The Open University

Public Authority Statutory Equality and Good Relations Duties
Annual Progress Report 2014-15

Contact:

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Section 75 of the NI Act 1998 and Equality Scheme</th>
<th>Name: John Addy</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>Telephone: 028 9024 5925</td>
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<tr>
<td></td>
<td>Email: <a href="mailto:john.addy@open.ac.uk">john.addy@open.ac.uk</a></td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Section 49A of the Disability Discrimination Act 1995 and Disability Action Plan</th>
<th>As above</th>
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<td>Name:</td>
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<td>Telephone:</td>
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Documents published relating to our Equality Scheme can be found at:
http://www.open.ac.uk/equality-diversity/content/equality-scheme-objectives

Signature:

\[Signature\]

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

It presents our progress in fulfilling our statutory equality and good relations duties, and implementing Equality Scheme commitments and Disability Action Plans.

This report reflects progress made between April 2014 and March 2015
PART A

PART A – Section 75 of the Northern Ireland Act 1998 and Equality Scheme

Section 1: Equality and good relations outcomes, impacts and good practice

1 In 2014-15, please provide examples of key policy/service delivery developments made by the public authority in this reporting period to better promote equality of opportunity and good relations; and the outcomes and improvements achieved.

*Please relate these to the implementation of your statutory equality and good relations duties and Equality Scheme where appropriate.*

2014/15 was a year of steady progress across the Open University and in Northern Ireland, as the local University entered its second year of devolved funding from the Department of Employment and Learning in Northern Ireland.

In December 2014 the Equality and Diversity Management Group received updated reports on progress on its equality objectives for 2012-2016, of which the following are germane to the Section 75 groups within Northern Ireland:

Objective 1: Improve the perception of ethnic minorities towards The Open University. Our market research data gave contradictory evidence as to whether the lower level of perception of the Open University amongst ethnic minority students was narrowing or not and further evidence would be available in mid 2015.

Objective 2: Increase the satisfaction of disabled students. The satisfaction level of disabled students had increased from 82% in 2012 to 86% in 2014 and was only 0.6% lower than non-disabled students.

Objective 3: Reduce the ethnicity attainment gap. 50% of white students achieve a good pass, compared to 20% of black students. The gap in December 2014 was 28.8% and was hardly changed over the first two years of the objective. A number of interventions had been deployed amongst tutors and students and these might take time to work, but clearly there was disappointing progress on this objective and more work was needed.

Objective 4: Increase the proportion of younger academic staff. The OU has a lower proportion of academic staff under 35 (12%) than the higher education sector as whole. The proportion of younger academic staff appointed in the past two years has increased from 18% to 24%.
Objective 5: Increase the satisfaction of ethnic minority staff. The Aspire programme and a range of other measures may have contributed to a narrowing of the gap in satisfaction between ethnic minority staff and staff overall from 9% in 2012 to 4% in 2014.

Objective 6: Increase the satisfaction of disabled staff. The gap has narrowed from 6% in 2012 to 5% in 2014 and interventions have included a range of measures including the Aspire programme, staff networks and other interventions.

Objective 7: Increase the proportion of female professors. While no professorial staff are employed in Northern Ireland, the proportion is up 2% to 36% in two years across the OU.

Objective 8: Improve Equality Monitoring information. Monitoring for religion/belief and sexual orientation has been introduced for both staff and students and also maternity returners amongst staff.

Objective 9: Improve Equality Policy and Guidance for Staff and Students. A religious festivals calendar was made available to staff during 2014. A range of policies have been developed across the period 2012-16.

The full list of equality objectives can be found at:

During the period of the report, the work of the Policy and Public Affairs Team has expanded its range of activities since the previous report. The OU in Northern Ireland liaises with elected members if the Northern Ireland Assembly, MPs and other people in public life from all major political parties. Officers from the OU attend the weekly meetings of the Assembly and the Assembly Committee for Employment and Learning. As well as informal liaison with elected representative, OU staff attend party conferences from the seven largest parties and we also invite people from the various parties to public events, including degree ceremonies, Culture Night and a range of other academic and cultural activities. The Open University has now joined Queens University and The University of Ulster in participating in the Northern Ireland Assembly’s Knowledge Exchange Seminar Series, with academic staff delivering briefings on a wide variety of topics at Stormont. The Minister for Employment and Learning attended our Belfast degree ceremony in May 2014 in the Waterfront Hall,
Belfast and the former assembly speaker, Lord Alderdice, was granted an honorary doctorate in the same ceremony.

During the year, the OU has appointed a Widening Participation Manager to support the recruitment of students from parts of the community which have a low take-up of higher education. As well as recruiting students into new "access" modules and other taster courses or short programmes designed to encourage student to complete their programme and take further study. Around half our students in Northern Ireland are able to study for free under current student finance arrangements.

The University records a range of information about its students and has started to record information about a number of protected characteristics including sexual orientation. The proportion of students with a disability has continued to increase with applicants encouraged to declare if they have a condition which may affect their study. They are encouraged to do so in order that additional resources may be targeted to their particular needs, for example dyslexia.

Following the legal changes brought in by the UK government in 2012 granting all employees the right to request flexible working, whereas this was previously only available to parent and carers with 26 weeks continuous service. Following extension consultation across the OU, the new Flexible Working policy was introduced during 2014.

Other noteworthy achievements during the report period include:

- Dr Meg Barker, Senior Lecturer in Psychology was listed at number 36 in the Independent on Sunday's Pink List of 101 gay, lesbian, bisexual and transgender people that "make a difference". She is best known for her research into bisexuality.

- Work has commenced on scoping the requirements on a new university policy on religion and belief, the results of which will be reported in 2015/16.

- The Strategy Office has worked closely with the Equality and Diversity Team to ensure that the University's Equality and Diversity planning and reporting process has been fully integrated into the annual process of producing business plans in each unit of the OU. including Northern Ireland.

- A new version of the OU's public Equality and Diversity website was launched in July 2014.

http://www.open.ac.uk/equality-diversity/

- Two new staff networks have been established in the OU: EnablingStaff@OU for disabled staff and Women@OU/
Please provide examples of outcomes and/or the impact of equality action plans/measures in 2014-15 (or append the plan with progress/examples identified).

The Annual Equality and Diversity Report for the Open University for 2014 and the Equality Action Plan can be found at:


Of the organisations 168 equality objectives for 2014/15, the following were specific to Northern Ireland.

1) The University's funder in Northern Ireland, the Department of Employment and Learning is implementing its strategy for higher education and for widening participation in higher education. The Open University has supplied members for all 19 of the working parties involved in implementing the two strategies.

2) Three new open access modules targeting students from sectors of the population with a low rate of participation in higher education were launched and approximately 100 students from across Northern Ireland were recruited.

3). A successful bid was made to for a joint research project with the Workers Education Association and a number Youth charities for an investigation into the experience and outlook for young people in Northern Ireland vulnerable to educational disadvantage. The project progressed through its pilot phase but latterly progress was hampered by the loss of public funding for for the next stage and the project has not progressed further.

4) The Development of a new Disability Action Plan was to have been achieved in this period and was not achieved. A new draft has now been submitted to the Equality Commission.

Equality Objectives for 2015/16 will be reported on in the next annual report.
PART A

3  Has the **application of the Equality Scheme** commitments resulted in any **changes** to policy, practice, procedures and/or service delivery areas during the 2014-15 reporting period? *(tick one box only)*

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

Please provide any details and examples:

The changes arising, based on the Equality and Diversity Principles set out in section 1.2 of the Equality Scheme are set out in sections 1 and 2 above.

3a  With regard to the change(s) made to policies, practices or procedures and/or service delivery areas, what **difference was made, or will be made, for individuals**, i.e. the impact on those according to Section 75 category?

Please provide any details and examples:

3b  What aspect of the Equality Scheme prompted or led to the change(s)? *(tick all that apply)*

☐ As a result of the organisation’s screening of a policy *(please give details)*:

☐ As a result of what was identified through the EQIA and consultation exercise *(please give details)*:

☐ As a result of analysis from monitoring the impact *(please give details)*:

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

☐ Other *(please specify and give details)*:

**Section 2: Progress on Equality Scheme commitments and action plans/measures**
PART A

Arrangements for assessing compliance (Model Equality Scheme Chapter 2)

4 Were the Section 75 statutory duties integrated within job descriptions during the 2014-15 reporting period? (tick one box only)

☐ Yes, organisation wide
☐ Yes, some departments/jobs
☒ No, this is not an Equality Scheme commitment
☐ No, this is scheduled for later in the Equality Scheme, or has already been done
☐ Not applicable

Please provide any details and examples:
NA

5 Were the Section 75 statutory duties integrated within performance plans during the 2014-15 reporting period? (tick one box only)

☒ Yes, organisation wide
☐ Yes, some departments/jobs
☐ No, this is not an Equality Scheme commitment
☐ No, this is scheduled for later in the Equality Scheme, or has already been done
☐ Not applicable

Please provide any details and examples:

The Open University's Annual is always published on its public website and the current plan includes objectives from across the OU including for Northern Ireland.

http://www.open.ac.uk/equality-diversity/content/equality-scheme-objectives

6 In the 2014-15 reporting period were objectives/ targets/ performance measures relating to the Section 75 statutory duties integrated into corporate plans, strategic planning and/or operational business plans? (tick all that apply)

☐ Yes, through the work to prepare or develop the new corporate plan
☒ Yes, through organisation wide annual business planning
☐ Yes, in some departments/jobs
PART A

☐ No, these are already mainstreamed through the organisation’s ongoing corporate plan

☐ No, the organisation’s planning cycle does not coincide with this 2013-14 report

☐ Not applicable

Please provide any details and examples:

The Open University Planning system requires all Units within the University, of which the Open University based in Northern Ireland is one, to produce an annual business plan. Objectives within the plan, such as those relating to the widening access to higher education to people from socially disadvantaged groups and those with other protected characteristics may also be included in the institution-wide Equality Diversity and Widening Access Plan, which is in effect Action Plan for the OU. Objectives in business plans which have a significant impact on equality and diversity for staff and/or students must be subjected to Equality Analysis. None of the objectives in the Northern Ireland business plan, which is a commercially sensitive document, required equality analysis in 2014/15.

Equality action plans/measures

7 Within the 2014-15 reporting period, please indicate the number of:

Actions completed: [ ] Actions ongoing: [ ] Actions to commence: [ ]

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

The Open University’s published Equality and Diversity, Widening Access and Success Plan, (EDWAS), reported on 168 action measures across the OU as a whole. Although some actions stem from Northern Ireland, many obtain across the whole OU and the report can be studied on the public website already cited.

8 Please give details of changes or amendments made to the equality action plan/measures during the 2014-15 reporting period (points not identified in an appended plan):

Please refer to:
http://www.open.ac.uk/equality-diversity/content/equality-scheme-objectives
http://www.open.ac.uk/equality-diversity/content/annual-reports

9 In reviewing progress on the equality action plan/action measures during the 2014-15 reporting period, the following have been identified: (tick all that apply)

☒ Continuing action(s), to progress the next stage addressing the known inequality
Action(s) to address the known inequality in a different way
Action(s) to address newly identified inequalities/recently prioritised inequalities
Measures to address a prioritised inequality have been completed

Arrangements for consulting (Model Equality Scheme Chapter 3)

10 Following the initial notification of consultations, a targeted approach was taken – and consultation with those for whom the issue was of particular relevance: (tick one box only)

☐ All the time  ☑ Sometimes  ☐ Never

11 Please provide any details and examples of good practice in consultation during the 2014-15 reporting period, on matters relevant (e.g. the development of a policy that has been screened in) to the need to promote equality of opportunity and/or the desirability of promoting good relations:

The Open University revised its list of published Section 75 consultees and a public consultation was carried on the University's new policy on the Recognition of Prior Learning, which looks at the wieh ECNI was party to the consultation, which attracted a limited number of responses, mostly updating contact details, and no substantive comments. Further consultations have occurred in the ensuing reporting period and will be reported on in the next report.

12 In the 2014-15 reporting period, given the consultation methods offered, which consultation methods were most frequently used by consultees: (tick all that apply)

☐ Face to face meetings
☐ Focus groups
☑ Written documents with the opportunity to comment in writing
☐ Questionnaires
☑ Information/notification by email with an opportunity to opt in/out of the consultation
☐ Internet discussions
☐ Telephone consultations
☐ Other (please specify):
Please provide any details or examples of the uptake of these methods of consultation in relation to the consultees’ membership of particular Section 75 categories:

A consultation was issued in January 2015 on The Open University’s revised revised policy for the Recognition of Prior Learning. The entire list of 61 consultees received the consultation by post and were asked to supply an email contact, which would be the basis of future consultations unless otherwise specified.

13 Were any awareness-raising activities for consultees undertaken, on the commitments in the Equality Scheme, during the 2014-15 reporting period? (tick one box only)

☐ Yes ☐ No ☒ Not applicable

Please provide any details and examples:

14 Was the consultation list reviewed during the 2014-15 reporting period? (tick one box only)

☒ Yes ☐ No ☐ Not applicable – no commitment to review

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

[insert link to any web pages where screening templates and/or other reports associated with Equality Scheme commitments are published]

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

0

16 Please provide the number of assessments that were consulted upon during 2014-15:

1 Policy consultations conducted with screening assessment presented.

Policy consultations conducted with an equality impact assessment (EQIA) presented.

Consultations for an EQIA alone.
17 Please provide details of the **main consultations** conducted on an assessment (as described above) or other matters relevant to the Section 75 duties:

No Equality Analyses were published in the Open University in Northern Ireland during the reporting period. OU consultations are published on our public website.

http://www.open.ac.uk/equality-diversity/content/equality-analysis-reports

18 Were any screening decisions (or equivalent initial assessments of relevance) reviewed following concerns raised by consultees? *(tick one box only)*

☐ Yes  ☒ No concerns were raised  ☐ No  ☐ Not applicable

Please provide any details and examples:

Arrangements for publishing the results of assessments (Model Equality Scheme Chapter 4)

19 Following decisions on a policy, were the results of any EQIAs published during the 2014-15 reporting period? *(tick one box only)*

☐ Yes  ☐ No  ☒ Not applicable

Please provide any details and examples:

OU equality analysis reports are published here, but none were conducted in the reporting period.

http://www.open.ac.uk/equality-diversity/content/equality-analysis-reports

Arrangements for monitoring and publishing the results of monitoring (Model Equality Scheme Chapter 4)

20 From the Equality Scheme monitoring arrangements, was there an audit of existing information systems during the 2014-15 reporting period? *(tick one box only)*

☒ Yes  ☐ No, already taken place

☐ No, scheduled to take place at a later date  ☐ Not applicable

Please provide any details:
Measures for equality objectives are reviewed regularly and updated annually, as reported in 2). No review of information systems were made in respect of the Equality Scheme.

21 In analysing monitoring information gathered, was any action taken to change/review any policies? (tick one box only)

☐ Yes  ☐ No  ☒ Not applicable

Please provide any details and examples:

Equality Objectives are monitored at the Institutional level by the Equality and Diversity Senior Team and revised annually:


22 Please provide any details or examples of where the monitoring of policies, during the 2014-15 reporting period, has shown changes to differential/adverse impacts previously assessed:

The institutional annual report, the Equality Objectives and the Equality, Diversity and Widening Access Plan (Action Plan) provide comprehensive information on the monitoring of policies, which are conducted at an institutional level in the main. Where a policy applies to Northern Ireland only or monitoring of an institution policy revealed a differential or adverse impact for Northern Ireland, this would be addressed by the Director, Ireland and the management team.

http://www.open.ac.uk/equality-diversity/content/equality-scheme-objectives

23 Please provide any details or examples of monitoring that has contributed to the availability of equality and good relations information/data for service delivery planning or policy development:

NA

Staff Training (Model Equality Scheme Chapter 5)

24 Please report on the activities from the training plan/programme (section 5.4 of the Model Equality Scheme) undertaken during 2014-15, and the extent to which they met the training objectives in the Equality Scheme.
The OU runs a vast array of training and induction activity for its staff and tutors across the UK and Ireland. Staff training for student facing staff and tutors would be too voluminous to list here. A range of recurrent provision is provided as part of the Learning and Development programme for staff. The short courses regularly delivered include:

The Equality Expert Workshops:
- Conducting Equality Analysis
- Deconstructing Stereotypes
- Valuing Student and Staff Difference

On online Diversity Module is also available to all staff.

Training for student facing staff for dealing with students with disabilities and helping our people to deliver the best support and target resources and interventions for our students is regularly updated in Belfast.

Please provide any examples of relevant training shown to have worked well, in that participants have achieved the necessary skills and knowledge to achieve the stated objectives:

The in-house disability training for staff in Belfast is highly valued.

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

Please list any examples of where monitoring during 2014-15, across all functions, has resulted in action and improvement in relation to access to information and services:

No specific Northern Ireland monitoring activities.

**Complaints (Model Equality Scheme Chapter 8)**

How many complaints in relation to the Equality Scheme have been received during 2014-15?

Insert number here: 0

Please provide any details of each complaint raised and outcome:

None in relation to the Equality Scheme

**Section 3: Looking Forward**
PART A

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

A draft revised Equality Scheme will be published in April 2016. A consultation on proposed changes to the existing scheme is being carried out with OU stakeholders at present.

29  Are there areas of the Equality Scheme arrangements (screening/consultation/training) your organisation anticipates will be focused upon in the next reporting period? *(please provide details)*

To be set out in a later report. The current scheme runs until 2016.
A major in-house training event is planned for 2014/15 for the student facing staff in Belfast on disability awareness and on latest guidance.

30  In relation to the advice and services that the Commission offers, what equality and good relations priorities are anticipated over the next (2015-16) reporting period? *(please tick any that apply)*

- [ ] Employment
- [ ] Goods, facilities and services
- [ ] Legislative changes
- [ ] Organisational changes/ new functions
- [ ] Nothing specific, more of the same
- [ ] Other (please state):
  
  Training on good employment practice and Northern Ireland legislation.
PART B - Section 49A of the Disability Discrimination Act 1995 (as amended) and Disability Action Plans

1. **Number of action measures** for this **reporting period** that have been:

- [ ] Fully achieved
- [x] Partially achieved
- [ ] Not achieved

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

2 (a) Please highlight what **public life measures** have been achieved to encourage disabled people to participate in public life at National, Regional and Local levels:

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Level</th>
<th>Public Life Action Measures</th>
<th>Outputs(^1)</th>
<th>Outcomes / Impact(^{\text{II}})</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>National(^{\text{III}})</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Regional(^{\text{IV}})</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Local(^{\text{V}})</td>
<td>The outgoing plan is largely obsolete and a new Disability Action Plan will be presented to the EQNI. A draft is appended hereto</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
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</tbody>
</table>

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

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Communications Action Measures</th>
<th>Outputs</th>
<th>Outcome / Impact</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>1</td>
<td>Noted that 15% of Northern Ireland Open University Students are disabled or report significant conditions which impact their study.</td>
<td>Leads to improved retention and progression of students if interventions (e.g. tool kits for students with dyslexia, support for those disclosing mental health issues).</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>2</td>
<td>Open University student-facing staff receive regular updates and training in dealing with students with disabilities and other declared conditions</td>
<td>High levels of student recruitment and improving retention</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>3</td>
<td>The former Student Disability Database has been superceded by VOICE, the University's Student Database which has flags, information and histories</td>
<td>Accurate information and better targeted student support</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>
for students and of their additional requirements and the interventions offered.

4. Ongoing telephone support and interventions

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

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Encourage others Action Measures</th>
<th>Outputs</th>
<th>Outcome / Impact</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>ECNI are referred to the new draft Disability Action Plan for Northern Ireland.</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
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</table>

2 (e) Please outline **any additional action measures** that were fully achieved other than those listed in the tables above:

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Action Measures fully implemented (other than Training and specific public life measures)</th>
<th>Outputs</th>
<th>Outcomes / Impact</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>New Disability Action Plan submitted and will be subject to public consultation</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
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</tbody>
</table>
3. Please outline what action measures have been **partly achieved** as follows:

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Action Measures partly achieved</th>
<th>Milestones/Outputs</th>
<th>Outcomes/Impacts</th>
<th>Reasons not fully achieved</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>1</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>2</td>
<td></td>
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</table>

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

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Action Measures not met</th>
<th>Reasons</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>1 5. Equality Impact Assessment of OU recruitment policies in Northern Ireland.</td>
<td>There are no separate Northern Ireland policies and students receive the same support and treatment as the rest of the UK and policies should be subject to equality assessment across the entire university.</td>
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<tr>
<td>2</td>
<td></td>
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</table>
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

National Student Survey and Student Experience on a Module SEAMS survey at the end of a course

(b) Quantitative

The proportion of Disabled Students was previously an institutional Equality Objective (3%), but given that the proportion is up to 15%, the objective has been changed to an improvement in student satisfaction. This is monitored by the institution wide end of course questionaire (Student Experience on a Module SEAMS), which can provide information at NI level as required.

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?

Yes

If yes please outline below:

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Revised/Additional Action Measures</th>
<th>Performance Indicator</th>
<th>Timescale</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>1</td>
<td>New and updated Disability Action Plan has been submitted.</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>2</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>3</td>
<td></td>
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7. Do you intend to make any further revisions to your plan in light of your organisation’s annual review of the plan? If so, please outline proposed changes?

See above

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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 fora.

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.