***Northern Ireland Authority for Utility Regulation******Acme Company***

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**Public Authority Statutory Equality and Good Relations Duties**

**Annual Progress Report 2019-20**

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| Documents published relating to our Equality Scheme can be found at: https://www.uregni.gov.uk/equality |
| **Signature:** |
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**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 2019 and March 2020**

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| **PART A – Section 75 of the Northern Ireland Act 1998 and Equality Scheme****Section 1: Equality and good relations outcomes, impacts and good practice** |
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| **1** | In 2019-20, 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.* |
|  | During the reporting period we (the Utility Regulator (UR)) continued to build on the work previously carried out to maintain and improve equality of opportunity and good relations as a mainstream element of our corporate goals and values.A formal review of the current equality scheme and disability action plan took place during 2017/18 and an Action Plan was agree for 5 years from 2018-2023 HR monitor the on-going process of improvement in equality awareness and other related policies and procedures, with assistance from managers and both union and non-union staff representatives.We continued to be represented in forums aimed at tackling fuel poverty in Northern Ireland (NI). We continue to work closely with the Department for Economy (DfE) to consider the future development of energy efficiency provision in NI. We are also represented on the NI Home Energy Conservation Authority (HECA) Panel which seeks to improve the energy efficiency of NI properties thus also alleviating the impact of fuel poverty. The NI Sustainable Energy Programme (NISEP) continued to provide 80% of its funding for energy efficiency measures to be installed in vulnerable households. In 2018-19 over £7m was spent on schemes providing heating systems and insulation with the aim of reducing energy costs and improving comfort for households at risk of fuel poverty.The NISEP has been extended until March 2025 or until a suitable replacement has been identified in the DfE Energy Strategy and will continue to target 80% of funding into energy efficiency schemes for vulnerable households. Fifteen priority schemes have been approved to provide a range of energy efficiency measures including heating systems, loft and cavity insulation, low energy lighting, shower regulators, radiator panels and heating controllers.All electricity and gas suppliers operating in the NI retail market must produce, gain approval for, and comply with the Energy Supplier Codes of Practice.  For electricity suppliers this is a mandatory licence requirement under conditions 30, 31, 33, 34 and 35 of the electricity supply licences.  For gas suppliers this is a mandatory licence requirement under conditions 2.8, 2.9, 2.11, 2.12 and 2.13 of the gas supply licences.The codes cover the following areas:* Code of Practice on Payment of Bills
* Code of Practice on Provision of Services for persons who are of Pensionable Age or Disabled or Chronically Sick
* Code of Practice on Complaints Handling Procedure
* Code of Practice on Services for Prepayment Meter Customers
* Code of Practice on the efficient use of electricity and gas

Once approved, each supplier must publish a copy of its Codes of Practice on its own company website which it must then comply with. Failure to comply with a Code of Practice, which has been approved by us, could constitute a breach of licence conditions.In order to ensure a consistently high standard, and after an extensive engagement process, we published minimum standards for Codes of Practice.  These minimum standards help to ensure that customers, and in particular vulnerable customers, are further protected in their relationship and dealings with electricity and natural gas suppliers.Protecting consumers is at the heart of our role. This is particularly important in relation to energy retail markets where the industries we regulate directly interface with consumers. We also seek to ensure customer protection by means of effective and timely enforcement of licence obligations in line with promoting functioning markets. **Retail Energy Market Monitoring (REMM)** Following a comprehensive consultation and industry engagement process in 2015-16 we implemented an enhanced REMM framework. REMM is a robust framework to monitor market indicators as well as supplier's compliance with their electricity and gas supply licences. The REMM is a useful tool for informing policy and ensuring the highest levels of consumer protection and we continue to work with all our stakeholders to ensure that it is delivered effectively. The REMM decision paper was published in June 2015. REMM was subject to screening as part of the decision making process and no negative impacts were highlighted as part of the project implementation. The Market Regulation and Monitoring team uses the REMM data to establish trend information and it is the primary source of internal information for policy discussions including the information used in our published Annual and Quarterly Transparency reports. We are continuing to progress the second stage of REMM which is referred to as Consumer Insight and Market Analysis (CIMA). The REMM CIMA objectives include: (i) Data optimisation (ensuring an accurate and efficient data collection, data processing and data storage system); (ii) Data Quality (enhancing the quality of the data that is submitted) and (iii) Enhancing the reporting of retail market and consumer outcomes both internally (to aid regulator decisions) and externally (to promote transparency, reputational incentives and consumer empowerment).In the previous reporting period we revised the way in which we monitor supplier statements of compliance to further enhance scrutiny and to make sure plans are implemented to address any compliance issues. During 2019 we conducted independent audits of supplier licence compliance in relation to Complaints Handling via supplier site visits (the results of which will be published).**Consumer Protection Programme** The Consumer Protection Programme (CPP) is a prioritised 3 year programme. Each of the projects identified in the CPP is expected to have a positive impact on domestic electricity, gas and water consumers. The costs and benefits of each project will be identified during the scoping phases of the individual projects. Delivery of the CPP started in April 2019. **Quick Check 101 Review** In January 2018, the Quick Check 101 scheme, which was designed to combat the incidences of bogus callers, was launched. Quick Check 101 provides domestic consumers with a facility to telephone the police 101 non-emergency number to check the identity of callers to their home who claim to represent an energy or water network company. Quick Check 101 is a collaboration between The Police Service for Northern Ireland (PSNI), energy and water network companies, supported by the Commissioner for Older People and us, in a bid to help people feel safer in their homes. Following a year of operational delivery, we reviewed Quick Check 101 and outlined next steps in January 2019. Overall, the review revealed a scheme that was functioning well, but recommended the development and adoption of a standardised communication plan and the widening of the parties involved in Quick Check 101 to include gas suppliers. Post review of Quick Check 101 parties will now adopt and implement a standardised communication plan – referring to frequency of messaging, use of media platforms and content. Quick Check 101 will run in this enhanced membership configuration (including gas suppliers) for another year (2020/21). After this time, we will conduct another review and investigate the possibility of extending Quick Check 101 to all domestic suppliers (electricity and gas) in NI during 2021/22.**Care Register Review** The review of the care registers held by Northern Ireland Electricity Networks (NIE Networks) and Northern Ireland Water (NI Water) is now complete. These registers provide certain services to vulnerable consumers who choose to be included on care registers. The registers are for consumers who require special assistance as they are at a greater risk of harm. Consumers likely to avail of these special services typically include those of pensionable age, who are disabled or chronically sick. The main output of the review has been the development and publication of a joint registration leaflet. NIE Networks and NI Water collaborated to produce a consumer-friendly leaflet that promotes the services of their respective registers and contains a facility for consumers to sign-up to either of the registers or both. In addition, both companies have come together to put in place a ‘warm transfer’ facility in their call centres which allows vulnerable consumers to be transferred seamlessly between each company; reducing confusion and potential distress to the consumer when signing up to the care registers. These additional consumer protections have been welcomed by consumer representatives as a step forward in delivering positive material outcomes for vulnerable consumers. **Best Practice Frameworks**In May 2019 we started the delivery of this project. We published a Call for Evidence paper to aid us in our decision making process for this priority consumer protection project. The responses to the Call for Evidence will assist the UR in forming an understanding of the current domestic interventions for vulnerable consumers in NI and help us identify any potential gaps in the protection of domestic vulnerable consumers. We are currently establishing what best practice should be in NI based on engagement with both industry and consumer representatives. During 2020/21 we will put in place the regulatory framework that is necessary to ensure best practice is achieved and delivered in NI. The implementation of this project will result in the establishment of practical interventions to address some of the consumer difficulties brought about by vulnerability. Examples of such interventions include early identification of consumers at risk and adequately trained utility staff. **Supplier Debt Communications Review** In October 2019 we commenced a review of debt-related communications by energy suppliers to their domestic customers. The review focusses on how suppliers do or should communicate about energy debt; we are interested in the appropriateness of format, frequency and tone of any communications with the aim of encouraging early engagement and prevention of serious instances of debt arising in the first place. This will have a positive impact for all domestic customers, but particularly those who are in vulnerable circumstances.**Consumer Vulnerability Working Group**The Consumer Vulnerability Working Group (CVWG), established in 2018, has continued to meet and provide the UR with a harmonised consumer representative voice in regards to consumer protection matters. The membership of the CVWG includes consumer representative bodies and statutory agencies, all at a senior level (manager and director level). The organisations represented are: (1) Advice NI, (2) Christians Against Poverty, (3) CCNI, (4) Commissioner for Older People, (5) NEA and (6) Public Health Agency. In 2019, the CVWG welcomed The Energy Savings Trust (EST) as a new member. EST provide insights and expertise in relation to many of the energy efficiency schemes aimed at assisting vulnerable consumers to improve the thermal comfort of their homes and consequently reduce their energy consumption. The CVWG is chaired by CCNI and so is independent of the UR. The CVWG remit has evolved during 2019/20 and is now focused on providing consumer insight and challenge to the UR in relation to wider consumer protection policy developments. We progressed our programme of work on the Energy Theft Codes of Practice throughout 2019/20. The objective of the Energy Theft Codes of Practice is to protect gas and electricity consumers from the safety issues and costs related to energy theft. We finalised the Energy Theft Codes of Practice and put in place licence conditions to ensure that suppliers and distribution network operators in gas and electricity implement detailed industry procedures to prevent, detect and investigate energy theft. The licence conditions for the Code of Practice took effect in January 2019 and we are monitoring compliance with this code through the annual returns (Statement of Licence Compliance) submitted via REMM.During 2017/18 in conjunction with the natural gas industry and consumer representative groups, we took forward arrangements needed if a gas supplier leaves the market unexpectedly. The gas Supplier of Last Resort (SoLR) arrangements are necessary to clarify the requirements and the process for all industry participants should a SoLR event be initiated. Necessary licence modifications to make these arrangements mandatory on all licensees came into effect in August 2018. SoLR test plans for all participants have been agreed including requirements of Test reporting to the UR. Currently we are planning testing of the SoLR arrangements to take place in autumn 2020.We carried out tariff reviews for firmus Energy Ltd, SSE Airtricity Gas Supply NI Ltd and Power NI during 2019-2020. This included liaising with stakeholders such as the DfE and the Consumer Council for Northern Ireland (CCNI) during the review process.We also completed a project to put a limit on backbills that domestic and small business customers could be charged in the event they have been undercharged for a long period of time. This included a call for evidence to understand the extent of backbilling in Northern Ireland. We then consulted on applying a limit of 13 months to any backbill for domestic and small business users. An equality screening form was completed for this project and it was found that the policy would have no adverse effects hence an EQIA was not required.Our website was redeveloped in 2016/2017 to become more consumer-facing, promoting easier access to information and improve the ease of use for all stakeholders. We are continuing to take steps to improve the accessibility of our website. In January 2018, we underwent our first Investor in People (IiP) assessment and in February 2018 we received accreditation which recognised that our staff enjoy very good terms and conditions. Following on from this we consulted with staff internally and developed a 3 year IiP Action Plan 2018- 2021 which was endorsed by the Remuneration Committee and which aimed at tackling some of the issues and delivering on some of the actions identified in staff feedback and the assessor report, such as Leading and Inspiring People; Rewarding High Performance and Delivering Continuous Improvement. In the previous reporting period a small group was set up comprising of HR and Communications staff to drive the day-to-day plan delivery, which included regular fortnightly meetings and tracked progress reported to SMT. We asked for volunteers to join a UR People (URP) staff team made up of representatives across directorates and grades to take an active a role in overseeing and supporting the ongoing delivery of the URP plan. During the reporting period the URP team become practically involved in the delivery of key URP plan actions. With members providing a sounding board for plan activities and acting as an advocate/champion for the URP plan within their directorates and as a channel of communication to and from directorates. During the reporting period, year 2 of the action plan, the URP group focused on actions and associated activities such as:* Developing a URP section of Intranet and URP notice board and monthly newsletter (including “You said, we did”).
* Developing external communications guide through URP working group “How to deal with calls.”
* Organising a Staff Away Day – 13 September 2019, including a facilitated session on our ways of working and organisation values for staff and board.
* Promoting learning through URP Speakers Programme (Stephen Kelly CEO MNI, Jonny Petrie CEO Ulster Rugby, Paul Frew MLA, Teresa Perchard (UR Board).
* Held a Corporate Services Open Door Session, where Corporate Services invited staff to join them for coffee and chat to answer any HR or corporate questions or queries.

The URP plan continues to focus on finding ways to promote and develop effective ways of working together to better engage and motivate staff; developing and reinforcing UR culture that is based on UR values. During the reporting period the URP team focused on promoting an increased awareness and engagement with staff on our values and “Ways of Working” – URP activities focused on staff engagement under this collective banner for several URP actions:* June 2019 -URP Working Group engaged directly with staff in each of the directorates to bring focus to the ways of working agenda through staff feedback.
* September 2019- staff away day workshop (ways of working and how we live the organisation values).
* October 2019 -Facilitated Leadership session- collective leadership homework presentations.
* Nov/Dec 2019 – URP Working Group presentations to directorates on Ways of Working agenda (1. internal communications, 2. leading and managing staff, 3. supporting everyone in learning and development, and 4. working collaboratively); and ideas and suggestions developed through staff feedback.
* January 2020 – SMT paper presenting ideas and suggestions around Ways of Working.

During the reporting period a 24 month review was held with the IiP assessor Stephanie McCutcheon on 14 February 2020. SMT, HR and Communications presented the progress of the URP team in promoting and delivering our URP priorities in the context of setting out progress under the following headings, (1) changes to leadership, structures, teams and staffing numbers; (2) challenges faced in the last 12 months, (3) improvement actions taken in the last 12 months; and (4) priorities for the next 12 months. Feedback from the assessor was very positive and this was shared with staff via a CEO presentation. The progress to date was reflected in the Assessor Report which was made accessible to staff on the intranet.In the previous reporting period we launched a UR Leadership Development programme in November 2018 intended to help start our response to the IiP assessment feedback under the “Leading and Inspiring” indicator. Marie Grattan from Future Spark Coaching, worked with us to develop a programme to inspire and help guide us at the start of an ongoing process of building leadership capacity. This was followed up with a Leadership Team Workshop in February 2019 where we developed ideas the best way to keep staff informed and engaged in delivering the plan including the rebrand of IiP Action Plan as a better way of supporting and developing our people through UR People (URP). During the reporting period we continued to deliver leadership sessions throughout the year, in 26 June, 13 Sept, 16 October and 13 November 2019, under the banner of UR Leadership Programme. The programme is intended to build a Leadership Team (LT) who will focus on collective ownership and leadership and is made up of all managers, heads of function (HoF) and directors and is aimed at equipping UR leaders with the skills and knowhow to lead and support the development of their teams.  Health and wellbeing continues to feature in the URP action plan 2018 – 2021 going forward. Staff continue to avail of employee assistance provider (EAP) “Inspire”, and the HR team monitors use of EAP services. During the reporting period HR carried out specific risk assessments for pregnant staff and new or returning mothers, adjustments were made to the working environment in some cases were specific requirements were needed. Where appropriate, amendments and reasonable adjustments are also explored for staff returning from sick and long term sick absence, including referrals to Welfare Support Service. Absence linked to disability or maternity is not counted towards our inefficiency policy. We carry out an annual monitoring review of “personal details” profile of staff members, and include a statement inviting staff who may have acquired a disability, to discuss the issue and any attendant matters confidentially with our HR team.During November and December 2019 we delivered our annual health and wellbeing activities under the banner of “Winter Wellness”, which included updates on the intranet around awareness about the benefits of a healthy diet and exercise, and positive mental health. Health checks were carried out by Chest Heart and Stroke; food sensitivity tests were offered by Kellie Magill a food sensitivity specialist; a massage therapist, Lesley Crymble, provided message treatments and tips on relaxation; free lunchtime yoga classes were also offered by our regular yoga teacher; and free taster Pilates sessions were introduced. We also supported colleagues who were not entitled to the free flu vaccine from their GP by providing time during working hours for staff to receive the vaccine, we reimbursed the cost of the vaccine. We also continued with our UR Wellbeing Calendar, which launched in February 2019 with promotion of “Time to Talk”. The calendar highlights a relevant wellbeing issue each month, with information or activities communicated via the UR intranet, with promotion of issues strongly linked to our mental health charter, such as Stress Awareness month in April; Mental Health Awareness week in May, which we marked with a visit from Inspire EAP provider who spoke to staff and promoted their services. Men’s Health was the focus in June, concluding with Financial Wellbeing in January. A new calendar was launched again in February 2020As a result of an organisational wide back care training session, delivered by a back care nurse in 2017, a number of standing/rising desks were purchased for individuals following medical advice or risk assessment. We also purchased a “bank” of desks for general use. We now have 10 such workstations in regular use.In 2017 we took part in World Mental Health Day and which led to a number of planned initiatives and the CEO’s personal endorsement of UR’s commitment to mental health by undertaking to sign World Federation for Mental Health’s Pledge and the Equality Commission’s Mental Health Charter. As part of this commitment we have mandatory “Mindful Manager” training for all managers based on the mental health tool kit took place during the reporting period and this training is ongoing for new staff and managers. A number of staff signed up to complete the accredited Mental Health First Aid course which aims to train key staff in the workplace to provide initial help to a person who is developing a mental health problem or who is in mental crisis until appropriate professional treatment is received or until the crisis is resolved. We currently have 5 mental health first aiders within the office, with further training planned.During the previous reporting period our CEO championed the development of a new Trans Equality Policy recognising the importance of equality, diversity and inclusion in the workplace. The policy is aimed at welcoming the contribution made by all staff, including trans colleagues, providing inclusive policies and practical support to enable all staff to fulfil their potential and encourage a diverse range of candidates to apply for roles within UR.During the reporting period we consulted on the policy with JNCC colleagues at our summer 2019 meeting. The policy was launched along with staff training on Diversity and Inclusion (Transgender Policy) in January and February 2020, with a further mop up session planned. This training included a talk by Alexa Moore on Transgender Awareness from Transgender NI. The sessions were fully attended and received positive feedback from staff.We continue to develop our relationship with Business in the Community (BiTC) which is now strongly imbedded in the URP Action Plan 2018-23. BiTC initiatives such as volunteering projects for staff within the community are focused on a number of Section 75 groups. We continue to foster relationships with voluntary, community and environmental groups within the local community as part of BiTC and our ongoing commitment to Corporate Social Responsibility (CSR). During the reporting period we have organised initiatives such as staff nominations for a Christmas charity and, as a result of this, cash, food and toiletry donations were made to the Welcome Organisation and Bryson’s Family Support. Staff volunteered in partnership with BiTC “Cash for Kids” in December 2019, sorting presents into bundles that will be delivered to children in need across Northern Ireland and 'Give and gain day' where group of staff volunteered during June 2019 at Crosskennan Lane Animal Sanctuary & Harryville allotments In September 2019. 3 staff attended the BitC Building Bridges Sustainability and Wellbeing with a view to contribute to the setup of a “Green Agenda” URP sub-group. “Time to Read” is an ongoing initiative with local schools and we are currently seeking volunteers for “Time to Count”. We hope to hold more staff team building and volunteering activities going forwards with the URP group planning to focus on a CSR programme.A number of fundraisers in the form of cake sales, coffee mornings and sponsored walks/runs took place during the year, for charities close to staff to supporting Autism, Cancer Research, Children and the homeless. |
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| **2** | Please provide **examples** of outcomes and/or the impact of **equality action plans/** measures in 2019-20 (*or append the plan with progress/examples identified*). |
|  | The Forward Work Programme is an established plan which has been consulted upon extensively with the people and organisations listed in our Equality Scheme. During the previous reporting period, the UR embarked on reviewing the CPS. However, we continued to implement the projects identified under the CPS. These projects included:* Begin work on back-billing procedures; and
* Review current European Consumer Checklist.

**Backbilling procedures**Protecting consumers is at the heart of the UR role and we pursue this, where appropriate, through promoting effective competition in the Northern Ireland (NI) energy markets. Backbills have the potential to cause significant financial hardship, as well subjecting the recipients to varying degrees of inconvenience and stress. Following consultation, in January 2020 the UR published its decision to proceed with the implementation of a 13 month limit on energy backbills. The obligation on suppliers will come into effect 1 October 2020, and will apply to domestic consumers and microbusinesses, for both gas and electricity and across all payment types. **European Consumer Checklist**We published a revised version of the [European Consumer Checklist](file:///%5C%5Cpr-ureg-docs%5Cofreg%20ni%5CCOMMON%20AREA%5CEquality%20Progress%20Report%5C2018-19%5C18.3.23%20FINAL%20COPY%20FOR%20WEB.docx) (ECC), as committed to within our CPS during 2018/19. The ECC is a collection of questions and subsequent answers that aim to provide practical information to consumers concerning their rights in relation to the energy sector.Through partnership working with the CCNI, and engagement with the industry, the aim of our reviewed document is to update and improve the information available for consumers. The reviewed ECC is available on the website of each network operator and supplier.The Marketing Code of Practice (MCOP), in operation since June 2014, protects all customers from potential misselling by energy suppliers. It ensures that all customers can take informed and unpressurised decisions regarding which energy supplier to choose. A review of this code is ongoing. MCOP ensures that no customers are subjected to misselling practices from energy companies. The Marketing Codes also specify the following requirements which should have positive impacts on Section 75 groups:* Suppliers will ensure that they provide training on the recognition and treatment of vulnerable consumers;
* Sales agents must not exploit a person’s inexperience, vulnerability, credulity, loyalties or intimidate a consumer in an attempt to restrict their ability to make an informed choice;
* The sales agent must not abuse the trust of vulnerable or inexperienced customers, for example, those who are elderly or those who have special needs. Sales agents should not complete an energy supply contract with customers who are not capable, at the time of the contact, of making an informed decision as to whether or not to enter into the contract.

We are active in ensuring compliance with the MCOP and this is reported to us annually through the annual REMM submission, Statement of Licence Compliance.The Gas (Individual Standards of Performance) Regulations (Northern Ireland) 2014 came into force on 1 April 2014 following extensive consultation. The Regulations afford protection to all consumers including those falling within Section 75 categories. The Regulations set out a level of service required in a number of service areas including;* Response to complaints
* Making and keeping appointments
* Reconnecting gas supply after an incident
* Resolving meter disputes

Where the supply or distribution company fails to meet a prescribed standard they must make a payment to the customer. The Regulations encourage companies to offer a high level of service to customers or to compensate them accordingly.During 2019/20 we have continued to work with CCNI, gas suppliers and gas distribution companies to consider how vulnerable customers are treated in the event of a disconnection. In this case, vulnerable customers refer to those who are of pensionable age, disabled or chronically sick. We will continue to work with the CCNI as they develop a policy for ensuring vulnerable customers are adequately protected in the event of a disconnection.During 2016/2017 we initiated a review of the Electricity (Standards of Performance) Regulations 1993 with a view to creating new regulations which will provide enhanced consumer protection to all consumers, including Section 75 categories. The review continues and a policy screening assessment alongside the consultation will be provided later this yearNISEP continued to provide grant funding for energy efficiency schemes for domestic and non-domestic properties. 80% of the funding available each year is ring-fenced for schemes that target vulnerable households. In 2018-19, over £7m was divided between 10 different schemes providing a mixture of heating systems, loft and cavity wall insulation and other energy efficiency measures to vulnerable households. Each scheme defined its own vulnerability criteria but the main criterion used to assess eligibility for the schemes was low-income. Whilst not specifically focusing on Section 75 groups, the schemes benefit all groups within the population at risk of fuel poverty.As part of the NISEP review, an equality screening exercise took place in September 2019. The screening exercise highlighted that NISEP has a positive impact on specific section 75 groups, including older people, children, people from BAME backgrounds and people living with disabilities.Licence modifications required to implement the customer protection requirements of the EU Third Energy Package (IME3) came into effect during 2014-15. Since the modifications came into effect, we have worked closely with licencees to ensure compliance with them and have continued to monitor their policies, procedures and practices to ensure ongoing compliance (for example approved new Codes of Practice for all suppliers). Annual monitoring of all supplier licence conditions, including the documents pursuant to the licence conditions, is done through the annual REMM framework (Statement of Licence Compliance).Electricity, as well as gas supply and distribution licences, contain a condition regarding services that must be provided for specific customer groups including customers who are of pensionable age, disabled or chronically sick and customers who are blind, partially sighted, deaf or hearing–impaired. Such services include a password scheme to identify company staff, the provision of bills and information in accessible formats, repositioning of pre-payment meters free of charge, providing bills to a nominated carer and making arrangements to avoid deprivation of adequate heating and cooking facilities where the conveyance of gas has been disconnected. We oversee compliance with licence conditions on an ongoing basis. Our major network price controls continue to build on the widely appreciated consumer research which underpinned previous price controls for NI Water, including their last price control at PC15. The collaborative partnership model we have developed locally continues to deliver for the consumer, especially where expertise is pooled across companies, this office, CCNI and associated government departments.For water, our collaborative group remains the Consumer Engagement Oversight Group (CEOG). Post-determination, a consumer measures and satisfaction working group (CM/SAT) which we chair continues to meet to develop the new consumer measures and new consumer satisfaction survey decided at PC15. The new metrics, definitions and replacement of an old satisfaction survey with something the company now can use as ‘actionable data’ to help target improvements for the customer experience, were introduced for the 2016/17 Annual Information Return (AIR17). CM/Sat and CEOG have continued to inform subsequent developments, including NI Water’s Business Plan submission for the PC21 price control and our subsequent determinations over same later this year.In addition to the consumer engagement undertaken by CEOG for PC21, principal stakeholders continue to be consulted. Feedback from other stakeholder groups, business customers and the broader domestic customer base on our price control decisions will be obtained through the consultation period which will follow the publication of our draft determination. For the RP6 price control of NIE Networks, both the company business plan and our determination were underpinned by rigorous consumer research and engagement, commissioned by the Consumer Engagement Advisory Panel (CEAP) using Perceptive Insight Market Research, a local research house with academic input from Queen’s University, Belfast. The work of the CEAP has continued and to date, NIE Networks has delivered on the promise to consumers to continually engage. This has included both continuing surveys of NIE Networks’ consumer base as well as the introduction of stakeholder workshops across the province. CEAP are currently reviewing their Terms of Reference to ensure a broader emphasis on consumer issues is available to inform their next price control RP7, upon which parties expect to begin development late 2020.For the local gas distribution network (GDN) companies we expect the same continuous engagement and have begun the process of re-constituting the Consumer Engagement Working Group (CEWG) by focusing upon the needs of their next price control at GD23 into account, within new Terms of Reference for the CEWG. This process has begun on the back of a successful cross-sector workshop which took place earlier 2020, including both CEWG for gas and the CEAP for electricity members.Regardless of whether CEAG, CEOG or CEAP, our collaborative partnership group’s modus operandi includes examination of the impacts of decisions upon Section 75 groups as well as consideration of how we might protect vulnerable consumers. |
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| **3** | Has the **application of the Equality Scheme** commitments resulted in any **changes** to policy, practice, procedures and/or service delivery areas during the 2019-20 reporting period? *(tick one box only)* |
|  | [ ]  | Yes | [x]  | No (go to Q.4) | [ ]  | Not applicable (go to Q.4) |
|  | Please provide any details and examples: |
|  |  |
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| **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: |
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| **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):* |
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| [ ]  | As a result of changes to access to information and services *(please specify and give details)*:  |
|  |       |
|  | [ ]  | Other *(please specify and give details)*:  |
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| **Section 2: Progress on Equality Scheme commitments and action plans/measures**  |
| **Arrangements for assessing compliance (Model Equality Scheme Chapter 2)** |
| **4** | Were the Section 75 statutory duties integrated within job descriptions during the 2019-20 reporting period? *(tick one box only)* |
|  | [ ]  | Yes, organisation wide |
| [ ]  | Yes, some departments/jobs |
| [ ]  | No, this is not an Equality Scheme commitment |
| [x]  | No, this is scheduled for later in the Equality Scheme, or has already been done |
| [ ]  | Not applicable |
|  | Please provide any details and examples: |
|  | Employee's job descriptions and personal performance plans reflect their contributions to the discharge of the Section 75 statutory duties and implementation of the equality scheme where relevant. The personal performance plans are subject to appraisal in the annual and mid-year performance review.  |
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| **5** | Were the Section 75 statutory duties integrated within performance plans during the 2018-19 reporting period? *(tick one box only)* |
|  | [ ]  | Yes, organisation wide |
| [x]  | 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 personal performance plans are subject to appraisal in the annual and mid-year performance review. Where Section 75 statutory duties are related to jobs this is reflected in individual performance plans.  |
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|  | In the 2019-20 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 |
| [x]  | Yes, in some departments/jobs |
| [x]  | No, these are already mainstreamed through the organisation’s ongoing corporate plan |
| [ ]  | No, the organisation’s planning cycle does not coincide with this 2015-16 report |
| [ ]  | Not applicable |
|  | Please provide any details and examples: |
|  | Our Corporate Strategy 2019-2024 placed consumers at the centre of our work and includes an overarching purpose to protect and empower all consumers. The strategy includes a strategic objective: ‘promoting markets that deliver effective competition, informed choice and fair outcomes. A key aspect of this is to protect vulnerable consumers, such as through our Consumer Protection Programme. We are also committed to engaging with consumers more as part of our work. Our Corporate Strategy identifies key success measures related to customer satisfaction. Specific objectives and measurements relating to Section 75 statutory duties were drawn out specifically in our UR People HR Strategy 2015-2019 which dovetailed into our URP Action Plan 2018-2021. The URP Action Plan was the outcome of a process of development led by our HR team in partnership with the senior management team (SMT) using feedback from staff to identify actions. The Action Plan focuses strongly on UR values which include “To be a best practice regulator, transparent, consistent, proportionate, accountable and targeted, which includes the fulfilment of UR's duties under Section 75 and ensuring that equality underpins, and is mainstreamed through, all our work. HR worked closely with staff and SMT to develop and refresh the UR Mission, Vision and Values and Behaviours (MVVB). From this a set of UR behaviours were developed of which best practice and equitable behaviour was key. During 2019/20 we also consulted on our Forward Work Programme for 2020/21. As well as considering all written responses, we held a stakeholder workshop to ensure the programme took into account the priorities and key issues of our stakeholders. During 2014 an equal pay review was carried out independently by the NI Statistics and Research Agency (NISRA) on behalf of UR to identify whether there is a significant difference between males and females and between Protestants and Catholics in terms of basic salary. Following on from the work carried out on the equal pay review, and in accordance with advice received from the Departmental Solicitor’s Office (DSO), NISRA completed a modelling exercise to develop a revised pay system. We worked closely with the Northern Ireland Public Service Alliance (NIPSA) and non-union staff representatives to develop options and agree the introduction of a system of pay progression with the intention to remove the inequalities identified in the pay review in 2014. The system of pay progression was agreed for three years. To establish the extent to which the revised pay system was successful in removing inequalities, further comparative analysis was carried out by NISRA in February 2017 which revealed that the number and extent of pay disparities has decreased. Management consulted with NIPSA on the findings at the Joint Negotiating and Consultative Committee (JNCC) meeting in April 2017 and with further advice from DSO agreed a further system of pay progression was agreed in February 2018 until March 2020. A commitment was given for NISRA to re-run the age analysis in 2018 to assess the extent to which age related gaps have been closed. This analysis was been delayed until the NICS pay remit for April 2018 had been applied and was undertaken and shared with NIPSA colleagues in August 2019. We will continue to engage with NIPSA colleagues to develop a system of pay which aims to prevent new significant equality differences emerging. |
|  |  |
| **Equality action plans/measures**  |
| **7** | Within the 2019-20 reporting period, please indicate the **number** of: |
|  | Actions completed: | 7 | Actions ongoing: | 7 | Actions to commence: |       |
|  | Please provide any details and examples (*in addition to question 2*): |
|  | Continuing to Develop as an Organisation: during 2018 a review of our Corporate Strategy was complete and our new corporate strategy for 2019-24 was published at the end of March 2019. This will continue to be an on ongoing action. |
|  |  |
| **8** | Please give details of changes or amendments made to the equality action plan/measures during the 2019-20 reporting period *(points not identified in an appended plan)*: |
|  | Please see updated action plan 2018-23. |
|  |  |
| **9** | In reviewing progress on the equality action plan/action measures during the 2019-20 reporting period, the following have been identified: *(tick all that apply)* |
|  | [x]  | 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)* |
|  | [x]  | All the time | [ ]  | Sometimes | [ ]  | Never |
|  |  |
| **11** | Please provide any **details and examples** **of good practice** in consultation during the 2019-20 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: |
|  | As part of our commitment to good practice in consultation, we proactively engage with CCNI in respect of the most appropriate ways of engaging with consumers. We seek appropriate and proportionate approaches to impact assessments in our consultation documentation and seek to reflect this in our template document. We also review the operation of our approach to consultation against our consultation guide.We continue to develop relationships and consult with other organisations including the Equality Commission, Disability Action, Age Sector Platform, the Commissioner for Older People, Save the Children, Christians Against Poverty and mainstream political parties. Our consultations are intended to seek the views of those directly affected by the subject matter or policy, regulated utilities, the Equality Commission, representative groups of Section 75 categories, other public authorities, voluntary and community groups, our staff and recognised trade union (NIPSA) and such other groups who have a legitimate interest whether or not they have a direct economic or personal interest.Initially all consultees within the UR Equality Scheme, as a matter of course, will be notified (by email or post) of the matter or policy being consulted upon to ensure they are aware of all consultations. Thereafter, to ensure the most effective use of our and our consultees’ resources, we will take a targeted approach to consultation for those consultees that may have a particular interest in the matter or policy being consulted on and to whom the matter or policy is of particular relevance. This may include, for example, regional or local consultations, sectoral or thematic consultation etc. We consider the accessibility and format of every method of consultation we use in order to remove barriers to the consultation process. During 2015/16 we commissioned the redevelopment of our website, which included looking at how we consult, and is aimed at improving the accessibility of our documents and information available. The new website went live in late October 2016, there is a dedicated section for Equality where we continue to publish all of our Section 75 information and reports.Specific consideration was given as to how best to communicate with children and young people, people with disabilities (in particular people with learning disabilities) and minority ethnic communities.Information can be made available, on request, in alternative formats, in a timely manner. This message is displayed on our website news items. Requests for alternative formats will be responded to usually within three working days and we will ensure that such consultees have equal time to respond.Specific training is provided to those facilitating consultations to ensure that they have the necessary skills to communicate effectively with consultees.Following the May 2016 Assembly elections, and as stipulated under the Fresh Start Agreement (FSA) of 20 November 2015, a maximum 8-week consultation period took effect for ongoing consultations.In addition the FSA included ‘Eight Steps to Good Practice in Public Consultation-Engagement’. The FSA’s call for “early and continuous engagement”, “consider[ation] of the timing, duration and cost”, “manage[ment] of stakeholders’ expectations” and “share[d] best practice” add further support to UR’s expectation for regulated utilities, especially the network monopolies, to continuously engage with consumers and stakeholders. Such informed conversations should not be limited to each price control published by us every five years or more. Furthermore, our collaborative partnership model of consumer research with consumer engagement working groups which pool resources across government/regulator, consumer representative, public and private sectors ensures we share best practice, to help deliver valuable research and insight into consumer priorities. Where, under the exceptional circumstances beyond our control, we must implement a policy immediately we may consult after implementation of the policy in order to ensure that any impacts are still considered.If a consultation exercise is to take place over a period when consultees are less able to respond, for example over the summer or Christmas break, or if the policy under consideration is particularly complex, we will give consideration to the feasibility of allowing a longer period for the consultation.We are conscious of the fact that affected individuals and representative groups may have different needs. We take appropriate measures to ensure full participation in any meetings that are held. We consider, for example, the time of day, appropriateness of venue and in particular whether or not it can be accessed by those with disabilities, how the meeting is to be conducted, the use of appropriate language, whether a signer and/or interpreter is necessary, and whether the provision of childcare and support for other carers is required.We continue to engage representative bodies of the Section 75 categories through official publications, website, press releases and reports and when consulting on business projects. We endeavour to keep consultation lists up to date with personnel or organisational changes. We do this via regular news updates and our CEO and/or directors regularly carry out briefings with stakeholders on key issues and use of workshops, question and answer sessions and consultations.Directorates continue to consult and engage with stakeholders by including representatives of vulnerable groups including S75 groups, to workshops or meetings on specific social action issues as appropriate. Our Chief Executive continues to meet with key consumer stakeholders and we hold a programme of consumer panel meetings with representatives of consumer bodies.  Stakeholders have the opportunity to discuss how our work impacts on all consumers with a focus on the most vulnerable. There is representation at a senior level from CCNI, National Energy Action, Age Sector Platform, Advice NI, Citizen’s Advice and Disability Action.  During 2019-2020 we reviewed our Corporate Protection Programme to help us develop a new programme of activities focused on the needs of vulnerable consumers.  A key aspect of this was a consumer summit which we organised in the previous reporting period and was attended by over 100 delegates from consumer representative bodies, third sector organisations and utility supply companies. In the context of consulting internally, we use team meetings, staff working groups, CEO open meetings, all staff emails, notice boards, URP updates and the intranet to provide information for internal consultation. During 2018-20 this specifically included seeing advice from NISRA and consultation with non-union representatives on pay progression matters [and other employment matters] and engaging with staff for their feedback to consider progressions of actions on our URP Action Plan. The URP group continues to meet to oversee and support the ongoing delivery of the URP plan, including practical involvement in the delivery of key URP plan actions and providing a sounding board for URP plan activities, as well as acting as an advocate/champion for the URP plan within their directorate and being a channel of communication on the activities to and from directorates.  |
|  |  |
| **12** | In the 2019-20 reporting period, given the consultation methods offered, which consultation methods were **most frequently used by consultees**: *(tick all that apply)* |
|  | [x]  | Face to face meetings |
| [x]  | Focus groups |
| [x]  | Written documents with the opportunity to comment in writing |
| [x]  | Questionnaires |
| [x]  | Information/notification by email with an opportunity to opt in/out of the consultation |
| [x]  | Internet discussions |
| [x]  | Telephone consultations |
| [x]  | Other *(please specify)*: Workshops |
|  | 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: |
|  | This list is not exhaustive and we may develop other additional methods of consultation more appropriate to key stakeholders and the matter being consulted upon. Consultation with all relevant stakeholders will begin as early as possible. We will engage with affected individuals and representative groups to identify how best to consult or engage with them. We will ask our consultees what their preferred consultation methods are and will give consideration to these. |
|  |  |
| **13** | Were any awareness-raising activities for consultees undertaken, on the commitments in the Equality Scheme, during the 2019-20 reporting period? *(tick one box only)* |
|  | [x]  | Yes | [ ]  | No  | [ ]  | Not applicable  |
|  | Please provide any details and examples: |
|  | See 12 above. |
|  |  |
| **14** | Was the consultation list reviewed during the 2019-20 reporting period? *(tick one box only)* |
|  | [x]  | Yes | [ ]  | No | [ ]  | Not applicable – no commitment to review |
|  |  |
| **Arrangements for assessing and consulting on the likely impact of policies (Model Equality Scheme Chapter 4)**Our website was redeveloped in 2016/17 using the same design as applied to all of the new main departmental websites. Screening templates, our equality scheme and framework are uploaded to the equality section and this archive is regularly maintained. We are continuing to assess how we may further enhance the accessibility of our website.  |
| **15** | Please provide the **number** of policies screened during the year (*as recorded in screening reports*): |
|  | 5 |  |
|  |  |
| **16** | Please provide the **number of assessments** that were consulted upon during 2019-20: |
|  | 1 | Policy consultations conducted with **screening** assessment presented.  |
| 0 | Policy consultations conducted **with an** **equality impact assessment** (EQIA) presented. |
| 0 | Consultations for an **EQIA** alone. |
|  |  |
| **17** |  Please provide details of the **main consultations** conducted on an assessment (as described above) or other matters relevant to the Section 75 duties: |
|  | In the reporting period no EQIAs were required. Details of other consultations are listed at Q11 above. A public consultation took place to gather qualitative evidence on the Consumer Protection Programme (CPP) during the screen process. |
| **18** | Were any screening decisions (or equivalent initial assessments of relevance) reviewed following concerns raised by consultees? *(tick one box only)* |
|  | [x]  | Yes | [ ]  | No concerns were raised  | [ ]  | No  | [ ]  | Not applicable  |
|  | Please provide any details and examples: |
|  | Qualitative evidence gathered at public consultation for the CPP allowed a final decision paper to be produced. Stakeholders stated in submissions the beneficial nature of this policy to the Section 75 categories of age and disability and which help shape the CPP content and prioritisation.  |
| **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 2019-20 reporting period? *(tick one box only)* |
|  | [ ]  | Yes | [ ]  | No | [x]  | Not applicable |
|  | Please provide any details and examples: |
| **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 2019-20 reporting period? *(tick one box only)* |
|  | [ ]  | Yes | [x]  | No, already taken place  |
| [ ]  | No, scheduled to take place at a later date | [ ]  | Not applicable  |
|  | Please provide any details: |
|  | An informal review of the Equality Scheme, including monitoring arrangements takes place in June/July each year, a formal review of the Disability Action Plan (DAP) took place in January 2018 and a new Equality Scheme and DAP is now in place for 2018-23. No new or updated policies during 2019-20 period have resulted in an identification of an adverse result and no policy has been amended or alternative policy introduced. Therefore no amendments to the monitoring arrangements were necessary. |
|  |  |
| **21** | In analysing monitoring information gathered, was any action taken to change/review any policies? *(tick one box only)* |
|  | [ ]  | Yes | [x]  | No  | [ ]  | Not applicable  |
|  | Please provide any details and examples: |
|  |       |
|  |  |
| **22** | Please provide any details or examples of where the monitoring of policies, during the 2018-19 reporting period, has shown changes to differential/adverse impacts previously assessed: |
|  | N/A |
| **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: |
|  | N/A |
|  |  |
| **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 2019-20, and the extent to which they met the training objectives in the Equality Scheme. |
|  | Staff have received ongoing training in corporate and individual responsibility to ensure compliance with Section 75 issues with a training sessions being delivered in advance of any recruitment exercise for new panel members, including training for two Board members in preparation for our Wholesale Director recruitment in April 2019. HR is always part of every recruitment exercise as a panel member or in an advisory capacity. This training covers persons of different religious belief; persons of different political opinion; persons of different racial groups; persons of different age; persons with different marital status; persons of different sexual orientation; men and women generally; persons with and without disability; and persons with and without dependants. Training also covers equality, diversity and unconscious bias. We undertake an annual individual review of all employees, where the key aspects of their performance and effectiveness are assessed. In addition to goals and objectives being established for the forthcoming year, training needs are reviewed and form part of the training needs analysis. Also, directorates undertake regular reviews of performance against targets where variances are highlighted, which are then addressed. More specific training of staff, in how they contribute to the values and responsibilities required under Section 75 carried out during the year, was as follows:* Employment Law updates – throughout the year;
* Equality Commission training - throughout the year;
* Equality Scheme, Action Plan and Equal Opportunities/Dignity at Work Policy included in induction for new staff;
* Members of the Consumer Protection branch attended seminars and workshops throughout the year in relation to fuel poverty and energy efficiency issues;
* Induction and ongoing staff training in equality legislation for all staff;
* Equality, diversity and selection training for staff sitting on recruitment and selection panels;
* Deaf awareness briefing for all staff and included in the induction for new staff;
* Equality, Diversity and Inclusion (Transgender Policy) training was delivered for all staff in January and February 2020, with further sessions planned for spring;
* Equality screening training was arranged for key staff in February 2014 and further equality screening training was completed in February 2016 to ensure all staff are adequately trained and competent in the screening process outlined in UR’s Equality Scheme (s75), training will be delivered every 3 years, and is planned for 2019, but was delayed and will now take place in 2020 to ensure new staff are aware of requirements (key staff will be trained as part of training needs) an accompanying simplified guide to equality screening produced and included in induction;
* Mandatory training for staff who would sit on evaluation panels for Central Procurement Directorate (CPD) administered tenders;
* Mandatory training for all staff on procurement, GDPR and Data Protection;
* Mindful Manager Training was delivered in 2018/19 and refresher planned for 2019/20 with the Tool Kit available on the intranet;
* Various resilience and mental health training is ongoing.
 |
|  |  |
| **25** | Please provide any examples of relevant training shown to have worked well, in that participants have achieved the necessary skills and knowledge to achieve the stated objectives: |
|  | General awareness training is provided for all staff and board members on Section 75 and disability issues including, anti-discrimination legislation, Section 75 background and responsibilities and details on disability action plans commences at induction. Board training is planned for 2019/20. All staff are trained and aware of the provisions of Section 75, UR's equality scheme commitments, the issues likely to affect people across the range of categories and understand their role in implementing the scheme.All staff were trained in policy screening and are now aware of the process and UR duties in this area. Refresher training is planned and the Equality Commission are currently working on an online training package being developed with the NICS Centre of Applied Learning (CAL), which our staff can avail of. HR staff have attended Section 75 training through the Equality Commission. Key staff are confident to and competent in the screening process in line with UR's Equality Scheme.Four staff and two Board members have been trained as new recruitment panel members during reporting period and have successfully recruited a number of UR staff. All staff who have been inducted have passed their 6 month probationary period in 2019-20. Staff sitting on tender evaluation panels will understand the importance of assessing each tender submission in an equitable, open and transparent manner using the published specification and award criteria.On an ongoing basis members of the Consumer Protection Branch attend fuel poverty/energy efficiency seminars and workshops, giving them better understanding of the issues and barriers encountered by related Section 75 groups. |
| **Public Access to Information and Services (Model Equality Scheme Chapter 6)** |
| **26** | Please list **any examples** of where monitoring during 2019-20, across all functions, has resulted in action and improvement in relation **to access to information and services**: |
|  | Section 75 continues to be annual agenda item for our Audit and Risk Committee. The Board also receives reports on performance against section 75 objectives through approval of this progress report. During the reporting period we continued to explain our duties and responsibilities and consulted with groups representing those with disabilities in the course of Section 75 processes.We fully comply with the requirements of the Disability Discrimination Act and the associated Codes of Practice within our offices. We ensure access requirements are met for members of the public with disabilities to take part in public consultation through provision of documents in alternative formats on request.The redevelopment of our website included looking at how we consult and is aimed at improving the accessibility of our documents and information. The website is consumer-facing and promotes access to information and improves the ease of use for all stakeholders. This includes an equality section detailing the new equality scheme, revised Disability Action Plan and equality progress reports. Accessibility to all is a priority for us and is clearly demonstrated by the website having been assessed against, and as compliant with, the W3C ‘AA’ standard. An independent assessment of public sector websites across the UK identified our website as among the most accessible. We can also provide alternative formats for all of our publications on request. Equality consultation has been incorporated within the development of our business approach with particular focus on employment matters, procurement, communications and social and environmental issues. Employment opportunities in the office are based on experience rather than minimum academic qualifications and all application forms and interviews are competency based and applicants with disabilities are invited to tell us about reasonable adjustments they require.A staff member with hearing loss assisted in production of a deaf awareness brief for inclusion in staff induction which includes practical guidance on deaf awareness and communicating effectively. We continue to include this in our induction for new staff.  |
|  |  |
| **Complaints (Model Equality Scheme Chapter 8)** |
| **27** | How many complaints **in relation to the Equality Scheme** have been received during 2019-20? |
|  | Insert number here:  | 0 |  |
|  | Please provide any details of each complaint raised and outcome: |
|  |       |

|  |
| --- |
| **Section 3: Looking Forward** |
| **28** | Please indicate when the Equality Scheme is due for review: |
|  | A review was carried out by the HR Manager each summer and a formal 5 year review was carried out in early 2018. The updated Equality Scheme 2018-23 was opened to a 4 week consultation before approval by Risk and Audit Committee in September 2018 and is available on the UR website. |
|  |  |
| **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)* |
|  | None. |
|  |  |
| **30** | In relation to the advice and services that the Commission offers, what **equality and good relations priorities** are anticipated over the next (2019-20) reporting period? *(please tick any that apply)* |
|  | [ ]  | Employment |
| [ ]  | Goods, facilities and services |
| [ ]  | Legislative changes |
| [ ]  | Organisational changes/ new functions |
| [x]  | Nothing specific, more of the same |
| [ ]  | Other (please state):  |

**PART B - Section 49A of the Disability Discrimination Act 1995 (as amended) and Disability Action Plans**

|  |
| --- |
| **1. Number of action measures** for this **reporting period** that have been: |
| **8** |  |  |  | **1** |  |  |  | **0** |  |  |  |
| Fully achieved | 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:

|  |  |  |  |
| --- | --- | --- | --- |
| Level | Public Life Action Measures | Outputs[[1]](#endnote-1) | Outcomes / Impact[[2]](#endnote-2) |
| National[[3]](#endnote-3) |       |       |       |
| Regional[[4]](#endnote-4) |       |       |       |
| Local[[5]](#endnote-5) | We will continue to develop staff and specifically board awareness workshops and training on equality and disability legislation, particularly for recruitment panels and staff dealing with consultation papers. | Promoting positive attitudes amongst staff and board members towards disabled people. | Improvement in attitude, more effective communication. |

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

|  |  |  |  |
| --- | --- | --- | --- |
|  | Training Action Measures | Outputs | Outcome / Impact |
| 1 | Equality, diversity and selection training for staff sitting on recruitment and selection panels. | Training sessions being delivered in advance of any recruitment exercise for new panel members, including new staff panel members (April, May, June & Oct 2019) trained in equality, diversity and selection and training for two Board members in preparation for our Wholesale Director recruitment in April 2019. | Panel members are adequately trained and competent in the equality and recruitment process outlined in UR’s Recruitment Policy and in line with equality legislation and best practice. |
| 2 | All staff trained equality and diversity. | HR and new key staff have attended Equality Commission training in 2019/20. Equality awareness is included in the induction for new staff. Section 75 and policy screening training was complete with all key staff in February 2016, and refresher training is currently being explored with the Equality Commission who have confirmed that their current plan is to devise an online course on that topic in conjunction with the NI Civil Service’s Centre for Applied Learning and to make it available to all public bodies which UR will then avail of. All staff training on Equality, Diversity and Inclusion (Transgender Policy) was carried out in January and February 2020 and further session are planned for the next reporting period. | All staff are aware of the provisions of Section 75, UR's equality scheme commitments, diversity in the work place and the issues likely to affect people across the range of categories and understand their role in promoting equality. |
|  |       |       |       |

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 | HR regularly reviews policies and discusses issues relating to Section 75 and disability discrimination as they arise with union representatives and communicated to staff. | Communicating and updating staff. A new Transgender policy has been developed and consulted on at JNCC. Training was complete all staff on inclusion and diversity to communicate the recently developed policy. | Forum to discuss with staff relevant issues on a timely basis. |
| 2 | Commissioning consultation documents to representative groups. | Developing relationships for feedback. Ongoing. | Consideration of applying feedback. |
| 3 | Developing relationships with other public authorities, voluntary & community sector groups and mainstream political parties. | Promoting good relations and positive attitudes. Ongoing. | Change of attitude and consideration of moving towards all-inclusive policies and procedures. |
| 4 | Review of accessibility of communications. | Promoting good relations and positive attitudes. Introduction of Twitter feed during 2018 to promote greater access to information about the UR. We have commenced a peer review of our communications which will look at the accessibility of our publications. . | Change of attitude and consideration of moving towards all-inclusive policies and procedures. Improved accessibility. |
| 5 | Produce accessible corporate documents. | Promoting clarity in communication and provision of the clearest possible information. New corporate document template produced to promote accessible information. The peer review of our communications which will look at the accessibility of our publications. | More engaging information for all consumers. |
| 6 | Website and intranet improvements plans to improve accessibility. | Both online channels, website and intranet, have been updated to promote ease of access and better engagement.  Intranet being reviewed during 2019/2020. | Inclusive approach from staff in relation to accessibility of information. |
| 7 | Ongoing website and intranet development and maintenance | Screening templates, our equality scheme and framework were uploaded to the equality section and this archive is regularly maintained. Intranet being reviewed during 2019/2020 and currently in development. | More engaging information for all consumers. |

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

|  |  |  |  |
| --- | --- | --- | --- |
|  | Encourage others Action Measures | Outputs | Outcome / Impact  |
| 1 |       |       |       |
| 2 |       |       |       |
|  |       |       |       |

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 |       |       |       |
| 2 |       |       |       |
|  |       |       |       |

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

|  |  |  |  |  |
| --- | --- | --- | --- | --- |
|  | Action Measures partly achieved | Milestones[[6]](#endnote-6) / Outputs  | Outcomes/Impacts | Reasons not fully achieved |
|  |  |  |  |   |
|  |       |       |       |       |
|  |       |       |       |       |

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

|  |  |  |
| --- | --- | --- |
|  | Action Measures not met | Reasons |
| 1 |       |       |
| 2 |       |       |
|  |       |       |

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

Evaluation of training provided

(b) Quantitative

Receipt of Monitoring Questionnaires for directly employed staff

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?

  No

If yes please outline below:

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

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

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. [↑](#endnote-ref-1)
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. [↑](#endnote-ref-2)
3. **National** : Situations where people can influence policy at a high impact level e.g. Public Appointments [↑](#endnote-ref-3)
4. **Regional**: Situations where people can influence policy decision making at a middle impact level [↑](#endnote-ref-4)
5. **Local :** Situations where people can influence policy decision making at lower impact level e.g. one off consultations, local fora. [↑](#endnote-ref-5)
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. [↑](#endnote-ref-6)