

**Public Authority Statutory Equality and Good Relations Duties  
Annual Progress Report 2024**

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

<https://www.infrastructure-ni.gov.uk/publications/department-infrastructures-equality-scheme>

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**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 2023 and March 2024.**

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## 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 2023-24, 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.*

#### 1.1 General Section 75 and Outcomes Delivery Plan

The Department's overriding purpose is to connect people safely, support opportunities, and create sustainable living places through our infrastructure, in order to have a positive impact on the daily lives of everyone living, working and visiting Northern Ireland. Our Business Plan outlines the programme of work and initiatives the Department has committed to, to ensure we deliver our objectives to connect people through our infrastructure.

##### i. Mainstreaming Equality across the Department

The DfI Equality Scheme has been in place since February 2021 and includes commitments to better promote equality of opportunity and good relations.

Our Equality Unit promotes DfI's statutory duty to consider equality when carrying out Departmental functions; provides advice / guidance to staff in relation to this; and leads work on equality related exercises, with input from across the Department as required.

To comply with the Equality Scheme, the Equality Unit has ensured that effective internal arrangements are in place so that section 75 is mainstreamed across the Department. [Annex 1](#) summarises actions taken during this reporting period.

In order to develop staff understanding of section 75 related issues, and the needs of each section 75 category, officials throughout the Department attend equality related meetings both externally and internally. At these meetings officials share and receive best practice advice, consider emerging issues, and raise / resolve issues which could present an inequality for any section 75 category.

The Department is represented on the Statutory Forum between the NI Civil Service (NICS) and the Equality Commission (ECNI) to discuss and develop guidance and forms, and the promotion of equality across Departments. Participation allows us to discuss issues and obtain advice from ECNI on a regular basis. Direct contact with ECNI is also made on an ad hoc basis for specific advice.

Following the publication of the Department's Equality Scheme a Departmental Audit of Inequalities was completed. A draft Equality Action Plan was developed in the later stages of 2022-23 followed by a consultation which that ended on 23 June 2023. This will be submitted to the Minister for approval during 2024-25.

'New Decade, New Approach' committed to developing a series of four cross cutting Social Inclusion Strategies – Anti-Poverty; Disability; Gender; and LGBTQI+. The development of the strategies has followed the co-design approach. DfI is a member of each strategy's Departmental Working Groups, working alongside other Departments and the independent Co-Design Groups in developing these strategies. In the absence of a functioning Executive, work on the strategies during this reporting period slowed.

## **ii. Diversity**

The NICS Diversity Champion Network (DCN) was established in 2015 to promote and encourage diversity throughout the NICS. The DCN has four thematic leads for Disability, Ethnic Minorities, LGBT and Gender. DfI continues to be represented on the group with the DfI Diversity Champion attending quarterly meetings throughout the year.

The Department provided input to the 2023-24 NICS Diversity Action Plan which included a range of actions to support each diversity theme.

DfI supports the NICS diversity agenda by promoting diversity themes. We do this by publishing an annual diversity calendar on the Department's intranet site, promoting and encouraging staff to become members of the various NICS staff networks, for example, the Disability LGBTQI+ and Gender staff networks. Alongside the diversity calendar the DfI intranet site publishes supporting articles and events on key diversity calendar occasions, activities and celebrations that includes Pride month, International Women's Day, International Men's Day, the Boardroom Apprentice Scheme, marking Disability days/weeks and participation in the International Job Shadow Day with placement opportunities provided across DfI. The Department has also published a number of personal stories on disability and gender issues on its intranet site during this period.

## **iii. Racial Equality Strategy**

The Department's Racial Equality Champion continues to represent DfI at the NICS Racial Equality Strategy meetings. The DfI Champion works closely with the Racial Equality Unit in The Executive Office (TEO), other NICS champions and the Racial Equality Subgroup. As well as

NICS officials, the sub-group comprises those working with minority ethnic people and migrants to identify and tackle any barriers to addressing racial inequality.

The DfI Champion attended Racial Equality Subgroup meetings throughout the year. The Champion is also a member of the Racial Equality Cross Departmental Working Group (CDWG) on ethnic monitoring. As well as attending these meetings the Champion has been working with DfI Equality Unit and Statisticians to improving better ethnicity data collection within DfI.

#### Monitoring Minority Ethnic in the Public Sector

Ethnic monitoring is an important step in addressing ethnic inequalities. The CDWG conducted a detailed data scoping exercise to determine what ethnicity data was already being collected by departments and established what additional data could potentially be captured. To address the lack of ethnic monitoring/data across the NICS, TEO have worked alongside Racial Equality Champions, NI Statistics and Research Agency (NISRA) and other bodies to develop a monitoring guide. The Guide was published in 2023.

The DfI intranet site publishes articles and personal stories to promote racial and ethnic awareness.

#### **iv. Children's Issues**

The Department's Children's Champion acts as the senior point of contact for any issues relating to the impact of the Department's functions on children and young people. This includes input to the Children and Young People's Strategy, and related draft Programme for Government outcomes.

The Department funds a number of concessions which assist children and young people when using public transport. We also have a number of road safety initiatives that specifically target children and young people. Further details of our initiatives or services affecting children and young people are set out within this report.

#### United Nations Committee on the Rights of the Child (UNCRC)

During this reporting period the Department's Children's Champion participated in the review of drafts of the UNCRC Report on 'List of Issues Prior to Report'. He also participated in the Northern Ireland exercise to inform the periodic report to the UN Committee about the UK's progress in implementing the UNCRC.

## **v. Mental Health Charter**

The NICS, including DfI, remains committed to the ECNI Mental Health Charter and its duty to protect the mental health of its staff. Awareness raising and support for mental health especially in recent years, has been promoted in the Department with intranet articles and online seminars. Staff are now able to avail of hybrid working which supports a mix of office and home working.

The Department is also committed to the ECNI's "every customer counts, promoting accessible services" recommendations.

All staff have access to and receive regular updates from the NICS Health and Wellbeing Programme / NICS Well, overseen by the Occupational Health Service (OHS). During the reporting period DfI continued to publish articles in support of Mental Health and general health and wellbeing. This also included promoting specific events such as World Mental Health Day and Mental Health Awareness Week (2023 highlighted children's mental health).

## **vi. Women and Girls**

The Period Products (Free Provision) Act (NI) 2022 requires DfI (and all other NICS departments) to make regulations specifying the departmental 'Public Service Bodies' required to ensure that period products are obtainable free of charge by persons in its premises who need to use them. A key aim of this legislation is to address period poverty.

At this position and time, 30 April 2024, DfI is proposing to specify Northern Ireland Water (NIW) and the Northern Ireland Transport Holding Company (NITHC) (Translink) as Public Services Bodies for the purposes of the Act. This will require them to establish and maintain arrangements to provide free period products in their premises for service users, visitors, and staff.

Departmental officials have drafted specification regulations and are preparing statutory guidance for NIW and NITHC on fulfilling their duties under the Act. This is in readiness for when arrangements are in place for the legislation to be made and consultation on the guidance in the manner required by the Act can be carried out.

The Department provided free period products in its headquarters.

## **vii. NI Water (NIW)**

NIW operates a Customer Care Register which offers a range of free additional services if a customer has a disability, is an older person, has a serious medical condition or needs extra help for any reason. The register is free and there are no qualifying requirements to join. NIW will prioritise these customers during an unplanned event

In 2023, NIW worked on the roll out of the JAM (Just a Minute) card initiative and by end June 2023 trained over 80% of employees in the programme which will support people with learning difficulties and autism.

## **1.2 Public Transport, including the Inclusive Mobility and Transport Advisory Committee (IMTAC)**

### **Access to Transport**

Many of the transport programmes funded by the Department are designed to remove barriers to travel that people, especially those with a disability, older people, and dependants (this includes dependants who may have a disability, and/or are younger or older), may face.

Initiatives and transport related programmes aimed at creating an inclusive / accessible transport system during this period, include:

#### **a. Improved Station Facilities**

- i. Lanyon Place Station – replacement of lifts & escalators complete.
- ii. The construction of the new York Street Station and demolition of the old Yorkgate Station has been completed and opened to the public in April 2024. The station provides level access to the entrance of the building with passenger lifts provided to access the concourse, airbridge and both platforms. The station is complete with a clear obstacle free route and is accessible for all customers with child changing facilities, accessible and changing places toilets.
- iii. Following completion of the ‘Enabling Sustainable Journeys’ study, several recommendations have been taken forward including the initiation of a project to install cycle storage for non-standard bikes at a number of stations and halts (in conjunction with advice from Wheels for Wellbeing); and representation as a key stakeholder, along with IMTAC, on DfI’s NI Active Travel Delivery Plan. This will prioritise the design and delivery of inclusive active travel routes to key public transport interchanges; and provides a commitment that all new developments/refurbishments (stations, park & rides etc) should consider inclusive active travel provision during the design as per ‘Enabling Sustainable Journeys’ recommendations.
- iv. As the Belfast Grand Central Station reaches its operational opening date, engagement with key stakeholders remains a high priority. Over the past year, IMTAC, RNIB, GuideDogsNI and the Consumer Council NI have advised the Department on key accessible elements

including the internal tactile path for wayfinding. This will be complemented by Navilens, an innovative wayfinding tool recommended by RNIB for blind and visually impaired customers. Seating has been designed using inclusive design standards and a new priority seating sticker developed with IMTAC input. A state-of-the-art sensory pod, a certified Autism product, will be available at the station along with sensory packs for children, teenagers and adults. Changing room facilities to include provision for disability access and baby changing rooms, toilet and changing facilities will accommodate those of both genders, and those from the transgender community.

Training for the station's new Duty Leads will also incorporate accessibility and disability elements using expert input from our Stakeholders.

The Phase 2 deliverables of accessible car parking (including electric charging facilities) and wheelchair accessible vehicle spaces, were designed with the stakeholders along with a dog spend area, and accessible cycle storage.

The wider enhanced public realm plan will see enhancements to the surrounding areas including the widening of footways for greater levels of pedestrian priority, step free access to and from the station to cater for pedestrians with restricted mobility and visual impairments. The project has adopted the new Social Value legislation released by the Executive which gives even more opportunity to create true and lasting benefits to the local area. There has been continuous ongoing engagement with stakeholders and community representatives throughout the planning process and construction stages to-date. This engagement will continue with stakeholders throughout the project duration including Phase 2.

#### **b. New Buses**

The Department provided Translink with funding of £48.3m towards the purchase of new buses. Throughout 2023-24, a total of 144 vehicles were in various stages of progress across all bus projects. All of the new buses are compliant with the Public Service Vehicle Accessibility Regulations. These projects include 44 Zero Emission Buses for Foyle Metro and the North Coast which entered service in the summer of 2023 and 100 Zero Emission buses for Ulsterbus and Belfast Metro due to enter service late 2024, providing climate positive, clean air public transport.

#### **c. Additional Train Carriages**

Translink and Irish Rail successfully obtained funding from the Special EU Programmes Body (SEUPB) PEACEPLUS programme and sponsoring departments to progress the purchase of eight new Belfast to Dublin "Enterprise" trains. The purchase of the new trains will enable the provision of



an hourly service between Belfast and Dublin with modern, reliable, faster and more environmentally friendly trains. The tender for the new trains issued in May 2024 with the technical specification seeking compliance with the EU Technical Specifications for Interoperability in relation to Persons with Disabilities and Reduced Mobility, as well as level access at all passenger doorways and throughout the train.

#### d. **Transport Programme for People with Disabilities (TPPD)**

The aim of this Programme is to improve accessibility to transport for those in urban areas with a disability who find it difficult to or cannot access mainstream services. Users of the programmes associated with the TPPD are those with a disability and / or those who are older.

The programmes included in TPPD, and their respective usage during 2023-24, are shown in the following table:

<b>Programme</b>	<b>Members</b>	<b>Data/usage</b>
<b>Disability Action Transport Scheme (DATS)</b> is a specialised transport service for people operating in towns or cities with a population more than 10,000 who find it difficult or impossible to use public transport.	15,331  Active Users 2,271	Number of trips delivered 78,118
<b>Shopmobility</b> helps people who consider themselves to have mobility problems (whether through disability, illness or injury) to continue to get around city and town centres independently, with freedom, confidence and dignity by the provision of mobility equipment, e.g. motorised scooters, wheelchairs etc.	13,221  Active Users 2,722	Number of equipment loans to individuals 51,685

The total amount of funding provided to these organisations, through TPPD, in 2023-24 was just under £2.5m.

#### e. **Dial-a-Lift (DAL)/Rural Transport Fund**

DAL was originally set up with the primary objective of reducing social isolation for rural dwellers. It provides transport options for individuals living in rural areas who are unable to access, or have difficulty accessing, public transport. The main users of this scheme are those aged 60+ and / or those with a disability.

During 2023-24 funding of almost £2.1m was provided by DfI to Rural Community Transport Partnerships in 11 operational areas to help deliver DAL services.

The number of people who used DAL services in 2023-24 was 3,993 who took 182,661 trips.

#### **f. Community Transport Evaluation**

During the reporting period, a number of pieces of work were undertaken to inform an evaluation of community transport; the Dial-a-Lift (DAL) Rural Transport Scheme and the Disability Action Transport Scheme (DATS). These included:

- a) research of published information on the value and benefits of community transport and relevant transport provision elsewhere;
- b) a community transport user survey;
- c) focus groups with users/non-users and representative bodies;
- d) a community transport manager questionnaire;
- e) quantitative data analysis; and
- f) a review of governance and accountability arrangements.

The evaluation sought to get a better understanding of why people use community transport, what they use it for, the value and benefits it brings to users and the impacts if community transport was not available as well as why people do not use community transport. Views were gathered via a user survey and focus groups for users and key stakeholders.

Eight Focus Groups were held with DAL and DATS users, IMTAC, the Age NI Consultative Forum and Age Friendly Coordinators/Networks with the purpose of gathering more in-depth user and non-user views.

Further focus groups were organised in conjunction with IMTAC and age representative groups and, again, participants were nominated by the respective organisations. These focus groups concentrated more on attaining non-user views and discussions were centered around transport currently used, awareness of community transport, barriers to use of community transport and suggested improvements. The Minister is currently considering the evaluation report.

#### **g. Concessionary Fares**

The Concessionary Fares Scheme supports those most at risk of social isolation to access public transport through discounted bus and rail fares. It provides free travel for people over aged 60, those who are registered blind and war disablement pensioners. There are also half fare concessions for people with a disability (who satisfy the relevant criteria) and children up to 16 yrs. SmartPasses also entitle a holder who meets the relevant criteria to the relevant concessionary fare. The total cost for the scheme during the reporting period was just over £39m (reimbursed by

DfI) and over 19m concessionary journeys (claimed by Translink and other participating operators) were taken as detailed in the table below.

Category	Cost £(000)	Journey numbers(k)
60+, Blind & War Disabled (full fare)	29,009	9,614
Half Fare Categories	805	522
Children	8,482	8,900
Administration Costs – overall	633	-
<u>Total</u>	<u>39,011</u>	<u>19,036</u>

The Department also funds a number of concessions to assist children and young people when using public transport; the YLink travel card for all 16-23 year olds and the translink Proof of Age card for all under 16 year olds, and the 24+ Student Railcard. These cards offer concession ranging from 1/3 to 50% off bus and rail journeys. (Rules apply).

#### h. **Free transport pilot for asylum seekers**

On 1 November 2023, through dispersal funding provided by the Home Office, the Department launched a free public transport pilot for asylum seekers. To date, over 3,000 travel cards have been provided to asylum seekers under the pilot. These cards provide free unlimited travel anywhere in Northern Ireland for a period of six months.

A formal evaluation of the pilot is currently being undertaken. However, early feedback from focus groups and consultation with stakeholders has been very positive. Asylum seekers have reported improved access to services, education and amenities; better health and well-being outcomes; and a greater sense of belonging.

The formal evaluation of the pilot is expected to be complete in Autumn 2024. However, in its report *From Arrival to Integration*, the Commissioner for the Integration of Refugees recognised that, “early feedback has highlighted the transformative impact that free transport has had on asylum seekers’ ability to access services and integrate within their communities, leading for calls from migrant groups for it to be extended”.

#### i. **IMTAC**

The role of IMTAC is to advise the Government and other relevant parties in Northern Ireland on issues that may affect the mobility of older people and / or people with a disability. IMTAC continues to be one of DfI’s primary sources for obtaining advice about issues that affect people with disabilities and how they use our infrastructure and services.

IMTAC has provided advice on number of wider policy issues throughout government, including:

- providing input into the draft North West and Sub Regional Transport Plan 2035, draft Eastern Transport Plan 2035, and the draft Fermanagh and Omagh Sub Regional Plan 2035;
- providing input to the development of DfI's Active Travel Plan;
- being an active stakeholder in the Bolder Vision for Belfast project; and
- continuing to participate in a working group to enhance accessibility requirements for future vehicle procurement contracts for Translink.

In addition, IMTAC has:

- continued to meet regularly with the Translink Accessibility Working Group, advising on a wide range of topics which impact upon older, Deaf and disabled transport users;
- provided advice and guidance to the Department and others on a range of projects and plans, including active travel projects, implementation of Belfast Cycling Network, public realm schemes, and development of pavement café licensing guidelines.
- provided specific advice and guidance to Translink across a range of major station redevelopments (including Belfast Transport Hub and Yorkgate), development of the Translink Ticketing Project, the Translink "Transforming Travel and Social Inclusion Project", and development of a consistent approach to provision of tactile guidance surfaces in transport stations and hubs.
- facilitated disability equality training with Translink Senior Management.
- submitted consolidated consultation responses designed to represent the views and concerns of older, Deaf and disabled across a wide range of subject areas.
- sought and were awarded grant funding of £63k for 2023-24; and
- developed its work programme for 2023-24 with a priority to support Government, transport providers and others in the continuing path to recovery from COVID-19.

The actions above made a significant contribution to the development of policy and services making travel more inclusive and accessible, especially for older people and people with a disability.

### **1.3 Policy Area – Management of Flood Risk and Roads and Footways**

The Department is responsible for the management of all publicly adopted roads and footways. Its main responsibilities include ensuring streets are maintained and are safe to use. It also plays an important role in seeing that any new works are completed to the appropriate standards and as far as possible the needs of those with a disability are considered within the design and development of a project.

#### **1.4 Policy Area – 20 mph Speed Limit Scheme**

The Scheme aims to improve road safety around schools when pupils are arriving in the morning and leaving in the afternoon.

To date a total of 215 schools have been added to the part time '20 mph speed limit scheme'.

There is a review of provision currently being undertaken before additional part time 20 mph speed limits are provided.

#### **1.5 Policy Area – Blue Badge Scheme**

The Blue Badge Scheme provides a range of parking concessions for people with severe mobility problems. A blue badge must be displayed to avail of the concessions. Use of the concessions associated with the blue badge scheme makes it easier for those with a severe mobility issue to park closer to their destination, therefore, making it easier to access facilities within the community.

Within this reporting period 53,586 blue badges were issued. A further 135 multiple badges were issued to support organisations.

#### **1.6 Policy Area – Driving Theory Test**

For candidates with a hearing/speech/visual impairment, the Department's Driver & Vehicle Agency (DVA) continues to allow for extra time, provides reader/recorder assistance, and/or provides information in accessible formats (e.g. British Sign Language on-screen video, Lip Speaker, Sign Language Interpreter etc).

For candidates where English is not their first language, the questions and answer options can be read through headphones in Portuguese, Turkish, Farsi, Cantonese, Arabic and Polish.

Video clips have replaced written scenarios in the car theory test, bringing the test up to date and making it more accessible for everyone. Research involving candidates with reading difficulties and disabilities showed that these learners felt more comfortable and confident with video scenarios as they were better able to process the information on screen.

The theory test online booking system has been subject to a comprehensive review and development to increase compliance with the Web Content Accessibility Guidelines.

DVA continues to work in partnership with the Driver & Vehicle Standards Agency (DVSA) in GB to engage with groups that represent those with learning difficulties and disabilities to facilitate these candidates when completing their driving theory test.

Liaison with representative groups has resulted in DVA adjusting tests to assist people with certain disabilities to allow them to take their tests in a manner more accessible to them.

## **1.7 Policy Area – Safe and Accessible Travel**

### **i) Community Interaction**

The Department continues to deliver road safety behavioural change interventions and educational messages through its 'Share the Road to Zero' website and its associated Facebook and Twitter social media channels. Throughout the year these messages regularly address the main causes of road casualties, with drivers continuously reminded to give extra consideration to more vulnerable road users, particularly children, people with mobility issues, and older people.

Campaigns designed for social media include subtitling to improve the messaging for those with hearing difficulties. In addition to social media activity, the Department also delivered various outdoor (bus advertising) road safety campaigns that specifically referenced older road users and children, namely in the pedestrian safety, distraction and anti-speeding campaigns.

In August 2023, advice on the use of mobility scooters was promoted via social media. This activity is scheduled to run again during 2024-25.

Last year's campaign to raise awareness with drivers on the dangers of parking on the pavement continued running on social media during August 2023. The campaign aims to show drivers how parking on the pavement can endanger all pavement users forcing them into oncoming traffic, with a specific focus on people with disabilities, older people, children and people pushing prams.

### **ii) Cycling Proficiency Scheme (CPS)**

With cycling becoming more and more popular in recent years, Cycling Proficiency continues to play an important role in preparing children for a safer, active lifestyle and encourages them to continue cycling as they progress into adulthood. Cycling is also fun and contributes to children's recommended 60 minutes daily physical activity.

Officials from the Department worked with 150 schools in this period to deliver the annual Cycling Proficiency Scheme with most schools running the scheme from Easter onwards.

The schools have confirmed that it has been delivered to their pupils as follows:

- Total number of children who took part in CPS training – 2393 pupils;
- Total number of children who attained CPS standard – 2287 pupils (96%); and
- Total number of children who wore helmet during training – 2388 pupils (99.8%).

There were 81 new instructors to the scheme, at 58 schools, who were trained to deliver programme of lessons in their schools.

A pupil evaluation survey was issued to schools in May 2023 which found:

- 98% of children surveyed reported their cycling safety knowledge had increased;

- 83% of children surveyed now wear a helmet whilst cycling compared to 43% before participating in the scheme; and
- 90% of children surveyed conduct a shoulder check for traffic whilst cycling compared to 30% before training.

This shows a heightened awareness of safety therefore keeping children safer when cycling on our roads.

### **iii) Practical Child Pedestrian Safety Training**

This training is offered to selected primary schools to help children in primary years three, four and five gain and develop pedestrian skills, observe dangers and practice crossing roads via training walks in their area.

The first stage of a 3-year intensive supported scheme rolled out to 14 new primary schools in Autumn 2022. All 14 participating schools completed Stage 2 within the period of this report and will commence Stage 3 in the autumn term of the 2024-25 academic year. An assessment showed that in the 14 schools:

- 764 pupils participated in Stage 2 of the scheme; and
- delivered a 10% overall increase in pupil knowledge between pre and post Stage 2 of the scheme.

The children in the scheme are gaining knowledge to help them be more alert to dangers when walking along the roadside, with the overall aim of reducing road incidents involving child pedestrians.

### **v) Development of Cycling Infrastructure**

DfI's Director for Active Travel has responsibility to take forward and deliver our commitment to increase the percentage of journeys made by walking, wheeling and cycling. An Advisory Group has been established, which includes IMTAC, to advise on strategic issues to assist in imbedding active travel as an integral part of the work of the Department. This group has been supplemented by the development of a Stakeholder group, the full membership of which has yet to be finalised.

The Department continues to work on developing cycling infrastructure which will be primarily segregated, not only from traffic but also from pedestrians, to provide safe space for all.

During the reporting period, further progress was made on the Belfast Cycling Network Delivery Plan 2022-31 with schemes progressing through various stages of design and development. The Belfast Cycling Network demonstrates how the provision of segregated infrastructure can reduce conflict between users as well as accessible infrastructure for disabled and elderly people.



We have also continued to liaise with stakeholders, including IMTAC, Sustrans, Cycling UK and others in the development of active travel measures.

#### **v) Publication of Transport Accessibility Statistics, Northern Ireland**

In March 2024, the Department published a new compendium report on transport accessibility. It brings together a range of information from various sources on transport accessibility. The report was developed following the Office for Statistics Regulation Systemic Review of Transport Accessibility Statistics; this report recommended that statistics producers should bring data and statistics together to meet user needs. Following further engagement with users, this summary report has been developed as an ad hoc reference document for the availability and use of transport accessibility statistics especially for staff in connection with Section 75 exercises.

### **1.8 Policy Area – Communication with Customers**

The DfI Guide to Making Information Accessible assists staff when communicating with the public. The Guide provides information and recommendations on how to communicate effectively with a range of section 75 groups to ensure all have the opportunity to fully participate in our decision making. An annual review was carried out and the document published on the DfI intranet site on 15 December 2023.

The Department also has both an Irish and an Ulster Scots Language policy which are reviewed annually most recently on 4 December 2023, and links were circulated to staff for information. It is also accessible on the Department's intranet site.

The Department is committed to making its website accessible, in accordance with the Public Sector Bodies (Websites and Mobile Applications) (No. 2) Accessibility Regulations 2018. The DfI website's Accessibility Statement is updated on a regular basis with progress on actions arising from the 2020 website Accessibility Audit. Various accessibility issues such as structure, tables and images of documents are undergoing repairs which should be complete by September 2024. Any new content will be checked to ensure these issues do not reoccur. Some developer issues were also identified which should be addressed during the current content manager upgrade due to completed by the end of 2024.

#### **DVA Services**

- i. In partnership with Age NI, DVA has developed arrangements to support older people who wish to engage on a range of services. DVA has provided Age NI with background information relating to its services, mostly on licensing and vehicle test bookings, and briefed their case officer on how to access relevant online information. This has, for example, enabled Age NI to assist those wishing



to check their MOT status online (Age NI provides a free telephone advice service). This partnership has been positively received by Age NI.

The establishment of points of contact with Age NI supports DVA and customers particularly during times when there are high volumes of queries on any specific matter. Age NI has also shared DVA's social media messages on its platforms to provide current information for older people who use the internet.

### **Concessionary Fares**

- ii. In June 2023, the Department launched a 12-week public consultation on changes to the eligibility criteria for the NI Concessionary Fares Scheme. The Consultation document was made available in pdf format, interactive online survey, interactive EasyRead and a British Sign Language and Irish Sign language subtitled video. A dedicated phonenumber and e-mail address were also provided to allow for free text and over the phone responses.

Face to face and online focus groups were held with older people across Northern Ireland, in both rural and urban locations (facilitated through Age NI, Councils' Age Friendly Co-ordinators and IMTAC). Officials also met with asylum seekers and representative and support organisations, including the Refugee and Asylum Forum and Flourish (a group supporting victims of human trafficking). The consultation received over 20,000 responses which have informed the Department's consultation outcomes report, Stage 6 report and draft EQIA. The Minister continues to take account of this information in deciding what, if any, changes should be made to the Scheme.

### **Free Public Transport Pilot for Asylum Seekers**

- iii. In November 2023, the Department launched a free transport pilot for asylum seekers providing six months free travel on all Translink services. Asylum seekers were provided with information on the pilot which was translated into 10 different languages (those most commonly used by asylum seekers resident in Northern Ireland). All communications on the pilot were translated and distributed through a range of channels.
- iv. The Department contracted Red Cross to provide bi-lingual telephone, email and text support during the distribution phase of the pilot. An accessibility aid was also added to the NI Direct website to assist asylum seekers in accessing online information.
- v. For the evaluation of the pilot, bi-lingual community facilitators were employed to ensure asylum seekers could participate in the pilot in their home language, enhancing user experience and promoting interaction between the Department and the pilot's participants. As a result, focus groups were very well attended, users felt included and that their opinions were valued, and the Department received detailed feedback to help inform its evaluation.

## 1.9 Policy Area – Public Appointments

All public appointment recruitment is completed in accordance with the Commissioner for Public Appointments NI Code of Practice (2016). There were two open public appointment competitions completed during 2023-24. The Department continues to encourage underrepresented groups to apply for public appointment opportunities. The Department's policy is that all public appointments are made via an open competition with the aim of improving diversity on boards.

The Department takes part in the Boardroom Apprentice programme as one of approximately 56 host boards across the public and third sectors. The programme is a unique 12-month board learning, development and placement programme which enables those who would like to serve on a public or third sector board to learn and gain experience in a safe way before they take that step. The programme is about delivering diversity, creating change and achieving aspirations – it seeks to enable a wider diversity of individuals to play their part within boardrooms across Northern Ireland.

## 1.10 Good Relations

### i. 'Together: Building a United Community Strategy' (TBUC)

DfI does not lead in any of the seven TBUC headline actions. That said, our work supports the Urban Villages Programme and we contribute, through planning policies, to the development of shared spaces for all. Our public transport system is also crucial in helping people and communities connect with each other and with employment and other opportunities.

### ii. Shared Space and Strategic Planning Policy Statement (SPPS) 'Planning for Sustainable Development'

The SPPS recognises that the planning system has an important role supporting Government with regards creating and enhancing shared spaces – specifically, through its influence on the type, location, siting and design of developments.

Councils are responsible for taking forward the development of local operational policy through new Local Development Plans (LDPs) and for the majority of planning decisions. These Plans contribute to the promotion of physical and social environments that support everyone, including children, older people and people with disabilities to have easy access to open space and the opportunity to participate in sport and outdoor recreational activity, or simply enjoy and have contact with nature.

The Department continues to engage, advise and support councils in the delivery of their local planning functions and to seek to ensure the two-tier planning system can operate as efficiently

and effectively as possible for all stakeholders. Councils must take account of the Regional Development Strategy 2035, the SPPS and any other policies or advice in guidance issued by the Department.

### **iii. Free public transport pilot for asylum seekers**

In November 2023, the Department launched a pilot providing asylum seekers with free public transport on Translink services for a period of six months. A formal evaluation of the pilot is currently underway. However, early evidence from focus groups with asylum seekers suggests that the pilot has assisted with integration and promoted good relations by facilitating greater intergroup contact between asylum seekers and the host community, promoting understanding between people of different ethnic and religious backgrounds.

**PART A – Section 1: Equality and good relations outcomes, impacts and good practice.**

2. Please provide **examples** of outcomes and/or the impact of **equality action plans** / measures in 2023-24 (*or append the plan with progress/examples identified*).

The Department for Infrastructure's report on its Audit of Inequalities 2021-26 was published 28 March 2023 <https://www.infrastructure-ni.gov.uk/publications/dfi-audit-inequalities-2021-2026>.

Consultation on the associated draft Equality Action Plan ran from April – June 2023 after a delay due to uncertainty of the budget position. The Department is preparing a consultation report on the responses received.

3. Has the **application of the Equality Scheme** commitments resulted in any **changes** to policy, practice, procedures and/or service delivery areas during the 2023-24 reporting period?

**Yes.**

Please provide any details and examples:

**Equality Processes:**

The Department's Equality Unit proactively encourages business areas to involve the Unit at an early stage.

This seeks to ensure that equality issues are considered as early as possible; quality of content is improved; and directing business areas to a wide range of relevant data. This all contributes to a stronger evidence base to assess possible impacts and provide greater appreciation of the particular needs of the various section 75 groups within the policy development process.

Since the Department's Section 75 training regime commenced in October 2021 there has been a noticeable increase in screenings being undertaken. For example, in the period 1 July 2021 – 30 September 2021 five screenings were published, whereas for the same period in 2023 13 screenings were published.

The Department's intranet site includes links to generic information relevant to the Department and directs staff to specific data where relevant. Every member of staff has access to "NINIS" online statistics and the DfI screening template includes a link to the Equality Commission's signposting document.

The Department has also been working with TEO on how to collate relevant ethnic data. The Audit of Inequalities found that section 75 data in general for DfI was lacking and this is included as an action within the draft Equality Action Plan to address the lack of data.

The Department's submission template to the Minister and senior management includes a statement on section 75 to ensure equality implications are considered and documented.

In line with our Equality Scheme commitment to consider any good practice or guidance issued by ECNI, the Equality Unit shares relevant information and guidance with all staff, for example ECNI e-newsletters and updates from the Employers for Disability NI.

**Age and Disability category:**

Application of the duties ensured officials took into account people with learning difficulties and older people when considering the removal of paper options, and/or removal of telephone numbers from DfI external communications.

Annual and quarterly audits / reviews on the accessibility of websites allow the Department to make any necessary improvements.

**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:

**Disability category:**

Research with Driving Theory Test candidates with reading difficulties and disabilities showed that these learners felt more comfortable and confident with video scenarios as they were better able to process the information on screen. The Driver Theory Test now includes video clips instead of written scenarios making it more accessible for everyone.

The theory test online booking system was subject to a comprehensive review and development to increase compliance with the Web Content Accessibility Guidelines. An Accessibility Statement, in compliance with the Public Sector Bodies (Websites and Mobile Applications) (No. 2) Accessibility Regulations 2018, was published on the site in September 2020 and most recently updated in February 2023. The Department's online systems continue to be reviewed to ensure accessibility is optimal.

As part of the NICS drive to promote the JAM ('Just A Minute') Card, DfI staff were reminded to renew their online training in this period.

**Age and Disability category:**

People with learning difficulties, and older people who are not proficient in IT, have other contact options of either phoning staff for information or advice or receiving communications in paper format

ensuring their independence when availing of DfI services. For DVA services, Age NI can assist older people (see 1.8 above).

Community transport providers and Shopmobility Schemes also maintain a telephone contact service with their members, often signposting them to other organisations who can provide help when needed. The majority of those who have/will benefit from this service would be those who are older and those with a disability.

### **Race/Intersectional**

In November 2023, the Department launched a public transport pilot providing asylum seekers with six months free travel on Translink services, through funding from Home Office, distributed by the Executive Office. To date over 3,000 cards have been distributed to asylum seekers. A formal evaluation of the pilot is currently underway. However, early findings suggest that the pilot has enhanced access to services, promoted good educational and health outcomes for asylum seekers and helped foster asylum seekers integration with the local community. The Commissioner for the Integration of Refugees, in its report “From Arrival to Integration”, has recognised early evidence on “the transformative impact that free transport has had on asylum seeker’s ability to access services and integrate within their communities”.

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

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

The Accessibility Audit of the Department’s website identifies issues and remedial work required to bring the website up to WCAG 2.1 accessibility standards. This is a recurring exercise.

## Section 2: Progress on Equality Scheme commitments and action plans/measures

### Arrangements for assessing compliance (Equality Scheme Chapter 2)

4. Were the section 75 statutory duties integrated within job descriptions during the 2023-24 reporting period? (*choose one option only*)

**Yes - some posts.**

~~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:

- Paragraph 2.5 of the Department's Equality Scheme sets out that, where relevant, employees' job descriptions and performance plans reflect their contributions to the discharge of the section 75 statutory duties and implementation of the equality scheme.
- Given its functions in relation to section 75, relevant staff within the Department's Corporate Strategy and Performance Directorate (CSPD) have included Equality duties as part of their job descriptions. This is also reflected, as appropriate, in other business areas across the Department.
- Section 75 duties are also reflected as objectives in the personal performance plans of relevant staff within CSPD, in particular the Equality Unit. These objectives are subject to an annual appraisal. Personal Development actions are developed and reviewed biannually to identify any new training requirements.

5. Were the section 75 statutory duties integrated within performance plans during the 2023-24 reporting period? (*choose one option only*)

**Yes - some posts**

~~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:

- Reply to Question 4 above refers.

6. In the 2023-24 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? *(keep in all that apply)*

**Yes - preparation and development of the Dfl corporate plan.**

~~Yes – through organisation wide annual business planning.~~

~~Yes – in some departments/jobs.~~

~~No – these are already mainstreamed through the organisation’s corporate  
—— plan.~~

~~No – the organisation’s planning cycle does not coincide with this 2023-24  
—— report.~~

Not applicable

Please provide any details and examples:

The Department’s annual Corporate Business Plan 2022-23 contains a commitment to section 75. Section 75 considerations are also reported on during the business plan monitoring periods throughout the year.

### **Equality action plans/measures**

7 Within the 2023-24 reporting period, please indicate the **number** of:

Actions completed: 0

Actions ongoing: 0

Actions to commence: 14

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

A draft of the Dfl Equality Action Plan has been consulted on and the Department is preparing a consultation report based on the responses received.

8 Please give details of changes or amendments made to the equality action plan/measures during the 2023-24 reporting period *(points not identified in an appended plan)*:



The draft Equality Action Plan, containing 14 actions, identified during the Audit of Inequalities in 2021 underwent a 12-week consultation in 2023 and we are considering the responses received.

9 In reviewing progress on the equality action plan/action measures during the 2023-24 reporting period, the following have been identified: *(tick all that apply)*

Action(s) to address newly identified inequalities/~~recently prioritised inequalities:~~

The 14 actions contained within the draft Action Plan outline how the Department will address identified inequalities that exist for its service users and those affected by its policies. Progress towards intended outcomes may be impacted by budgetary constraints.

~~Continuing action(s), to progress the next stage addressing the known inequality~~

~~Action(s) to address the known inequality in a different way~~

~~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: *(choose one option)*

- Sometimes.
- ~~All the time~~
- ~~Never~~

11. Please provide any **details and examples of good practice** in consultation during the 2023-24 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:

- In 2023-24, the Department undertook a public consultation on changes to the eligibility criteria for the NI Concessionary Fares Scheme. The consultation was accessible on Citizen Space (the NI Government's on-line consultation hub), and also featured on the Department's website, for a period of 12 weeks from 1 June to 24 August 2023. Individuals and groups could respond to the consultation in a variety of ways: the survey on Citizen Space; email to the dedicated Concessionary Fares Consultation Scheme mailbox; and through post.
- Prior to the launch of the survey, a number of adjustments were made to the initial consultation document, including adjustments to the layout and the configuration of tables to make access easier for respondents who rely on assisted technology.

- An Interactive EasyRead version of the survey was produced and alternative accessible formats, including large font paper copies and language translations, were available on request. British Sign Language (BSL) and Irish Sign Language (ISL) versions of the consultation, with voice over and subtitles, also featured on the consultation page of the Department's website.
- The Department held extensive pre-consultation engagement with a range of key stakeholders and, over the duration of the consultation, facilitated 17 focus groups comprised of target demographics to examine the potential impact of the proposed changes and to gain insight into the shared experiences of each group.
- To reach the broadest possible range of individuals and groups, over 200 stakeholders were contacted via email when the consultation launched. A link to the online consultation survey was provided and groups were encouraged to share the link with others.
- In terms of media engagement, the consultation was covered by a number of news outlets throughout the consultation period and featured on programmes such as BBC Newsline, BBC Talkback, the Stephen Nolan show and UTV Live.
- The consultation was also extensively covered by the daily and weekly press with articles in a number of national, regional and local newspapers, ensuring it was accessible to older people, who may be less likely to use the internet or may lack IT skills.
- In its response to the consultation, IMTAC recognised the Department's "good practice" approach to making the consultation accessible through the following statement:
  - "We would like to put on record our praise to officials undertaking the consultation for their positive approach to engaging with Deaf people, disabled people and older people about the options. This positive approach includes attending numerous meetings with users of the scheme. The Committee commends the production of materials in other formats including Easy Read and signed video in both British and Irish Sign Language. This positive approach provides a template for others for future engagement and consultation".

**12.** In the 2023-24 reporting period, given the consultation methods offered, which consultation methods were **most frequently used by consultees**: *(keep all that apply)*

- Focus groups (inc virtual).
- Questionnaires/Surveys.
- Internet discussions; and

- other(please specify): leaflet drops, advertisement in national and/or local newspapers and online publications.
- Face to face meetings.
- Written documents with the opportunity to comment in writing.
- Information by email with an opportunity to opt in/out of the consultation.
- Telephone consultations.

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:

In relation to the Concessionary Fares consultation, seventeen events were held, usually comprising up to 15 participants. Focus group participants were either older people (age), people with disability or people from a minority ethnic background.

- The key documents on the website achieved the following downloads:
  - Consultation – 3,416 downloads;
  - Easy read – 2,009 downloads;
  - Key briefing – 945 downloads; and
  - EQIA – 503 downloads.
- The Department's social media pages were also used to engage with the public and encourage participation in the consultation. During the consultation period, the following engagement was achieved on the main launch posts:
  - Twitter - 51k impressions, 1,276 engagements including 38 shares; and
  - Facebook - 6.4k reach, 642 impressions, 705 engagements and 140 shares.
- The consultation survey asked respondents to confirm their sex, and of the respondents who answered the question, 54% were female and 46% were male. Of the respondents who answered the survey question on age, the age profile was as follows:
  - 2% were 80+ years of age;
  - 14% were 70-79 years of age;
  - 56% were 60-69 years old;
  - 19% were 50-59 years old;
  - 4% were 40-49 years old;
  - 3% were 30-39 years old;
  - 1% were 20-29 years old; and
  - 0.1% were 10-19 years old.

- Respondents were also asked to confirm if they have any physical or mental health conditions or illnesses that have lasted, or are likely to last, for 12 months or more. Of the respondents who answered, 34% confirmed that they did, whilst the majority (66%) said that they did not.

**13.** Were any awareness-raising activities for **consultees** undertaken, on the commitments in the Equality Scheme, during the 2023-24 reporting period? (*choose one option only*)

- No - As is standard practice, the quarterly screening report was circulated, and consultations emailed, to all those on our section 75 consultee list.
- ~~Yes.~~
- ~~Not applicable.~~

**14.** Was the consultation list reviewed during the 2023-24 reporting period? (*choose one option only*)

- Yes – It is reviewed annually.
- ~~No~~
- ~~Not applicable – no commitment to review~~

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

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

- 62 screening analysis were carried out during this period and can be viewed at <https://www.infrastructure-ni.gov.uk/section-75-consultation-information#toc-114>

**16.** Please provide the **number of assessments** that were consulted upon during 2023-24:

- Policy consultations conducted with **screening** assessment presented: 0
- Policy consultations conducted **with an equality impact assessment** (EQIA) presented. 0
- Consultations for an **EQIA** alone. 2

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

- DVA carried out a section 75 screening assessment on proposals to increase the Driver and Vehicle test fees and screened it out. This was followed by an eight week consultation that

concluded with the publication of a synopsis of responses, and the implementation of a suite of Driver and Vehicle test fee increases via amending Regulations.

- The Department published a draft revised policy consultation document for strategic planning policy on renewable and low carbon energy for comment on 6 April 2023. This Consultation was accompanied by a section 75 equality screening analysis. The draft policy and accompanying draft screening analysis were subject to a 12 week consultation period. Officials are currently finalising a synopsis of responses which will be published along with the final policy once agreed.
- Screening exercises were carried out for seven proposed policies being considered as part of a Water, Flooding and Sustainable Drainage Bill. The policies included: Wider Water Shortage measures; Powers for the Department to issue future guidance on sustainable drainage systems (SuDS); Powers for NI Water to adopt Private Drainage Infrastructure constructed prior to 1st October 1973; Enhanced powers for NI Water to deal with sewer and drain misconnections; Power for NI Water to register Article 161 Agreements in the Statutory Charges Register; Powers for the Department to grant fund Homeowner Flood Protection measures and Powers for the Department to amend, update or revoke the Drainage (Environmental Impact Assessment) Regulations (Northern Ireland) 2017 and the Water Environment (Floods Directive) Regulations (Northern Ireland) 2009. Screening exercises were carried out and no significant impacts were identified on any section 75 groups. The screening exercises were published on 24 January 2024.
- On 1 June 2023, the Department published a 12-week public consultation and draft EQIA on changes to eligibility for the NI Concessionary Fares Scheme. A Stage 6 report and updated EQIA, taking account of the consultation responses, was published in June 2024 and will be finalised, once the Minister has made any final decisions on what, if any, changes will be made to the Scheme.
- As part of the discretionary spend review in early 2023, funding for the Travel Survey NI (TSNI) was halted temporarily until a decision was taken by the then Permanent Secretary on the allocation of funding for the continuation of the 2023 Survey. The equality screening found that, an equality impact assessment would need to be undertaken on any potential decision to cease funding for the TSNI, due to the likely significant impact this could have on section 75 groups, future transport related policy development and monitoring and the Department's equality commitments. The decision to continue to fund the TSNI was made and therefore no EQIA was required.

- The Department carried out a section 75 screening assessment on potential changes to The Planning (Development Management) Regulations (Northern Ireland) 2015. This was followed by a 12 week consultation focusing on a review of the existing classes of development and the corresponding thresholds for local, major and regionally significant development; proposals to make pre-determination hearings discretionary for councils; and proposals to provide for in-person and online/electronic engagement as part of pre-application community consultation process. Officials are currently finalising a synopsis of responses which will be published along with the final policy once agreed.
- The Department carried out a section 75 screening assessment on the review of Permitted Development Rights. This followed by a 12 week consultation on proposals to revise permitted development rights for the installation of domestic microgeneration equipment such as heat pumps and provide new permitted development rights for reverse vending machines. The Planning (General Permitted Development) (Amendment) Order (Northern Ireland) 2023 came into operation on 4 July 2023.
- The Department carried out a section 75 screening assessment on its Budget allocation for 2023/24. On 15 May 2023, a 12 week consultation was launched on the potential impacts of this budget on the Department's statutory services.

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

- ~~Yes~~
- No concerns were raised
- ~~No~~
- ~~Not applicable~~

#### **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 2023-2024 reporting period? (choose one option only)**

**Yes**

**No**

**Not applicable**

Please provide any details and examples:

An equality screening was carried out on the Draft Budget 2023-24 outcome for the Department, which identified the need for an Equality Impact Assessment. After drafting it was subject to a consultation from 15 May 2023 to 7 August 2023.

Following consideration of the 1,119 consultation responses received final budget decisions were taken.

The final consultation report was published 30 October 2023 - [DfI Resource Budget 2023-24 Equality Impact Assessment – Final Report | Department for Infrastructure \(infrastructure-ni.gov.uk\)](#)

#### **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 2023-2024 reporting period? *(choose one option only)*

~~No – already taken place.~~

~~No – scheduled to take place at a later date.~~

~~Not applicable.~~

**Yes.**

Please provide any details:

- The Department's Audit of Inequalities highlighted that, whilst the Department continues to collect data for section 75 groups with all surveys, we are limited in the analysis that can be undertaken for categories such as ethnicity and sexual orientation. This is due to the achieved sample size for each DfI survey which means that survey response counts of ethnic minority group respondents, or those indicating a sexual orientation other than 'heterosexual / straight', are generally too small in order to provide robust and reliable statistical analysis.
- However, the 2021 Census has now released information on Sexual Identity and Ethnicity by NI Overall and Local Government District and this will become available for smaller areas in subsequent data releases.
- The Social Inclusion Strategies recommendations have also highlighted the lack of meaningful section 75 data and is a potential action emanating from each Strategies' Expert Advisory Panel's reports.
- The Department reviews all aspects of its websites regularly to ensure they meet accessibility regulations. Work continues on remediation work identified in the Department's Accessibility Statement.

**21.** In analysing monitoring information gathered, was any action taken to change/review any policies? (*choose one option*)

~~Yes~~

**No**

~~Not Applicable~~

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

None.

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

The Department has carried out various surveys linked to our services all of which has assisted and informed decision making and when carrying out equality screening analysis:

DfI currently has a number of question modules included in the Continuous Household Survey (CHS) which provides a regular source of information on a wide range of issues relevant to Northern Ireland. Where possible, results for all CHS reports are broken down by gender, age group, urban/rural and by Local Government District.

Between four and five separate reports are published annually on topics such as:

- Attitudes towards Walking, Cycling and Public Transport [Walking, Cycling and Public Transport in Northern Ireland 2021/22 | Department for Infrastructure \(infrastructure-ni.gov.uk\)](#) updated 16 June 2023
- Attitudes towards eCars [Attitudes towards electric vehicles in Northern Ireland 2022/23 | Department for Infrastructure \(infrastructure-ni.gov.uk\)](#) published 9 November 2023,
- Publication of Young Persons' Behaviour and Attitudes Survey 2022 Travel to and from School Factsheet [Publication of Young Persons' Behaviour and Attitudes Survey 2022 Travel to and from School Factsheet | Department for Infrastructure \(infrastructure-ni.gov.uk\)](#) published 24 November 2023
- Public Transport Journey Planning [Public Transport and Journey Planning in Northern Ireland 2022/23 | Department for Infrastructure \(infrastructure-ni.gov.uk\)](#) published 25 January 2024.
- Walking and Cycling [Walking and Cycling in Northern Ireland 2022/23 | Department for Infrastructure \(infrastructure-ni.gov.uk\)](#) published 28 March 2024

Upcoming publications include:

- Travel to/from School; and



- Road Safety.

## Staff Training (Model Equality Scheme Chapter 5)

**24.** Please report on the activities from the training plan/programme (section 5.4 of the Model Equality Scheme) undertaken during 2022-23, and the extent to which they met the training objectives in the Equality Scheme.

A range of section 75 training continued during the period:

- Further training using the ECNI video on Section 75 Screening was sent to staff in May 2023.
- The Department continues to circulate links to webinars, including those delivered by ECNI and Employers for Disability.
- All staff have access to various e-learning courses on mental health/resilience (personal and of others); disability; ASD awareness; and vulnerable users.
- The DfI Staff Induction package includes a section on Equality and section 75, with relevant links to information and training.

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

- The DVA staff induction for new staff includes a presentation on Diversity and Inclusion.
- 'Introduction to Human Rights e-learning' course has benefitted staff by raising awareness and understanding of human rights in the delivery of their duties and the work of the Department generally.
- Unconscious Bias e-learning course has promoted positive attitudes towards people with a disability.
- ASD e-course has given a good foundation to understanding the communication difficulties encountered by people on the spectrum.
- DfI staff refreshed their JAM ('Just A Minute') Card online training in this period as part of an NICS drive.
- This training has provided useful information for staff, particularly frontline staff to understand the needs of people with a disability when accessing public transport and other public facing services.

- Accessibility training for websites has been introduced across the NICS. However, this training is not mandatory. Further communications to issue to encourage staff to complete this training.

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

**26.** Please list **any examples** of where monitoring during 2023-24, across all functions, has resulted in action and improvement in relation **to access to information and services**:

The surveys listed at 23 will assist the department in its prioritising and planning decisions.

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

**27.** How many complaints **in relation to the Equality Scheme** have been received during 2023-2024?

Please provide any details of each complaint raised and outcome:

- The Driver & Vehicle Agency (DVA) received 16 complaints during the year that related to Section 75 characteristics.
- Of these, eight related to Disability, six to Race, one to Religion and one to Political Opinion.
- Of the 16 complaints received, two were upheld, three were partially upheld and 11 were not upheld.

### **Section 3: Looking Forward**

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

- The Equality Scheme is not due for review until February 2026.

**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)*

Issues identified in the Audit of Inequalities were in relation to:

- public and rural transport (people with disabilities, older people, women and younger people) - the Department is working with key stakeholders to explore measures to address these issues;
- road safety (younger people aged 16-24) – the draft Road Safety Strategy to 2030 introduced new measures and targets to reduce the high rate of deaths and serious injuries impacting this group. Road safety continues to be an area requiring work and the

Department is involved with Cycling Proficiency and Pedestrian safety training schemes in primary schools. Social media is utilised constantly to send safety messages to road users;

- pavement parking (people with disabilities, older people and people with dependants) - an options paper was launched in 2022 setting out possible options for dealing with inconsiderate pavement parking. The Department sought the general public's views on the issue and on the options suggested, including possibly dealing with vehicles parked across dropped kerbs. On 6 December 2023 the Department released a Findings Report on the responses received to the consultation. This can be accessed using this link; <https://www.infrastructure-ni.gov.uk/publications/inconsiderate-pavement-parking-findings-report> a formal response to the consultation exercise will follow. The Department routinely reminds drivers to 'think before you park' and continues to take action against vehicles that are in contravention of parking restrictions, including those that apply to footways. The Department also recently introduced the Footways (Prohibition of Waiting) Order (Northern Ireland) 2023 which allows it to enforce against vehicles found parked on footways alongside bus lanes, bus stops/stands, mandatory cycle lanes and mandatory 'School Keep Clear' markings. The legislation adds to list of specific areas where footway parking is prohibited;
- the Department, like others, has limited equality data and the Equality Unit has been working alongside colleagues in Analysis, Statistics and Research Branch to address this anomaly; and
- Continuing section 75 training programmes for all staff in DfI. The staff induction pack advises of our Equality duties and recommends that all staff complete the Introduction to Section 75 e-learning.

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

~~Employment~~

~~Goods, facilities and services~~

~~Legislative changes~~

~~Organisational changes/ new functions~~

~~Nothing specific, more of the same~~

Other (please state):

- I. Advice on the progression of the Equality Action Plan goals;
- II. Advice on the review and development of a new Departmental Disability Action Plan; and

- III. We will also continue to seek advice on various issues encountered when screening (especially those linked to the current Budget), and developing guidance and policies, as necessary.

Alternative versions of this document can be requested from the DfI Equality Unit by:

**Email:** [equality@infrastructure-ni.gov.uk](mailto:equality@infrastructure-ni.gov.uk)

**Telephone:** 02890540934 (for text relay service start with 18001)

**Post:** Floor 1, James House, The Gasworks, 2-4 Cromac Avenue, Belfast BT7 2JA.

Part B

**section 49A of the Disability Discrimination Act 1995 (as amended) and Disability Action Plans**

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

12

Fully achieved

3

Partially achieved

0

Not achieved

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

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

Level	Public Life Action Measures	Outputs <sup>1</sup>	Outcomes / Impacts <sup>2</sup>
National <sup>3</sup>	To encourage more disabled people to apply for public appointments.	A Guaranteed Interview Scheme is considered in all competitions.	No public competitions were completed/held in 2022-23.
Regional <sup>4</sup>	The Department will support IMTAC as a source of independent advice on the transport needs of disabled and older people to secure engagement with disabled people in the design and development of policies.	The IMTAC Work Programme for 2022-23 was agreed and published on 26 May 2022. The Programme for 2023-24 was agreed and published 31 March 2023. The programme reflects Government priorities.	Better informed decisions made by the Department on issues affecting those with a disability and older people when developing Strategies and designing schemes.  The programmes include tasks relating to emerging from the pandemic, influencing strategy, policy and projects, supporting

Level	Public Life Action Measures	Outputs <sup>1</sup>	Outcomes / Impacts <sup>2</sup>
			innovation in policy and service developments, promoting engagement and developing as a Committee.
Local <sup>5</sup>	-	-	-

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

	Training Action Measures	Outputs <sup>1</sup>	Outcome / Impact <sup>2</sup>
1.	Promoting positive attitudes towards people with a disability within the Department.	<p>The e-learning course 'Unconscious Bias' is mandatory for all staff, and new entrants will be asked to complete it by line managers.</p> <p>Introduction to section 75 e-course is recommended and available to all staff.</p> <p>A JAM card awareness refresher course was updated and circulated to staff to complete.</p> <p>Training being carried out as a result of the Paragraph 10 complaint on Taxis in Bus Lanes should also go some way to improve attitudes.</p>	<p>Staff have increased awareness of the issues faced by people with a disability in and out of the workplace. Also a greater understanding of disability legislation, disability duties and diversity within the NI Civil Service.</p> <p>The JAM card is one of a number of ways in which we are raising awareness of disability, learning difficulties and neurodiversity</p> <p>This should also go some way to improve attitudes and understanding of each member of staff's section 75 responsibilities.</p> <p>During this period the following staff training took place:</p>

	Training Action Measures	Outputs <sup>1</sup>	Outcome / Impact <sup>2</sup>
			<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• S75: An Introduction (mandatory e-learning) for all staff on the NICS training site - rolled out in March 2022.</li> <li>• The 'Focus on Screening' training for staff at grade 7 and above, took place 14 June 2022.</li> </ul> <p>(Note: More training using the ECNI video on Screening was sent to staff in May 2023 to watch. To date 310 have confirm completion).</p>
2.	Promoting positive attitudes towards people with a disability within the Department.	Information available on Intranet site which provides staff with a disability, and their line managers, with some practical advice and guidance.	Staff have access to online advice and information to assist colleagues who have, or have dependents with, a disability.
3.	Promoting positive attitudes towards people with a disability within the Department.	The Department continues to investigate training options and sources of guidance on best practice and disseminates these.	<p>Training information/opportunities, from ECNI and section 75 organisations, are disseminated widely across the Department.</p> <p>Staff are also encouraged to enrol on relevant internal NICS courses to ensure they are up to date on section 75 guidance.</p> <p>A Calendar that includes Diversity and Inclusion and Health and Wellbeing events available on the DfI intranet. The events are promoted on the DfI Intranet.</p>

	Training Action Measures	Outputs <sup>1</sup>	Outcome / Impact <sup>2</sup>
4.	Increase awareness of the Disability Duties and disability legislation of those who hold a public life position.	<p>Training package shared with all panel members on Boards of Arm's Length Bodies and specific training arranged as required.</p> <p>No public appointment competitions were held during 2022-23.</p> <p>Competitions offer a Guaranteed interview Scheme.</p> <p>Increased promotion of public appointment opportunities across all underrepresented groups.</p> <p>-</p>	<p>Increased awareness and understanding of the disability legislation and disability duties for Board members of Arm's Length Bodies.</p> <p>Increased awareness of appointment opportunities in this underrepresented group, and others.</p> <p>Five competitions used the Guaranteed Interview Scheme and it is anticipated that the scheme will continue for future competitions.</p> <p>The Departmental Board acknowledge the role of effective leadership in relation to S75 within the Department and support mainstreaming of the Equality duties.</p> <p>All staff and Independent Board Members are aware of their responsibilities.</p>

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

	Communications Action Measures	Outputs <sup>1</sup>	Outcome / Impact <sup>2</sup>
1.	To provide road safety and active travel advice and guidance to all special	To provide road safety and active travel advice and guidance to all 36 special schools using show and tell demonstrations and fun activities, in	Staffing and budget pressures have prevented pro-active visits to special schools as initially planned this year. A new plan will



	Communications Action Measures	Outputs <sup>1</sup>	Outcome / Impact <sup>2</sup>
	schools in the north of Ireland on a yearly basis.	keeping with the pupils' ability to learn.	be developed but this will be dependent on the staffing and financial resources available.  Road Safety advice and guidance for children with special needs remains a priority to the Department. Officials will continue to contact special schools via telephone and email. Budget permitting, further resources will be developed.
2.	The Department will review ways of ensuring that information on services is both inclusive and accessible.	The Department's Guide to Making Information Accessible is available on its internet site. It is reviewed annually and so reflects best practice.	Guidance developed for staff to ensure our internal and external communications are accessible to all. The document was reviewed and staff were sent a link to the updated version on our internet site at <a href="#">The Guide to Making Information Accessible</a> in November 2022.
3.	The Department will review ways of ensuring that information on services is both inclusive and accessible.	Websites underwent an Accessibility Audit in August 2020 to ensure they met the new WCAG 2.1 Accessibility Regulations (2018). A further Audit is scheduled for 2023. The Accessibility Statement was published on the internet 19 October 2021. This was updated in February 2023. Work will continue to ensure content is formatted correctly, reviewed, and updated as required.  As well as the regulatory accessibility audit an independent	Accessible information on the functions of the Department is available for all members of the public.

	Communications Action Measures	Outputs <sup>1</sup>	Outcome / Impact <sup>2</sup>
		audit of the Dfl website is carried out by Sitemorse INDEX. The INDEX enables organisations to compare digital capability with their peers or competitors. Digital capability is assessed across Experience, Optimisation and Compliance.	
4.	The Department will review ways of ensuring that information on services is both inclusive and accessible.	One complaint was received in this period in relation to access to website information on the Department's services.	This is under investigation to ensure information on the functions/services of the Department is inclusive and accessible to the public.

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

	Encourage others Action Measures	Outputs <sup>1</sup>	Outcome / Impact <sup>2</sup>
1.	Promoting positive attitudes towards people with a disability within the Department.	<p>Links to newsletters from section 75 organisations e.g. ‘E-Male Matters’ and Employers for Disability (EfD) were placed on the staff intranet. Also articles/ items such as “Autism Awareness Month” and the Autism Awareness Factsheet; “Mental Health Awareness” week; EfD’s videos / advice; and other news from section 75 organisations were published on the intranet.</p> <p>Circulated information on equality related events and issues to equality representatives for further dissemination.</p> <p>The in-house newssheet (“InFocus”) includes items relating to disability issues, events and groups.</p>	<p>Staff are kept informed on disability issues.</p> <p>Staff have awareness of issues faced by those with various disabilities and their parents/guardians.</p>
2.	Promote and encourage the planning of well-designed places which are accessible and inclusive places for all.	<p>Identify measures and activities by working together with Strategic Design Group members to promote inclusive, successful, sustainable, well designed places which will have a positive impact on people’s lives.</p> <p>Members include central and local government, professional bodies, and community and voluntary bodies.</p>	The Strategic Design Group (SDG) enables the sharing of knowledge, best practice and making connections etc. with the aim of promoting successful place making and promoting well designed places which are accessible and inclusive to all.

	Encourage others Action Measures	Outputs <sup>1</sup>	Outcome / Impact <sup>2</sup>
3.	To nominate staff to represent the Department on relevant disability representative groups.	<p>Dfl represented on Disability groups.</p> <p>Feedback provided on best practice to the Department's Equality Unit and other business areas.</p>	<p>Increased awareness and understanding of the disability legislation and disability duties.</p> <p>Ensures the Department is aware of any Disability related issues.</p>
4.	Demonstrate evidence of monitoring of this Plan [Disability Action Plan] and the Department's ongoing commitment to the Disability Duties.	<p>The Plan was reviewed, the status of the Action Measures updated and included with the Equality Progress reports to the Departmental Board.</p> <p>Annual Progress Report 2021-22 was sent to Equality Commission in September 2022.</p> <p>Three equality complaints were made under the Department's Equality Scheme during the reporting period. One related to a Penalty Charge Notice and another claimed Sex Discrimination in respect of how a claim was handled by the Department – neither complaint was upheld.</p> <p>The third complaint about how a request for a driving licence application (DL1) form in Irish was handled was upheld.</p> <p>During the year DVA received 5 complaints regarding the section 75 characteristics. Of these 1 related to gender and 4 to disability. All the complaints are now resolved.</p>	<p>The Departmental Board and Minister are kept informed of progress of DAP Action measures in line with requirements of the Equality Scheme.</p> <p>The complaints process tested.</p> <p>Staff guides were reviewed, and staff reminded of the processes for receiving/replying to correspondence in different languages, as set out in the Department's language policies.</p>

2 (e) Please outline **any additional action measures** that were fully achieved other than those listed in the tables above:

	Action Measures fully implemented (other than Training and specific public life measures)	Outputs <sup>1</sup>	Outcomes / Impact <sup>2</sup>
1.	Development of the detailed design and implementation for Belfast Rapid Transit to ensure the system is accessible to all.	Engagement with disability organisations and groups in relation to detailed design and implementation of Belfast Rapid Transit (Phase 1), in particular accessibility issues around the design of the halts and vehicles used.  Further engagement with the Belfast Rapid Transit Key Stakeholders Forum will take place as BRT phase 2 is developed.	The introduction of Belfast Rapid Transit Glider services, which are more accessible, has led to an increase in patronage by older people and people with disabilities when compared to previous Metro services for the same routes.
2.	Driver & Vehicle Agency will help improve the mobility of 16 year old applicants who are in receipt of Personal Independence Payments by allowing them to apply for a driving licence up to two months prior to their 16 <sup>th</sup> birthday. Availability of this scheme is advertised on NI Direct and on the DL1 application form.	Annual uptake figures are provided in the Annual report to ECNI which is published on DfI website and the link sent to section 75 consultees for information.	6 licences were issued in this period. .
3.	To consider how to meet the transport needs of disabled people in the future.	<u>Performance Indicator 1:</u> In the period 1 April 2022-31 March 2023 one complaint was received by Disability Action. Their formal complaints	<u>Performance indicator 1:</u> Achieved.

	Action Measures fully implemented (other than Training and specific public life measures)	Outputs <sup>1</sup>	Outcomes / Impact <sup>2</sup>
		<p>procedure is detailed on the DA website.</p> <p><u>Performance Indicator 2:</u> This has been taken on by the Department of Health</p>	<p><u>Performance Indicator 2:</u> Will no longer be reported on by DfI.</p>

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

	Action Measures partly achieved	Milestones <sup>6</sup> / Outputs <sup>1</sup>	Outcomes/Impacts <sup>2</sup>	Reasons not fully achieved
1.	Development of a new Accessible Transport Strategy (ATS) Action Plan.	Following the 2015 consultation on the draft ATS, a report detailing the responses to the consultation was published 11 May 2016.	The new ATS and Action Plan will address accessibility issues experienced by older people and people with a disability across the transport system.	Improvements in transport accessibility is being considered under Programme for Government Outcomes.
2.	Implementation of changes identified during the 2013 Review of Blue Badge scheme.	All but one of the recommendations has been implemented. The legislation for the second staged fee increase to achieve full cost recovery remains to be made. Legislation has been made for all other changes identified.	The changes to the Blue Badge Scheme in Northern Ireland are aimed at enhancing the service and ensuring the Scheme's uptake is targeted at those whose everyday lives can be greatly enhanced by the concessions they are entitled to.	<p>All changes recommended are implemented bar the second staged fee increase.</p> <p>This is still under consideration by the Department.</p>

3.	A review of the Blue Badge Scheme re-application process for citizens with life-long disabilities affecting their mobility.	A report on the findings has been completed.	The Blue Badge Scheme in Northern Ireland enables Badge Holders to access services and facilities, through a range of parking concessions.	The report is under consideration by the Department.
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4. Please outline what action measures **have not been achieved** and the reasons why.

i) Action Measure not met: None.

Reason: N/A

ii) Action Measure not met: None

Reason: N/A

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

(a) Qualitative: No new monitoring tools have been implemented during this reporting year.

(b) Quantitative: No new monitoring tools have been implemented during this reporting year.

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

- made any **revisions** to your plan during the reporting period: None. **OR**
- taken any **additional steps** to meet the disability duties which were **not outlined in your original** disability action plan / any other changes?

No.

If yes please outline below the Revised/Additional Action Measures and associated Performance Indicator

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

No.

<sup>1</sup>**Outputs** – defined as act of producing, amount of something produced over a period, processes undertaken to implement the action measure e.g. Undertook 10 training sessions with 100 people at customer service level.

<sup>2</sup>**Outcome / Impact** – what specifically and tangibly has changed in making progress towards the duties? What impact can directly be attributed to taking this action? Indicate the results of undertaking this action e.g. Evaluation indicating a tangible shift in attitudes before and after training.

<sup>3</sup>**National** - Situations where people can influence policy at a high impact level e.g. Public Appointments.

<sup>4</sup>**Regional** - Situations where people can influence policy decision making at a middle impact level.

<sup>5</sup>**Local** - Situations where people can influence policy decision making at lower impact level e.g. one off consultations, local fora.

<sup>6</sup>**Milestones** - Outline what part progress has been made towards the particular measures; even if full output or outcomes/ impact have not been achieve.



## Annex 1 - Timetable for Measures to check compliance with the DfI Equality Scheme

Para #	Measure	Lead responsibility	Timetable	Action status
2.7	Objectives and targets relating to the statutory duties will be integrated into the Department's corporate and operational business plans.	Equality Officer, All Directors.	Annually	To date (2023) lines have been provided for the DfI Plans.
2.9	S75 Annual Progress Report	Equality Officer/ Permanent Secretary	31 August (annually)	Ongoing.
2.13	Biannual progress reports to the Departmental Board, and Minister	Equality Officer	Biannually	Complete.
3.4	Review consultation list of S75 contacts annually	Equality Unit	Annually	Complete.
4.20	Quarterly publication of Screening Reports	Equality Officer	Quarterly	Complete.
4.34	Review of existing information systems to address, where possible, any gaps identified in monitoring.	Equality Officer ASRB	Within one year of Equality Commission approval of scheme.	DfI Equality Scheme published in 2021.
4.37	Notify consultees of publication of Annual Report.	Equality Officer	Annually by 30 September	Complete.
5.4	Check availability/ suitability of focussed training for key staff	Equality Officer	Annually	EQIA & section 75 courses. Following the para 10 investigation at DfI's request ECNI have been facilitating section 75 training for the Department.
5.5/6	Review/ organise /update training	Equality Officer	Annually	
5.10	Evaluation of Training	Equality Officer in conjunction with Human Resources.	Annually	
6.7	Review and update DfI Guide to Making Information Accessible	Equality Officer	Annually, November	Achieved.
6.14	Assessing access to public information and services	Equality Working Group and Equality Forum	Annually	Ongoing - updates are requested for biannual reports to the Board and this Report.
10.1	Review of Equality Scheme	Equality Officer	Within 5 years of Scheme approval.	Scheme published 2021.

**Abbreviations**

ATS	Accessible Transport Strategy
BRT	Belfast Rapid Transit
DATS	Disability Action Transport Scheme
DfC	Department for Communities
DfI	Department for Infrastructure
DoH	Department of Health
DE	Department of Education
DoJ	Department of Justice
ECNI	Equality Commission Northern Ireland
EQIA	Equality Impact Assessment
EWG	Equality Working Group
GRPB	Good Relations Programme Board
IMTAC	Inclusive Mobility Transport Advisory Committee
NI	Northern Ireland
NICS	Northern Ireland Civil Service
PSNI	Police Service for NI
RCTP	Rural Community Transport Partnership
SIB	Strategic Investment Board
SPPS	Strategic Planning Policy Statement
S75	Section 75
TBUC	Together: Building a United Community Strategy
TEO	The Executive Office
TPPD	Transport Programme for People with Disabilities