

EQUALITY COMMISSION FOR NORTHERN IRELAND
Public Authority 2007 - 2008
Annual Progress Report on Section 75 of the NI Act 1998 and
Section 49A of the Disability Discrimination Order (DDO) 2006

This report template includes a number of self assessment questions regarding implementation of the Section 75 statutory duties from

1 April 2007 to 31 March 2008. This template also includes a number of questions regarding implementation of Section 49A of the DDO from the **1 July 2007 to 31 March 2008.**

Name of public authority

Department for Social Development

Equality Officer

S75 &DDO: Julie Lavery Office of the Permanent Secretary 5 th Floor, Lighthouse Building Gasworks Business Park, Ormeau Road Belfast BT7 2JB Tel 028 90829570 Fax 028 90829560 E-mail Julie.lavery@dndni.gov.uk

S75 Executive Summary

Section 1: Strategic Implementation of the Section 75 Duties

The Office of the Permanent Secretary is responsible for monitoring and reporting progress on the implementation of the Department's Equality Scheme. The branch plays a central role within the Department providing advice, guidance and support on policy issues and co-ordinating Departmental responses.

Business Planning

The DSD Corporate Business Plan included reference to its statutory duty obligations and how these were integral in delivering its business. The plan included a number of specific targets to promote good relations and target inequality, such as measures to reduce poverty and disadvantage, addressing the housing needs of vulnerable groups and improve the quality of life for marginalised people in the most deprived neighbourhoods.

The Office of the Permanent Secretary's Business Plan which is updated annually, details the specific performance measurements the branch must undertake and achieve in delivering and meeting the Department's statutory duty obligations. It includes a risk assessment of the branch objectives, the consequences of failing to deliver these outcomes and contingency plans.

Many staff also include targets and references to equality and section 75 in their own forward job descriptions and personal development plans each year whilst others use this opportunity to identify training needs to raise their own awareness of the statutory duty etc. This is not solely restricted to those staff within Office of the Permanent Secretary who have specific responsibility for monitoring the statutory duty.

Mainstreaming the section 75 duty: Departmental Commitment

The very existence of section 75, and the statutory duty upon public authorities to deliver it, has ensured mainstreaming of equality into the Department's policy making processes. The Department recognises its responsibilities as set out in its Equality Scheme. The Permanent

Secretary and Departmental Management Board receive regular updates on the implementation of the Department's Equality Scheme.

The Departmental Management Board approves the issue of the Department's Annual Progress Report to the Equality Commission each year and subsequently receives a paper summarising the Equality Commission's response.

The existence of the Department's Equality Scheme and linkages to the Training and Awareness Communication Plan, Corporate and Business Plans and the direct support offered to staff across the Department on implementing the statutory duty has ensured that equality considerations are embedded within the organisation and are fully reflected in all of the Department's programmes and policies.

Key Policy/Service Developments

The key policy/service developments made by the Department during the past year to better promote equality of opportunity and good relations were:

- The implementation of the Department's Disability Action Plan. The Plan sets out the actions that the Department will take over the next three years to promote positive attitudes and encourage participation by disabled people in public life;
- The Review of the Equality section of the Department's website to ensure that it contained the latest guidance on equality issues, such as the Equality Commission's 'Statement on Key Inequalities in Northern Ireland' and
- The revision of the Ministerial submission template to ensure equality considerations and implications are highlighted at the outset of all new or revised policy submissions presented to Minister.

The main initiatives planned for 2008/2009 to ensure the Department improves outcomes in terms of equality and good relations for individuals from the nine categories covered by Section 75 are:

- To conduct a review of the information it disseminates to staff in relation to Section 75 issues. This review will ensure that the Department's guidance in relation to Section 75 is relevant to the

Department's needs and provides advice to officials on good practice in this area.

- To undertake a training analysis for staff involved in providing advice and guidance on issues relating to Section 75. This will help ensure that Department fully meets its Section 75 requirements.
- To carry out a review of the current provision of statistical and research services across the Department and the degree to which this reflects the priorities/needs of all key policy areas.

Changes to Policies/Practices

Please see below examples of changes to policies or practices which have resulted in outcomes:

	Outline change in policy or practice which have resulted in outcomes	Tick if result of EQIA
Persons of different religious belief		
Persons of different political opinion		
Persons of different racial groups	Pensions Act (Northern Ireland) 2008 The introduction of a positive parent and carer's credit and the reduction in the number of qualifying years required for a basic State Pension will help all women to acquire entitlement to a basic State Pension. These measures may, in particular, help women from ethnic minority groups.	
Persons of different age	Pensions Act (Northern Ireland) 2008 (State Pension age)The reduction in the number of qualifying years required for a basic State Pension and the introduction of a positive parent and carer's credit will assist persons reaching State Pension age on or after 6 April 2010. Mesothelioma Bill (50+) The overall aim of the policy is to provide faster compensation to all those diagnosed with mesothelioma. Because of the long latency of mesothelioma, people being diagnosed now will mainly be in the 50+ age group.	
Persons with different marital status	Pensions Act (Northern Ireland) 2008 (married persons)The Act enables married women to claim a Category B retirement Pension based on her husband's National Insurance contributions without her husband having to claim his Category A pension. Child Maintenance Bill (separated/divorced/single) The Bill aims to encourage parents to make their own arrangements; to simplify and improve the child maintenance calculation process; to improve collection and enforcement processes; and to	

	<p>increase efforts to collect and manage debt. All Child Support claimants will have separated from, or never lived with, the non-resident parent. However they may have formed new partnerships or marriages.</p>	
Persons of different sexual orientation	<p>Pensions Act (Northern Ireland) 2008 The opportunities presented by the reforms to build basic State Pension and Second State Pension entitlements are available to all. In particular, provisions enabling a person to draw a pension based on the National Insurance record of a civil partner who has chosen not to retire will assist members of same-sex couples.</p>	
Men and women generally	<p>Pensions Act (Northern Ireland) 2008 (women) The introduction of a positive parent and carer's credit and the reduction in the number of qualifying years required for a basic State Pension will narrow the pensions gender gap and assist carer's, frequently women, to build pension rights. Career breaks will no longer necessarily have a negative effect on pension entitlement. Future uprating of the basic State pension in line with earnings will assist both men and women but may be of particular assistance to women as State Pension represents a larger proportion of their income. Mesothelioma Bill (women) Without proposals to extend payment to anyone suffering from mesothelioma a significant number of women would be unlikely to get any form of compensation unless they successfully sued a former employer.</p>	
Persons with and without a disability	<p>Pensions Act (Northern Ireland) 2008 (Persons with a disability) The reduction in the number of qualifying years required for entitlement to a basic State Pension and the abolition of the Labour Market Attachment test for long-term disabled people from 2010 are likely to be of significant benefit to disabled persons. Mesothelioma Bill (Persons with a disability) All persons diagnosed with mesothelioma will either be or become disabled to a certain degree as a result of the disease. The proposals will enable these people to have greater financial security in the final months of their lives.</p>	
Persons with and without dependants	<p>Pensions Act (Northern Ireland) 2008(People with Dependents) The introduction of a positive carer's credit and the reduction in the number of qualifying years required for a Basic State Pension will assist persons who have spend periods not accruing entitlement to a pension because of caring responsibilities. Child Maintenance Bill (People with Dependents) The nature of child maintenance is that it is paid to parents who have one or more dependants.</p>	

Section 2: Screening

Annex 1 contains a list of all the screening carried out by the Department's Social Security Policy and Legislation Division. The Division screens a substantial amount of routine legislation each year, updating the social security regulations that maintain parity. Whilst these are subjected to screening as per section 75 of the NI Act, the scope for tailoring policy to local circumstances is restricted by the policy of maintaining parity. However, in line with its Equality Scheme, the Department maintains close contact with the Department for Work and Pensions in GB to advise them of any section 75 issues and ensure that Northern Ireland is involved in any national consultations on new policy proposals/ legislation, particularly those that may have a significant and adverse impact on any of the section 75 categories.

Section 3: Equality Impact Assessment (EQIA)

EQIA Timetable – April 2007 - March 2008

Title of Policy EQIA	EQIA Stage at end March 08 (Steps 1-6)	Outline adjustments to policy intended to benefit individuals, and the relevant Section 75 categories due to be affected.
Mesothelioma Bill	6	Please see p4 - Table detailing changes to Policies/Practices
Child Maintenance Bill	6	Please see p4 - Table detailing changes to Policies/Practices

The Department's 2007 – 08 timetable detailed that EQIAs on the Strategic Business Review (Social Security Agency) and proposals for Development of Crumlin Road/Girdwood would be at Stage 6 by October 2007 and March 2008 respectively.

The EQIA on Crumlin Road/Girdwood has been delayed due to the fact that the consultation process has taken longer than previously expected. It is now envisaged that the EQIA will be completed in April 2009.

Given the complex nature of the Strategic Business Review, some additional time was taken to inform and complete the Outline Business Case process. This work has now been completed and EQIA related consultation is planned to commence in August, culminating in the production of an EQIA by the end of 2008.

Ongoing EQIA Monitoring Activities April 2007- March 2008

Title of EQIA subject to Stage 7 monitoring	Indicate if differential impacts previously identified have reduced or increased	Indicate if adverse impacts previously identified have reduced or increased
Pensions Bill	No	No
Information and Advice Strategy	No	No

2008-09 EQIA Time-table

Title of EQIAs due to be commenced during April 2008 – March 2009	Existing or New policy?	Please indicate expected timescale of Decision Making stage i.e. Stage 6
Strategic Business Review (Social Security Agency)	E	March 2009
Proposals for Development of Crumlin Road/Girdwood	N	April 2009
Northside Urban Village Draft Regeneration Framework	N	January 2009
Westside Regeneration District Draft Masterplan	N	April 2009

Section 4: Training

Corporate Plan

In its Corporate and Business Plan, the Department underlined its commitment to staff training; “Our staff will be provided with a wide range of learning and development opportunities which embrace equality, human rights and diversity.”

Training Undertaken

All new entrants to the Department receive general equality and human rights training. For on-going training or as new developmental needs are identified, staff self nominate and their training is arranged according to this identified need. In addition, occasionally the Department will require staff to undertake mandatory training for example anti – discrimination.

During 2007/08, staff in the Department received the following training:

EQUALITY RELATED TRAINING UNDERTAKEN 1/4/07 – 31/3/08			
COURSE TITLE	NUMBER ATTENDEES	DURATION DAYS	PROVIDER
Deaf Awareness	4	½	RNID
Deaf Awareness/Start to sign	7	2	RNID
Equality Impact Assessment	4	3	Key Consulting
Conducting an Equality Impact Assessment	8	1	CAL
Screening/Impact of Assessment of Policies	2	2	CAL
Travelling Community Awareness	9	½	In House – Satellite Training Managers
Migrant Worker Awareness	65	½	In House - Satellite Training Managers
Human Rights Act	124	½	In House – Satellite

- Education & Awareness			Training Managers
Equal Opportunities – Awareness of Anti Discrimination Legislation	466	½	In House – Satellite Training Managers and Management Training Team in TDU
Equal Opportunities for Managers	162	½	CAL
Diversity	22	½	1 by CAL and 21 by the Satellite Training Managers.
Islamic Awareness	5	1	Aksaa LTD, West Yorkshire

The aforementioned training has been undertaken at a variety of both administrative and management levels. Additional and more informal training and advice has also been provided throughout the year by the Department's Statutory Duty Officer, particularly when a formal training package could not be delivered on time.

Training Evaluation

Evaluation of training delivered through the Department's Training and Development Unit is undertaken at the end of each training event. Staff complete a training evaluation sheet and this can be followed up at periodic intervals to further monitor how the training has been useful in the officer's day to day work. Line managers are also encouraged to discuss how effective the training has been with their staff and under the new Performance Management System all staff must have an individual training plan. The evaluation of this training has shown that in the overwhelming majority of cases, the training has improved the officer's understanding of the issues and enhanced their ability to deliver the services for which they are responsible.

DSD involvement with representatives of the nine equality categories

The Department's Training and Development Unit has frequently engaged outside providers to supply equality related training which fully reflects the needs and issues for different groups. In the past, the Royal National

Institute for the Blind and the Royal National Institute for the Deaf (RNID) have provided training on deaf awareness, sign language and visual impairment. The Northern Ireland Council for Ethnic Minorities have provided ethnic minority training and Disability Action supplied training for Disability Discrimination Act awareness. Belfast Institute for Further and Higher Education has also provided sign language training for front line staff in the Social Security Agency and Child Support Agency. In the past year the Department has also engaged with the RNID to provide Sign Language Interpreters to assist staff who experience hearing difficulties on a training courses.

Section 5: Communication

Corporate Plan

The Department's commitment to equality and the statutory duties is underlined in its 2007 – 2008 Corporate Business Plan:

“The promotion of equality of opportunity and community relations is at the forefront of our programmes and activities. Section 75 of the Northern Ireland Act 1998 has been integrated into our policy development processes and will continue to be an important aspect of governance throughout the period of this plan. We will continue to fulfil the commitments made in our Equality Scheme and we will work closely with the Equality Commission and others to take forward any emerging issues arising from the 5 year review of that scheme.”

Public Commitment of Senior Staff

The Minister and Senior officials undertook a large number of public engagements during the year. During many of these engagements Ministers and officials underlined the Department's continuing commitment to promoting equality of opportunity, particularly amongst marginalised or vulnerable groups and individuals. These include:

Through the Neighbourhood Renewal Programme the Department contributed over £350k to a new, improved Women's Centre for the Ballymurphy area of West Belfast opened on the 3rd of October. The Centre's premises have facilities tailor-made to its needs including up-to-date therapy rooms, training rooms and office space. At the official opening, Minister Ritchie said: “The Management Committee has successfully established Ballymurphy Women's Centre as a vital part of this community. Members are working to break the cycle of decline in the Upper Springfield/Whiterock area by providing information and support to local people.”

In January 2008, Minister Ritchie addressed the first ever conference in Northern Ireland dedicated to addressing the housing needs of people with dementia. The Conference “Housing, Planning and the Built Environment – Getting it Right for People with Dementia” was attended by professionals and key players who have a stake in looking after people who suffer from

dementia in its many forms ranging from alcohol related dementia to Alzheimer's disease. The Minister pledged to be pro-active to ensure that provision of accommodation across the spectrum of care, from home to supported housing, public housing provision, nursing home and residential care deals with this increasing trend.

Press Releases

The Department's Information Office prepares briefing and press releases that are issued to a much wider audience through the medium of television, radio and newspapers. During the year 432 press releases were issued many of these directly or indirectly in support of work for one or more of the Section 75 Groups.

Internet

The Department's Equality Scheme is located in the publications section of its website. The web-site continues to be a very important and regularly accessed communication tool. In the past year the Department's internet site was visited 918,725 times (an average of 2,510 times per day). During this time 2,424,387 pages were visited (an average of 6,624 pages being looked at every day).

In addition 1,034,046 files were downloaded from the site. The Department published 7 online consultation papers and there were 12,991 copies of these papers downloaded during the last financial year.

The Department also publishes this Annual Progress Report on its internet web-site. This is available through the "on-line" publications catalogue. The Department also notifies Section 75 representative organisations on its consultee mailing list of this report on progress which also serves to advise of all screening exercises undertaken throughout the year that did not proceed to a full impact assessment.

The Department, in recognition of how important a communication tool the internet has become, regularly reviews its site to ensure that it is as accessible as possible in both design and content. In addition, the site incorporates 'Browesaloud', a speech enabling application that provides open and free access for web site visitors who have difficulties reading printed or on-screen text.

Staff Awareness

The Department has a very well developed team briefing and intranet system for keeping staff up to date. During the year the intranet was used on a regular basis to advise or update staff in relation to new guidance or developments in relation to the implementation of the statutory duty. For example, in October 2007, guidance produced by the Equality Commission on implementing the good relations duty was communicated to all staff via the Intranet system.

Further information and guidance on the statutory duty and other equality/human rights issues for staff are also posted on the Department's Intranet site. This site contains guidance on equality related matters in one easy to navigate area and has been regularly visited from staff across the Department.

During the year 1st April – 31st of March 2008 the DSD intranet site was visited 781,384 times (an average of 2,134 per day). A total of 6,132,678 pages were visited during this time (an average of 16,755 pages being looked at every day). In addition 1,319,048 files were downloaded from the site.

Section 6: Data Collection & Analysis

Client Group Publications

The Social Welfare Statistics and Consultancy Branch of the Department has developed a set of analyses from its existing scans of Social Security Benefit administrative data for persons of working age and their children and persons over state pension age in Northern Ireland.

By matching data from the individual benefit scans an estimate can be made of the number of people who are claiming at least one of the key benefits that are available to the working age population and those over state pension age. Information on the key characteristics of these claimants is also available for age, gender, duration of claim, family type and regional analysis. These Client Group publications are published at:

http://www.dsdni.gov.uk/client_group_analysis.htm

The key findings from the latest report published in May 2008 included:

- People of the working age population claiming at least one key benefit was 19.8% (213.9 thousand) in Northern Ireland in August 2007;
- People of working age claiming sickness and/or disability benefits made up 72% of the overall total in August 2007. Lone Parents and unemployed claimants made up 12% and 11% respectively of the overall total;
- 127,760 children were living in families claiming a key benefit at August 2007. 65% of these children were in families claiming Income Support; and
- People over state pension age receiving Retirement Pension but not Pension Credit/Income Support made up 69% of the overall total in August 2007.

In November 2007 the Department published a report based on the information from the Family Resources Survey that presented the data on an urban/rural basis. Some of the key findings from the "Family Resources Survey Urban Rural Report Northern Ireland 2005 – 2005-2006" included:

- The Belfast Metropolitan Urban Area had the highest proportion of households without children whilst the Rural West had the lowest proportion;
- Urban areas recorded the highest proportion of households with at least one permanently sick or disabled member;
- Rural areas reported the highest number of males and females in full time employment; and
- An East-West difference was found within the Urban areas for religious denomination, with the Urban East comprising 59% Protestant and 29% Catholic households, compared to the Urban West which comprised 29% Protestant and 62% Catholic households.

The full report can be found at:

http://www.dsdni.gov.uk/index/urban_rural_reports.htm

Individual Income Series

In December 2007 the Department published a report entitled the "Individual Income Series, Northern Ireland 2006/07". The report highlights that the average income for women in Northern Ireland was 65% that of men 2005/06. Other statistics that emerged included:

- The median total individual income for women was £172 per week, compared to £265 for men;
- For women, 64% of income was sourced from earnings (employment and self employment); 24% from benefits; 4% from Non-State Pensions;
- For men, 79% of income was sourced from earnings (employment and self-employment); 11% from benefits; 6% from Non-State Pensions;
- Women looking after the family and/or home contributed 11% of total family income; and
- For families with incomes under £300 per week, three fifths of total family income came from men's income.

This was the fourth report in the “Individual Income Series”. The report provides analyses of the weekly individual income of men and women in Northern Ireland by family type, age, marital status, source of income and employment status providing a means by which men’s and women’s incomes can be compared either directly or in their own right. The full report can be accessed at:

http://www.dsdni.gov.uk/individual_income_series_reports.htm

In November 2007 the Department published a report detailing estimates of take-up of the main income related benefits in Northern Ireland. The benefits covered are Income Support, Minimum Income Guarantee, Pension Credit, Housing Benefit and Jobseeker’s Allowance (Income Based). The publication provides estimates for 2004/2006 using two years of combined data. Some of the key findings include:

- Total Pension amount of Pension Credit left unclaimed annually was between £26 million and £168 million;
- By family type, take up of Income Support appeared to be lower among non-pensioners without children than those with children; and
- By family type, take up of Jobseeker’s Allowance (Income Based) is highest for couples with and without children.

The full report can be accessed at:

http://www.dsdni.gov.uk/statistics_and_research-take_up.htm

Monitoring Guidance

The publication of the Commission’s Section 75 Monitoring Guidance was communicated to all staff via the intranet system. The guidance was also placed on the equality section of the Department’s web site, which is regularly accessed by policy makers from across the Department’s business areas. The Department’s Equality Unit have also highlighted the guidance when providing advice to policy makers about screening exercises or EQIAs.

Section 7: Information Provision, Access to Information and Services

Provision of Information in Accessible Formats

The Department is committed to ensuring that all of its services are fully accessible to all parts of the community. In its Equality Scheme, the Department set out how it proposed to provide public access to information and services. Throughout the year these commitments have been adhered to in the publication of many documents, leaflets, forms and press releases issued.

Translation and Interpretation Services

To help meet the needs of customers who do not speak English as their first language, the SSA provides benefit information in alternative languages in Arabic, Chinese, Latvian, Lithuanian, Polish, Portuguese and Spanish – this includes a variety of leaflets and customer charters.

The SSA continues to provide Interpretation and Translation services in Partnership with the Department for Employment and Learning (DEL). Through joint arrangements, the SSA and DEL provide 3 services.

Telephone Interpreting – provides instant access to interpreters in more than 150 languages using ‘thebigword’ facility.

Face to Face Interpreting – personal attendance of an interpreter through a pre- arranged appointment.

Document Translation – correspondence converted to and from customer’s own language.

These services are available in all SSA and DEL offices and enable customers who do not speak English as their first language to access the full range of services on offer.

In 2007/08 a total of 2,049 calls were made to the telephone interpreting service at a cost of £25,748.81. In the same period 956 face-to-face interpreting sessions took place amounting to £84,126.22, while 10 documents were translated costing £1,216.72.

In 2007/08 interpretation and translation were provided in the following languages:

- Arabic
- Bulgarian
- Czech
- Dutch
- Farsi
- German
- Hungarian
- Japanese
- Latvian
- Mandarin
- Portuguese
- Russian
- Spanish
- Tagalog
- Thai
- Ukrainian
- Bengali
- Cantonese
- Danish
- Estonian
- French
- Greek
- Italian
- Korean
- Lithuanian
- Polish
- Romanian
- Slovak
- Swedish
- Tetum
- Turkish
- Urdu

The List shows the great diversity of customers accessing services from the SSA and the availability of interpreting services is considered invaluable in meeting their needs.

The SSA also undertook an initial review of its stock of benefit leaflets, how many had the Crystal Mark award and how these compared to leaflets available from DWP in GB. Findings and recommendations were reported to Agency Management Board in February 2008 and work will continue in 2008/09 to take forward these recommendations.

In addition a new DLA claim form was introduced in April 07 for all adult customers. This was Crystal Marked by the Plain English Campaign.

The Child Maintenance and Enforcement Division (formerly the Child Support Agency) also provides a translation and interpretation service that is available to customers on demand. In 2007/2008 telephone interpreting services were provided to customers in Polish, Russian, Hindi, Czech, Punjabi and Italian.

Outreach Events during 2007/08

The SSA attended the 2 day Young at Heart exhibition in May 2007. It is estimated that 7,500 members of the public attended each day of the event. There were about 750 – 1000 callers to the SSA's stand and approximately 150 cases were referred for follow up by SSA staff. The SSA will, on request, carry out home visits to individuals who are otherwise unable to access services.

Client Groups targeted by SSA for Benefit Uptake

In the 2007/08 Benefit Uptake Programme the targeted clients included carers, older people, families, and those with a disability. About 22,500 clients were offered a comprehensive benefit assessment. The programme was delivered in partnership with Advice NI and CAB. The SSA have reported that 44.2% of clients responded to the targeted exercises.

In addition the SSA continued to improve linkages between State Pension and State Pension Credit. At the end of March 2008, 15, 215 new State Pension recipients were identified to receive a letter informing them of their potential entitlement to State Pension Credit. Approximately 2,200 potentially vulnerable clients will also be offered additional support to make a claim to State Pension Credit.

Strategic Business Review Project

SBR Project (Business Development Directorate) established an information page on the DSD Internet site. During the period up to March 2008 there were approximately 3,000 hits to the Internet site. An E Mail Account was also set up to allow staff and the general public to place their views/pose questions.

Winter Fuel

In August 2007 people aged 60 or over who had not received a Winter Fuel Payment were urged to contact the SSA to check if they were eligible. This responded to concerns that although most people receive the payment automatically if they receive a State Pension or other social security benefit, others, perhaps those who are working, do not realise they were eligible.

In the same statement, people aged 60 or over who owned their own homes or rented from a private landlord (other than the Northern Ireland Housing Executive) and who were in receipt of means-tested benefits were advised they might also be eligible for Warm Homes Plus which provides heating and insulations.

Social Fund

During 2006 and 2007 the Social Fund paid out more than £81million to thousands of people in real need. The Fund is designed to give extra help with essential costs that people on low incomes find hard to pay for out of their regular budget. The figure includes winter fuel payments, maternity and funeral costs, non-repayable community care grants and interest-free budgeting and crisis loans.

Women and Carers

In November 2007 Minister Ritchie proposed changes to pension entitlement. The number of qualifying years for a full state pension will be cut to 30 for both men and women from 2010; for women this is a cut of almost a quarter in the number of years needed for a full pension. This addresses concern that women with caring responsibilities have suffered due to broken work patterns. As a result of the proposed changes, around 75% of women reaching pension age in 2010 are expected to have a full pension compared to around 40% currently. The Department also provided for State Pension to be uprated in line with earnings rather than in line with prices as is current practice. This will help to ensure that pensioners will share in future prosperity in the same way as people in work.

Supported Housing

In June 2007 Minister Ritchie opened an innovative housing scheme at Springfield Court in West Belfast that allows people with disabilities to live independently. The pioneering project was developed jointly by Leonard Cheshire Northern Ireland and Oaklee Housing Association providing accommodation for 12 adults with physical disabilities. Minister noted the need to provide quality accommodation and an environment that meets the housing needs of the people who live there, thus facilitating a high quality of life.

Group Housing for Travellers

In April 2007, 16 new homes were started for Travellers at Monagh Road, Belfast. This group housing has been designed with additional facilities and amenities to accommodate extended Traveller families on a permanent basis. The dwellings are being built by North and West Housing Association with grant funding from the Department of £3m.

Housing Scheme for Older People

In November 2007 Minister Ritchie opened a social housing project for older people at Ballysillan Close. The BIH Housing Association scheme provides 10 self contained bungalows, including one for wheelchair use. There are also 17 town houses and apartments for owner occupation. The site is close to public transport links and local amenities and is therefore capable of supporting a mixed tenure scheme.

North Belfast Newington Centre

The Department provided funding of £286,000 for a new Reminiscence Centre opened on 8 October. The project, developed by the Newington Day Centre which provides support services for older people and carers across the local community in North Belfast, is designed to enable people who are older to recall their life history and bygone days. This is achieved through staff, carers and volunteers using artefacts such as pictures of school days, wedding days and background family details to stimulate memories. It is anticipated that such activities will help encourage awareness and improve self-esteem.

Downpatrick Telephone Care Service

In October 2007 the Department, through Neighbourhood Renewal, provided funding of £222,000 to an innovative telephone care service. The telephone service, Good Morning Down, provides free telephone care for vulnerable adults throughout the Down District Council area.

Newry Gateway Club

In December 2007 Minister Ritchie officially reopened the premises of Newry and District Gateway Club. The Department provided over £45,000 towards the extensive refurbishment through its Neighbourhood Renewal Project. Since its foundation in 1973 the Newry and District Gateway Club has played a hugely important role in the community and has gone from strength to strength thanks to the volunteers who help it run its services.

Upper Springfield Childcare

The Department, through the Belfast Regeneration Office, provided funding of more than £500,000 towards a brand new childcare centre opened at Ardmonagh in June 2007. The Childcare Centre will not only benefit over 100 children everyday, but also their families and the local community. It will provide training opportunities for young people looking for a career in childcare and it will benefit the local economy by providing much needed jobs, as well as enabling parents to seek employment in the knowledge their children are being well looked after.

Bangor Playgroup

In July 2007, the Department provided funding of over £35,500 to First Friends Playgroup in Bangor's Kilcooley Estate through the Neighbourhood Renewal Programme. The investment will support the playgroup to deliver high quality affordable education, play and care for up to 30 children per year, and employment for three full-time day-care staff. It will also provide work experience for childcare students and training and volunteering opportunities for local people.

Newhill Youth and Community Association West Belfast

The Newhill Youth and Community Association in west Belfast were awarded nearly £30,000 from the Department through the Neighbourhood Renewal Strategy in July 2007. The Association provides a range of services for young people living in the New Barnsley area of Upper Springfield in west Belfast including day care, a play group, after schools project, a youth club and a summer scheme.

North Belfast Women's Initiative

The North Belfast Women's Initiative received funding of just under £13,000 from the Department through Neighbourhood Renewal in July 2007. The funding will help support two key posts and allow the organisation to sustain existing services and develop the range of programmes available to women in the Glenbryn, Wheatfield and Ballysillan areas of the city. These range from alternative therapies, cookery classes and keep fit through to leadership, community development and suicide intervention. Minister Ritchie commented on the initiative and said that she was particularly impressed by efforts to encourage women from ethnic minorities to become involved in activities to

help them integrate into the community and by the annual health week which is open to all men, women and children in the community.

Partners for Change Strategy

In July 2007 Minister Ritchie, welcomed the Executive's endorsement for a cross-governmental Strategy. 'Partners for Change' sets out how Government works with voluntary and community organisations to deliver services to those most in need in society. Minister commented that; "The skills, knowledge and independent voice of the Sector are vital to complement Government services and policy-making. This leads to direct support for those most in need and helps us build stronger, more inclusive communities across the North."

Section 8: Complaints

The Department's complaint procedure is outlined in chapter 10 of its Equality Scheme.

When members of the public believe that they have been directly affected by a failure of the Department to comply with the obligations set out in the Department's Equality Scheme, they can make a formal complaint to the Department.

During 2007/08, no complaints were lodged with the Department and investigated in accordance with chapter 10 of the Department's Equality Scheme.

Section 9: Consultation and Engagement

Strategic Business Review (SBR)

An independent customer research programme, via Focus Groups, was conducted to inform SBR implementation. The research focused on the proposed changes under the Strategic Business Review's new service delivery model including the increased use of telephony/Internet and the introduction of an appointment system for callers. Operations Directorate Project Managers used a wide range of communications methods which included advertising in local newspapers, letters to representatives and various voluntary and community groups e.g. staff from Newry office participated in talks to ethnic minority groups in Newtownhamilton and Newry. SSA staff also attended meetings with Help the Aged and Age Concern and took part in the Surestart Anti-natal Clinic for non –nationals. There are also formal arrangements in place to meet regularly with representatives from the Disability and Voluntary Sector (CAB, Advice NI, the Law Centre and Disability Action). Meetings are held to discuss operational issues and advise/seek views on proposed changes to processes.

Connswater Community Greenway

The project promoters, East Belfast Partnership, commissioned East Belfast Community Development Agency to carry out a detailed public consultation into proposals surrounding the Connswater Community Greenway. Fliers and a newsletter were issued along with an extended series of public meetings arranged through local schools, churches and voluntary and community organisations resulting in a detailed consultation report being produced. This document was key to the success in the project securing £23.5m Big Lottery funding. The total project cost is circa £32m with the Department recently confirming funding of £3.2m.

Woodstock Link Scheme

Ahead of submitting proposals to Planning Service in relation to a proposed environmental improvement at Woodstock Link, Belfast Regeneration Office South and East Team undertook a consultation exercise, talking to all local community groups operating in the area. In addition, each property owner and business operating in the area were asked for their comments in

relation to the proposals with ideas put forward by both the community and local business incorporated into the plans. Final costs have not yet been forwarded to the Team although the project is likely to cost in the region of £400k. The Department will be funding the entire project.

Foyle Pride Festival

In August 2007 Minister Ritchie officially opened the Foyle Pride festival in Derry. Speaking at the official opening, the Minister said: "Discrimination or harassment on the grounds of a person's sexual orientation is simply wrong; it is unacceptable and must not be tolerated." In declaring the festival officially open, the Minister paid tribute to the work of the voluntary and community Sector across the North and in particular thanked the Rainbow Project in Derry for their contribution in bringing the Pride Festival back to the City after a five year absence.

Modernisation Fund Information Sessions

During July and August 2007 the Department held information sessions in Belfast, Ballymena, Enniskillen, Armagh, Derry and Omagh for organisations interested in applying for the £15 million Modernisation Fund. The Fund was announced by Minister Margaret Ritchie to help the voluntary and community sector to modernise and prepare itself for the future. The grants available range from £20,000 to £1.5 million and are designed to provide equipment and improve facilities.

Seacourt Estate Larne

Seacourt is part of the Department's 'Areas at Risk' pilot programme, which supports projects in targeted areas that help build social cohesion and community confidence. Minister Ritchie visited the estate in August 2007 and toured ongoing work being funded by the Department to renovate two bungalows to provide dedicated facilities for the young people of Seacourt and the surrounding areas. The Minister encouraged local people to get involved and have their say in community development.

Neighbourhood Partnerships

In October 2007 Minister Ritchie hosted a reception at Parliament Buildings for representatives of the 36 Neighbourhood Partnerships from across Northern Ireland. Here she noted the success of the Neighbourhood

Renewal Strategy since its launch in 2003 and the continuing need to make sure the 280,000 people in targeted areas have access to the best possible services and life opportunities. The Minister revealed that the Department for Social Development had invested nearly £45million in Neighbourhood Renewal areas across Northern Ireland in the past two years.

Homelessness

In July 2007 the Department published the "Including the Homeless: A strategy to promote the social inclusion of homeless people and those at risk of becoming homeless in Northern Ireland". This strategy is being taken forward by a cross-sectoral steering group which includes voluntary sector representatives. The Department has fully engaged with the Equality Commission (and the Human Rights Commission) on the delivery of this strategy.

Fuel Poverty Strategy

As part of the Government-wide Fuel Poverty Strategy a Fuel Poverty Advisory Group has been set up to advise Minister on delivery of the strategy. It is chaired by John McMullan from the voluntary sector and includes a number of voluntary sector interests.

Crumlin Road

The Grade A listed Crumlin Road Gaol and the adjacent former Girdwood Army Barracks have been in government ownership since August 2003 and February 2005 respectively. The Department for Social Development is responsible for taking forward the redevelopment of the joint 27 acre site which occupies a strategic location by virtue of its proximity to Belfast city centre and which provides a unique opportunity to regenerate one of the most disadvantaged areas in Northern Ireland.

In March 2006, an Advisory Panel was established comprising political, community and statutory representatives with the task of overseeing production of a draft masterplan and making recommendations to the Minister on the agreed plan. The Advisory Panel agreed from the outset that the opportunities for the development of the site should embrace principles of equality, based on objective assessment of need and a 'Shared Future' so that the site would be developed in such a way that there would be access and use by both communities.

Throughout the development of proposals for the site, the Advisory Panel therefore engaged with both the Nationalist and Unionist communities in North Belfast through community meetings including on a cross-community basis.

A draft masterplan containing the Advisory Panel's recommendations for the regeneration of the site was presented to the Minister for Social Development in August 2007 and was subsequently launched for a period of public consultation on 16 October 2007. The public consultation concluded on 22 January 2008. During this period 5 public meetings were held and over 900 written responses were received.

The EQIA, which is now underway, will also be subject to a period of public consultation following which the final masterplan is expected to be presented to the Executive Committee.

Neighbourhood Renewal

The Neighbourhood Renewal Unit (NRU) has produced 'Guidance on the establishment and role of Neighbourhood Partnerships (NPs)' including a section entitled 'Equality and Good Relations.' This aims to ensure that equality principles in accordance with Section 75 are addressed in the development and delivery of Vision Frameworks and Neighbourhood Action Plans.

In September 2007, NRU provided relevant information to DSD Development Offices to enable them to look at the implementation of Neighbourhood Renewal policy in relation to Section 75 groups. Information was also provided on the extent of ethnic minority groups in Neighbourhood Renewal areas. This assisted in determining the level of ethnic minority citizens in areas so that their needs are identified and groups are represented on Neighbourhood Partnerships.

Section 10: The Good Relations Duty

The Department for Social Development perhaps more than most, given its Departmental responsibilities, is aware of the obligation to have regard to the desirability of promoting good relations between persons of different religious belief, political opinion or racial group.

Shared City Project

The Shared City Project was formed in April 1999 as a statutory response to the alienation and marginalisation within predominately Unionist/Loyalist/Protestant areas of the city and district as a result of a process of research and consultation carried out by the District Partnership and Derry City Council.

A substantial body of work has been achieved with the focus on community development of Protestant areas in Phase I of the project and engagement with the wider community in Phase II.

The Shared City Project has made a significant impact addressing issues of division and diversity by working directly with community groups setting up projects and programmes, which they identify to suit the needs of their areas.

Projects currently being undertaken by Shared City include:

- **Interface Projects** – Shared City works closely with community groups in the following interface areas Fountain/Bogside/Brandywell, Currynierin/Tullyally and Irish Street/Gobnascale to identify projects and programmes to develop further meaningful cross community contact and promote good relations between these communities.
- **Single Identity Projects** – work on capacity building and cultural identity in partnership with Riverview Women’s Group, Long Tower Community Association, BBI Women’s Group and BBI Health Forum. Targeting loyalist and Catholic communities specifically the Fountain /Bishop Street/Brandywell interface which is one of the city’s most problematic sectarian interface areas. Shared City Project has been

able to secure a property for a community house for the Fountain residents at 3 Aubery Street, from the Housing Executive. This has been a great boost for the community and will continue to encourage and support capacity building and community development in the area. This venue provides an opportunity for cross community projects, promoting good working relationships between these groups.

- **Community Education Programme** – was set up to assist in the development of the community and encourage life long learning. Courses are available at schools, community centres and community houses throughout the city i.e., Irish Street Community Centre, Caw/Nelson Drive Action Group, Workhouse Museum, Tullyalley & District Development Group and Fountain estate. A wide range of educational and recreational courses are offered at a variety of venues so that members from the Waterside, the Fountain, City-side and the rural community have access to education and the opportunity to obtain qualifications i.e., ICT all levels, text/word processing all stages, history, art, arts and crafts, basic and intermediate food hygiene, floral art, patchwork, conversational French and Spanish etc.
- **Women Into Irish History Programme**– this programme was set up to introduce women from both sections of our community to research their own Irish history and learn from each other regarding their own culture and heritage. The women participating in this project are from very diverse backgrounds including both sides of interface areas such as Tullyally / Currynierin, Irish Street / Gobnascale and also Newbuildings, Caw, Strathfoyle, Drumahoe, the Fountain, Creggan, Glen, Ballymagroarty and Rosemount. The weekly project meetings frequently involve intense discussion and debate around perceptions of historical events their impact on Northern Ireland today.

The programme is now in its sixth year and has gone from strength to strength, they have produced two informative books “***Sure what did we know about it?***” and “***History on our Doorstep***”. They have also produced a CD ROM ‘***the Diamond and its Surrounding Areas***’.

The group are currently taking part in a series of workshops on ‘***the missing sex – women’s role in Irish history***’, which, is facilitated by Sally Halliday of the University of Ulster, and should provide further topics of debate and discussion for the women.

Time for Me – This project was set up to address the needs of marginalised women living in areas of deprivation in the waterside, city-side and rural, in order to develop new skills and knowledge through classes and workshops, build confidence, personal development and social skills, which will help participants, play a fuller role in local life and also to create opportunities to network with women from other communities.

We Too Have Suffered – this project involves a group of Protestant and Catholic woman from Waterside, City-side and rural areas, who have suffered loss directly through the troubles i.e., the death of a relative, intimidation, destruction of property etc. Through continued group work the women have come together to tell their stories of what happened to them, their families, friends and neighbours. They share how they each coped in their own way with the tragedy being played out in their homes, across their city and even across the Irish sea and acknowledge the shared suffering of the two communities over the past thirty years of the troubles. On the 14 December 2005 the group officially launched their DVD and Calendar at the Tower Hotel. The DVD has been a great success and has been well received by both communities. The PSNI Equality Division are currently using the DVD as training development tool for their officers.

The project is ongoing and the group are currently looking at sharing their experiences by becoming involved with other groups addressing conflict issues. They are themselves ambassadors for a multi-faceted Ireland facilitating the transfer of personal reconciliation experiences in the wider community.

- **Claudy and Omagh Victims Families ‘Make Mine the Last’** – through continued work with the Claudy family’s links have been established with the victims families of the Omagh bombings. The two groups participated in art therapy and creative writing workshops and have produced some beautiful pictures and poems; these images and poems are being used to produce a collection of hand painted cards, which were officially launched by the Duchess of Abercorn in Baronscourt Conference Centre on 1 May 2007 for Community Relations Week 2007.

- **Community Information Forum** – this group meets every month in order to bring community groups and organisations city-wide and rural together to give support, share information and ideas and also network with other community groups, it also encourages cross community interchange between other community groups, which would not normally have the opportunity to meet. The group hosted a **‘Heart of the Community’**, event in the Junction, on 7 February 2007, this event provided opportunities for community groups and organisations to inform and create awareness about the wide variety of work being carried out in the northwest.
- **WIN (Women Into the Network)** – Shared City Project have formed a partnership with WIN Ireland (Women Into the Network) who are a cross border project funded under Peace II in order to encourage and support women in self-employment. The partnership actively encourages women who are unsure of the next step or considering their career options and also bring women together from diverse background to share experiences and support each other. 50 women from across the city are currently involved in the programme.
- **Halloween Carnival** – Shared City Project organises an annual Halloween Event of activities and fun in St Columb’s Park House to promote inclusion and encourage greater participation from the Protestant community in the Waterside for the Halloween Carnival. The event is very popular with young people taking part from local schools, youth clubs and playgroups from the Waterside, City-side, rural areas, and indeed further afield.
- **St Patrick’s Day Spring Carnival** – Shared City Project also organises a range of activities to celebrate the St Patrick’s Day Carnival, this event is also particularly difficult to get the Protestant community involved in and is seen by most Protestants living in the Waterside as a Catholic only event. Shared City is attempting to address this issue and have put together a range of activities which will encourage people of all ages and diverse backgrounds to take part in the celebrations.
- **Health Information Events** – to highlight health education and awareness in the community, Shared City works in partnership with community groups, women’s groups and youth clubs throughout the city to identify workshops and health information events to encourage

participants to make more healthy choices in their everyday lives. These health programmes are of great benefit as many of the participants taking part live in interface areas and this leads to significant negative consequences within these communities, impacting on health and well-being.

Cloona Oasis Centre

On 08 August 2007 Minister Ritchie took part in a Cultural Day at Cloona Oasis Centre in west Belfast. Performers from across the community, including cheerleaders from Sandy Row, Irish dancers and Ulster Scots musicians, entertained local families. Minister planted a tree to mark the start of work on business units at the site, which are being partly funded by the Department. She commented: "A strong and progressive community can only come about through integration and inclusion. The range of projects offered at the Centre is an excellent illustration of how a partnership approach can make a real difference to the lives of local people."

The Cloona Oasis Centre already delivers a wide variety of services in an area faced by social and economic disadvantage. These include training, counselling and activity programmes. The six planned units will be available at an affordable rate for use by local community groups and businesses. Funding for the £600,000 project is being provided by the Department (over £350,000), the International Fund for Ireland and Lisburn City Council.

The Minister continued: "My Department is to the fore in the development of community empowerment in this part of the city; indeed, we have already provided funding of around £3million to such activity in the Colin area. The funding for the Units has been provided under Neighbourhood Renewal, which includes an objective to develop economic activity in the most disadvantaged areas. I am determined that through continued collective efforts we can, and will, make sure that Neighbourhood Renewal has a significant impact on the lives of many people."

£7 Million Funding

On 19 July Minister Ritchie announced a £7 million package of environmental improvements to disadvantaged areas of Belfast. During a visit to west Belfast and the greater Shankill the Minister saw two projects

already underway, which are helping to improve living conditions for communities on both sides of the peaceline at Clonard and Cupar Way. The Minister also took time to visit the nearby Lawnbrook Centre in the greater Shankill area, where she toured a new £7.5 Million family housing scheme which is being built on previously derelict land acquired by the Belfast Regeneration Office. The Minister commented that: “The areas beside the peacelines in north and west Belfast have long been identified as some of the most underprivileged, run down and deprived in Belfast. The projects which I have observed today are an excellent start to the process of regenerating these areas and turning their prospects around.”

Derry – new synthetic pitch

Minister Ritchie officially opened a new £630,000 synthetic pitch in Derry on 13 December 2007. The pitch, at St Columb’s Park, will enable competitive hockey and football to be played as well as providing training facilities for Gaelic games and rugby. Minister said: “This project will kick-start the wider redevelopment of St Columb’s Park as an attractive public space and sports area benefiting local people.”

Funding for youth in Lurgan

On 20 December 2008 Minister Ritchie announced almost £0.5 million funding for a cross community youth facility in Lurgan town centre. The funding, which will go to Underground ECF Links Ltd, will enable it to fit out its existing premises to provide state of the art youth facilities open to young people from both communities. The Minister said that “Providing funding for a project which caters for different interests means young people from both communities will enjoy the benefits of music, dance and drama.”

In the current financial year funding of £90,000 has also been allocated to provide community bases for both the Shankill & Wakehurst Community Development Association and the Albert Street & Lough Road Residents Association. In addition a funding package of £139,143, over a three year period, was awarded for a Sports Development Officer, based at the Clan Na Gael Gaelic Athletic Club, who works in local schools with young people from the Lurgan area promoting healthy and active lifestyles.

Minister concluded: “My officials are currently assessing a number of other youth facility projects for the Lurgan area including the provision of a Multi Use Games Area, costing in the region of £100,000, in the

Kilwilkie/Lurgantarry estates. I remain committed to providing state of the art youth facilities in deprived areas.”

Investment for Ballybeen Dundonald

Government and the International Fund for Ireland have confirmed on 10 March 2008 their intention to invest over £3 million in Ballybeen, Dundonald.

Social Development Minister Margaret Ritchie MLA, Health Minister Michael McGimpsey MLA and International Fund for Ireland Chairman Denis Rooney, pledged their plans for the Enler Project in Dundonald.

The scheme will be situated on the site of the former Enler House which was demolished for public safety reasons. It will provide a modern facility that will serve the entire community regardless of age and deliver day care facilities for the elderly as well as community facilities, retail units and a community recording studio. The estimated cost is £3,300,000.

Social Development Minister Margaret Ritchie said: “I am in a position to support this project and commend those who have worked tirelessly and selflessly to see this most valuable scheme brought to fruition. I look forward to seeing the completed scheme in the next couple of years.”

Denis Rooney, Chairman of the International Fund for Ireland said: “I am delighted that the fund will provide financial support of £400,000 to Landmark East towards the development of a mixed use community and retail building complex in the Ballybeen Estate, East Belfast. Everyone involved in the project is to be congratulated for their efforts over a long period of time. Ultimately, the work the Fund is investing in now is part of our commitment to building a sustainable and lasting peace in our society.”

It is hoped that work will begin on site by June, subject to final approvals.

Warrenpoint and Kilkeel Community Projects

On 28 March 2008 Minister Ritchie visited two projects funded through the Department’s Local Community Fund in the Newry and Mourne area.

Speaking at the opening of a new extension to ‘JIMS’, a cross community drop in centre for young people in Kilkeel the Minister said:

“This particular project, like a number of our Local Community Fund projects spread all across the country, is a good example for other small community groups to follow. I would like to wish you further success for the future in your efforts to serve the needs of all of the young people in the Kilkeel area.”

The Minister also visited the Warrenpoint Community House, a project recently funded by the Local Community Fund, where she met with representatives of Warrenpoint Community Partnership. The Community House serves as a resource and focus for all community development activity in the local area. It provides technology and resources support for wider initiatives throughout the greater Warrenpoint area.

Enniskillen – “Shared Future”

On 12 November 2007 Minister Ritchie congratulated Ulidia Housing Association for winning two prestigious UK housing awards for its ‘Shared Future’ social housing scheme in Enniskillen. The development at Carran Crescent is Northern Ireland’s first mixed community social housing development and is the result of a ground-breaking partnership between Ulidia and the Northern Ireland Housing Executive. The Minister said: “Over the years Northern Ireland has come to accept as normal a society where people live separately. This new housing development proves that this does not have to be the case. Carran Crescent is an inspiring example of residents from different religious and ethnic backgrounds choosing to live and participate in the same community. It points the way forward for identifying ways in which imbalances in social housing patterns can be addressed.”

Good Relations Guide.

The publication of the Commission’s Good Relations Guide was communicated to all staff via the intranet system. The guidance was also placed on the equality section of the Department’s web site, which is regularly accessed by staff throughout the Department. During the year the Department’s Equality Unit also brought the guide to attention of policy makers when providing advice on Section 75 related matters.

Section 11: Additional Comments

In the past year, with the advent of devolution, the Department has found that there has been an increased interest in equality in policy development and service delivery. The Department welcomes this and will endeavour throughout the coming year to ensure that the promotion of equality of opportunity continues to be at the forefront of its thinking.

Annual Report July 2007/ March 2008
'Disability Duties' Questions

1. How many action measures for this **reporting period** have been?

Fully
Achieved

Partially
Achieved

Not
Achieved

2. Please outline the following detail 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 ¹	Outcomes / Impact ²
National ³			
Regional ⁴			
Local ⁵	Encourage greater participation of previously excluded groups, including disabled people, in the development of local community based projects designed to develop community capacity within 11 to 20% most deprived Super Output areas identified through the Noble Deprivation indicators.	Intermediary funding bodies encouraged to consider projects for funding that previously have not been able to secure funding for local projects.	At this stage it is too early to gauge if there has been an increase in participation by previously excluded groups.

¹ **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.

² **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.

³ **National** : Situations where people can influence policy at a high impact level e.g. Public Appointments

⁴ **Regional**: Situations where people can influence policy decision making at a middle impact level

⁵ **Local** : Situations where people can influence policy decision making at lower impact level e.g. one off consultations, local forums.

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

	Training Action Measures	Outputs	Outcome / Impact
1	Diversity Awareness training	<p>Classroom training for new entrants was introduced Autumn 2007 but suspended in Summer 2008 to allow for a review of course content.</p> <p>Revised classroom training for new entrants is to be re-launched Autumn 2008.</p> <p>On-line training for all other staff is to be launched Autumn 2008.</p> <p>Diversity Masterclass for senior staff is to take place in Autumn 2008.</p>	Consistent approach to diversity and equality training across the NICS. This will support the two disability duties.
2			
3			
4			

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	Promote positive attitudes towards disabled people amongst staff using the internet, staff magazine, team meetings and notice boards.	During the year the Department has used the intranet and team brief to made staff aware of the disability duties and to invite comments and suggestions on the Department's Action Plan. The Department has also used the intranet system to alert staff to various disability related events, such as International Day of Disabled Persons. In the winter 2007 edition of the Department's staff magazine 'Social Life' a member of staff who is the Chairperson of Paralympic Swim Ireland and the Ireland Paralympic Swimming Team Manager give an insight into what it takes to prepare for Beijing 2008. Commenting on her work with the elite swimming squad she stated that it is; "It is ability that counts not	An increase in awareness on these issues amongst staff and a demonstration of Department's commitment with regards to this measure.

	disability”.	
--	--------------	--

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

	Encourage others Action Measures	Outputs	Outcome / Impact
1			
2			
3			
4			

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	Develop the screening exercise to assess the significance of the disability duties	<p>The Department has redesigned its screening proforma to include questions in relation to the disability duties. The questions are:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Does the policy/decision in any way discourage disabled people from participating in public life? 	Business areas will consider the disability duties when developing or revising policy.

		<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Is there a an opportunity to better promote positive attitudes towards disabled people or encourage their participation in public life by making changes to the policy/decision or introducing additional measures? • Please detail what data you will collect in the future in order to monitor the effect of the policy/decision with reference to the disability duties? 	
2			
3			

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

	Action Measures partly achieved	Milestones ⁶ / Outputs	Outcomes/Impacts	Reasons not fully achieved
1	Recognise the scale of disability amongst our customers by ensuring positive and proportionate imagery in Corporate documents.	Images of disabled people in some of the Department's corporate documents, such as the Social Security Agency's Annual Report and Accounts.	Positive imagery included in Corporate Documents.	There has been much debate over what constitutes a positive image and most of the Department's corporate documents do not include any imagery due to cost implications.
2				
3				
4				

⁶ **Milestones** – Please outline what part progress has been made towards the particular measures; even if full output or outcomes/ impact have not been achieved.

4. Please outline what action measures have not been achieved and the reasons why?

	Action Measures not met	Reasons
1	Encourage staff to engage in the newly commissioned NICS focus groups which are to be set up to gauge views on corporate and personnel policies and practices with regards to disability duties.	Department of Finance and Personnel (DFP) have revised timescales to Autumn 2009. (Please see DFP's Section 75 Annual Report for further information)
2	Form Departmental focus groups for disabled staff	It was planned that Departmental focus groups would take the lead from those set up for the NICS (see above). The Department has also experienced difficulties in attracting a sufficient number of staff to form a consultative body.
3	Conduct a staff survey to ascertain how the Department is performing in valuing and supporting its disabled employees	Staff survey was to be based on issues raised in NICS and Departmental focus groups.
4	Commit to the Office of the First Minister and deputy First Minister (OFMDFM) attitude survey to encourage all public appointees to declare a disability and make suggestions on how positive attitudes could be promoted towards disabled people.	OFMDFM have advised that the survey will now be carried out in March/April 2009. (Please see OFMDFM's Section 75 Annual Report for further information).

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 and (b) Quantitative

The Department's revised plan will outline how it will evaluate and monitor the degree to which actions have been effective and develop new opportunities for action.

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.

Please delete: Yes

If yes please outline below:

	Revised/Additional Action Measures	Performance Indicator	Timescale
1	Engagement with Disability Action	Revised Disability Action Plan will reflect the views of the disability sector and the needs of disabled people.	Ongoing
2	The formation of focus group comprising of officials from the Department's main business areas.	Revised Disability Action Plan will reflect the business of the Department.	Ongoing

7. Do you intend to make any further **revisions to your plan** in light of your organisations annual review of the plan? If so, please outline proposed changes?

The Department is at present in the process of revising it's DAP. The revisions will take account of official feedback from the Equality Commission, when received, on content of the plan and of advice and guidance from Disability Action.

Annex 1

Ongoing Screening Activities 2006/07

The following policies were 'screened out' during the year. No plans are in place to carry out an EQIA on any of the policies noted in the table. Most of these are routine pieces of amending legislation necessary to maintain parity on Social Security issues between GB and NI.

Consultations with key stakeholders and s75 groups helped inform the development of many of the policies listed in the table below.

Title of Policy	Brief Description as appropriate
The Register of Occupational and Personal Pension Schemes (Amendment) Regulations (Northern Ireland) 2007 SR 2007 No 297	These Regulations provide that information contained in the register of occupational pension schemes and personal pension schemes, compiled and maintained by the Pensions Regulator under section 59 of the Pensions Act 2004 shall be provided to, or made available for inspection by, the Office for National Statistics for the purposes of producing pension statistics.
The Occupational Pension Schemes (Winding Up, Winding Up Notices and Reports, etc.) (Amendment) Regulations (Northern Ireland) 2007 SR 2007 No 338	These Regulations make amendments- <ul style="list-style-type: none">• to provide that trustees of an occupational pension scheme may make lump sum payments even if members did not have a right to a lump sum payment under the scheme;• to provide that trustees or managers of occupational pension schemes can make winding up lump sum payments to pension credit members;• to provide that the trustees or managers of schemes which commence winding up after 1 October 2007 submit their first winding up report to the Pensions Regulator two years from the date that winding up commenced.

<p>The Social Security (1989 Order) (Commencement No. 4) Order (Northern Ireland) 2007 SR 2007 No 362 (C.24)</p>	<p>This Order commences paragraph 3 of Schedule 5 to the Social Security (Northern Ireland) Order 1989 to extend the equal treatment rules in pension schemes to periods of paid paternity and adoption leave.</p>
<p>The Occupational Pension Schemes (EEA States) Regulations (Northern Ireland) 2007 SR 2007 No 457</p>	<p>These Regulations amend various provisions in pensions legislation to take account of the adoption of the European Union Directive 2003/41/EC on the activities and supervision of institutions for occupational retirement provision by the European Economic Area States (Norway, Iceland and Liechtenstein).</p>
<p>The Occupational Pensions (Revaluation) Order (Northern Ireland) 2007 SR 2007 No 486</p>	<p>This Order sets the revaluation percentage for uprating the pension rights of those who leave their pension scheme early over the period since they left the scheme.</p>
<p>The Guaranteed Minimum Pensions Increase Order (Northern Ireland) 2008 SR 2008 No 84</p>	<p>This Order specifies the percentage by which the guaranteed minimum pension element of an individual's occupational pension entitlement is to be increased.</p>
<p>The Occupational and Personal Pension Schemes (General Levy) (Amendment) Regulations (Northern Ireland) 2008 SR 2008 No 97</p>	<p>These Regulations substitute new amounts to be used in calculating the amount payable in respect of the general levy payable by occupational and personal pension schemes, which meet the running costs of the Pensions Regulator, the Pensions Advisory Service and the Pensions Ombudsman, for the year 1 April 2008– 31 March 2009 and subsequent years.</p>
<p>The Occupational Pension Schemes (Internal Dispute Resolution Procedures) (Consequential and Miscellaneous Amendments) Regulations (Northern Ireland) 2008 SR 2008 No 116</p>	<p>These Regulations simplify internal dispute resolution procedures for occupational pension schemes.</p>
<p>The Occupational Pension Schemes (Non-European Schemes Exemption) Regulations (Northern Ireland) 2008 SR 2008 No 117</p>	<p>These Regulations exempt certain unregistered schemes or split approved schemes from the requirements of Article 230 of the Pensions (Northern Ireland) Order 2005, allowing such employers to contribute to the home scheme in respect of employees currently working in Northern Ireland.</p>
<p>The Occupational Pension Schemes (Employer Debt and Miscellaneous Amendments) Regulations (Northern Ireland) 2008 SR 2008 No 132</p>	<p>These Regulations amend the Occupational Pension Schemes (Employer Debt) Regulations (Northern Ireland) 2005 and make consequential amendments to other Regulations to increase flexibility for defined benefit occupational pension schemes and employers, while frustrating any abandonment of pension schemes by employers.</p>

<p>The Occupational Pension Schemes (Levy Ceiling) Order (Northern Ireland) 2008 SR 2008 No 144</p>	<p>This Order specifies the amount of the levy ceiling as £833,410,200 for the financial year beginning on 1st April 2008.</p>
<p>The Occupational Pension Schemes (Levies) (Amendment) Regulations (Northern Ireland) 2008 SR 2008 No 145</p>	<p>These Regulations amend the Occupational Pension Schemes (Levies) Regulations (Northern Ireland) 2005 by substituting new amounts to be used in calculating the amount payable in respect of the Pension Protection Fund administration levy for the year 1 April 2008– 31 March 2009 and subsequent years.</p>
<p>The Pension Protection Fund (Pension Compensation Cap) Order Northern Ireland) 2008 SR 2008 No 146</p>	<p>This Order specifies the amount of the compensation cap as £30,856·35, for the purposes of paragraph (a) of the definition of “the compensation cap” in paragraph 26(7) of Schedule 6 to the Pensions (Northern Ireland) Order 2005.</p>
<p>The Pension Protection Fund (Prescribed Payments) Regulations 2008 SI 2008 No 664</p>	<p>These Regulations make provision for the Board of the Pension Protection Fund to make payments from the Fund to cover certain expenditure incurred by the Board in respect of risk-based administration costs.</p>
<p>The Transfer of State Pensions and Benefits Regulations (Northern Ireland) 2007 SR 2007 No 286</p>	<p>These Regulations are made in pursuance of Article 11(2) of Annex VIII to the Staff Regulations set out in Council Regulation 259/68 and allows for a person's rights which have accrued by virtue of their National Insurance contributions, to be transferred to the pension scheme for officials and servants of Community institutions and bodies (“the Communities’ scheme”) if they so wish.</p>
<p>The Social Security (National Insurance Credits) (Amendment) Regulations (Northern Ireland) 2007 SR 2007 No 395</p>	<p>These Regulations amend the Social Security (Credits) Regulations (Northern Ireland) 1975, the Social Security and Child Support (Decisions and Appeals) Regulations (Northern Ireland) 1999, and the Social Security (Crediting and Treatment of Contributions, and National Insurance Numbers) Regulations (Northern Ireland) 2001 specifying the treatment of a person, affected by an incorrect awards of contributory benefits, made as a result of the mismatch of data held on computer systems managed by DWP and HMRC.</p>
<p>The Social Security (National Insurance Numbers) (Amendment) Regulations (Northern Ireland) SR 2008 No 51</p>	<p>These Regulations amend the Social Security (Crediting and Treatment of Contributions, and National Insurance Number) Regulations (Northern Ireland) 2001 to reflect changes introduced by the Immigration (Restrictions on Employment) Order 2007 regarding the documentary evidence required by an</p>

	individual as proof of their right to work in the UK.
The Social Security Revaluation of Earnings Factors Order (Northern Ireland) 2008 SR 2008 No 121	This Order directs that the earnings factors relevant to the calculation of the additional pension in the rate of any long-term benefit or of any guaranteed minimum pension, or to any other calculation required under Part III of the Pension Schemes (Northern Ireland) Act 1993, are to be increased by the percentage of their amount for each of the tax years specified in the Schedule to the Order.
The Social Security Pensions (Low Earnings Threshold) Order (Northern Ireland) 2008 SR 2008 No 120	This Order directs that the low earnings threshold, for the purposes of the Social Security Contributions and Benefits (Northern Ireland) Act 1992, for the tax years following 2007-2008 shall be £13,500. The low earnings threshold is used for the purposes of calculating entitlement to the additional pension (the state second pension) in a state retirement pension.
The Child Support (Miscellaneous Amendments) Regulations (Northern Ireland) 2007	These Regulations made an amendment to the definition of taxable income for the purposes of assessing an amount of child maintenance payable. Changes were also made to the length of time allowed to non-resident parents living abroad to make an appeal against a Deduction from Earnings Order.
The Child Support (Miscellaneous Amendments) Regulations (Northern Ireland) 2008	These Regulations made amendments to the Child Support Information, Evidence and Disclosure Regulations to allow the Department for Social Development to obtain information from the Driver and Vehicle Agency, credit reference agencies and deposit takers to supply information which would assist with the collection of child maintenance. Changes were made to the Collection and Enforcement Regulations to compel non-resident parents to notify the Department of the name and address of a new employer.
The Housing Benefit (Miscellaneous Amendments) Regulations (Northern Ireland) 2007 (S.R. 2007 No. 266)	The Regulations make various amendments to Regulations relating to housing benefit. The Housing Benefit (Decisions and Appeals) Regulations (Northern Ireland) 2001 are amended to provide for the date from which certain decisions have effect and to make minor drafting corrections. The Housing Benefit Regulations (Northern Ireland) 2006 and the Housing Benefit (Persons who have attained the qualifying age for state pension

	<p>credit) Regulations (Northern Ireland) 2006 are amended to: clarify that a particular restriction in relation to liability to make payments in respect of a dwelling applies to rent; provide that where the claimant's partner is the owner of a dwelling then payments by a claimant in respect of that dwelling are not eligible for housing benefit; provide that the amount of housing benefit payable to a claimant in respect of a dwelling will be subject to the maximum rent provisions from the beginning of his claim if his partner has claimed housing benefit in respect of that dwelling in the previous 52 weeks; and take account of the Private Tenancies (Northern Ireland) Order 2006. Screened 1 May 2007.</p>
<p>The Discretionary Financial Assistance (Amendment) Regulations (Northern Ireland) 2008 (S.R. 2008 No. 111)</p>	<p>The Regulations amend the Discretionary Financial Assistance Regulations (Northern Ireland) 2001, which govern the payment of Discretionary Housing Payments, to: confirm that Discretionary Housing Payments do not cover shortfalls arising from Housing Benefit overpayment recovery; ensure that a Discretionary Housing Payment can only be paid for a period for which there is entitlement to Housing Benefit; take account of the Water and Sewerage Services (Northern Ireland) Order 2006 by excluding water, sewerage or allied environmental charges from the scope of Discretionary Housing Payments; and update a reference to the Child Support (Northern Ireland) Order 1991. Screened 6 February 08.</p>
<p>The Social Security (Miscellaneous Amendments No. 2) Regulations (Northern Ireland) 2008</p>	<p>The Regulations make various amendments to the Social Security and Child Support (Decisions and Appeals) Regulations (Northern Ireland) 1999, the Housing Benefit Regulations (Northern Ireland) 2006, the Housing Benefit (Persons who have attained the qualifying age for state pension credit) Regulations (Northern Ireland) 2006 and the Housing Benefit (Consequential Provisions) Regulations (Northern Ireland) 2006. The amendments: introduce of a full disregard of child maintenance in Housing Benefit; remove the pensioner premiums from working age Housing Benefit; and correct or clarify provisions in the consolidated sets of Housing Benefit Regulations and the Social Security and Child Support (Decisions and Appeals) Regulations 1999. Screened 18 March 2008.</p>

<p>The Social Security (Claims and Information) Regulations (Northern Ireland) 2007 (S.R. 2007 No. 467)</p>	<p>The Regulations are a consequence of powers in section 38 of the Welfare Reform Act (Northern Ireland) 2007. Section 38 extends various gateways for the use of information, and sharing of functions between, relevant authorities (the Department and the authorities administering Housing Benefit (the Northern Ireland Housing Executive and the Land and Property Services Agency of the Department of Finance and Personnel)). The Regulations give effect to certain provisions in section 38 so as to enable greater streamlining of the social security claims administration process. The Regulations are concerned with the acceptance, verification and forwarding of claims and information by one relevant authority on behalf of another and the use of such information by the receiving authority, for example, to allow the authorities administering Housing Benefit to use Housing Benefit information to encourage people to claim benefits administered by the Department. Screened April 2007.</p>
<p>The Housing Benefit (Executive Determinations) Regulations (Northern Ireland) 2008 (S.R. 2008 No. 100)</p>	<p>The Regulations are a consequence of powers introduced by section 30(2) of the Welfare Reform Act and relate to the introduction of Local Housing Allowance arrangements in Housing Benefit. The Regulations provide for the Northern Ireland Housing Executive to make Broad Rental Market Area determinations and Local Housing Allowance determinations, thereby setting the areas and rates for Local Housing Allowance. Screened April 2007.</p>
<p>The Housing Benefit (Local Housing Allowance) (Amendment) Regulations (Northern Ireland) 2008 (S.R. 2008 No. 101) The Housing Benefit (State Pension Credit) (Local Housing Allowance) (Amendment) Regulations (Northern Ireland) 2008 (S.R. 2008 No. 102)</p>	<p>The Regulations are a consequence of powers introduced by section 30(2) of the Welfare Reform Act and amend the main Housing Benefit Regulations for the introduction of Local Housing Allowance arrangements in Housing Benefit. Local Housing Allowance provides a new way of calculating Housing Benefit for tenants in the private rented sector. It means that a similar amount of Housing Benefit is paid to claimants with similar circumstances living in a similar area. The existing payment arrangements for Housing Benefit apply. For existing cases the application of the amended Regulations will be staggered. Screened April 2007.</p>

<p>The Housing Benefit (Local Housing Allowance) (Miscellaneous and Consequential Amendments) Regulations (Northern Ireland) 2008 (S.R. 2008 No. 103)</p>	<p>The Regulations amend various Statutory Rules as a result of the introduction of Local Housing Allowance. Screened April 2007.</p>
<p>The Social Security and Housing Benefit (Amendment) Regulations (Northern Ireland) 2007 (S.R. 2007 No. 263)</p>	<p>The Regulations make provision excluding persons from abroad or persons treated as not in Northern Ireland from making advance claims for income support, jobseeker's allowance, state pension credit and housing benefit</p>
<p>The Social Security (Claims and Payments) (Amendment No. 3) Regulations (Northern Ireland) 2007 (S.R. 2007 No. 330)</p>	<p>The Regulations provide for deductions from specified benefits in respect of integration loans made under the Integration Loans for Refugees and Others Regulations 2007</p>
<p>The Social Security (Miscellaneous Amendments No. 3) Regulations (Northern Ireland) 2007 (S.R. 2007 No. 332)</p>	<p>The Regulations allow the Department and the eligible member of an appeal tribunal to refer a person to a health care professional for medical examination and report, rather than only allowing a referral to a medical practitioner – consequential upon section 55 of the Welfare Reform Act (Northern Ireland) 2007</p>
<p>The Pneumoconiosis, etc., (Workers' Compensation) (Prescribed Occupations) Order (Northern Ireland) 2007 (S.R. 2007 No. 337)</p>	<p>The Order prescribes occupations for the purposes of each disease to which the Pneumoconiosis, etc., (Workers' Compensation) (Northern Ireland) Order 1979 applies – consequential upon section 52 of the Welfare Reform Act (Northern Ireland) 2007</p>
<p>The Social Security (Industrial Injuries) (Prescribed Diseases) (Amendment No. 2) Regulations (Northern Ireland) 2007 (S.R. 2007 No. 341)</p>	<p>The Regulations amend prescribed disease A11 by adding sensorineural symptoms to the description of the disease and a proviso that both sets of symptoms are caused by vibration and by providing that the prescription shall not cover blanching of the skin or sensorineural symptoms prior to employment in a prescribed occupation and amends the description of the occupation involving hand-held chain saws</p>
<p>The Social Security (Miscellaneous Amendments No. 4) Regulations (Northern Ireland) 2007 (S.R. 2007 No. 392)</p>	<p>These Regulations amend</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • the Social Security (Claims and Payments) Regulations (Northern Ireland) 1987 to extend the list of exceptions to the general rule of the necessity to make a claim to be entitled to benefit, enable claimants to benefit from certain linking rules, ensure that transitional protection for payment of child dependency increases is not lost

	<p>where a disabled person goes into hospital or certain other accommodation, enable carer's allowance to be paid from the date that entitlement first arises in certain circumstances and enable arrears of benefit to be paid to a spouse or civil partner of a deceased claimant without the need for a written application to be made</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • the Social Security and Child Support (Decisions and Appeals) Regulations (Northern Ireland) 1999 to extend the definition of an "incapacity benefit decision" to cover awards of long term incapacity benefit, enable the Department to revise certain decisions and to make it clear that an existing provision can apply only to the person being cared for and not the carer • regulation 77(1) and (2) of the Housing Benefit Regulations (Northern Ireland) 2006 and regulation 57(1) and (2) of the Housing Benefit (Persons who have attained the qualifying age for state pension credit) Regulations (Northern Ireland) 2006 to provide that those provisions are subject to regulation 8(3) of the Housing Benefit (Decisions and Appeals) Regulations (Northern Ireland) 2001
<p>The Social Security (Attendance Allowance and Disability Living Allowance) (Amendment) Regulations (Northern Ireland) 2007 (S.R. 2007 No. 431)</p>	<p>The Regulations provide the circumstances in which attendance allowance or the care component of disability living allowance is not be payable where a person is resident in a care home (an establishment that provides accommodation together with nursing or personal care) where any of the costs of any qualifying services (accommodation, board or personal care) are met, in whole or in part, out of public or local funds</p>
<p>The Social Security (Industrial Injuries) (Prescribed Diseases) (Amendment) Regulations (Northern Ireland) 2008 (S.R. 2008 No. 45)</p>	<p>The Regulations add the disease nasopharyngeal cancer, as it relates to occupations involving working with wood, to the list of prescribed diseases</p>
<p>The Social Security (Claims and Payments) (Amendment) Regulations (Northern Ireland) 2008 (S.R. 2008 No. 69)</p>	<p>The Regulations provide that when a person's spouse or civil partner is awarded a Category A retirement pension, that person can be</p>

	awarded a Category B retirement pension without having to claim it, providing that they are already entitled to either a Category A retirement pension or to a graduated retirement benefit and clarifies an existing provision regarding the award of a Category B retirement pension where a person marries or enters into a civil partnership
The Pneumoconiosis, etc., (Workers' Compensation) (Payment of Claims) (Amendment) Regulations (Northern Ireland) 2008 (S.R. 2008 No. 73)	The Regulations increase the amounts payable under the Pneumoconiosis, etc., (Workers' Compensation) (Northern Ireland) Order 1979
The Social Security Benefits Up-rating Order (Northern Ireland) 2008 (S.R. 2008 No. 92)	The Order provides for the rates of benefits from April 2008
The Social Security Benefits Up-rating Regulations (Northern Ireland) 2008 (S.R. 2008 No. 105)	The Regulations make provision consequential on the Social Security Benefits Up-rating Order (Northern Ireland) 2009 and increase the earnings limits for child dependency increases payable with a carer's allowance
The Social Security (Industrial Injuries) (Dependency) (Permitted Earnings Limits) Order (Northern Ireland) 2008 (S.R. 2008 No. 115)	The Order increases the earnings limits for the purposes of paragraph 4(4) of Schedule 7 to the Social Security Contributions and Benefits (Northern Ireland) Act 1992
The Workmen's Compensation (Supplementation) (Amendment) Regulations (Northern Ireland) 2008 (S.R. 2008 No. 115)	The Regulations increase the lower rates of lesser incapacity allowance consequential upon the increase in the maximum rate of that allowance made by the Social Security Benefits Up-rating Order (Northern Ireland) 2008
The Welfare Reform Act (Northern Ireland) 2007 (c.2)	The main provisions include the introduction of a new Employment and Support Allowance to replace Incapacity Benefit and Income Support on the grounds of incapacity; a number of measures dealing with Housing Benefit including a Local Housing Allowance; and measures to improve or clarify various aspects of existing legislation to make it simpler to administer and easier to understand
The Social Security (Miscellaneous Amendments No. 2) Regulations (Northern Ireland) 2007 (S.R. 2007 No. 306)	These Regulations amend: <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • the Social Security (Credits) Regulations (Northern Ireland) 1975 • the Income Support (General) Regulations (Northern Ireland) 1987; • the Jobseeker's Allowance Regulations (Northern Ireland) 1996; • the Housing Benefit Regulations

	<p>(Northern Ireland) 2006;</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> the Housing Benefit (Persons who have attained the qualifying age for state pension credit) Regulations (Northern Ireland) 2006; and <p>in consequence of the changes to the tax system in relation to pensions schemes made by the Finance Act 2004.</p>
<p>The Social Security (Students and Income-related Benefits) (Amendment) Regulations (Northern Ireland) 2007 (S.R. 2007 No. 298)</p>	<p>The purpose of these Regulations is to amend the Income Support (General) Regulations (Northern Ireland) 1987, the Jobseeker's Allowance Regulations (Northern Ireland) 1996 and the Housing Benefit Regulations (Northern Ireland) 2006 to provide for the annual increase in student disregards in respect of books, equipment and travel costs, all of which shall only apply once in every academic year. Most full-time students are not eligible to claim any of these income-related benefits. There are exceptions for each benefit, though, and students can claim benefit if they fall into the "vulnerable group" (in the main, lone parents, student couples with children or disabled students). For those students who are entitled, there are specific regulations that deal with the treatment of their income. Each year, in time for the start of the academic year, these regulations are amended to up-rate the disregards for books, equipment and travel costs applicable to student loans or personal maintenance grant income.</p>
<p>The Independent Living Fund (2006) Order (Northern Ireland) 2007 (S.R. 2007 No. 382)</p>	<p>The purpose of the Order is to make miscellaneous amendments to the Income Support (General) Regulations (Northern Ireland) 1987, the Child Support (Maintenance Assessments and Special Cases) Regulations (Northern Ireland) 1992, the Jobseeker's Allowance Regulations (Northern Ireland) 1996, the State Pension Credit Regulations (Northern Ireland) 2003, the Housing Renewal Grants (Reduction of Grant) Regulations (Northern Ireland) 2004, the Housing Benefit Regulations (Northern Ireland) 2006 and the Housing Benefit (Persons who have attained the qualifying age for state pension credit) Regulations (Northern Ireland) 2006. The amendments are consequential upon the coming into force of section 61 of the Welfare</p>

	<p>Reform Act 2007. Section 61 amends the Disability (Grants) Act 1993 (c. 14) to enable the Secretary of State for Work and Pensions and the Department for Social Development to make grants to the Independent Living Fund (2006). From 1st October 2007, the Independent Living Fund (2006) will operate in place of the Independent Living (Extension) Fund and the Independent Living (1993) Fund. This Order provides that, in matters of social security, child support and housing, payments from the Independent Living Fund (2006) will be treated in the same way as payments from the Independent Living (Extension) Fund and the Independent Living (1993) Fund.</p>
<p>The Social Security (Miscellaneous Amendments) (No. 5) Regulations (Northern Ireland) 2007 (S.R. 2007 No. 396)</p>	<p>The purpose of the Regulations is to make miscellaneous amendments to the Social Security (Invalid Care Allowance) Regulations (Northern Ireland) 1976, the Social Security (General Benefit) Regulations (Northern Ireland) 1984, the Income Support (General) Regulations (Northern Ireland) 1987, the Social Security (Incapacity Benefit) Regulations (Northern Ireland) 1994, the Social Security (Incapacity for Work) (General) Regulations (Northern Ireland) 1995, the Jobseeker's Allowance Regulations (Northern Ireland) 1996, the State Pension Credit Regulations (Northern Ireland) 2003, the Housing Benefit Regulations (Northern Ireland) 2006, and the Housing Benefit (Persons who have attained the qualifying age for state pension credit) Regulations (Northern Ireland) 2006.</p> <p>Amendments in these regulations fall into four main categories:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • they replace references to obsolete legislation with references to equivalent current legislation, tidy up obsolete cross-references or clarify existing policy; • they align treatment of certain payments for working-age income-related benefits with that for pension age income-related benefits; • they simplify benefit administration; or • they up-rate earnings limits in line

	<p>with the minimum wage. The amendments will:</p> <p><u>Ignore certain termination payments</u> From October 2007, all final earnings on new claims to all benefits will be ignored, to align with the treatment of final earnings in the pension age income-related benefits.</p> <p><u>Simplify the existing disregard on income from sub-tenants</u> From April 2008 the existing two-tier disregard on income from sub-tenants within the working-age income-related benefits will be replaced with a single disregard amount.</p> <p><u>Valuation of National Savings Certificates</u> Align the valuation of National Savings Certificates to the way other capital assets are valued – i.e. at its current market value or surrender value.</p> <p><u>Amend the notional income regulations to exclude those on unpaid work placement</u> The current income-related benefit Regulations contain rules so that people who carry out unpaid work are treated as possessing ‘notional earnings’. An amendment to the regulations ensures that people are able to participate in unpaid work placements approved by the Department without loss of benefit.</p> <p><u>Disregard of Education Maintenance Allowance</u> From April 2008 the payment of Education Maintenance Allowance is being extended to include unwaged trainees. These will be disregarded in line with the current disregard for Education Maintenance Allowances for young people in education.</p> <p><u>Disregard of arrears of rate relief</u> The new rate relief scheme came into operation in April 2007. References to the rate relief scheme are being inserted to ensure an award of rate arrears continue to be disregarded.</p> <p><u>Notional Income</u> Regulations provide for treating claimants as possessing notional income where they have</p>
--	--

failed to claim State Pension to which they would have entitlement. This amendment ensures that no more income is taken into account as notional and actual income than they would receive if they had claimed their State Pension.

Definition of pension fund holder

For the purpose of the State Pension Credit Regulations, the amendment ensures that the definition of “pension fund holder” also applies to occupational pension schemes. This brings it into line with the other income related benefits.

Carer’s Allowance (Formerly Invalid Care Allowance) – change to the earnings limit

A condition for entitlement to Carer’s Allowance is that a person shall not be gainfully employed. The level of earnings at which someone is treated as gainfully employed is increasing from £87 to £95 so they are not disadvantaged as a result of the increase in minimum wage from October.

Increasing the Permitted Work Earnings Limit

One of the qualifying conditions for Incapacity Benefit and related benefits is that a person is incapable of work, although permitted work can be undertaken within limits to encourage people to return to work or to encourage social contact. The earnings limit increases from £86 to £88.50 a week from 1 October 2007. Corresponding increases have been made to the earnings limits for Councillors receiving Incapacity Benefit. The earnings level for the purposes of the Unemployability Supplement under the Industrial Injuries Disablement Benefit scheme is increased from £4,472 a year to £4,602 a year. These increases mean that customers are not disadvantaged as a result of the increase in minimum wage from October.

Days of incapacity for work and National Insurance Credits

Incorrect awards of National Insurance Credits have been discovered as a result of discrepancies in the information held on DWPs Pension Strategy Computer System and HMRC’s National Insurance Recording

	<p>System. Current awards of Incapacity Benefit based on these incorrect credits will not be revised and continue in payment as normal. This amendment ensures that days which were incorrectly considered days of incapacity for work as a result of the incorrect awards of credits will be treated as days of incapacity for work for the purposes of later linked claims for IB (linking rules are used so that people can be entitled to benefit using the contribution conditions and benefit rates that applied to a previous award of benefit. Normally periods of incapacity are linked when they are separated by no more than 8 weeks but this may be extended to 104 weeks when someone leaves benefit to start work or training).</p>
<p>The Social Security (Miscellaneous Amendments) Regulations (Northern Ireland) 2008 (S.R. 2008 No. 112)</p>	<p>The purpose of the Regulations is to make minor and non-controversial miscellaneous amendments to the Income Support (General) Regulations (Northern Ireland) 1987), the Social Security (Claims and Payments) Regulations (Northern Ireland) 1987, the Jobseeker's Allowance Regulations (Northern Ireland) 1996, the State Pension Credit Regulations (Northern Ireland) 2003 and the Housing Benefit Regulations (Northern Ireland) 2006.</p> <p>The amendments will-</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> a. Create a disregard of payments made to young people beyond the age of 18 who wish to remain with their ex-carer, when that payment is then made to ex-carer. b. Clarify the regulations that deal with the attribution of monthly income; c. Introduce Regulations to align the treatment of income from Public Lending Rights in the working age Income-related Benefits Regulations with the pension age Income-related Benefits; d. Amend Jobseeker's Allowance Regulations so that any person on

	<p>Additional Adoption Leave is treated as not available for work;</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> e. Remove outdated references from and make minor amendments to, the Income-related Benefits Regulations; f. Remove a current disparity between Income Support and Jobseeker's Allowance where couples with responsibility for a child, in the same circumstances receive different amounts of benefit; g. Update the Jobseeker's Allowance Regulations to reflect that the Venture Trust programme is no longer funded by the Home Office in England and Wales; h. Make minor amendments to Income Support and Jobseeker's Allowance Regulations to ensure estranged 16/17 year olds are treated consistently and the qualifying conditions for those in education and training reflect the original policy intention; and i. Amend the Claims and Payment regulations that determine the point at which direct payments can be made for Hostel Dwellers, so as to reduce the risk of eviction.
<p>The Jobseeker's Allowance (Extension of the Preparation for Employment Programme) (Amendment) Regulations (Northern Ireland) 2007</p>	<p>These Regulations make amendments to the Jobseeker's Allowance Regulations (Northern Ireland) 1996 to extend the Preparation for Employment Programme which currently covers Jobseeker's Allowance claimants who are aged between 25 and 50 years. The changes will make it mandatory for Jobseeker's Allowance claimants who are aged between 50 and 59 years old and who have been receiving benefit for a cumulative period of at least 18 months in the previous 21 months to participate in the Preparation for Employment Programme scheme. The Preparation for Employment Programme will continue to be available on a voluntary basis to</p>

	<p>people over the age of 59 who are in receipt of qualifying benefits.</p> <p>The purpose of these changes is to make the Preparation for Employment Programme mandatory for those jobseekers aged 50 to 59 with the ultimate aim of increasing the number of people in employment supporting the Government's 5 year strategy of achieving "Opportunity and Security Throughout Life". This provision ensures that jobseekers in this age group will receive at least the same level of support as younger jobseekers thus addressing previous differences in treatment for those aged 50 to 59 to that offered to other age groups. These amendments comply with the age discrimination legislation covering employment and training which was implemented in October 2006 by the Employment Equality (Age) Regulations (Northern Ireland) 2006.</p>
<p>The Social Security (Housing Costs and Miscellaneous Amendments) Regulations (Northern Ireland) 2007.</p>	<p>The statutory rule makes amendments to the Income Support (General) Regulations (Northern Ireland) 1987, the Social Security (Claims and Payments) Regulations (Northern Ireland) 1987, the Jobseeker's Allowance Regulations (Northern Ireland) 1996 and the State Pension Credit Regulations (Northern Ireland) 2003.</p> <p>The amendments are a series of unrelated technical changes which are needed to the various sets of Regulations (named above) to correct support for mortgage interest. These proposals should decrease complexity within the housing cost provisions by updating references and clarifying the existing policy intention. The amendments are to:-</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • amend the Claims and Payments Regulations to update age references; • amend the mortgage interest run on provisions; • ensure continuity between different benefit claims when linking periods apply; • remove a potential anomaly concerning the circumstances in which housing costs are not met; and • remove otiose references in standard interest rate provisions. <p>The changes to the provisions will apply to all</p>

	homeowners who are in receipt of Income Support, income-based Jobseeker's Allowance and State Pension Credit who receive help with their housing costs, regardless of religious belief, political opinion, race, sexual orientation, gender or disability.
The Jobseeker's Allowance (Joint Claims) (Amendment) Regulations (Northern Ireland) 2008	<p>The Joint Claims for Jobseeker's Allowance regime currently applies to couples who claim income-based Jobseeker's Allowance. Specifically, couples without dependant children, one partner who is aged over 18 but under State Pension Age and born after 28 October 1957.</p> <p>The objective is to increase the number of couples to whom the Joint Claims regime applies, by amending the criteria to include couples where one partner is aged over 18, under pension age and born after 28 October 1947. Couples with a child are still exempt as are any couples with one member who falls into the existing exemption categories which remain unchanged.</p>
Benefit Uptake Programme 2007 – 2008	The aim of the programme will be to enable the Agency to continue to deliver one of its 5 key priorities "Promoting Benefit Uptake" and will also contribute to the regional action plan arising out of "Lifetime Opportunities", the Government's strategy for tackling poverty and social exclusion in Northern Ireland, which was launched in 2006.
Relocation of Newtownards Social Security Office and Newtownards Jobcentre to a new site within the Castlebawn Estate	Under the government's Welfare Reform and Modernisation Programme, the Social Security Agency and Department for Employment and Learning are jointly running a project (Jobs and Benefit) to improve the service offered to customers of working age. The project co-locates the Social Security Office and Jobcentre on a single site, integrating services around the customer and focusing on their welfare and labour market needs.