

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

**Audit of Inequalities 2011-2016**

**5-Year Review**

**Summary Report**

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# **Section 1: 5-YEAR REVIEW OF DAERA AUDIT OF INEQUALITIES 2011-2016 AND ACTION PLAN**

**(Review completion date: September 2021)**

## **INTRODUCTION**

* 1. In accordance with the Equality Commission for Northern Ireland (ECNI) guidance, a five-year review of our Audit of inequalities and Action Plan is now due. This review will actually cover the period 2011-2021, making it a 10-year review. It incorporates the transition of the NICS from twelve departments down to nine since 8 May 2016. During this period the department’s name changed from Department of Agriculture and Rural Development (DARD) to Department of Agriculture, Environment and Rural Affairs (DAERA).
  2. The Department of Agriculture, Environment & Rural Affairs encompasses:
* the functions of the former Department of Agriculture and Rural Development (DARD), excluding Rivers Agency;
* environmental functions from the former Department of Environment (DOE);
* inland fisheries from the former Department of Culture, Arts and Leisure (DCAL); and
* policy responsibility for Sustainable Strategy.
  1. The environmental functions that transferred from DOE included regulation, but excluded the Northern Ireland Environment Agency’s built heritage function.
  2. In addition, the Departmental Human Resource (DHR) functions transferred to the central NICS HR team which is part of the Department of Finance (DoF).
  3. Throughout this review the acronym DAERA will be used to cover the full reporting period rather than using a combination of the old acronym of DARD and the new DAERA title.

## **BACKGROUND**

* 1. It had been planned that a new Audit of Inequalities and Action Plan would be prepared to cover the 2017 to 2022 period but due to the issues listed at paragraph 2.2 below this did not happen. However, given that virtually all of the measures and actions from the 2011-2016 Audit of Inequalities and Action Plan were still relevant in going forward, the Department continued to adhere to and comply with its statutory functions in relation to these equality duties.
  2. Several events impacted on the work and development of the Audit of Inequalities and Action Plan and these were the Voluntary Exit Scheme (VES), internal and external staff transfers, the restructuring of the Equality Branch to become part of Central Management Branch (CMB) and the collapse of the NI Executive in January 2017. Indeed this dramatic period of change and fluctuation continued up to January 2018 when the equality unit, within CMB, became part of a newly formed branch which became known as the Equality, Diversity and Public Appointments Branch. The formation of this new Branch also saw the relocation of these functions and the team from Dundonald House to Jubilee House. Since October 2020 the equality unit now sits within the Staff Engagement, Equality and Diversity (SEED) Branch.

## **MAIN ACHIEVEMENTS FROM 2011 TO DATE**

* 1. The Action Plan contained a range of measures as set out below. There were 18 issues with related actions and outcomes, with number 13 being split in two (issue 13a and 13b).
  2. At a high level the issues, actions and outcomes for the 2011-2016 Audit of Inequalities and related Action Plan can be broadly categorised in the following three ways, Achieved, Partially Achieved, or Not Achieved.

**Issues to Address (2011-2016) Review**

1. Integration of Section 75 duties into all planning and decision-making processes. Achieved (and ongoing).
2. Action to tackle persistent inequalities. Partially Achieved (and ongoing).
3. Improve engagement with customers across Section 75 groups. Achieved (and ongoing).

**4.** Improve representation by women on DAERA NDPBs and associated bodies. Not Achieved (but ongoing).

**5.** Improve representation by women on internal decision-making teams / groups. Not Achieved (but ongoing).

**6.** Improve representation (disability, race, age) on NDPB’s and associated bodies. Actions Mainly Achieved (and ongoing).

**7.** Improve equality monitoring, and data co-ordination. Partially Achieved (and ongoing).

**8.** Low take up of Rural Development Programme (RDP) funding. Partially Achieved (and ongoing).

**9.** Development opportunities for young people. Achieved (and ongoing).

**10.** Opportunities for older people. Achieved (and ongoing).

**11.** Anti-poverty measures. Achieved (and ongoing).

**12.** Access to rural transport services. Achieved (and ongoing).

**13a.** Provision of Accessible Communication Channels. Achieved (and ongoing).

**13b.** Provision of Accessible Information Services. Achieved (and ongoing).

**14.** Raise awareness of health and well-being information and rural support services. Achieved (and ongoing).

**15.** Increase take up of women on CAFRE’s people development programmes. Not Achieved (but ongoing).

**16.** Specific training for front line staff. Achieved (and ongoing).

**17.** Disability Equality. Achieved (and ongoing).

**18.** Recreation areas and facilities. Achieved (and ongoing).

* 1. For ease of summary, the eighteen issues can be further categorised in to five broad topics: Section 75/Equality issues; Staff, Customers, Services & Communications issues; Representation on Boards & Teams issues; Development Opportunities issues, and Persistent Inequalities issues.

**Section 75/ Equality issues**

* 1. Issues 1, 7 and 17 can be grouped within this broad category and the review showed that most of the actions and outcomes for these issues have been achieved. Issue 7 has been partially achieved and more work needs to be done in relation to monitoring and data co-ordination.
  2. However, it remains important to continue with issues 1 and 17 in order to help consolidate the good work that has been achieved to date and in taking forward the other Section 75 and equality related actions.

**Staff, Customers, Services & Communication issues**

* 1. Issues 3, 12, 13a, 13b, 14, 16 and 18 can be grouped within this broad category and the review showed that all of the actions and outcomes for these issues have been achieved within the previous reporting period.
  2. However, these issues are still important to the Department and it is necessary to maintain a high level of staff and customer interaction and to provide the communication channels and services that are expected from the Department.

**Representation on Boards & Teams issues**

* 1. Issues 4, 5, 6, 8 and 15 can be grouped within this broad category and the review showed that there is still much work to do in relation to these issues.
  2. It is clear to see that the intended outcomes have not been achieved in relation to these issues, i.e. improved representation on boards and teams with under-represented groups such as women, disabled people, people of various races and ages. A number of actions have been achieved but this has not resulted in the desired results.
  3. There has been some local success with the Agri-Food and Biosciences Institute (AFBI) Board having reached, and even surpassed, the intended outcome of a 50:50 split by gender on their Board, with the ratios, at the time of the review and up to 2021, being 70% female and 30 male membership.
  4. Related to the issues of under-represented groups are issues 8 and 15. That is, there is still a low uptake of RDP funding by females (issue 8) and a lack of increase of women on CAFRE’s people development programmes (issue 15).
  5. It is clear that these issues must be taken forward and further work should continue to advance with the aim of overcoming these inequalities.

**Development Opportunities issues**

* 1. Issues 9 and 10 can be grouped within this broad category and the review showed that all of the actions and outcomes for these issues have been achieved within the previous reporting period.
  2. The Department has provided and maintained the availability of opportunities for young and older people. This is another success for DAERA but in going forward it is still necessary to maintain the provision of such opportunities for these groups.

**Persistent Inequalities issues**

* 1. Issues 2 and 11 can be grouped within this broad category and the review showed that most of the actions and outcomes for these issues have been achieved. Issue 2, is an overarching issue, and has been partially achieved given that (although many of the overall issues, actions and outcomes have been achieved) some of them have not been achieved and others are only partially achieved. It is clear that more work needs to be done in relation to working towards the outcome of eliminating the inequalities relevant to DAERA as far as possible.

# **Section 2: Audit of Inequalities 2021-2025 and ACTION PLAN**

* 1. In summary and looking at the results of the review overall, then the Department has achieved many successes over the past 10 years but all that success has to be maintained and continued in going forward and built upon in relation to a number of key areas within the new Audit of Inequalities 2021-2025 and related Action Plan.
  2. A new five-year Audit and Action Plan (2021-2025) has been developed. DAERA has liaised with staff and customers during its development to help shape the Audit and Action Plan’s development. It has been drafted taking into account the DAERA Equality Scheme, the 5-Year Review (10-Years in total, 2011-2021) and with reference to ECNI guidance. The final draft Audit and Action Plan has been consulted upon and any responses received were analysed and incorporated where necessary.

# **Section 3: CONCLUSION**

* 1. DAERA will continue to build on our achievements to date. We will train and work with staff to ensure that they work effectively to meet the needs of people within the Section 75 categories. We will endeavour to further embed this pro-active outreach engagement work into the culture of the Department and encourage business areas when developing policies to take these inequalities, actions and outcomes in to account in going forward.
  2. We will encourage partnership-working arrangements with others to further facilitate projects, where possible, and continue to work to improve the accessibility, communication and services to our staff and customers.