

Department of Finance



**Public Authority Statutory Equality and Good Relations Duties
Annual Progress Report 2017-2018**

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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:

Heather Caulfield

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 2017 and March 2018

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 2017-18, 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.

NICS HR policies

NICSHR was established in April 2017 and is located in the Department. It provides HR services to all NICS Departments and related bodies whose staff are employed on NICS terms and conditions.

Diversity and inclusion is at the centre of development of the new NICS People Strategy and our ambition for a NICS that is a great place to work, where everyone can reach their full potential and where diversity is truly valued. Consultation on the People Strategy has been ongoing with a wide range of stakeholders throughout 2017/18 and the key themes have informed developments in other diversity areas such as the Gender Action Plan and the Disability Action Plan.

Diversity Champions

In 2015 the NICS established a network of Diversity Champions to promote diversity within the NICS. The network consists of Diversity champions in each department together with 4 thematic leads for LGB&T, Disability, Gender and Ethnic Minorities.

International Women's Day & Workplace Discussions of Women's Issues

To mark international Women's Day, NICS held an event on 9th March in the Titanic Belfast. Attended by over 400 staff, the event provided an opportunity to network, exchange ideas and hear about the development of the NICS Gender Action Plan. In addition to the formal event, a series of Workplace Discussions also took place in

March across Northern Ireland in partnership with The Charity for Civil Servants. The workplace discussions aimed to promote understanding of women's issues and focused on three key issues facing women in the workplace, namely caring responsibilities, mental wellbeing and managing money as well as signposting the support which is currently available in relation to these issues.

The Gender Action Plan

The NICS is committed to building an organisation in which everyone can play their part fully to serve our wider community. We recognise that women in our workplace face particular challenges and in March 2018 launched the first NICS Gender Action Plan. The gender Action Plan focuses on three key themes of Culture, Well-being and Leadership. The plan recognises that part of developing a truly diverse and inclusive NICS needs clear action to support women at all levels and, vitally, it needs men and women, working together, to deliver that objective.

The NICS Gender Action Plan has been developed following extensive engagement with a wide range of staff and has been fully endorsed by the NICS Board. The Plan will be integrated with our People Strategy and delivered alongside a range of Diversity and Inclusion interventions as part of our People Strategy Implementation Programme. NICS HR is committed to continued engagement with all staff on this work.

NICS LGBT Staff Network

The NICS LGBT Staff Network was officially launched by the Head of the Civil Service, on 29 November. The launch, in the PRONI building in Belfast's Titanic Quarter, was attended by 70 staff from all parts of the NICS.

Creation of the Network has been an important aspect of the NICS Diversity Champions' Group's agenda for the NICS as an employer. The Group has initiated a range of actions to ensure that the workplace is fully inclusive of people regardless of gender, race, sexual orientation or disability. The NICS recognises that such networks

were increasingly seen as good practice for employers who cared about diversity and highlights the values adopted by the Network – respect, visibility and integrity. The Network plans to participate in the 2018 Belfast Pride Festival.

The Network aims to hold informal meetings on a roughly quarterly basis, open to all who are interested in the Network's aims regardless of their sexual orientation or gender identity. Plans include an opportunity to hear from one of the most senior LGBT members of the Home Civil Service and a discussion with Jill Minne, Strategic Director of NICS HR. Through the 'Working With Pride' group, NICS members will also be able to access special events run by other staff networks in Northern Ireland, on such matters as legal issues and LGBT local history. Since not all staff are able to come to meetings, a range of further information will also be circulated via e-mail.

NICS Diversity Lead for Disability / Disability Working Group

Following a period when the NICS did not have a Disability Champion due to unforeseen circumstances, in March 2018 Ronnie Armour accepted the role as NICS Diversity Lead for Disability with responsibility to promote equality and inclusion for staff with a life-long or acquired disability or a serious health issue. Previously a NICS Disability Working Group was established which considered a number of key themes for people with disabilities working within the NICS. The Working Group drafted a report setting out their findings along with a Disability Action Plan, which suggested how to make progress in a number of areas. Ronnie committed to build on this work by re-establishing the Disability Working Group and to focus on a number of areas in an effort to deliver some key changes as quickly as possible.

Disability Passport

One of the areas that the Working Group previously identified as an issue for some staff was related to reasonable adjustments. The Working Group suggested that the current Reasonable Adjustment Agreement arrangements should be enhanced and a new approach should be adopted across the NICS. Ronnie will explore this suggestion with NICS HR colleagues and aim to have revised guidance in place in the near future.

NICS Disability Work Placement Scheme

Ronnie also committed to reinvigorate the NICS Disability Work Placement Scheme, which went live in April 2016, offering a range of structured work placements for individuals with disabilities. Feedback from both participants and Departments has been positive since the scheme was launched. Working with NICS HR colleagues Ronnie plans to re-launch the scheme with the aim of increasing participation across Departments, with a greater range and volume of meaningful placements provided to individuals.

Mental Health Charter

On 23 January 2018, the Head of Civil Service made a commitment on behalf of NICS, to promote mental wellbeing in the workplace by signing up to the Equality Commission for Northern Ireland's Mental Health Charter. As one of Northern Ireland's largest employers, the NICS recognises its duty to protect the mental health of the 23,000 staff working for it. Signing up to Mental Health Charter is a powerful signal of our commitment to provide a healthy, inclusive and open workplace both for staff and for the public who use our services.

NICS HR are supporting this in a number of ways. In building upon the range of services and support already available to NICS staff, NICS HR has recently established a multi-disciplinary project team to develop practical, workable guidance for managers and staff dealing with mental health issues in the workplace and also to put in place the appropriate arrangements to ensure staff are supported back into the workplace following a period of mental health related sickness absence. Although this work will initially focus within DfC, the outcomes of this pilot will provide the basis and guide for the development of a NICS-wide strategy on mental health. The group hopes to report on its finding shortly.

Additionally, OHS and Welfare Support Services has also initiated a joint forum involving representatives from the various services on offer from the WELL programme, Inspire,

The Charity for Civil Servants, the Centre for Applied Learning and Welfare Support Services to encourage a more collaborative response from these partners in relation to supporting good mental health across the NICS. Working with those partners, OHS and Welfare supported and highlighted a range of initiatives offered to staff to mark this year's Mental Health Awareness Week in May.

The NICS' health and wellbeing programme, NICS WELL, received funding for a further three years in 2018. OHS oversees the programme and we are working with the WELL team to identify opportunities for a greater emphasis on mental wellbeing.

Cancer Support Network

A working group was created in August 2017 to explore setting up a NICS cancer support network similar to that already established in the PSNI. The objective of the network is that, if a civil servant has a diagnosis of cancer, they can be put in touch with a colleague (volunteer) who has previously had cancer while working for the civil service. The volunteers will have received training from Macmillan Cancer Support and they can then offer advice and support by drawing on their experience of having had cancer. The network is intended to act in a supplementary role to existing staff support services or help and support already being given outside work. Volunteers are currently receiving their training from Macmillan, with a view to piloting in DoF and DE later this year (2018). The scheme will then be evaluated with a view to possibly rolling out throughout the NICS in 2019.

'Maternity Hub'

NICSHR also developed an online information 'hub' for pregnant staff, returning mothers and their line managers. The aim of the hub is to gather together a range of relevant NICS policies and useful information in one location. It includes a checklist for staff and managers to use during the pregnancy, maternity and return to work periods guiding them through the various actions each should take. It is intended that the hub will be launched in 2018.

DoF Diversity Group

An event was held in April for female staff in DoF at DP level and above, focusing on 'Building and Maintaining your Strategic Awareness'. This was well attended and the feedback on the event has been positive.

The DoF Diversity Group was reconstituted at the start of 18/19 with all staff in DoF being invited to take part in the group. A sizeable number of people volunteered to take part and we will report on group activities in future reports.

Goodwood House Mental Health Awareness Group

Goodwood House launched a Mental Health Awareness Group on World Mental Health Day in October 2017, made up of staff volunteers in the building from a variety of backgrounds. Their mission statement is 'to actively encourage and promote a positive approach to better Mental Health throughout Goodwood House where all matters will be treated in confidence; to provide information and guidance on where to seek help for those who need it and provide a safe space for quiet time within the building'. Senior management and trade union have been very supportive and actively encouraged the group. In the short time they have been in existence they have:

- Provided a lunchtime guided relaxation session
- Organised a roadshow on mental health with 5 organisations represented
- Established a quiet room for staff to take time out if they need it
- Provided Inspire information points
- Placed information leaflets on all floors and regular posters in lifts

In June 2018 the Goodwood House Mental Health Awareness Group were awarded 'Highly Commended Award in Public Sector Workplace Wellbeing' at the Inspire Workplace Wellbeing Awards which celebrate workplaces across Northern Ireland who are investing in the wellbeing of their employees.

Training Course Development

The Centre for Applied Learning has added a new Buy Social classroom course to its portfolio. This course has been developed and is delivered by subject matter experts in the Strategic Investment Board. It is aimed at staff involved in procurement or

contract management of large contracts and aims to provide an understanding of how the Buy Social tool can be used to maximise social and economic benefits from public purchasing.

Buy Social

Buy Social is a practical demonstration of how using public sector procurement spend strategically, can deliver social and economic outcomes for people in Northern Ireland. As of 31 March 2018, 483 New Entrant Trainees were employed through public sector contracts that have a Buy Social clause. 332 New Entrant Trainees gained employment through construction contracts and 151 through services contracts. Buy Social means that contractors who win public work have to ring-fence a proportion of positions for people who are unemployed or are in/leaving education, essentially those furthest removed from the labour market. Some contracts have a specific target to recruit people with a disability or young people leaving the care system. From these contracts that have specific targets, 11 people with a disability have been recruited as well as 2 young people leaving the care system.

The model was implemented for construction contracts in April 2016 and during 2017/18, it was included in services contracts from October 2017.

During the year CPD staff continued to provide professional procurement advice and policy support to departments in relation to the incorporation of social considerations into their contracts.

Framework Agreement for the Provision of Agency Workers

The NICS Framework Agreement for the Provision of Agency Workers was put in place from 1 December 2016. The successful contractor has a target to deliver 15% of Administrative Assistant and Administrative Officer vacancies for people who are unemployed or are in/leaving education, essentially those furthest removed from the labour market (New Entrant Trainees). To date 104 New Entrant Trainees have benefitted from this contract, 6 of which are people with a disability.

10 year Construction Strategy

CPD construction professionals are currently liaising with construction industry representatives through a Construction Industry Forum for Northern Ireland (CIFNI), Task and Finish Subgroup, to develop a 10 year construction strategy. The subgroup has identified a number of initiatives that address issues currently affecting the industry, future trends and measures to create an attractive, sustainable sector that will contribute to economic growth.

The subgroup has identified Equality, Diversity and Inclusivity as an initiative to address the gender imbalance and the under representation of minority groups within the sector. While data for the number of females employed within the construction professional services area of the sector is readily available, data for gender and the wider LGBT+, ethnic and other groupings within construction operative roles is not as readily available.

The subgroup has brought the strategic initiatives to CIFNI for consultation and agreement on the way forward. CIFNI is considering how this data may be gathered; how current benchmarks should be identified; what the indicators for positive outcomes should be; and how positive outcomes should be measured.

Support for Rate Payers

Land and Property Service (LPS) has developed a Draft Communications & Marketing Plan for Increased Uptake of Disabled Person's Allowance and Lone Pensioner Allowance and carried out a pilot exercise to promote these allowances in January – March 2018.

Activities to date include:

- DPA & LPA social media campaign (targeted at both those eligible for the reliefs and their carers, friends and family members)
- Targeted email marketing to key stakeholders
- Invitation to key stakeholders to book an event

Upcoming outreach activities

- Poster campaign
- Further social media marketing
- Continued contact with relevant stakeholders

LPS attended 4 outreach events during 2017/18 to promote details of the support schemes available for ratepayers. During the 2017/18 year there were 1,292 new Disabled Person's Allowance (DPA) Awards) and 4,048 new Lone Pensioner Allowance (LPA) Awards.

DoF has been working hard to promote and put in place arrangements to maximise uptake of the new DoF Rate Rebate Scheme. As part of these efforts, LPS has engaged with a wide range of stakeholders including, the voluntary/community sector, social housing bodies, advice/representative organisations, other Government Arm's Length Bodies, Department for Communities (DfC) and DoF Digital Transformation Services (DTS). Examples of work undertaken taken to date include:

- ongoing engagement and delivery of presentations to a range of representative bodies;
- delivering presentations at all UC events for external stakeholders, held six weeks in advance of the introduction of UC in every region of NI;
- circulating Factsheets to over 150 stakeholder organisations;
- commissioning Rate Rebate awareness training to regional third sector staff as part of the DfC Voluntary Community Division funding allocated in the 'Fresh Start: Stormont House Agreement & Implementation Plan';
- holding stakeholder awareness events and workshops;
- putting in place arrangements for claimants with Libraries NI via DoF Digital Transformation Services (DTS);
- utilising the Northern Ireland Housing Executive Patch Manager network; and

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- installing of helpline phones to NI Direct into LPS Customer Information Centres (CICs).

Go ON NI Digital Inclusion Programme

Digital Transformation Service (DTS) commissioned a baseline research report by Citizens Online regarding the Digital Resilience and Digital Partnership in Northern Ireland. This provided supporting evidence to assist with developing a coordinated, resourced and comprehensive Digital Resilience approach to supporting digital inclusion. Identifying where those aged over 65 are located is important as they are more likely to be at risk of digital exclusion. While people of retirement age are clearly distributed across the whole of Northern Ireland, within each Local Government District there are identifiable concentrations in particular areas. This report will assist in identifying projects aimed at supporting those who are currently digitally excluded get online. Go ON NI also continues to provide assisted digital services to people who are elderly and those who have disabilities.

Equality Commission Every Customer Counts Initiative

The Department signed up to the Equality Commission's Every Customer Counts Initiative on 29th March 2018. NISRA HQ, Colby House hosted the signing event for this. Our customer facing areas (NISRA General Registry Office (GRO), Land and Property Service (LPS), NICS HR Occupational Health Service (OHS) and Central Procurement Directorate) carried out audits and implemented actions to ensure that they are accessible to people with a disability. We are proud to be the first NICS department to sign up to this initiative. The refurbishment of Colby House was completed in 2017 and has a high standard of disability access. Both staff and visitors to the GRO public counter have flat, clutter free access from the car park with automatic doors and induction loops at the GRO front desk and meeting rooms. Further examples of improvements made in LPS as a result of the Every Customer Counts initiative are included at Question 26.

Departmental Racial Equality Champion

Alfie Wong was appointed as Departmental Racial Equality Champion in July 2017. The objective of the Departmental Champion is to:

- communicate to all staff within Departments the Racial Equality Strategy and the Department's commitment to it;
- ensure that members of staff have an awareness and understanding of racial equality and issues arising for specific action within the Department's policy and operational areas;
- cascade the strategy to non-departmental public bodies and other service providers and encourage and/or work with them to ensure its effective implementation; and
- share knowledge, expertise and good practice with others.

Together with his fellow Departmental Champions, he sits on the Racial Equality Subgroup, which is intended as a strong voice within government on issues specifically affecting minority ethnic people, migrants and race relations. Membership is comprised of people working with or representing minority ethnic people and migrants – including representatives of refugees and asylum seekers, Northern Ireland Human Rights Commission and the Equality Commission for Northern Ireland. Alfie also represents the Department on the Migrant Forum, chaired by Belfast City Council.

In order to better inform the way forward and communicate the work of DoF, he completed a short targeted landscape review initially focused on DoF business services which would engage regularly with the public and companies, where Strategy outcomes such as equality of service provision would need to be visible. This included Central Procurement Directorate, Digital Incision, Land & Property Services, NI Direct, General Register Office (of NISRA) and NICS HR. The findings were presented to DoF Departmental Board in Feb 2018. Post 2017-18 to date, he has drafted a brief overview of DoF and its outward facing services to be communicated externally to both Racial Equality Subgroup and Migrant Forum members.

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He continues to pro-actively enhance his local knowledge of minority ethnic experiences by connecting with wider ethnic minority communities and organisations. Engagements during 2017-18 included visit to Belfast Friendship Club, Living Library events (Belfast City Council's DiverseCity programme), Refugee and Arabic cultural information event (Belfast City Council's DiverseCity programme), UK Race Disparity Audit presentation by Cabinet Office, launch of QUB research paper of Asylum Seekers and Refugee's Experience of Life in Northern Ireland, Racial Equality Subgroup discussion on Hate Crime and Racism, guest speaker at Chinese Cultural and Resource Centre for Chinese New Year celebrations as part of Belfast City Council's DiverseCity programme, short interview on diversity for local community broadcaster NVTV (featured on Focal Point programme), visit to Scottish Executive to meet with Scottish Diversity Champions network, sat on Selection Panel for TEO Minority Ethnic Development Fund and attended Racial Equality training delivered by The Race Equality Center (Leicester).

He is in the process of setting up a Racial Equality Network within DoF to support communication of the Strategy and is in ongoing discussions with Heather Cousins (NICS BME Champion and DfE Racial Equality Champion) as regards developing a NICS staff network. He has set up twitter account to connect with people outside NICS to promote stakeholder group engagement.

Deprivation (NIMDM 2017)

Measures that describe the spatial distribution of deprivation or disadvantage have been developed and used by Government and others since the 1970s. They have played a pivotal role in both informing the targeting of resources to the most deprived areas and monitoring the spatial impact of policy interventions. In November 2017, NISRA published an update of the NI Multiple Deprivation Measure 2010 ([NIMDM 2017](#)). A representative from the Equality Commission sat on the Steering Group throughout this project. The measures provide rankings of the 890 Super Output Areas on income, employment, health, education, access to services, living environment and crime. In order to reach the widest possible audience, NISRA implemented a six month user engagement programme to outline what the measures were, how they could and

couldn't be used and how they could be accessed. The deprivation team participated in 20 public presentations and 15 dedicated user training events, which reached over 700 people and resulted in over 10,000 downloads of the tailored deprivation output products that were released.

Some of the key messages that were consistently delivered to all stakeholders were: (i) the extent of the stakeholder engagement achieved through two active public consultations, (ii) the way in which the measures had been improved through the use of innovative administrative data on, for example, over 700,000 household incomes, public transport travel times to key services and access to reliable broadband and (iii) the need to use the full range of deprivation measures across each of the seven domains as well as the multiple deprivation measure in order to get a holistic picture of the relative deprivation in an area. The feedback from users has been published on our website [Deprivation user feedback](#). The following percentages of users agreed/strongly agreed with the following statements:

- The new look booklet is easy to understand and meets user need - 96%
- My knowledge of NIMDM 2017 has increased as a result of the event- 96%
- I understand what the measures can and cannot be used for- 98%
- I will be able to apply what I have learnt to explore the data further- 97%

Against this background, the six month user dissemination programme will have enhanced the capability of users not just in terms of their knowledge of the updated measures, but also in terms of how to use them more effectively.

Ageing of Northern Ireland's Population

In October 2017, NISRA's Demographic Statistics team drew together information on the ageing of the NI population for a NICS Policy Champions Network event. The presentation outlined: the key demographic trends over the past 40 years and 40 years into the future, the extent to which Northern Ireland's population was ageing and the impact that this would have on key population groups such as children, those of working age and the elderly. In addition, NISRA developed an analysis package that made it very easy to retrieve the key demographic information that was of most

interest to particular users (e.g. the projected number of people of a particular age group over a particular time period). The analysis package was subsequently publically released via the NISRA website in order to reach a wider audience (see [Population Statistics Analysis package](#)).

NINIS

During 2017/18, NISRA continued to update and promote the NINIS website www.nisra.gov.uk/ninis which provides free access to statistical and locational information relating to small areas across the Region. It makes data available at local area level on a range of topics including population, health, education, crime, census 2011 and deprivation. It has a wide user base across local and central government and voluntary and private sector. This local data was used in developing community plans. NISRA continued to provide free NINIS training sessions to a variety of users. NISRA also makes available detailed demographic data as part of the [Registrar General's Annual Report](#). NISRA continued to develop analysis at lower level geographies supporting the 'Making Life Better' strategy and for Neighbourhood Renewal Areas.

Census 2021 planning

Census Office within NISRA carried out a range of testing and research as part of the preparations for the delivery of the Census in 2021. This work has included meeting with a range of stakeholders including those covering health, education, housing, language and equality. Census Office also conducted a large scale test of a range of questions both online and on paper. The test questionnaire included revised questions on health, languages and a potential new question on sexual orientation. Research was also commissioned in relation to a range of potential new questions on equality related matters.

- 2 Please provide **examples** of outcomes and/or the impact of **equality action plans/** measures in 2017-18 (*or append the plan with progress/examples identified*).

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

As an example of the impact of 'Buy Social' clauses, CPD managed a project for the construction of a new Acute Services Block at the Ulster Hospital, on behalf of the South Eastern Health and Social Care Trust. The contractor is required to provide 2,756 weeks of employment, spread across several priority groups – such as long-term unemployed, school leavers and young people leaving the care system. The contractor, GRAHAM-BAM, embraced the concept – to date 23 individuals have benefited from opportunities and seven have moved on from their initial 'Buy Social' employment phase to be retained as employees. A particular success was the ring-fenced target for young people leaving care and this is now being included by CPD in all suitable health trust construction projects. The contractor went even further than their contractual obligations, hosting awareness-raising workshops with their supply chain to help widen opportunities for unemployed individuals with disabilities. Five work experience placements have been organised for students from Killard House Special School – the school felt these were really significant for the individuals, showcasing their 'abilities' rather than 'disabilities'.

The experience of using 'Buy Social' in this project has been helpful to improve understanding amongst CPD and the health trusts of how the scheme can work in practice to impact on marginalised groups in society. Preparing the new recruits for the construction environment can be challenging, and the contractor invested time and resources in holding presentations, site visits and providing online resources for young adults, their mentors, social workers and personal assistants to explain what the work environment would involve. Most importantly, the trainees themselves have benefited from their experience of employment on the construction site, and are now inspiring other students and job seekers by giving peer employability talks.

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The Project won the inaugural Buy Social/Sustainable Procurement Award at the Go Procurement Awards in March 2018, further showcasing the potential of the initiative.

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3 Has the **application of the Equality Scheme** commitments resulted in any **changes** to policy, practice, procedures and/or service delivery areas during the 2017-18 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 2017-18 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:

Under the NICS Performance Management Framework, Personal Performance Agreements contain targets and objectives which include statutory obligations relative to the official's responsibilities. For example, Strategic Equality Branch staff PPAs contain objectives relevant 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 2017-18 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:

Plans, flowing out of the Department's business plan, were created for each business area, including relevant obligations for managers and staff in relation to Section 75 duties. The balanced scorecard for Central Support included an action to provide advice, guidance and support to policy makers on all aspects of equality.

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In the 2017-18 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 2017-18 report
- Not applicable

Please provide any details and examples:

Objectives and targets were built into plans at an appropriate level and monitored throughout the year. For example, the Strategic Equality Branch comes falls within Central Support and the business plan for this area for 2017/18 contained an objective in relation to compliance with our Equality Scheme commitments. The Department's operational business plan for 2017/18 was a one-year stand-alone plan which reflected the continuation of the Department's existing priorities in 2017-18, reflecting the need to continue existing business while future plans are formulated.

Equality action plans/measures

7 Within the 2017-18 reporting period, please indicate the **number** of:

Actions completed:	7	Actions ongoing:	11	Actions to commence:	1
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Please provide any details and examples *(in addition to question 2)*:

Please see attached action plan.

8 Please give details of changes or amendments made to the equality action plan/measures during the 2017-18 reporting period *(points not identified in an appended plan)*:

Please see attached action plan.

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9 In reviewing progress on the equality action plan/action measures during the 2017-18 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

Due to the absence of a Minister there were limited consultations during 2017/18.

11 Please provide any **details and examples of good practice** in consultation during the 2017-18 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:

An Easy Read version of the Department’s draft Section 75 Action Plan 2018-23 and draft Disability Action Plan 2018-23 was produced to make these documents more accessible.

12 In the 2017-18 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
- Telephone consultations
- Other *(please specify)*:

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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 2017-18 reporting period? *(tick one box only)*

- Yes No Not applicable

Please provide any details and examples:

14 Was the consultation list reviewed during the 2017-18 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/dof-departmental-equality-scheme>

<https://www.finance-ni.gov.uk/publications/impact-assessments-budgetary-outlook-2018-2020-rates>

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

7

Please provide the **number of assessments** that were consulted upon during 2017-18:

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

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

A consultation on our draft Section 75 Action Plan 2018-23 was launched in March 2018 (this consultation also covered our draft Disability Action Plan 2018-23). The draft plans will be finalised following full consideration of the consultation feedback.

- 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:

RNIB provided feedback in relation to the Government Digital Transformation Strategy 2017-2021 screening. The input by RNIB was well received and as a result, through further engagement by, and support from our Departmental Equality Unit, we went back out to our Section 75 stakeholders. This aim of this exercise was to provide more time and opportunity for stakeholders to provide additional information and data which could be considered as part of the equality screening process. The extended period and renewed call for information/data did not however yield further submissions. The review is still active and an evidence base will be shared with NICS service owners to inform future service reviews and/or building of new services.

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 2017-18 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 2017-18 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:

A review of our Audit of Inequalities was carried out to inform our draft Section 75 Action Plan for 2018-2023 which went out for consultation in March 2018. The draft plan will be finalised following full consideration of the consultation feedback.

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

- Yes No Not applicable

Please provide any details and examples:

22 Please provide any details or examples of where the monitoring of policies, during the 2017-18 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:

The DTS Digital Inclusion Unit sits on the Digital Assist Steering Group which aims to improve digital skills and capability levels across the province. This group meets quarterly and is an opportunity to convene public, private and third sector partners to deliver a

more collaborative, coordinated and innovative approach to meeting the digital skills challenge.

The Digital Assist Steering Group in particular aims to:

- Increase the digital capability needed to build thriving local digital economies by sharing and supporting the creation of local partnerships.
- Create a more coherent framework that enables people and organisations to identify and access good digital skills training opportunities and enables providers to collaborate to upscale and innovate.
- Provide strategic support to ensure the desired aim is delivered in the best possible way. It will also share experience, knowledge, networks and, where possible, resources to further its work.

The Digital Inclusion Unit also represents NI on the British-Irish Council, where assisted digital support is discussed and shared from across the UK, Ireland and GB regions with relation to those people who are offline.

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 2017-18, and the extent to which they met the training objectives in the Equality Scheme.

A wide range of training has been delivered during the year to ensure that staff are aware of their responsibilities.

Course	Number of DoF staff completed training 1/4/17 – 31/3/18
Autism Spectrum Disorder Awareness	63
Disability Awareness for Frontline Staff (e-learning)	34
Diversity Now (classroom-based)	16

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Diversity Now (e-learning)	16
Introduction to Human Rights (e-learning)	6
Introduction to Section 75 (e-learning)	116
Mental Health Awareness for Line Managers	20
*Positive Mental Health Toolkit for Line Managers (e-learning)	13
*Positive Mental Health Toolkit for Staff (e-learning)	35
Recruitment and Selection – Legislation (e-learning)	114
Supporting Vulnerable People (e-learning)	36
Unconscious Bias (e-learning)	2043
Unconscious Bias	35

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

The Senior Civil Service Unconscious Bias classroom training events had very positive feedback. From the pilot first delivery, when asked whether the course met their training objectives, 83% of trainees rated this training 5 out of 5 and 17% rated it 4 out of 5 (on a scale of 1 to 5, where 1 is the lowest rating and 5 is the highest rating).

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

- 26** Please list **any examples** of where monitoring during 2017-18, across all functions, has resulted in action and improvement in relation **to access to information and services**:

As a result of carrying out the Every Customer Counts audit:

- An Inclusive Customer Service Policy has been developed and is displayed in LPS Customer Information Centres and Housing Benefit Public Counter, in Occupational Health Service, Central Procurement Directorate and in the General Register Office.
- An access champion has been appointed for each of the above.
- Induction Looped Hearing systems installed in the Omagh Customer Information Centre and Housing Benefit Public Counter (other CICs already had this installed).
- New Customer Comment Cards deposit box installed in the Housing Benefit Public Counter to encourage feedback (other services have these already).
- Review of LPS website accessibility for those with a sight impairment carried out to identify improvements which will be delivered during 2018-19.

Complaints (Model Equality Scheme Chapter 8)

27 How many complaints **in relation to the Equality Scheme** have been received during 2017-18?

Insert number here:

1

Please provide any details of each complaint raised and outcome:

A complaint was received in relation to the Department's Briefing paper on the Northern Ireland Budgetary Outlook 2018-20.

The substance of the complaint was that the Department had failed to comply with its Equality Scheme in not screening the policy proposals in the briefing paper and in not carrying out a formal consultation.

The Department responded substantively to complainant within 10 working days, stating that given the unique circumstances the absence of an Assembly presented, the normal budget consultation arrangements could not apply. The complainant was advised that given this situation, the Department had taken the unusual step of publishing information about the broad choices available for balancing the Budget to help inform decisions to be taken by an incoming Executive but that these were not binary choices. The complainant

was further advised that DoF continues to work with departments to gather information and assess the impact of any potential Budget outcome and that, as part of this ongoing work, the Department had commissioned information on the equality impact of budget reductions on departments and would ensure that Ministers were briefed prior to making decisions on any potential equality impacts resulting from the cumulative impact of allocations, in line with Equality Commission guidance.

Section 3: Looking Forward

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

A consultation on a revised scheme was held from January – April 2017. A revised Scheme will be submitted to the Equality Commission NI for approval when a Minister is in post.

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)*

Following engagement with the Equality Commission in the Equality Forum, and the focus on effective leadership, Strategic Equality Branch are engaging in a series of briefing sessions on the Equality Scheme commitments with senior managers in DoF business areas during 2018/19.

30 In relation to the advice and services that the Commission offers, what **equality and good relations priorities** are anticipated over the next (2017-18) 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):

Section 75 Action Plan: Update on Progress during 2017/18

Section 75 Category	Inequalities identified	action	measure	outcome	timescale	2017/18 Update
Religious Belief	<p>Under-representation of Protestants in administrative and junior management grades in the NICS compared to the NI labour market.</p> <p>Under-representation of Protestants and Catholics in some grades in the Professional and Specialist groups in the NICS compared to the NI labour market.</p>	<p>Use of positive action advertising statements to encourage applications from under-represented groups.</p> <p>Data from recruitment competitions analysed to monitor the applicant profile and the progress of S75 groups through the recruitment stages.</p>	<p>Workforce equal opportunities monitoring and Review of Fair Participation in the NICS (the "Article 55 Review") - the 2016 review will show the impact of the NICS Voluntary Exit Scheme (VES) on the profile of the workforce.</p>	<p>2016 Review to be completed and published.</p> <p>Reduction in degree of measured under-representation.</p> <p>Any issues of concern from recruitment competitions highlighted and addressed for forthcoming competitions.</p>	<p>31st December 2017.</p> <p>31st March 2018.</p>	<p>The report was published in October 2017. The review found that Protestants continue to be under-represented in the grades of Administrative Officer and Executive Officer. As a result we will continue to use positive action advertising statements when recruiting to encourage applications from Protestants.</p> <p>The review also found Protestants and Roman Catholics continue to be under-represented in some Professional & Specialist groups. We will continue to use</p>

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						Positive Action Advertising as appropriate. We will also continue to analyse all recruitment competitions to monitor the profile of applicants and the progress of all equality groups through the recruitment process.
Age	Take-up of housing benefits and rate relief.	Outreach campaign focusing on Lone Pensioner Allowance, particularly those living with carers.	Continued uptake in benefit.	Benefit reaches those vulnerable groups entitled to financial assistance.	31 st March 2018.	LPS attended 4 outreach events to promote rating reliefs, including Housing Benefit, Lone Pensioner Allowance and Disabled Persons Allowance. During the 2017/18 year there were 4,048 new Lone Pensioner Allowance awards.
	Access to Government Services via electronic means.	Continuation of Digital Inclusion Programme activities, including continuation of Silver Surfers' day, Get Online	Reduction of barriers to citizen access to online public services	These digital inclusion activities will provide improved access to services	31 st March 2018.	The Digital Inclusion Programme continued throughout the year, including the updated Digital Learning day

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		<p>Weeks and continued liaison with the Libraries Network, and similar initiatives with other organisations to encourage digital participation.</p>		<p>(government and other) for those groups currently less able to avail of them via the web channel.</p> <p>Year on year increase in internet usage for those aged 50-64 and 65+.</p>	<p>(previously known as Silver Surfers' day). Get Online Weeks comprised of bespoke sessions with PRONI, continued liaison with the Libraries NI Network and the Belfast City Council Community Hubs.</p> <p>Other events to encourage digital participation took place with Barclays Digital Eagles, Lisburn & Castlereagh City Council and Google. Also Digital Assist via bespoke training and roadshow programmes for government online initiatives including Universal Credit and PSNI Fire Arms Licencing.</p>
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						<p>Liaison continued with NICS Business areas including Blue Badge and DVA regarding Digital Assistance for online services.</p> <p>Survey information for 17/18 shows that 75% of those aged 50-64 and 48% of those aged 65+ use the internet.</p>
		Revised hard copy training guides and e-learning via Go ON NI website.	Training guides on website completed that can be used online or downloaded for hard copy for training and learning purposes.	Increased digital knowledge and skills.	Completed and ongoing updates to March 2018.	The Go ON NI website has been updated to include advice and information, especially about online safety, cyber security and scams for training and learning purposes.
Marital Status	Law in NI treats unmarried fathers differently from married and unmarried mothers.	Consider amendments to current laws.	Take forward recommendations emerging from The Lord Chief Justice Review.	Equality of treatment.	Awaiting publication of the final report of the Review of Civil and	Review of Civil and Family Justice completed September 2017, shadow Family Justice Board and shadow Civil Justice Council have both

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					Family Justice.	met several times. Issues relating to marital status will continue to form part of the work of those bodies.
Sexual Orientation	Data gaps.	Gather information on sexual orientation from applicants and appointees. Develop actions from LGBT survey results.	Workforce Equal Opps monitoring. Action taken as a result of the survey.	More reliable data to help inform policy making. Staff LGBT Forum launched.	31 st March 2018. 31 st March 2018.	We analyse all recruitment competitions to monitor the profile of applicants and the progress of equality groups through the recruitment process. Forum launched. Further actions to be identified.
Disability	Access to information	Continue outreach activity and updating of literature.	Continued uptake of benefit.	Benefit reaches those vulnerable groups entitled to financial assistance.	31 st March 2018.	LPS attended 4 outreach events to promote rating reliefs, including Housing Benefit, Lone Pensioner Allowance and Disabled Persons Allowance. During 2017/18 there were 1,292 new Disabled

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						Persons Allowance awards.
		<p>Digital Inclusion Programme activities, including Digital Learning Day, Get Online Week and Spring Online Week, and similar initiatives with organisations to encourage digital participation. The Go ON NI programme highlights the benefits of being online, and brings together all the initiatives, places and tools to help and encourage off-liners to become internet beginners. How-to guides, internet access points, schedules of tuition and training – are all available at www.nidirect.gov.uk/go-on</p>	<p>Year on year increase in internet usage for those aged 50-64 and 65+.</p> <p>Annual total of 10,000 citizens reached through all Go ON NI Programmes in liaison with the LibrariesNI Network, SCNI and BITC and including the Digital Assist Steering Group partners.</p>	<p>Increased digital knowledge and skills.</p>	<p>31st March 2018.</p>	<p>Bespoke Connect-ability digital sessions with Disability Action, Mencap and carers in liaison with BITC.</p> <p>Survey information for 17/18 shows that 75% of those aged 50-64 and 48% of those aged 65+ use the internet.</p> <p>Annual total of citizens reached through all Go ON NI Programmes was 10700 for 2017.</p>

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Depend-ants	Take-up of housing benefit and rate relief.	Continue outreach activity and updating of literature.	Continued uptake of benefits.	Benefit reaches those vulnerable groups entitled to financial assistance.	31 st March 2018.	LPS Housing Benefit and Application Based Rate Relief promoted as part of wider LPS rate support package at 4 events. Members of the Applications Based Rate Relief team helped with Housing Benefit queries on outreach sessions.
Gender	Under-representation of males/females in some occupational groups/grade levels in the NICS compared to the NI labour market.	Use of positive action advertising statements to encourage applications from under-represented group. Development of a new action plan to increase representation at senior level.	Workforce equal opportunities monitoring and Review of Gender representation in the NICS - the next review will show the impact of the NICS Voluntary Exit scheme on the profile of the workforce.	2016 Review to be completed and published. Reduction in degree of measured under-representation. Increased in the number of females	31 st December 2017. 31 st March 2018.	The results of the Gender Review were published in October 2017. It found males and females are under-represented in some grades and disciplines. We continue to use positive action advertising to attract applications from the under-represented gender.

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		<p>Data from recruitment competitions analysed to monitor the applicant profile and the progress of S75 groups through the recruitment stages.</p>		<p>at the most senior level.</p> <p>Any issues of concern from recruitment competitions highlighted and addressed for forthcoming competitions.</p>	<p>31st March 2018</p>	<p>The NICS Gender Action Plan has been launched following extensive engagement with a wide range of staff and has been fully endorsed by the NICS Board. The Plan will be integrated with our People Strategy and delivered alongside a range of Diversity and Inclusion interventions as part of our People Strategy Implementation Programme.</p> <p>We also continue to analyse data from all recruitment competitions to monitor the profile of the applicant pool and the progress of each gender through the recruitment process.</p>
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Racial Group	Data gaps	Information on place of birth is needed to allow more detailed analysis of ethnic background. This is collected from applicants and appointees.	Workforce equal opportunities monitoring.	More reliable data to help inform policy making.	31 st March 2018.	We continue to consider how to address this issue.
	Access to Information	Pilot project "Browsealoud" in partnership with LibrariesNI – the provision of specialist software for those where English is not their first language and those who would have lower levels of literacy. 10 libraries participating, including specific events to highlight the use of the tool.	Evaluation of programme to show improved access to services where this software can assist with translation and with web navigation and form filling.	Improved access to services.	By 31 st March 2018.	Initial usage metrics from the pilot indicate users benefit from assistance in accessing and understanding content online with Browsealoud, and specific events were carried out using the software in a selection of library locations.
All S75 groups	Staff to have the appropriate, knowledge, skills and	Development of Part 1 (Unconscious Bias) of a four- part Equality,	Unconscious Bias package to be finalised following evaluations.	Increased knowledge and application of	31 st March 2018.	NICS HR - Unconscious Bias training has been

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	attitudes to apply the Equality, Diversity and Inclusion policy at all times.	Diversity and Inclusion training package for NICS staff.		equality, diversity and inclusion policy.		developed and rolled out.
		Unconscious Bias training to be rolled out to all DoF staff (mandatory training).	% of staff who have completed the training.	Increased knowledge and application of equality, diversity and inclusion policy.	31 st March 2018.	Unconscious Bias training was rolled out to all staff in DoF during 2017/18. The completion rate is currently 88.9%.
		Buy Social Model for Services (services contracts excluding IT and professional services contracts)	Model in place for services contracts.	Increased job opportunities for the long-term unemployed and those leaving education.	31 st March 2018	The Model was implemented in October 2017.

PART B - Section 49A of the Disability Discrimination Act 1995 (as amended) and Disability Action Plans

Please refer to our [Disability Action Plan Update on Progress against 2016/17 actions which we use for reporting purposes:](#)

Disability Action Plan: Progress against 2017-18 actions

Measures	Performance Indicators/Targets	Timescale	2017/18 Update
<p>All staff (new and existing) to complete Unconscious Bias training.</p> <p>Customer-facing staff to complete:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Disability Awareness for front-line staff; • Autism Spectrum Disorder (ASD) Awareness; and • Supporting Vulnerable People 	<p>Number of staff trained.</p> <p>Priority 1 training (within 0-4 months).</p>	<p>31st March 2018.</p>	<p>Unconscious Bias was rolled out to all staff in June 2017. Completion rate:</p> <p>New customer-facing staff have undertaken disability awareness training. In addition, as part of actions for Every Customer Counts, to ensure we meet our commitments in the Autism Strategy Action Plan, and in support of the LPS Vulnerable Customer Engagement Strategy, existing staff in our customer facing areas have been encouraged to take the three listed courses. Completion of these courses for existing staff continues in the 2018/19 year.</p>

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DoF to sign up to the Equality Commission's Every Customer Counts Initiative.	Customer facing areas of DoF to undertake audits and implement actions.	31 st March 2018	DoF signed up to Every Customer Counts online on 29 th March and an official signing event was organized and publicised on 11 th April.
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 disabilities and feedback on the reasonable adjustment process.	31 st March 2019.	A review has commenced.
Facilitation of meaningful work experience opportunities for people with disabilities in the NICS.	Number of applications and number of placements facilitated.	Annually.	During the 2017/18 financial year, 13 placement applications were received from 3 Disability organisations, 10 of which resulted in placements being agreed with departments.
NICS to sign up to Equality Commission's Mental Health Charter and support the launch of this through a number of WELL activities focusing on Mental Health and the development of a NICS-wide mental health strategy.	Charter signed. Feedback from WELL activities. Mental health strategy in place.	31 st March 2018	Charter signed 23 Feb 2018. WELL programme delivery for next 3 years to increase focus on mental wellbeing. Strategy under development.
Digital Inclusion Programme activities to encourage people with disabilities to make more use of online services. Through the Connectability programme in partnership with BITC, and in partnership with local charities/community groups, Go ON NI training	Reduction of barriers to citizen access to online public services.	31 st March 2018.	The Connectability digital sessions with Disability Acton, Mencap and carers were carried out in partnership with Business in the Community,

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<p>sessions are available for people with disabilities to help increase the use of the Internet and specific online services including the NIDirect website. Disabled citizens can be given one-to-one tuition over the course of the sessions.</p>			<p>and delivered to over 50 service users across NI.</p>
<p>Land and Property Services to continue outreach to maximise take up of Rate Reliefs by vulnerable groups. Focus of 17/18 campaign is Lone Pensioners Award, particularly those who live with a carer due to a disability.</p>	<p>Increased take up of Rate Reliefs by persons with a disability.</p>	<p>31st March 2018.</p>	<p>LPS attended 4 outreach events to promote rating reliefs, including HB, LIRR, LPA and DPA. During the 2017/18 year there were 1,292 new DPA awards and 4,048 new LPA awards.</p>
<p>Include a social clause in relation to disability in government purchasing contracts (services), to create more employment and training opportunities for people with a disability.</p>	<p>Procurement Board to endorse and implement the Buy Social Model for services contracts.</p>	<p>30th September 2017.</p>	<p>The Model was implemented in October 2017.</p>
<p>Development of a new Disability Action Plan for 2018-2023.</p>	<p>Consultation launched by 31st March 2018.</p>	<p>Existing DAP extended until 31 March 2018. 5 year review of DAP and consultation for new plan to launch during 2017/18.</p>	<p>Consultation launched on 15th March 2018 for 12 weeks. New DAP will be published later in the year following consideration of consultation responses.</p>