



Public
Prosecution
Service

Public Authority Statutory Equality and Good Relations Duties Annual Progress Report 2023-24

Contact:

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<ul style="list-style-type: none">Section 49A of the Disability Discrimination Act 1995 and Disability Action Plan	As above <input checked="" type="checkbox"/> Name: Telephone: Email:

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

<http://www.ppsni.gov.uk/Equality-5023.html>

Signature:

Peter luney	Senior Assistant Director, Resources and Change

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

It 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 2023 and March 2024

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 2023-24, 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.

Governance Framework

Corporate Planning

The PPS Corporate Plan is based around four strategic priorities which act as a framework to drive our planning outcomes and our approach to managing performance and risk.

Within the 2023-24 Business Plan a commitment was made to continue to meet our objectives under the Disability Discrimination Act (DDA) and under Section 75 of the Northern Ireland Act 1998. It also outlined the steps we will take to make it happen - i.e. to meet our DDA / Equality Scheme Action Plan objectives for 2022-23 and 2023-24. Objectives in relation to DDA and Section 75 were also integrated into the Policy and Information Unit's Business Plan, which had overall responsibility for the co-ordination of equality matters.

Regular updates on progress against these objectives were provided to the Management Board (MB), Senior Management Group (SMG), People and Resources Committee (PRC) and Equality and Diversity Steering Group (EDSG).

Equality and Disability Action Plans for 2023-24 and 2023-24

Equality and disability objectives and targets for 2023-24 were approved, published and forwarded to the Equality Commission in October 2023.

The PPS Equality and Disability Action Plans are normally aligned with the Service's business planning cycle; that is, they usually cover a three-year period, mirroring the Service's Corporate Plan. For the 2023/24 financial year, the focus of corporate planning is restricted to single years, with separate business plans produced annually in April. This is driven by the current budgetary position where a multi-year funding settlement has not been agreed. In light of this decision the Service produced two-year Equality and Disability Action Plans to the end of March 2024.

In preparing updated plans for 2022-23 and 2023-24 the Service carried out a review of all actions for the year ahead to ensure that the plans continued to address key issues within the PPS.

A number of measures within the PPS Equality Action Plan address key inequalities. For example one of the measures was to provide opportunities to increase staff awareness / knowledge of equality, diversity, inclusion and equal opportunities. Further details are provided below.

The PPS's Equality and Disability Action Plans are available to view on the PPS Website and (internally) on the Service's Intranet.

<http://www.ppsni.gov.uk/Equality-5023.html>

Equality Screening

The Service continued to screen policies for equality and good relations impacts. During 2023-24 equality screening exercises resulted in five policies being screened out.

Equality and Diversity Steering Group (EDSG)

The Service's Equality Officer is a member of the PPS Equality and Diversity Steering Group (EDSG), chaired by the PPS Equality and Diversity Champion. The EDSG is a group consisting of staff representing a range of business areas within the PPS. The role of the EDSG is to provide assurances to the Director and Management Board that the PPS complies with all its statutory obligations in relation to equality and diversity and DDA. The EDSG met two times during the year.

EDSG members have a role in promoting and raising awareness of Equality and Diversity matters at Region/Section level within the PPS and to act as points of communication for the EDSG and the Equality Officer.

Improving Awareness

2023-24 Training Programme

Equality and Diversity remained a key training priority for the Service during 2023-24. PPS staff are NI Civil Servants, recruited through the Northern Ireland Civil Service (NICS) process. The Centre for Applied Learning (CAL) is contracted to provide a range of generic training courses to the whole of the NICS. PPS staff also attend other specialised training events, conferences and workshops that are arranged to provide staff with the required skills and knowledge for their current job.

The following training was provided during the year:

Course Name	No. of Staff Completing Training
ASIST training, delivered by victim Support NI	11
Disability Positive training, delivered by NICS People and Organisational Development Team	11
Domestic Abuse training, delivered by Women's Aid Federation NI	15
Training on Evidence Led Prosecutions/Res Gestae Domestic Abuse (delivered in-house)	136
Refresher training on prosecuting cases involving hate crime (delivered in-house)	24
Attendance at NI Commission for Human Rights Annual Rights Lecture	1
Attendance at Men's Advisory Project Annual Conference	1
Menopause for Line Managers training, delivered through Business in the Community	11
Attendance at conference / training concerning Non-Fatal Strangulation	103
Trauma resilience training, delivered by Inspire Wellbeing and Police Rehabilitation and Retraining Trust	22

Opportunities were also taken throughout the year to raise awareness of the Service's Section 75 commitments, including updates from the EDSG and the Annual Progress Report, for example via team briefings, e-mail and intranet.

Information Events

The Service also continued to highlight notable diversity and inclusion related news and promote attendance at information events through the PPS Intranet and staff emails. For example:

- Lesbian Visibility Week;
- National Stalking Awareness Week;
- NICS Introduction to Diversity and Inclusion training module;
- NICS Equality and Diversity Essentials training module;
- Mental Health Awareness Week;
- International Day Against Homophobia, Transphobia and Biphobia;
- Guidance for Ethnic Equality Monitoring in the Public Sector;
- Annual NICS Equality Report;
- New Inspire Support Hub;
- Updates from NICS Autism Working Group;

- NICS Student Network PureMental NI virtual events;
- Inspire Employee Assistance Programme sessions;
- Omagh Pride 2023;
- Women's Aid fundraising events;
- International Women in Engineering Day;
- NICS Women's Network events;
- Ending Violence Against Women and Girls Strategic Framework and related events;
- NICS LGBTQ+ Staff Network events;
- Causeway Pride 2023;
- PPS attendance at Belfast Pride;
- PPS attendance at Belfast Mela;
- Belfast Community Planning Partnership Belfast Agenda;
- NSPCC events supporting young victims and witnesses of crime;
- International Job Shadow Day, in collaboration with the Northern Ireland Union of Supported Employment;
- NICS Live events on Building Resilience in Children;
- NICS LGBTQ+ Network Role Models Guide;
- Good Relations Week 2023;
- National Inclusion Week events, and NICS Diversity Mark;
- NICS seminar – Empowering Neurodivergent Thinking;
- Employers for Disability NI – Disability Positive Assessment;
- World Menopause Day;
- JAM Card, and associated staff training;
- Northern Ireland Youth Assembly 2023-25;
- World Mental Health Day 2023;
- National Coming Out Day;
- NICS Black History Month seminars;
- Stonewall Training Calendar and associated events;
- NICS LGBTQ+ inclusion and Trans & Non-Binary Inclusion e-Learning modules;
- National Anti-Slavery Day;
- Domestic violence Awareness Month;
- United Nations International Day of Persons with Disabilities;
- NICS Disability Staff Network events;
- NICS Race and Ethnicity Network events and awareness sessions;
- Women's Night Safety Charter NI launch;
- Empowering Women to Lead Digital Transformation Programme NI;
- GREVIO Special Rapporteur NI visit;
- New ECNI Equality Training Course package;
- New PPS Policy for Prosecuting Cases of Domestic Abuse;
- International Women's Day;
- International day for the Elimination of Racial Discrimination;
- International Trans Day of Visibility;

The Service also continues to explore opportunities for engaging with equality and diversity partners, particularly in relation to the provision of appropriate training and awareness of disability legislation and guidance on effective communication.

Monitoring

Statistics and Research

The PPS has maintained its research capacity, focusing primarily on the development of internal (staff) and external (stakeholder) surveys such as the Northern Ireland Omnibus Survey.

Other data collected included information provided through membership of, and engagement with, a large number of interagency groups and through other meetings with external voluntary and community organisations; and the monitoring arrangements established to record the numbers and types of outreach events which PPS has delivered or supported. The PPS Equality and Diversity Champion is also a member of the NICS Diversity Champions Network (DCN). The focus of the DCN is on the NI Civil Service workforce and its aims are to emphasise the importance of raising the issue of diversity, to champion the benefits of a culture where diversity is celebrated and the value of a diverse workforce to enable the NICS to best serve the entire NI community. The DCN procures data in support of its work in relation to gender, disability, LGB&T and BME sectors.

In September 2023, the PPS published detailed statistics in relation to the prosecution of cases involving hate crime during the 2022-23 financial year. The coverage of these statistics included details of enhanced sentences imposed in cases aggravated by hostility on the basis of sexual orientation, race, disability and religion.

Complaints

The PPS is committed to ensuring that the complaint handling arrangements are effective. Therefore, on completion of each complaint case, a short follow-up questionnaire is sent to complainants on behalf of the Independent Assessor of Complaints, asking them to provide feedback on the way their complaint was handled.

Monitoring is undertaken in a confidential way. All information provided is held securely and questionnaires can be submitted anonymously.

In addition, complainants are asked to provide some information about themselves (for example, age and gender). Monitoring of complaints is essential in this regard and can assist the PPS to deliver a better service.

The PPS received one Section 75 related complaint during 2023-24. Further details are at paragraph 27 below.

- 2 Please provide **examples** of outcomes and/or the impact of **equality action plans / measures** in 2023-24 (*or append the plan with progress/examples identified*).

Identified inequalities and issues to be addressed in 2023-24 included:

- A need to raise public awareness of role of the PPS and the standard of service expected among S75 groups and the wider public;
- The need to increase satisfaction and confidence among S75 groups and members of the wider public;
- The need to improve services, communication and support provided to victims and witnesses across all Section 75 groups in Northern Ireland;
- The need to increase confidence in the PPS's handling of case involving serious sexual offences;
- A need to increase assurance that best practice is followed in respect of procurement; and
- A need to increase staff awareness in respect of equality and diversity issues and the importance of promoting equality of opportunity.

All Section 75 groups were affected. Examples of the measures taken forward to address these inequalities are set out below:

Registered Intermediaries Scheme

The PPS has continued to support the Registered Intermediaries (RI) Scheme. RIs are provided to assist witnesses and defendants who have communication difficulties and may otherwise be unable to give their best evidence.

Representatives from the Service attend the RI Core Users Group meeting on a regular basis.

Community Outreach

Over the course of 2023-24 a series of inter-agency and outreach events and activities were conducted across the PPS. These included:

- Meetings with victims and witnesses and representative groups;
- Regular meetings of the PPS Stakeholder Engagement Forum, involving s75 representative support and advocacy organisations;

- Participation in multi-agency events and working groups;
- Presentations to voluntary and other organisations on the role of the PPS;
- Meetings with local elected representatives including MPs and MLAs;
- Media interviews;
- Participation in Business in the Community initiatives;
- Representation at the Belfast Pride and Mela Festivals; and
- Participation in seminars and conferences locally, nationally and internationally which have included presentations by members of PPS staff.

Publication of Annual Hate Crime / 'Aggravated by Hostility' Statistics

In September 2023 the PPS published detailed statistics in relation to the prosecution of cases involving hate crime during the 2022-23 financial year. The coverage of these statistics included details of enhanced sentences imposed in cases aggravated by hostility on the basis of sexual orientation, race, religion or disability. This increased transparency should lead to improved public understanding of, and confidence in, the prosecution process.

Corporate Social Responsibility

Through its Corporate Social Responsibility Steering Group, the PPS continues to work in partnership with Business in the Community (BITC) to engage with various challenges and volunteer projects. During 2023-24, PPS staff have volunteered for a number of events including the BITC Shop Challenge in support of Cancer Focus NI. Staff also promoted and participated in a range of health and wellbeing sessions relating to nutrition, mindful leadership, financial support for working parents, menopause in the workplace, caring for carers and green therapy / taking positive steps to get outdoors. PPS staff continue to avail of BITC seminars relating to awareness of mental and physical health.

PART A

3 Has the **application of the Equality Scheme** commitments resulted in any **changes** to policy, practice, procedures and/or service delivery areas during the 2023-24 reporting period? *(tick one box only)*

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

Please provide any details and examples:

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:

Not applicable

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):*

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

Other *(please specify and give details):*

Not applicable.

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 2023-24 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:

The Head of Policy and Information and the Equality and Corporate Governance Officer's job descriptions specifically reflect the Public Prosecution Service's commitment to equality in ensuring its compliance with relevant legislation, in particular its obligations under Section 75 of the Northern Ireland Act 1998.

Section 75 statutory duties are also integrated into staff job descriptions within Policy and Information Unit.

The Heads of Corporate Services branches are also responsible for ensuring that Section 75 obligations are fully complied with in developing, reviewing and implementing policy decisions within their remit.

5 Were the Section 75 statutory duties integrated within performance plans during the 2023-24 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:

PART A

The Head of Policy and Information and the Equality and Corporate Governance Officer's performance plans outline objectives to ensure the delivery of Section 75 targets and actions.

Section 75 statutory duties are also integrated into staff performance plans within Policy and Information Unit.

The Heads of Corporate Services branches are also responsible for ensuring that Section 75 obligations are fully complied with in developing, reviewing and implementing policy decisions within their remit.

6. In the 2023-24 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:

Within the 2023-24 Business Plan a commitment was made to continue to meet our objectives under the Disability Discrimination Act (DDA) and under Section 75 of the Northern Ireland Act 1998. It also outlined the steps we will take to make it happen i.e. to meet DDA / Equality Scheme Action Plan objectives for 2023-24.

Objectives in relation to DDA and Section 75 were also integrated into the Policy and Information Unit's Business Plan.

Equality action plans/measures

7 Within the 2023-24 reporting period, please indicate the **number** of:

Actions completed:

Actions ongoing:

Actions to commence:

Please provide any details and examples (*in addition to question 2*):

In addition to Question 2 the following actions are ongoing:

Provide mandatory e-learning training for all staff in Section 75 matters

This action is ongoing. All staff undergo mandatory Section 75 e-learning every two years, and rollout to all staff in the Northern Ireland Civil Service came under the direct centralised control of NICS HR in 2017-18. The e-learning is scheduled to be rolled out again in early 2025.

8 Please give details of changes or amendments made to the equality action plan/measures during the 2023-248 reporting period (*points not identified in an appended plan*):

Not applicable.

9 In reviewing progress on the equality action plan/action measures during the 2023-24 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 2023-24 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:

Publication of the PPS Policy for Prosecuting Cases of Domestic Abuse, and policy for Prosecuting Sexual Offences.

Both these policies were updated from previous versions, to take account of legislative changes, developing practice and in response to external review of how the criminal justice system cases with offences of this nature. A series of formal consultations with stakeholders including support groups, charities, criminal justice partners and advocacy organisations been held prior to the development of new policy. Post-consultation and prior to publishing, close engagement continued with stakeholders in relation to consultation feedback. This continued to foster positive engagement and highlights openness to challenge, which in turn delivers policy fit for purpose and reinforces positive stakeholder relationships. The Policy for Prosecuting Sexual Offences was published in November 2023. The Policy for Prosecuting Cases of Domestic Abuse was published in February 2024.

- 12 In the 2023-24 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:

Productive close relationships are maintained at a senior management level with representative and advocacy groups (for example Nexus, Women's Aid, Commissioner for Older People NI, Victim Support NI, Rainbow Project), through both targeted consultation in particular policy areas and more general engagement and awareness raising through the PPS Stakeholder Engagement Forum in particular. It is acknowledged that this engagement is influenced by a heavy emphasis on the prosecution of criminal offences which may impact upon the groups which organisations such as these advocate for.

PART A

13 Were any awareness-raising activities for consultees undertaken, on the commitments in the Equality Scheme, during the 2023-24 reporting period? *(tick one box only)*

- Yes No Not applicable

Please provide any details and examples:

The Service continues to be represented at the Belfast Pride and Mela festivals which are ideal opportunities for the PPS to meet the public and to raise awareness of our work generally, plus our Equality Scheme. Other opportunities are embraced as they arise.

The PPS Stakeholder Engagement Forum continues to meet at least 2 times per year, in addition to more targeted consultation engagement to inform policy development and business processes.

14 Was the consultation list reviewed during the 2023-24 reporting period? *(tick one box only)*

- Yes No Not applicable – no commitment to review

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

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

3

16 Please provide the **number of assessments** that were consulted upon during 2023-24:

0	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:

Not applicable.

- 22** Please provide any details or examples of where the monitoring of policies, during the 2023-24 reporting period, has shown changes to differential/adverse impacts previously assessed:

None

- 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:

The PPS has maintained its research capacity, focusing primarily on the development of internal (staff) and external (stakeholder) surveys. The key surveys conducted during 2023-24 included the following:

- **Northern Ireland life and Times Survey**

On an annual basis the PPS commissions questions for inclusion in the criminal Justice System module of the Northern Ireland Life and Times Survey. A total of 4 questions were included in the 2024 survey to gauge public awareness of the PPS and its role.

The findings of the survey, produced across a number of key variables including age, gender and religion, have been considered by senior managers and will help to inform the development of PPS policy.

- **Complaints**

The PPS is committed to ensuring that the complaint handling arrangements are effective. Therefore on completion of each complaint case, a short follow-up questionnaire is sent to complainants asking them to provide feedback on the way their complaint was handled.

Monitoring is undertaken in a confidential way. All information provided is held securely and questionnaires can be submitted anonymously. In addition, complainants are asked to provide some information about themselves (for example, age and gender).

Monitoring of complaints is essential in this regard and can assist the PPS to deliver a better service.

- **Informal Feedback**

PPS policy staff have developed a wide network of informal contacts through their membership of, and engagement with, a large number of interagency groups and through other meetings with external voluntary and community organisations. These contacts

provide qualitative data to the team which is used to inform policy development on an ongoing basis and is shared with other criminal justice partners where appropriate.

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 2023-24, and the extent to which they met the training objectives in the Equality Scheme.

- 11 staff attended Applied Suicide Intervention Skills Training organised by Victim Support NI.
- 136 staff attended training on evidence-led prosecutions in domestic abuse cases.
- 24 staff attended refresher training on prosecuting cases involving hate crime.
- 22 staff attended trauma resilience training, delivered by Inspire Wellbeing and the Police Rehabilitation and Retraining Trust. This training will be extended into 2024-25.

These examples, and other training highlighted at page 4 above continue to support Equality Scheme training objectives.

To ensure all staff are aware of and understand our equality obligations the following arrangements are in place / information events were provided during 2023-24:

- The Equality Scheme is available to all staff on the Equality and Diversity page of the PPS intranet.
- A PPS Users Guide on Consultation is available on the PPS intranet.
- Section 75 Statutory Duties form part of new induction programme for new staff.
- Specific advice and guidance was provided to staff involved in, for example, conducting Section 75 equality screenings and consultations.
- The Equality Officer continued to circulate information and provide updates (for example on equality and diversity articles / events / issues / progress on the implementation of actions set out within the Equality Scheme / Action Plan and Disability Action Plan) to staff, the Service's Equality and Diversity Steering Group, People and Resources Committee, Senior Management Group and Management Board as appropriate. This was achieved via the PPS intranet and e-mail.
- The staff intranet site which has a dedicated equality section makes available our Annual Progress Report, Disability Action Plan, Equality Scheme/Action Plan, Section 75 Consultation List, minutes from the EDSG / Equality and Diversity Drivers meetings and current consultations.

- For staff in policy areas, who are involved in screening or equality impact assessments, the site provides other useful information on Section 75 implementation, together with links to other organisations' websites, (for example the Equality Commission, Participation Network). There is also a dedicated area on the staff website for diversity issues. Staff are encouraged to provide ideas for inclusion on the site.

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:

Trauma resilience training, delivered by Inspire Wellbeing and the Police Rehabilitation and Retraining Trust was initiated due to acknowledgement that particular groups of staff regularly encounter criminal evidential material that would be considered traumatic and challenging to mental wellbeing. There is recognition that although this is unavoidable due to the nature of the work, as a responsible employer all possible steps should be taken to mitigate adverse effects of exposure to such material. Feedback from the range and quality of training delivered (group sessions, small workshops and individual engagement) has been positive, and further opportunities to extend this support through 2024-25 and beyond are being explored.

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

26 Please list **any examples** of where monitoring during 2023-24, across all functions, has resulted in action and improvement in relation **to access to information and services**:
Not applicable.

Complaints (Model Equality Scheme Chapter 8)

27 How many complaints **in relation to the Equality Scheme** have been received during 2023-24?

Insert number here:

1

Please provide any details of each complaint raised and outcome:

One individual raised a complaint under Paragraph 10 of Schedule 9 of the Northern Ireland Act 1998 alleging failure(s) by the Public Prosecution Service to comply with its approved Equality Scheme. The matters raised were not addressed to the individual's satisfaction and they were subsequently escalated to the Equality Commission in November 2023. The complaint to the Equality Commission alleged failures to comply with the PPS's approved Equality Scheme, specifically:

- a) Chapter 1; the PPS duty under Section 75 (1)
- b) Chapter 5: in particular paragraphs 5.3 (training) and 5.6 (monitoring and evaluation)
- c) Chapter 6; “Arrangements for ensuring and assessing public access to information and services”.

In February 2024 the Equality Commission’s Statutory Duty Investigations Committee considered whether the complaint had been made in accordance with statutory criteria of Paragraph 10 of Schedule 9 of the Northern Ireland Act 1998.

The Committee decided that the complaint had not been made in accordance with the statutory criteria of Paragraph 10(1). The matters alleged in the complaint related to the PPS’ decision to prosecute the Complainant, resulting in his conviction. Matters relating to the prosecution of offences are specifically excluded from the PPS’ Equality Scheme arrangements and the Section 75 duties, as set out in Section 38 of Justice (Northern Ireland) Act 2002. The Committee, therefore, was unable to proceed to consider the request that the Commission investigate the complaint made. This decision was upheld by the Committee following a subsequent request for review by the complainant.

Section 3: Looking Forward

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

The next review of the PPS Equality Scheme is due in 2027-28.

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)*

Not applicable.

30 In relation to the advice and services that the Commission offers, what **equality and good relations priorities** are anticipated over the next 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):

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:

11

Fully achieved

0

Partially achieved

2

Not achieved

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

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	The PPS does not hold influence over policy at this level, e.g. in relation to public appointments.		
Regional ^{iv}	The PPS does not influence policy decision making at this level.		
Local ^v	PPS continues to support the NICS work experience scheme for people with disabilities.		NICS HR continue to make approaches about prospective placements, and individual circumstances are considered by local management.

PART B

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

	Training Action Measures	Outputs	Outcome / Impact
1	To promote Disability Awareness training for staff (e-learning) for all new staff as appropriate, and regular refresher training.	Disability Awareness / Diversity and Inclusion training for Front line Staff (mandatory e-learning, refreshed every 2 years).	Better informed and trained workforce, with a greater understanding and appreciation of the experiences of colleagues and clients with disabilities.

2(c) What Positive attitudes **action measures** in the area of **Communications** were achieved in this reporting period?

	Communications Action Measures	Outputs	Outcome / Impact
1	To encourage staff and stakeholders to submit articles, promoting positive attitudes towards disability, for inclusion on the PPS Intranet.	Articles produced throughout the period relating to autism awareness, Good relations Week, National Inclusion Week, participation in the \Disability Positive Assessment by Employers for Disability NI, promotion of JAM Card awareness and the United Nations international Day of Persons with Disabilities.	Increased awareness across all staff of support available for disability equality issues, promotion of responsibilities and lived experience.

PART B

2	Review access to information and services relevant to disabled people.	Monitoring of feedback and complaints received from service users.	Monitoring complaints provides an additional means of capturing issues raised by disabled people.
3.	Monitoring of feedback received from disabled people or representative groups via agreed consultation arrangements.	Relevant responses to PPS Updates on Equality Screening and policy development, and consultations by PPS are monitored and recorded.	Provides a mechanism to obtain feedback directly from representative groups in relation to specific policies and initiatives, and to formulate responses and make changes as necessary.

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

	Encourage others Action Measures	Outputs	Outcome / Impact
1	To set out our commitments to disability equality in Corporate Business Plans.	The PPS Business Plan for 2023-24, which sets out PPS commitments to disability equality, was published in August 2023.	The Corporate Business Plan and other key PPS policy and planning documents take account of, and reinforce our commitment to implementation of the disability duties and other requirements under DDA legislation.
2	Publish and promote the Disability Action Plan.	PPS Disability Action Plan published in July 2024 on both PPS intranet and internet sites, circulated to all staff, and all consultees notified of publication.	Highlights to both internal and external stakeholders the steps to be taken within the year in order to implement the disability duties.

PART B

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	Human Resources will issue a yearly request to staff to invite them to provide confidential disability declarations to aid the development of a Personal Emergency Evacuation Plan (PEEP).	Request for PEEP detail issued in February 2024, in line with HR update planning – all staff were included in circulation and where appropriate advised to complete the form.	Improved data held on the level and diversity of disability among staff. In turn, PEEPs tailored to personal circumstances developed and rehearsed.
2	To engage fully with the NICS Diversity Champions Network.	The Service participates in the meetings of the Diversity Champions Network, and also addresses all agreed PPS commitments in progressing recommendations of the Disability Working Group.	Maintain connections with NICS sector leads for disability matters, and contribute to NICS-wide actions in promoting disability awareness.
4	To consider relevant survey finding (e.g. staff surveys) and address issues as appropriate.	Issues arising from NICS People Survey findings are considered by the liP Action Plan Group.	This provides an additional avenue for those with a disability within the organisation to provide feedback on a range of core areas including health and wellbeing, learning and career development, organisational culture and management.
5	Manage PPS’s statutory equality responsibilities.	Throughout the period, quarterly meetings of the internal Equality and	The EDSG and its reporting responsibilities support the internal

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		Diversity Steering Group took place to review Disability Action Plan measures, and identify new measures as appropriate. Regular progress reports were also provided to the Management Board.	framework for management of how the disability duties are addressed, and ensure that senior management are informed of progress in doing so.
6	To monitor impact of alternative working arrangements for employees with a disability.	Maintain contact with DoF and NICS HR and consider appropriate responses to any proposals for alternative working arrangements in support of employees with a disability.	Alternative arrangements under hybrid working arrangements continue to be monitored.

3. Please outline what action measures have been **partly achieved** as follows:

	Action Measures partly achieved	Milestones / Outputs	Outcomes/Impacts	Reasons not fully achieved
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4. Please outline what action measures **have not been achieved** and the reasons why.

	Action Measures not met	Reasons
1	To increase the participation of disabled employees in the PPS Equality and Diversity Steering Group.	Although turnover in memberships encourages fresh ideas and engagement with disability matters and implementation of corporate responsibilities, none of the

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		EDSG membership are disabled employees.
2	To provide opportunities for disability equality speakers to address the Equality and Diversity Steering Group (EDSG) and other key personnel as appropriate.	Scheduling issues plus the volume and variety of events promoted to all staff have prevented achievement of this action.

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

(a) Qualitative

Progress with the implementation of the Disability Action Plan is overseen by the Equality Officer and the EDSG throughout the life of the plan. The EDSG consists of managers from across a wide range of business areas and includes both administrative and legal staff, as well as volunteer staff with an interest in diversity issues. The group is chaired by the Equality and Diversity Champion, who is a member of the PPS Management Board and NICS Diversity Champions Network. Regular reports are provided to the Management Board.

(b) Quantitative

On receipt of feedback arising from consultation arrangements, follow-up engagement takes place to further examine issues raised.

Monitoring is undertaken in a confidential way. All information provided is held securely and questionnaires can be submitted anonymously. In addition complainants are asked to provide some information about themselves (for example, age and gender). Monitoring of complaints is essential in this regard and can assist the PPS to deliver a better service.

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?

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Not Applicable.

If yes please outline below:

	Revised/Additional Action Measures	Performance Indicator	Timescale
1			
2			
3			
4			
5			

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?

The PPS Disability Action Plan is normally aligned with the Service’s business planning cycle; that is, it will usually cover a three-year period, mirroring the PPS Corporate Plan. For the 2022/23 and 2023/24 financial years, the focus of corporate planning is restricted to single years, with separate business plans produced annually in April. This is driven by the current budgetary position where a multi-year funding settlement has not been agreed. In light of this, the Service developed a two-year Disability Action Plan to the end of March 2024. This planning environment is likely to continue, and a further 2-year Disability Action Plan has been developed for the 2024/25 and 2025/26 financial years.

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- 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.