

Audit of Inequalities and Action Plan 2021-2025

Sustainability at the heart of a living, working, active landscape valued by everyone.



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

www.daera-ni.gov.uk



**INVESTORS
IN PEOPLE**

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Go to www.daera-ni.gov.uk/daeras-equality-scheme#toc-5 for information on alternative formats and www.daera-ni.gov.uk/consultations for the full set of consultations papers.

The central point of contact for the implementation and review of the Audit of Inequalities and Action Plan, or to get a copy of this document in another format is:



- **Telephone: 028 7744 2033** and ask for the **DAERA Equality Unit** If you have a hearing difficulty you can contact the Department via **Text Relay**. **Dial 18001 028 7744 2033.**



- **Email:** equality@daera-ni.gov.uk



- **Write to:** DAERA Equality Unit
Jubilee House, 111 Ballykelly Road
Limavady BT49 9HP



- **Visit:** www.daera-ni.gov.uk

About us

We are the Department of Agriculture, Environment and Rural Affairs.

What do we do?

Here are some of the things we do.



- We look after the development of farming, forests and fishing in Northern Ireland.
- We provide a service to look after the health and welfare of animals, fish and plants.
- We look after environment and rural development in Northern Ireland.
- We provide research, expert advice and education.
- We look after some parts of public health in how food is made.

1. Introduction

The Department of Agriculture, Environment and Rural Affairs (DAERA) has developed a new Audit of Inequalities and Action Plan for the next 5 years (2021 to 2025).

The new Audit of Inequalities and Action Plan tells you what we hope to do over the next 5 years. We will look at the Action Plans every year and make changes as needed.

The Department of Agriculture, Environment and Rural Affairs will work towards the measures and outcomes in this plan.

The central point of contact for the implementation and review of the Audit of Inequalities and Action Plan will be:

DAERA Equality Unit
Jubilee House
111 Ballykelly Road
LIMAVADY
BT49 9HP



2. What we did

To help us make plans we looked at what the Department of Agriculture, Environment and Rural Affairs does:

- We ensure the quality of our food is of a high standard
- We support farmers and farms
- We help make sure our environment is safe & healthy
- We take care of our forests and country parks
- We help to keep our rural areas sustainable.

Then we thought about what we can do as part of our daily work that may benefit people across the nine Section 75 equality categories and ensure those people will have an equal chance to use our services.



3. Audit of Inequalities and Action Plan

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

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

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



The Equality Commission for Northern Ireland recommends that public authorities, such as DAERA, should undertake an audit of inequalities by examining their functions and how these relate to the promotion of equality and good relations.

Specific actions to address the inequalities identified should then be set out in an action plan, and these actions linked to the authority's corporate planning cycle.

The Department of Agriculture, Environment and Rural Affairs will assess the impact of all new plans and policies to promote opportunities for people in the nine Section 75 categories by making changes and adjustments.

The Department of Agriculture, Environment and Rural Affairs will talk to representatives of the Section 75 equality groups and their views have been included in the new Audit of Inequalities and related Action Plan.

The Department of Agriculture, Environment and Rural Affairs has a VISION to create:

“Sustainability at the heart of a living, working, active landscape valued by everyone.”



4. Inequality Issues and Actions

There are 18 inequality issues that we want to change and there are 40 actions that we will do to help us remove these inequalities.

What do we want to change?

1. Integration of Section 75 duties into all planning and decision-making processes.

How will we do this?

- 1.1 Minister, Departmental Board 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.

What do we want to change?

2. Action to tackle persistent inequalities.

How will we do this?

- 2.1 Departmental Board commitment to tackling persistent inequalities and to monitoring progress towards achieving equality outcomes.
- 2.2 Departmental Board 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.

What do we want to change?

3. Improve engagement with customers across Section 75 groups.

How will we do this?

3.1 Business areas to actively engage with customers, staff and consultees across Section 75 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.

What do we want to change?

4. Improve representation by women on DAERA Non Department Public Boards (NDPBs) and associated bodies.

How will we do this?

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.

What do we want to change?

5. Improve representation by women on internal decision-making teams/groups.

How will we do this?

- 5.1 Revise the gender make-up of internal Boards, review teams, policy, subject-specific groups, forums, etc. and the criteria for membership.

What do we want to change?

6. Improve representation (disability, race, age) on NDPB's and associated bodies.

How will we do this?

- 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.

What do we want to change?

7. Improve equality monitoring, and data co-ordination.

How will we do this?

7.1 Establish a methodology for the collection and co-ordination of Section 75 equality monitoring data across all business functions.

7.2 Develop new methods to record and analyse data on the equality categories.

7.3 Develop staff to be able to use the information to inform policy or decision-making processes.

7.4 Outcomes from equality monitoring to inform future screening and decision-making processes.

What do we want to change?

8. Low take up for Rural Development Programme (RDP) funding.

How will we do this?

8.1 Pro-active activities to target rural women and women's groups to encourage RDP funding applications.

8.2 Pro-active activities to target young people and other under-represented groups to encourage RDP funding applications.

8.3 Encourage suitable project applications that are likely to improve community relations, addressing sectarianism and conflict issues.

8.4 Develop a new funding programme to replace the RDP.

What do we want to change?

9. Development opportunities for young people.

How will we do this?

9.1 Provide a range of opportunities to develop young people at the DAERA College (CAFRE – College of Agriculture, Food and Rural Enterprise).

What do we want to change?

10. Opportunities for older people.

How will we do this?

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.

What do we want to change?

11. Anti-poverty measures.

How will we do this?

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.

11.2 Target RDP funding to be spent on projects that specifically benefit children and young people in rural areas.

What do we want to change?

12. Access to rural transport services.

How will we do this?

12.1 In partnership with the Department for Infrastructure (DfI) to ensure the availability and delivery of accessible rural transport services to benefit rural people, including those who are elderly or have a disability.

What do we want to change?

13a. Provision of Accessible Communication Channels.

13b. Provision of Accessible Information Services.

How will we do this?

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.



What do we want to change?

14. Raise awareness of health and well-being information and rural support services.

How will we do this?

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:

- domestic and sexual violence
- men's health issues
- students/education and counselling/support services
- Carers
- Sexual orientation issues.

14.2 Ensure staff are made aware of relevant policies and the support services available.



What do we want to change?

15. Increase take up of women on CAFRE's people development programmes.

How will we do this?

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.

What do we want to change?

16. Specific training for frontline staff.

How will we do this?

- 16.1 Ensure that staff receive the training needed to effectively carry out equality screening, consultations and EQIAs effectively.
- 16.2 Gender Budgeting awareness/ training to be sourced for DAERA staff, with particular focus for budget holders.
- 16.3 Provision of disability awareness training as needed for frontline staff.



What do we want to change?

17. Disability Equality.

How will we do this?

17.1 DAERA equality and diversity staff will represent the Departments interests at the NICS Disability Staff Network.

17.2 Monitor progress by business areas towards completion of the DAERA Disability Action Plan.

What do we want to change?

18. Recreation areas and facilities.

How will we do this?

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.



5. Public Boards

We have responsibility for 5 Non Departmental Public Bodies (NDPB). These are:

Executive NDPBs:

- Agri-Food and Biosciences Institute (AFBI).
- Agricultural Wages Board for NI (AWB).
- Livestock and Meat Commission for NI (LMC).
- Northern Ireland Fishery Harbour Authority (NIFHA).
- Council for Nature Conservation and the Countryside (CNCC).

North South Implementation Body

DAERA is jointly responsible for one North South Body:

- the Foyle, Carlingford and Irish Lights Commission (FCILC).

Ad-Hoc Advisory

- TB Eradication Partnership (TBEP).
- College of Agriculture, Food and Rural Enterprise (CAFRE)
College Advisory Group.
- Review of Decisions - External Panel.

6. How you can respond to this Action Plan

- To find out more about this discussion document; or
- To tell us what you think about it.



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