

DEPARTMENT FOR THE ECONOMY



Public Authority Statutory Equality and Good Relations Duties Annual Progress Report 2020-21

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Documents published relating to our Equality Scheme can be found at
Equality Scheme submitted to EQNI - publication is pending subject to acceptance by EQNI

Signature: Owen Gillespie (Department for the Economy, Equality Officer)



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 2020 and March 2021

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 2020-21, 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 for the Economy (DfE) was established in May 2016 and has almost 1,200 staff at various different grades. Its responsibilities include:

- wider economic policy, including specific areas like Energy, Tourism and Telecoms;
- skills policy and strategy that supports economic growth and delivery of a range of skills interventions;
- oversight and funding of the further and higher education sectors;
- various aspects of employment law; and
- the management and operation of various EU funding programmes.

The Department also has an important role in delivering the Northern Ireland Programme for Government (PfG).

The Northern Ireland Executive's Outcomes Framework will provide the strategic context for the future work programme. Initially, it will give focus to an economic Recovery Strategy, but will also become the basis for actions and programmes needed to build long-term societal change. There are currently nine outcomes in the draft Framework and, while outcome ownership is still subject to change, DfE has provisionally been designated as the lead Department on one outcome – "Our economy is globally competitive, regionally balanced and carbon neutral". The Department will also have significant contributions to make to several other outcomes.

The Department is designated as a Public Authority for the purposes of Section 75 of the Northern Ireland Act 1998 (the Act), which sets out a requirement to fulfil two key statutory duties, including a duty of having due regard to the promotion of equality of opportunity, and regard to the desirability of promoting good relations across a range of categories outlined in the Act. The Department's Equality Scheme 2016-2022 sets out how we will fulfil these statutory duties.

COVID-19 Public Health Crisis and Equality

The COVID-19 pandemic had a major impact on all public bodies, and due to restrictions upon the work place the majority of DfE staff worked from home throughout 2020-21. Adaptation to this model of working required a significant and additional IT provision over the course of the year. Most staff were gradually provided with laptops and supported by an IT infrastructure that enabled the Department's business needs to be delivered largely by remote working.

The impact of the COVID-19 public health crisis dominated the work of many areas of the Department throughout 2020-21, as it led the economic response to the pandemic. The Department's business plan for the year was reshaped with the addition of temporary COVID-19 strategic objectives, and various additional work-streams to enable achievement of these objectives. Throughout the year, effort was centred upon ensuring that resources were focused on priority areas, which required a temporary suspension of non-business critical activities, closure of offices, and the temporary redeployment of staff to ensure the ability to deliver essential services and to respond quickly to rapidly emerging needs.

In responding to the unprecedented impacts of COVID-19 the Department was required to rapidly design and implement a wide range of interventions to protect the economy and the workforce; for example, during 2020-21 the Department launched a number of financial support schemes that delivered over £460 million to businesses in Northern Ireland. Some of these interventions were significant in an equality context, and helped to protect jobs in sectors that employed large numbers of young people, part-time workers (many of whom are female) who were disproportionately impacted by the COVID-19 crisis. Other interventions were directly focused upon particular groups of people, such as for example: incentive schemes for employers to take on new apprentices; and a financial package for Higher Education bodies and students adversely impacted by economic effects of the COVID-19 pandemic. More examples of these interventions are provided later in this report.

Equality Screening

Given the pace at which these schemes were being developed, designed and delivered some schemes did not follow the normal procedures involved with introducing new interventions. Due to the imperative to get money to businesses and organisations quickly, there was inadequate time to carry out normal due diligence to identify preferred options etc. and so the schemes were progressed following a Ministerial Direction, due to expressed concerns by the Accounting Officer on issues such as VfM, fraud, error etc. Also, in a minority of these interventions the unprecedented urgency did not allow for equality screening to be carried out prior to implementation - as would be the customary procedure as recommended by our equality scheme.

In light of this position the Department issued formal guidance to policy makers which emphasized and reiterated the Equality Commission's guidance (2020) on Section 75 duties when developing COVID-19 related policies. In summary,

this recognised that such policies may need to be developed and implemented with utmost urgency, and may on occasion permit some modification to the screening arrangements outlined by an equality scheme - but should as far as practicable, base any decisions on relevant information, and ensure that screening is undertaken to identify any equality impacts associated with the policy as soon as it is feasible to do so.

Alongside this additional work to respond to the COVID-19 crises, the Department continued to deliver a programme of pre-existing work commitments which were subject to the customary process of equality screening, as set out in our equality scheme. The Department's Equality Unit proactively encouraged departmental business areas to involve the Unit at an early stage, ensuring that equality issues are considered early, quality of content is improved. Also, there was an apparent increase in awareness of equality screening issues generally, as evidenced by a significant increase in the annual total of equality screenings published during 2020-21. Overall, a total of 36 policies were screened during the year, all of which were screened out. There were no full Equality Impact Assessments carried out during the reporting period.

DfE policies screened during 2020/21 are published on the [Department's website](#) and are listed below:

2020/21 Resource Budget

Parental Bereavement Leave and Pay

Proposed Resource Departmental Expenditure Limit (RDEL) Budget 2020/21
Internal Allocations

Insolvency and company legislation

Student fees regulations Northern Ireland 2020

Education Student Support Regulations Northern Ireland 2020

Science Foundation Ireland - COVID-19 rapid response call

Mutual Recognition of Professional Qualifications – proportionality test

Electricity and Gas amendment EU Exit regulations 2020

EU Exit - Mutual Recognition of Professional Qualifications – miscellaneous provisions

Business Support Grant Schemes

PART A

Provision of £126m Financial Transactions Capital (FTC) loan financing to Ulster University (UU) to assist in bridging the funding gap in its Greater Belfast Development (GBD) project

COVID-19 supplier relief schemes

Legislative powers to close or direct FE and HE institutions in NI during COVID-19

Framework for recommencing on-site educational delivery in FE colleges and non-statutory contractors

Costed postgraduate awards extensions

Northern Ireland Committee Irish Congress of Trades Unions - Employment Training Programme 2020/21

Priority Dispatch Provisions of the 2019 Electricity (Recast) Regulation ((EU) 2019/943)

The Posted Workers (Agency Workers) Order (Northern Ireland) 2020

Equality screening - Transposition of the 2019 Electricity (Recast) Directive ((EU) 2019/944

The Education (Student Fees and Support) (Amendment etc.) (EU Exit) Regulations (Northern Ireland) 2020.

Recruit an apprentice incentive scheme

Challenge Fund incentive scheme

Framework for the safe resumption of on-site educational provision and related activity - screening

US-Ireland Research and Development (R&D) Partnership - change to eligibility criteria for NI applicants

Covid Restrictions Business Support Scheme Parts A and B

Presbyterian Mutual Society (PMS)

Review of the NI Postgraduate Tuition Fee Loan

Existing Policy and a Revision of- The Education (Student Support) (No.2) Regulations (Northern Ireland) 2009/373 (The Student Support Regulations)

DfE Resource Departmental Expenditure Budget 2021/22 - equality screening

Delivery of additional financial support to HE students in Northern Ireland who have been impacted by COVID-19

Energy Strategy policy options

Employment Rights (NI) Order 1996 (Protection from Suffering Detriment in Health and Safety Cases) (Amendment) Order (Northern Ireland) 2021

Large Tourism and Hospitality Business Support Scheme (LTHBSS)

Wet Pubs Business Support Scheme

Renewables Obligation (Amendment) Order (Northern Ireland) 2021

COVID-19 Pandemic Response Schemes and Section 75 groups

As earlier indicated, the Department developed and implemented a series of schemes in response to the COVID-19 pandemic over the duration of 2020-21. The schemes were designed to protect businesses and jobs throughout the population, and thereby assisted people across all Section 75 groups, also with some schemes providing direct assistance to specific groups who were particularly disadvantaged or at risk.

While healthy young people are much less likely to lose their lives from COVID-19, it is evident that they have been significantly impacted by the measures introduced to slow its spread and save lives. These impacts range from missing face-to-face school/college/university education through to a higher likelihood of younger people being placed on furlough or made redundant than the rest of the working population. The number of 16-24 year olds in NI on the claimant count has soared - from 5,940 in March 2020, peaking at 14,395 in July 2020 and still almost double the March figure in January 2021 (11,620). Also the employment status of 16-24 year olds has been more negatively affected than any other working age group. A report by the Institute for Employment Studies (IES) found sharp falls in the numbers of young people able to combine work and study. This may have financial consequences for those on low incomes, including some part-time workers and carers, who are not eligible for other forms of financial support. It also means fewer young people gaining early work experience and workplace skills.

Research by the Institute for Fiscal Studies (IFS) into the first UK national lockdown from March 2020 found employees under the age of 25 were around two and a half times more likely to work in sectors that were shut down compared with other employees. Sharp contractions in sectors that had to close made it harder for young people to take their first step onto the career ladder, while reduced job opportunities is likely to make it harder for them to move into higher-paying occupations.

The following information provides summary details for some example schemes that were introduced to assist particular Section 75 groups and to address areas of specific disadvantage arising from the COVID-19 pandemic.

- **COVID-19 Supplier Relief Schemes for:**

1. ApprenticeshipsNI (AppsNI) Training Contractors
2. Training for Success (TfS) Training Contractors
3. Disability Support Service (DSS) Contractors

The fundamental purpose of the three supplier relief schemes was to ensure the continued economic viability of contractors during and after the COVID-19 crisis so that normal AppsNI and TfS programme delivery, and Disability Support services in respect of both programmes, could be resumed quickly and effectively when the restrictions were lifted.

- **Recruit An Apprentice Incentive Scheme**

The aim of the Apprenticeship Recruitment Incentive Scheme was to maintain and grow the supply of Apprenticeship opportunities and to help support displaced apprentices to find the employment needed to complete their qualification(s). By providing a financial incentive for each apprentice employed the Department encouraged and support employers to create apprenticeship opportunities (jobs) for both new apprentices and apprentices who have been displaced by other employers. The Apprenticeship system, provided young people, (aged 16-24) and those seeking higher qualifications with a pathway to employment and qualification. The system has been uniquely and disproportionately impacted by the COVID-19 pandemic, with figures reflecting that over 50% of apprentices being furloughed. Other issues such as employers closing or reprioritising activities and the suspension of face to-face training have also presented challenges.

- **Challenge Fund Incentive Scheme**

The aim of the Challenge Fund Incentive Scheme was to maintain and grow the supply of Apprenticeship opportunities. The Incentive aided the development of new and innovative solutions to mitigate risk, promote collaboration and increase confidence of employers and organisations with an interest in the NI apprenticeship system to engage with the apprenticeship system to achieve the overall aim of maintaining the skills pipeline. This was intended to prevent a short term economic shock resulting in long term damage to businesses / sectors and individuals' career prospects. The Apprenticeship system, provides young people, (aged 16-24) and those seeking higher qualifications with a pathway to employment and qualification. The system has been uniquely and disproportionately impacted by the COVID-19 pandemic, with figures reflecting that over 50% of apprentices have been furloughed. Other issues such as employers and organisations with an interest in the NI apprenticeship system closing or reprioritising activities and the suspension of face to face training also presented challenges.

- **Additional financial support to HE students in Northern Ireland who have been impacted by COVID-19.**

In February 2021, the Department announced a substantial financial support package of £37.7million for higher education agreed by the Executive. £22 million of the support package had been secured to provide almost 40,000 students studying in Northern Ireland with a £500 COVID-19 Disruption Payment. This one-off single discretionary payment is being made in recognition of the disruption suffered by students to their studies, the impact on them both financially and in respect of their mental health, due to the effects of the coronavirus pandemic.

The support package also included:

- £8.5m to address student financial hardship, digital poverty and to support student unions with mental health provision
- £4.1m for the provision of a safe working, learning and research environment
- £3.1m to compensate universities for lost income arising from rental pauses and releasing students from accommodation contracts.

- **Costed Postgraduate Awards Extensions – PGA Studentship Scheme, US Ireland (USI) Programme and SFI/DfE Investigators Programme Partnership (SFI/DfE IPP)**

This policy offered costed extensions to all DfE funded PhD students in NI. All students had equal opportunity to apply for a funded extension. The policy particularly benefited those groupings who might otherwise have experienced particular challenges due to e.g. caring responsibilities, or disabilities that required them to shield. This facilitated a more level playing field in allowing all students to complete their studies without suffering financial detriment.

- **Statutory Paternity Pay, Statutory Adoption Pay and Statutory Shared Parental Pay (Normal Weekly Earnings etc.) (Coronavirus) (Amendment) Regulations (Northern Ireland) 2020.**

The purpose of the Regulations is to prevent adverse impact on employees' entitlements to family-related statutory payments arising as a consequence of being furloughed. The change to the calculation of Normal Weekly Earnings will apply to all claimants and will therefore not distinguish by section 75 category and will not adversely affect anyone on that basis.

- **Wet Pub Business Support Scheme**

The Wet Pub Business Support Scheme was designed to help protect jobs, prevent business closures and promote economic recovery for all eligible wet pub businesses in Northern Ireland who were required to close or cease trading from 4 July to 22 September 2020 due to Health Protection (Coronavirus, Restrictions) (No.2) Regulations (Northern Ireland) 2020. The support provided to businesses through the scheme, and the implications of that support for employees and individuals, also assisted particular groups of people, including young people, females and part-time workers who contribute a large proportion of this workforce.

- 2 Please provide **examples** of outcomes and/or the impact of **equality action plans/** measures in 2020-21 (or append the plan with progress/examples identified).

The Department's priorities and work objectives were necessarily reprioritised during 2020-21 due to the imperative of responding to the COVID-19 pandemic. While this resulted in necessary additional work streams, a large part of the Department's pre-existing work plan was also implemented, and significant progress was achieved among the measures set out in the Department's Equality Action Plan. This progress is illustrated by some examples shown below.

Public Appointments

DfE Equality Action Plan Measure(s): increase the number of women, people with disabilities, and ethnic minorities applying for the Department's public appointments

During 2020-21 DfE, in conjunction with all other Departments, progressed work towards achieving targets agreed by the NI Executive in February 2016 to achieve gender equality (in aggregated public appointments) by 2020/21. One competition was completed during the year, one appointment list from an earlier year was used and several reserve lists were also used. In total, 20 appointments were made – 11 male (55%) and 9 females (45%). One appointee had a disability (5%).

The Department continues to incorporate new ways to attract applications from people with disabilities, people from ethnic minorities and younger people. We operate the Guaranteed Interview Scheme for applicants with a disability.

Staff representatives from the Department's Public Appointments Unit (PAU) attend the cross-departmental Public Appointment Forum (PAF) which shares learning and best practice. DfE is represented on a PAF sub-group which collaborated with Ulster University in 2020 to conduct a survey aiming to understand Board Culture and how this impacts on issues of equality and diversity. The outcomes from this survey will be used to inform the development of an assessment tool and guidance to be used by NICS Departments/Public Sector Boards. This will be published by the PAF sub-group later in 2021.

PAU continued to facilitate participation in the Strictly Boardroom's "Boardroom Apprentice" programme, which seeks to ensure that there is a diverse and sustainable pool of capable board-ready candidates for public appointment which is more reflective of our society. The DfE sponsored bodies taking part in the 2020/21 programme are Tourism NI, the Health & Safety Executive NI, the Labour Relations Agency, Southern Regional College and South West College.

The Department continues to use Twitter, LinkedIn, Facebook and Mailing Lists to publicise all new public appointment competitions. Due to COVID

restrictions and the lack of opportunity for PAU staff to network in person, we stepped up our distribution of electronic competition flyers to bespoke lists including those for organisations representing women, ethnic minorities, those with disabilities and under-represented groups. These lists are regularly reviewed and updated. Where possible, we publicised competitions for their duration using the bottom strapline of the standard Departmental email.

European Social Fund (ESF) Programme 2014-2020

DfE Equality Action Plan Measure(s): assist groups at particular disadvantage in the labour market who are unemployed/inactive.

One of the aims of the ESF Programme is to assist groups at a disadvantage in the labour market who are unemployed /economically inactive. To achieve this the Department has continued to promote sustainable and quality employment and supported labour mobility. Programme activity will continue until 2023.

The Department has funded activity under the ESF Programme (2014-2020) to enhance and extend employment opportunities. Focusing on support for young people aged 16-24 who are not in employment, education or training (NEET).

By 31 December 2020, 36,234 unemployed, including long-term unemployed participants have been supported, of whom 8,045 were in employment, including self-employment, upon leaving the Programme. By 31 December 2020 a total of 4,249 unemployed participants were in employment, including self-employment, six months after leaving

There are four particular groups that have been targeted for assistance by the Programme;

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- Group 1 - Unemployed/economically inactive - Young people aged 16-24 who are not in employment, education or training (NEET).
- By 31 December 2020 the Programme has supported 17,915 participants not in education, training or employment aged 16-24 supported, of whom 3,272 were in employment, including self-employment, and 7,353 were in education or training upon leaving the Programme.
- Group 2 - People with a Disability.
By 31 December 2020 the Programme has supported 13,842 participants with a disability, of whom 1,768 were in employment, including self-employment, and 3,526 were in education or training upon leaving the Programme.
- Group 3 - People (NEET) within families receiving Community Family Support (CFSP)
By 31 December 2020 the Programme has supported 6,270 NEET participants aged 16+ within families receiving CFSP, of whom 1,061 were in employment, including self-employment, and 1,898 were in education or training upon leaving the Programme.

- Group 4 - Apprenticeships and Youth Training - Improving the labour market relevance of education and training systems, facilitating the transition from education to work, and strengthening vocational education and training systems and their quality, including through mechanisms for skills anticipation, adaptation of curricula and the establishment and development of work based learning systems, including dual learning systems and apprenticeship schemes.
By 31 December 2020 the Programme has supported 31,584 employed participants aged 16 and over working towards an apprenticeship, of whom 71% achieved a targeted level 2 qualification, and 72% achieved a targeted level 3 qualification.

Essential Skills

DfE Equality Action Plan Measure(s): encourage uptake and achievement of essential skills.

Lack of Essential Skills has long been recognised as a barrier to employment and a richer quality of life. Essential Skills training in literacy, numeracy and ICT skills are available free of charge to all adults within and accessing DfE training, employment and further education programmes, such as Training for Success and Apprenticeships. This is an accredited qualification available from Entry Levels to Level 2.

During the academic year 2019-20, 7,479 Essential skills Level 2 qualifications were achieved. Success rate for this measure is defined as the proportion of the total number of enrolments who complete their study and achieve their qualification to the number of enrolments. The overall success for Essential Skills qualifications in the 2019/20 year was 65.1% (Entry Level through to Level 2).

Access to Further Education - disability

DfE Equality Action Plan Measure(s): improve accessibility of Further and Higher Education for people with disabilities.

The Department provides £4.5 million, per year funding to FE colleges through the Additional Support Fund (ASF) to support students with learning difficulties and/or disabilities (SLDD).

£2.5 million per annum is provided to help meet the cost of additional technical and personal support for SLDD and £2 million per annum to help meet the extra costs associated with offering discrete courses for those for whom mainstream provision is not suitable.

Although the total number of all student enrolments within Further Education (FE) fell during 19/20, the number of enrolments declaring a disability (as a percentage of total FE enrolments) remained constant at 17%. The Department is aware of the need for a consistent approach across FE to provision for SLDD and sharing of best practice. To this end an Interim Policy for SLDD, which aims to ensure best practice across the sector, was issued in November 2020.

Participation in Higher Education (HE) by disadvantaged groups

DfE Equality Action Plan Measure(s): promotion of greater participation in Higher Education (HE) by disadvantaged groups, including those with learning difficulties and disabilities.

The Department's Audit of Inequalities identifies an under representation of disadvantaged groups in Higher Education. This includes people with a disability who have greater difficulty in accessing and achieving further and higher education.

Widening participation in higher education is a key priority for the Department, and one of our aims is to increase the participation of those groups which are currently under represented in HE - in particular students from disadvantaged backgrounds and students with learning difficulties and disabilities.

In the academic year 2020-21, the Department allocated £1.73 million as follows: £1.23 million for a widening participation premium and £0.5 million for a disability widening access premium.

The Department provided grant support through the Disabled Students' Allowance to enable students with disabilities to access appropriate course-related support and assistance. HE providers are able to draw down from grant support from the Department as a contribution towards the cost of providing Disabled Student Allowances (DSA) Needs Assessments, and the recruitment and training of appropriate non-medical helpers for qualifying students.

Eligible full-time, part-time and postgraduate students may also apply for DSA, and entitlement is not based on household income. The type of support available varies depending on the individual needs of a student, but assistance can include non-medical helpers, specialist equipment and travel. In the region of 2,500 students are supported through DSA annually, with funding in the region of £4m provided.

Funding is also provided to Queen's University and Ulster University to meet the administration costs of a Register of Support Providers. The Register of Support Providers is a unique service which provides one to one personal support to disabled students registered on recognised higher education courses at any of the colleges or universities in Northern Ireland.

During the year 2020-21 year, £9,561,688 of spend was allocated for widening access and participation activities, with £4,263,958 of financial support to student activities. Planned outreach and retention activities were impacted by the COVID-19 pandemic limiting access to schools and potential students to carry out the planned activities. Many HE Providers made changes to their plans to support students in response to the pandemic including the introduction of remote access supported with technology provision. Approved plans are also in place for the 21/22 year and include a total commitment of £8,993,791 to widening access and participation activities which are also likely to be impacted by the pandemic.

In 2019/20 students from Quintiles 1&2 made up 33% of all students.

Students who self-declare a disability made up 14% of all students and 5% of students were in receipt of DSA.

Careers Service

DfE Equality Action Plan Measure(s): promotion of greater participation in the workforce by people with disabilities, and provide assistance for young people with disabilities to make the transition from school to adult provision and work.

The Careers Service is an all-age, all-ability service that provides impartial guidance on career planning to people in education, employment, training and to the unemployed. However, there is also a particular focus on addressing the needs of young people and adults facing, or vulnerable to, social exclusion, including young people with a disability.

The Service actively targets young people aged 16 and 17 not in employment, education or training (NEET) to assess their specific needs and signpost them to appropriate provision. Each Careers Adviser reviews their NEET caseload on a monthly basis. In addition, the Careers Service delivers careers guidance to young people within Alternative Education Provision and NEET community projects.

Careers advisers also offer additional support to young people at risk of leaving school early or at risk of not successfully transferring to education, training or employment. Such young people are identified early in school, and actively supported until they are settled in a positive destination. During the 2019/2020 academic year the Careers Service had Partnership Agreements in place with:

- 216 out of 225 (96%) Post Primary Schools;
- 40 Training Organisations; and
- 6 Further Educations Colleges.

Partnership working arrangements are in place with the Health and Social Trusts at an operational level.

During the 2019/2020 academic year the Careers Service attended 903 Transition Plan Meetings and 1,609 Annual Review meetings for children who have a statement of special educational need. The figures for the 2020/2021 academic year are not yet available.

Throughout 2020-21, the Careers Service continued to work closely with schools and DfCs Disability Employment Service to provide a seamless service for people with disabilities to ensure they are fully supported in the transition from school to adult provision and work. Effective referral processes are in place with Disability Action Job Match Employment Support Officers, to help with the career planning needs of adults with a significant disability. Also, links have been established with all 5 Health Trust Regional Autism coordinators to ensure that clients with Autism have access to careers services.

Peace IV – United Youth Programme

DfE Equality Action Plan Measure(s): Address inequalities between young people of different community and religious backgrounds – via a programme for marginalized and disadvantaged 14-24 year olds.

The Department is responsible for the design and delivery of the United Youth Programme, which is a key commitment in the NI Executive’s ‘Together: Building a United Community’ Strategy.

This commitment is currently being delivered via the cross-border Peace4Youth programme, funded under Objective 2.1, Children and Young People, of the PEACE IV programme, managed by the Special EU Programmes Body (SEUPB).

DfE is the NI Accountable Department and is responsible for funding the Peace4Youth programme in Northern Ireland and, through Youth Inclusion Branch, ensuring satisfactory performance and governance. Youth Inclusion Branch also administer an incentive payment to eligible participants in Northern Ireland.

Activity under Phase 1 has now concluded and following the verification of Phase 1 activity, SEUPB advise that the total number of young people who completed Peace 4 Youth programmes was 1,784.

At the end of March 2021, over 3,000 young people had completed Phase 2 of the programme, and a further 1,700 young people are currently participating on the programme. This brings the total completed output to date is approx. 5,000 participants (subject to verification).

Outcomes are being assessed via an independent evaluation by QUB. The first evaluation in 2018 focused on Phase 1 of the programme to ensure that the programme activity was having a positive impact on the participants and acted as a potential programme break point, justifying continuation into Phase 2.

The second evaluation in 2020 focused on Phase 2 at the mid-term stage and is highly positive, evidencing substantial positive progression across the outcome areas of good relations, citizenship and personal development for the young people completing the programme and clear evidence that the programme is positively impacting the lives of the young people.

- 3** Has the **application of the Equality Scheme** commitments resulted in any **changes** to policy, practice, procedures and/or service delivery areas during the 2020-21 reporting period? *(tick one box only)*

Yes No (go to Q.4) Not applicable (go to Q.4)

Please provide any details and examples:

In addition to the appointments made in 2020/21 from existing lists and reserve lists, PAU commenced a number of fresh competitions, following the appointment of a new Minister. COVID-19 restrictions meant that staff were unable to do any physical outreach or networking but bespoke mailing lists were produced for each competition to target the sectors relevant to the vacancies. We also used images of diverse groups in some adverts, FAQs were made available on our website and Information Packs were reviewed. COVID-19 restrictions required that public appointment interviews were conducted online. We therefore consulted a representative body, Action on Hearing Loss, for specialist advice when making reasonable adjustments for some of our candidates. PAU introduced an online application form to reduce the burden on all applicants and make for a more user-friendly submission process. While interviews were mostly carried out online out of necessity, they proved to be particularly successful, and PAU anticipates facilitating online interviews to candidates as a matter of course in future. Hard-copy applications will continue to be accepted.

- 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:

DfE Public Appointments Unit (PAU)

The work of the Department's Public Appointments Unit (PAU) continues to address under-representation of particular Section 75 groups, and is serving to create new and wider opportunities for individuals from such groups. In addition to the appointments made in 2020/21 from existing lists and reserve lists, PAU commenced a number of fresh competitions, following the appointment of a new Minister.

One competition was completed during the year, one appointment list from an earlier year was used and several reserve lists were also used. In total, 20 appointments were made – 11 male (55%) and 9 females (45%). One appointee had a disability.

Also, one fresh competition was completed during the year - for new South Eastern Regional College (SERC) members. Sixty-five applications were received – 42 male (65%) and 23 Female (35%). Six applicants declared a disability (9%) and 2 (3%) were from an ethnic minority background.

PAU also commenced a number of fresh competitions, following the appointment of a new Minister.

The statistics for 2021/22 will reflect the efforts made to attract women and people with a disability to these vacancies

Introduction of Parental Bereavement Leave and Pay entitlements into Northern Ireland Employment Law

The Department's Employment Relations Policy and Legislation Division undertook a consultation exercise in June 2020 that sought to inform the public about the government's intention to introduce Parental Bereavement Leave and Pay entitlements into Northern Ireland Employment Law. The proposed legislation was similar to the entitlements introduced in Great Britain on 6 April 2020. The consultation was undertaken during difficult circumstances associated with the COVID-19 pandemic, however the Department invited views from stakeholders who were enabled to respond online via a dedicated consultation page or in writing. Stakeholders, including working parents and their employers; groups representing employers and employees; groups involved in bereavement care; and legal, HR and payroll professionals were invited to comment on the proposed provisions, and opened discussion around how best to mirror the legislation in GB while taking account of specific needs in Northern Ireland. Consultees were issued with detailed information including: a detailed consultation paper on the proposed legislation; Detailed responses to Frequently Asked Questions; a Section 75 Equality Screening; a Rural Needs Impact Assessment; and a Regulatory Impact Assessment. The latter of these documents were updated in light of feedback received during the consultation.

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):*

The Department's commitment in the Equality Scheme endeavours to ensure that all policies are screened at an early stage, ensuring equality issues are considered and form part of the policy/ decision making process. Also, the Department's Equality Unit regularly engages in 'equality awareness' activity to promote wider awareness of the Equality Scheme and related commitments. There was a significant increase in the number of policies screened during 2020-21, as reflected in the annual number of equality screenings published by the Department. This would perhaps suggest an increased level of awareness regarding equality duties among staff.

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):*

PART A

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

During 2020-21 COVID-19 restrictions prevented public appointment interviews being conducted on the customary face to face basis. The Department's Public Appointments Unit (PAU) consulted with Action on Hearing Loss for specialist advice on making reasonable adjustments for some candidates. Following this consultation PAU introduced an online application form and online interviews, which resulted in a reduced burden on all applicants and resulted in a more user-friendly submission process. While interviews were mostly carried out online out of necessity, they proved to be particularly successful, and PAU anticipates facilitating online interviews to candidates as a matter of course in future.

On a wider level, DfEs Equality Scheme includes a commitment to achieving effective communication and ensuring that all our services are fully accessible to everyone in the community across all Section 75 categories.

- 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 2020-21 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 for staff in DfEs Equality Unit reflect their contributions to the discharge of the Section 75 statutory duties

5 Were the Section 75 statutory duties integrated within performance plans during the 2020-21 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, commitments set out in DfE's Equality Scheme are reflected in the Performance Assessments of relevant staff and reviewed throughout the year.

6 In the 2020-21 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 2018-19 report
- Not applicable

Please provide any details and examples:

Six Monthly Assurance Statements

In addition to existing commitments already contained in the Equality Scheme, the Department's Six Monthly Assurance Statement includes an assurance, given by all Heads of Division, that Divisions, Units and Branches within the Department that staff have been made aware of the organisation's Health and Safety Policy and Equality Policies and that these are being complied with and all Divisions conduct equality screening and, if appropriate, Equality Impact Assessments, on all new policies/amendments to existing policies, both internal and external, in line with Section 75 of the NI Act 1998.

COVID-19 Response Business Plan 2020-21

As a result of the pandemic, significant sections of our economy essentially shut down. Interventions were urgently put in place to help businesses and employees through the crisis. The short-term objectives as a Department were no longer restricted to growing our economy, but also limiting the damage dealt to it by the pandemic. A short-term COVID-19 Response Business Plan was rapidly developed to provide strategic focus and clarity to the Department's much changed priorities. The Plan contained a number of new Strategic Objectives that related to the Department's Section 75 Statutory Duties, these included:

- To review and develop support for further education students who have barriers to education in light of COVID-19.
- To seek additional funding from the Executive for Support Funds for University Students facing genuine financial hardship.
- To assess the impact of the COVID-19 Pandemic on the international student mobility agenda and engage with relevant stakeholders.

- To ensure the stability & continuation of the non-statutory training sector and maintain training delivery to young people by extending contracts to deliver the Department's Training for Success programme.
- To ensure appropriate learner support for Training for Success participants (including support to those trainees with a disability or learning difficulty) by supporting Contractors to adapt to current circumstances.
- To introduce Parental Bereavement Leave and Pay in NI, including the drafting, consultation and finalisation of policy proposal and commencement of initial drafting of primary legislation.
- To develop policy proposals in respect of references to protecting workers' rights in the New Decade New Approach document and other Ministerial priorities for employment rights – including the need for any legislative changes.
- To develop Northern Ireland policy on English for Speakers of Other Languages (ESOL).

Departmental People Plan

The plan includes, under the category Wellbeing and Work-Life Balance, an action to Establish priorities for increasing diversity and inclusion in DfE, in line with NICS commitments.

Equality action plans/measures

7 Within the 2020-21 reporting period, please indicate the **number** of:

Actions completed:	<input type="text"/>	Actions ongoing:	9	Actions to commence:	<input type="text"/>
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Please provide any details and examples (*in addition to question 2*):

Public Appointments

DfE, in conjunction with all other Departments, continues to progress work towards achieving targets agreed by the NI Executive in February 2016 to achieve gender equality.

We consistently look for new ways to increase the numbers of applications from people with disabilities, people from ethnic minorities and younger people. In practice, this means every competition is looked at afresh and a Diversity Plan incorporated into each Appointment Plan.

The language used in setting criteria, the number and type of criteria and the various methods of publicity are discussed and agreed by the selection panel. Specific publicity actions are shared between the Department's Public Appointments Unit (PAU) and the relevant Sponsor Branch to address the needs of the particular public body. Selection panels are reminded that when determining an applicant's merit, cognisance must be taken of non-traditional career-paths and lifestyles, to ensure individuals are not discriminated against either directly or indirectly.

COVID-19 restrictions also meant having to carry out public appointment interviews online. We therefore consulted with an expert representative body, Action on Hearing Loss, for advice when making reasonable adjustments for some of our candidates.

- 8 Please give details of changes or amendments made to the equality action plan/measures during the 2020-21 reporting period (*points not identified in an appended plan*):

The Department's business priorities were significantly altered during 2020-21 to focus on an immediate response to COVID-19 and to limit the impact of the pandemic upon businesses and the workforce - this was alongside pre-existing commitments to support the Northern Ireland economy. Some interventions related to COVID-19 were introduced to address economic impacts affecting particular Section 75 groups, both directly and indirectly. These were intended as immediate, but short-term interventions such as, for example the additional financial support of £500 to Higher Education students who were impacted by COVID-19. While these shorter-term interventions did not result in amendment to the Equality Action Plan, the Equality Unit will continue to monitor the position to identify inequalities that arose during 2020-21 and persist for a longer duration - and merit inclusion in the equality action plan, to be addressed as longer term inequalities requiring particular action.

Other measures in action plan remain relevant to our on-going functions and work.

- 9 In reviewing progress on the equality action plan/action measures during the 2020-21 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 2020-21 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:

During 2020-21 COVID-19 restrictions prevented public appointment interviews being conducted on the customary face to face basis. The Department's Public Appointments Unit (PAU) consulted with Action on Hearing Loss for specialist advice on making reasonable adjustments for some candidates. Following this consultation PAU introduced an online application form and online interviews, which resulted in a reduced burden on all applicants and resulted in a more user-friendly submission process. While interviews were mostly carried out online out of necessity, they proved to be particularly successful, and PAU anticipates facilitating online interviews to candidates as a matter of course in future.

- 12** In the 2020-21 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 2020-21 reporting period? *(tick one box only)*

Yes No Not applicable

Please provide any details and examples:

- 14** Was the consultation list reviewed during the 2020-21 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)

[Insert link to any web pages where screening templates and/or other reports associated with Equality Scheme commitments are published]

<https://www.economy-ni.gov.uk/consultations>

<https://www.economy-ni.gov.uk/department-economy-equality>

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

36

In line with Equality Scheme commitments the Department publishes completed screenings on its website on a quarterly basis. Completed screenings for 2020/21 can be found at:

[DfE Screenings page.](#)

16 Please provide the **number of assessments** that were consulted upon during 2020-21:

7	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:

[Northern Ireland Renewable Heat Incentive Scheme – 2020 Tariff Review](#)

[Parental bereavement leave and pay](#)

[Priority Dispatch Provisions of the 2019 Electricity \(Recast\) regulation EU 2019/943](#)

[Transposition of 2019 Electricity \(Recast\) Directive](#)

[Legislative measures to transpose Gas Directive 2009/73/EC as amended by Directive 2019/692](#)

[Northern Ireland Non-Domestic Renewable Heat Incentive Scheme – Future of the Scheme](#)

[Consultation on policy options for the new Energy Strategy for Northern Ireland](#)

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:

- 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 2020-21 reporting period, has shown changes to differential/adverse impacts previously assessed:

None identified.

- 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:

None identified.

Staff Training

- 24** Please report on the activities from the training plan/programme (section 5.4 of the Model Equality Scheme) undertaken during 2020-21, and the extent to which they met the training objectives in the Equality Scheme.

Training

NICS offers a range of training, both classroom based and e-learning, which seeks to assist staff in achieving both the understanding and skills required to promote equality of opportunity and good relations and to make equality central to the whole range of public policy decision-making. In addition to assisting the department achieve its statutory duties in respect of service to the people of Northern Ireland, the range of training available also seeks to ensure that the principles of equal opportunity and fair treatment are also extended to staff by colleagues and managers alike.

A range of some of the training undertaken by DfE staff in 2020/21 is outlined below:

Autism Spectrum Disorder Awareness

This e-learning course was developed by the Northern Health and Social Care Trust, providing information about what ASD is and the challenges faced by individuals living with it. Having an awareness of ASD will help staff understand why an individual with ASD may be acting or reacting in a particular way and it will help create and maintain positive working relationships. During 2020-21, 18 staff completed training.

Disability Awareness for front line staff

The aim of this e-learning training is to increase staff knowledge of disability and to provide frontline staff with an introduction to disability awareness. The course is aimed at staff at all grades who are in, or new to a post that deals with the public. During 2020-21, 5 staff completed training.

Mental Health Awareness for Line Managers

This virtual training course encourages and supports managers to proactively promote good mental health and wellbeing within their teams. During 2020-21, 9 staff completed training.

Supporting Vulnerable People

This e-learning course has been designed to assist staff in supporting vulnerable people who may seek to use the services offered by the department. On completion of the course staff should be able to describe and define what a vulnerable person is, recognise ways to identify vulnerable people, explain ways to support vulnerable people, including methods for dealing with third parties, and state the sources of help, advice and support available in the NICS for employees. During 2020-21, 5 staff completed training.

Unconscious Bias

This e-learning course aims to help staff discover what personal bias they may have, explore its causes and consider some techniques to manage it. On completion of the course staff should be able to define what Unconscious Bias is; explain how Unconscious Bias can impact in the workplace and state ways to tackle Unconscious Bias. During 2017/18 this course was mandatory for completion by all DfE staff in management grades i.e. EOII and above and 690 staff successfully completed the training. In addition to this a further 13 senior officials from DfE attended a classroom based training course. During 2020-21, 25 staff completed training.

Introduction to Section 75

Staff who require this e-learning training are those with responsibility for policy development or policy review and staff involved with the implementation of Section 75 duties, whether directly or indirectly. The aim of this course is to familiarise participants with the two statutory duties as outlined in Section 75 of the NI Act

1998 and the guidance provided by the Equality Commission NI. During 2020-21, 9 staff completed training.

Racial Equality

NICSHR will be launching a new e-learning package in June 2021 aimed at learning more about racial equality and staff responsibilities as a civil servant. This short e-Learning package will raise awareness of the key ideas, practical strategies and sources of help and guidance so staff can work to ensure racial equality is mainstreamed in their role within the NICS.

- 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:

None identified – limited data is available on evaluation of individual training events

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

- 26** Please list **any examples** of where monitoring during 2020-21, across all functions, has resulted in action and improvement in relation **to access to information and services**:

None identified.

Complaints (Model Equality Scheme Chapter 8)

- 27** How many complaints **in relation to the Equality Scheme** have been received during 2020-21?

Insert number here:

1

Please provide any details of each complaint raised and outcome:

One complaint was received which alleged that the Department had, contrary to Paragraph 1.1 of its approved Equality Scheme, failed to have due regard to the need to promote equality of opportunity for students wishing to undertake a Higher Education Foundation Degree. A detailed investigation of available evidence concluded that the Department did comply with its equality duties and found no evidence to support the claim that the Department did not comply with its associated duties under Section 75, Schedule 9.

Section 3: Looking Forward

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

The Equality Scheme originally covered the period 2016 to 2021, but has been extended to 2022 with the agreement of the Equality Commission. It is our intention to review the scheme during 2022.

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*)

It is anticipated that departmental activity planned for the next reporting period will benefit numerous areas. Some examples are set out below:

Raising awareness

With regard to raising awareness, the Equality Unit had intended to hold face to face meetings with senior staff to discuss the commitments in the Department's Equality Scheme and how these relate to respective business areas across the Department. Several meetings were arranged during the reporting year 2020-21, but were necessarily cancelled due to the COVID-19 pandemic. However, the Department's Equality Unit plans to invite staff to participate in such meetings during 2021-22, to be held remotely. The aim will be to reappraise staff of our equality duties, and the implications for their business areas in particular.

Also, the Equality Unit also plans to publish a new Equality Screening Template during 2021-22 to comply with the international Web Content Accessibility Guidelines (WCAG) 2.1. , which aim to ensure that all web content may be accessible to users with disabilities. Alongside the new screening template, the Equality Unit also plans to introduce new, detailed guidance to provide staff with step by step assistance on the process of completing of the new screening template. The guidance will also include answers to 'frequently asked questions', based upon our experience of queries previously raised by staff undertaking equality screening.

DfE Diversity Group

The Department's Diversity Group plans to deliver a broad programme of activities that are designed to raise awareness of diversity issues among departmental staff. The focus of these activities will include many issues such as, ethnicity, disability and gender identity for example, that directly impact upon our equality and good relations duties, and delivery of our services.

Disability Support Services

DfE will review Disability Support Services offered to participants in vocational training courses such as Training for Success and Apprenticeships NI and use findings to inform the commissioning of new Disability Support programmes. It is

anticipated that a revised disability specialist support programme will be in place to support vocational training participants by end 21/22

Further Education Capital Investment

The ongoing FE Capital Investment Programme to rationalise the FE college estate, by aims to replace buildings in very poor condition with modern, state of the art learning environments also encompasses and promotes accessibility for all. The needs of students and staff have been taken into account at design stage and key stakeholder engagement has been maintained throughout delivery in tandem with compliance with the necessary building control aspects.

E-learning

NICSHR will be launching a new e-learning package in June 2021 aimed at learning more about racial equality and staff responsibilities as a civil servant. This short e-Learning package will raise awareness of the key ideas, practical strategies and sources of help and guidance so staff can work to ensure racial equality is mainstreamed in their role within the NICS.

Public Appointments Unit

Staff representatives from the Department's Public Appointments Unit (PAU) attend the cross-departmental Public Appointment Forum (PAF) which shares learning and best practice. DfE is represented on a PAF sub-group which collaborated with Ulster University in 2020 to conduct a survey aiming to understand Board Culture and how this impacts on issues of equality and diversity. The outcomes from this survey will be used to inform the development of an assessment tool and guidance to be used by NICS Departments/Public Sector Boards. This will be published by the PAF sub-group later in 2021.

30 In relation to the advice and services that the Commission offers, what **equality and good relations priorities** are anticipated over the next (2021-22) reporting period? *(please tick any that apply)*

- Employment
- Goods, facilities and services
- Legislative changes
- Organisational changes/ new functions
- Nothing specific, more of the same
-

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

1

Fully achieved

13

Partially achieved

Not achieved

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

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

Level	Public Life Action Measures	Outputs ⁱ	Outcomes / Impact ⁱⁱ
National ⁱⁱⁱ	DfE, as part of the cross-departmental Public Appointment Forum (PAF), strives to address the recommendations made by the Commissioner for Public Appointments, Northern Ireland (CPANI), in his report on under-representation and lack of diversity in	Public Appointments Forum meetings attended quarterly and Department has contributed to actions being co-ordinated centrally.	One competition was completed during the year, one appointment list from an earlier year was used and several reserve lists were also used. In total, 20 appointments were made – 11 male (55%) and 9 females (45%). One appointee had a disability.

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	<p>public appointments in Northern Ireland – published in January 2014.</p> <p>We continue to seek to identify additional measures which might increase the appeal of DfE public appointments to a wider audience.</p>	<p>Use of social media (Twitter, LinkedIn and Facebook) to publicise competitions, the placing of articles in publications and on websites and the distribution of flyers at events targeting under-represented groups to reach new audiences.</p> <p>All venues are checked to ensure they are accessible for people with disabilities to attend and make their contribution and any other reasonable adjustments requested are accommodated.</p>	<p>The one fresh competition completed during the year was for new South Eastern Regional College (SERC) members. Sixty-five applications were received – 42 male (65%) and 23 Female (35%). Six applicants declared a disability (9%) and 2 (3%) were from an ethnic minority background.</p> <p>PAU also commenced a number of fresh competitions, following the appointment of a new Minister.</p> <p>The statistics for 2021/22 will reflect the efforts made to attract women and people with a disability to these vacancies</p>
<p>Regional^{iv}</p>	<p>Further Education (FE) Capital Projects Team continues to support FE Colleges by funding capital works to ensure compliance with Disability Discrimination Act legislation.</p> <p>All venues for external events checked to ensure they are accessible</p>	<p>Three superb new FE campuses have been recently completed at a cost of approximately £80m and over £143m is currently being invested in a further four new projects across Northern</p>	<p>This ongoing investment will equip the FE sector with new facilities designed to be fully accessible by all. These are modern, efficient, fit for purpose campuses that are welcoming, comfortable, healthy and vibrant places to learn and innovate.</p>

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	for people with disabilities to attend and make their contribution.	Ireland to replace ageing facilities.	
Local ^v	<p>All venues for external events checked to ensure they are accessible for people with disabilities to attend and make their contribution.</p> <p>DfE will maintain and review the adjustments it has taken for staff to comply with DDA requirements.</p>	<p>Ensure all identified reasonable adjustments, including employee and customer access, have been considered and subsequently implemented, as appropriate.</p>	<p>Evaluation of and feedback from events helps to inform future management.</p> <p>The views / contribution from people with disabilities will help inform future policy.</p>

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

	Training Action Measures	Outputs	Outcome / Impact
1	Line Managers to provide induction training for all new entrants, which includes	A new online Departmental e-zine Induction programme has been developed for DfE staff.	The online Departmental e-zine Induction programme was made available via the departmental Intranet. The Corporate Engagement Team has responsibility for the

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	NICS/Departmental Policies and Procedures		quarterly review of material included in the Induction programme.
2	The NI Civil Service has an updated Diversity Training package which promotes an inclusive working environment and stresses the importance of valuing differences. The package also includes material on the duty to promote positive attitudes towards disabled people and on current disability equality legislation.	All new recruits to the NICS to attend classroom based Diversity training delivered by the Centre for Applied Learning. Module 1 of a series of modules to address diversity training was produced during 2016/17 with departmental involvement, and began roll out from 2017 and have continued thereafter.	Staff are encouraged to recognise the importance of an inclusive working environment and the importance of valuing differences.

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

	Communications Action Measures	Outputs	Outcome / Impact
1	In line with the Autism Strategy 2013-2020 and associated Action Plan 2013-2016 which were launched on 15 January	Autism Factsheet distributed to all DfE staff and their NDPBs.	The Autism Factsheet was distributed to all DfE staff as part of participation in World Autism Awareness Day.

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	2014, DfE continues to raise awareness of autism amongst all DfE staff.		
2	The DfE Diversity Group continues to produce factsheets to promote understanding amongst staff of the needs of all Section 75 groups and to encourage best practice within DfE. Each factsheet will focus on a different subject, providing background information and advice for staff and line managers to encourage understanding and promote more positive attitudes as well as raising awareness of the types of reasonable adjustments available.	The Diversity and Staff Induction internal web pages have been updated.	The Diversity Group continues to publish diversity related articles on the Department’s Intranet site. Activity was limited during 2020-21, due to COVID-19, but will resume in 2021-22.

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

	‘Encourage others’ Action Measures	Outputs	Outcome / Impact
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1	Attendance at TEO/ECNI etc. events.	DfE Equality Unit staff seeks to provide colleagues in DfE and NDPBs with details of relevant TEO/ECNI etc. events.	Representatives from DfEs Equality Unit continues to attend ECNI-led equality meetings/events during 2020-21.
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2 (e) Please outline **any additional action measures** that were fully achieved other than those listed in the tables above:

	Action Measures fully implemented (other than Training and specific public life measures)	Outputs	Outcomes / Impact
1	Line Managers, with advice from Corporate Services as required, will take forward Personal Emergency Evacuation Plans (PEEPs).	Corporate Service staff will seek to raise Line Managers' Awareness of their responsibility to complete PEEPs as required.	The Office Risk Assessment Exercise, which Corporate Services issues annually to all business areas, includes a section on PEEPs. This asks managers whether they have a member of staff with mobility/ other relevant issues and, if so, whether a PEEP has been agreed. As such it helps to provide an assurance that PEEPs are in place where required.

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

	Action Measures partly achieved	Milestones/ Outputs	Outcomes/Impacts	Reasons not fully achieved
1	Induction training for all new entrants, including information on the disability duties	A new online Departmental e-zine Induction programme has been developed for DfE staff.	The online Departmental e-zine Induction programme was made available via the departmental Intranet. The Corporate Engagement Team has responsibility for the quarterly review of material included in the Induction programme.	Ongoing
2	The NI Civil Service has a Diversity Awareness Training package which promotes an inclusive working environment and stresses the importance of	All new recruits to the NICS to complete an on-line Diversity e-learning programme provided by the Centre for Applied Learning.	All DfE staff are required to complete mandatory on-line refresher Diversity training on a 3-year rolling basis.	Ongoing

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	<p>valuing differences. The package also includes material on the duty to promote positive attitudes towards people with disabilities and on current disability equality legislation.</p>	<p>All DfE staff are required to complete mandatory on-line refresher Diversity training on a 3-year rolling basis.</p>		
3	<p>An online Disability Awareness Training Course, designed by the Centre for Applied Learning is available.</p>	<p>Line managers will encourage staff to avail of this training.</p>		<p>Ongoing</p>
4	<p>DfE, through internal briefing mechanisms such as the Department's intranet, will publish articles to promote awareness of the Disability Action Plan and statutory duties as appropriate.</p>	<p>Articles published on the Department's intranet.</p>	<p>Articles published on the Department's intranet to increase staff awareness of the Disability Action Plan</p>	<p>Ongoing</p>

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	<p>In line with the Autism Strategy</p> <p>2013-2020, DfE will:</p> <p>(1) Raise awareness of autism amongst all DfE staff; and</p> <p>(2) Help ensure that Autism Awareness Training is made available to frontline staff.</p>	<p>Article published on the Department's intranet.</p>	<p>Autism Factsheet distributed to all DfE staff as part of participation in World Autism Awareness Day,</p>	<p>Ongoing</p>
<p>5</p>	<p>DfE has established a Departmental Diversity Group. The Diversity Group membership is representative of job roles directly related to equality and diversity, Trade Union Side plus volunteers who express an interest in diversity.</p>	<p>Group met on a quarterly basis</p>	<p>In addition to attending meetings, members of the Group had the opportunity to contribute to the development of communications for staff by researching material, offering ideas on topical issues, drafting publications etc.</p>	<p>Ongoing</p>

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4. Please outline what action measures **have not been achieved** and the reasons why.

	Action Measures not met	Reasons
1		
2		

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

(a) Qualitative

(b) Quantitative

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

- made any **revisions** to your plan during the reporting period or
- taken any **additional steps** to meet the disability duties which were **not outlined in your original** disability action plan / any other changes?

Please select

If yes please outline below:

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

None planned.

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

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

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

^{iv} **Regional**: Situations where people can influence policy decision making at a middle impact level

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