

**Department of Agriculture, Environment and Rural Affairs (DAERA)**

**Audit of Inequalities 2021-2025**

**and**

 **Action Plan**

**Consultation Response Questionnaire**

**Responses must be received no later than midnight on**

**08 March 2022**

**BACKGROUND**

**Audit of Inequalities 2021-2025 and Action Plan**

Section 75 of the Northern Ireland Act 1998 requires public bodies when carrying out their work to have due regard to the need to promote equality of opportunity between nine categories of persons:

* Between persons of different religious belief, political opinion, racial group, age, marital status or sexual orientation;
* Between men and women generally;
* Between persons with a disability and persons without; and
* Between persons with dependants and persons without.

Public authorities must also have regard to the desirability of promoting good relations between persons of different religious belief, political opinion or racial group.

In April 2010 the Equality Commission for Northern Ireland published new statutory guidance, ‘Section 75 of the Northern Ireland Act 1998: A guide for Public Authorities‘. The guidance recommends that public authorities should undertake an audit of inequalities by examining their functions and how these relate to the promotion of equality and good relations. Specific actions to address the inequalities identified should then be set out in an action plan, and these actions linked to the authority’s corporate planning cycle.

The audit of inequalities is additional and complementary to the development of an equality scheme. It is intended to produce a more strategic picture of inequalities that a public authority may be in a position to influence, rather than examining inequalities on a policy by policy basis. It should be similar to other approaches undertaken by organisations to review and evaluate their performance, to make decisions about the way forward and to prioritise actions over time.

It is a review and evaluation of existing reliable and verifiable data, both qualitative and quantitative, for each of the Section 75 equality and good relations categories.

The action plan is also intended as a basis for monitoring performance on equality measures, and for annual reporting to the Equality Commission.

Purpose

The attached questionnaire seeks your views on the draft Audit of Inequalities and related Action Plan.

Freedom of Information and UK GDPR

If you have indicated that you would be interested in contributing to this consultation then we might process your contact details to get in touch with you about your response.

We will process any other personal data provided in the responses for the purpose of informing the development of our policy, guidance or other regulatory work in the subject area of the request for views. In the case of consultations, we will publish a summary of the consultation responses and, in some cases, the responses themselves but these will not contain any personal data.

The lawful basis we are relying on to process your personal data is article 6(1)(e) of the UK GDPR, which allows us to process personal data when this is necessary for the performance of our public tasks in our capacity as a regulator.

Before you submit your response, please read Appendix 1 about the effect of the Freedom of Information Act 2000 on the confidentiality of responses to public consultation exercises.

**DEPARTMENT OF AGRICULTURE, ENVIRONMENT AND RURAL AFFAIRS**

**DRAFT AUDIT OF INEQUALITIES 2021-2025 AND ACTION PLAN**

**CONSULTATION QUESTIONNAIRE**

The questionnaire can be completed by individual stakeholders, members of the public, or on behalf of a group or organisation.

**Your Details**

|  |  |
| --- | --- |
| Name: |  |
| Job Title: |  |
| Organisation: |  |
| Address: |  |
|  |  |
|  |  |
| Tel: |  |
| E-mail: |  |

**May we contact you should clarification be required on your response?**

**Yes / No**

 (delete as appropriate)

**This Consultation Response Questionnaire has been provided to assist in the process, or you may submit a response in any format. Responses should be returned by email to** equality@daera-ni.gov.uk **or by posting to:**

Staff Engagement, Equality, and Diversity Branch

Department of Agriculture, Environment and Rural Affairs

Ballykelly House

111 Ballykelly Road

Limavady

BT49 9HP

**Responses must be received no later than midnight on**

**08 March 2022**

Responses received after this date will only be considered in exceptional circumstances and with prior agreement from the Department.

**Questions**

1. **Do you broadly agree that the draft Audit of Inequalities 2021-2025 identifies appropriate inequalities in relation to the functions of DAERA?**

**YES/NO**

**If not, please explain why not, and add any further comments.**

1. **Do you broadly agree that the measures in the draft Action Plan will have a positive impact on the Section 75 groups?**

**YES/NO**

**If not, please explain why not, and add any further comments.**

1. **Do you have any other general comments on the draft Audit of Inequalities 2021-2025 and draft Action Plan?**

Note: it would be helpful if commenting on specific items within the draft plan to refer to the particular Measure in question.

**THANK YOU FOR COMPLETING OUR QUESTIONNAIRE.**

**Appendix 1**

**FREEDOM OF INFORMATION ACT 2000 – CONFIDENTIALITY OF CONSULTATIONS**

A summary of responses to this consultation will be published on the DAERA website at: [www.daera-ni.gov.uk](http://www.daera-ni.gov.uk/)

The summary will include a list of organisations who responded but not personal names, addresses or other contact details. Your response, and all other responses to the consultation, may be disclosed on request. The Department can only refuse to disclose information in exceptional circumstances. Before you submit your response, please read the paragraphs below on the confidentiality of consultations and they will give you guidance on the legal position about any information given by you in response to this consultation.

Information provided in response to this consultation, including personal information, maybe made available to the public on request, in accordance with the requirements of the Freedom of Information Act 2000 (FOIA). DAERA may also publish the responses to the FOIA/EIR requests on [www.daera-ni.gov.uk/](http://www.daera-ni.gov.uk/)

Section 8(e) of the Data Protection Act 2018 permits processing of personal data when necessary for an activity that supports or promotes democratic engagement. Information provided by respondents to this stakeholder engagement exercise will be held and used for the purposes of the administration of this current exercise and subsequently disposed of in accordance with the provisions of the Data Protection Act 2018 and the UK General Data Protection Regulation. For more information and to view the DAERA Privacy Statement please go to:

<https://www.daera-ni.gov.uk/publications/daera-privacy-statement-document>

The FOI Act gives the public a right of access to any information held by a public authority, namely, the Department in this case. This right of access to information includes information provided in response to a consultation. The Department cannot automatically consider as confidential, information supplied to it in response to a consultation. However, it does have the responsibility to decide whether any information provided by you in response to this consultation, including information about your identity should be made public or be treated as confidential. If you do not wish information about your identity to be made public please include an explanation in your response including any harm you believe such a disclosure might cause.

This means that information provided by you in response to the consultation is unlikely to be treated as confidential, except in very particular circumstances. The Lord Chancellor’s Code of Practice on the FOI Act provides that:

* The Department should only accept information from third parties in confidence if it is necessary to obtain that information in connection with the exercise of any of the Department’s functions and it would not otherwise be provided;
* The Department should not agree to hold information received from third parties “in confidence” which is not confidential in nature acceptance by the Department of confidentiality provisions must be for good reasons, capable of being justified to the Information Commissioner.

For further information about confidentiality of responses please contact the Information Commissioner’s Office, or visit the ICO Website.

DAERA is the data controller in respect of any personal data that you provide, and

DAERA’s Privacy Statement document, which gives details of your rights in respect of the handling of your personal data, can be found at:

<https://www.daera-ni.gov.uk/publications/daera-privacy-statement-document>

The consultation is open from 30 November 2021. This is a fourteen-week consultation therefore, responses should be received by mid-night 08 March 2022. Consultation responses may be emailed to equality@daera-ni.gov.uk

Or sent by post to:

Equality Unit

111 Ballykelly Road

Ballykelly

Limavady

BT49 9HF

This consultation is in line with consultation guidelines, which can be found at:

<https://www.nidirect.gov.uk/articles/public-consultations>

If you have any comments or complaints about the consultation process, please address them to the Equality Unit at the address above, or email them to equality@daera-ni.gov.uk

Copies of the consultation document can also be made available, on request, in alternative formats e.g. in large print, Braille, and other languages. Please contact 028 7744 2033 to arrange such copies, or to discuss the consultation more generally. For those with hearing difficulties, you can use the following services:

* Making a call from a textphone:  Dial 18001 + 028 7744 2033
* Making a call from a telephone:  Dial 18002 + 028 7744 2033

We look forward to receiving your responses.