apply for public appointments. | Sponsor Branch (monitored by Central Support Team). | During 2022/23, People and Organisational Development promoted a number of public appointment competitions with the NICS Disability Working. Members of the group include external representatives from the disability sector who were asked to share with their sector contacts. |

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| <p>Digital Inclusion Programme activities specifically targeted at disabled people and their carers and developed in conjunction with disability organisations.</p> | <p>Number of activities and evaluation results.</p> | <p>Annually</p> | <p>Encourage people with disabilities to make use more online services.</p> | <p>Digital Enabling Services.</p> | <p>ONGOING The wider Go ON NI Programme includes services for those who are disabled. Specific digital learning days will be planned in 2023 to support disabled people with improving digital skills.</p> |
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