



Department of
**Agriculture, Environment
and Rural Affairs**
www.daera-ni.gov.uk

Public Authority Statutory Equality and Good Relations Duties Annual Progress Report 2020 -21

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

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

Signature:

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

DAERA's vision is "sustainability at the heart of a living, working, active landscape, valued by everyone". This report presents our progress in fulfilling our statutory

equality and good relations duties, and implementing Equality Scheme commitments and Disability Action Plans.

This report reflects progress made between April 2020 and March 2021.

PART A – Section 75 of the Northern Ireland Act 1998 and Equality Scheme

Section 1: Equality and good relations outcomes, impacts and good practice

- 1** In 2020-21, please provide **examples** of key policy/service delivery developments made by the public authority in this reporting period to better promote equality of opportunity and good relations; and the outcomes and improvements achieved.

Please relate these to the implementation of your statutory equality and good relations duties and Equality Scheme where appropriate.

During this reporting period DAERA's governance structures continue to ensure 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 and it was restructured to include a diverse cross section of DAERA staff. The EDWG is now chaired by the Director of Staff Engagement, Equality & Diversity Directorate. The chair is also DAERA's Diversity and Racial Equality Champion, as well as Gender Champion for the Social Inclusion Strategies. (DAERA Directors from VSAHG and RAFSET also sit as DAERA representatives on the other three Cross Departmental Social Inclusion Strategies for Disability, Anti-Poverty and Sexual Orientation)

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. During this reporting period, the group continued to report, and makes recommendations to the EDSG.

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

The DAERA Equality Unit are also members of the cross-departmental Equality Practitioners Group (EPG) as well as actively attending the Equality Forum meetings where the Equality Commission for Northern Ireland (ECNI) are also a member. However, during this reporting period, due to COVID, the Equality Unit staff have attended virtual quarterly meetings for these two groups. 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.

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

The annual Single Application and Map Service provides farm businesses online access to submit a range of claims for Area-based Schemes, including the main agricultural subsidy scheme in Northern Ireland, the Basic Payment Scheme. During the 20/21 period, the Department introduced pro-active contacting of customers to ensure that they were aware of the need and had the ability to complete applications for this and other schemes before the deadline. Where customers were unable to complete the online application themselves, Departmental staff did so on their behalf via telephone appointments. In addition, the online application was further enhanced to improve accessibility and usability for all customers.

During this reporting period, the recruitment activities for DAERA's College (CAFRE) were disrupted due to the Covid pandemic, and the majority of promotion and engagement activities took place online, with virtual open day events being held in October 2020 and March 2021. These events were discipline specific and hosted on Facebook Live. Analysis of the viewing figures indicated that the largest percentage of viewers across all disciplines was female in the age range 45-54, suggesting that mothers, along with their son's / daughters were interested in finding out about the courses on offer at CAFRE.

CAFRE promotes the range of programmes and courses available through its website, cafre.ac.uk. The College is committed to making its website accessible, in accordance with the Public Sector Bodies (Websites and Mobile Applications) (No. 2) Accessibility Regulations 2018. The CAFRE website was tested and updated for compliance with the Web Content Accessibility Guidelines 2.1 level A and level AA, with further tests on the site carried out internally in April 2021.

In 2020-2021 CAFRE's enrolments were 1,673, of which 45% were female. The number of students declaring a disability or learning need in 2020/21 was 13%, which is similar to the 14% in 2019/20. The promotion of support available for student's with disability or learning need by the Student Support Officer and teaching staff continued throughout the year both online and, when possible, face to face with early disclosure encouraged to ensure the receipt of approval for support from Awarding Organisations prior to formal / alternative assessments taking place.

As a demonstration of DAERA's commitment to ensure that its services are fully accessible to everyone, CAFRE's full-time Student Support Officer 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.

Towards the end of the 2019/20 academic year and during the 2020/21 academic year, the delivery of CAFRE's programmes was impacted by the Covid pandemic. In March 2020, all face-to-face delivery ceased and students completed the academic year through online delivery. From September 2021, CAFRE programmes were delivered using a blended approach, with face-to-face delivery on campus focusing on the essential practical elements of the courses and remote delivery used for the theory based elements using digital learning technologies. During periods of increased Covid restrictions in October / November 2020 and from January to March 2021, the programmes were completed delivered remotely. Arrangements put in place by Awarding Organisations and validating Universities have ensured that student success and progression has not been impacted by the pandemic.

In preparation for online delivery in the 2020/21 academic year, CAFRE teaching staff completed a range of training courses during the summer of 2020. Information was also provided to students enrolling in September 2020 on the platforms and software required to access online classes. The College also introduced a laptop loan scheme to ensure that those students who did not possess a personal computer / mobile device or where other siblings needed access to the family computer / mobile device could access online lessons. Uptake of this scheme has been limited with 30 CAFRE students availing of the Scheme.

In November 2020, CAFRE invited the Education and Training Inspectorate (ETI) to undertake a baseline review of the delivery and impact of remote learning. Feedback from the review was positive with a number of strengths identified including: -

- the quality of teaching and learning in the classes observed,
- the swift and agile response by senior and middle manages to adapt the curriculum in response to the restrictions posed by Covid;
- the high levels of support provided to staff to build their capacity for remote delivery;
- the mutually respectful relationships developed between staff and learners;
- the strong commitment to meeting the care and welfare needs of learners.

CAFRE also provided signposting to a wide range of support organisations and throughout the academic year, specific events at each CAFRE Campus were organised with a focus on mental health and sign-posting to services available. Webinars were also used to cover topics such as managing exam stress sessions for final year students and time management at home, work and study priorities.

During periods when students were able to be in residence, the programme for evening activities focused on building resilience and encouraged students to think about healthier lifestyle options, healthy eating and eating on a budget. Throughout the year, each campus also hosted themed nights for students including pizza nights and BBQ nights. These encouraged social interaction with students across all the subject areas and promoted inclusion.

In February 2021, the Student Support Officer and wider campus teams developed a programme of events for all students to promote positive mental health and wellbeing amongst the student population. This was organised as an alternative to the annual campus health fairs and took place over the course of a week with workshops offered from a variety of external providers including the Colleges Counselling Service, Inspire, Start 360 and Action Mental Health. The workshops were held virtually and topics covered included:

- Mood & Food;
- Healthy Eating and Nutrition;
- 'Our Generation' Mental Health Workshop;
- HITT Cardio Workout;
- Loving Your Online Life;
- A Chat with YFCU President;
- Rory Best – Mental Health Video;
- Becoming Physically Excellent – Your Guide to Exercise;
- Drugs & Alcohol Awareness;
- Yoga & Relaxation;
- Let's Talk About Sex- Sexual Health Session;
- 'Love Your Bits'- Cancer Awareness, Male and Female Sessions;
- Safe Driving with PSNI;

(ii) NORTHERN IRELAND ENVIRONMENT AGENCY (NIEA)

Sixteen projects were delivered in 2020/21, funded by the Environment Fund Challenge Competition. The theme of these projects included outdoor recreation, land purchase for outdoor recreation and nature recovery. They improved inclusivity and accessibility throughout Northern Ireland and many supported all ability access to the natural environment. These projects were:

1. Murlough Boardwalk Restoration - Phase 3

Delivered by National Trust for the extension of 1 km of paths from the main car park, passing access points to the reserve from two caravan sites to Murlough Beach. Sections of the boardwalk were replaced to make them safe, provide suitable access for wheel chair users, and reduce visitors straying onto the surrounding habitat.

2. Slieve Donard Path Repair and Habitat Protection: Phase III

Delivered by National Trust to sustainably repair damages and improve visitor containment, supporting conservation and restoration of ASSI/SAC habitats

3. Land Acquisition at Cave Hill

Woodland Trust acquired 100 ha of land in a strategic location, both for conservation and access, in the Eastern Belfast Hills area. The site links with Belfast City Council's Cave Hill Country Park, National Trusts Divis Mountain and WT's own sites at Throne, Carnmoney, and Monkstown, a cluster of key sites that attract in excess of 650,000 visitors PA.

4. Arney Community Battlefield Trail

The Arney Battlefield Community Trail provides 1.9km of community walking trail will increase connection to nature, improve physical and mental wellbeing, increase community cohesion and promote social inclusion. It will provide access to a safe, off road walking trail linking community facilities, shared community spaces and valued built heritage in the form of the site of the Battle of the Ford of the Biscuits.

5. Lough Lea Trail

Delivered by Knocks Community Association this project focuses on the development of a new perimeter-walking trail around Lough Lea in Knocks, Co Fermanagh. It is the collective vision of Knocks Community Development Projects, which is a new partnership, comprising a number of local community, sporting and recreational groups.

6. Connecting people with nature, culture and the environment at Lough Beg.

Delivered by Mid Ulster Council, this project connects people through the works of Seamus Heaney with nature, culture and the environment at Lough Beg. A DDA compliant boardwalk with associated interpretive panels, woodland sculptures, woodland trail, poetry and augmented reality, linked with the tranquil landscape, the commanding views of Church Island and the local birdlife will immerse the visitor in the tranquillity and unique setting of the Strand at Lough Beg.

7. Causeway Coast Way Land Purchase

Delivered by the Causeway Coast and Glens Borough Council to secure long-term access on the Causeway Coast Way.

8. Ulster Way Mapping & Website

Delivered by Outdoor Recreation NI The Ulster Way (UW) is Northern Ireland's premier long-distance walking product. The new website will incorporate interactive mapping and allow users to accurately view UW information on mobile phones and tablets.

9. Greenlough Greenway Project - Phase 5

Delivered by Bann Valley Community Group, this project constructed a further 1.5km of stone pathway, and took a further 1.5km off road onto a safe trackway that extended the pathway further helping to make connection with the looped pathway.

10. Strategic Outdoor Recreation Data and Research

Delivered by Outdoor Recreation NI, this project delivered evidence of the importance of outdoor recreation in Northern Ireland to connect people with the environment as well as increasing physical activity, improving health and wellbeing.

11. Daisy Hill Wood Community Trail

Delivered by Newry, Mourne and Down District Council, the Daisy Hill Wood Community Trail provides access to c.1.1 kilometre of safe, pleasant, off-road walking trail that will fill a gap where there are currently limited facilities within, or in the vicinity of, the Daisy Hill area of Newry City. This project provides a healthy impact both mentally and physically on the local community, of all ages, race, and gender. This project will create a well-needed resource in an economically and socially disadvantaged area.

12. Derry & Strabane District Natural Capital Account of Outdoor Recreation Facilities

Delivered as part of Derry & Strabane District Council's Green Infrastructure Plan, which has several actions linked to natural capital accounts of public owned green & blue spaces.

13. RSPB NI - Improving Visitor Experience on RSPB NI Reserves

Delivered by RSPB NI, this project enhances visitor infrastructure on Rathlin Island and explores possibilities at Portmore Lough. On Rathlin the project will see the creation of a 2km path at Craigmacagan, joining up existing pathways and providing opportunities for Islanders and visitors. At Portmore, the project will create a boardwalk around and through the reed beds, the first step in creating an iconic facility.

14. Access pathway and bridge from Glenmore into Deadwall

Delivered by Lisburn & Castlereagh City Council, the Deadwall Plantation is an 8 1/2 acre Site of Local Nature Conversation Importance (SLCNI) within Lagan Valley Area of Natural Outstanding Beauty (AONB). This project will create a 1.2km path (including a small bridge), enhancing and raising awareness of biodiversity, involving the local community/school groups in the seasonal planting schemes and working with partners such as Lagan Valley Regional Park.

15. Discovering Nature

Delivered by Creggan Education and Research Services (An Creagán). The project provides facilities and infrastructure to enable children, families and visitors to engage with the semi-natural landscape within the remnant quarry, adjacent to Creggan Bog Local Nature Reserve (LNR).

16. Ballyronan Wood

Delivered by Mid Ulster Council, the project redevelops the woodland within Ballyronan as a quality off road multi-use 1km trail, incorporating an interpretation panel depicting the flora & fauna of the area. The trail is way marked and has bench seating and artwork throughout.

NIEA Regional Operations – Country Parks and Nature Reserves

1. Improvements at Quoile Pondage Nature Reserve

Following on from the works completed over the previous three reporting periods, we have continued to deliver improvements for accessibility at the Quoile Pondage National Nature Reserve (NNR).

Works have been completed at the old Quoile Road car park, increasing visibility and opening up the site to views from the road, thus allowing the installation of 2 dedicated disabled parking spaces, with easy access to the recently resurfaced and upgraded pathways throughout the Quoile Pondage area.

2. Improvements at Peatlands Park

During the reporting period works continued to install new and replace existing sections of boardwalk at Peatlands Park to improve accessibility to sections of pathway which otherwise would be inaccessible to visitors with a disability. All sections of boardwalks within the park and at Derryadd Lake have now been upgraded and which constitutes a network of over 10km of accessible pathway throughout the site. Major sections of previously stone-topped lanes have also been upgraded with a tarmac finish to improve accessibility throughout the heart of the site.

A substantial CCTV system rollout is nearing completion, which will improve security and safety within the site.

Play parks continue to be highly utilised by visitors in their first operational spring and summer, with significant numbers visiting since the easing of restrictions.

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 2021/22. The proposed new footbridge will provide enhanced visitor access through the park, including the created provision of a safe, contained and circular walking route.

In addition, plans are being progressed to take forward the replacement of both the Carrick Mills and Roe Mills footbridges, which will be designed and upgraded to provide enhanced DDA considerations.

4. Crawfordsburn Country Park

Designs have been completed 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 2021-2022 period and the associated planning application has been approved.

Considerable re-surfacing works around the site has been completed, including the main car park areas, all providing enhanced access. The Skelly Hill path and sections of the Crawford’s Burn riverside path have been both been considerably upgraded to provide greater access. Two of the main bridges onsite have also been replaced.

The improvements implemented enable enhanced access to the area and the views over the site coastal site, including the wildflower meadow at Skelly Hill, and will substantially complement existing infrastructure.

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 2.78 million visitors during 2020.

(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. The Department has a guide to Public Angling Estate fisheries with access for disabled anglers and this provides information on the suitability of access for different disabilities.

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.

Grant funding and associated events were suspended throughout the financial period of 31st March 2020 to 1st April 2021 due to COVID restrictions (reopened on 17th May 2021 – in line with COVID easements). Angling tuition could not take place due to the need to share hard surfaces such as rods and equipment. As restrictions are beginning to ease, the Department is starting to receive applications for grant support for the 2021 period. Government advice and guidelines will determine how many events can take place and an update on the number of applications received, and subsequently approved, will be provided in the next update.

(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 2020-2021 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, by telephone and by email.
- Stakeholders 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, farming groups, councils, private individuals, forestry industry and government.
- In March 2021, Forest Service launched a scoping consultation for the Armagh Forestry Planning Area. DAERA welcomes the significant engagement shown so far from stakeholders, which will be a valuable contribution to the

development of meaningful forest plans.

- Due to Covid-19 precautions, meetings with stakeholders were paused, and subsequently recommenced using video conferencing. Forest Service invited stakeholders to meet so that draft forest plans could be presented and comments received. Stakeholders included community organisations and NGOs.
- In November 2020, Forest Service published “What People Told Us – scoping a new forestry plan for forests and woodlands in the North West”. The document is a summary of consultation responses received for the North West Forestry Planning Area. The document outlines the diverse, and sometimes competing, demands of stakeholders.
- In October 2020, Forest Service published two story maps regarding forestry planning. Each one is a combination of interactive maps, images and informative text, designed to give you a clearer understanding of how our forests are managed. The first story map is about the forestry planning process and can be viewed via [Forestry Planning Story map](#). The second story map is about the forest plans for Sperrin and can be viewed via [Sperrin Forest Plan Story map](#). These 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. An annual report is published¹ and 81 section 75 forms were returned in year reflecting a response rate of 55%. 6% of beneficiaries are female which compares to 4% of farmers being female and religion and age group indicators are comparable with the farming context figures.
- 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 2020/21 Forest Service completed 83 public consultations about the environmental impact of forestry projects. 71 consultations were in connection with woodland creation, 11 were for woodland removal and 1 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

¹ <https://www.daera-ni.gov.uk/publications/northern-ireland-rural-development-programme-nirdp-2014-2020-section-75-report-2020>

awareness programme) based at Forest Service's Parkanaur Forest Park.

- Developing and facilitating partnership working with Ards and North Down Borough Council and DAERA's Tackling Rural Poverty and Social Isolation Initiative (TRPSI) delivering access improvement works at Cairn Wood Ballysallagh Forest with the aim of promoting and developing participation in sport and outdoor physical recreation. Phase 1 included improved car parking facilities and a toilet block.
- Facilitating 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.
- Facilitating partnership working between Forest Service, Newry Mourne and Down District Council and DAERA's TRPSI Initiative to develop a community walking trails and carpark facilities in Tievenadarragh Wood, Bohill Forest, Cory Wood Castlewellan Forest and Drumkeeragh forests.
- Continuing to facilitate 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.
- Further development of recreation infrastructure at Rostrevor Forest through partnership working with Newry, Mourne and Down District Council to improve visitor provision and amenities, including a new walking trail and lease arrangements for car parking.
- Facilitating partnership working with Mid Ulster District Council and DAERA's TRPSI initiative to delivering access improvement works at Moydamlaght Forest, Moneyneena with the aim of promoting and developing participation in outdoor physical recreation.
- Facilitating partnership working with Derry City and Strabane District Council to develop the Appalachian Way walking trail in Goles Forest.

(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 2020/21, 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), NI Museums Council 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 2020/21 letters of offer issued to 84 projects across all 11 Council areas at an overall cost of £1,709,000. Facilities, which were provided at a range of indoor and outdoor venues, include:

- installation of sensory gardens
- accessibility trails
- accessible play equipment
- IT equipment to allow live streaming of arts/cultural events, and
- the installation of Changing Places facilities.

During the 2020/21 year, an additional £7m of support was made available through the TRPSI programme to aid those in rural areas where the impact of the pandemic was felt hardest. For example, the rural transport initiative was repurposed to facilitate travel to testing and vaccine centres, food parcels were delivered throughout the TRPSI network.

(vi) ESTATE TRANSFORMATION DIVISION (ETD)

The DAERA estate consists of approximately 900 buildings across 234 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.

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. During 2020/21 ETD commissioned a pilot condition survey exercise 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 have been identified, the Division is liaising with relevant business areas to identify corrective measures that could be implemented.

2 Please provide **examples of outcomes and/or the impact of equality action plans/ measures in 2020- 21** *(or append the plan with progress/examples identified)*.

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 2020-2021, 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.

During the 2020/21 year, the Department was impacted by the Covid pandemic and all face-to-face meetings ceased. Consequently, the first meeting scheduled for June 2020 was cancelled, however; we successfully completed the following three quarterly meetings using online Webinar meeting facilities.

The Equality, Diversity and Public Appointments (EDPA) business area was reviewed during 2020 and this branch was disbanded. The Equality and Diversity units became part of a new business area, Staff Engagement, Equality and Diversity Branch (SEED). The dedicated Equality Officer and Diversity Officer, along with the deputies remain in place. This is to ensure Equality and Diversity remain high on the agenda for DAERA and that the original plan 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, remains a commitment for DAERA. 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, the dedicated Equality Officer, supported by a deputy Equality Officer assist the Department in meeting 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 Practitioners Group (EPG), which is responsible for sharing good practice across departments with regard to the implementation and application of the statutory equality duties. This good practice can then be disseminated within DAERA, and used as a reference in providing advice and recommendations to senior management or the Minister.

The dedicated Diversity Officer, supported by the deputy Diversity Officer, assists the Department in meeting its objective to ensure diversity and inclusion is embedded firmly within the Department in a way that both embraces and values difference. They have encouraged and promoted all aspects of diversity and inclusion through raising awareness and championing the core basics of fairness and respect for difference, equality of opportunity and treatment across the workplace. This was achieved by raising awareness via intranet articles, newsletters and events, educating staff and contributing to enabling cultural change within DAERA and by helping create a working environment where everyone is valued and included, and diversity is promoted and respected.

PART A

DAERA maintains a Section 75 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 2020-21, 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.

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 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. However, this training has now been scheduled via the online platform and will take place during 2021.

3 Has the **application of the Equality Scheme** commitments resulted in any **changes to policy, practice, procedures and/or service delivery areas** during the 2020-21 reporting period? *(tick one box only)*

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

Please provide any details and examples:

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 2020 show that in total 41,393 Section 75 Surveys have been issued to RDP 2014-2020 applicants. 13,927 have been completed/partially completed, giving a total programme response rate of 34%.

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 84% 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 total response rate for the scheme increased from 51% to 73% in 2018. In 2020, the total response rate dipped to 67%. 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 10% to 14% 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 6%.

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.

DAERA continues to seek to deliver a project that captures data for the Single Application Form and future farm based grant schemes. 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. Meeting these objectives while remaining compliant with the UK General Data Protection Regulation is proving challenging for the Department.

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 2020 and 31 March 2021. 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 transferred to the Arm's Length Body (ALB) Corporate Sponsor Branch. The new ALB Corporate Sponsor & Public Appointments Branch oversee a centralised approach to the planning, management and delivery of two public appointment competitions with a further two competitions underway.

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 28 public appointments on its regulated bodies at 31 March 2021, 13 (46%) 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, the gender breakdown being seven females (70%) and three males (30%).

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, be given the opportunity to put himself or herself 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):*

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

PART A

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 2020-21 reporting period? (*tick one box only*)

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

Please provide any details and examples:

Job descriptions for relevant staff working in the Staff Engagement, Equality and Diversity Branch (SEED) 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 Inequalities, commission, collate and quality assure returns and input from

PART A

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 2020-21 reporting period? (*tick one box only*)

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

Please provide any details and examples:

An extract from a personal performance agreement in 2020-2021 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 2020-21 reporting period were **objectives/ targets/ performance measures** relating to the Section 75 statutory duties **integrated** into corporate plans, strategic planning and/or operational business plans? (*tick all that apply*)

- Yes, through the work to prepare or develop the new corporate plan
- 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:	<input type="text" value="13"/>	Actions ongoing:	<input type="text" value="10"/>	Actions to commence:	<input type="text" value="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 ongoing actions are those that 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 2020-21 reporting period, on matters relevant (e.g. the development of a policy that has been screened in) to the need to promote equality of opportunity and/or the desirability of promoting good relations:

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 talked 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.

To ensure that forest plans reflect the diverse needs of people, wildlife and industry, Forest Service promotes the use of early engagement with stakeholders. In March 2021, Forest Service launched a consultation for the Armagh Forestry Planning Area. Responses were received from community groups, environmental organisations, councils, private individuals, forestry industry and government. DAERA welcomes this significant response from stakeholders, which will be a valuable contribution to the development of forest plans. Draft forest plans were presented to stakeholders, from both the community and environmental interest sectors, via online video conferencing.

The Protein Crops Pilot Scheme was introduced from the beginning of 2021, with the objective of creating a domestically produced source of protein for animal feed and to provide agronomic benefits within arable rotations. The pilot scheme will run for 2 years and then the approach will be refined for subsequent years to maximise the economic and environmental benefits. To ensure that the new scheme is fully inclusive, Transition Policy Division undertook the Protein Crops Scheme consultation exercise. The DAERA Section 75 consultee list was used to ensure that views were sought from all Section 75 groups. To make responding to the consultation exercise as accessible as possible, as well as accepting hard copy responses, a web based response

PART A

platform was also provided. In total 22 responses were received from interested organisations and individuals.

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
- 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 the Armagh Forestry Planning Area, a consultation document was published and stakeholders were invited to respond. Invitations were issued by email and through the use of press releases, posters and social media. Responses were received via email and the online tool, Citizen Space. Responses were also received from community groups, environmental organisations, councils, private individuals, forestry industry and government. Meetings were held with stakeholders via video conferencing.

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:

PART A

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>

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

70

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

5	Policy consultations conducted with screening assessment presented.
0	Policy consultations conducted with an equality impact assessment (EQIA) presented.
0	Consultations for an EQIA alone.

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

1. Consultation on the Amendment of the Horse Racing (Northern Ireland) Order 1990
2. Consultation on Further Education Support and Charging Policy at the College of Agriculture, Food and Rural Enterprise (CAFRE)
3. Consultation on the development of fisheries management measures for Marine Protected Areas (MPAs) and establishment of Scallop enhancement sites in the Northern Ireland inshore region
4. Consultation on Proposal to Introduce a Protein Crops Payment Pilot Scheme for 2021

PART A

5. Consultation Paper Extension of the existing NIEA Regulatory Charging Policy from 1 April 2021 to 31 March 2023

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)*

- Yes No Not applicable

Please provide any details and examples:

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

20 From the Equality Scheme monitoring arrangements, was there an audit of existing information systems during the 2019-20 reporting period? *(tick one box only)*

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

Please provide any details:

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

- Yes No Not applicable

Please provide any details and examples:

- 22** Please provide any details or examples of where the monitoring of policies, during the 2019-20 reporting period, has shown changes to differential/adverse impacts previously assessed:

Not applicable for the period.

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

None available for the period.

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 prior to this reporting period. The aim was to ensure the online training was comprehensive and 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. ECNI have undertaken to provide further sessions of this training using an online platform.

A range of the training undertaken by DAERA staff in 2020-2021 is outlined below:

- **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 2020/21, 51 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 2020/21, 13 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 2020/21, 20 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 2020/21, 12 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 2020/21, 5 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 influence 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 2020/21 a further 49 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. 10 DAERA staff completed this training between April 2020 and March 2021.

- **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 encounter children and young people as part of their duties. The training aims to help staff understand how to recognise that a child is suffering abuse, what safeguarding is, what their responsibilities are and how to keep a young person safe. During 2020/21, 22 staff completed this training.

During 2020/21 450 CAFRE staff / and staff based at CAFRE campuses completed Level 2 Safeguarding training, delivered by the NSPCC. A further 14 staff completed Designated Officer Safeguarding training.

- **Mental Health Awareness for Staff Working at Home (Webinar)**

This virtual training course encourages all staff to proactively consider how they can maintain or improve their wellbeing when working at home and isolated from others. During 2020/21, 83 staff completed this virtual training.

- **Mental Health Awareness for Managers Managing Remote Teams (Webinar)**

The webinar aims is to encourage and support managers to proactively promote good mental health and wellbeing within their teams. During 2020/21, 55 staff completed this virtual training.

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

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:

1

Please provide any details of each complaint raised and outcome:

Complaint from Committee on the Administration of Justice/Rural Community Network/Northern Ireland Rural Women’s Network that the Covid-19 Support Fund breached the Equality Scheme by failing to properly screen the policy.

The relevant business area responded with a detailed breakdown of the rationale behind the screening decision. No further Action was taken.

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 currently under review and it is intended to bring the Scheme to the Minister’s consideration within the next few months. 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*)

PART A

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 hold further equality screening training sessions. 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 (2021-22) reporting period? *(please tick any that apply)*

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

The Department throughout 2021 and 2022 will embrace our transition from the EU and maximise all opportunities this presents with regular engagement with key stakeholders.

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 ⁱ	Outcomes / Impact ⁱⁱ
National ⁱⁱⁱ			
Regional ^{iv}	<p>Review and monitor the accessibility of DAERA facilities and explore opportunities for improving access</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 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>

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		<p>relevant business area to identify corrective measures that could be implemented to address this.</p> <p>EMFG Inland Fisheries (IF) currently have a target to deliver improvements to 2 sites annually, for improved accessibility under a disabled access remit of work. IF regularly engages with local community groups and charities to take on board suggestions and recommendations for improvement to infrastructure to improve accessibility to angling activities and events.</p> <p>EMFG Inland Fisheries were able to complete works at the River Bush salmon station this year, despite COVID impacts, in contribution to this target - with a second site identified for works for later in the year.</p>	
<p>Local^v</p>	<p>Ensure all managers are aware of their legislative responsibilities e.g. under the DDO, DDA, and Section 75</p> <p>Staff Awareness Raising</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>Increased knowledge and awareness that, in turn, will lead to improved outcomes across the Section 75 categories.</p>

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		<p>DAERA as an organisation supports people with a communication difficulty – we endorse the JAM Card. 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 and newsletters related to our Diversity, Inclusion and Wellbeing calendar. The purpose of these articles/newsletters are to raise awareness on diversity and wellbeing issues, while recognising and celebrating the differences in our organisation.</p> <p>In February 2021 Staff Engagement, Equality and Diversity Branch hosted a webinar to mark Sexual Abuse and Sexual Violence Awareness Week. Lindsay Fisher, Chief Inspector, Public Protection Branch, PSNI and Geraldine Aitken, Counsellor and Helpline Supervisor, NEXUS NI presented the webinar.</p> <p>During Mental Health Awareness Week from 10-16 May 2021, we ran a series of events across the Department focusing on the 5 steps to Wellbeing.</p>	<p>DAERA is now a JAM Card friendly employer ensuring that we provide that important extra support when it is needed.</p> <p>Because of these newsletters, articles and events, staff awareness and understanding are being raised in relation to a number of Diversity and Wellbeing issues, which, in turn, will lead to improved outcomes across the Section 75 categories.</p>
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2(b) What **training action measures** were achieved in this reporting period?

	Training Action Measures	Outputs	Outcome / Impact
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<p>1</p>	<p>Provide specific disability and equality training for policymakers and front line staff.</p>	<p>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. Due to COVID this course did not run during 2020/21 but was replaced the online course as detailed below.</p> <p>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 difficulties. During 2020/21, 51 DAERA staff completed this training.</p> <p>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. During 2020/21, 13 DAERA managers completed this training.</p> <p>Autism Spectrum Disorder (ASD) Awareness – E-Learning The Northern Health and Social Care Trust, providing information about what ASD is and the challenges faced by individuals living with it, have developed this course. Having an awareness of ASD will help staff understand why an individual with ASD may be</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>
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		<p>acting or reacting in a particular way and it will help create and maintain positive working relationships. In 2020/21, 20 staff completed the training.</p> <p>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 2020/21, 12 DAERA staff successfully completed this training.</p> <p>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 and explain ways to support vulnerable people, including methods for dealing with third parties. In 2020/21, 5 DAERA staff successfully completed this training.</p> <p>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 affect in the workplace and state ways to tackle Unconscious Bias.</p>	
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		<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 2020/21 a further 49 staff completed this training.</p> <p>Safeguarding Children and Young People 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 2020-21 a total of 450 staff from CAFRE, including those staff who regularly work on the three college campuses and 50 external staff delivering CAFRE programmes completed the Level 2 Safeguarding Children and Young People Training delivered by the NSPCC and a further 14 CAFRE Designated Officers completed the enhanced training.</p> <p>Safeguarding Children and Young People During 2020/21 Safeguarding Level 2 training was provided to identify staff within EMFG & Forest Service who may encounter children and young people as part of their duties. In 2020/21, 195 staff from EMFG & FS undertook this training.</p>	
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		<p>During 2020 /21 Safeguarding Level 2, training was also provided to the DAERA Safeguarding Working group, 18 staff completed this training and a further 10 Designated Officers (with representative from each business group) completed the enhanced training.</p> <p>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 encounter 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 2020/21, 22 staff completed this training.</p> <p>It has been agreed that staff joining CAFRE will complete this e-training, unless they join during the period of refresher Level 2 Safeguarding training delivery and as such, no CAFRE staff were required to complete the e-learning training in 2020/21.</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
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1	<p>Provision of information that is easy to understand and access</p>	<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	<p>Raise awareness about autism</p>	<p>See 2 (b) in relation to Autism Spectrum Disorder training.</p> <p>CAFRE has a permanent student support officer who has attended autism specific training courses.</p>	<p>The training continues to improve the knowledge and understanding of staff and ensures they are more aware of the issues and concerns of student/customers dealing with these issues.</p> <p>Improved educational outcomes for students with autism.</p>
3	<p>Increase awareness of CAFRE support services.</p>	<p>During 2020-21, CAFRE provided support to approximately 217 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</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>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 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>	
4	<p>Improve representation across DAERA forums, groups, committees and CAFRE student groups.</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 directly with either a Course Tutor or anonymously using programme related surveys.</p>	<p>CAFRE reviews its education provision regularly using the feedback from students.</p>

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		<p>During 2020-21 academic year, the majority of the delivery of CAFRE programmes was online with students attending the campuses for face-to-face delivery of essential practical elements of their courses only. As a result, student attendance at Senior College Management Team meetings was not feasible. At course level, Staff Student Consultative Committee meetings were held remotely and the annual Learner Voice survey was completed. Actions plans to take on board feedback received from students will be put in place by the respective Course Delivery Teams.</p> <p>Meetings of student representatives with the Senior CAFRE Management Team will be scheduled for the 2021/22 academic year, subject to Covid restrictions.</p> <p>Following attendance of student representatives at the College Advisory Group (CAG) meetings, which comprises external experts, in 2019/20, it is anticipated that the students will have the opportunity to provide feedback to CAG in 2021/22, subject to Covid restrictions.</p>	
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		Discussions have also take place with DAERA Equality Unit to enhance the engagement of wider DAERA staff with CAFRE students, especially in areas of policy development relevant to children and young people. An initial meeting of Equality Unit Staff with the CAFRE Student Representative Councils from each Campus is planned for autumn 2021.	Engagement of Young People in wider DAERA issues
5	Hold biannual meetings of the Equality Diversity Steering Group (EDSG)	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	Increased support and engagement with the disability sector	CAFRE’s Enniskillen Campus provides facilities for Riding for the Disabled (RDA) programmes. CAFRE organised a pilot education course for health professionals who are delivering Equine Assisted Therapy and	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>Learning (EAT&L) activities which can be used to enhance the health and well-being of our local community.</p> <p>Discussions are continuing with One Equine Trust, which informs, supports and promotes equine assisted activities in Northern Ireland, and Ulster University on the development of education provision in EAT&L.</p> <p>Inland Fisheries (IF) had initiated engagement with the Royal National Institute for Blind People (RNIB) prior to the COVID lockdown in March 2020 – with a view to encouraging more of the visually impaired community to participate in angling activities. The intention was to pilot this project with a view to rolling it out across other areas of the disability sector, if successful.</p>	<p>pilot EAT&L course had commenced but was temporarily postponed due to the Covid-19 restrictions.</p> <p>Due to COVID restrictions, Inland Fisheries (IF) were unable to commence a pilot project with RNIB. These activities are due to commence now that easements are lifting.</p> <p>In addition, IF are currently reviewing additional methods of engagement with individuals, groups and organisations within the disability sector and are also committed to utilising all available technology to increase accessibility (particularly during COVID) – such as virtual events, online programmes and webinars to increase accessibility and engagement.</p> <p>Currently (2021), stakeholder forums are undergoing review, to assess diversity and inclusivity of membership, to ensure wider ranging representation across several underrepresented groups – one such forum is the Salmon, Inland, Fisheries Forum (SIFF).</p>
2	<p>Improve how we consult and engage with people with disabilities. This includes our</p>	<p>DAERA has conducted a number of consultations throughout the reporting period and these have been informed by input from various</p>	<p>Policies and service provision better informed by service users that, 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</p>

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	<p>own staff and those who use our services.</p>	<p>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 however due to COVID this did not take place but it is hoped this will resume June 2022.</p> <p>Forest Service encouraged various stakeholders to become involved in developing forest plans for Armagh forests and woodlands. Stakeholders were encouraged to participate via email, posters, press releases and social media.</p>	<p>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> <p>50 stakeholder responses were received to the Armagh Forestry Planning Area consultation. Responses were received from community groups, environmental organisations, councils, private individuals, forestry industry and government.</p>
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3	Promote work placement opportunities	Work placements provided to people through the NICS Work placement Scheme for those with a disability where	This practice was postponed due to the restrictions because of the COVID pandemic.
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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	Promote employment opportunities	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 the Department for Communities Workable Programme.	Improved career pathways for students with a disability.

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	Display positive messages and images about people with disabilities	When appropriate the Department has included equality-focused wording in key press releases, and has portrayed images and	This is a continuing action and further work on positive messaging will be carried forward to 2021/2022 as we take	Due to resource issues, this action was only partially achieved within the reporting period.

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		wording about people with a disability in a positive manner.	forward our revised Disability Action Plan 2019-2024.	
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4. Please outline what action measures **have not been achieved** and the reasons why.

	Action Measures not met	Reasons
1	Improve representation by people with disabilities on NDPBs.	<p>There was limited opportunity to increase representation on DAERA’s bodies by people with a disability this, as only two competitions progressed and concluded in this period. .</p> <p>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 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. The work relating to people with a disability is on hold with both the Equality Commission and CPANI. This is mainly due to COVID restrictions being in place. It is hoped that this work will resume in the early autumn 2021 once restrictions allow.</p> <p>This will include supporting and promotion of work being undertaken by the Commissioner for Public Appointments for Northern Ireland (CPANI) including:</p>

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		<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • CPANI workshops for people who have a disability with the Equality Commission for NI (ECNI); • CPANI mentoring programme for disabled individuals who have an interest in serving on public bodies; • 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. <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>
2	<p>Promote the staff Disability Forum and encourage new members to join and to play an active role.</p>	<p>Due to the formation of the NICS Staff Disability Forum (NICSSDF) and following consultation with NICS Disability Champion, Ronnie Armour, it has been decided that a DAERA staff Disability Forum would be a duplication of any work undertaken and may even detract from the NICS SDF.</p>

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

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(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 are held 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.
- **Marine & Fisheries Division – Inland Fisheries (IF):** Issue concessionary licences to a 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:

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	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?

A revised DAERA DAP was published in November 2020. As the previous DAP was being used for the majority of this reporting period the action measures above are from that DAP. From November 2020, DAERA worked toward achieving the outcomes in relation to the new DAP and these will be reported upon in the next APR. The Department, in conjunction with ECNI, will continue to explore any outreach/awareness programme for the Department to potentially deliver a range of training on equality, disability and diversity.

ⁱ **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.

ⁱⁱ **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.

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

^{iv} **Regional**: Situations where people can influence policy decision making at a middle impact level

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

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