



Action Plan for DAERA Audit of Inequalities 2021-2025

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Department of
**Agriculture, Environment
and Rural Affairs**

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Introduction

The Equality Commission for Northern Ireland (ECNI) recommend in their guide ([Section 75 of the Northern Ireland Act 1998: A Guide for Public Authorities](#)) the following:

We recommend that public authorities take a systematic approach to examining their functions and how these relate to the promotion of equality of opportunity and good relations. As part of this approach, we recommend that public authorities develop action measures/action plans to promote equality of opportunity and good relations which are based on the context of their functions and are implemented through the framework of equality schemes.

Action measures/action plans to promote equality of opportunity and good relations should be informed by an analysis of the inequalities that exist for those Section 75 categories affected by the functions of the public authority¹.

Steps to develop an action plan²

The Commission recommends that, in preparing action measures/action plans, public authorities should:

- undertake an audit of inequalities to identify the range of key inequalities which the discharge of the public authority's functions is intended to or is likely to address;
- develop action measures based on functions and key inequalities identified;
- prioritise those actions which have most impact on inequalities;
- develop performance indicators for delivery of action measures;
- develop timescales for implementation of action measures;
- develop an action plan;
- consult on action plan.

¹ [Section 75 of the Northern Ireland Act 1998: A Guide for Public Authorities](#) Chapter 8 Action Measures, page 46.

² [Section 75 of the Northern Ireland Act 1998: A Guide for Public Authorities](#) Chapter 8 Action Measures, pages 47-48.

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The ECNI also recommend that, Public authorities should review and update action plans over the lifetime of their equality scheme to ensure that they remain effective and relevant to their functions and work³. And that, Effective ongoing monitoring should be considered at all stages of the implementation of action plans to allow for measurement and reporting of progress on their delivery⁴.

In conjunction with the above publication we have also referred to further guidance ([Realising Outcomes from the Section 75 Equality Duties: Advice to Public Authorities](#)) to help us draft our Audit of Inequalities Action Plan.

In summary, various inequalities have been set out in the DAERA Audit of Inequalities 2021-2025 and from that document we have developed the following Action Plan. The issues, actions and outcomes that we have focused on are based on the inequalities that are related to the Departments functions.

³ [Section 75 of the Northern Ireland Act 1998: A Guide for Public Authorities](#) Chapter 8 Action Measures, page 50.

⁴ [Section 75 of the Northern Ireland Act 1998: A Guide for Public Authorities](#) Chapter 8 Action Measures, page 50.

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Issue to Address	Action Needed	Intended Outcomes	By when
1. Integration of Section 75 duties into all planning and decision-making processes.	1.1 Minister, Departmental Board (DB) and senior managers committed to incorporating equality and good relations targets across all aspects of Departmental business, both externally and internally. 1.2 Formation of a localised forum for each DAERA Group/Agency with staff trained in Section 75 and equality screening.	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Equality and good relations outcomes included in all future corporate and strategic plans, staffing and financial planning processes. Completion of timely and thorough Equality Screening exercises and EQIA assessments. Each Group/Agency will have trained individuals to advise and share their knowledge with their Group/Agency colleagues in relation to the completion of equality screenings and EQIA's. 	2021 2021 2022
2. Action to tackle persistent inequalities.	2.1 DB commitment to tackling persistent inequalities and to monitoring progress towards achieving equality outcomes. 2.2 DB provided with progress reports. 2.3 This Action Plan will be monitored during each reporting year. 2.4 New data added to the background statistical/research paper when available.	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Successful achievement of all actions in this Action Plan by the appropriate target dates. Inequalities and under-representation levels eliminated. 	2025 2025
3. Improve engagement with customers across Section 75 groups.	3.1 Business areas to actively engage with customers, staff and consultees across S75 categories early in the policy development process. 3.2 Specific actions needed to encourage participation by people with disabilities, children and young people, older people and those from a minority ethnic background.	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Policymakers have a better understanding of the issues impacting on different groups of people. Customers actively contributing to decision-making processes that they have a specific interest in. Improved engagement between policymakers and key groups. 	2022 2022 2022

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Issue to Address	Action Needed	Intended Outcomes	By when
4. Improve representation by women on DAERA NDPBs and associated bodies.	4.1 In partnership with others, review all aspects of our public appointments processes and groups that DAERA hosts, to remove any potential barriers to participation by women. 4.2 Undertake prompt and innovative outreach measures to raise interest levels amongst potential female candidates.	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • An increase of 25% in expressions of interest by women in DAERA public appointments by 2024. • An increase of 25% in the number of successful applications received from women by 2025 across all NDPB's and associated bodies. • To increase the gender balance to take representation to 50%. 	2024 2025 2025
5. Improve representation by women on internal decision-making teams/groups.	5.1 Revise the gender make-up of internal Boards, review teams, policy, subject-specific groups, forums, etc. and the criteria for membership.	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Fair representation (50:50) by women and men on all key DAERA internal decision-making Boards, teams/groups, etc. 	2025
6. Improve representation (disability, race, age) on NDPB's and associated bodies.	6.1 In partnership with others, review public appointments processes and identify ways to address potential barriers to participation. 6.2 Review existing NDPB equality monitoring to standardise with Section 75 requirements. 6.3 Innovative outreach measures to raise interest levels amongst potential under-represented groups.	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • By 2022 DAERA public appointment process to be reviewed, and to become more accessible and welcoming to under-represented groups. • By 2022 to have introduced a co-ordinated approach to equality monitoring and reporting process across NDPB's. • In partnership with others to introduce co-ordinated annual programmes of interest raising measures. • To increase by 25% the number of applications received from those groups currently under-represented across all NDPB's and bodies by 2023. 	2022 2022 2022 2023

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7. Improve equality monitoring, and data co-ordination.	7.1 Establish a methodology for the collection and co-ordination of Section 75 equality monitoring data across all business functions.	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> A localised equality database for each Group/ Agency and a standardised approach to Section 75 monitoring across all business functions. 	2022
	7.2 Develop new methods to record and analyse data on the equality categories.	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Agreed programme of equality monitoring undertaken by business areas. 	2022
	7.3 Develop staff to be able to use the information to inform policy or decision-making processes.	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Equality monitoring outcomes reviewed and published on an annual basis. 	2022
	7.4 Outcomes from equality monitoring to inform future screening and decision-making processes.		
8. Low take up for RDP funding.	8.1 Pro-active activities to target rural women and women's groups to encourage Rural Development Programme (RDP) funding applications.	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Increase in profile of RDP with under-represented groups, i.e. women, young people, people with disabilities and those from ethnic minority backgrounds. 	2023
	8.2 Pro-active activities to target young people and other under-represented groups to encourage RDP funding applications.	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Increase in number of applications received from under-represented groups, i.e. women, young people, people with disabilities and those from ethnic minority backgrounds. 	2023
	8.3 Encourage suitable project applications that are likely to improve community relations, addressing sectarianism and conflict issues.	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Increase in successful projects specifically benefitting under-represented groups, i.e. women, young people, people with disabilities and those from ethnic minority backgrounds. 	2023
	8.4 Develop a new funding programme to replace the RDP.	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Increase in funding applications that will improve community relations, address sectarianism and conflict issues. A replacement funding programme for RDP. 	2023

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9. Development opportunities for young people.	9.1 Provide a range of opportunities to develop young people at the DAERA College (CAFRE).	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • CAFRE students have opportunities to benefit from work placements. • Successfully achieve the DAERA targets set out in the TEO (DE) Children and Young people's Action Plan. 	2021 2025
10. Opportunities for older people.	10.1 Work with others to ensure older people are not excluded or marginalised and can access the range of rural support services they require.	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Rural older people do not experience reduced services disproportionately. 	2022
11. Anti-poverty measures.	<p>11.1 Take forward a range of measures to target those most disadvantaged and excluded in rural areas. To work in partnership with others to assist with the provision of rural services.</p> <p>11.2 Where possible, provide rural communities, who have a larger proportion of lower income, older and more vulnerable users, who still prefer or need to use cash, with the option to do so.</p> <p>11.3 Target RDP funding to be spent on projects that specifically benefit children and young people in rural areas.</p>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Ongoing development and delivery of Programmes and Projects to address rural poverty and social isolation issues. • At least 5% of the RDP will be spent on projects benefitting young people. 	2024 2025

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Issue to Address	Action Needed	Intended Outcomes	By when
12. Access to rural transport services.	12.1 In partnership with Dfl to ensure the availability and delivery of accessible rural transport services to benefit rural people, including those who are elderly or have a disability.	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Through a joint funding arrangement facilitate the provision of at least 100,000 passenger trips on an annual basis. 	2024
13a. Provision of Accessible Communication Channels. 13b. Provision of Accessible Information Services.	13.1 In partnership with others, improve the accessibility of our communication channels to suit the specific needs of different customer groups. 13.2 Our information, both written and web-based will be developed pro-actively in accessible formats to suit the needs of all equality groups. 13.3 Address website accessibility issues. 13.4 Provide language translations of key documents. 13.5 DAERA will be mindful of the images it uses in publications and social media and use images of Section 75 groups rather than the stereotypical male farmer. 13.6 Communications will be of a reading level that is appropriate for the target audience.	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Customers can communicate with us using a range of accessible communication methods. • Customers are made aware of the availability of accessible services and how to access them. • More accessible information services for customers. Easyread and summary to accompany all documents over 30 pages. • Website accessibility and technology enhanced to suit needs of different groups of customers. • Will proactively provide translations of documents likely to be of significant interest to ethnic minorities. • On request will provide translations of documents into other languages. 	2022 2022 2021 2022 Ongoing Ongoing

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14. Raise awareness of health and well-being information and rural support services.	<p>14.1 Through the provision of rural services, including our main offices, CAFRE (DAERA College), websites, etc. aim to provide useful information / sign posting about rural support services available, such as:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • domestic and sexual violence • men's health issues • students/ education and counselling/support services • Carers • Sexual orientation issues. <p>14.2 Ensure staff are made aware of relevant policies and the support services available.</p>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Will raise awareness with rural communities, staff and students through a range of methods over the next year, including: <ul style="list-style-type: none"> - Regular updates circulated to staff. - Information made available on intranet sites. - Induction information for students. - Awareness raising events organised as appropriate. - CAFRE student support services. - Speakers from key organisations. - Training sessions as needed. 	2022
15. Increase take up of women on CAFRE's people development programmes.	<p>15.1 Pro-active engagement with rural women and representative groups to find ways to remove barriers to women's participation on CAFRE people and diversification programmes.</p>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • To increase the number of women taking part in CAFRE people development programmes from 25% at present date to 33%. 	2023

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16. Specific training for frontline staff.	16.1 Ensure that staff receive the training needed to effectively carry out equality screening, consultations and EQIAs effectively.	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • DAERA will work with NICSHR Learning and Development (L&D) to develop and pilot a suite of Section 75 training modules for DAERA staff. 	2021
	16.2 Gender Budgeting awareness/training to be sourced for DAERA staff, with particular focus for budget holders.	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Frontline staff better able to assist our customers who may need additional assistance at times. 	2022
	16.3 Provision of disability awareness training as needed for frontline staff.	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • College staff skilled to provide immediate and appropriate support for students, visitors and staff with disabilities. 	2022
17. Disability Equality.	17.1 DAERA equality and diversity staff will represent the Departments interests at the NICS Disability Staff Network.	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • DAERA to successfully take forward and complete any objectives from the NICS Disability Staff Network that are relevant to the Department. 	2023
	17.2 Monitor progress by business areas towards completion of the DAERA Disability Action Plan.	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Successfully complete all actions set out in the DAERA Disability Action Plan. 	2025
18. Recreation areas and facilities.	18.1 Pro-actively seek partnership working with others to develop accessible, age appropriate, safe recreation for different age bands and play areas for children and young people.	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Continual development of recreational facilities in forests and country parks to support accessibility and attractiveness to different age bands and groups. 	2025

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