



## **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 2019-20, 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.*

During this reporting period DAERA's governance structures helped with the delivery of its equality and good relations duties and diversity and inclusion priorities in line with its Equality Scheme commitment to having effective internal arrangements in place for ensuring effective compliance with the Section 75 duties. The governance structures ensure that these functions are overseen and supported at a senior level within the Department and that they continue to be mainstreamed and made central to policy development and the delivery of services to our citizens. This approach has continued to contribute to enabling cultural change within DAERA by helping create a working environment where equality and good relations are embraced as core business values, and that they are promoted and respected both within the Department and in our engagement with stakeholders and customers.

The Equality and Diversity Steering Group (EDSG), which is chaired by the Permanent Secretary and is a sub-group of the DAERA Board, continued to meet to discuss equality and diversity issues. This demonstrates the continued leadership and ownership of equality, good relations, diversity and inclusion at the most senior levels which, in turn, have ensured they are better promoted and championed within the Department and more widely. The EDSG is also responsible for overseeing and monitoring the Department's progress against its equality, good relations and human rights obligations and relevant strategies, policies and action plans. As set out in the Terms of Reference, this group sat twice in the reporting period and ensured that initiatives were given due consideration and progressed appropriately.

The 2017-18 Progress Report highlighted that an Equality and Diversity Working Group (EDWG) had been established within the Department. The development of this group continued during 2019 as it was restructured to include a diverse cross section of DAERA staff. This group reports, and makes recommendations, to the EDSG. The EDWG is co-chaired by the Director of Corporate Services and the DAERA Diversity Champion. This group is responsible for, amongst other things, promoting equality, good relations and diversity best practice across business areas and maximising collaborative working on equality and diversity initiatives where possible.

The DAERA Equality Unit provide administrative support to these two groups and assist in taking forward any actions that may apply to them. The Equality Unit have also

attended the quarterly meetings for the cross-departmental Equality Practitioners Group (EPG) as well as the Equality Forum meetings where the Equality Commission for Northern Ireland (ECNI) are also a member. The DAERA equality staff have also been involved with particular equality sub-groups to assist in taking forward projects such as the Section 75 online training set out at Question 24.

**(i) FOOD AND FARMING GROUP and COLLEGE OF AGRICULTURE, FOOD AND RURAL ENTERPRISE (CAFRE)**

The Basic Payment Scheme, accessed via the online Single Application and Map Service Scheme, is the main agricultural subsidy scheme in Northern Ireland and has replaced most of the individual Common Agricultural Policy subsidy payments previously made to farmers. Following consultation and engagement with users, a web chat facility was successfully introduced in 2017 and continues to allow users to communicate in real time using easily accessible web interfaces.

During this reporting period, DAERA's College (CAFRE) continued to engage with GCSE and 'A' level pupils through the provision of syllabus support, Open Days and taster days in line with DAERA's commitment to achieving effective communications with its customers and the wider rural community.

This engagement took place with young people from all school types, i.e. controlled/maintained/voluntary/integrated/single sex/mixed etc. In doing so, young people from all backgrounds were provided with opportunities to find out more about the agriculture, food and rural enterprise sectors and to make better informed career decisions and choices. In 2019-2020 CAFRE's enrolments were 1,708, of which 44% were female. The number of students declaring a disability or learning need has increased from 10% in 2018/19 to 14% in 2019/20.

This increase can be partially attributed to a greater focus by the CAFRE Student Support Officer and by CAFRE staff in encouraging early disclosure by students to ensure that the support they require can be put in place early in the academic year. Changes to the curriculum to more exam based assessments, particularly for further education students, has also encouraged students to disclose their needs early in the year to enable approval of support to be received from Awarding Organisations prior to examinations taking place.

As a demonstration of DAERA's commitment to ensure that its services are fully accessible to everyone, CAFRE has a full-time Student Support Officer who provides information and advice to all students at induction and throughout the year at each of its three campuses. The officer is also available to provide targeted assistance to students who have additional needs. At the end of their education programme, additional assistance is provided by CAFRE staff to students with a disability, by signposting them to supported employment services.

In addition, CAFRE provides signposting to a wide range of support organisations and, during 2019-20, organised a broad forum of organisations to visit each campus and meet

with students. During their time at CAFRE, students have the opportunity to represent the student body in discussions with College managers and through feedback forums. The student body is represented on College management committees to ensure student views are represented in decision making processes.

## **(ii) NORTHERN IRELAND ENVIRONMENT AGENCY (NIEA)**

### **Access Projects**

Thirteen access projects were delivered in 2019/20, funded by the Environment Fund Capital Challenge Competition 2019/20. These projects improved inclusivity and accessibility throughout Northern Ireland and many supported all ability access to the natural environment. These projects were:

#### **1. Slievenacloy and Balloo Wetlands walkways**

Delivered by Ulster Wildlife for the upgrade of 1 km paths and signage at Slievenacloy Nature Reserve in the Belfast Hills and restoration of 1/2km of paths at Balloo Wetland in Bangor to enable the site to be reopened to the public. This project provided improved access for groups with disabilities.

#### **2. Greenlough Greenway Project**

Delivered by Bann Valley Community Group for the construction of 1km pathway, incorporating 3 disabled angling points to make the final connection with Clady, Inishrush and the looped pathway.

#### **3. Creggan Bog Local Nature Reserve Boardwalk**

Delivered by Creggan Education and Research Services (An Creagán) for the creation of a 1.1km boardwalk to provide access across a 9 hectare raised bog along with interpretation to improve public understanding of species and habitats. This project provided improved access for disabled groups.

#### **4. Smith's Strand fully accessible footpath, nature walk & picnic area**

Delivered by Share Discovery Village for the development of a fully accessible nature walk at Smith's Strand near Lisnaskea. This project provided improved access for disabled groups.

#### **5. Murlough Boardwalk Restoration - Phase 2**

Delivered by National Trust for replacement of sections of boardwalk at Murlough National Nature Reserve to make them safe, provide suitable access for wheel chair users, and reduce visitors straying onto the surrounding habitat.

#### **6. Accessible Portstewart Strand**

Delivered by National Trust to provide fully accessible bathroom facilities to allow Portstewart Strand's Blue Flag beach Area of Special Scientific Interest (ASSI) and Special Areas of Conservation (SAC) designated to be enjoyed by people with additional mobility needs.

#### **7. The Wildflower Way**

Delivered by The Advantage Foundation for the construction of the Wildflower Way which is a 1.3km trail within Knockbracken Healthcare Park. This project provided improved access for disabled groups.

#### **8. Access to Sloughan Glen Waterfall**

Delivered by Fermanagh and Omagh District Council to repair the visitor path to Sloughan Glen waterfall to enable it to be reopened and provide the public with information about the natural environment at this designated Area of Special Scientific Interest (ASSI). This project provided improved access for disabled groups.

#### **9. Cabin Wood**

Delivered by Woodland Trust to create improvements to the 1.9km of paths and visitor infrastructure Cabin Wood, Cookstown. This project provided improved access for disabled groups.

#### **10. New Mossley Woodland Walk**

Delivered by Antrim and Newtownabbey Borough Council for Land acquisition and construction of 1km of pathways at New Mossley estate. This project provided improved access for disabled groups.

#### **11. Improving and Formalising of Access to Rea's Wood**

Delivered by Antrim and Newtownabbey Borough Council for upgrading of paths and installation of interpretation alongside Rea's Wood Special Area of Conservation with views over Lough Neagh ASSI & Special Protection Areas (SPA). This project provided improved access for disabled groups.

#### **12. Improving Accessibility in Crumlin Glen**

Delivered by Antrim and Newtownabbey Borough Council for the widening of the bridge spanning the Crumlin River to provide all ability access from the town centre to the trails in Crumlin Glen, along with interpretation.

#### **13. Improving Access: Threemilewater Park**

Delivered by Antrim and Newtownabbey Borough Council for the creation of a 1.5km all-ability trail loop through a woodland linking the east and west sides of Threemilewater Park.

### **NIEA Regional Operations – Country Parks and Nature Reserves**

#### **1. Pathway improvement at Quoile Pondage Nature Reserve**

Following on from the works completed over the previous two reporting periods we have continued to deliver improvements for accessibility at the Quoile Pondage National Nature Reserve (NNR). In particular we have provided improved accessibility to less able-bodied visitors along the Quoile Pondage riverside walkways.

This reporting period the riverside pathways have been further extended and the Quoile “flood gates” car park has also been enhanced and resurfaced.

In recognition of this work, Quoile Countryside Centre received a Prestige Access Award from the “William Keown Trust.” These awards recognise significant efforts made to remove barriers that may otherwise limit people with physical disabilities from full participation in the life of their community.

The works undertaken commenced in 2017 include over 2.6km of newly re-surfaced pathway incorporating a DDA compliant gradual incline access ramp leading from the existing car park to the re-surfaced river-side path.

To complement this, The Countryside Centre's toilets were re-furbished to now include a dedicated DDA compliant cubicle and the existing picnic benches throughout the nature reserve area were replaced with wheelchair accessible models.

The award recognises and welcomes NIEA's ongoing efforts to enhance opportunities for all, regardless of perceived ability, to access and enjoy the countryside and our open natural spaces, promoting the important health and wellbeing of engaging with our environment and furthering the awareness and appreciation and Northern Ireland’s natural heritage and amazing biodiversity.

## **2. Improvements at Peatlands Park**

During the reporting period works continued to install new sections of boardwalk at Peatlands Park and replace older sections to improve accessibility to sections of pathway which otherwise would be inaccessible to less able-bodied visitors. The newly refurbished completed over flow car park at Peatlands includes a number of parking spaces for people with limited mobility. The train halt on site was also refurbished and now provides improved DDA compliant accessibility. A number of wheelchair DDA accessible picnic benches with suitable bases have also been installed on site.

## **3. Roe Valley Country Park**

Designs have been completed for the installation of a new bridge on site with enhanced accessibility for all, for which planning permission is currently being sought. To be completed in 2020/21.

## **4. Development of play parks at Peatlands Park and Ness Country Park**

Natural play parks at both Peatlands Park and Ness Country Park were completed and opened during August 2019, which includes play and sensory elements for play opportunities for less able bodied children.

The design for Peatlands Country Park includes a wide range of play experiences including challenging climbing and clambering, role play and

imaginative play, discovery and sensory play, problem solving and social and cooperative play.

The design has a strong focus on accessibility and the equipment has been designed to be inclusive of all abilities and to incorporate wheelchair access. For example, bonded rubber mulch surfacing throughout provides easier access to all areas for wheelchair users and pushchairs, as well as accessible picnic benches.

To enhance the sensory experience, bog cotton and bluebell posts with hidden bells have been placed around the play areas to enhance the sensory experience. Wheelchair users can also access these and can be involved in the play activity. Other inclusive play opportunities such as a basket swing and a central hill in the area for younger children have also been provided to allow children of all abilities to join in.

#### **5. Crawfordsburn Country Park**

Designs were also completed during the reporting period for the replacement of the beach toilet block at Crawfordsburn Country Park, to include enhanced services for people with disabilities including a “changing places” facility. Funding has been secured to deliver this project over the 2020-2021 period and planning application has been submitted.

In summary, the above interventions at NIEA Parks and Reserves have resulted in positive outcomes in terms of improved inclusivity and accessibility at DAERA funded sites for people throughout Northern Ireland in line with DAERA’s commitment to ensuring accessible services for everyone.

In terms of headline visitor figures across the properties managed by the Northern Ireland Environment Agency (7 Country Parks and in the region of 60 Nature Reserves), they have attracted an estimated 2.33 million visitors during 2019.

### **(iii) MARINE AND FISHERIES DIVISION**

#### **Inland Fisheries**

In order to increase participation in angling, Inland Fisheries provides concessionary licences and permits to those over 60 and those with disabilities, at a significant saving on the full cost.

In addition, the online application system for licences and permits is designed to improve access for anglers, particularly those with, for example, a disability or caring responsibilities, as this online interaction removes the physical barrier of travel and visiting a distributor to obtain a licence or permit. Both methods of application are still available.

Inland Fisheries funds a small grant scheme to encourage new participants into angling. This is particularly targeted at under-represented groups, including those who are socially excluded, those who have disabilities, or those who are disadvantaged in some way. From 1st April 2019 to 31st March 2020 there were 129 of these groups funded and full season complimentary fishing licences and permits were issued to 644 male and 363 female participants in those funded events.

#### **(iv) OTHER EMFG / NIEA ACTIONS**

##### **Covid Waste Contingency Group Communications Action Plan**

Following the outbreak of the Covid-19 pandemic in early 2020 and the subsequent implementation of movement restrictions, the group identified the need to deliver a communications plan to the citizens of Northern Ireland. The messaging being delivered was priority health messaging, informing people how to deal with contaminated waste and about bin hygiene. An Equality Screening was completed which established that existing communications on the subject were insufficient in terms of reaching a high proportion of the population, particularly in the age and rurality categories.

A campaign was developed in collaboration with Northern Ireland National Communications Action Plan. This comprised of a flyer outlining the key health messaging with regard to waste, which was delivered to 830,000 households. Two 30 second radio adverts were devised, delivering the same messaging. This was played over the course of four weeks on local radio and was listened to 1.5 million times. Associated social media assets were also developed. These were used by various stakeholders and reached 1.1 million people throughout the duration of the campaign. This three-pronged approach to these communications maximised the impact of the campaign, and assisted in getting the messaging to harder to reach groups.

##### **Environment Strategy for Northern Ireland**

The Department launched a 20 week public discussion on the 'Environment Strategy for Northern Ireland' on 14 September 2019. A group of 30 young people representing their schools and environmental organisations participated in the launch which included a litter clean up in the Belfast hills. The event was covered by BBC, Good Morning Ulster and local newspapers.

An 'Our Bright Futures' event involving a large number of school pupils was held at Parliament Buildings as part of activities to promote the public discussion. At the end of the discussion period 2,500 responses had been received from all age groups – from the under 18s to the over 70s.

#### **(iv) FOREST SERVICE**



The importance of green space to people's health and wellbeing is acknowledged in the Regional Development Strategy for Northern Ireland 2025. Research evidence shows how various interventions in green spaces, which include forests and woodland, can help address public health issues related to obesity, cardiovascular effects, mental health, wellbeing and equality. Community participation in the planning process is an effective way to increase the success of these interventions and generate benefits.

### **Early engagement, collaboration and partnership**

In 2019-2020 Forest Service, in collaboration and partnership with other organisations, implemented a number of actions in relation to forestry and the forests it manages to maximise social, health and equality benefits. These are in line with DAERA's commitments in terms of consultation, effective communication and improving access. Relevant actions included:

- Early engagement with stakeholders to encourage their involvement in the development of Forest Plans. Stakeholders are invited to contribute at the scoping stage of forestry planning to ensure that the diverse needs of people, wildlife and industry are considered. For each scoping exercise stakeholders are informed that a consultation is ongoing by press releases, posters, social media and by email.
- Stakeholders emailed and invited to contribute to scoping consultations include groups representing LGBT, disability, ethnic minority, women's and retired people's interests. Other stakeholders that are invited to contribute include community groups, environmental organisations, farmers groups, councils, private individuals, forestry industry and government.
- Between June and September 2019 Forest Service conducted scoping consultations for the West Tyrone and the East Fermanagh / East Tyrone Forestry Planning Areas. In total, 68 responses were received from community groups, environmental organisations, farmers groups, councils, private individuals, forestry industry and government. DAERA welcomes this significant engagement from stakeholders which will be a valuable contribution to the development of meaningful forest plans.
- Forest Service facilitated 14 meetings with stakeholders so that draft forest plans could be presented and comments received. Stakeholders included community and charitable organisations.
- In September 2019 Forest Service published "What People Told Us – scoping a new forestry plan for Antrim forests and woodlands". The document is a summary of consultation responses received for the Antrim Forestry Planning Area. The document outlines the diverse, and sometimes competing, demands of stakeholders.
- During August 2019 Forest Service launched an "easy read" version of its scoping document to improve communication and to encourage people to

contribute to Forest Plans. Working with a community organisation the “easy read” document has been used in forest based education with schools from the preschool, controlled, maintained and Gaelscoil sectors. Copies were distributed to libraries and others before work was paused due to Covid-19 restrictions. It will now be used regularly for engagement in relation to forestry planning.

- Forestry Grant Schemes operate within the Rural Development Programme. The schemes are continuously monitored to assess the impact and outcomes of policy decisions and section 75 forms are collected for new forestry grant scheme applicants. The response rate for returned forms in 2019 was 55% which is an increase of 5% compared to the previous year.
- Environmental Impact Assessment (forestry) regulations seek to protect the environment for the benefit of society and require the Department to consult the public which also helps achieve equality and good relations outcomes. In 2019-2020 Forest Service completed 74 public consultations about the environmental impact of forestry projects. 56 consultations were in connection with woodland creation, 11 were for woodland removal and 7 for forest road works.
- Promoting mutual understanding through education by encouraging joint working between the Royal Forestry Society (which aims to give children an opportunity to learn about trees) and the Speedwell Trust (an environmental awareness programme) based at Forest Service’s Parkanaur Forest Park.
- Facilitating partnership working with Causeway Coast and Glens Borough Council and DAERA’s Tackling Rural Poverty and Social Isolation Initiative (TRPSI) delivering access improvement works at Garvagh forest with the aim of promoting and developing participation in sport and outdoor physical recreation.
- Developing partnership working with Lisburn and Castlereagh City Council to facilitate development of new and improved recreation facilities at Hillsborough forest, creating health opportunities and improving access to physical recreation in the forest. Phase 1 will include an accessible woodland play area for children of all abilities.
- Facilitating partnership working between Forest Service, Armagh, Banbridge and Craigavon Borough Council and DAERA’s TRPSI Initiative to develop a community walking trail and children’s playpark at Carnagh forest in South Armagh. This development will provide improved opportunities for all abilities.
- Developing a collaborative partnership between Forest Service and Fermanagh and Omagh District Council to promote recreation and tourism in their council area facilitating the development of new and improved walking, cycling and horse riding facilities at Gortin Glen Forest Park. The partnership has also

facilitated the development of a new woodland play area for children of all abilities within the Forest Park.

- Further development of recreation infrastructure at Slieve Gullion Forest Park through partnership working with Newry, Mourne and Down District Council to improve visitor provision and amenities, including new toilet facilities.
- Facilitating partnership working with Mid Ulster District Council, Eskra Community Association, Sport NI and DAERA's TRPSI initiative to delivering access improvement works at Knockmany Forest, Augher with the aim of promoting and developing participation in sport and outdoor physical recreation.
- Facilitating partnership working between Forest Service, Mid Ulster District Council and DAERA's TRPSI Initiative to develop a community walking trail through Brantry wood, Caledon.
- Development of a new 'All out trekking' project at Gosford Forest Park in partnership with Armagh City, Banbridge and Craigavon Borough Council, DfC and Disability Sport NI providing an inclusive opportunity for people of all abilities to access the forest's walking and cycling trails together.
- Facilitating partnership working with Causeway Coast and Glens Borough Council and DAERA's Tackling Rural Poverty and Social Isolation Initiative (TRPSI) to commence access improvement works at Garvagh forest with the aim of promoting and developing participation in sport and outdoor physical recreation.
- Developing partnership working with Lisburn and Castlereagh City Council to facilitate development of new and improved recreation facilities at Hillsborough forest, creating health opportunities and improving access to physical recreation in the forest. Phase 1 will include an accessible woodland play area for children of all abilities.
- Facilitating partnership working between Forest Service, Armagh, Banbridge and Craigavon Borough Council and DAERA's TRPSI Initiative to develop a community walking trail through Carnagh forest in South Armagh.
- Developing a collaborative partnership between Forest Service and Fermanagh and Omagh District Council to promote recreation and tourism in their council area facilitating the development of new and improved walking, cycling and horse riding facilities at Gortin Glen Forest Park. The partnership has also facilitated the development of a new woodland play area for children of all abilities within the Forest Park.

- Further development of recreation infrastructure at Slieve Gullion Forest Park through partnership working with Newry Mourne and Down District Council to improve visitor provision and amenities.
- Facilitating partnership working with Mid Ulster District Council, Eskra Community Association, Sport NI and DAERA's TRPSI initiative to commence access improvement works at Knockmany Forest, Augher with the aim of promoting and developing participation in sport and outdoor physical recreation.

#### **(v) RURAL AFFAIRS DIVISION**

Rural Affairs Division is committed to ensuring that all initiatives supported are fully accessible to everyone in the community.

The Tackling Rural Poverty and Social Isolation (TRPSI) Framework supports the development and delivery of initiatives to address the Framework's 3 priority areas of financial poverty, access poverty and social isolation. Through an average annual opening budget of £4m, the TRPSI Programme provides support across a range of initiatives, the majority of these being delivered in partnership with other Departments, Agencies or Councils seeking to address poverty, isolation, loneliness and mental and physical health issues in rural areas, details of which are set out below.

The Rural Support charity operates a telephone Helpline and signposting service for farmers and rural dwellers seeking various forms of support. Their volunteers support clients with a range of issues pertaining to farming matters and emotional health. The volume of calls to their helpline increased very significantly during the early months of the Covid-19 pandemic. Rural Support also prepared a booklet 'Coping with the Pressures of Farming', which is also available on-line. This easy to read document gives farmers and farm families details on how to prepare and cope with the pressures of farming life and on health and wellbeing issues.

Social Farming - this support service provided by Rural Support staff operates as a hub for Social Farming which provides disadvantaged groups of people in NI with an opportunity for inclusion, to increase their self-esteem and to improve their health and well-being through participating in meaningful activities in a farm environment. Social Farming is a service provided by farmers who give their time and experience to help others and who also benefit from offering this support and using their farm in this way. The Support Service supports existing and new Social Farming initiatives and promotes Social Farming to raise awareness of its benefits to ensure the expansion of the service across NI.

Farm Families Health Checks Programme - Through this Programme, on an annual basis, 2,600 rural dwellers avail of a comprehensive physical and mental health screening service. The Farm Families Health Checks Programme has screened the physical and mental health and well-being of over 20,000 individuals since 2012,

primarily farmers, farm workers and farm family members attending marts and community events. A record of the screening results is forwarded to the client's GP for consideration and potential action. Those clients that have an identified health issue are encouraged to attend their GP. After a 12 week period, those clients who had a health issue detected will receive a follow up call from a Programme trained nurse to further assess their health and encourage solutions.

SPRING Social Prescribing – This project is delivered with the support of the Department of Health, the Health and Social Care Board and in partnership with the rural Healthy Living Centres. It aims to link medical care to non-clinical locally delivered support services by enabling medical professionals to refer rural patients to a range of activities and services to support greater independence, reduce reliance on primary healthcare, tackle poverty/isolation and deliver better outcomes for rural people and society.

Other TRPSI funded initiatives such as the enhancement of Forest Parks and the development of Community Trails, the utilisation of school facilities for community use, the regeneration of disused historic buildings in rural villages, the continued funding for the Rural Support Networks and a small grants scheme to assist the rural community and voluntary sector to continue to provide services for rural dwellers all played a significant role in 2019/20 in addressing issues that can lead to poor physical and mental health.

Rural Affairs Division is also a joint partner in the Access and Inclusion Programme which is Delivered by the Department for Communities, in partnership with the Public Health Agency (PHA) and local Councils. Its key aim is to improve accessibility to arts, cultural and active recreation venues in existing premises for people with disabilities.

The programme funds a range of measures, up to a total cost of £30,000 in Council operated premises aimed at achieving these objectives. In 2019/20 46 projects were funded at an overall cost of £900,000. Facilities, which were provided at a range of indoor and outdoor venues, include:

- lifts in buildings
- loop systems
- adjustments to internal/external doors
- power assisted doors.

#### **(vi) ESTATE TRANSFORMATION DIVISION (ETD)**

The DAERA estate is a valuable resource, consisting of approximately 900 buildings across 236 sites, as well as 84,000 hectares of land with approximately 75,000 of this belonging to forestry. While the scale of the DAERA estate is vast, it is also diverse with a wide range of accommodation including science, education, marine and agriculture facilities.

## PART A

During 2019/20 Estate Transformation Division continued to work with DAERA business areas and key stakeholders to maximise access to and utilisation of the Department's estate.

ETD work on an ongoing basis with relevant business areas to ensure the maintenance of Disability Discrimination Act (DDA) measures which are already in place across our estate and arrange for work to be undertaken where it is identified that additional measures are required e.g. during 2019/20 included the installation of additional access equipment, such as automatic door openers, at DAERA's Headquarters at Ballykelly House. This is to assist individuals with disabilities when using the building. Looking wider across the estate, the Division has commissioned initial condition surveys of selected DAERA properties. A key facet of the surveys involves assessing how well each property complies with the latest statutory standards including compliance with the Disability Discrimination Act. Where deficiencies are identified the Division will work with the relevant business area to identify corrective measures that should be implemented to address this. The Division plans to widen these surveys out to all properties within the estate on a rolling 5 year programme.

**2** Please provide **examples** of outcomes and/or the impact of **equality action plans/ measures** in 2019- 20 *(or append the plan with progress/examples identified)*.

In addition to the outcomes and impacts outlined in Part 1, the Department continued to progress its equality scheme commitments, which are prioritised as key business activities. During 2019-2020, DAERA reflected its Section 75 obligations in its corporate business planning and achieved all targets set in relation to these, with the exception of the EDWG commitment to hold four meetings in the reporting period. The first three meetings were successfully completed but unfortunately, due to COVID19 the fourth meeting had to be cancelled.

The Equality, Diversity and Public Appointments (EDPA) business area was reviewed during 2019 and additional resources secured. A dedicated Diversity Officer is in place to ensure that DAERA identified and implemented a wide ranging calendar of diversity events. By autumn 2019 a deputy Diversity Officer was also recruited to assist with this important work. This was part of the original plan and helped to fulfil the need to provide dedicated corporate resources to ensure that equality duties and broader diversity priorities are mainstreamed and made central to policy development within DAERA in a consistent manner. These revised structures are designed to ensure that the Department meets its commitment to have functioning internal arrangements in place for ensuring effective compliance with the Section 75 statutory duties and for monitoring and reviewing its progress.

While the day to day delivery of equality functions is mainstreamed within the various business areas throughout DAERA, there is a dedicated Equality Officer in post supported by a deputy Equality Officer whose collective role is to ensure the Department meets its equality obligations in line with its commitment to have the necessary resources in place to ensure compliance with the statutory duties. The equality officers, along with their line managers, are members of a NICS wide Equality and Human Rights Practitioners Group which is responsible for sharing good practice across departments with regard to the implementation and application of the statutory equality duties and human rights obligations. This good practice can then be disseminated within DAERA and used as a reference in providing advice and recommendations to senior management or a Minister.

DAERA maintains a Section75 consultee list which is reviewed regularly. This is accessible to all staff and is used to maintain regular communication with Section 75 stakeholders, especially as policies are changed or reviewed. The results of equality screening exercises are shared with our Section 75 consultees as well as being published on the departmental internet page on a quarterly basis.

During 2019-20, the dedicated Equality Unit continued to fulfil its key role in disseminating information to business areas on equality related issues; quality assuring policy screening exercises, including advice and support on how to conduct evidence based screening and reviewing the effectiveness of the screening template in conjunction with the Equality Practitioners Group (EPG) forum and ECNI.

## PART A

A summary of the Equality Scheme has been made available to all DAERA staff and the complete Equality Scheme can be accessed from the departmental internet page.

Induction training for new staff includes an awareness of Section 75 and the statutory duties. However, there has been difficulty in accessing Section 75 training during the reporting period. The Equality Unit had started to roll out a couple of Section 75 Screening courses in early 2020 with the ECNI leading in the presentation of these courses. Unfortunately only one course was held as the Covid-19 situation meant that the planned second course had to be cancelled. This training will be initiated in the future when it is conducive to do so.



**3** Has the **application of the Equality Scheme** commitments resulted in any **changes** to policy, practice, procedures and/or service delivery areas during the 2019-20 reporting period? *(tick one box only)*

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

Please provide any details and examples:

**2014-2020 Northern Ireland Rural Development Programme (NIRDP)**

DAERA is committed to having effective internal arrangements in place for ensuring compliance with the Section 75 statutory duties and for monitoring and reviewing progress. An EQIA was completed at the onset of the NIRDP for 2014-2020 which made a number of recommendations for improving the equality monitoring and data co-ordination. These have been set out again as a reminder and are as follows:

- Section 75 should be incorporated into the requirements of IT systems to help improve return rates and data analysis;
- A unique identifier or reference number should be included on all forms so that information can be linked back to schemes / measures / tranches;
- Monitoring forms should be issued at application stage rather than post-award in order to collect information on those that are unsuccessful as well as successful;
- The number of monitoring forms issued should be recorded in order to track response rates;
- Where possible, information such as age, gender, disability should be collected on the scheme application forms to ensure a maximum response rate;
- Consideration should be given to collecting a reduced amount of information via the monitoring forms and collecting other information such as political opinion using other methods;
- For projects with multiple beneficiaries, the project promoter should be required to submit a short equality report on those using the service rather than issuing equality monitoring forms to a large number of beneficiaries.

The statistics produced and published on the DAERA website up to August 2019 show that in total 33,222 Section 75 Surveys have been issued to RDP 2014-2020 applicants. 12,770 have been completed / partially completed, giving a total programme response rate of 38%.

Ongoing monitoring of the individual schemes within the NIRDP demonstrated that for schemes where the Department facilitates completion of the Section 75 monitoring as an integrated part of the online application process, a completion rate of 82% or above is delivered.

Roll out of the new administration computer system for the LEADER scheme has allowed Section 75 data collection to be completed online. In 2017, the baseline response rate for LEADER was 51%. This response rate was based on manual forms issued to applicants with a self-addressed envelope supplied. With the introduction of the online completion, the Department noted an improved response rate from the 51% baseline to 73% in 2018. In 2019, the response rate dipped to 69%. This may be in part due to the change in nature of the LEADER schemes from individual applicants and small businesses to larger organisations such as Councils and Community Groups who do not tend to complete the monitoring information. The Department continues to encourage completion of Section 75 forms to maximise response rates.

For area based NIRD schemes, a link was included on the 2019 Single Application Form to an electronic Section 75 survey form on Citizen Space. Response rates via this method continue to be low ranging from 12% to 22% depending on the scheme. A mixture of postal returns and online Citizen Space completion is used for the smaller knowledge transfer schemes. Farm Family Key Skills, which issues a link to the Citizen Space Section 75 survey after training is completed, has the lowest response rate of 9%.

Analysis continues to be carried out by the Northern Ireland Statistics and Research Agency (NISRA) of equality data collected to review progress and to enable the Department to adjust actions or introduce mitigating measures as appropriate. The inclusion of identifiers has enabled analysis to be carried out on the basis of successful and unsuccessful applications.

The first stage of a project was completed in Spring 2020 with IT colleagues to develop an improved Section 75 data collection method for the Single Application Form. The second stage of the project is to roll this data collection method out via online services to capture further data from those who have not already completed the survey. The aim of the project is to assist DAERA to deliver equality of opportunity for all their customers, while reducing the burden of ongoing completion of Section 75 forms, reducing the risk of low response rates and increasing data available to inform equal opportunity policy making.

The Department is committed to continuing to improve its response rate for Section 75 data collection and this remains challenging in light of the fact that the provision of this information is voluntary. The Department is aware, however, that where it supports and encourages the provision of Section 75 data as an inherent part of the application process, this leads to better response rates and the Department will continue to work towards adopting this approach where feasible.

**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:

### **2014-2020 Northern Ireland Rural Development Programme (NIRDP)**

In the example provided at Question 3 in relation to improvements made to the Department's equality monitoring system for the NIRDP 2014-2020, this has the potential to lead to better outcomes for our service users. Although this work has been challenging, it is still important to persist with it as an effective monitoring system will enhance the Department's capacity to perform its Section 75 duties as it will highlight possible inequalities and provide the evidence base for positive action to remove any identified disadvantage or unfairness in the system for individuals. This piece of work is still ongoing. It is intended to improve and enhance Section 75 data collection within the Department.

### **Public Appointments**

DAERA has responsibility for the following Non Departmental Public Bodies (NDPBs):

#### **Executive NDPBs**

- Agri-Food and Biosciences Institute
- Agricultural Wages Board for Northern Ireland
- Livestock and Meat Commission for Northern Ireland
- Northern Ireland Fishery Harbour Authority

#### **Statutory Advisory Body**

- Council for Nature Conservation and the Countryside

DAERA is committed to fulfilling its Section 75 statutory duties across all its functions and in terms of its functions in relation to public appointments, it is committed to following the Code of Practice for Ministerial Public Appointments in Northern Ireland which is prescribed and published by the Commissioner for Public Appointments for Northern Ireland (CPANI).

The Department provided CPANI with a statement of assurance on compliance with the code of practice for the public appointments it made between 1 April 2019 and 31 March 2020. The Department also adheres to the principles that underpin the appointments process including the principles of appointment on merit and equality of opportunity.

During this reporting period, the dedicated public appointments officer supported by a deputy and the EDPA Branch overseen a centralised approach to the planning, management and delivery of one public appointment competition and a second competition was taken to pre-appointment stage to await a decision from an incoming Minister. Minister Poots was appointed as the Minister of Agriculture, Environment and Rural Affairs in January 2020.

PART A

These processes were carried out taking account of broader equality functions and diversity responsibilities.

This centralised and dedicated approach to public appointments allows for expertise in the area to be developed and provides a platform for best practice to be shared and disseminated within the Department which, in turn, reduces the risk of non-compliance with the CPANI Code and reputational damage for DAERA.

Furthermore, it provides an opportunity to streamline and develop processes for attracting a diverse range of candidates with the right skills to serve on DAERA bodies and build on the success already achieved by the Department in terms of increasing female participation on its boards.

The number of females on the Department's public bodies is still below the 50% target set by the Executive. Of the 36 public appointments on its regulated bodies at 31 March 2020, 16 (44%) were held by women. The Department is continuing to move closer towards achieving the overall target. The Agri-Food and Biosciences Institute (AFBI) Board has exceeded the 50% target at an individual level. During the course of this reporting period a new Chair was appointed to the AFBI Board, this changed the gender breakdown to eight females (67%) and four males (33%).

In terms of impact on individuals according to Section 75 category, the central public appointments unit helps ensure that the processes for appointments are fairly and openly applied and that the principles underpin an inclusive process.

It is important that any individual who wishes to serve on one of DAERA's bodies and has the skills to contribute is given the opportunity to put themselves forward for appointment. Having resources dedicated to public appointments also means that staff can be proactive in terms of outreach efforts when running a competition including maximising media opportunities to attract a large and diverse applicant pool.

Following conclusion, each public appointment competition is assessed which will help to identify any potential barriers to participation by under-represented groups and continually improve the process and widen opportunities to participate for everyone.

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

As a result of the organisation's screening of a policy *(please give details):*

As a result of what was identified through the EQIA and consultation exercise *(please give details):*

PART A



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

The outcome of Public Appointment competitions are routinely monitored to identify under-represented groups and identify any potential barriers and any measures which can reduce or remove barriers and encourage applications.



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

The change to key services to the equality monitoring system, which was provided for the NIRDP, has improved access and improved monitoring returns. The development, implementation and monitoring of these changes have progressed over the past few years and have been set out above at Question 3.



*Other (please specify and give details):*

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

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

4 Were the Section 75 statutory duties integrated within job descriptions during the 2019-20 reporting period? *(tick one box only)*

- Yes, organisation wide
- Yes, some departments/jobs
- No, this is not an Equality Scheme commitment
- No, this is scheduled for later in the Equality Scheme, or has already been done
- Not applicable

Please provide any details and examples:

Job descriptions for relevant staff working in the Equality, Diversity and Public Appointments Branch include the following actions:

- Ensure that the Department fully complies with its statutory obligations, meets its Equality Scheme commitments and the targets in its Audit of Inequalities;
- Support the implementation of the Equality Scheme commitments across the Department;
- Ensure the Minister and the Department complies with its statutory duties under Section 75 of the Northern Ireland Act. Monitor, manage and maintain the commitments set out in the DAERA Equality Scheme and published action plans. Provide advice to senior management and business areas on significant equality issues and lead on the preparation of regular and annual progress reports towards a range of relevant NI, UK and international equality targets.
- Provide a high quality secretariat support to the Equality Diversity Steering Group and Equality Diversity Working Group; promote Section 75 across DAERA business functions; engage regularly with colleagues in policy areas; maintain regular engagement with relevant external organisations; regular attendance and participation on inter-departmental groups/projects; progressing work on equality-related action plans; Section 75 awareness raising and providing a quality assurance function to business areas.
- Engage as appropriate with DAERA colleagues and others on the development of key strategies and policies; share best practice and report on the Department's progress towards its published targets, for example the Audit of

PART A

Inequalities, commission, collate and quality assure returns and input from business areas and provide evidence based recommendations and advice to senior managers on equality related issues.

5 Were the Section 75 statutory duties integrated within performance plans during the 2019-20 reporting period? *(tick one box only)*

- Yes, organisation wide
- Yes, some departments/jobs
- No, this is not an Equality Scheme commitment
- No, this is scheduled for later in the Equality Scheme, or has already been done
- Not applicable

Please provide any details and examples:

An extract from a personal performance agreement in 2019-2020 is as follows:

“To support the Minister, Equality Officer, Departmental Board and the wider Department in ensuring the Department meets its statutory obligations under Section 75 of the Northern Ireland Act 1998 and through the commitments set out in our Equality Scheme and published action plans”.

6. In the 2019-20 reporting period were **objectives/ targets/ performance measures** relating to the Section 75 statutory duties **integrated** into corporate plans, strategic planning and/or operational business plans? *(tick all that apply)*

- Yes, through the work to prepare or develop the new corporate plan
- Yes, through organisation wide annual business planning
- Yes, in some departments/jobs
- No, these are already mainstreamed through the organisation’s ongoing corporate plan
- No, the organisation’s planning cycle does not coincide with this 2017-18 report
- Not applicable

Please provide any details and examples:

The Department’s Draft Strategic Plan 2020 states: As a public authority, DAERA has statutory equality obligations to meet under Section 75 of the NI Act 1998. We take

these responsibilities seriously, and work hard to ensure that equality and good relations considerations are a core part of our business functions and all decision-making processes. Our Equality Scheme and Audit of Inequalities set out the actions the Department has promised to take to meet its equality obligations. We are also committed to meeting the Department’s sustainable development and rural proofing obligations.

Relevant actions related to the Section 75 statutory duties are included within the Divisional and Branch Balance Scorecards. This management tool helps to ensure that these key objectives are progressed on behalf of the Department where possible. The Divisional Business Plan for DAERA’s Central Management functions in 2019-2020 included an objective to ensure the Department met its statutory obligations in respect of its Equality Scheme; Disability Action Plan; Audit of Inequalities and Children and Young People’s Action Plan.

**Equality action plans/measures**

**7** Within the 2019-20 reporting period, please indicate the **number of:**

Actions completed:	13	Actions ongoing:	10	Actions to commence:	0
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Please provide any details and examples (*in addition to question 2*):

The majority of the actions in the Equality Action Plan were implemented at the introduction of the scheme. The actions which are ongoing are those which are time bound for quarterly, bi-annual and annual completion each year. There are no actions outstanding.

**8** Please give details of changes or amendments made to the equality action plan/measures during the 2019-20 reporting period (*points not identified in an appended plan*):

None identified.

**9** In reviewing progress on the equality action plan/action measures during the 2019-20 reporting period, the following have been identified: (*tick all that apply*)

- Continuing action(s), to progress the next stage addressing the known inequality
- Action(s) to address the known inequality in a different way
- Action(s) to address newly identified inequalities/recently prioritised inequalities



- Measures to address a prioritised inequality have been completed

**Arrangements for consulting (Model Equality Scheme Chapter 3)**

- 10** Following the initial notification of consultations, a targeted approach was taken – and consultation with those for whom the issue was of particular relevance: *(tick one box only)*

- All the time                       Sometimes                       Never

- 11** Please provide any **details and examples of good practice** in consultation during the 2019-20 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:

Due to onset of the Covid-19 pandemic DAERA was no longer able to provide face to face digital assistance appointments. However, as an alternative DAERA put in place a digital assistance service by telephone for farmers who were unable to submit their application online themselves. Advisors triaged the calls and if a farmer required individual assistance a call back appointment was made. During this call back DAERA staff walked the farmer through the online application and completed the application on the farmer's behalf based on the information provided by them. In 2020, 1,225 farmers availed of this enhanced service. In addition, advisors also dealt with 3,552 callers who had general submission queries.

The Forest Service promotes the use of early engagement with stakeholders to encourage their involvement in the development of forestry plans for West Tyrone and the East Fermanagh /East Tyrone Planning areas to ensure they reflect the diverse needs of people, wildlife and industry. In total, 68 responses were received from community groups, environmental organisations, farmers groups, councils, private individuals, forestry industry and government. DAERA welcomes this significant engagement from stakeholders which will be a valuable contribution to the development of meaningful forest plans.

- 12** In the 2019-20 reporting period, given the consultation methods offered, which consultation methods were **most frequently used by consultees**: *(tick all that apply)*

- Face to face meetings  
 Focus groups  
 Written documents with the opportunity to comment in writing  
 Questionnaires

PART A

- Information/notification by email with an opportunity to opt in/out of the consultation
- Internet discussions
- Telephone consultations
- Other (*please specify*):

Please provide any details or examples of the uptake of these methods of consultation in relation to the consultees' membership of particular Section 75 categories:

For West Tyrone and East Fermanagh / East Tyrone forests a total, 68 responses were received from community groups, environmental organisations, farmers groups, councils, private individuals, forestry industry and government. DAERA welcomes this significant engagement from stakeholders which will be a valuable contribution to the development of meaningful forest plans.

- 13** Were any awareness-raising activities for consultees undertaken, on the commitments in the Equality Scheme, during the 2019-20 reporting period? (*tick one box only*)

Yes       No       Not applicable

Please provide any details and examples:

- 14** Was the consultation list reviewed during the 2019-20 reporting period? (*tick one box only*)

Yes       No       Not applicable – no commitment to review

The consultation list is continually kept under review and updated as required.

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

This can be found via the following link:

<https://www.daera-ni.gov.uk/daeras-equality-scheme>

PART A

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

35
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16 Please provide the **number of assessments** that were consulted upon during 2019-20:

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

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

- 1) Consultation on amendments to the Marketing of Fresh Horticulture Produce Regulations (NI) 2010, the Marketing of Bananas Regulations (NI) 2019 and the Agriculture, Food and Horse (Miscellaneous Amendments) (NI) (EU Exit) Regulations 2019
- 2) Consultation on the numbering format for Bovine EID
- 3) Options for Basic Payment Scheme Entitlement Unit Values Post 2019
- 4) DAERA Consultation Paper: Draft NI Animal Health & Welfare Strategic Framework
- 5) Consultation on the draft Eggs and Chicks and Poultry-meat (Northern Ireland) Regulations 2010 as amended
- 6) Islandmargee Gas Storage Project December 2019 Consultation

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

Yes       No concerns were raised       No       Not applicable

Please provide any details and examples:

**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 2019-20 reporting period? (tick one box only)



## 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 2019-20, and the extent to which they met the training objectives in the Equality Scheme.

The Equality Unit continued to provide advice and information to the Department's business areas throughout the reporting period to help ensure that the Department was compliant in carrying out their statutory obligations in relation to Section 75.

A summary of the Equality Scheme has been made available to all staff. The full Equality Scheme is available to all staff via the DAERA internet.

Induction training for new staff includes an awareness of Section 75 and the statutory duties. The content of the online training 'Introduction to Section 75' is currently under review. A working group comprising of staff from DAERA Equality Unit, Department for Communities, ECNI, NI Assembly, The Executive Office & NICS HR Learning and Development had been set up during this reporting period. The aim was to ensure the online training was comprehensive and also to include an introduction to the disability duties. This work had progressed well until the Covid-19 situation brought it to a halt. Work will continue when the situation allows and this training will be available through the online portal to all staff.

Access to Section 75 Screening training during the reporting period remained difficult for staff. However, ECNI had delivered to DAERA staff the first of two scheduled screening training sessions in March 2020, the second having been postponed due to the Covid-19 situation.

A range of the training undertaken by DAERA staff in 2019-2020 is outlined below:

- **Mental Health Awareness for Line Managers**  
The aim of this course is to raise awareness of the issue of Mental Health in the workplace, and to assist line managers in supporting and signposting staff who may be going through a mental health issue. During 2019/2020, 29 DAERA managers successfully completed this training.
- **Positive Mental Health Toolkit for All staff E-Learning**  
This training is designed to give all staff an understanding of how mental health affects how we think and feel and how we cope with life's ups and downs.  
  
On completion of the course staff should understand what mental health and stress is, be able to identify problems that can lead to stress, understand what they can do to manage stress and build resilience, and be aware of the many services available if they want to understand more about specific mental health issues. During 2019/20, 66 DAERA staff completed this training.
- **Positive Mental Health Toolkit for Line Managers E-Learning**

This training is aimed at line managers and is designed to raise awareness and promote understanding of mental health.

On completion of the course line managers should understand what mental health is and define depression, anxiety, stress and resilience; recognise internal and external factors that could cause mental health problems in the workplace; and have knowledge of how to create positive relationships with their team members and know what steps to take to support their mental health issues. During 2019/20, 17 DAERA managers completed this training.

- **Autism Spectrum Disorder (ASD) Awareness E-Learning**

This course was been developed by the Northern Health and Social Care Trust, providing information about what ASD is and the challenges faced by individuals living with it. Having an awareness of ASD will help staff understand why an individual with ASD may be acting or reacting in a particular way and it will help create and maintain positive working relationships. In 2019/20, 51 staff completed the training.

- **Disability Awareness for front line staff E-Learning**

The aim of this training is to increase staff knowledge of disability and to provide frontline staff with an introduction to disability awareness. The course is aimed at staff at all grades who are in, or new to a post that deals with the public. In 2019/20, 21 DAERA staff successfully completed this training.

- **Supporting Vulnerable People E-Learning**

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

The course is entirely voluntary and in 2019/20, 23 staff completed the training.

- **Unconscious Bias E-Learning**

This course aims to help staff discover what personal bias they may have, explore its causes and consider some techniques to manage it. On completion of the course staff should be able to define what Unconscious Bias is; explain how Unconscious Bias can impact in the workplace and state ways to tackle Unconscious Bias.

This mandatory course was rolled out to DAERA staff during 2017/18 for completion by all DAERA staff in management grades i.e. EOII and above and

1,629 staff successfully completed the training. During 2019/20 a further 84 staff completed this training.

- **Introduction to Section 75 E-Learning**

Staff who require this training are those with responsibility for policy development or policy review and staff involved with the implementation of Section 75 duties, whether directly or indirectly. The aim of this course is to familiarise participants with the two statutory duties as outlined in Section 75 of the NI Act 1998 and the guidance provided by the Equality Commission NI. 56 DAERA staff completed this training between April 2019 and March 2020.

- **Policy Making and Human Rights**

This course aims to raise awareness and understanding of the benefits of applying human rights principles and obligations throughout the policy development process. It is aimed at staff involved in developing policy, particularly policies which may have human rights impacts. This training aims to help staff identify relevant human rights standards, treaties and legislation to be engaged when developing policy and legislation; explain how combining NICS policy guidance with an understanding of human rights principles provides assurance that human rights standards and legislation are sufficiently considered; and demonstrate how the application of human rights principles adds value to the policy process ensuring policy making is inclusive, lawful and targeted at those most in need. During 2019/20, 19 DAERA staff completed this training.

- **Safeguarding Children & Young People E-Learning**

This e-learning package has been designed to provide an awareness of safeguarding children and young people and is aimed at those staff who may come into contact with children and young people as part of their duties. The training aims to help staff understand how to recognise if a child is suffering abuse, what safeguarding is, what their responsibilities are and how to keep a young person safe. During 2019/20, 85 staff completed this training.

- **S75 Screening Training (specific to DAERA staff)**

ECNI had undertaken to deliver 2 sessions of this training to DAERA staff on 10 & 24 March 2020. The first session took place as scheduled with 50 staff participating. The second session, however, was postponed due to the onset of the Covid-19 restrictions.

**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:

This is covered in responses to question 24 above.

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

**26** Please list **any examples** of where monitoring during 2019-20, across all functions, has resulted in action and improvement in relation **to access to information and services**:

Nothing specific in the reporting period.

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

**27** How many complaints **in relation to the Equality Scheme** have been received during 2019-20?

Insert number here:

0
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Please provide any details of each complaint raised and outcome:



### Section 3: Looking Forward

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

The DAERA Equality Scheme 2016 – 2020 contains a commitment to review the Scheme within its lifetime. The Department’s Equality Scheme is due for review and it is the intention to bring the Scheme to the Minister’s consideration and review it thereafter as necessary. Going forward DAERA will publish a refreshed Equality Scheme for 2021-25.

#### 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)*

Training and awareness raising will continue to be a particular focus for DAERA in the next reporting period. DAERA will continue to work in collaboration with the ECNI to potentially deliver a range of training on equality, disability and diversity and in particular to re-start the equality screening training sessions that were cancelled in March. In addition, it is intended that we (DAERA) will hold our own events and awareness sessions for these important issues at a time more conducive to do so.

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

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

The EU Exit is still a current and significant priority for DAERA and will remain as such through the next reporting period. Work will be ongoing throughout 2020 and 2021 to develop and refine strategic policy priorities on a range of EU Exit related issues through regular engagement with key stakeholders. The Department will take forward the development of policy, and associated legislation, required as the result of the repatriation of EU policy to the UK. In addition, throughout the next reporting period, the Department will co-ordinate the development and implementation of Day 1 delivery plans for those impacted areas to ensure the continued delivery of services post exit from the EU. It is not clear as to how the Covid-19 pandemic will be transformed, if at all, going into the 2020-21 reporting period so the Department will have to be understanding and flexible in dealing with this situation.



## 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

1

Partially achieved

2

Not achieved

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

DAERA had 15 Actions to promote positive attitudes towards disabled people and encourage participation by disabled people in public life. Twelve of the actions have been achieved and are listed below:

- Review and monitor the accessibility of DAERA facilities and explore opportunities for improving access (Participation in public life)
- Ensure all managers are aware of their legislative responsibilities e.g. under the DDO, DDA, and Section 75 (Promoting positive attitudes)
- Staff Awareness Raising (Promoting positive attitudes and participation in public life)
- Provide specific disability and equality training for policymakers and front line staff (Promoting positive attitudes)
- Provision of information that is easy-to-access and understand (Promoting positive attitudes)
- Raise awareness about autism (Promoting positive attitudes)
- Increase awareness of College of Agriculture, Food and Rural Enterprise (CAFRE) support services (Promoting positive attitudes)
- Improve representation across DAERA forums, groups, committees and CAFRE student groups.
- Hold biannual meetings of the Equality Diversity Steering Group (EDSG) (Promoting positive attitudes)
- Increased support and engagement with the disability sector (Promoting participation in public life)

PART B

- **Improve how we consult and engage with people with disabilities. This includes our own staff and those who use our services (Promoting positive attitudes and participation in public life)**
- **Promote work placement opportunities**

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>i</sup>	Outcomes / Impact <sup>ii</sup>
National <sup>iii</sup>			
Regional <sup>iv</sup>	<p><b>Review and monitor the accessibility of DAERA facilities and explore opportunities for improving access</b></p>	<p>NIEA Parks and Reserves have continued to improve access at Quoile Pondage Nature Reserve, Peatlands Park, Roe Valley Country Park and they are also working to enhance services at Crawfordsburn Country Park with a new “Changing Places” facility planned for installation as part of the beach toilets refurbishment. At Peatlands Park the train halt on site was also refurbished and now provides improved DDA compliant accessibility. All the enhancements have resulted in improved inclusivity and accessibility in line with DAERA’s commitment to ensuring accessible services for everyone.</p> <p>Estate Transformation Division has commissioned initial condition surveys of selected DAERA properties. A key facet of the surveys involves assessing how well each property complies with the latest statutory standards including compliance with the Disability Discrimination Act. Where deficiencies are identified the Division will work with the</p>	<p>Improved inclusivity and accessibility at DAERA funded sites for people throughout Northern Ireland in line with DAERA’s commitment to ensuring accessible services for everyone; “Sustainability at the heart of a living, working, active landscape valued by everyone”</p>

PART B

		<p>relevant business area to identify corrective measures that should be implemented to address this. The Division plans to widen these surveys out to all properties within the estate on a rolling 5 year programme.</p>	
<p>Local<sup>v</sup></p>	<p><b>Ensure all managers are aware of their legislative responsibilities e.g. under the DDO, DDA, and Section 75</b></p> <p><b>Staff Awareness Raising</b></p>	<p>Achieved and ongoing.</p> <p>Senior managers have been updated on disability, diversity and equality issues through the Equality and Diversity Steering Group and Equality and Diversity Working Group. The course “Introduction to Section 75 E-Learning “was completed by 56 DAERA staff April 2019 and March 2020. There has been continued difficulty accessing Section 75 training during the reporting period. Advice on equality screenings has been provided to managers and they are encouraged to focus on these issues in assessing their policies.</p> <p>In June 2019 DAERA implemented a new initiative to support people with a communication difficulty – the JAM Card. All staff were encouraged to complete a short training programme. The JAM Card allows people with a communication difficulty to inform a service provider that they need Just A Minute of patience and understanding.</p> <p>Throughout the year we publish articles related to our Diversity and Inclusion calendar. The purpose of these articles is to raise awareness on diversity issues, while recognising and celebrating the differences in our organisation.</p>	<p>Increased knowledge and awareness which, in turn, will lead to improved outcomes across the Section 75 categories.</p> <p>DAERA is now a JAM Card friendly employer ensuring that we provide that important extra support when it’s needed.</p> <p>Staff Awareness and understanding raised in relation to a number of Diversity issues which, in turn, will lead to improved outcomes across the Section 75 categories.</p>

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

	Training Action Measures	Outputs	Outcome / Impact
1	<p><b>Provide specific disability and equality training for policymakers and front line staff.</b></p>	<p><b>Mental Health Awareness for Line Managers</b>                      The aim of this course is to raise awareness of the issue of Mental Health in the workplace, and to assist line managers in supporting and signposting staff who may be going through a mental health issue. During 2019/20, 29 DAERA managers successfully completed this training.</p> <p><b>Positive Mental Health Toolkit for All staff – E-Learning</b>                      This training is designed to give all staff an understanding of how mental health affects how we think and feel and how we cope with life's ups and downs. During 2019/20, 66 DAERA staff completed this training.</p> <p><b>Positive Mental Health Toolkit for Line Managers – E-Learning</b>                      This training is aimed at line managers and is designed to raise awareness and promote understanding of mental health. During 2019/20, 17 DAERA managers completed this training.</p> <p><b>Autism Spectrum Disorder (ASD) Awareness – E-Learning</b>                      This course has been developed by the Northern Health and Social Care Trust, providing information</p>	<p>Staff better able to assist our customers who at times may need additional assistance. Increased awareness of equality and disability issues which, in turn, can lead to better outcomes for staff and customers across the Section 75 categories.</p>

		<p>about what ASD is and the challenges faced by individuals living with it. Having an awareness of ASD will help staff understand why an individual with ASD may be acting or reacting in a particular way and it will help create and maintain positive working relationships. In 2019/20, 51 staff completed the training.</p> <p><b>Disability Awareness for front line staff – E-Learning</b> The aim of this training is to increase staff knowledge of disability and to provide frontline staff with an introduction to disability awareness. The course is aimed at staff at all grades who are in, or new to a post that deals with the public. In 2019/20, 21 DAERA staff successfully completed this training.</p> <p><b>Supporting Vulnerable People – E-Learning</b> This course has been designed to assist staff in supporting vulnerable people who may seek to use the services offered by the department. On completion of the course staff should be able to describe and define what a vulnerable person is, recognise ways to identify vulnerable people and explain ways to support vulnerable people, including methods for dealing with third parties. In 2019/20, 21 DAERA staff successfully completed this training.</p> <p><b>Unconscious Bias – E-Learning</b> This course aims to help staff discover what personal bias they may have, explore its causes and consider some techniques to manage it. On completion of the</p>	
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		<p>course staff should be able to define what Unconscious Bias is; explain how Unconscious Bias can impact in the workplace and state ways to tackle Unconscious Bias.</p> <p>This mandatory course was rolled out to DAERA staff during 2017/18 for completion by all DAERA staff in management grades i.e. EOII and above and 1,629 staff successfully completed the training. During 2019/20 a further 84 staff completed this training.</p> <p><b>Safeguarding Children and Young People</b>          This training is mandatory for all CAFRE staff, including all who work directly or indirectly with students, many of whom are under 18 years of age and is rolled out to staff every 3 years. In addition those staff who have additional supervisory care responsibilities for the students are required to complete Designated Officer Training.</p> <p>During 2017-18 a total of 426 staff from CAFRE and those staff who regularly work on the three college campuses completed Safeguarding Training and a further 9 CAFRE Designated Officers completed the enhanced training. As this training is only rolled out to relevant business areas every 3 years, there was none of this training delivered during 2019-20 and refresher training will be delivered during 2020-21.</p> <p><b>Safeguarding Children &amp; Young People – E-Learning</b>          This e-learning package has been designed to provide an awareness of safeguarding children and</p>	
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		<p>young people and is aimed at those staff who may come into contact with children and young people as part of their duties. The training aims to help staff understand how to recognise if a child is suffering abuse, what safeguarding is, what their responsibilities are and how to keep a young person safe. During 2019/20, 85 staff completed this training.</p>	
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2(c) What Positive attitudes **action measures** in the area of **Communications** were achieved in this reporting period?

	Communications Action Measures	Outputs	Outcome / Impact
1	<b>Provision of information that is easy to understand and access</b>	<p>Achieved and ongoing.</p> <p>All documents produced in-house have adhered to the written communication guidelines and have a disability/equality statement on how to access alternative formats. Equality Unit continues to promote the production of easy-read versions of all major DAERA publications. These are provided on the internet and are in hard copy on request.</p>	<p>Information that is easy to understand and access helps people make better informed decisions and choices. It removes barriers so that people with particular needs are not excluded from accessing Departmental information and services and therefore ensures equality of access.</p>
2	<b>Raise awareness about autism</b>	<p>See 2 (b) in relation to Autism Spectrum Disorder training.</p>	<p>The training continues to improve the knowledge and understanding of staff and ensures they are more aware of the</p>

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		<p>CAFRE has a permanent student support officer who has attended autism specific training courses.</p>	<p>issues and concerns of student/customers dealing with these issues.</p> <p>Improved educational outcomes for students with autism.</p>
<p>3</p>	<p><b>Increase awareness of CAFRE support services.</b></p>	<p>During 2019-20 CAFRE provided support to approximately 247 students with disabilities and learning support needs. This support is provided through the CAFRE Student Support Officer who is employed on a full-time basis and works across all three CAFRE campuses. The Student Support Officer arranges a wide variety of support for students, depending on their needs, for example provision of IT / specialist equipment, provision of Campus Support Assistants or Study Skills tutors. The Student Support Officer will also link with course awarding bodies to obtain approval for academic support, for example additional time to submit coursework, specialist assistance during exams. This officer also signposts students to appropriate mental health support and counselling and administers the CAFRE Hardship Fund.</p> <p>The support available from the Student Support Officer is promoted on the</p>	<p>The uptake of support services, available to students with additional needs throughout the student body has improved, mainly due to a change in curriculum and an increased focus on signposting students to support services available. The increased knowledge and understanding of staff has meant that they are more aware of the issues and concerns of students/customers dealing with mental health issues.</p>

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		<p>CAFRE website and student intranet. The Officer also speaks to all student groups at induction each year and throughout the year to outline their role and how to access support.</p>	
<p>4</p>	<p><b>Improve representation across DAERA forums, groups, committees and CAFRE student groups.</b></p>	<p>In accordance with CAFRE student charter, there are a number of opportunities for students to be represented on College committees to provide feedback on the programme they are studying. In addition, they also have the opportunity to discuss and evaluate their experience either directly with a Course Tutor or anonymously using programme related surveys.</p> <p>During 2019-20 academic year plans were put in place for CAFRE student representatives to attend CAFRE Education Management Team meetings (attended by the Heads of Branches) to provide feedback to the senior education management team. Student attendance at these meetings was arranged for the February, March and April 2020 meetings. However, due to Covid-19 restrictions only the February meeting took place and was attended by Food Technology and BAFRE students from Loughry Campus.</p>	<p>CAFRE reviews its education provision regularly using the feedback from students. Services are evaluated and improvements implemented, for example:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Feedback from the student representation at the Education Management Team meeting was very positive in relation to their academic programmes and support they have received from staff during their time at CAFRE.</li> <li>• Feedback from the student representation at the College Advisory Group meeting was very positive with no reported issues with the programmes. Students took the opportunity to indicate their reasons for studying at CAFRE and their future career aspirations in the equine industry. Suggested increased use of social media and more targeted marketing of customers to promote CAFRE courses to prospective students have been implemented in response to the Covid-19 restrictions and the need to engage remotely with our customers.</li> </ul>

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		Following on from student representation to the College Advisory Group (CAG), which comprises external experts, at Loughry Campus in November 2018 and Greenmount Campus in February 2019, equine student representatives had the opportunity to provide feedback on their experiences of CAFRE at the College Advisory Group (CAG) meeting which comprises external experts – at Enniskillen Campus in November 2019.	
5	<b>Hold biannual meetings of the Equality Diversity Steering Group (EDSG)</b>	2 meetings were held during the reporting period.	Business areas and policy makers better informed about equality and disability issues to ensure improved outcomes for those with a disability.

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

	Encourage others Action Measures	Outputs	Outcome / Impact
1	<b>Increased support and engagement with the disability sector</b>	CAFRE’s Enniskillen Campus provides facilities for Riding for the Disabled (RDA) programmes.  CAFRE organised a pilot education course for health professionals who are	Widened access to services for people with autism and improved outcomes in relation to health and wellbeing.  A number of joint initiatives are being developed to utilise the horses and natural resources at Enniskillen Campus to enhance the health and well-being of the local community, including walking in the countryside and using horses for equine assisted therapy. The

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		<p>delivering Equine Assisted Therapy and Learning (EAT&amp;L) activities which can be used to enhance the health and well-being of our local community.</p>	<p>pilot EAT&amp;L course had commenced but was temporarily postponed due to the Covid-19 restrictions.</p>
<p>2</p>	<p><b>Improve how we consult and engage with people with disabilities. This includes our own staff and those who use our services.</b></p>	<p>DAERA has conducted a number of consultations throughout the reporting period and these have been informed by input from various groups/individuals including the Disability organisations.</p> <p>DAERA has continued its stakeholder engagement campaign with its Section 75 consultees which includes disability groups.</p> <p>Inland Fisheries support a promotional stand at the Disability exhibition in June each year.</p> <p>Forest Service has encouraged various stakeholders to become involved in developing forestry plans for West Tyrone and East Fermanagh / East Tyrone forests. Responses received will inform draft forestry plans.</p> <p>During August 2019 Forest Service launched an “easy read” version of its scoping document to improve communication and to encourage people to contribute to Forest Plans.</p> <p>Working with a community organisation</p>	<p>Policies and service provision better informed by service users which, in turn, will improve outcomes for those with a disability.</p> <p>Due to Covid-19 unfortunately face to face meetings had to be postponed however DAERA is committed to early engagement to help build working relationships and strengthen networks. This will increase the potential for collaboration and partnership working in the future as policies and services are developed which are relevant to our customers.</p>

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		the “easy read” document has been used in forest based education with schools from the preschool, controlled, maintained and Gaelscoil sectors. Copies were distributed to libraries and others before work was paused due to Covid-19 restrictions. It will now be used regularly for engagement in relation to forestry planning.	
3	<b>Promote work placement opportunities</b>	Work placements provided to people through the NICS Work placement Scheme for those with a disability where relevant.	This year three business areas offered this opportunity and the NI Carrier Bag Levy Team was chosen to provide a 20 week placement to one person. This provided the person with valuable mentoring and experience of administrative work within the NICS. The person adapted quickly to the operational and administrative demands of a busy team and the front line on the job experience he has gained will be of real benefit to him in his future career.

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

	Action Measures fully implemented (other than Training and specific public life measures)	Outputs	Outcomes / Impact
1	<b>Promote employment opportunities</b>	All CAFRE students with a disability who require assistance to find employment are signposted, by the Student Support Officer, to supported employment services such as Cedar Foundation and	Improved career pathways for students with a disability.

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		the Department for Communities Workable Programme.	
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3. Please outline what action measures have been **partly achieved** as follows:

	Action Measures partly achieved	Milestonesvi / Outputs	Outcomes/Impacts	Reasons not fully achieved
1	<b>Display positive messages and images about people with disabilities</b>	When appropriate the Department has included equality focused wording in key press releases, and has portrayed images and wording about people with a disability in a positive manner.	This is a continuing action and further work on positive messaging will be carried forward to 2020-2021 as we take forward our revised Disability Action Plan 2019-2024.	Due to resource issues this action was only partially achieved within the reporting period.

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

	Action Measures not met	Reasons
1	<b>Improve representation by people with disabilities on NDPBs.</b>	There was limited opportunity to increase representation on DAERA’s bodies by people with a disability this reporting period, as only two competitions progressed in this period, only one of which reached completion.  DAERA continues the use of the Guaranteed Interview Scheme which provides applicants with a disability the opportunity to demonstrate their abilities beyond the initial application stage. Applicants with a disability who meet the essential criteria at stage one of the selection process will automatically be

		<p>offered an interview. Their application will not be subject to any short-listing which may take place.</p> <p>Moving forward DAERA wants to extend its efforts to promote public appointments to people with disabilities. The intention is to implement some practical measures to help in this area, which have unfortunately been delayed due to the impact of Covid 19 but it is hoped these will progress in early 2021 subject to circumstances This will include supporting and promotion of work being undertaken by the Commissioner for Public Appointments for Northern Ireland (CPANI) including:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"><li>• CPANI workshops for people who have a disability with the Equality Commission for NI (ECNI);</li><li>• CPANI mentoring programme for disabled individuals who have an interest in serving on public bodies;</li><li>• Monitoring and/or participating in CPANI’s pilot project alongside TEO and Departments aimed at removing barriers to people who have a disability from the public appointments system.</li></ul> <p>DAERA will also continue to monitor and review Board compositions and appointments to address the lack of representation and encourage and facilitate participation of people with a disability</p> <p>DAERA in conjunction with the CPANI will be working to improve the understanding of disability issues by public Boards to enable them to become more confident in attracting, recruiting and retaining talent of people with disabilities. This will include training for selection panel members and practitioners covering disability awareness.</p> <p>As with all other departments, it is difficult to put a figure on Board Members who have a disability as not all people declare their disabilities.</p>
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2	<b>Promote the staff Disability Forum and encourage new members to join and to play an active role.</b>	Dedicated resources are now in place to take this work forward, including the outworking's of a NICS-wide working group which is currently considering a NICS-wide Disability Forum. Equality staff had a meeting set up to discuss with NICS Disability Champion. This was planned for March 2020 and was postponed because of the onset of Covid-19.
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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

- **DAERA Website:** Regular monitoring and publication of standard of website accessibility; web accessibility testing as appropriate.
- **Facilities Management:** The effectiveness of the personal emergency evacuation plans are assessed with individuals during evacuations (practice and real) to ensure they meet all parties' needs.
- **CAFRE:** Specific training needs are discussed and assessed at the start of each academic year, and a training plan implemented to meet those needs. Review interviews with students availing of support services take place twice a year to establish if their needs are being fully met.
- **Equality and Diversity Steering and Working Groups:** These will act as a consultative forum to discuss and escalate issues in relation to disability and to consider staff and customer views.

(b) Quantitative

- **Facilities Management:** All personal emergency evacuation plans are assessed and tested twice yearly through practice evacuations. Monitoring and reviewing effectiveness of relocation projects to ensure no adverse impact on staff across the Section 75 categories.
- **CAFRE:** Training is provided for staff when it is identified that they will have students with specific difficulties. This is deemed the best approach as training can be tailored to the individual students' needs. The effectiveness of this training is monitored through interviews with the students to determine the level of satisfaction with the support they receive. CAFRE assesses the number of students availing of student support services and supported employment opportunities.

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- **Marine & Fisheries Division – Inland Fisheries (IF):** Issue concessionary licences to range of groups including disabled anglers. In addition, complimentary licences and permits are issued to similar groups including disability groups. IF records the number of complimentary licences/permits issued. They also support groups through the angling events fund and record the grants issued to groups including disability groups such as Mental Health charities.

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

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

Not applicable

If yes please outline below:

	Revised/Additional Action Measures	Performance Indicator	Timescale
1	Not Applicable		

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?

During the 2019/20 reporting period the Disability Action Plan has been re-drafted. The DAP will be published but the consultation will be delayed until a more conducive time. In addition, the Department, in conjunction with ECNI, will continue to explore an outreach/awareness programme for the Department to potentially deliver a range of training on equality, disability and diversity.

<sup>i</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.

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

<sup>iv</sup> **Regional**: Situations where people can influence policy decision making at a middle impact level

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

<sup>vi</sup> **Milestones** – Please outline what part progress has been made towards the particular measures; even if full output or outcomes/ impact have not been achieved.