
Budget 2024-25
Equality Impact Assessment
Public Consultation

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1. Section 75 of the Northern Ireland Act 1998

1.1 Section 75 of the NI Act 1998 requires the Department of Infrastructure (hereinafter referred to as 'the Department'), in carrying out its functions, to have due regard to the need to promote equality of opportunity between:

- people with different religious beliefs;
- people from different racial groups;
- people of different ages;
- people with different marital status;
- people with different sexual orientations;
- men and women generally;
- people with or without a disability;
- people with or without dependants; and
- people with different political opinions.

1.2 In addition, but without prejudice to the duty above, the Department should also have due regard to the desirability of promoting good relations between people with different religious beliefs, different political opinions or from different racial groups.

1.3 The Disability Discrimination (NI) Order 2006, which came into effect on 1 January 2007, introduced new duties requiring all public authorities in carrying out their functions having due regard to the need to:

- promote positive attitudes towards disabled people; and
- encourage participation by disabled people in public life.

1.4 Equality Scheme commitments require public authorities to determine if there are any impacts on equality of opportunity and if there are opportunities to better promote equality of opportunity between people within the Section 75 equality categories. Where screening would not be an adequate means of gathering the information that is needed to assess the relevant equality impacts or opportunities, the public authority should proceed to do an Equality Impact Assessment (EQIA).

1.5 In light of this, an equality impact assessment will be carried out on the 2024-25 Budget, given the level of decisions required to seek to manage within the budget provided, and the Department's lack of robust data to determine impacts on the S75 groups.

1.6 The purpose of this document is to record the findings of the EQIA and invite comments.

1.7 The Resource and Capital Budget 2024-25 screening documents are available at: - <https://www.infrastructure-ni.gov.uk/consultations/dfi-budget-2024-25-equality-impact-assessment>

Other relevant screening documents and the Rural Needs Assessment will be available on the website shortly.

1.8 To request an alternative format please contact:

Department for Infrastructure
Financial Planning and Management Branch
1st Floor James House
2-4 Cromac Avenue
Belfast
BT7 2JA
Email: budget@infrastructure-ni.gov.uk

2. Equality Impact Assessment

2.1 The process of setting Budgets can in some cases have an unintentionally greater impact on some specific Section 75 groups than others, for example, on males, females, young or older people, etc. In distributing the resource and capital budgets, the Department aims to avoid any adverse impacts and where possible, action will be taken to mitigate against specific adverse impacts.

2.2 To comply with its Section 75 obligations, the Department, following equality screenings, is carrying out an EQIA on the Department's Budget 2024-25 provided to the Department by the Executive.

2.3 The primary function of an EQIA is to assess whether policy proposals would have a differential impact and, an adverse differential impact on the categories of persons listed in Section 75, and any subgroups within those categories.

2.4 When conducting an EQIA, the Department acts in accordance with the guidance published by the Equality Commission in April 2001 (revised 2005) which recommends that there should be seven steps in the EQIA process:

Step 1 Defining the aims of the policy.

Step 2 Consideration of available data and research.

Step 3 Assessment of impacts.

Step 4 Consideration of measures which may mitigate any adverse impact and alternative policies which may better achieve the promotion of equality of opportunity.

Step 5 Formal consultation.

Step 6 Decision and publication of the EQIA results.

Step 7 Monitoring for adverse impact.

2.5 In response to this, the Department has examined a number of potential scenarios for its 2024-25 budget allocation and given potential for adverse impacts across Section 75 groups has prepared a EQIA for consultation, in order to collate views from interested stakeholders. This document is the draft

of the EQIA prior to incorporating the outcomes of a public consultation which will form the basis of the Final EQIA.

3. Policy Aim

Budget 2024-25

- 3.1 The Executive agreed the 2024-25 Budget, which provided each Department with a resource and capital budget allocation.
- 3.2 The budget agreed by the Executive, is presented at an overall departmental outcome level. Therefore, it is for each Department to allocate its budget across its spending areas, with the Minister making decisions on how the Department's budget is allocated.
- 3.3 Following budget decisions these will be implemented by: business areas within the Department; Non-Departmental Public Bodies (NDPBs); and other Arms' Length Bodies (ALBs). Where any ALB falls under Section 75 of the NI Act (1998), they will be expected to also adhere to these duties.
- 3.4 Departments are required to screen proposed budget decisions in line with Equality Commission Northern Ireland guidance and should an EQIA be required, this will be published to support the consultation process.
- 3.5 The purpose of this paper is to set out the Department's initial assessment of the equality impacts of the 2024-25 Budget on its essential services and infrastructure.

The Department for Infrastructure

- 3.6 The Department for Infrastructure is responsible for the maintenance, development and planning of critical infrastructure in Northern Ireland. It is this physical (roads, bridges, and water and sewage systems) and soft (policies, resources, and services, i.e., public transport) infrastructure that underpins society, thereby, allowing people to meet their personal needs and participate in broader societal and economic activity. Inadequate physical and social infrastructure can be a barrier to economic and social activity; therefore, infrastructure is essential to ensuring economic well-being for individuals and for society as a whole.

- 3.7 Through its focus on transport, water and planning, the Department manages and protects in the region of £37bn of public assets that improve people's quality of life. These assets include over 26,000km of roads, around 5,900 bridges, around 10,000km of footways, approximately 300,000 streetlights, 426km of raised flood defence embankments and flood walls, 26km of coastal defences and approximately 366km of below ground culverts.
- 3.8 The Department has a vast and wide-ranging remit. Its responsibilities are grouped into three key delivery areas: Transport, Water and Planning.

Transport

- 3.9 The Department is responsible for the oversight and facilitation of surface transport in Northern Ireland. The main tools available for the delivery of the Department's transport vision are the development of Transport Policy, the management of the Road Network Asset (including the promotion of road safety) and providing funding and sponsorship of Translink which delivers the public transport network.
- 3.10 The Department is developing a new Transport Strategy which will set out the Department's new vision for our transport system here, placing climate change and connecting people at its heart. The Transport Strategy will signal the future direction of transport, provide the context in which decisions, within and beyond government, will be made and set out the strategic framework for future transport investment decisions.
- 3.11 The Transport Strategy will form the basis for the first Transport Sectoral Plan required by the Climate Change Act (NI) 2022 which is one of the primary drivers of the strategy.
- 3.12 The Department also sponsors the NI Transport Holding Company (NITHC) which is the parent company of Northern Ireland's only publicly owned bus and rail company, Translink. The Department is responsible for ensuring the delivery of the Strangford ferry and the management of the Rathlin ferry. The

Department also has responsibility for some aspects of the governance of Trust Ports and the development of airports.

3.13 The Department has a number of key responsibilities to ensure that everyone has access to safe and accessible travel. For this to happen we have a statutory responsibility to promote good road safety, reduce road fatalities and people being injured on our roads.

3.14 Another key part of this is done through the Department's agency - the Driver and Vehicle Agency (DVA) which contributes to road safety, law enforcement and a cleaner environment by promoting compliance of drivers, vehicles and transport operators through testing, licensing, enforcement and education.

Water

3.15 The Department is responsible for setting the strategic direction for water, wastewater and drainage policy across Northern Ireland including developing water, flooding and sustainable drainage legislation as well as the sponsorship of NI Water.

3.16 NI Water is an arm's length body of the Department and a Government owned Company with the Department as sole shareholder. NI Water is the statutory water and sewerage undertaker for Northern Ireland. NI Water provides 605m litres of drinking water every day to 910k households and businesses and treats 362m litres of wastewater from homes and businesses before safely returning it to the rivers and sea.

3.17 The Department also sponsors Waterways Ireland, one of six North South Implementation Bodies, established to promote the recreational and navigational use of our waterways.

3.18 The Department is responsible for the management of flood risk which includes the maintenance of our river and sea defences, construction of flood alleviation schemes, informing development decisions and developing flood maps.

3.19 DfI is the lead government Department for the strategic coordination of the emergency response to severe weather events, including flooding, emergency planning and processes, which are developed in conjunction with our multi-agency partners.

Planning

3.20 The Department is responsible for the strategic direction and production of regional policy for land use planning. It also develops planning legislation and processes a small number of regionally significant planning applications and those applications which may be 'called in', along with having a statutory consultee role for roads and rivers to provide specialist advice in relation to the consideration of planning applications by councils.

3.21 The Department works together with the councils in managing the two-tier planning system and has a statutory consultee and an oversight role in the preparation of Local Development Plans which set out councils' long-term visions, objectives and growth over the plan period. The Department, with local government and stakeholders, is also taking forward a Planning Improvement Programme. An interim Regional Planning Commission has been established to provide advice and support, and the programme for change and improvement focuses on a breadth of work areas including legislation, policy, practice, resourcing and governance.

3.22 The Department also has a regeneration role with Crumlin Road Gaol, Belfast and have ownership of lands at the former St Lucia Barracks, Omagh.

3.23 By focusing on transport, water and planning, the Department is clear on the current state of infrastructure in these key areas, what is needed, why it is needed and that the value of infrastructure cannot be overstated, and that appropriate investment is required.

4. Budget 2024-25

Resource Budget

4.1 The Department identified that it required £676.6m (as detailed in the table below) resource budget in 2024-25 to deliver and in some instances further improve its essential services, including actions towards meeting climate action targets.

2024-25 Forecasted Resource Requirements

	£m
ALBs:	
NI Water	169.3*
Translink	178.7
DVA	3.9
Waterways Ireland	5.2
Department:	
Transport and Road Asset Management	172.4
Climate, Planning and Public Transport	20
Water and Departmental Delivery (includes departmental salaries)	127.1
Total	676.6

* based on draft Mid Term Review requirements

4.2 The Department's resource budget allocation for 2024-25 is £559.5m, which when set against the Department's forecast requirements is a shortfall of some £117m.

4.3 The Department has been historically underfunded, by over a decade of cuts by the British Government, with its baseline position not being sufficient to deliver core services and has relied on in-year funding to continue delivery. This underfunding has compounded the impact of the shortfall on the Resource Budget this year for the Department, with levels of service continually being maintained at lower levels than requested.

4.4 This means that important areas of work are not progressed as they should be, such as bridge, road and rivers inspections, adoption of new housing

developments, remedial works and safety improvements. Investment in new infrastructure projects, including those that provide more opportunities for active travel and for modal shift away from private cars, is also constrained. In recent years, the impact of construction inflation and other new costs for the delivery of services, including for water and wastewater treatment and public transport, has created further challenge to the available budget.

4.5 Essential Road asset maintenance has been reduced considerably over the years due to budget constraints, with a limited service being provided since the inception of the Department, following the significant budget reductions in 2015. This level of service increases the risk to public safety and ultimately requires much more expensive repairs where defects deteriorate quickly (e.g., filling potholes). The public, and public representatives are already seeing the impact of reduced maintenance, and this is impacting directly on the Department through rising public liability claims, with a real potential for much larger claims in future.

4.6 The cost of running the extensive public transport network within the North requires public subsidy to breakeven as reflected in the Public Service Agreement between the Department and Translink. Indeed, in common with many other jurisdictions, our public transport network has always required subsidy to operate. The baseline funding for our public transport network has not kept pace with inflationary cost pressures and this has resulted in severe financial pressures for Translink, with its reserves depleted. These financial challenges are expected to continue for Translink, and therefore there is a real risk that without increased funding there are likely to be impacts on public transport services.

4.7 In previous years, there has been chronic underfunding for water and wastewater services, due to the aforementioned cuts by the British Government, with funding levels below the levels determined independently by the Utility Regulator as necessary to ensure an efficient and affordable delivery of water and sewerage services. In 2021-2022, the Executive agreed to fund NI Water to the level recommended by the Regulator as set out in the PC21 Final Determination (FD) which was based on 2018-2019 prices. Since the Final

Determination was agreed, the financial outlook has changed considerably due to inflationary rises and also the cost of the market supply of skills and essential resources and the Utility Regulator has agreed that these increased costs need to be factored into any budget decisions, as these reflect the current cost of operations.

4.8 Having clean and safe drinking water and appropriate sewerage infrastructure is essential to enable economic growth and development and requires a sustainable funding model. The impact of previous spending decisions is now serious and manifesting itself in restrictions on economic and housing development and risks associated with pollution and environmental compliance. Failure to continue to provide the funding independently assessed as necessary to maintain functioning water and wastewater infrastructure will have a direct impact on service delivery, including continued constraints on development at a time when economic recovery is so important and significantly increased risks of widespread water outages, sewer blockages and untreated sewage being discharged into the environment, directly impacting public safety.

4.9 Some 95% of the Department's resource budget delivers front-line service provision, with the vast majority regulated, statutory, fixed or contractually obliged, which leaves little opportunity to make savings. It could be argued that given the operational nature of the Department's services it is disproportionately impacted by rising costs of inflation and contractual commitments.

4.10 Therefore, again this year, the Department will be faced with maintaining limited service levels, and possibly direct impacts on its water and wastewater services and public transport network.

4.11 In seeking to balance the Department's requirements against the resource budget provided, the Department is currently considering a number of options to reduce spending forecasts, while still seeking to protect concessionary fares and community transport. Details of these proposed options and resulting indicative allocations, subject to equality considerations, are detailed below:

- NI Water – 21.7% reduction to funding against its revised 2024-25 Operating Plan and Budget;
- Translink – 19.4% reduction to funding against its forecast requirements, including implementation of a concessionary fares application fee and if required bid for additional funding for its potential holiday pay liability*.
- DVA - requirement for DVA to use its reserves to fund licensing and enforcement activities rather than be provided with a subsidy from the Department;
- Essential Road Maintenance – Maintain a limited level of service level for a further consecutive year;
- Reduce funding for Public Liability*;
- Remove funding for annual programme of footway enhancement on poor footways;
- Increase Private Street Fees charge;
- Fund Winter Service to December 2024 and seek additional funding in-year*;
- Increase controlled parking zones charge, increase charge for blue badge and turn on all Monitoring Traffic Offences enforcement cameras;
- Maintain a limited Flood Risk Management Service and no provision to develop a Flood Forecasting Centre unless ringfenced funding provided;
- Reduce Road Safety Advertising to match proposed sponsorship and reduction in requirement for Road Safety Schemes;
- Funding of Community Transport remains at the total level provided in 2023-24, with funding for Assisted Rural Travel Scheme to be provided by the Department for Agriculture, Environment and Rural Affairs;
- Remove Climate Action Plan forecast requirements to deliver against draft Climate Action Plan;
- Maintain staff levels for Planning statutory consultees and planning staff unless ringfenced funding provided;
- Reduce funding for Departmental Pay and manage in year through staff churn*; and
- Remove funding for Emergency Response costs.

*should additional funding be required for these costs it is proposed that these will be bid for in-year, and if no additional funding provided further reductions may be required in year which would be subject to further equality considerations.

Indicative Resource Allocations (subject to Equality considerations)

Spending Area	2024-25 Indicative Allocation
	£m
NI Water	137.7
Translink	144
DVA	(2.9)
Waterways Ireland	5.2
Department – TRAM	155.3
Department – CPPT	7.7
Department – WDD	11.3
Department - Staffing	101.2
TOTAL	559.5

4.12 It is clear that under the resource budget allocation provided, the Department will be required to continue to deliver limited level of services, reduce funding for other essential services such as road safety, reduce progress on actions for climate change and will not be able to respond to emergency response, over and above normal expected levels, such as flooding, infrastructure collapse and major weather events without additional funding or impacting directly on its other essential services. With the reductions to both Translink and NI Water proposed there is a real risk that this will impact directly on the level of services provided, water and wastewater and public transport.

4.13 Final budget decisions have not been made by the Minister in terms of the distribution of the Department’s budget, this will be made following this consultation on the proposed options.

Capital Budget

4.14 The agreement of a capital budget for the Department will progress key infrastructure schemes and capital maintenance of vital infrastructure, which will benefit all S75 groups. However, this progression will be subject to the budget outcome, which limits the scale of what can be achieved. This means

that there will be a prioritisation of which schemes progress in this financial year.

- 4.15 The Department submitted capital bids of £1.12bn in terms of progressing delivery of capital schemes and enhancing infrastructure. The Department's 2024-25 Capital Budget agreed by the Executive is £820m, of which £188.9m was for specific schemes and £631.1m was a general allocation.
- 4.16 Of the Department's bids, £799m of these are deemed inescapable or are for specific earmarked schemes, and therefore the allocation goes some way towards addressing these. To further mitigate the shortfall the Department overplans against its capital budget allocation, to reflect that capital schemes can face delays and therefore reduced costs in year. By overplanning the Department seeks to maximise the budget outcome to effectively spend in-year. However, should reductions not occur, and additional funding is not provided there will be a requirement to stop/pause further capital schemes in-year.
- 4.17 This budget outcome will enable some key schemes to progress, for example the Belfast Transport Hub; A5; A4; A29 Cookstown Bypass; Newry Southern Relief Road; Phase 3 Derry to Coleraine track improvements; essential rail and bus safety works; and some structural maintenance of our road network. It will not however facilitate the level of investment initially identified and therefore will likely result in the delay on progress for some schemes.
- 4.18 The proposed allocation of the Department's capital budget which is still subject to Minister's decisions and equality considerations, is set out in the table below.

	Proposed 2024-25 Allocation £m
Ringfenced Allocations (provided for specific schemes)	
Flagship - A5	88.5
Flagship – A6	6.5
Flagship - Belfast Transport Hub	79.9
City Deal – Lagan Bridge	0.5
City Deal – Belfast Rapid Transit 2	5
City Deal – Newry Southern Relief Road	1.3
City Deal – A4 Enniskillen Southern Bypass	0.8
EU Matching Funding (Enterprise Rolling Stock and NI Water)	7.2
Ringfenced Total	189.7
General Allocation	
NI Water	323.7
Translink (includes earmarked funding for Coleraine to Derry rail line)	159.5
Driver Vehicle Agency	0.4
Waterways Ireland	2.4
Arms' Length Bodies Total	486
Transport and Road Asset Management	143.1
Rivers	21.5
Living With Water Programme	4
Water and Departmental Delivery	0.8
Climate, Planning and Public Transport	1.1
Department Total	170.5
General Allocation Total	656.5
Overall Proposed Capital Budget Allocations	846.2
Overplanning	26.2
Capital Budget	820

4.19 To allow for effective budget management, it is also proposed that total general budget allocations are provided to NI Water and Translink (excluding earmarked and ringfenced funding), rather than by specific scheme/programme. It will therefore be for both organisations to prioritise within the allocations given, and to use flexibility to manage their capital delivery programme within the total budget provided, noting the overplanning element and need to reduce this in year. It will also be pertinent for these organisations to prioritise their health and safety and equality obligations, where relevant.

- 4.20 In order to seek to live within the capital budget provided to the Department it is expected that this will lead to a slowing down of NI Water, Translink and the Department's capital programmes. With a constrained budget situation, it will be vital to protect and prioritise business critical projects and essential capital maintenance projects to protect the safety of the public here.
- 4.21 There may be consequences of decisions in order to secure health and safety within the budget position, which could require a reduction in the levels of service provided and/or access to infrastructure leading to closure of Roads or a reduced public transport provision.

5. Consideration of Available Data and Research

5.1 In assessing the impact of the 2024-25 Budget policy against obligation under Section 75 of the 1998 Act the Department concludes that there is evidence of some differential impact in respect of some Section 75 categories.

5.2 Impacts have been considered against the backdrop of monitoring of the impacts of the 2023-24 budget on Section 75 groups as well as available data, derived from (please note this is not an exhaustive list):-

- DfI Budget 2023/24 Consultation Report
- NISRA 2021 Census data
- The Anti-Poverty Strategy Expert Advisory Panel Report
- The Gender Strategy Expert Advisory Report
- THE TRANSPORT TRAP – How transport disadvantages poorer people
- The relationship between transport and loneliness - [Sustrans.org.uk](https://www.sustrans.org.uk)
- The impact of public spending changes in Northern Ireland – NIHRC
- IMTAC publications
- AGE NI Lived Experience 2021
- OUTstanding in your field: Experience of LGBT people in rural areas
- NI Rural Women's Network
- Funding water infrastructure in Northern Ireland - NIAO

5.3 However, the Department also concluded that on initial analysis of the limited Section 75 data available there is not enough sufficient robust data to determine significant and adverse impact on all S75 groups.

5.4 The services provided by the Department are generally universal in nature and provide benefit to all citizens across Northern Ireland. Although the Department been monitoring the impacts of the 2023-24 Capital and Resource Budgets on Section 75 groups, data is limited. It is difficult to assess how significant and adverse the impact of service or infrastructure reductions will be on Section 75 groups. As such the Department will seek to gather further information on potential impacts through this consultation.

6. Assessment of Impacts

6.1 As the services and infrastructure provided by the Department are generally universal in nature and are for the benefit of all citizens in the North it is difficult to assess the significant and adverse impact of potential service and infrastructure reductions for each Section 75 group. Potential adverse equality impacts are unknown as there is insufficient data upon which to make an assessment. It is therefore considered appropriate to conduct an equality impact assessment in order to better assess them. There is further detail on the impacts within each of the associated screening forms and these should be referenced in assessing the impact.

Religious belief

6.2 Whilst the Department has no specific data to determine the impact of the overall budget on this group the 2021 Census breakdown of religious belief in NI showed that 44% of the population are Protestant, 46% Catholic, 1.5% other religions and 9% no religion.

6.3 Data from the 2016-2018 Travel Survey for Northern Ireland shows there are no differences between Protestants and Catholics when considering the percentage of journeys by walking, cycling or public transport. Those who are other/none/refused to answer were more likely to make journeys using those travel modes.

6.4 The DfI Audit of Inequalities cites anecdotal evidence that religious belief may have some relevance in the provision of public transport services – particularly in respect of safety.

6.5 The Northern Ireland Human Rights Commission's (NIHRC) on report on the impact of public spending shows that the social housing stock is also highly segregated by religious community background, with around 90% of social housing estates being single identity. Therefore, where social housing developments are restricted in areas of deprivation due to wastewater and sewerage constraints, this may impact on religious belief linked to economically deprived areas.

- 6.6 The Department for Communities Anti-Poverty Strategy highlights the ongoing historic regional imbalance of transport, particularly in the North West.
- 6.7 Although monitoring of the impacts of the 2023-24 Capital and Resource budgets on Section 75 groups has not concluded, initial analysis of the limited data available has not provided evidence of adverse impacts on people of religious belief and as such it is difficult to determine the impact(s) on this group of the Department's 2024-25 Capital and Resource budget allocations.

Political Opinion

- 6.8 Whilst the Department has no specific data to determine the impact of the overall budget on this group, there has been a historical tendency for voting preferences to closely reflect the religious affiliations of the population. NISRA statistics for first preference votes in the 2022 NI Assembly Election showed 42% unionist, 42% nationalist and 16% other. This implies that any issues and differentials identified in relation to people of different religion may also impact on people of different political opinion.
- 6.9 In Census 2021, 814,600 people (42.8%) living here identified solely or along with other national identities as 'British'. This is down from 876,600 people (48.4%) in 2011. The Census also found, 634,600 people (33.3%) living here identified solely or along with other national identities as 'Irish'. This is up from 513,400 people (28.4%) in 2011. In Census 2021, 598,800 people (31.5%) living here identified solely or along with other national identities as 'Northern Irish'. This is up from 533,100 people (29.4%) in 2011.
- 6.10 Although monitoring of the impacts of the 2023-24 Capital and Resource budgets on Section 75 groups has not concluded, initial analysis of the limited data available on this area has not provided evidence of adverse impacts on people of or political opinion and as such it is difficult to determine the impact(s) on this group of the Department's 2024-25 Capital and Resource budget allocations.

Racial Group

- 6.11 Whilst the Department has no specific data to determine the impact of the overall budget on this group, the 2021 Census recorded that 3.5% (66,600) people were from ethnic minority groups.
- 6.12 The DfI Audit of Inequalities suggested that there is some evidence that racial group may have some relevance in the provision of public transport services. The report highlighted evidence that safety and perceptions of safety against racial hate crime on public transport is a particular consideration for those from minority ethnic groups. The Audit also highlighted evidence that asylum seekers and migrant workers may be more heavily reliant on public transport, citing evidence that a high proportion of this cohort is reliant on benefits or employed in low-paid jobs, so affordability of transport is a particular factor. The Audit identified language issues as a potential barrier to usage of public transport for new migrants and asylum seekers.
- 6.13 Since the introduction of the Immigration Act 2014, there have been restrictions on the ability of migrants to hold or obtain a driving licence. Additionally, asylum seekers have no recourse to public funds, meaning that they cannot work or receive benefits and rely on their Asylum Support payments from the Home Office. There are also impacts due to lack of rural services for asylum seekers, particularly to travel to Home Office appointments, health appointments, school etc. There has been a particular impact on children who when granted refugee status must move from Home Office supported accommodation lose the EA bus pass and can't afford to travel to sit exams at their schools.
- 6.14 Although monitoring of the impacts of the 2023-24 Capital and Resource budgets on Section 75 groups has not concluded, initial analysis of the limited data available on this area has not provided evidence of adverse impacts on people from a minority ethnic group and as such it is difficult to determine the impact(s) on this group of the Department's 2024-25 Capital and Resource budget allocations.

Age

- 6.15 The Department provides benefit to all citizens across NI. The 2021 census indicated that 17% of the 1.9m people resident in Northern Ireland are aged 65 and over. At May 2024, 369,374 SmartPasses were held by older people.

Comparing this to the 2019 mid-year population estimate of those persons aged 60 and over (420,528 persons), there was an approximately 80% uptake of these Smart Passes. The number of active passes used in 2022-23 was 186,609, which represents approx. 50% of active passes.

- 6.16 In a normal year, older people make up approximately 20% of Metro passengers, 16% of NIR passengers and 13% of Ulsterbus passengers which equates to an overall 16% of Translink's normal 84m annual passenger journeys. This evidence is based on the journeys taken by people over 60 years old who hold concessionary fare passes. This overall percentage is representative of the percentage of older people in Northern Ireland which is almost 17% of the population here based on NISRA population statistics.
- 6.17 Translink carries around 80k school children to school every day, representing just over 20% (16m journeys) of its total 2019-20 passenger journeys. This is comparable with NISRA population statistics indicating that those aged up to 15, make up almost 21% of the NI population.
- 6.18 Children and young people make the majority of their trips by bus, to get to school or college, leisure facilities and work. Therefore, affordability can be a barrier for older children and young people. Lack of provision in rural areas particularly affects young people who cannot drive.
- 6.19 The 2021 Travel Survey for Northern Ireland data also shows that young people (both 0-15 and 16-24) were more likely to make a higher percentage of journeys by walking, cycling or public transport than other age groups.
- 6.20 Older people are the main users of the grant funded Community Transport services in 2023-24, Dial-a-Lift (50% of trips undertaken by people aged over 65), the Disability Action Transport Scheme (54% of new members aged over 65) and Shopmobility (45%). This highlights the importance of these services to those aged over 65.

- 6.21 Road fatalities for 2021-22 were 45 compared to 61 for 2022-23. The number of fatal and serious casualties i.e. the number of KSI casualties overall stood at 940 in 2021-22, this was 349 more KSIs or a 59% increase on the previous year. In comparison with ten years ago, the number of fatal and serious collisions for 2021-22 was 58 more than 2012-13, with 108 additional KSI casualties (reductions of 8% and 13% respectively). In 2021 nearly half (48%) of all people killed or seriously injured in road collisions were aged 34 or under; therefore, cuts to road safety may impact disproportionately on younger people.
- 6.22 In respect of roads and footpath maintenance, there is evidence from the Chartered Institution of Highways and Transportation (CIHT) and The AA to suggest that poor maintenance of pavements poses a particular difficulty to older people's ability to get out and about. There is also substantial anecdotal evidence from the Department's own advisory body, Inclusive Mobility and Transport Advisory Committee (IMTAC), whose members typically identify poor maintenance of existing, and poor design of new, pedestrian infrastructure to be a major barrier to older people's ability to get around on foot.
- 6.23 Unrepaired street lighting outages and/or street lighting switched off completely may lead to defects on a footpath being tripping hazards which could cause problems for people of any age who have a mobility related disability or visual impairment. For many in this S75 group unrepaired streetlights and or no street lights at all might increase their sense of insecurity where a number of street lights have ceased to work.
- 6.24 Major potential impacts have been identified as a result of potential reductions to public transport. Older people, who normally make up approximately 20% of Metro passengers, 16% of NIR passengers and 13% of Ulsterbus passengers, require a service level to meet their normal daily needs which may include access to shops, friends and community facilities as well access to health and care services.

Marital Status

- 6.25 The Department's provides benefit to all citizens across NI. Whilst the Department has no specific data to determine the impact of the overall budget on this group, in 2021 there were 7,921 marriages in Northern Ireland.
- 6.26 The 2016-2018 Travel Survey for Northern Ireland data shows that compared to those who are married or in a civil partnership, single people were likely to make a higher percentage of journeys by walking, cycling or public transport. Similarly, those who are divorced or widowed were also more likely to use these travel modes than married people.
- 6.27 The NIHRC' report on the impact of public spending changes in Northern Ireland highlights that single parents are more likely to be on benefits, and therefore, more likely to rely on public transport or social housing and to be women. The report also outlines that single working-age applicants make up 45% of the social housing waiting list, and a similar proportion of housing applications. Restricted provision of wastewater and sewage services is constraining social housing developments which may impact on people of differing marital status who are on social housing waiting lists.
- 6.28 Although monitoring of the impacts of the 2023-24 Capital and Resource budgets on Section 75 groups has not concluded, initial analysis of the limited data available on this area has not provided evidence of adverse impacts on people of marital status and as such it is difficult to determine the impact(s) on this group of the Department's 2024-25 Capital and Resource budget allocations.

Sexual Orientation

- 6.29 The Department's provides benefit to all citizens across NI. Whilst the Department has no specific data to determine the impact of the overall budget on this group, the Continuous Household Survey 2022 records 0.7% of participants as gay/lesbian, 0.6% bisexual, 0.3% Other, 1% undetermined and 97.3% heterosexual. In the absence of more robust data outside of that above it

is difficult to determine the impact(s) on this group of the Department's 2024-25 budget allocation.

6.30 The DfI Audit of Inequalities highlighted that LGBTQI+ people living in a rural area were three times as likely not to access services they are aware of because it is too far to travel compared to those living in an urban area. Seven in every eight LGBTQI+ people living in a rural area feel that it is important to have access to an LGBTQI+ support service in their local area. Therefore, cuts to public transport can negatively impact on the LGBTQI+ community.

6.31 Although monitoring of the impacts of the 2023-24 Capital and Resource budgets on Section 75 groups has not concluded, initial analysis of the limited data available on this area has not provided evidence of adverse impacts on people of sexual orientation.

Men & Women generally

6.32 The Department provides benefit to all citizens across NI. Whilst the Department has no specific data to determine the impact of the overall budget on this group, of the responses to the Travel Survey 2017 – 2019 there were 5,266 respondents interviewed of which 2,462 (47%) were male and 2,805 (53%) female. Men tend to cycle more than women therefore active travel spend promoting cycling may benefit men more.

6.33 NISRA population statistics indicate that men and women make up roughly equal parts of NI's 1.89m population. The NISRA, 2019, Travel Survey for Northern Ireland In-depth Report 2016-2018 showed there is little difference in how frequently men and women use public transport, but like the rest of the UK, men tend to travel further distances than women on all forms of transport.

6.34 Women tended to use grant funded Community Transport services in 2023-24 more than men, Dial-a- Lift (69%), the Disability Action Transport Scheme (54% of new members) and Shopmobility (58%). This highlights the importance of these services to women.

- 6.35 PSNI Road Fatalities statistics shows that of the 45 people killed on Northern Ireland's roads in 2021-22, 39 were male and 6 were female.
Males tend to be more likely to hold a driving licence when compared to females.
- 6.36 In respect of public transport usage, the Department's Audit of Inequalities cites evidence that fewer women than men hold driving licences and may, thus, be more reliant on affordable public transport than men. The Gender Equality Strategy Expert Advisory Panel Report also notes that greater dependence on public transport puts women at an economic disadvantage to men and highlights cost and availability of public transport services (in rural areas in particular) as a barrier to women's participation in society and civic life. The Department's Audit also highlights that safety and perceptions of safety against gender-based crime on public transport is more of a barrier to use of public transport for women than men. The Audit also notes that women are also more likely to have care-giving responsibilities that can necessitate multiple short journeys during a day. The Audit highlights that the typical "hub and spoke" design of public transport systems which may present challenges to these travel patterns. This may also have implications for general affordability and development of suitable ticketing options.
- 6.37 The NI Rural Women's Network note that "Women are much less likely to have access to their own private transport than men. This means that women depend much more on public transport and are at an economic disadvantage to men. The accessibility of education, training, work and childcare provision, and the cost of public transport, are factors in determining women's participation, especially in rural areas. The economic disadvantages of lack of access to transport are compounded by the impeded ability to access basic services and social isolation".
- 6.38 Although monitoring of the impacts of the 2023-24 Capital and Resource budgets on Section 75 groups has not concluded, initial analysis of the limited data available on this area has not provided evidence of adverse impacts on people of men and women generally and as such it is difficult to determine the

impact(s) on this group of the Department's Capital and Resource 2024-25 budget allocations.

Disability

- 6.39 The 2021 Census indicates that nearly 45% of households in Northern Ireland with one or more people in the household with a disability (40% for 2011).
- 6.40 In the DfI Travel Survey, 19% of respondents said they had some difficulty with travel due to a physical disability or long-standing health problem. There was no real difference between males and females except in the 70+ age group: more women aged 70+ had difficulty with travel (48%) than men aged 70+ (36%). Difficulty with travel due to a physical disability or long-standing health problem increases with age: 6% of 16–29-year-olds had difficulty with travel compared to 42% of those aged 70 and over.
- 6.41 NISRA statistics show that 21% of adults in Northern Ireland are classed as having a disability. A key condition of membership of the Disability Action Transport Scheme is that an individual finds it difficult or impossible to use mainstream public transport. This highlights the importance of these services to those aged over 60.
- 6.42 Community Transport is important to people with a disability, the Disability Action Transport Scheme aims to help people who find it difficult or impossible to use mainstream public transport. Similarly, Shopmobility schemes offer mobility equipment to help people with a disability access goods and services.
- 6.43 In respect of roads and footpath maintenance, there is evidence from the Chartered Institution of Highways and Transportation (CIHT) and The AA to suggest that poor maintenance of pavements poses a particular difficulty to disabled peoples' ability to get out and about. There is also substantial anecdotal evidence from the Department's own advisory body, Inclusive Mobility and Transport Advisory Committee (IMTAC), whose members typically identify poor maintenance of existing, and poor design of new, pedestrian infrastructure to be a major barrier to disabled people's ability to both walk and wheel.

- 6.44 The Disability Strategy Expert Advisory Panel Report outlines how access to transport is a long-standing issue which can have a direct impact on the ability of d/Deaf and disabled people to exercise their rights to, for example, independent living, education, employment, health, and access to culture, arts and leisure. The Report also outlines that the physical inaccessibility of public transport has been recognised by the CRPD Committee as a major factor in the ongoing marginalisation and exclusion of both disabled children and adults. While there have been improvements to public transport, many of the improvements have benefitted people travelling in the Greater Belfast area the most, with travel by public transport more challenging for people living in other areas.
- 6.45 The Western Health and Social Care Trust report on Audit of Sensory Support Services (2010) showed that access to transport is particularly important for people with disabilities who live in rural areas, as they are less likely to have access to a car than other households.
- 6.46 Restricted provision of wastewater and sewage services is constraining social housing developments which may impact on disabled people who are on social housing waiting lists.

Dependants

- 6.47 The Department provides benefit to all citizens across NI. The 2011 NI Census indicated that 34% per cent of households in Northern Ireland contained dependent children and 40% contained at least one person with a long-term health problem or disability; made up of those households with dependent children (9.2%) and those with no dependent children (31%).
- 6.48 In respect of roads and footpath maintenance, there is evidence from the Chartered Institution of Highways and Transportation (CIHT) and The AA to suggest that poor maintenance of pavements poses a difficulty to all pedestrians but the latter highlights particularly the negative impact on those with young dependents who are reliant on using pushchairs or wheelchairs. There is also substantial anecdotal evidence from the Department's own

advisory body, Inclusive Mobility and Transport Advisory Committee (IMTAC), that poor maintenance of existing, and poor design of new, pedestrian infrastructure is a major barrier to people who use pushchairs for dependants to get around on foot.

- 6.49 As highlighted in the gender section women are more likely to be a single parent and claiming benefits, or to be earning low incomes working in insecure employment. As such this presents challenges for expectant mothers or parents with young children with regards to affording public transport and/or the of availability of public transport, as well as limitation in transport choice when travelling with a young child. These are similar experiences to disabled people and older people, the accessibility and design of physical spaces can also affect parents' ability to travel freely with small children, especially if using pushchairs (DfI Audit of Inequalities).
- 6.50 The cost-of-living crisis can have a particular impact on families, with rising household costs, particularly childcare, meaning that more people may rely on benefits and public transport. This is evident in the Women's Regional Consortium Report on Women's Experiences of the Cost-of-Living Crisis in Northern Ireland, particularly as "Younger age groups were more likely to say that they had to turn the heating down or off – these are the households more likely to have children."
- 6.51 Although monitoring of the impacts of the 2023-24 Capital and Resource budgets on Section 75 groups has not concluded, initial analysis of the limited data available on this area has not provided evidence of adverse impacts on people of men and women generally. It is difficult to determine the impact(s) on this group of the Department's 2024-25 Capital and Resource budget allocations.

7 Consideration of Mitigations / Alternative Policies

7.1 The impact of the Capital and Resource Budgets for 2024-25 on the Department is very challenging with the compounded impact of historic underfunding on its services and now impacting its infrastructure.

7.2 In developing options to live within the proposed 2024-25 budget allocations, consideration will be given to how any adverse impacts on Section 75 groups can be reduced, this includes seeking to protect concessionary fares and community transport. It would, however, be difficult to mitigate the potential adverse impacts anticipated, given the scale of additional funding the Department requires. Where options for reductions have been identified, separate screenings are being completed and will be available on the Department's website in the coming weeks.

7.3 Where possible mitigations will be implemented, this includes for capital schemes, prioritising health and safety and for the Department's services seeking to ensure that its essential services continue, albeit in some instances at a reduced level.

7.4 The Department is seeking comments on any potential equality implications arising from the Capital and Resource Budgets for 2024-25 and will consider the need for any further mitigating actions in light of responses received during the consultation. Promotion of equality of opportunity and the protection of services to vulnerable groups will be a key consideration in the Department's decisions and during monitoring rounds.

8 Consultation, Publication and Decision

- 8.1 The Department is committed to seeking the views of those who are affected by the decisions that it will make in relation to its Capital and Resource budget reductions. We are keen to hear from individuals and organisations about their views on the equality implication of the decisions being made and about any mitigations that the Department could put in place.
- 8.2 Decisions on final opening budget allocations need to be made urgently. This is so they can be implemented in time to take effect over as much of the financial year as possible; and so that business areas who depend on our funding can make the necessary plans as soon as possible.
- 8.3 Therefore, given the urgent need to provide certainty of funding to business areas, Arm's Length Bodies, and organisations who depend on our funding, the Department will consult over a four-week period. Views received on both the Capital and Resource budgets during this time will be used to inform the Department's allocation of funds to its business areas as well as any early mitigations that can be put in place. Any responses received between weeks 5 and 12 of this consultation will be used to consider further mitigation measures, to inform in-year budget reallocation processes, and to direct any additional funding (or further reductions) that emerge over the course of the financial year.
- 8.4 The Department would welcome your views on the equality impacts of the Department's 2024-25 Capital and Resource Budgets. Screening assessments on the proposed options to reduce spending and capital budget allocations should be considered as part of this budget consultation. All relevant screening documents will be available on the Department's website in the coming weeks.
- 8.5 The Department welcomes comment on any aspects of this document. Interested parties are encouraged to make responses by 9 July 2024, which will be used to inform the Department's allocation of 2024-25 funds. Any further consultation responses received between 10 July 2024 to 6 September 2024 will be used to inform further mitigation measures and reallocation of any additional funding available during 2024-25.

8.6 Further consultations and equality screening will be considered, as appropriate, as plans to live within our Capital and Resource Budget 2024-25 allocations are considered.

9 Monitoring

9.1 In keeping with this Department's commitments under its Equality Scheme, any adverse differential impact on equality of opportunity or good relations that may be identified through this consultation process will be taken into account in informing the Department's Budget 2024-25 distribution for services. Any such findings will be used to inform further development of mitigations, revised Budget distributions and in-year bids.

10 Confidentiality

10.1 The Freedom of Information Act 2000 gives the public the right of access to any information held by a public authority, namely, the Department in this case. This right of access to information includes information provided in response to a consultation. The Department cannot automatically consider as confidential information supplied to it in response to a consultation. However, it does have the responsibility to decide whether any information provided in response to this consultation, including information about identity, should be made public or treated as confidential.

10.2 This means that information provided in response to the consultation is unlikely to be treated as confidential, except in very particular circumstances. The Lord Chancellor's Code of Practice on the Freedom of Information Act provides that:

- the Department should only accept information from third parties in confidence if it is necessary to obtain that information in connection with the exercise of any of the Department's functions and it would not otherwise be provided;
- the Department should not agree to hold information received from third parties "in confidence" which is not confidential in nature; and
- acceptance by the Department of confidentiality provisions must be for good reasons, capable of being justified to the Information Commissioner.

10.3 For further information regarding confidentiality of responses please contact the Information Commissioner's Office at:

Information Commissioner's Office – Northern Ireland
10th Floor Causeway Tower,
9 James Street South
Belfast BT2 8DN
Telephone: 0303 123 1114
Email: ni@ico.org.uk
Website: <http://www.ico.org.uk>

11 Consultation Questions

11.1 Given the constrained financial position and the growing demand, DfI public services are facing significant challenges going forward.

11.2 In consulting on both the Department's 2024-25 Capital and Resource Budget allocations views are welcomed on the following:

1. Are there any data, needs or issues in relation to any of the Section 75 equality categories that have not been identified in Section 5 and 6 of the EQIA consultation document? If so, what are they? Please provide details.
2. Are there any adverse impacts in relation to any of the Section 75 equality groups that have not been identified in section 6 of the EQIA Consultation document? If so, what are they?
3. Please state what action you think could be taken to reduce or eliminate any adverse impacts in seeking to manage the Department's 2024-25 budget, for both resource and capital?
4. Are there any other comments you would like to make in regard to the consultation process generally?

11.3 Comments on the DfI Capital and Resource budgets, whether to both budgets or an individual budget, and the equality impacts of both can be submitted using the online survey which can be accessed at:

<https://consultations2.nidirect.gov.uk/dfi-1/dfi-budget-2024-25-equality-impact-assessment> on the NIdirect website.

11.4 If you are unable to respond using the online consultation facility, you can email your response via email to:

budget@infrastructure-ni.gov.uk

11.5 The Department welcomes comment on any aspects of this document.

Interested parties are encouraged to make responses by 9 July 2024, which will be used to inform the Department's allocation of 2024-25 funds. Any further consultation responses received between 10 July 2024 to 6 September 2024

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will be used to inform further mitigation measures and reallocation of any additional funding available during 2024-25.

The deadline for responses is 6 September 2024