

## Department of Finance



### Public Authority Statutory Equality and Good Relations Duties Annual Progress Report 2021-22

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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 2021 and March 2022**

## **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 2021-22, 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 is a Directorate within the Department of Finance (DoF), providing strategic Human Resources services to all Northern Ireland Civil Service (NICS) Departments, and related bodies whose staff are employed on NICS terms and conditions. It is structured across a number of functional areas and includes a dedicated Diversity & Inclusion team, who ensure the NICS' diversity and inclusion objectives are at the forefront of HR activity.

#### **People Strategy**

The NICS Board extended the People Strategy to 31 March 2022, with a number of key priorities - recruitment, workforce planning; talent management (including how we recruit, retain and develop a diverse and highly skilled workforce); and the NICS employee relations project (to build capacity of the line manager role in the NICS).

Valuing diversity is a key pillar of the NICS People Strategy, and provides the impetus for activity in this area. The NICS diversity and inclusion strategy continues to be evidence based and driven by best practice and by listening to our people. It is not focused on quick wins, instead, the NICS has optimised its strategy to promote diversity, tackle areas of under-representation and support inclusion by creating the architecture to achieve real and lasting change

Since the launch of the People Strategy in 2018, there has been a substantial increase in diversity and inclusion activity to achieve the ambition of being a truly inclusive NICS which reflects the society it serves, and to signal change, .

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

### **NICS Diversity Action Plan**

The DCN and NICS HR have worked collaboratively to develop an annual NICS Diversity Action Plan which is the roadmap to achieving the objectives set out in our People Strategy and is responsible for moving the NICS from a position where diversity is tactically talked about, to having it truly embedded within the culture of the organisation.

The Diversity Action Plan sets out key activities to be undertaken across the NICS to improve diversity and inclusion across four key themes: Gender, LGBTQ+, Race and Ethnicity 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 NICS HR, as well as through partnership working with stakeholder organisations.

During 2021/22, there was a particular focus on delivering actions to attract a wider pool of applicants and diversify the NICS workforce. These actions included:

- delivering a range of initiatives to expand the NICS resourcing mix, such as:
  - increased use of external recruitment, including a number of large volume recruitment competitions and Senior Civil Service posts;
  - launch of a new Operational Delivery Apprenticeship Scheme;

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- increased number of student placement offerings; and
  - facilitation of paid work experience opportunities for young disabled people as part of the JobStart scheme.
- delivering a programme of outreach and increased engagement with the education sector (see next section).
- expanding advertising channels to include social media (e.g Instagram, Spotify, Twitter, LinkedIn etc.).
- launching a NICS Guaranteed Interview Scheme which ensures a guaranteed number of disabled applicants, who meet the minimum essential eligibility criteria for the role they have applied for, are offered an interview. The GIS applies to all external Civil Service recruitment competitions at any grade and any discipline where shortlisting criteria are involved, in addition to essential criteria. Work to introduce ring a fencing policy for disabled applicants started in 2021 and will be completed in 2022.
- commencing the review of recruitment and selection which will seek to ensure the NICS is staffed with the right people with the right skills in the right posts at the right time. NICS HR also reviewed and refreshed its recruitment and selection e-learning product, and the associated guidance for selection panel members. This reinforces the responsibilities of each individual panel member to always ensure fair and equal selection processes.
- developing a new Civil Service Skills Academy and a new graduate development programme, both launching in 2022/23.

The first permanent female Head of the Civil (HOCS) took up post and has demonstrably supported the diversity and inclusion agenda by meeting with the Diversity Champions Network and each of the staff networks, supporting initiatives including the launch of

the Sexual and Domestic Abuse Policy, Menopause Policy and International Women's Day events.

Throughout the year, a flexible approach to working has continued to be 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, a new hybrid working policy was developed. The policy will provide a blended flexible approach to working, which includes office based working, working from home and remote working. As part of the new policy, the NICS also launched in March 2022 its Connect2 regional hubs which provide flexible working options for staff, reduce their travel time and support better work life balance.

NICSHR developed and implemented a number of new policies and updated existing policies:

- Menopause Policy launched on International Women's Day 2022, supported by training for staff.
- Domestic and Sexual Abuse Policy launched which has been regularly promoted by senior leaders. ONUS provides specialist training in relation to domestic violence and abuse and a number of NICS colleagues completed Onus' Safe Place Advocate training to help embed and support the policy. The NICS was awarded the Onus Gold Workplace Charter Award in recognition of its work in this area.
- the suite of policies (Maternity, Paternity, Adoption) was updated to ensure that all colleagues in their new parental role have equal access to the provisions set out in them, regardless of their sexual orientation, gender identity or their chosen path to parenthood.
- paid paternity leave provision increased from two days full pay to two weeks full pay to encourage colleagues with parental responsibilities to take time off in the important early days following the birth of their child/ren.

The NICS undertook a range of benchmarking resulting in the achievement of the Stonewall Silver Employer award in respect of commitment and progress for LGBTQ+ inclusion, and the Onus Gold Workplace Charter by an accreditation scheme which recognises organisations for their support to anyone affected by domestic violence or abuse.

As one of the largest employers here, we have implemented policies and practices to create an inclusive work environment and set an example to other employers with several organisations approaching NICS to learn about our diversity and inclusion strategy and approach to outreach.

### **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 and to attract the best talent.

During 2021/22, the NICS delivered a programme of outreach and increased engagement with the education sector, via participation in university recruitment fairs, career webinars and an industry insights event to promote the NICS as an inclusive employer.

Targeted advertising to under-represented groups was undertaken for large volume competitions which included promoting career opportunities to the Northern Ireland Union of Supported Employment (NIUSE), Rainbow Project, Minority Ethnic support groups, ex-conflict related prisoner groups and via NICS Career Officers. The NICS continues to have a permanent presence on the Employers for Disability NI (EFDNI) online recruitment portal promoting and signposting to its weekly opportunities bulletin and it also developed a new “Information for Disabled People” section of its recruit website to provide relevant information and guidance to disabled applicants. The NICS also delivered targeted advertising to the NI disability sector in respect of public

appointment opportunities to address the current under-representation of disabled people in these roles.

As part of the programme of outreach for large volume competitions (e.g. Executive Officer 1 and 2 and Operational Delivery Apprenticeships), NICSHR in collaboration with the Executive Office's Racial Equality Unit and NIUSE, delivered information sessions to promote the career opportunities to representatives from minority ethnic groups and the disability sector.

A webinar was also delivered to the disability sector as part of the launch of the Guaranteed Interview Scheme.

In addition to participation in University recruitment fairs and career webinars etc, the NICS has actively promoted its commitment to diversity and inclusion by supporting and participating in a number of other external events including.

- Diversity Mark signatory peer event
- Diversity Mark Roundtable Discussion
- Race Equality Network Conference
- The Government People Show
- QUB's Gender Initiative "Future of Work".

## **DISABILITY**

### **NICS Disability Champion/Disability Working Group/Autism 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 Champion also chairs the NICS Autism Working Group whose overall aim is to help NICS autistic staff as well as those who are parents/carers of autistic individuals to deliver actions to raise awareness and understanding. During March 2022, Autism Acceptance Week was celebrated with colleagues from the Autism Working Group sharing their stories and highlighting work that is going on across the NICS to support autistic people and their families.

During 2021, work progressed to develop and implement a Guaranteed Interview Scheme (GIS), and to review 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. The Disability Working Group was consulted in the development of the GIS, given the wide range of expertise and lived experience within the group.

The GIS launched in January 2022 and applies to all external NICS recruitment competitions (at any grade and any discipline) where appropriate. For more information on the GIS please refer to the new “Information for disabled applicants” section of the [NICS recruit website](#).

The review of the Disability Work Placement Scheme is complete and a new proposal is currently being developed for launching in 2022/23.

### **International Job Shadow Day**

Since 2018, the NICS has participated annually in International Job Shadow Day (IJSJ which offers work experience to disabled people). In conjunction with NIUSE, the NICS hosted an information session to the disability sector to promote the NICS’ support and participation in the initiative and the range of potential placements on offer. Placements were hosted over a three month period across the organisation and the NICS has committed to participating again in 2022.



### **Disability Staff Network**

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

Since its formation in November 2020, the Disability Staff Network has continued to grow. The Network collaborated with NICSHR and Employers for Disability NI (EFDNI) to deliver a comprehensive programme of disability awareness training to staff.

During the reporting period, representatives from the network have supported NICSHR in delivering information sessions as part of the NICS outreach activity for large volume competitions to encourage applications from under-represented groups.

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.

The NICS remains committed to being a JAM (Just a Minute) friendly organisation and all colleagues continue to have access to the NOW Group's on-line awareness training.

**Employers for Disability Northern Ireland – Lead Partner Membership**

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

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

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

During 2021/22, EFDNI delivered a comprehensive programme of disability awareness session available to all staff in collaboration with NICS HR and the Disability Staff Network.

**NICS Work Experience Scheme for People with Disabilities / Job Start scheme Pilot**

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.

Given the ongoing restrictions determined by the pandemic, applications for work experience were suspended during 2021/22.

The NICS participated as an employer in the Job Start scheme which was designed to help young people aged 16-24, at risk of long term unemployment, move into the job

market, by offering six to nine month job opportunities with a range of employers across Northern Ireland. NICS HR supported the Department for Communities in facilitating 15 paid work placement opportunities (up to nine months' duration) for young disabled people.

### **Harkin Summit**

During the year, preparation progressed for the global Harkin Summit which was being hosted in June 2022 by the Department for Communities (DfC) and the Harkin Institute. The summit would bring together senior leaders from a wide range of local and international organisations to network and raise awareness of disability employment issues, share best practice and challenge for change to help more disabled people secure and retain employment. As one of the largest employers in Northern Ireland, the NICS would participate, attend and supported the summit to promote its commitment to disability inclusion.

### **NI Disability Employment Strategy**

NICS HR represented the NICS as an employer in the co-design sessions to develop a new NI Disability Employment Strategy for Northern Ireland. The sessions were attended by employers, the disability sector, councils, trade unions, NICS departments and academics. The information from these sessions has informed a framework of actions under various themes for the strategy.

### **LGBTQ+**

#### **Pride**

Due to the Covid-19 pandemic, the NICS' celebrations for Pride 2021 were digital which were led by the LGBTQ+ Network. A number of Ministers and senior civil servants including the interim Head of Civil Service and Minister for Finance supported Pride through internal and external communications. Work has continued internally to support LGBTQ+ colleagues through a series of communications, and events.

### **Stonewall Diversity Champions Programme/Workplace Equality Index**

As a clear demonstration of our commitment to have an inclusive workplace for all, in 2021, NICS HR, on behalf of the NICS, renewed membership to the Stonewall Diversity Champions Programme.

The NICS made a submission to the Stonewall Workplace Equality Index (WEI) in 2022 to benchmark its practices, understand LGBTQ+ colleagues' experiences and promote commitment for LGBTQ+ inclusion. The NICS was awarded the Stonewall Silver Employer award as a reflection of progress and commitment to LGBTQ+ inclusion as part of the WEI.

Through membership of the Stonewall Diversity Champions programme, the NICS advertised the Executive Officer and Head of the Civil Service career opportunities on the Stonewall Proud Employers website and had access to best practice information and guidance and the latest LGBTQ+ research and statistics.

### **NICS LGBTQ+ Staff Network**

The NICS has a designated LGBTQ+ Champion whose role is to encourage a positive and LGBTQ+ inclusive workplace across the NICS. In an effort to raise awareness and understanding across the organisation, the Champion works closely with the LGBTQ+ Staff Network to deliver a series of events, communications and initiatives focusing on relevant health, wellbeing and lived experiences of colleagues. The network led on NICS Pride Celebrations for 2021 and also reverse mentored the interim Head of the Civil Service.

NICS HR continues to support the LGBTQ+ 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.

During 2021/22, there was a focus on increasing gender balance across grades and professional/technical groups where required, develop and introduce further measures to facilitate work life balance, health and well-being and support for colleagues facing challenging life events; and to support the development of the NICS Women's Network and other staff networks and to raise the profile of and understanding of gender diversity and inclusion as an issue for everyone in the organisation.

The NICS published its Gender Review ([Article 55 - Gender Review 2019 \(finance-ni.gov.uk\)](#)) in 2021 which indicated that progress continues to be made with regards to female representation in the Senior Civil Service (Grade 5 and above) The latest figures are available on the Northern Ireland Research and Statistics Agency website ([Equality Statistics | Northern Ireland Statistics and Research Agency \(nisra.gov.uk\)](#))

### **Gender Champion/Women's Network**

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

During the reporting period, the Women's Network continued to raise its profile, published a range of communications and delivered a number of virtual and in person events which have promoted inclusion, encouraged allyship and created a sense of belonging. One of these included a virtual interview and interactive discussion with the Gender Champion to raise awareness of the Women's Network, a reflection on the Champion's career and tips maintaining a work-life balance and leadership challenges.

During the reporting period the NICS celebrated: International Men's Day 2021 via a virtual event focusing on sport and wellbeing and International Women's Day 2022 with colleagues attending an in person and virtual event which include discussions from senior leaders and included topics such as women and health.

The Women's Network provided input into a number of policies developed by NICSHR including the Menopause Policy and the Sexual and Domestic Abuse Policy and have supported the promotion of them to help embed into the organisation.

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

### **Diversity Mark**

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

The NICS successfully maintained its Bronze Diversity Mark in 2021 and will undergo further assessment in 2022.

### **Age**

During 2021-22 Pensions Division progressed a legislative response to promote age equality and remedy age discrimination in NI public service pension schemes as a consequence of the 'McCloud' judgement. This judgement found that the transitional protections introduced alongside 2015 reformed public service pension schemes had discriminated against younger members in some schemes. During this period the NI Assembly agreed 2 legislative consent motions for the remedy to address this age discrimination, which is now contained in the provisions of the Public Service Pensions and Judicial Offices Act 2022 to extend for devolved public service pension schemes in Northern Ireland. This framework legislation enables scheme responsible departments to remove age related discrimination and ensure age equality going forward, with the effect that from 1 April 2022 all public service pension scheme members are now members of the 2015 reformed schemes only. Work is also being progressed by scheme responsible departments to enable any scheme members who have been affected by the discrimination since the introduction of transitional protections on 1

April 2015 up until their removal from 1 April 2022, to be provided with a choice at the point of retirement (or retrospectively if they have already left service) about how any reckonable service accrued within that period is calculated. This means all members affected by the discrimination will be given the choice to have their service during that 'remedy' period treated under either the pre 2015 (legacy) scheme or the post 2015 (reformed) scheme, thus ensuring equal treatment retrospectively and regardless of age.

### **RACE AND ETHNICITY**

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

DoF and NICSHR were Friends of Mela for the third year with DoF/NICS communications published internally and on social media to celebrate Belfast Mela 2021.

As a Friend of Mela, the NICS collaborated with ArtsEkta to deliver a series of cultural competence/awareness webinars (February to May 2022).

NICSHR also participated in a panel discussion as part of the Race Equality Network Conference 2021.

### **Race and Ethnicity Network**

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

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

During the reporting period, representatives from the network have supported NICSHR in delivering information sessions to minority ethnic support groups as part of the NICS outreach plan for large volume competitions to encourage applications from under-represented groups.

NICSHR and the DoF Racial Equality Champion have been approached by a number of other organisations to learn more about the NICS' approach to racial equality and inclusion in terms of outreach activity and its staff network.

The network published a number of global intranet articles as part of its communications campaign to raise the network's profile and also celebrated Black History Month 2021 with a series of webinars delivered by the minority ethnic sector.

NICS Race and Ethnicity Network partnered with race networks from Scotland, Wales and England developing a Civil Service Race Networks Directory.

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

### **DoF RACIAL EQUALITY CHAMPION and NICS RACE AND ETHNICITY CHAMPION UPDATE**

These dual responsibilities are not full-time roles; the roles effectively merged into one, therefore there is not always a clear distinction between what are DoF and what are NICS activities.

#### **2021/22 activities have included:**

##### **Internal Outreach – within NICS**



- The Departmental Racial Equality Network, chaired by the DoF Racial Equality Champion, gathers as required to address any specific items.
- The DoF Racial Equality Champion, also as the NICS Race and Ethnicity Champion (appointed July 2020 and attend NICS Diversity Champions' Network) chairs the NICS Race and Ethnicity Staff Network, setup in August 2020 to support colleagues from minority ethnic backgrounds, ensuring our uniqueness and individuality are valued and respected. The Network is consulted and involved the development of relevant NICS policies and initiatives.
- NICS Race and Ethnicity Staff Network are developing intranet hub, which will host resources and useful links for all NICS staff.
- Reminder that Staff Network activities are supported by NICS Diversity Champions' Group and therefore did not have to be taken out of personal time but can be attended as part of workday. Importance of raising awareness and helping colleagues understand how they can help everyone in the workplace to feel valued for who they are.
- Network activities included inviting AdviceNI to speak to members at an information session in relation to the EUSS deadline and offer Q&A.
- Previous DoF Racial Equality Champion updates to staff on the DoF Intranet (also accessible by other NICS Departments), communicating about engagements to date outside NICS and personal reflections, have now been upgraded to NICS Race and Ethnicity Champion updates to all NICS staff. This highlights to all NICS 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.
- NICS articles during 2021/22 and 2020/21 have included focus on:
  - Definition of a minority ethnic group, challenging common misunderstand that ethnic groups are made up of people who are not white
  - Black Lives Matter
  - Disproportionately high number of minority ethnic communities' deaths from the pandemic

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- Rise in Coronavirus hate crimes and incidents
- Brexit, where our EU citizens, friends, family and colleagues are being targeted and discriminated against
- Promotion of NICS Cultural Competence Webinars across UK Civil Service, delivered by lived experience speakers from NI minority ethnic communities
- UK Civil Service Race Networks Directory Launch, involving NICS collaborating with Civil Service colleagues in Scotland, England and Wales
- Support of Black History Month, including promotion of webinars delivered by lived experience speakers
- Support of Belfast Mela
- Two-part interview with NICS Race and Ethnicity Champion, covering range of topics
- International Day for the Elimination of Racial Discrimination, which fell on Census Day 2021, including highlighting the fire at Belfast Multi-Cultural Association on Donegall Pass
- NICS learning and development opportunities delivered with the NI minority ethnic sector, included webinars for Black History Month (October) and cultural competence webinars (February to May), which were promoted and open to both NICS and UK Civil Service to register attending.
- Regular updates to DoF Departmental Board as required, including verbal briefing of DoF Minister and Permanent Secretary.
- Supported NICSHR led marketing strategy in respect of various recruitment campaigns, including speaking at specific information sessions targeted at minority ethnic sector.
- Supported and reviewed NICS Racial Equality e-learning content before release to all NICS staff.
- In February 2022, sat on evaluation panel for the Minority Ethnic Development Fund 2022-25.

### External Outreach – outside NICS

- Since March 2018, DoF REC twitter account (@alfiecbwong) set up to continue outreach and engagement with both DoF/NICS staff and outside NICS.
- Currently still the Department's (now also NICS) representative on Belfast Migrant Forum (chaired by Belfast City Council), Intercommunity Interest Forum (chaired by Bryson Intercultural) and Consultative Forum on Equality (chaired by NIHE); therefore engaging and still connecting with the minority ethnic sector.
- As NICS Race and Ethnicity Champion and chair of NICS Race and Ethnicity staff network, attend regular Civil Service Race Forum meetings involving leads from all four nations.
- Sat on virtual roundtable with Minister Paul Scully MP, UK Government Minister for Small Business, Consumers and Labour Markets at the Department for Business, Energy and Industrial Strategy (BEIS); topics included the importance of inclusivity and diversity in business, challenges and opportunities faced by minority ethnic communities in business in Northern Ireland, access to finance, the small business environment and economic recovery.
- New translation facility was enabled on NI Direct website. This was following feedback from the minority ethnic sector, where DoF Racial Equality Champion then collaborated with DoF NI Direct colleagues to review official central website to raise awareness and improving accessibility to online government services (in compliance with the Public Sector Bodies (Websites and Mobile Applications) Accessibility Regulations 2018 (PSBAR), all contributing to Equality of Service Provision outcome of Racial Equality Strategy 2015-2025), contributing to Equality of Service Provision outcome of Racial Equality Strategy 2015-2025. This collaboration included engagement with ArtsEkta and plans for further outreach with wider minority ethnic sector.
- Participation on The Hume Foundation's virtual panel discussion (March 2021), along with leaders from the minority ethnic sector, on 'Unfinished Business of Reconciliation - The Importance of Diversity and Inclusion.'

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- Since May 2021, sit on the British National (Overseas) Advisory Group, supporting Northern Ireland Strategic Migration Partnership (NISMP), in respect of the new immigration scheme devised by the UK Government, for people from Hong Kong who are British Nationals (Overseas).
- Supported **Multi-Ethnic Sports and Cultures NI (MSCNI)** in attending their first Multi-Ethnic Art, Culture and Heritage Expo 2021.
- Supported and advised HMRC, in their delivery of online event to minority ethnic sector in respect to career opportunities.
- Supported and advised PRONI, in their delivery of 'An Archive for Everyone' information targeted at minority ethnic sector, including production of a leaflet considering proper terminology/language.
- Gave interview to BBC Newsline on the subject of racism
- Attended virtual roundtable, 'Conversation with Alfie', with members from our black communities.
- For Belfast Mela 2021, DoF participated virtually; however I supported ArtsEkta as a volunteer at Belfast Mela 2021 in Writers' Square, Belfast. DoF (LPS, NISRA, NI Direct and GO ON NI) utilised the DoF Twitter account to promote support for the event through tweets on 17<sup>th</sup> and 25<sup>th</sup> August 2021. Through this support for the event LPS was able 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. DoF has been recognised as a 'Friend of Mela', demonstrating its support for promoting cultural diversity across Northern Ireland.
- In October 2020, NICS participated for the first time in Black History Month, celebrating the culture, history, achievements and contributions of our African and Caribbean communities here. We are also contributing to the UN International Decade for People of African Descent (2015-2024), where the theme is "People of African descent: recognition, justice and development". NICS is keen to recognise the important contributions made by our black community here. NICS Race and Ethnicity Staff Network collaborated with the

minority ethnic sector from the outset, to promote opportunity, recognition and inclusion. Working together with the minority ethnic sector, we created opportunities for learning through four webinars delivered to NICS staff during October, by experienced speakers from the minority ethnic sector itself, who have lived experience. In October 2021, the next series of webinars were delivered using same format, but this time promoting to UK Civil Service, to colleagues in Scotland, England Wales.

- Attend Islamic Cultural Awareness Session delivered by NI Muslim Family Association (NIMFA)

### **Economist Profession Diversity and Outreach**

The Economist Profession continues to follow the key principles of the NICS Equality, Diversity and Inclusion Policy. The Profession recognises and is 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.

Given the challenges associated with the COVID-19 pandemic and on-going restrictions, during 2021/22 it was of course difficult for the Economist Profession to engage in the way we usually would with Universities and Schools, meaning that many activities from our Diversity and Outreach Action Plan had to be postponed. The Profession did however continue to provide one year placements for students in their sandwich year in the Department for the Economy and Department of Education. The Profession also continued to engage in other non-physical formats with Universities, and through its recruitment activities to ensure maximum outreach and improve opportunities to recruit from a diverse pool of candidates as possible.

During the pandemic the Profession carried out a Review of Workforce Management which completed in March 2022, and where a number of recommendations included actions around the Profession restarting its outreach activity as we emerge from the

pandemic. These included actions to update our Outreach and Diversity Plan and to form a Profession Oversight team to develop and drive the Plan which will include a focus on addressing the issue of gender diversity. This is in light of the Profession having a higher proportion of males than females, especially at entry level, Assistant Economist.

However, previous discussions with local universities identified that this balance generally reflects the pool of economics graduates within Northern Ireland. In addition, discussions with representatives of local universities and schools indicated that they have seen a drop in the numbers of females studying Economics.

This is an issue that is also evident in Great Britain, where we are aware that the UK Government Economic Service (GES) also has a similar gender balance to the NICS Economist Profession. Recognising this, the new Economist Profession Outreach and Diversity action plan will 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.

#### **Land and Property Services (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 2021/2022. 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 continues to utilise established networks with NIHE, DfC Make the Call as well as promoting available reliefs through advertising in the Young at Heart Dairy and Directory, through information flyers to various regional Health Trust Carer Coordinators, to raise awareness of help and assistance on Rate Rebate , Lone

Pensioner Allowance and Disabled Person's 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 translated versions of the Rate Rebate Factsheet from English to Simplified Chinese for the Chinese Welfare Association and continues to provide translated information literature to many other minority ethnic groups.

#### Land & Property Services – Housing Benefit Future Delivery Project

The Housing Benefit Future Delivery Project completed The Equality Screening (Future Delivery of Housing Benefit (Rates) and Low Income Rate Relief for Owner Occupiers Project) to identify that no customers will be adversely affected by the transfer of the owner/occupier sector from LPS administration to the NIHE administration.

The Equality Screening document was published on the DoF website in January 2022 and was issued to approximately 96 consultees. **LPS Mental Health Hub**

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

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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 were trained in Mental Health First Aid Training in conjunction with Northern Health and Social Care Trust. The training took place in October 2021 and January 2022.

Some of the work to date included:

- Promotion of Mental Health being promoted within Goodwood House
- Liaison with the Consumer Council in respect to future events
- Liaison with the Charity for Civil Servants as to the feasibility of hosting information sessions

### **Digital Inclusion**

All Go ON NI Digital Inclusion Programme events in 2021/22 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](#).



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- 2 Please provide **examples** of outcomes and/or the impact of **equality action plans/** measures in 2021-22 (*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 2021-22 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 2021-22 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 2021-22 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, specific 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 2021-22 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 2021-22 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 2021-22 reporting period, please indicate the **number** of:

Actions completed:  Actions ongoing:  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 2021-22 reporting period (*points not identified in an appended plan*):

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

The plans are due for renewal in 2023.

9 In reviewing progress on the equality action plan/action measures during the 2021-22 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 2021-22 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:

A review of the Equality Scheme itself commenced during 2021/22, with consultation with all equality consultees, staff and other stakeholders at its core. This extended to one-to-one and bi-lateral consultation meetings with stakeholders such as the Equality Coalition and the Commission.

- 12** In the 2021-22 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:

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**13** Were any awareness-raising activities for consultees undertaken, on the commitments in the Equality Scheme, during the 2021-22 reporting period? *(tick one box only)*

- Yes       No       Not applicable

Please provide any details and examples:

Consultation during the review of the Equality Scheme itself highlighted the commitments in the scheme and sought views of consultees on, for example, what might strengthen the scheme in their opinion.

**14** Was the consultation list reviewed during the 2021-22 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)*:

15
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**16** Please provide the **number of assessments** that were consulted upon during 2021-22:

	Policy consultations conducted with <b>screening</b> assessment presented.
	Policy consultations conducted <b>with an equality impact assessment</b> (EQIA) presented.
	Consultations for an <b>EQIA</b> 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)*

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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 2021-22 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 2021-22 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 2021-22 reporting period, has shown changes to differential/adverse impacts previously assessed:

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

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

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

Equality statistics from the 2021 Census will be released in line with the Outputs Prospectus available at <https://www.nisra.gov.uk/sites/nisra.gov.uk/files/publications/census-2021-outputs-prospectus.pdf>

### 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 2021-22, 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 2021-22:

Course	Numbers of staff completed
Buy Social (e-learning)	4
Disability Awareness for Frontline Staff (e-learning)	21
Domestic Abuse (e-learning)	38
Introduction to Human Rights (e-learning)	17
Introduction to Section 75 (e-learning)	21
Mental Health Awareness for Managers Managing Remote Teams (Webinar)	20
Mental Health Awareness for Staff Working at Home (Webinar)	37
*Positive Mental Health Toolkit for Line Managers (e-learning)	11
*Positive Mental Health Toolkit for Staff (e-learning)	34

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Recruitment and Selection – Standards and Skills (Webinar)	205
Recruitment & Selection: Refresher Training for SCS (Webinar)	13
Scoring Social Value - Construction Contract (Webinar)	2
Scoring Social Value - Services and ICT Contract (Webinar)	13
Supporting Vulnerable People (e-learning)	36
Unconscious Bias (e-learning)	152

- 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 2021-22, across all functions, has resulted in action and improvement in relation **to access to information and services**:

**Complaints (Model Equality Scheme Chapter 8)**

- 27 How many complaints **in relation to the Equality Scheme** have been received during 2021-22?

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:

As noted above, a statutory 5-year review began during this reporting period with consultation with stakeholders, also including one-to-one and bi-lateral meetings. It will complete in the 2022/23 reporting period.



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

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

- 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
- 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
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	Use of positive action advertising (PAA) statements to encourage applications from under-represented groups.  The NICS will develop and implement a NICS wide outreach plan, which will include a range of affirmative actions such as PAA and targeted outreach with	Representation of both communities in line with what would be expected based on the relevant comparator, through the Review of Fair Participation in the NICS (the “Article 55 Review”).	Continuous until the next review (due for publication 2023)	<p><b>ONGOING</b></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 contains goals and timetables for action – and is available on the DoF website –</p> <p>Following publication of the review in May 2021, NICS HR has met with ECNI on a biannual basis to review and assess progress.</p>

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Inequality	Action	Performance Outcome	Timescale	2020/21 Update
NI labour market <b>(Religious belief).</b>	the education sector and appropriate professional bodies as appropriate.			<p>Outreach during 2021/22 continued to be delivered virtually as a result of the Covid-19 restrictions. The NICS increased its engagement with the education sector to promote the Civil Service as an employer which has included participation in university recruitment fairs and career webinars</p> <p>The NICS expanded its advertising methods and adopted a campaign style approach to reach as wide an applicant pool as possible this has included a range of social media (Instagram, Spotify, Twitter, LinkedIn etc.).</p> <p>The NICS also delivered a number of initiatives to expand routes into the NICS, which included increasing the use of external recruitment, including a number of large volume</p>

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Inequality	Action	Performance Outcome	Timescale	2020/21 Update
				recruitment competitions launching over the last year, launch of a new apprenticeship scheme and increasing the number of student placement offerings.
Under-representation of males/females in some occupational groups/grade levels in the NICS compared to the NI labour market <b>(Men and women generally).</b>	Use of positive action advertising statements to encourage applications from under-represented group.  The NICS will develop and implement a NICS wide outreach plan, which will include a range of positive actions such as PAA and targeted outreach with	Representation of each gender in line with what would be expected based on the relevant comparator, through the Review of Gender in the NICS.	Continuous until the next review due for publication (2023)	<b>ONGOING</b>  Continue to analyse recruitment competitions to monitor the profile of applications and the progress of all equality groups through the recruitment process.  In the interests of promoting gender equality, the NICS completed a comprehensive gender review alongside its tri-annual statutory Article 55 Review which was published in May 2021. The review provides a detailed analysis of the gender profile of the NICS workforce composition and flows during the review

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Inequality	Action	Performance Outcome	Timescale	2020/21 Update
	the education sector and appropriate professional bodies as appropriate.			<p>period, and provides a clear evidence base to inform decisions about where affirmative action measures are required</p> <p>The review is <a href="#">publicly available</a> on the DoF website.</p> <p>Following publication, NICSHR has met with ECNI on a biannual basis to review and assess progress.</p> <p>The NICS retained its Bronze Diversity Mark in September 2021 in respect of commitment to gender diversity. As part of the accreditation, the NICS has as committed to an annual independent assessment and development of an action plan for the forthcoming year.</p>

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Inequality	Action	Performance Outcome	Timescale	2020/21 Update
				<p>Outreach during 2021/22 continued to be delivered virtually as a result of the Covid-19 restrictions. The NICS increased its engagement with the education sector to promote the Civil Service as an employer which has included participation in university recruitment fairs and career webinars.</p> <p>The NICS expanded its advertising methods and adopted a campaign style approach to reach as wide an applicant pool as possible this has included a range of social media (Instagram, Spotify, Twitter, LinkedIn etc.).</p> <p>The NICS also delivered a number of initiatives to expand routes into the NICS, which included increasing the use of external recruitment, including a number of large volume</p>

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Inequality	Action	Performance Outcome	Timescale	2020/21 Update
				<p>recruitment competitions launching over the last year, launch of a new apprenticeship scheme and increasing the number of student placement offerings.</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 minority ethnic backgrounds.	The NICS will develop and implement a NICS wide outreach plan to attract under-represented groups.	Representation in line with what would be expected through the annual review of the NICS workforce composition.	Ongoing	<p><b>ONGOING</b></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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<b>Inequality</b>	<b>Action</b>	<b>Performance Outcome</b>	<b>Timescale</b>	<b>2020/21 Update</b>
	<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>Outreach during 2021/22 continued to be delivered virtually as a result of the Covid-19 restrictions. The NICS increased its engagement with the education sector to promote the Civil Service as an employer which has included participation in university recruitment fairs and career webinars. In addition, information sessions were delivered by NICSHR and the Executive Office’s Racial Equality Unit to minority ethnic groups to support large volume competitions.</p> <p>The NICS expanded its advertising methods and adopted a campaign style approach to reach as wide an applicant pool as possible this has included a range of social media (Instagram, Spotify, Twitter, LinkedIn etc.).</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.			<p>The NICS also delivered a number of initiatives to expand routes into the NICS, which included increasing the use of external recruitment, including a number of large volume recruitment competitions launching over the last year, launch of a new apprenticeship scheme and increasing the number of student placement offerings.</p> <p><b>COMPLETE</b></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
Support for transitioning staff ( <b>Men and women generally</b> ).	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 <sup>st</sup> March 2019.	<b>COMPLETE</b> NICS Trans Policy and Transitioning at Work Guide launched in March 2019. HOCS, together with a colleague from NICS LGBT Staff Network and a Stonewall representative took part in a video to launch the Policy and Guide.
Data Gaps on Section 75 profile of NICS workforce ( <b>Racial group; Persons with a disability; Persons with dependents; Sexual orientation</b> ).	Obtain data from staff on ethnicity, disability, dependents and sexual orientation.	Increase in data held on HRConnect for existing staff in relation to ethnicity, disability, dependents and sexual orientation.	Ongoing	<b>ONGOING</b> The NICS Employee Services Portal provides functionality for NICS staff to update their disability, dependents and sexual orientation information.  Through NICS staff networks, global articles have been published encouraging existing staff

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Inequality	Action	Performance Outcome	Timescale	2020/21 Update
				<p>to update equal opportunities monitoring information. Work is ongoing to improve the data completion rates.</p> <p>The latest annual "<a href="#">Northern Ireland Civil Service Equality Statistics</a>" report 2022 reflects a decrease in the data missing for NICS staff in respect of sexual orientation, ethnicity and disability.</p>
<p>Job opportunities for the long-term unemployed and those leaving education (<b>All S75 categories</b>).</p>	<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</p>	<p>11.25% of AA and AO job roles recruited from the long-term</p>	<p>Ongoing</p>	<p><b>ONGOING</b></p> <p>At 31 March 2022, 110 (including 7 who have lost their jobs as a result of Covid) AAs and AOs were placed on assignment from the long-term unemployed and those leaving education.</p> <p>Overall unemployment in Northern Ireland dropped to a low of 2.3% in the first quarter of this year. To assist in this area the recruitment</p>

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Inequality	Action	Performance Outcome	Timescale	2020/21 Update
	<p>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>unemployed and those leaving education.</p>		<p>agency continues to reach out to contacts in the local unemployment offices etc. to signpost those looking for work and continue to run virtual open days for registrations etc., working with their marketing team to promote opportunities available.</p> <p>The recruitment agency has been working closely with Belfast Metropolitan College on their Skills Academy, a 4 week training course to assist unemployed people get into the workplace.</p> <p>Planned outreach was impacted by COVID. The Recruitment Agency is attending job fairs again that are now taking place again post COVID restrictions to target unemployed and those in/leaving education.</p>

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Inequality	Action	Performance Outcome	Timescale	2020/21 Update
				Total AAs and AOs placed from the start of new contract 25.01.2021 was 1772. 6.2% of the target was achieved in 2021/22.
Job opportunities for those who have a disability; who are a looked after child/care leaver; and who are from a minority ethnic background	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 minority ethnic background in an Administrative Assistant	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.	Ongoing	<p>At 31 March 2022, 2 AAs and AOs from the priority groups were placed on assignment.</p> <p>Total AAs and AOs placed from the start of new contract 25.01.2021 was 1772. 0.1% of the target was achieved in 2021/22.</p> <p>Planned outreach was impacted by COVID. The recruitment agency has been communicating with various disability support groups who have been assisting in promoting the available opportunities, promoting home working</p>

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<b>Inequality</b>	<b>Action</b>	<b>Performance Outcome</b>	<b>Timescale</b>	<b>2020/21 Update</b>
	(AA), Administrative Officer (AO) or analogous role, as per the conditions of the contract.			opportunities and safer registrations for vulnerable groups.

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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 ( <b>Age; Persons with a disability</b> ).	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 <sup>st</sup> March each year.	<p><b>COMPLETE</b></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 <a href="http://www.nidirect.gov.uk/go-on">www.nidirect.gov.uk/go-on</a></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 31<sup>st</sup> March 2020.</p>	<p><b>COMPLETE</b></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 31<sup>st</sup> March 2020.</p>	<p><b>COMPLETE</b></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><b>COMPLETE</b></p> <p>Autism NI delivered be-spoke training to NICS HR OHS and Welfare Staff. Further training arranged for Land and Property Services and General Registry Office staff.</p> <p>The Autism <b>(Amendment)</b> Bill passed in March 2022 seeks to strengthen current legislation</p>

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	<p>Introduce the JAM (Just a Minute) card to the NICS.</p>		<p>By 31<sup>st</sup> March 2019.</p>	<p>and places considerable responsibility on all government departments and on the health and social care sector. In response to this, NICSHR Learning and Development Team and DoH worked continued to develop an e-learning package ‘Supporting Autistic People to assist in increasing colleague’s understanding of autism and enable them to provide necessary support within the workplace and in how we develop and deliver our services. The e-learning package is being co-produced with people who have lived experience of autism and will launch in June 2022.</p> <p><b>COMPLETE</b></p> <p>Implementation planning began in early 2019.</p> <p>The NICS remains committed to being a JAM (Just a Minute) friendly organisation and all</p>
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				<p>colleagues continue to have access to the NOW Group’s on-line awareness training.</p> <p>NICSHR are engaging with the NOW Group on post Covid-19 communications to promote the NICS as a JAM Card friendly organisation.</p>
<p>Accessibility of Stormont Estate <b>(Persons with a disability).</b></p>	<p>A new inclusive play park built at Stormont Estate.</p>	<p>A play park that is suitable for children of all abilities.</p>	<p>By 30<sup>th</sup> June 2019.</p>	<p><b>COMPLETE</b></p> <p>Work is complete and the play park opened in June 2019.</p>
	<p>A new Changing Places toilet to be built at Stormont Estate.</p>	<p>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.</p>	<p>By 30<sup>th</sup> April 2021</p>	<p><b>COMPLETE</b></p> <p>The facility was opened by the Finance Minister on 26 April 2021.</p>

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<p>Take-up of housing benefit, low income rate relief, rate rebate disabled person’s allowance and lone pensioner allowance <b>(Marital Status, Age, Persons with a disability, Persons with dependents).</b></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 <a href="http://www.nidirect.gov.uk/go-on-ni">www.nidirect.gov.uk/go-on-ni</a>. 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 31<sup>st</sup> March each year.</p>	<p><b>COMPLETE</b></p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Due to the related Government restrictions during Covid times the LPS Outreach team did not attend any outreach events in 2021/2022.</li> <li>• Through 2021/2022 networking activities engagement has taken place with Young at Heart and the Chinese Welfare Association. LPS provided an insert for the Racial Equality Strategy detailing the circulation of translated versions of the Rate Rebate factsheet.</li> <li>• The number of applications for Disabled Persons Allowance (DPA) and Lone Pensioner Allowance (LPA) continues to increase since the appointment of a dedicated LPS Outreach Manager in 2018. Figures for 2021-2022 indicate an increase of 50%</li> </ul>
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	difficulties in the past, including those who have found it difficult to access services during normal office opening hours.			in DPA applications and a decrease in LPA figures.
Law in NI treats unmarried fathers differently from married and unmarried mothers ( <b>Marital Status</b> ).	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	<b>ONGOING</b>  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
<b>Awareness Raising and Training</b>					
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 <sup>st</sup> March each year.	Promotion of positive attitudes towards people with a disability within the department.	DoF Diversity Network.	<b>Ongoing outreach via multiple channels.</b>
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	<b>ONGOING</b>  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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<p>managers (EO2 and analogous and above).</p>			<p>including the disability duties.</p>		<p>induction process is undertaken.</p> <p>Work progressed to develop interventions to raise the profile of diversity and inclusion across the organisation, this has included development of a new Diversity and Inclusion Hub <u>and e-learning product</u>. Both are due to launch during 2022.</p> <p>NICSHR collaborated with the NICS Disability Staff Network and Employers for Disability NI (EFDNI) to deliver a comprehensive programme of disability awareness training to staff.</p>
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<p>Revise Form and Guidance on Reasonable Adjustments</p>	<p>New Form and Guidance available to staff.</p>	<p>By 31<sup>st</sup> March 2019.</p>	<p>Clearer process and guidance for staff on the reasonable adjustments process.</p>	<p>NICS HR</p>	<p><b>COMPLETE</b> Guidance issued to staff in September 2018 by NICS Disability Champion on passporting of reasonable adjustments.</p>
<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"> <li>• Disability Awareness for front-line staff;</li> <li>• Autism Spectrum Disorder (ASD) awareness;</li> </ul>	<p>Number of staff trained.  Customer surveys/feedback.</p>	<p>Priority 1 training (0-4 months)  Complaints dealt with within customer service standards timescales.</p>	<p>Improved service for customers with disabilities.</p>	<p>Line managers and customer service teams.</p>	<p><b>ONGOING</b> NICS agreed to become JAM Card friendly and implementation planning began early 2019 with staff beginning training April 2019.  2021/22 update - The NICS remains committed to being a JAM (Just a Minute) friendly organisation and all colleagues continue to have</p>

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<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>Supporting Vulnerable People</li> </ul> <p>Induction for front-line staff to include 'Every Customer Counts'.</p>		<p>Customer surveys carried out every year.</p>		<p>access to the NOW Group's on-line awareness training.</p> <p>NICSHR are engaging with the NOW Group on post Covid-19 communications to promote the NICS as a JAM Card friendly organisation.</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 &amp; Benefits staff in November 2018.</p>
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					Local inductions updated to include 'Every Customer Counts'.
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).	Publication of the NICS Well Newsletter 'Well Times'.  Well Champions Conference	Quarterly.  Annually	Increase awareness of health conditions and how to manage them.	NICS HR.	<b>COMPLETE</b> <b>2021/22 update</b> There has been a continued focus this year on support for mental wellbeing and raising awareness of mental health issues for NICS staff given the ongoing impact of the Covid-19 pandemic and in recognition of the risk of employees feeling isolated, finding it difficult to switch off or working much longer hours at home than they would normally do if in the office. This was addressed through the

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					<p>communications including regular messages from senior leaders, the launch of a new Health &amp; Well-being Focused Support Guide available for all Departments and working with WELL and other delivery partners to raise awareness, highlight campaigns and signpost to sources of information at various times throughout the year</p> <p>The Covid-19 staff information internet site which is as a single source of reliable information including FAQs, guidance, articles etc. continued to be updated throughout the pandemic.</p>
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					A staff Health and Wellbeing hub exists, which contains mental health support and advice with resources on resilience, mindfulness, exercise and support services.
<b>Recruitment and Development</b>					
Promote and develop the work experience programme, providing meaningful placements for people with disabilities with a wide range of disability organisations.	Number of participants by work area.  Number of participating disability organisations.	Annually.	Encourage more disabled people to apply for NICS jobs and promote positive attitudes towards people with a disability within the Department.	NICS HR.	<b>COMPLETE</b>  Applications to the NICS Work Experience Scheme for People with Disabilities (launched in April 2016) were suspended during 2021 given the ongoing Covid-19 restrictions.

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	Feedback from participants and hosting managers.				NICSHR supported the Department for Communities in facilitating 15 nine month paid work placement opportunities for young disabled people as part of Job Start scheme. NICSHR also coordinated the NICS' participation in the annual International Job Shadow Day (IJD) initiative which offered work experience opportunities to disabled people over a three month period. This included a virtual information event to promote IJD in collaboration with NIUSE.
Review and implement the NICS Policy on reasonable	Monitoring information on	31 <sup>st</sup> March 2019.	NICS' recruitment and selection	NICSHR.	<b>COMPLETE</b>

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<p>adjustments in the recruitment and selection process in collaboration with people with a disability.</p>	<p>applications from people with a disability and feedback on the reasonable adjustment process.</p>		<p>procedures to provide equality of opportunity to people with disabilities so that they are encouraged to apply and compete for employment opportunities.</p>		<p>The review of this policy is now complete and the new version was uploaded onto the NICS Recruitment website on 19/3/19.</p>
<p><b>Participation and Engagement</b></p>					
<p>Development of a NICS-wide Mental Health Strategy.</p>	<p>1. Establish Mental Health forum (internal partners) to connect all NICS mental health activities. 2. Connected links developed with</p>	<p>31<sup>st</sup> March 2023.</p>	<p>NICS has a cohesive approach to the delivery of mental health initiatives, and support services, from both internal and external partners.</p>	<p>NICS HR.</p>	<p>1. <b>ONGOING</b> – linked to the development and outworkings of the Mental Health Strategy. 2. <b>COMPLETE</b> Collaboration partners meetings throughout the year, leading to working</p>

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	<p>external partners (Inspire/Charity for Civil Service Servants)</p> <p>3. Mental Health Strategy developed and implemented.</p>				<p>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 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.</p> <p>3. <b>ONGOING</b> - NICS Mental Health Strategy to be progressed during 2022.</p>
<p>Complete appointment plan for each new public appointment competition,</p>	<p>Numbers of people with a disability applying for and</p>	<p>Plan to be completed at the time draft</p>	<p>Encourage more disabled people to</p>	<p>Sponsor Branch (monitored by</p>	<p><b>COMPLETE</b></p> <p>During 2020/21 DoF ran a number of public</p>



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<p>focusing on diversity and steps to encourage applications from disabled people, and taking on board any recommendations or actions emanating from the TEO strategic diversity plan for public appointments.</p>	<p>being appointed to public life positions.</p>	<p>competition is being developed.</p>	<p>apply for public appointments.</p>	<p>Central Support Team).</p>	<p>appointment competitions. Appointment plans focused on diversity, including reviewing criteria, consideration of the Guaranteed Interview Scheme and targeted contact 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 the Economy with the NICS Disability Working. Members of the group include external representatives from the</p>
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					disability sector who were asked to share with their sector contacts.
Digital Inclusion Programme activities specifically targeted at disabled people and their carers and developed in conjunction with disability organisations.	Number of activities and evaluation results.	Annually	Encourage people with disabilities to make use more online services.	Digital Transformation Service.	<p><b>ONGOING</b></p> <p>The wider Go ON NI Programme includes services for those who are disabled.</p> <p>1216 participants took part in the Go ON NI programme, as well as 512 support phone calls provided. 105 of the participants took part in the Connected Devices Project as well as 61 groups being provided with bespoke training.</p>