

Department of Finance



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:

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

Signature:

Jonathan R McNaught

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

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

This report reflects progress made between April 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.

NICSHR

NICSHR, a Directorate within the Department of Finance (DoF), provides Human Resources services to all Northern Ireland Civil Service (NICS) Departments and related bodies whose staff are employed on NICS terms and conditions.

People Strategy

The NICS People Strategy continues to provide the framework for an improved model and culture of people management across the NICS. It sets out the NICS people priorities under the following outcome themes:

- A well-led NICS;
- A high performing NICS;
- An outcomes-focused NICS; and
- An inclusive NICS in which diversity is truly valued – a great place to work

Much of the programme of diversity and inclusion work stems from the NICS People Strategy, which places diversity and inclusion firmly at its centre, and includes a range of actions designed to help accelerate our ambition of a truly inclusive NICS which reflects the society we serve.

There has been a substantial increase in diversity and inclusion activity to achieve this ambition and to signal change since the launch of the People Strategy in 2018.

DoF, in common with each NICS Department, has its own Diversity Champion who represents DoF in a central Diversity Champions Network (DCN) co-chaired by Jill Minne (Director of NICSHR). In addition to Departmental Diversity Champions, the NICS has appointed Diversity Champions for each of the four key themes: Gender, LGBT, Race/minority ethnic, and Disability.

NICS Diversity Action Plan

The DCN and NICSHR have worked collaboratively to develop an annual NICS Diversity Action Plan to progress diversity and inclusion work across the NICS.

The Diversity Action Plan sets out key activities to be undertaken across the NICS to improve diversity and inclusion across four key themes: Gender, LGBT, Race/minority ethnic and Disability, cross-cutting priorities and departmental priorities. It is overseen by the leadership of the NICS Board, the NICS Diversity Champions Network, Departmental Diversity Champions and Thematic Diversity Champions, NICS colleague networks and NICSHR, as well as through partnership working with stakeholder organisations. The Diversity Action Plan also includes supporting plans on communications and outreach.

- The impact of the Covid-19 pandemic was considered in terms of the actions contained in the 2020/21 Diversity Action Plan and in relation to resources and priorities for implementation. There was a particular focus on mental health and wellbeing throughout the implementation of the plan and two areas for immediate priority actions were to establish a new Disability Staff Network in November 2020 and also a Race and Minority Ethnic staff network in August 2020.
- Throughout the year, a flexible approach to working has been adopted, with the majority of staff working mostly/partially from home. Taking on board the benefits presented by the new working practices and staff feedback from the People Survey

supporting a hybrid approach to working, work began to develop a new Working from Home Policy.

- The pandemic also drove NICSHR Resourcing to introduce video interviewing (both live and pre-recorded). This provided an alternative to face to face interviews both during the Covid 19 crisis and in the future where it is deemed an appropriate method of carrying out interviews for both internal and external competitions. This new process will be in addition to, not instead of, existing arrangements. Video interviewing can be used for both external open competitions and internal competitions. The introduction of remote interviewing may reduce the stresses and costs of commuting to an interview location for some, the need for reasonable adjustments for some candidates with a disability and it may also assist candidates with dependants or in rural locations who might otherwise find it difficult to travel to central interview locations. While we held no evidence which profiles the economically active population accessing technology or experiencing difficulties accessing technology, detailed guidance and support has been put in place to reduce any reservations some candidates might feel regarding the technology involved. In addition to this, if the candidate does not have a device suitable for remote interviewing, an alternative interview method can be considered on a case by case basis, including, as is currently, any request for reasonable adjustments made by disabled candidates.

NICS Outreach

Outreach is a key element of NICS recruitment to help increase representation of people from groups which are under-represented in the workforce.

An outreach plan has been developed to capture the outreach activities of the many stakeholders contributing to the delivery of the NICS diversity and inclusion agenda. The plan details activities intended to reach external audiences to promote the NICS as an employer of choice, and to support specific recruitment campaigns. The plan will be monitored by the DCN who will have a particular focus on outreach to those groups currently under-represented in the organisation.

During 2020, the NICS undertook its tri-annual Workforce Review which includes its statutory Article 55 Review and also a Gender Review. The Review provides a detailed analysis of the profile of the NICS workforce and its applicant pools during the review period in terms of community background and gender. It also determines what, if any, affirmative action is reasonable and appropriate where it appears fair participation is not, or may not continue to be enjoyed. The findings of both the Article 55 and Gender Review will be used to inform the outreach plan to encourage applications from under-represented groups and help support our ambition of being a diverse and inclusive employer. As outlined in the Reviews, the NICS has worked with the ECNI to determine future goals and timetables for measuring progress towards fair participation. The NICS' overall goal is to have an applicant pool and workforce that is in line with the relevant part of the economically active population. NICSHR will engage with ECNI annually to review and assess progress, will review the workforce composition in light of new Census data once published.

Planned outreach during 2020/21 was impacted by the Covid-19 pandemic measures, with the disruption of many external outreach events and with outreach activity subsequently being undertaken virtually and online. Activities included participation in the Open University's Careersfest initiative, Pride and Belfast Mela, which provided a valuable opportunity to connect with individuals and relevant organisations to let them know about the range of careers available in the NICS.

To attract a broad applicant pool and to target under-represented groups within the NICS, large volume external recruitment competitions were promoted on the Employers for Disability NI (EFDNI) online recruitment portal, the Stonewall Proud Employers website, and with the Northern Ireland Union of Supported Employment (NIUSE), Rainbow Project, Ethnic Minority Groups, ex-conflict related prisoners group and via NICS Career Officers.

During 2020 NICSHR also collaborated with colleagues in the Executive Office's Racial Equality Unit and with NIUSE in advance of the large volume external Work Coach (EOII) recruitment competition. Together, we hosted information sessions with representatives from minority ethnic and disability sectors, and those organisations who work directly to support them, to discuss the roles, the selection process and to provide more information about the Civil Service as an employer.

DISABILITY

NICS Disability Champion/Disability Working Group

Staff from the NICSHR Diversity and Inclusion team provide support to the NICS Disability Champion in the role of Chair of the Disability Working Group, which is a consultative group that promotes disability inclusion across the NICS. The group comprises disabled NICS colleagues, representatives from the disability sector and NIPSA, and a number of departmental colleagues responsible for disability public policy.

The Disability Working Group identified a range of evidence-based interventions and targeted actions to drive balance and inclusion of disabled persons within the NICS, as outlined in the NICS Diversity Action Plan ending March 2021.

During 2020, work started on the development of a Guaranteed Interview Scheme (GIS), and a review of the NICS Disability Work Placement Scheme with a view to improving and expanding the Scheme to provide opportunities for disabled people to gain experience and skills in work. Both of the initiatives will be taken forward in the forthcoming year. In addition, work is ongoing to provide an enhanced access to interview facility where the GIS is not appropriate and to introduce the facility to ring-fence posts for disabled people in recruitment competitions.

International Job Shadow Day

Since 2018, the NICS has participated annually in International Job Shadow Day (IJSJ). In conjunction with NIUSE, the NICS hosted information sessions to the disability

sector to promote the range of potential placements within the NICS to the disability sector, with a view to increasing the numbers of job seekers. Unfortunately due to the Covid-19 pandemic, IJSD 2020 was cancelled. However, the NICS marked the day via internal communications and on social media to celebrate the success of previous IJSD events, and to recognise the positive contribution that disabled people make to the workforce.

The NICS is committed to participating in IJSD 2021, with placements taking place from September – November 2021, subject to Covid-19 restrictions.

Disability Staff Network

As a priority action identified in the Diversity Action Plan 2020/21, the Disability Working Group held an internal awareness event in September 2020 to promote the work of the Group and to launch and encourage membership of the new NICS Disability Staff Network (DSN), which was formed in November 2020. The DSN will promote, celebrate and champion disability diversity and will provide a voice to disabled colleagues that will enhance their working lives, and contribute to a work environment where everyone feels supported and valued.

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

JAM Card

The JAM Card was created by participants of The NOW Group. It allows users with autism or a communication difficulty/disability, if they chose to do so, to discreetly inform a colleague or service provider that they need Just A Minute of patience. The NICS Board agreed a recommendation from the NICS Disability Working Group that the NICS should become JAM Card friendly, with implementation planning beginning in early 2019.

All NICS colleagues were provided with access to a short on-line awareness training session provided by the NOW Group. NICSHR is engaging with the NOW Group on post

Covid-19 communications and we expect to announce that the NICS is JAM Card friendly in the near future.

Employers for Disability Northern Ireland – Lead Partner Membership

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

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

EFDNI continues to deliver tailored disability awareness training to staff and provides support and guidance to NICS staff and managers on a range of complex disability issues.

As part of the NICS' commitment to diversity and inclusion and in order to attract a more diverse applicant pool for recruitment opportunities in the NICS, it continues to promote job and career opportunities on the EFDNI Jobs Bulletin Board, which is an online service circulated to disability organisations.

NICS Work Experience Scheme for People with Disabilities

The NICS Work Experience Scheme for People with Disabilities launched in April 2016.

Work experience and work placements are excellent interventions to provide opportunities for the person to gain valuable experience which will increase their employability skills.

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From mid-March 2020, all applications for work experience were suspended due to Covid-19. The NICS will resume applications as soon as it is feasible to do so in line with government health guidance and regulations.

The Department for Communities and NICS HR undertook a review of the NICS Work Experience Scheme for People with Disabilities in 2020. It is anticipated that a new and improved scheme will be launched in late 2021.

During 2020/21, work also started on the development of a NICS Pre-Employability Scheme for People with Disabilities and this will be taken forward in 2021/22.

LGBT

Pride

Due to Covid-19 restrictions, NICS participation in Pride 2020 was virtual. The NICS LGBT Staff Network marked Pride 2020 with a month of virtual activities, celebrations and online publications, including the launch of a Lets Get Better Together Language Guide and a global article from the Head of the Civil Service on Pride and LGBT inclusion. In addition, a number of departments used social media to celebrate Pride and to demonstrate their commitment to LGBT inclusion.

Stonewall Diversity Champions Programme/Workplace Equality Index

As a clear demonstration of our commitment to have a fully inclusive workforce, in July 2020, NICS HR, on behalf of the NICS, renewed membership to the Stonewall Diversity Champions Network and planned to submit to the 2021 Stonewall Workplace Equality Index, a definitive benchmarking tool for employers to measure their progress on LGBT inclusion in the workplace.

Due to the challenges faced in response to the Covid-19 pandemic, Stonewall cancelled the 2021 Index and announced that submissions for the 2022 Index would open in summer 2021 with new Index criteria launched.

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The NICS is committed to renewing its Stonewall membership in July 2021 and submitting to the 2022 Workplace Equality Index.

As a Stonewall Diversity Champion programme employer, the NICS used the Stonewall 'Proud Employers' website to advertise NICS recruitment opportunities as part of our LGBT outreach activities. The NICS also enjoys access to a wide variety of best practice seminars and training via the Stonewall Diversity Champions programme on a range of relevant diversity and inclusion subjects.

The NICS continued to deliver a number of LGBT inclusion initiatives such as reviewing and updating key policies such as Special Leave/Career Breaks, Maternity; Paternity and Adoption Leave and Domestic and Sexual Abuse, to ensure they are LGBT inclusive.

NICS LGBT Staff Network

The LGBT Staff Network developed a dedicated LGBT website where it has published a number of global intranet articles on relevant topics as part of its communications campaign, and provided links to sources of support and information.

The Network marked Pride 2020 with a month of virtual activities and celebrations, including the launch of a Lets Get Better Together Language Guide. It has also created opportunities for staff learning through the provision of a number of digital workshops such as: Championing LGBT Inclusion as a Senior Leader; Introduction to Allyship; and LGBT+ Mental Health: Supporting your Colleagues. NICS HR continues to support the LGBT staff Network, providing funding to support its development, raise its profile and increase its membership.

GENDER

The Gender Action Plan

The NICS Gender Action Plan, focussing on three key themes of culture, well-being and leadership continues to be implemented through the People Strategy.

Priority actions for 2020 included continuing to support the development of the NICS Women's Network and actions to encourage females to apply for job roles within professions that are historically male dominated. Female role models were used in external recruitment marketing materials for roles within procurement, ICT apprenticeships and statisticians

The Gender Review undertaken during 2020 indicated that progress continues to be made with regards to female representation in the Senior Civil Service (Grade 5 and above), with 41.5% Senior Civil Service female representation in 2020 in comparison to 11.3% in 2000.

Gender Champion/Women's Network

The NICS Gender Champion also co-chairs the NICS Women's Network. The Network aims to promote a diverse and inclusive NICS with equal representation of women at every level of the organisation. It operates over four geographical hub locations: Belfast, Stormont, Craigavon and the North West. NICS HR and the Women's Network work closely on the implementation of the NICS Gender Action Plan.

The Women's Network has continued to raise its profile and awareness of the service through ongoing communication with staff including the creation of a dedicated website. They provided a range of interventions to support women during the Covid-19 pandemic with a strong focus on resilience and mental health. In addition, the Women's Network took the lead on events for NICS International Women's Day Celebrations 2021. NICS HR continues to provide an annual budget to support the running of the Women's Network, raise its profile and increase its membership.

The NICS also celebrated International Men's Day 2020 with a number of webinars and initiatives delivered supporting men's health, and a number of our male colleagues sharing some personal and inspirational accounts of living with a serious health issue.

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In line with Department of Health and Department of Justice Guidance for Employers on Developing a Workplace Policy on Domestic and Sexual Abuse, work is underway to review the NICS workplace policy on Domestic and Sexual Abuse, and to obtain the ONUS Workplace Charter on Domestic Violence.

NICSHR is also working on the development of flexible working guidance and a network approach to job share. Development of future talent in the NICS has been supported by corporate mentoring schemes.

The NICS Women's Network initially piloted the use of mentoring circles within the NICS for female staff at G7 level. Mentoring circles have taken place over the last number of years for Grade 6/7 and analogous grades, focussing on female staff as part of the commitment to address under representation of women at senior levels and to enhance the overall performance of the NICS. Feedback from staff involved in the first two sets of mentoring circles was extremely positive.

Given the success of this programme at the G6/7 level and taking account of the feedback received through consultations with staff during the development of the NICS People Strategy, the use of mentoring circles were expanded and rolled out at substantive DP grade.

As with the initial G6/7 mentoring circles, the pilot for staff at DP level was for female staff only. Again this pilot was very successful with excellent feedback.

Although the mentoring circles planned for 2020/21 were on hold, our Learning and Development team is researching ways in which to continue on a virtual basis and are providing direct support to individual departments and business areas to help them develop their own mentoring capability.

Diversity Mark

The NICS is a founding member of Diversity Mark NI. The Diversity Mark enables organisations to apply for a charter mark which recognises their commitment to diversity and inclusion, initially focussing on gender diversity. The Diversity Charter Mark involves an ongoing annual independent assessment and action plan with targets focusing on initiatives around diversity, outreach and ensuring women are represented at senior levels. Work is underway to implement the action plan to maintain the bronze Gender Diversity Mark and progress towards silver status.

RACE AND ETHNICITY

As a priority action identified in the Diversity Action Plan 2020/21, a new NICS Race and Ethnicity Staff Network was established in August 2020 led by the NICS Race and Ethnicity Champion.

While the Covid-19 pandemic impacted on NICS outreach activities during 2020, the NICS supported “Mela at Home” during 2020. The special virtual festival enabled the NICS to continue to participate in this key event in its programme of outreach to those groups currently under-represented in the workforce and to promote the wide range of careers available across the civil service. The NICS Diversity Champions participated in virtual live panel discussions and NICS HR participated at the Mela Bazaar zone showcasing the wide range of roles in the NICS.

The Race and Ethnicity staff network has engaged with organisations in the minority ethnic sector and created opportunities for staff learning through webinars as part of Black History Month 2020 and has published a number of global intranet articles as part of its communications campaign. Work is also underway to develop a dedicated Race and Ethnicity website. NICS HR continues to support the Race and Ethnicity staff Network, providing funding to support its development, raise its profile and increase its membership.

NICSHR issued communication in December 2020 to all staff concerning the need for EU citizens to apply for settled status by June 21 and provided external links to further advice and guidance on the issue

DoF RACIAL EQUALITY CHAMPION UPDATE

2019/20 activities have included:

Internal Outreach

- The Departmental Racial Equality Network, chaired quarterly by the Racial Equality Champion, is still going well. It was set up to improve internal communication to DoF Directorates, promote awareness and understanding of racial equality issues and to build upon and share existing areas of good practice.
- Quarterly DoF Racial Equality Champion updates are provided to staff on the DoF Intranet (also accessible by other NICS Departments), communicating about engagements to date outside NICS and personal reflections. This highlights to staff the important work of organisations in the minority ethnic sector. Hyperlinks are used within articles to support staff wanting to click and learn more about the organisations outside NICS.
- Regular updates provided to the DoF Departmental Board on progress of actions towards the Racial Equality Strategy 2015-2025.
- Acted as the Race and Ethnicity representative on NICS Live Diversity & Inclusion panel discussion (May 2019).
- Speaker at NICS Women's Belfast Hub to support International Women's Day (March 2020).

External Outreach

To raise awareness and promote collaboration with non-NICS organisations:

- Since March 2018, DoF REC twitter account (@alfiecbwong) set up to continue outreach and engagement with both DoF/NICS staff and outside NICS.
- Belfast Friendship Club – with interested stakeholders delivered two (June 2019 and February 2020) interactive Small Worlds café-style workshops to DoF staff,

promoted as a safe space for participants to encounter people from different backgrounds and parts of the world.

- Craigavon Travellers Support Committee – scheduled cultural awareness staff training event for March 2020 (postponed due to current COVID-19 situation) as important opportunity to hear directly from the community and to increase understanding of Traveller culture, enabling participants to gain greater knowledge of the issues which affect the health and wellbeing of Travellers.
- African Women Organisation NI – planning for Modern Slavery & Human Trafficking Workshop Training Event for DoF staff (has been postponed due to current COVID-19 situation).
- Speaker in November 2019 at closing conference and launch of the Lisburn and Castlereagh City Council BME and Cultural Awareness Forum, to raise awareness of issues faced by minority ethnic communities and in support of The Institute for Conflict Research on their delivery of community relations programme funded by PEACE IV.
- In addition to DoF representative at Belfast Migrant Forum (chaired by Belfast City Council), Intercommunity Interest Forum (chaired by Bryson Intercultural) and Consultative Forum on Equality (chaired by NI Housing Executive), now also actively engaging with:
 - East Belfast Race Relations Forum (chaired by East Belfast Community Development Agency); and
 - Stronger Together Network

Following the Roundtable event at Girdwood Community Hub (October 2018) between NICS Racial Equality Champions and Racial Equality Subgroup to discuss a range of issues with community and voluntary groups working with or representing minority ethnic people and migrants and collating feedback for DoF action, key outputs include:

- DoF (NISRA, Census2021, LPS, Go ON NI, NI Direct, MyNI and NICSHR) took part for the first time at the Belfast Mela Festival (August 2019), to communicate and share about our outward facing services and to promote and ensure increased

participation by under-represented groups. We wanted to reach out to our diverse communities, helping with signposting, advice and support, while always ready to listen to feedback; to contribute to Equality of Service Provision outcome of Racial Equality Strategy 2015-2025.

- A public DoF Services for Our Diverse Society survey was commissioned and launched at Belfast Mela (August 2019), seeking views from our communities on our services, on the day itself and also subsequently (September 2019) through DoF Racial Equality Champion networks and social media. This DoF survey was used as a checkpoint on progress in responding to feedback from Girdwood Community Hub Roundtable and to identify any further actions.
- Review of NI Direct website to raise awareness and improving accessibility to online government services, contributing to Equality of Service Provision outcome of Racial Equality Strategy 2015-2025. This included work on Online Accessibility Translation Services involving engagement with ArtsEktra and plans for further outreach with wider minority ethnic sector.
- NICSHR led marketing strategy in respect of recruitment, including for DP/SO and AO external recruitment competitions, promoting 'If you can see it, you can be it' with profile of Racial Equality Champion (DP) and outreach AO awareness session with wider minority sector organisations including North West Migrants Forum.
- DoF Racial Equality Champion working with DoF colleagues to address feedback and continually review involving the minority ethnic sector, including regarding Census 2021 and NI Direct.

SistersIN Leadership Programme – Assumption Grammar School

NICSHR has affiliated with Assumption Grammar School SistersIN Leadership Programme, which aims to foster leadership capacity and build confidence amongst its Sixth Form female students.

In building this partnership, NICSHR developed and hosted a NICS As An Employer Workshop for 11 students from Assumption Grammar school in Goodwood House on Thursday 13th February 2020. This workshop was designed to provide these students with an opportunity to learn about the diverse job opportunities the Northern Ireland Civil Service has to offer, how its female leadership is evolving and how it is supporting the next generation of female leaders. The workshop included a series of motivational talks by two Permanent Secretaries and an Assistant Secretary followed by a question and answer session.

A chance for students to talk to NICS staff working in diverse roles such as engineers, statisticians, agriculturalists, solicitors and HR professionals. Feedback from both students and tutors has been extremely positive and NICSHR will continue to be involved in this programme.

Economist Profession Diversity and Outreach

The Economist Profession continues to follow the key principles of the NICS Equality, Diversity and Inclusion Policy. We recognise and are committed to the benefits of having a cohort of Economists which comprises diverse characteristics and different experiences, needs and aspirations. Understanding, valuing and effectively managing these differences can result in greater participation, and help bring about success at an individual, branch, Departmental and Profession level. The Economist Profession's Diversity and Outreach Champion has been implementing actions from the 'Diversity and Outreach Action Plan' and the wider Profession has been engaging in activities to raise the Profession's profile.

Part, but not all, of our focus has naturally been on the issue of gender diversity as the profession has a higher proportion of males than females. However, the current balance generally reflects the pool of economics graduates and indeed school leavers who have undertaken A Level Economics within NI. From discussions with representatives of the universities and schools they have noted a drop in the numbers

of females studying Economics. Recognising this, we are continuing to target school and University students and promote Economics as a career choice for female economists, and while it is recognised that we may not see the full benefits of this engagement immediately, it remains a strong commitment for the Profession moving forward.

However, given the challenges with COVID-19 during 2020, it was difficult to continue to engage in the way we usually would with Universities and Schools, meaning that many activities from the Diversity and Outreach Action Plan had to be postponed. Unfortunately, this also meant that we were not able to host work experience students as we usually would. The Profession has however continued to provide one year placements for students in their sandwich year, currently these students are carrying out placements in Department for the Economy (DfE) and Department of Education (DE).

Land and Property Service (LPS) Outreach activity

Opportunities to develop and enhance outreach activity continues to be undertaken by LPS Revenues & Benefits (R&B) directorate during Covid times in 2020/2021. The online 'digital first' approach for Rate Rebate claimant's remains in place. Supporting this approach, LPS has developed a suite of options, including telephony to assist citizens with a new online application form, and promoted the Rate Rebate Scheme, to assist citizens in receipt of Universal Credit with the payment of Rates. LPS issued a Rate Rebate Factsheet to the Northern Ireland Housing Executive (NIHE) Equality Unit assisting tenants in making an application for Rate Rebate. LPS also issued Rate Rebate guidance literature to the Landlords Association for NI (LANI) which has been included on the LANI website.

LPS continues to utilize established networks with NIHE, DfC Make the Call as well promoting available reliefs through advertising in the Young at Heart Dairy and Directory, raising awareness,, help and assistance on Rate Rebate , Lone Pensioner Allowance and Disabled Persons Allowance. LPS continues to collaborate with the DoF

Communications Team, updating and maintaining online literature on rate reliefs and appropriate signposting to DfC Make the Call. LPS also provided Polish translated versions of the Rate Rebate Factsheet and continues to provide translated information literature to many other minority ethnic groups. LPS Outreach Team has created a tailored version of the Get Help with Rates booklet for the RNIB (people with sight loss) Service User Group for use at Outreach discussion groups.

Land & Property Services – Housing Benefit Future Delivery Project

LPS has set up a Housing Benefit Future Delivery Project Team and part of the role of the project team will be to carry out an EQIA Screening to determine if a full EQIA should be completed to identify that no customers will be adversely affected by the transfer of the owner/occupier sector from LPS administration to the NIHE administration.

LPS Mental Health Hub

LPS have developed a Mental Health Hub on their Intranet site with the main aim being to promote the message “It’s ok to talk”. The hub lists the Mental Health First Aiders and Health & Safety representatives in LPS locations. The hub also holds contact details for support services available within the NICS and contact routes for various help services. Posters with this information are displayed in all LPS offices. LPS have a NICS WELL Champion who has facilitated wellbeing and engagement events and activities which many staff have benefitted from.

DoF Diversity Network

The DoF Diversity Network has continued to promote diversity and inclusion across the Department and supporting specific location or topic related groups. This year DoF was represented at MELA which again had a large representation from the various DoF business areas. The network continues to consider where it can fill gaps in the work being undertaken by others such as NICS HR or specific DoF groups such as the Goodwood House Mental Health Group.

Goodwood House Mental Health Group

The quiet room has still been available for members who have been working in the office during the pandemic.

Two members of Goodwood House Mental Health Group have enrolled in Mental Health First Aid Training in conjunction with Northern Health and Social Care Trust. The training will take place in October 2021. This may coincide with an increased return of staff numbers returning to the office.

- Money and mental health, in collaboration with the Consumer Council, the Credit Union and Christians Against Poverty;
- Walking tours, with a subsequent charitable donation made to Action Mental Health;
- Big Listen, supporting the work of the Samaritans; and
- Participation in the filming of a video for “This is Me”, part of Inspire’s campaign on body image and self-esteem (during mental health awareness week)

Digital Inclusion

All Go ON NI Digital Inclusion Programme events in 2021/21 have been online only and restricted to training and informational sessions held in conjunction with our partners at LibrariesNI and Supporting Communities.

Information and assistance is provided regarding online services, including government services and transactions which would link into the [“Making Lives Better” NI government strategy for digital transformation](#).

PART A

- 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*).

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

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

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

5 Were the Section 75 statutory duties integrated within performance plans during the 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, Personal Performance Agreements contain targets and objectives which include statutory obligations relative to the official's responsibility. For example, Central Support Team staff PPAs contain objectives relative to their role in providing advice and guidance and promoting equality across the department.

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

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- 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 2020-21 report
- Not applicable

Please provide any details and examples:

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

Equality action plans/measures

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

Actions completed:

See below

Actions ongoing:

See below

Actions to commence:

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

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

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*):

N/A. The Section 75 Action Plan 2018-23 was published in October 2018 following consultation.

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:

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)*:

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:

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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)

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

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

11

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

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:

None.

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

Yes No concerns were raised No Not applicable

Please provide any details and examples:

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

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

19 Following decisions on a policy, were the results of any EQIAs published during the 2020-21 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 2020-21 reporting period? *(tick one box only)*

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

Please provide any details:

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

- Yes No Not applicable

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:

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

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

NISRA Equality Statistics for the NICS: [Equality Statistics for the Northern Ireland Civil Service - 2020](https://www.nisra.gov.uk/equality-statistics-for-the-northern-ireland-civil-service-2020)
[Northern Ireland Statistics and Research Agency \(nisra.gov.uk\)](https://www.nisra.gov.uk/)

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 2020-21, and the extent to which they met the training objectives in the Equality Scheme.

Staff in the Department undertook the following training provided by NICSHR Learning and Development during 2020-21:

Course	Numbers of staff completed
Autism Spectrum Disorder Awareness (e-learning)	22
Buy Social (e-learning)	8
Buy Social - Construction Contract (Webinar)	2
Services and ICT Contract (Webinar)	3
Disability Awareness for Frontline Staff (e-learning)	21
Introduction to Human Rights (e-learning)	10
Introduction to Section 75 (e-learning)	22
Mental Health Awareness for Managers Managing Remote Teams (Webinar)	22
Mental Health Awareness for Staff Working at Home (Webinar)	82
*Positive Mental Health Toolkit for Line Managers (e-learning)	11
*Positive Mental Health Toolkit for Staff (e-learning)	76
Recruitment and Selection – Standards and Skills (Webinar)	
Recruitment & Selection: Refresher Training for SCS (Webinar)	95

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	7
Supporting Vulnerable People (e-learning)	22
Unconscious Bias (e-learning)	68
Section 75 Duties – A focus on Screening	0
Policy Making and Human Rights	0

- 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:

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**:

Planned outreach during 2020/21 was impacted by the Covid-19 pandemic measures, with the disruption of many external outreach events and with outreach activity subsequently being undertaken virtually and online.

As disabled people and those from minority ethnic communities are under-represented in the NICS, NICS HR collaborated with the Executive Office’s Racial Equality Unit and the Northern Ireland Union of Supported Employment (NIUSE) to deliver two information sessions to encourage applications for the large volume Work Coach (Executive Officer II) recruitment competition launched in October 2020.

In addition, in order to attract a broad applicant pool and to target under-represented groups within the NICS, a recruitment e-flyer was shared with NIUSE, TEO’s Racial Equality Unit, the Rainbow Project, ex-conflict related prisoners group and via NICS Career Officers in order to promote the opportunity with their contacts. The opportunity was also promoted on the Employers for Disability NI (EFDNI) online recruitment portal and via social media.

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:

0

Please provide any details of each complaint raised and outcome:

Section 3: Looking Forward

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

The Department commenced its statutory 5-year review in April. Consultation is currently being undertaken with stakeholders. It is intended the review will complete in the Autumn.

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

We will continue to focus on improvements to screening assessments and the consideration and inclusion of relevant data.

30 In relation to the advice and services that the Commission offers, what **equality and good relations priorities** are anticipated over the next (2020-21) reporting period? *(please tick any that apply)*

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

DoF Section 75 Action Plan 2018-23: Update on Progress during 2020/21

Policy Area: Human Resource Management

Strategic Objectives:

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

Inequality	Action	Performance Outcome	Timescale	2020/21 Update
<p>Under-representation of Protestants in General Service administrative and junior management grades and of Protestants and Catholics in some grades in the Professional and Specialist groups in the NICS compared to the</p>	<p>Use of positive action advertising statements to encourage applications from under-represented groups.</p> <p>Other actions will be considered when the NICS develops and implements a communications and outreach plan to support</p>	<p>Representation of both communities in line with what would be expected through the Review of Fair Participation in the NICS (the “Article 55 Review”).</p>	<p>Continuous until the next review in 2022.</p>	<p>ONGOING</p> <p>Continue to analyse recruitment competitions to monitor the profile of applications and the progress of all equality groups through the recruitment process.</p> <p>The Article 55 Review was conducted during 2019/20. Analysis was completed in May 2020. Goals and timetables for action are contained in the latest report.</p>

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Inequality	Action	Performance Outcome	Timescale	2020/21 Update
NI labour market (Religious belief).	delivery of the NICS D&I agenda, promoting key messages at all levels across the Service and key audiences externally. This will include specific work, such as delivery of targeted outreach activity informed by data and aligned to NICS recruitment plans.			Planned outreach during 2020/21 was impacted by the Covid-19 pandemic measures, with the disruption of many external outreach events and with outreach activity subsequently being undertaken virtually and online. Activities included participation in the Open University's Careersfest initiative, Pride, and Belfast Mela, which provided a valuable opportunity to connect with individuals and relevant organisations to let them know about the range of careers available in the NICS.
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.	Representation of each gender in line with what would be expected through the Review of Gender in the NICS.	Continuous until the next review in 2022.	ONGOING Continue to analyse recruitment competitions to monitor the profile of applications and the progress of all equality groups through the recruitment process.

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Inequality	Action	Performance Outcome	Timescale	2020/21 Update
<p>(Men and women generally).</p>	<p>Other actions will be considered when the NICS develops and implements a communications and outreach plan to support delivery of the NICS D&I agenda, promoting key messages at all levels across the Service and key audiences externally. This will include specific work, such as delivery of targeted outreach activity informed by data and aligned to NICS recruitment plans.</p>			<p>In the interests of promoting gender equality, the Civil Service completed a comprehensive gender review alongside its tri-annual statutory Article 55 Review during 2020. The review provides a detailed analysis of the profile (community background and gender) of the NICS workforce composition and flows during the review period. The Equality Commission for NI (ECNI) has confirmed the NICS is legally compliant. The reviews are publically available and provide a clear evidence base to inform decisions about where affirmative action measures are required. The NICS has committed to engaging annually with the ECNI to monitor progress.</p> <p>The NICS attained the Diversity NI Charter Mark in October 2019 and has committed to an</p>

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Inequality	Action	Performance Outcome	Timescale	2020/21 Update
				<p>annual independent assessment and action plan with targets focusing on initiatives around diversity, outreach and ensuring women are represented at senior levels. The next assessment is due summer 2021.</p> <p>Mentoring Circles were introduced into the NICS following the successful pilot of a concept designed by the NICS Women’s network as a mechanism for targeting a development programme for women to help address gender issues at the senior levels within the NICS.</p>
Under-representation of staff from ethnic minorities.	Other actions will be considered when the NICS develops and implements a communications and	Representation in line with what would be expected through the Review of the NICS workforce.	Ongoing	<p>COMPLETE</p> <p>Continue to analyse recruitment competitions to monitor the profile of applications and the progress of all equality groups through the recruitment process.</p>

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Inequality	Action	Performance Outcome	Timescale	2020/21 Update
	<p>outreach plan to support delivery of the NICS D&I agenda, promoting key messages at all levels across the Service and key audiences externally. This will include specific work, such as delivery of targeted outreach activity informed by data and aligned to NICS recruitment plans.</p>			<p>Planned outreach during 2020/21 was impacted by the Covid-19 pandemic measures, with the disruption of many external outreach events and with outreach activity subsequently being undertaken virtually and online. Activities included participation in the Open University’s Careersfest initiative, Pride, and Belfast Mela, which provided a valuable opportunity to connect with individuals and relevant organisations to let them know about the range of careers available in the NICS.</p> <p>In addition, NICSHR collaborated with the Racial Equality Unit in the Executive Office to host information sessions with minority ethnic organisations in advance of launching the large volume external Work Coach (EOII) recruitment competition.</p>

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Inequality	Action	Performance Outcome	Timescale	2020/21 Update
	<p>The DoF Racial Equality Champion (REC) will engage with business areas to ensure that all policies and operational practices of the Department and its agency take account of the aims and principles of the Racial Equality Strategy 2015-25. REC will also continue to engage externally, outside DoF, with Racial Equality Subgroup (chaired by TEO), Belfast Migrant Forum (chaired</p>			<p>COMPLETE</p> <p>REC established a Departmental Racial Equality Network in August 2020 to promote awareness/share good practice. Feedback from the Racial Equality round-table event shared with Network and Departmental Board to progress (including feedback shared with NICSHR for consideration and incorporation into current and planned work programme).</p>

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Inequality	Action	Performance Outcome	Timescale	2020/21 Update
	by Belfast City Council) and Intercultural Interest Forum (chaired by Bryson Intercultural), to assist with any consultation.			
Support for transitioning staff (Men and women generally).	Develop transgender guidance for managers and staff.	Transgender guidance in place to ensure managers are aware of how to appropriately support transitioning staff and that staff are aware of the support they can expect.	By 31 st March 2019.	COMPLETE NICS Trans Policy and Transitioning at Work Guide launched in March 2019. HOCS, together with a colleague from NICS LGBT Staff Network and a Stonewall representative took part in a video to launch the Policy and Guide.
Data Gaps on Section 75 profile of NICS	Obtain data from staff on ethnicity, disability,	Increase in data held on HRConnect for	By 31 st March 2020.	ONGOING

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Inequality	Action	Performance Outcome	Timescale	2020/21 Update
workforce (Racial group; Persons with a disability; Persons with dependents; Sexual orientation).	dependents and sexual orientation.	existing staff in relation to ethnicity, disability, dependents and sexual orientation.		Through NICS staff networks, global articles have been published encouraging existing staff to update equal opportunities monitoring information. Work ongoing to consider how to address this issue.
Job opportunities for the long-term unemployed and those leaving education (All S75 categories).	Lot 1 Contractors (General Job Roles) under the Framework Agreement for the provision of Agency workers to recruit a minimum of 15% of AA and AO job roles from the long-term unemployed and those leaving education, as per contract specification.	15% of AA and AO job roles recruited from the long-term unemployed and those leaving education.	By 31 st March each year.	ONGOING The previous agency worker's framework ended in December 2020 and the new agency worker's contract commenced in January 2021. Work is underway by the recruitment agency to meet the performance outcome.

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Inequality	Action	Performance Outcome	Timescale	2020/21 Update
	<p>The recruitment agency under Lots 1 and 2 (administration roles) and 6 (ancillary and industrial roles) of the new agency worker's contract is required to recruit a minimum of 11.25% of new personnel who are long term unemployed or have left education in an Administrative Assistant (AA), Administrative Officer (AO) or analogous role, as per the conditions of the contract.</p>	<p>11.25% of AA and AO job roles recruited from the long-term unemployed and those leaving education.</p>		

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Inequality	Action	Performance Outcome	Timescale	2020/21 Update
Job opportunities for those who have a disability; who are a looked after child/care leaver; and who are from a BAME community	The recruitment agency under Lots 1 and 2 (administration roles) and 6 (ancillary and industrial roles) of the new agency worker's contract is required to recruit a minimum of 3.75% of new personnel who have a disability; who are a looked after child/care leaver; or who are from a BAME community in an Administrative Assistant (AA), Administrative Officer (AO) or analogous role, as per	3.75% of AA and AO job roles recruited from those who have a disability; who are a looked after child/care leaver; and who are from a BAME community.	By 31 st March each year.	The previous agency worker's framework ended in December 2020 and the new agency worker's contract commenced in January 2021. Work is underway by the recruitment agency to meet the performance outcome.

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Inequality	Action	Performance Outcome	Timescale	2020/21 Update
	the conditions of the contract.			

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Policy Area: Services to the Citizen

Strategic Objective:

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

Inequality	Action	Performance Outcome	Timescale	2020/21 Update
Access to Government Services (Age; Persons with a disability).	A range of accessible Digital Inclusion Programme activities and events are promoted annually – however, due to the Covid-19 situation in 2020/21, it was only possible to deliver these via online mechanisms. They included, Get Online Week and Spring Online Week, and similar initiatives with other external organisations to	Increase in Digital skills and internet usage for those aged 50-64 and 65+.	By 31 st March each year.	<p>COMPLETE</p> <p>Previous survey information indicates that internet Use has increased for those age 50-64 and aged 65+ as follows:</p> <p>Age 50-64</p> <p>2015/16 – 72%</p> <p>2016/17 – 84%</p> <p>2017/18 – 75%</p> <p>2018/19 – 87%</p> <p>Unfortunately no relevant NI stats have been available since 2019/20, although alternative data sets such as Lloyds Consumer Digital Index indicates that the UK as a whole has shown an increase of approx. 11% in the</p>

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	<p>encourage digital participation such as Safer Internet Day. Additionally, online training and informational opportunities were provided via our partners at LibrariesNI and Supporting Communities during the year. The Go ON NI programme focuses on the benefits of being online, and brings together all the initiatives, places and tools to help and encourage off-liners to become internet</p>			<p>number of over 60's going online especially in the 60- 65 age group from 2019.</p> <p>In excess of 10,000 citizens have been reached through Go ON NI Programmes in liaison with the Libraries NI Network, Supporting Communities and BITC, and including the Digital Assist Steering Group partners. All sessions and information were provided to those over age 50 or with a disability excepting approx. Over 2000 citizens were trained through the Go On programme in Libraries 2019-2020.</p> <p>During the year, work also commenced on developing a Connected Devices project aimed at enabling up to 150 participants who have never previously used the internet to get online via the loan of a tablet device and free data.</p>
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	<p>beginners. Full details are all available at www.nidirect.gov.uk/go-on</p>			<p>Additionally, a Digital Text Help service was launched to help those who are online stay online by using digital volunteers to help sort out simple IT and connection problems.</p>
	<p>Increased working relationships and working in partnership with organisations represented on the Digital Assist Steering Group, to deliver bespoke training, awareness and information sessions. Continuing working relationships with Age Friendly, Belfast City Council and inroads into other organisations.</p>	<p>Quarterly DASG and ScamwiseNI meetings.</p> <p>A fifth of overall Go ON NI target remit (i.e. 2000 citizens) to be specifically reached through this group.</p>	<p>By 31st March 2020.</p>	<p>COMPLETE</p> <p>Now subsumed into the wider Go ON NI Programme.</p>

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	<p>Connectability Programme to continue as part of the DoF Go ON NI programme: specific IT sessions to be delivered for those with a mental or physical disability or to those caring for a disabled person. Provided across ten groups initially on a programme plan.</p>	<p>Evaluation of IT sessions whereby increased Digital Skills enable engagement with government services and financial capability online as required.</p>	<p>By 31st March 2020.</p>	<p>COMPLETE</p> <p>Now subsumed into the wider Go ON NI Programme.</p>
	<p>Engage with Autism NI on further training/awareness and review signage and communications. Share good practice with other public facing areas of the department.</p>	<p>People with a learning difficulty, Autism or a communication barrier supported in accessing government services.</p>	<p>By 30th June 2019.</p>	<p>COMPLETE</p> <p>Autism NI delivered be-spoke training to NICS HR OHS and Welfare Staff. Further training arranged for Land and Property Services and General Registry Office staff.</p>

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	Introduce the JAM (Just a Minute) card to the NICS.		By 31 st March 2019.	COMPLETE Implementation planning began in early 2019. NICS HR are engaging with the NOW Group on post Covid-19 communications to announce that the NICS JAM Card friendly and expect to do so in the near future.
Accessibility of Stormont Estate (Persons with a disability).	A new inclusive play park built at Stormont Estate.	A play park that is suitable for children of all abilities.	By 30 th June 2019.	COMPLETE Work is complete and the play park opened in June 2019.
	A new Changing Places toilet to be built at Stormont Estate.	A provide a Changing Places toilet that will enable people with complex needs to access the facilities they need to enjoy what Stormont Estate has to offer.	By 30 th April 2021	COMPLETE The facility was opened by the Finance Minister on 26 April 2021

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<p>Take-up of housing benefit, low income rate relief, rate rebate disabled person’s allowance and lone pensioner allowance (Marital Status, Age, Persons with a disability, Persons with dependents).</p>	<p>Outreach activity and updating of literature. The introduction of a ‘digital first’ approach for use by claimants to the new Rate Rebate scheme remains in place, alongside a suite of support options, including telephony for those who may have difficulty interacting with a digital interface, including help and assistance being available at www.nidirect.gov.uk/go-on-ni. This should benefit to customers who have faced</p>	<p>Uptake in benefit each year from those vulnerable groups entitled to financial assistance.</p>	<p>By 31st March each year.</p>	<p>COMPLETE</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Additional staff resource added to the Outreach Team to support the LPS Outreach Manager. • Due to the related Government restrictions during Covid times the LPS Outreach team did not attend any outreach events in the rating year 2020/2021. • Through 2020/2021 networking activities engagement has taken place with Young at Heart, LANI, NIHE Equality Unit, Non-English First Language stakeholder groups, North West Migrants’ Forum, Northern Ireland Community of Refugees and Asylum Seekers (NICRAS). • The number of applications for Disabled Persons Allowance (DPA) and Lone Pensioner Allowance (LPA)
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	difficulties in the past, including those who have found it difficult to access services during normal office opening hours.			continues to increase since the appointment of a dedicated LPS Outreach Manager in 2018.e Figures for 2020-2021 indicate an increase of 10% in LPA applications and a decrease in DPA figures, however the Covid restrictions on house visits have impacted on these DPA figures.
Law in NI treats unmarried fathers differently from married and unmarried mothers (Marital Status).	Consider amendments to current laws.	Take forward recommendations on parent/child contact emerging from The Lord Chief Justice Review which was published in September 2017.	TBC	ONGOING Further work will be considered in the context of the work of the shadow Family Justice Board, and taking account of existing legislative and other resource priorities.

DoF Disability Action Plan 2018-23: Update on Progress during 2018/19

Measure	Performance Indicators/Target	Timescale	Intended Outcome	Responsibility	2018/19 Update
Awareness Raising and Training					
DoF Diversity Network to work with people with disabilities to raise awareness of disability e.g. showcase and promote the positive contribution of DoF staff with disabilities to the department.	Promotion articles/activities. Staff survey results.	31 st March each year.	Promotion of positive attitudes towards people with a disability within the department.	DoF Diversity Network.	Ongoing outreach via multiple channels.
NICS Diversity Training Unconscious bias (e-learning) training to be completed by all staff but is mandatory for all new	Number of new staff trained.	Priority 1 training – within 0-4 months of appointment.	All new staff to know about the NICS Equality, Diversity and Inclusion policy and their responsibilities,	Line managers and NICS HR	ONGOING The DoF Induction process includes Equality, Diversity and Inclusion. New staff and their Line Managers are expected to record when the

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managers (EO2 and analogous and above).			including the disability duties.		<p>induction process is undertaken.</p> <p>Work commenced in 2020 to develop a new NICS Diversity and Inclusion hub to include and promote key diversity and inclusion information, guidance and learning materials. Work also began to develop a new NICS Diversity and Inclusion e-learning awareness product for all NICS staff. Both are anticipated to be launched in 2021.</p>
Revise Form and Guidance on Reasonable Adjustments	New Form and Guidance available to staff.	By 31 st March 2019.	Clearer process and guidance for staff on the reasonable	NICS HR	<p>COMPLETE</p> <p>Guidance issued to staff in September 2018 by NICS Disability Champion on</p>

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			adjustments process.		passporting of reasonable adjustments.
<p>Front-line staff to be trained to deal with customers with a disability through completion of the following e-learning courses:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Disability Awareness for front-line staff; • Autism Spectrum Disorder (ASD) awareness; • Supporting Vulnerable People <p>Induction for front-line staff to include 'Every Customer Counts'.</p>	<p>Number of staff trained.</p> <p>Customer surveys/feedback.</p>	<p>Priority 1 training (0-4 months)</p> <p>Complaints dealt with within customer service standards timescales.</p> <p>Customer surveys</p>	<p>Improved service for customers with disabilities.</p>	<p>Line managers and customer service teams.</p>	<p>ONGOING</p> <p>NICS agreed to become JAM Card friendly and implementation planning began early 2019 with staff beginning training April 2019.</p> <p>2020/21 update - JAM Card friendly training was rolled out across NICS in 2019. Implementation planning began in early 2019. NICS HR is engaging with the NOW Group on post Covid-19 communications to announce that the NICS is JAM Card</p>

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		carried out every year.			<p>friendly and expect to do so in the near future.</p> <p>Training rolled out to support Every Customer Counts. Numbers trained are detailed at Question 24.</p> <p>Mandatory e-learning courses for disability awareness, autism awareness and supporting vulnerable people were rolled out to all LPS Revenue & Benefits staff in November 2018.</p> <p>Local inductions updated to include 'Every Customer Counts'.</p>
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<p>Provision of advice and support to staff on health related matters, including promoting positive mental health, through NICS Well and in line with the NICS Mental Health Strategy (strategy under development).</p>	<p>Publication of the NICS Well Newsletter 'Well Times'.</p> <p>Well Champions Conference</p>	<p>Quarterly.</p> <p>Annually</p>	<p>Increase awareness of health conditions and how to manage them.</p>	<p>NICS HR.</p>	<p>COMPLETE</p> <p>This year, greater emphasis has been placed on support for mental wellbeing and raising awareness of mental health issues for NICS staff. This has been achieved working with WELL and other delivery partners to raise awareness, highlight campaigns and signpost to sources of information at various times throughout the year and using a range of communications methods: social media, intranet sites, WELL sites, articles in e-zines, information sessions, videos etc.</p>
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					<p>As a result of the Covid-19 pandemic, a new Health and Wellbeing Steering Group was established which co-ordinated the delivery of a programme of information and support to NICS staff, including creation of a Covid-19 staff information internet site as a single source of reliable information including FAQs, guidance, articles etc.</p> <p>A staff Health and Wellbeing hub was created, containing mental health support and advice with resources on resilience, mindfulness, exercise and support services. We collaborated</p>
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					<p>with third party subject matter experts to provide advice on specialist areas such as supporting older people during Covid-19 (Age NI) and alcohol awareness (Addiction NI).</p> <p>The impact of the Covid-19 pandemic was also considered in terms of the actions contained in the 2020/21 Diversity Action Plan and in relation to resources and priorities for implementation. There was a particular focus on mental health and wellbeing throughout the implementation of the plan.</p>
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<p>Recruitment and Development</p>					
<p>Promote and develop the work experience programme, providing meaningful placements for people with disabilities with a wide range of disability organisations.</p>	<p>Number of participants by work area.</p> <p>Number of participating disability organisations.</p> <p>Feedback from participants and hosting managers.</p>	<p>Annually.</p>	<p>Encourage more disabled people to apply for NICS jobs and promote positive attitudes towards people with a disability within the Department.</p>	<p>NICS HR.</p>	<p>COMPLETE</p> <p>The NICS Work Experience Scheme for People with Disabilities (launched in April 2016) continued to accept applications from disability organisations seeking structured work placements for their clients up until mid-March 2020, when the scheme was suspended due to Covid-19 restrictions. Scheme information is available on the NICS Recruitment website.</p> <p>From 1 January 2020 to 13 March 2020 there were 11 applications. These 11</p>

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					<p>applications resulted in two placements being agreed. The other nine requests could not be facilitated in 2020/21 due to Covid-19 restrictions.</p> <p>Applications continue to be suspended due to the pandemic, however the NICS will resume applications as soon as it is feasible to do so in line with government health guidance and regulations.</p> <p>The Department for Communities and NICSHR undertook a review of the scheme in 2020. It is anticipated that a new and</p>
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					<p>improved scheme will be launched in late 2021.</p> <p>During 2020 / 21, work also commenced to develop a NICS Pre-Employability Scheme for People with Disabilities and will be taken forward in 2021/22. .</p> <p>In preparation for International Job Shadow Day (IJSJ) 2020, NICS in conjunction with NIUSE hosted information sessions to the disability sector to promote the range of potential placements within the NICS to the disability sector, with a view to increasing the numbers of job seekers. Unfortunately due</p>
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					to the Covid-19 pandemic, IJSD 2020 was cancelled. However, the NICS marked the day via internal communications and on social media to celebrate the success of previous IJSD events, and to recognise the positive contribution that disabled people make to the workforce.
Review and implement the NICS Policy on reasonable adjustments in the recruitment and selection process in collaboration with people with a disability.	Monitoring information on applications from people with a disability and feedback on the reasonable	31 st March 2019.	NICS' recruitment and selection procedures to provide equality of opportunity to people with disabilities so that they are	NICSHR.	COMPLETE This review of this policy is now complete and the new version was uploaded onto the NICS Recruitment website on 19/3/19.

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	adjustment process.		encouraged to apply and compete for employment opportunities.		
Participation and Engagement					
Development of a NICS-wide Mental Health Strategy.	<p>1. Establish Mental Health forum (internal partners) to connect all NICS mental health activities.</p> <p>2. Connected links developed with external partners (Inspire/Charity for Civil Service Servants)</p>	31 st March 2023.	NICS has a cohesive approach to the delivery of mental health initiatives, and support services, from both internal and external partners.	NICS HR.	<p>1. ONGOING – linked to the development and outworkings of the Mental Health Strategy.</p> <p>2. COMPLETE Collaboration partners meetings throughout the year, leading to working together on a range of issues/events including International Men’s Day, Women’s Day, World MH Day, BBC’s Christmas campaign. These all had</p>

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	3. Mental Health Strategy developed and implemented.				inputs from OHS, Welfare, Inspire, Charity for C.S and others and were delivered using a range of channels – social media, intranet, internet, group sessions etc. 3. ONGOING - NICS Mental Health Strategy to be completed by March 2022.
Complete appointment plan for each new public appointment competition, focusing on diversity and steps to encourage applications from disabled people, and taking on board any recommendations or actions emanating from the	Numbers of people with a disability applying for and being appointed to public life positions.	Plan to be completed at the time draft competition is being developed.	Encourage more disabled people to apply for public appointments.	Sponsor Branch (monitored by Central Support Team).	COMPLETE During 2020/21 DoF ran a number of public appointment competitions. Appointment plans focused on diversity, including reviewing criteria, consideration of the Guaranteed Interview Scheme and targeted contact

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<p>TEO strategic diversity plan for public appointments.</p>					<p>with disability representative organisations to promote the vacancies.</p> <p>During 2020/21, NICSHR promoted a number of public appointment competitions being arranged by the Department for Education with the NICS Disability Working. Members of the group include external representatives from the disability sector who were asked to share with their sector contacts.</p>
<p>Digital Inclusion Programme activities specifically targeted at disabled people and their carers and developed in conjunction</p>	<p>Number of activities and evaluation results.</p>	<p>Annually</p>	<p>Encourage people with disabilities to make use more online services.</p>	<p>Digital Transformation Service.</p>	<p>ONGOING</p> <p>The wider Go ON NI Programme includes services for those who are disabled.</p>

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with disability organisations.					
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