

BUILDING A BETTER FUTURE

THE NORTHERN IRELAND EXECUTIVE

PROGRAMME FOR GOVERNMENT 2008-2011

BUDGET 2008-2011

INVESTMENT STRATEGY 2008 - 2018

**DRAFT EQUALITY IMPACT ASSESSMENT
CARRIED OUT AT A STRATEGIC LEVEL**

JANUARY 2008

SEEKING YOUR VIEWS

The Executive has decided to carry out an Equality Impact Assessment at a strategic level on the Programme for Government (PFG), Budget and the Investment Strategy.

You are invited to give your views on this draft assessment on the Executive's PFG, Budget and Investment Strategy. The purpose of the consultation is to obtain:

- Consultees' views on this draft assessment of the equality impacts of the PFG, Budget and Investment Strategy;
- any further information which could be useful in assessing those equality impacts; and
- any comments or suggestions on how groups could be best engaged during the consultation process.

When considering your response, the following questions may offer a useful guideline:

- Do you have any views on any of the aspects of equality covered in this draft assessment?
- Are there any other issues that have not been addressed? If so, what are these?
- Do you have any views on how the delivery of the PFG, Budget and Investment Strategy should be taken forward to effectively address inequalities and differentials?
- Are there any measures that should be implemented to mitigate against an adverse impact on people in the Section 75 equality groups?

We would welcome any additional information and comments that you feel would help inform our equality considerations of the PFG, Budget and Investment Strategy.

We would like to receive your comments by **Wednesday 23 April 2008**. In keeping with the Executive's policy of openness, from 18 February 2008 responses to this consultation will be published on the PFG/Budget website (www.pfgbudgetni.gov.uk).

If you do not wish your response to be used in this way, or if you would prefer it to be used anonymously, please indicate this when responding.

You can contact us by writing to us at the address below or by

Email : pfgbudget@nics.gov.uk

Telephone : 028 9052 0093

Fax : 028 9052 2552

Melanie McGinnis
Programme for Government Unit
Economic Policy Unit
Office of the First Minister and deputy First Minister
Castle Buildings
Stormont Estate
Belfast
BT4 3SR

This document is also available on the following Internet site:

www.pfgbudgetni.gov.uk

Should you require this document in an alternative format please contact the above address.

The Executive is determined that the consultation on this draft assessment will offer everyone the opportunity to have their say and influence final decisions.

To ensure an open and transparent process in this regard, officials will hold a number of public consultation seminars across Northern Ireland. Details of the seminars are as follows;

Location	Date & Time	Venue
Belfast	Tuesday 19 February, 7pm	Spires Conference and Exhibition Centre
Derry /Londonderry	Thursday 28 February, 7pm	Guildhall, Guildhall Square
Omagh	Tuesday 4 March, 7pm	Omagh Community House, 2 Drumragh Ave.

Location	Date & Time	Venue
Newry	Thursday 6 March, 7pm	Newry Arts Centre, 1A Bank Parade
Enniskillen	Tuesday 11 March, 7pm	Clinton Centre, Belmore Street

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EXECUTIVE SUMMARY

- i. On 28 January 2008, following 10 weeks of public consultation, the Executive's Programme for Government (PfG) 2008-11 and Investment Strategy 2008-2018 were formally endorsed by the Assembly. This was followed on 29 January with the Assembly formally agreeing to the Executive's Budget for 2008-11, as presented by the Minister for Finance and Personnel. Together, these documents represent the Executive's strategic plan, setting out the priorities, key programmes and associated resources and capital investment the Executive will pursue over the next three years¹.
- ii. This draft Equality Impact Assessment, carried out at a strategic level, considers the impacts which may be associated with the Executive's policy and spending priorities as set out in the Programme for Government (PfG) and supported by the allocation of resources as set out in the Budget and Investment Strategy. Recognising that these three documents operate at the strategic level, the focus of the assessment is at that level as set out below:

Document

Focus of Analysis

- | | |
|----------------------------|---|
| • Programme for Government | The 5 priority areas set out in the PfG |
| • Investment Strategy | The overall programme of investment as set out under the 6 'pillars' of the Investment Strategy |
| • Budget | The overall allocation of resources across departments; and decisions on the regional rate |

- iii. To ensure clarity and transparency, the analysis of each of the documents considers the distinct impacts which may be associated with each of the section 75 groups. Many of the issues are interconnected and individuals and groups may experience multiple inequalities which cut across the section 75

¹ The Investment Strategy also highlights indicative allocations beyond 2011, recognising the lead in time required for delivering major capital investment projects.

categories. Where available data permits, this latter point is reflected in the analysis of impacts.

- iv. The individual programmes and policies which departments will seek to deliver over the PfG period will continue to be subject to equality screening and, where appropriate and in line with statutory duty, full EQIA by departments and their agencies and relevant statutory authorities, in accordance with the criteria set out in the guidance produced by the Equality Commission for Northern Ireland. Each Department also has a responsibility to produce annually a report setting out how EQIA screening has been applied within the department. This can help ensure transparency and accountability.
- v. Equality is an important issue for the Executive and for society. As such, the Executive has pledged, in the PfG, that it is determined to address all forms of inequality, and that the principles of fairness, inclusion and equality of opportunity will be watchwords for all their policies and programmes.
- vi. In line with that commitment, the Executive has sought to ensure that both equality and good relations were central in its approach to developing the PfG, the Budget and Investment Strategy. This is a key aim underpinning the PfG and reflected in the priority to **Promote Tolerance, Inclusion, Health and Well-being**. Similarly, underpinning the PfG, Budget and Investment Strategy is a commitment by the Executive to deliver fair outcomes and social improvements through the implementation of policies and programmes and in that context, to develop new and innovative measures which will address patterns of inequalities and social disadvantage. To realise the Executive's commitments in this regard, a three stage process has been adopted to ensure that equality and good relations are considered in the development and delivery of the PfG, Budget and Investment Strategy.
- vii. This assessment, highlights a number of areas where there is the potential to address inequalities and deliver positive impacts on a number of section 75 groups. It recognises, however, that the realisation of positive impacts will only result where the delivery of policies and programmes at departmental level take account of the findings of this draft assessment and include specific measures to address the key inequalities identified. This is in line with the

Executive's commitment, as set out in the PfG, to deliver fair outcomes and social improvements through the implementation of policies and programmes

- viii. This draft assessment is being made available for public consultation. Following consultation, the Executive will publish a final assessment.

1. INTRODUCTION

1.1 This draft Equality Impact Assessment carried out at a strategic level considers the impacts which may be associated with the Executive's policy and spending priorities as set out in the Programme for Government (PfG) and supported by the allocation of resources as set out in the Budget and Investment Strategy.

1.2 Section 75 of the Northern Ireland Act 1998 requires all public authorities in carrying out their functions relating to Northern Ireland, to have due regard to the need to promote equality of opportunity –

- between persons of different religious belief, political opinion, racial group, age, marital status or sexual orientation;
- between men and women generally;
- between persons with a disability and persons without; and
- between persons with dependants and persons without.

1.3 In addition, without prejudice to the above obligation, public authorities must also, in carrying out their functions relating to Northern Ireland, have regard to the desirability of promoting good relations between persons of different religious belief, political opinion or racial group.

1.4 The Executive is fully committed to complying with the statutory requirements of Section 75 of the Northern Ireland Act 1998.

1.5 The Executive has decided to carry out an Equality Impact Assessment at a strategic level on the PfG, Budget and Investment Strategy. The PfG, Budget and Investment Strategy are published separately from this assessment. In addition, the assessment also takes account of the new duties on public authorities to promote positive attitudes towards, and encourage public participation of disabled people, introduced by Article 5 of the Disability Discrimination (NI) Order 2006 and commenced in January 2007.

Aim of Programme for Government, Budget and Investment Strategy

- 1.6 The Executive's overall aim, as set out in the PfG, Budget and Investment Strategy, is to build **a peaceful, fair and prosperous society in Northern Ireland, with respect for the rule of law** and where everyone can enjoy a better quality of life now and in years to come.
- 1.7 In support of the Executive's overall aim, the PfG establishes the Executive's policy and spending priorities and is supported by a detailed framework of Public Service Agreements (PSAs) which highlight the key actions and targets departments will deliver in support of the Executive's priorities. Throughout this document, therefore, references to the PfG should be read to include the following document and its Annexes:

*Building a Better Future: Northern Ireland Executive Programme
for Government 2008 – 2011*

- 1.8 As the principle mechanism by which the Executive has determined its policy and spending priorities, the PfG has formed the basis upon which the Executive has directed the allocation of resources as set out in the Budget and the Investment Strategy.

2.0 PROGRAMME FOR GOVERNMENT, BUDGET AND INVESTMENT STRATEGY

2.1 Together the PfG, Budget and Investment Strategy represent the Executive's strategic plan, setting out the priorities, key programmes and associated resources and capital investment the Executive will pursue over the next three years². In that context, the Executive has taken a co-ordinated approach to the development and launch of the PfG, Budget and Investment Strategy to ensure close alignment between their policy and spending priorities. An overview of the role of each is set out below.

Programme for Government

2.2 The Executive must seek to agree each year, and review as necessary, a Programme for Government incorporating an agreed budget linked to policies and programmes, subject to approval by the Assembly, after scrutiny in Assembly Committees, on a cross-community basis. This is a statutory duty.

2.3 In that context, however, the PfG does not set out the entire programme of work across departments. The PfG is a strategic document: it establishes and sets out the Executive's policy and spending priorities in support of its overall aim, which thereafter direct the allocation of resources as set out in the Budget and Investment Strategy. In the PfG document, the Executive has identified five key strategic and interdependent priorities, as follows:

- Grow a Dynamic, Innovative Economy
- Promote Tolerance, Inclusion, Health And Well-Being
- Protect and Enhance our Environment and Natural Resources
- Invest to Build our Infrastructure
- Deliver Modern, High Quality and Efficient Public Services

2.4 The Executive's priorities seek to provide a strategic framework to address the key social, economic and environmental challenges facing Northern

² The Investment Strategy also highlights indicative allocations beyond 2011, recognising the lead in time required for delivering major capital investment projects.

Ireland, and to provide the wealth and resources required to enable it to build a peaceful, prosperous, and inclusive society over the longer-term.

Budget

- 2.5 The Budget document sets out the Executive's spending plans. The allocation of resources across departments outlined in the Budget has been directed both by the Executive's priorities, as set out in the PfG, and the need to meet existing commitments and protect and enhance key frontline services.
- 2.6 The Budget provides the Executive with an opportunity to improve the lives of people in Northern Ireland: It also provides an opportunity to assess if spending in certain areas should be continued or whether or not these resources would be of greater benefit to the public if spent elsewhere, or if services could be provided in a better, more efficient way. The Budget gives the Executive and opportunity to identify priority areas and direct resources to those areas.
- 2.7 The Budget document sets out the overall distribution of resources across departments, it does not set out in detail the totality of spending proposals at departmental level. It remains for individual Ministers to determine how the overall settlement is distributed within their respective departments in the context of competing needs and priorities.

Investment Strategy

- 2.8 The Executive's strategic framework for infrastructure investment is set out in the Investment Strategy, which has been published alongside the PfG and Budget. The Investment Strategy is the result of a comprehensive programme of work undertaken by the Strategic Investment Board working with departments, to ensure a strategic approach to investment in public infrastructure.
- 2.9 Guided by the Executive's priorities as set out in the PfG, the Investment Strategy outlines the overall capital expenditure programme under six inter-related pillars, as follows: Networks; Skills; Health; Social; Environment; and Productive.

Equality across the PfG, Budget and Investment Strategy

- 2.10 Equality is an important issue for the Executive and for society. As such, the Executive has committed in the PfG, to work to address all forms of inequality and to build a shared and better future for all, and that fairness, inclusion and equality of opportunity will be watchwords for all their policies and programmes.
- 2.11 In line with that commitment, the Executive has sought to ensure that equality and good relations have a central role in its approach to developing the PfG, the Budget and Investment Strategy. This is one of the key aims underpinning the PfG and reflected in the priority to Promote Tolerance, Inclusion, Health and Well-being. Similarly, a Shared and Better Future for All, is a key cross-cutting theme underpinning the PfG, Budget and Investment Strategy. A central element of that theme is a commitment by the Executive to deliver fair outcomes and social improvements through the implementation of policies and programmes and in that context, to develop new and innovative measures which will address existing patterns of inequalities and social disadvantage.
- 2.12 The setting of the Executive's priorities and the subsequent setting of the PfG, Budget and Investment Strategy were also informed by the outcome of a series of consultation meetings undertaken at an early stage in the Comprehensive Spending Review. These meetings involved a wide range of stakeholder groups including trade unions and business groups as well as the community and voluntary sector.
- 2.13 In addition, opportunities to promote social inclusion and equality of opportunity have been built into the procurement of infrastructure programmes. This includes developing employment plans and building opportunities for apprenticeship into major delivery contracts in a way that contributes to the most economically advantageous outcomes. The Investment Strategy for Northern Ireland (ISNI) also recognises the benefits of co-operation with the South in developing infrastructure, and where appropriate, will help ensure more efficient planning and joined-up delivery of

key projects, resulting in better value for money, economies of scale in public investment and better deals from financial markets.

Consultation on the Draft Equality Impact Assessment carried out at a strategic level

- 2.14 Consultation is a key and important part of this process. The Executive is determined that the consultation on this draft assessment will effectively engage section 75 groups and offer everyone the opportunity to have their say and influence final decisions.
- 2.15 To ensure an open and transparent process in this regard, officials will hold a number of public consultation events across Northern Ireland to gather as many views as possible. In addition to the public meetings, sectoral meetings will be held with the Equality Commission, the Equality Coalition, representing key stakeholders within each of the nine section 75 groups. Individual meetings with officials will also be offered to members of the Equality Coalition.

3.0 SCOPE OF ASSESSMENT

- 3.1 The PfG sets the strategic direction for the Executive, it does not address the totality of programmes and policies which departments will pursue over the PfG period. The allocation of resources as outlined in the Budget and Investment Strategy have been guided by the Executive's priorities while also reflecting departmental spending commitments and inescapable pressures. However, the Budget and Investment Strategy do not contain a list of all policies, programmes and capital projects to be delivered. All three documents, therefore, are set at the strategic level. Together they represent the Executive's strategic plan, setting out the vision and direction for the Executive.
- 3.2 In order to assess the potential equality and good relations implications of the PfG, Budget and Investment Strategy as a whole, therefore, the focus of this assessment is appropriately at the strategic level. It aims to consider the overall impacts which may be associated with the Executive's strategic priorities and the allocation of resources as set out in the Budget and Investment Strategy.
- 3.3 The delivery of policies, programmes and capital projects at departmental level will be informed by the outcome of this assessment. However, recognising the strategic focus of the PfG, Budget and Investment Strategy, the equality impacts of individual policies, programmes and capital projects which departments will deliver are not specifically considered here. These will continue to be subject to equality screening and, where appropriate and in line with statutory duty, full EQIA by departments and their agencies and relevant statutory authorities, in accordance with the criteria set out in the guidance produced by the Equality Commission for Northern Ireland. In that context, the Executive will seek to ensure that departments, government agencies and relevant statutory authorities continue to meet their obligations under Section 75 including Schedule 9.

4.0 OVERVIEW OF AVAILABLE DATA SOURCES

4.1 In carrying out this assessment, in addition to research reports, strategies and departmental High Level Impact Assessments (HLIAs), a range of data sources have been considered in relation to the Section 75 groups. Some are outlined below.

Northern Ireland Census

4.2 A census of population is normally taken every ten years and is carried out by the Census Office for Northern Ireland (CONI). The census provides essential statistical information about the population and households for all parts of the country. The most recent results available are from the 2001 census returns.

Indicators of Equality and Diversity in Northern Ireland

4.3 Published on 12 January 2007, this is the fifth in a series of reports from a research project commissioned by the Office of the First Minister and Deputy First Minister to study the development of indicators of diversity and equality in Northern Ireland. Through reviewing and extensively analysing existing NI statistics and research, the report aims to develop an “equality and diversity picture” of the region; to identify key indicators of change over time; and to consider the potential of existing data to provide useful indicators of equality and diversity

Statement on Key Inequalities in Northern Ireland

4.4 Published by the Equality Commission for Northern Ireland in October 2007, the statement seeks to highlight the range and breath of the equality agenda in Northern Ireland and to set out some of the inequalities which remain to be addressed.

Equality and Inequalities in Health and Social Care in Northern Ireland

4.5 Published by DHSSPS in 2004, the report draws together a corpus of wide ranging information to document inequalities in health and social care in Northern Ireland. Where data permit, the overview includes information about differences that exist between the statutory equality categories of Section 75 of the Northern Ireland Act.

Northern Ireland Multiple Deprivation Measure 2005

- 4.6 Published by NISRA, May 2005, the report identifies small area concentrations of multiple deprivation across Northern Ireland. The report includes a series of maps which set out each domain of deprivation and the overall Multiple Deprivation Measure.

Social Trends

- 4.7 Social Trends is an annual publication produced by the National Statistics Office. An established reference source, it draws together social and economic data from a wide range of government departments and other organisations to paint a broad picture of society today, and how it has been changing.

Continuous Household Survey 2004/05

- 4.8 The Continuous Household Survey (CHS) provides a regular source of information on a wide range of social and economic issues in Northern Ireland, and has been running since 1983. The survey is based on a random sample of 4,500 domestic addresses. Interviews are sought of all adults aged 16 and over in the selected households.

Northern Ireland Life and Times Survey

- 4.9 The Northern Ireland Life and Times Survey (NI LTS), launched in the autumn of 1998, monitors the attitudes and behaviour of people in Northern Ireland annually to provide a time-series and a public record of how attitudes and behaviour develop on a wide range of social policy issues.

The Expenditure and Food Survey

- 4.10 The Expenditure and Food Survey (EFS) took over from the Family Expenditure Survey (FES) and the National Food Survey (NFS) on 1 April 2001. The EFS is a continuous survey, collecting information on household expenditure, income and food consumption. The primary uses of the survey are to provide information about spending patterns for the Retail Price Index, and about food consumption and nutrition.

Households Below Average Income, NI 2003-04

- 4.11 Households Below Average Income (HBAI) uses household disposable incomes, adjusted for household size and composition, as a proxy for material

living standards or, more precisely, for the level of consumption of goods and services that people could attain given the disposable income of the household in which they live.

Family Resources Survey NI, 2003-04

- 4.12 The Family Resources Survey collects detailed data on income levels, resources and financial circumstances of individuals and households for the period from April 2002 to the end of March 2003.

Northern Ireland Crime Survey

- 4.13 The Northern Ireland Crime Survey is carried out by Central Survey Unit on behalf of the Northern Ireland Office. It is a household survey which has been running as a continuous survey since January 2005. It was first carried out as a one-off survey in 1994/5 and was repeated in 1998, 2001 and 2003/4. The main purpose of the survey is to collect information about levels of crime and public attitudes to crime. The information is collected by interviewing people to find out about crimes they may have experienced, including those that were not reported to the police. Respondents are also asked their views about the level of crime and how much they worry about crime.

Regional Trends

- 4.14 Regional Trends is a comprehensive regular source of official statistics for the Statistical Regions of the United Kingdom (Scotland, Wales, Northern Ireland and the Government Office Regions within England) produced by the National Statistics Office. It includes a wide range of demographic, social, industrial and economic statistics, covering aspects of life in the regions.

Labour Force Survey

- 4.15 The Labour Force Survey (LFS) is a quarterly sample survey carried out by interviewing people about their personal circumstances and work. It is the biggest regular household survey in Northern Ireland and provides a rich and vital source of information about the labour force using internationally agreed concepts and definitions. The LFS provides information on labour market structure, employment, ILO (International Labour Organisation) unemployment, economic activity, groups within the labour market.

2005 Labour Force Survey Religion Report

- 4.16 The 2005 Labour Force Survey Religion Report presents information from the 2005 Labour Force Survey (LFS) on the labour market characteristics of Protestants and Roman Catholics in Northern Ireland.

Women in Northern Ireland

- 4.17 Women in Northern Ireland is a quarterly publication produced by the Department of Enterprise, Trade and Investment. This publication contains key facts and figures about women in Northern Ireland. It covers the areas of employment, unemployment, economic inactivity, education, childcare provision and representation in public life.

Child and Family Poverty in Northern Ireland

- 4.18 Published in April 2006, the report was commissioned by the OFMDFM and provides an analysis of the levels and composition of child and family poverty and social exclusion.

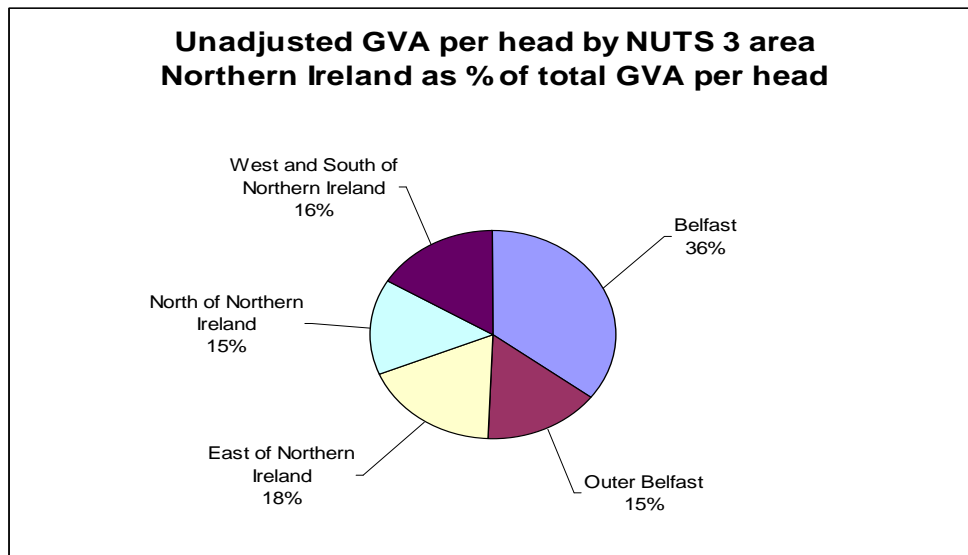
Equality Mainstreaming - Policy and Practice for LGB People

- 4.19 This research report was commissioned by the Equality Directorate of OFMDFM prior to devolution, with the aim of providing a 'broad evidence base to assist statutory bodies in effectively considering LGB issues in the development of policy and practice'

5.0 OVERVIEW OF KEY SOCIO-ECONOMIC DIFFERENTIALS ACROSS NORTHERN IRELAND

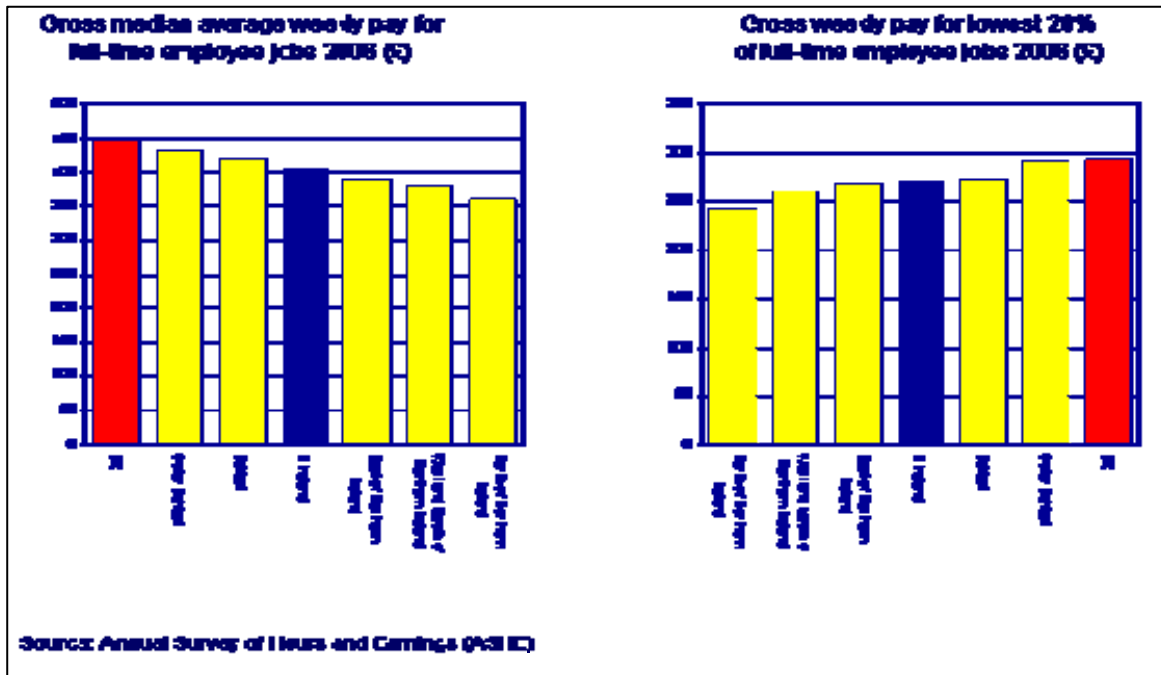
- 5.1 There are considerable variations at the sub-regional level across Northern Ireland in a number of key socio-economic indicators.
- 5.2 Over recent years investment in business and industry has tended to focus on the Greater Belfast area. This is reflected, as illustrated in chart 1 below, in the considerable variations in GVA per head of the population across Northern Ireland.

Chart 1:



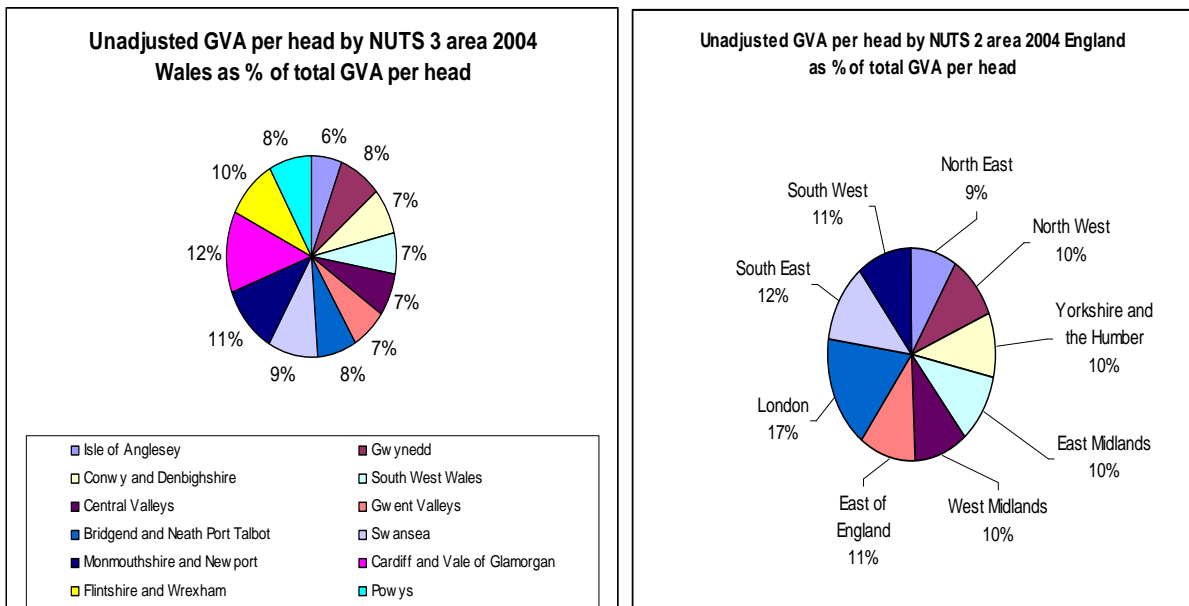
- 5.3 GVA per head is a measure of productivity. Figures for 2004 suggest that GVA per head is considerably higher in the Belfast area (25,280) than any other area of Northern Ireland (ranging from 10,712 – 12,940). Moreover, GVA per head in the Belfast area is at the higher end of all UK NUTS 3 areas and twice that of any other area in Northern Ireland. Conversely, the other areas of Northern Ireland have among the lowest levels of GVA of all NUTS 3 areas across the UK. As chart 2 illustrates, there are also significant variations in household incomes at a regional level, with the highest in the Rural East and lowest in the Rural West.

Chart 2: Regional Variations in Household Incomes

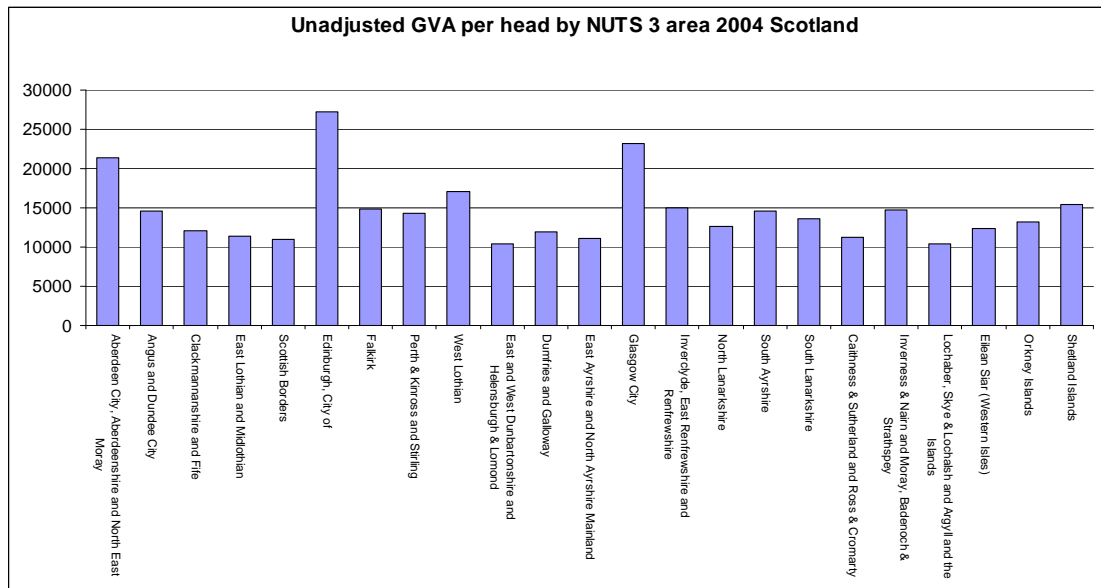


5.4 Variations in regional GVA are to be expected, with major urban areas likely to experience higher levels of GVA per head. The sub-regional variation in GVA across Northern Ireland, however, would appear to be more significant than that for other regions of the UK as illustrated below³.

Chart 3: Regional Variations in GVA per head 2004, Wales, England and Scotland



³ The GVA per head for Northern Ireland, Scotland and Wales is expressed at NUTS 3 level. That for England is expressed at NUTS 2 level for illustrative purposes.



5.5 Reflecting the position in relation to GVA and household incomes, there would also appear to be clear variations in levels of deprivation across Northern Ireland. Of the 10% most deprived super output areas⁴ (SOAs), the majority are in Belfast. Multiple deprivation maps produced by NISRA (available at www.nisra.gov.uk/archive/deprivation/NIMDM2005FullReport.pdf) illustrate the levels of multiple deprivation by SOA and economic deprivation by output area (OA) across Northern Ireland.

5.6 The Executive has highlighted the key role economic growth can play in addressing poverty, exclusion and inequality. In this regard, the charts considered above, would appear to indicate a close relationship between economic and employment opportunities and levels of deprivation. In light of the variations at sub-regional level, effectively addressing poverty, exclusion and inequality may require consideration of measures to specifically promote economic growth and job creation, particularly in high value sectors, in areas of economic disadvantage.

⁴ SOA is a spatial area containing an average of just less than 2,000 people.

6.0 ASSESSMENT OF IMPACTS

6.1 PROGRAMME FOR GOVERNMENT

- 6.1.1 The focus of this assessment on the PfG is on the five key strategic and interdependent priorities identified by the Executive. The following section presents an assessment of the potential impacts of the priority areas as set out in the PfG and reflected in the Budget and Investment Strategy. While recognising that infrastructure investment contributes to and impacts across the full range of priorities, to avoid duplication the potential impacts which may be associated with the Executive's priority *Investing to Build Our Infrastructure*, are considered separately under the assessment of the Investment Strategy.
- 6.1.2 The impacts associated with the priority areas in relation to each of the section 75 groups are considered separately. Many of the issues are interconnected; individuals and groups may experience multiple inequalities which cut across the section 75 categories. Where available data permits, this latter point is reflected in the analysis of impacts.

Priority: Growing a Dynamic, Innovative Economy

Background

- 6.1.3 Over the last decade the Northern Ireland economy has grown significantly, experiencing one of the strongest job creation records of all UK regions. However, significant structural weaknesses remain which must be addressed if the economy is to be competitive and sustainable over the long term.
- 6.1.4 The priority aims to provide a framework to address the structural weakness in the economy and create the conditions for a sustainable, prosperous and competitive economy. In this regard, the focus of the priority is on growing the private sector, increasing productivity and prosperity through enhanced skills and innovation, and on increasing employment and addressing problems of economic inactivity.
- 6.1.5 In identifying the economy as its top priority, the Executive recognises that improving economic and employment opportunities are central to addressing

poverty and exclusion and promoting well-being. In line with that, the PfG acknowledges that at a time when the potential for economic growth is at its greatest, it is crucial that we use this growth to tackle inequality and use prosperity to end poverty.

Assessment of Impacts

Overall:

- 6.1.6 A key objective in delivering this priority is to ensure that everyone has the opportunity to contribute to and benefit from increased prosperity. Recognising this, the PfG highlights that alongside action to increase the overall prosperity of the economy, the Executive will seek to address key differentials and the barriers to economic activity and increased prosperity. In this context, it is assumed that the implementation of the Executive's economic priority has the potential to impact on a number of Section 75 groups where there is a greater risk of unemployment or economic inactivity. However, there is no evidence to suggest the priority will have a significant negative impact on any groups. Rather it is anticipated that growing a dynamic, innovative economy alongside a commitment to ensure that everyone has the opportunity to contribute to and benefit from increased prosperity, has the potential to deliver real benefits for all and make a significant contribution to the promotion of good relations.
- 6.1.7 While recognising the potential for positive impacts, these will only be realised where the delivery of programmes and policies by departments in support of the Executive's priorities, directly address the barriers to entrepreneurial activity, employment and progression within employment
- 6.1.8 There continues to be regional and urban/rural differentials with regard to employment opportunities. Effectively addressing the barriers to employment may also require a focus on promoting increased employment and career progression opportunities across all areas of Northern Ireland.

Between men and women generally:

- 6.1.9 The number of women employed in the Northern Ireland labour force has increased significantly over recent years. Despite that progress, however, the employment rate for females (63.7%) remains well below that for men

(74.3%)⁵. In part, this may be attributed to the fact that females are more likely to be economically inactive, 34.8% compared to 21.4% for men⁶. Women are significantly more likely than men to be carers and the unequal sharing of care responsibilities means that of those females who are economically inactive, almost half (45%) are unavailable for work due to family/home commitments⁷.

6.1.10 Much of the increase in women's work in Northern Ireland has been in part-time work, as a result a significantly higher proportion of women work in part-time employment, 35% compared to 7% for men, and often in less-skilled areas. As a consequence they have poorer access to training and progression within employment while there are also associated negative impacts on access to pensions and contributions based benefits⁸.

6.1.11 The vast majority of women workers are employed in the service sector, whereas men's employment is more evenly distributed across industrial sectors and men are much more likely than women to occupy senior or managerial positions.

6.1.12 Although there has been some improvement over time, there continue to be significant differentials in average earnings by gender. In April 2006, females working full-time had median annual earnings of £19,607, over 11% less than the equivalent male figure of £21,849.

6.1.13 There are also significant gender differentials with regard to entrepreneurial activity. Men are much more likely to be self-employed than women, with the level of female entrepreneurship in Northern Ireland the lowest of all UK regions.

6.1.14 Through providing a focus across Government to address economic inactivity and the barriers to employment, the implementation of this priority area has the potential to address the significant gender differentials which exist both

⁵ Women in Northern Ireland, Labour Market Statistics Bulletin, NISRA, February 2006

⁶ Labour Force Survey 2005

⁷ Statement on Key Inequalities in Northern Ireland, Equality Commission for Northern Ireland, October 2007

Women in Northern Ireland: Labour Market Statistics Bulletin, DETI, 2007

⁸ Evason, Women and Pensions, Belfast, Equality Commission for Northern Ireland, 2002

with regard to employment and entrepreneurship and therefore have a more positive impact on women than men. However, reducing the economic differentials between men and women will be dependent upon the ability to address the specific barriers to employment and entrepreneurship which women in particular may face and therefore, on improving access to, and progress within, employment.

6.1.15 As such, if positive impacts are to be realised, in delivering programmes and policies to promote employment and employability, including action to increase skills and training, it will be important for departments and agencies to consider how best to address the particular barriers which women may face. There would be appear to be particular issues with regard to adequate and affordable childcare provision, flexible employment, increased general employment opportunities and consideration of measures to address gender differentials in pay. It may also be necessary to explore opportunities to further promote business start up among women and work to identify further barriers to entrepreneurship which women may face.

6.1.16 While recognising the potential in areas for a differential impact, it is not anticipated that the delivery of a priority focused on economic growth will have a negative impact upon men. Indeed measures to address skills barriers to employment and long-term unemployment are likely to have a positive impact on men, particularly those from marginalised and disadvantaged communities.

Persons of different age:

6.1.17 The Employment Equality (Age) Regulations (Northern Ireland) 2006 prohibits age discrimination in employment, however, there is a clear perception among unemployed people over 50 that their age acts as a barrier to entering employment. This may be reflected in data from the Labour Force Survey which indicated that households aged between 55-64 are most likely to be workless⁹ (24.7% in 2005). In addition, there are concerns that older people in employment are more likely to face discrimination with regard to training and development. There is, however, also evidence to suggest that younger people (16-24), who have a higher economic inactivity rate, 40.8% in 2005,

⁹ A workless household is defined as one in which no adult of working age is in employment.

than that for the working age population as a whole, also face distinctive barriers to employment for example, limited previous employment experience or skills. This may be a particular issue for young men from disadvantaged communities who are more likely to leave formal education with no qualifications.

6.1.18 There is no evidence to suggest that growing the economy will have an adverse impact on persons of different age. However, recognising the commitment within the PfG to assist the long-term unemployed into employment, to promote continued skills development and the interests of older people, there is the potential for the priority area to impact more on older people, particularly men, in this regard. In addition, by specifically targeting the skills barriers to employability, including a focus on those leaving formal education with no qualifications and providing enhanced careers advice and support, the delivery of the Executive's economic priority also has the potential to have a positive impact on younger people.

Persons with or without a disability:

6.1.19 Employment enables all, including disabled people, to become economically and socially active in their local communities¹⁰. There is evidence, however, to suggest that people with disabilities often find it more difficult to find and retain employment. While progress has been made in recent years, the employment rate for people with a disability (32%) is still less than half that of people without a disability (79%)¹¹. This is further reflected in the fact that those who are sick or disabled represent the majority of those on out-of-work benefits, 83% in 2006¹². Attitudes of employers may act as a barrier to employment for people with a disability. In 2005, a Disability Rights Commission survey on *Small Employers' Attitudes to Disability* found that 45% of those surveyed felt that it would be quite/very difficult to employ a disabled person.

6.1.20 There is also clear evidence to suggest that people with a disability have greater difficulty in accessing further and higher education¹³. For example, the

¹⁰ Statement on Key Inequalities in Northern Ireland, Equality Commission for Northern Ireland, October 2007

¹¹ Labour Force Survey, 2007

¹² Client Group Analysis, DSD

¹³ Dearing Report, NICHE, 2007

2007 *Labour Force Survey* suggests that 13% of people with a disability held higher qualifications compared with 27% of people without a disability. This latter point is particularly significant given that enhanced skills are increasingly key to improving employability and prosperity.

- 6.1.21 The delivery of the PfG, which includes a commitment to promoting independent living, addressing the barriers to employment which disabled people may face and enhancing careers advice for disabled people has the potential to have a more positive impact on people with a disability. There is no evidence to suggest that the delivery of the wider priority will have an adverse impact on people without a disability.

Persons of different marital status:

- 6.1.22 Single people are more likely to be unemployed than those who are married. This may be reflected in data from the Labour Force Survey which indicated that single households were more likely to be workless, 18.9%, than married households, 10.1%. In addition, the proportion of lone parents of working age in employment at 42.5%, despite some progress in recent years, is still well below the average.

- 6.1.23 As stated previously, through delivery of the PfG, Budget and Investment Strategy, the Executive is committed to increasing employment and addressing the barriers to employment. At a broad level, the delivery of initiatives in this area, where there is a focus on addressing recognised need, have the potential to impact more on single people and lone parents who experience higher rates of unemployment and economic inactivity. There is no evidence to suggest that a focus on economic growth will have a negative impact on married or cohabiting people. Rather, it is anticipated that increased prosperity has the potential to deliver positive impacts for all persons of different marital status.

Persons of different religious belief:

- 6.1.24 In recent years there has been a significant narrowing of the labour market differentials between working-age Catholics and their Protestant counterparts. In this context the gap between economically active Protestants and Catholics

in employment is currently 0.9%¹⁴, though the employment gap is more significant for older Protestants and Catholics. That narrowing of the differential in this regard is widely attributed to the substantial growth in employment which occurred throughout the 1990s and it is anticipated that continued employment growth could result in a further narrowing of labour market differentials.

6.1.25 Despite the progress outlined above, the economic inactivity rate for Catholics, 33.5%, continues to be higher than that for Protestants, 23.9%¹⁵. The differential is particularly significant for catholic females who have the highest economic inactivity rates. Limited access to affordable childcare and local employment opportunities may be contributing factors in this regard. This is a particular problem in rural areas. Reflecting the differentials in economic activity rates, the 2005 Labour Force Survey indicated that a higher proportion of Catholic Households, 18%, are workless compared to 11% of Protestant households.

6.1.26 Delivery of the Executive's objectives with regard to increasing employment levels and opportunities has the potential to impact more on Catholics, where continued economic growth may facilitate a further narrowing of the employment differential. There is no evidence to suggest that a narrowing of the employment differential resulting from general employment growth will have an adverse impact on Protestants. Indeed a focus on promoting employability and increasing employment opportunities will impact equally on Protestants and Catholics who are unemployed or suffer multiple deprivation.

6.1.27 In recent decades there has been a preference for Protestant students to leave Northern Ireland to obtain university education in Britain. In 2001-02, of those Catholic school leavers entering higher education, 82% choose to study in Northern Ireland. In contrast a third of Protestant school leavers entering higher education choose to study in GB¹⁶. Many of those who choose to study in GB do not return to Northern Ireland to take up employment opportunities. There may be a number of factors contributing to this trend, however, in part this may be attributed to historically limited graduate or high value

¹⁴ Labour Force Survey Religion Report 2006

¹⁵ Labour Force Survey 2005

¹⁶ Department of Education and Learning (DEL) Factsheet 8

employment opportunities in Northern Ireland. Increasing employment opportunities, particularly in high value added areas is a key aim of the Executive's economic priority. Realisation of that aim has the potential to attract back those who leave Northern Ireland to study in the UK. As a greater proportion of those are Protestant there is the potential in this regard for to impact on a greater number of Protestants, however, this does not equate to a differential impact.

Persons with/without dependants:

6.1.28 Persons with dependants, particularly women, lone parents and those living in isolated and rural areas, may face additional barriers to employment and accessing further and higher education. In particular, there are indications of high job exit rates among lone parents, the majority of whom are women. Low paid employment, especially when linked to part-time work and ill-health were found to be important contributing factors¹⁷.

6.1.29 There is also evidence to suggest that carers of people with a disability and those who care for young children or older people face particular issues in relation to accessing employment. The number of dependants is also important in this regard¹⁸. Those who provide care over the longer-term, who are more likely to be women, can find that it has a negative impact on their income, future pension and the development of social networks¹⁹.

6.1.30 As outlined above, the PfG, Budget and Investment Strategy aim to provide a strategic framework to address the barriers to employability which some groups may experience. In this regard, there is the potential for a more positive impact on those with dependants. There is no evidence to suggest that delivery of the priority will result in a significant adverse impact for those without dependants.

Persons of different political opinion:

¹⁷ Statement on Key Inequalities in Northern Ireland, Equality Commission for Northern Ireland, October 2007

Evans et al, Lone Parents Cycling Between Work and Benefits, London, Dept of Work and Pensions, 2004

¹⁸ Statement on Key Inequalities in Northern Ireland, Equality Commission for Northern Ireland, October 2007

¹⁹ DHSSPS, Caring for Carers, 2006

6.1.31 There has been an historical tendency for voting preferences in Northern Ireland to closely reflect the religious affiliations of the population within electoral districts. It is important not to over-estimate that relationship. The correlation of religious affiliation and voting preference, however, may indicate that those issues and differentials identified in relation to persons of different religion may also impact on persons of different political opinion. There is no evidence to suggest that the delivery of the priority will result in a significant adverse impact for those of differing political opinion.

Persons of a different racial group:

6.1.32 Irish Travellers are more likely to be economically inactive and unemployed than other racial groups. The employment rate for Irish Travellers aged 16-74 (35%) is significantly below that of all economically active people aged 16-74 (62%)²⁰. They are also more likely to leave formal education with no qualifications and have low participation rates in further and higher education. In 2003-05, 24% of Irish Travellers achieved 5+ GCSEs at A – G grades, this compared to 89% of all pupils.

6.1.33 As a result of recent inward migration, the Northern Ireland workforce has become increasingly diverse. As a consequence of the speed at which that change has happened, there is a lack of reliable statistical data on the numbers of migrant workers in Northern Ireland and the experiences of those workers. It is, therefore, difficult to draw conclusions in this regard although there is a potential for racial prejudice to be reflected in the workplace.

6.1.34 In delivering the PfG the Executive is committed to addressing the barriers to employment and education for Irish Travellers. It is anticipated, therefore, that the implementation of the priority area will have a positive impact on Irish Travellers. There is no evidence of an adverse impact on other persons of different racial group.

Persons of different sexual orientation:

6.1.35 Although there is limited data available, the issue of harassment in the workplace is of major concern to this sector. However, there is no evidence to

²⁰ NISRA, Northern Ireland Census of Population 2001

suggest that the delivery of the priority will result in a significant adverse impact on persons of different sexual orientation.

Priority: Promote Tolerance, Inclusion, Health and Wellbeing

Background

- 6.2.1 Northern Ireland has undergone significant transformation in recent years. Progress has been made, but sectarianism, racism and intolerance are still too evident. It is also recognised that there remain too many people living in poverty, disadvantage and experiencing exclusion. These people are more likely to suffer from poor health and low educational attainment and experience unemployment and more limited lifetime opportunities.
- 6.2.2 The priority aims to address divisions within our society and tackle disadvantage and exclusion. In this context, the priority focuses on building good relations, promoting tolerance and respect for diversity alongside efforts to address poverty and exclusion, regenerate disadvantaged communities and support the most vulnerable within our society.

Assessment of Impacts

Overall:

- 6.2.3 A key objective underpinning this priority area and indeed the approach to the development of the PfG, Budget and Investment Strategy is to promote equality and good relations and address the causes and consequences of poverty and exclusion. In this context, the PfG highlights that alongside action to address poverty and exclusion, the Executive will seek to address differential outcomes in key areas such as health and education which may be experienced by a number of Section 75 groups and which significantly impact on the lifetime opportunities of those groups. Focusing action to address differentials will have a more positive impact on some Section 75 groups than others. However, there is no evidence to suggest that this is likely to equate to a negative impact on others.
- 6.2.4 Through delivery of this priority area, the Executive is committed to the promotion of good relations, tolerance and respect for diversity. For those Section 75 groups who are more likely to experience hate crime or live in communities blighted by sectarianism and/or intolerance there is the potential for a more positive impact in this area. However, as the focus of the priority is on addressing need this does not equate to a negative impact on other

groups. Rather, it is anticipated that building a more tolerant society will have wider benefits for all Section 75 groups and will make a significant contribution to the promotion of good relations.

Between men and women generally:

- 6.2.5 Overwhelming evidence shows that women are at greater risk of experiencing poverty, multiple deprivation and exclusion, this is reflected in studies which suggest that 57% of adults in poor households are women²¹. Moreover, single people with children, who are more likely to be female, have the highest risk of poverty overall²². Any action to address the causes and consequences of poverty may be reasonably assumed, in light of this, to have the potential for a greater impact on women, particularly those who are carers. However, such an outcome may be associated directly with the current differential rates of poverty between men and women. In this context, men who are in poverty are likely to benefit equally from wider measures to address poverty and there is no evidence of an adverse impact on men.
- 6.2.6 Life expectancy is higher for women than men, although they are likely to suffer more ill health than men. In 2003-05 life expectancy was 80.8 for women and 76.0 for men²³ in non-deprived wards. Life expectancy for those in deprived wards was somewhat lower, at 77.9 years for women and 72.0 years for men. There is a clear relationship between deprivation and health outcomes. In general those in deprived areas tend to experience worse health outcomes, they are more likely to suffer from increased morbidity and mortality and higher levels of mood and anxiety disorders, while the teenage birth rate in deprived areas is 71% higher than the Northern Ireland average. Through the PfG, Budget and Investment Strategy the Executive is committed to addressing the differential outcomes for those in deprived areas. This is likely to have a positive impact on both men and women in deprived areas.
- 6.2.7 There has been a significant change in the patterns of educational performance of girls and boys, as a result girls now outperform boys at school. In 2006/07 the percentage of girls gaining A-C grades at GCSE was

²¹ Bare Necessities – Poverty and Social Exclusion in Northern Ireland, Democratic Dialogue, October 2003

²² Households Below Average Income, DSD

²³ Health and Social Care Inequalities Monitoring System: First Update Bulletin 2004, DHSSPS

75.5%, this compared to 69.0% for boys²⁴. After leaving school only 56% of boys progressed to further or higher education compared to 75% of girls.

6.2.8 Both boys and girls from areas of high deprivation, however, are more likely to leave formal education with no qualifications, particularly boys. This is a key concern as it significantly limits their life opportunities and contributes to a cycle of deprivation. There would also appear to be a particular issue in this area with regard to religion. In the 2005-06 school year, 24.3% of Protestant pupils entitled to free school meals achieved 5+ GCSEs A-C, compared to 35.2% of Roman Catholic pupils entitled to free school meals.

6.2.9 A key aim of the priority is to address the differentials outlined above. Addressing the causes and consequences of poverty and exclusion is likely, therefore, to impact marginally more on women than men, given women are more likely to experience poverty. However, it is equally likely to benefit those men in poverty and there is no evidence of an adverse impact on either gender.

Persons of different age:

6.2.10 Poverty and exclusion can have a particularly negative impact on children's upbringing and can reduce the chances of children enjoying a happy childhood, achieving skills and qualifications and as a result can significantly impact on outcomes in later life.

6.2.11 While younger households are more likely to experience poverty, there would also appear to be particular issues with regard to older people, who tend to have lower incomes, are more benefit dependent and spend more on necessities than the rest of the population. In 2004/05, 52.8% of pensioner household weekly expenditure was on necessities²⁵. They also experience other forms of exclusion, such as isolation from friends, relatives, services and facilities and increased fear of crime²⁶. Recent work undertaken by Help the Aged indicates that 53% of older people feel that loneliness is the major issue facing older people today²⁷. The Northern Ireland Equality

²⁴ Department of Education (DE) GCSE Headline Statistics 2006/07

²⁵ Expenditure and Food Survey, NISRA

²⁶ Ageing in an Inclusive Society, OFMDFM, 2005

²⁷ Statement of Key Inequalities in Northern Ireland, Equality Commission for Northern Ireland, October 2007

Commission's 2006 survey "*Attitudes and Awareness of Equality Issues Amongst the General Public in Northern Ireland*" revealed that older people were the group respondents were most likely to perceive as being treated unfairly in Northern Ireland.

6.2.12 Location can be highly relevant, as older people living in remote areas or on disadvantaged housing estates have difficulty accessing the sorts of opportunities that most people in society can often take for granted. This is a particular issue for pensioners in rural areas who are significantly more likely to be in poverty than those in urban areas. For older women, participation can be further constrained by pensioner poverty.

6.2.13 The priority area seeks to address poverty and exclusion among children and older people in particular, it is therefore likely to have a differential and positive impact on these groups. However, the overall objective is to address the causes and consequences of poverty for all age groups. In light of that, there is no evidence to suggest the delivery of the priority will have a negative impact on people of different age.

Persons with or without a disability:

6.2.14 Of the section 75 categories, adults with a disability and children with a disability have the highest risk of poverty before social transfers²⁸ at 77% and 70% respectively in 2004-05²⁹. After social transfers the risk of poverty for adults with a disability was 26% and children with a disability was 37%. Research also highlights the fact that disabled people may face particular difficulties when accessing public and social services such as transport, housing and financial services.

6.2.15 As indicated in the consideration of barriers to employment, people with a disability may experience prejudice as a direct result of their disability. In a study undertaken by Mencap in 2000 (*Living in Fear. The need to combat bullying of people with a learning disability*) nine out of ten people with a disability reported that they had been harassed in the previous year because

²⁸ Before social transfers excludes from household income all social cash transfers including state pensions and state benefits.

²⁹ Households Below Average Income DSD.

of their disability, while one third of people with a learning disability had experienced such harassment on a weekly basis.

6.2.16 A key aim of this priority area is to support vulnerable people, including those with disabilities to live independently within their communities and to address exclusion, for example through promoting access to services and social infrastructure. The delivery of the priority, therefore, has the potential to have a more positive impact on people with a disability. However, this reflects the higher rates of at risk of poverty experienced by people with a disability and there is no evidence to suggest that the delivery of initiatives in this area will have an adverse impact on people without a disability.

Persons of different marital status:

6.2.17 Marital status is associated with poverty. Those who are separated have the highest rate of poverty followed by those who are divorced and then single people. Only those who are married or cohabiting have a poverty rate below the average³⁰.

6.2.18 Recognising that, action to address poverty and exclusion may impact more on single people and those who are separated or divorced. This does not suggest that the priority will have an adverse impact on married or cohabiting couples, as the outcome can be attributed to the differential rates of poverty rather than marital status. In light of this, there is no evidence of an adverse impact on people of different marital status.

Persons of different religious belief:

6.2.19 The available data on adults living in lower-income households suggests that there is an approximate balance between the Protestant and Catholic communities in the numbers living in such households, although data shows that Catholics are at greater risk of multiple deprivation.

6.2.20 In this context, the delivery of a priority focused on addressing poverty and disadvantage may be seen to have the potential to impact upon a greater proportion of Catholics. However, measures to address inequality and poverty will be focused on responding to need. They will, therefore impact equally on

³⁰ Households Below Average Income DSD.

Protestants experiencing multiple deprivation and exclusion. As such, there is no evidence to suggest the priority will have an adverse impact on persons of different religious belief.

6.2.21 During 2006/07 there were 1,695 sectarian incidents, up from 1,470 in 2005/06³¹. A key aim of the priority is also to address sectarianism, racism and intolerance and to build a shared and better future. Delivery of the priority and realisation of the associated objectives will, therefore make a significant contribution to the promotion of good relations between persons of different religious belief.

Persons with/without dependants:

6.2.22 Households caring for children or dependant adults have higher poverty rates and are at greater risk of multiple deprivation than those without dependants. In 2004/05, 24% of couples with children were at risk of poverty compared to 18% of couples with no children³². Single parent households, which are more likely to be female, experience an elevated risk of poverty and exclusion compared to other groups, 49% in 2004/05. It may be assumed that in addressing recognised need, the delivery of the priority may impact more on those with dependants, however, there is no evidence to suggest it will have an adverse impact on persons without dependants.

Persons of different political opinion:

6.2.23 No evidence of adverse impact, however, delivery of measures to promote tolerance and respect for diversity will contribute to the promotion of good relations between people of different political opinion.

Persons of a different racial group:

6.2.24 Reflecting the economic differentials outlined previously, Irish Travellers are at greater risk of poverty, multiple deprivation and exclusion. They are also more likely than other groups to leave school with no qualifications. A number of initiatives across departments aim to address the difficulties Irish Travellers may face in accessing services and employment. Research undertaken by the Equality Commission also appears to confirm negative attitudes towards

³¹ PSNI, Statistical Report No.3, Hate Incidents and Crimes 1 April 2006 – 31 March 2007, 2007

³² Households Below Average Income, DSD

Irish Travellers among a significant minority of respondents³³. Of those surveyed, 24% would mind having an Irish Traveller as a work colleague, 41% as a neighbour and 38% as a relative by marriage. Similarly, the *2005 Northern Ireland Life and Times Survey*, found that 82% of respondents were unwilling to accept a member of the Irish Traveller Community as a close friend.

6.2.25 The *2005 Northern Ireland Life and Times Survey* also found that 68% of respondents thought there was more racial prejudice in Northern Ireland in 2005 compared to 5 years previous. Reflecting that perception is the fact that the number of racist incidents reported to the PSNI in 2006/07 increased by over 12% on the previous year to 1,047³⁴.

6.2.26 The priority seeks to provide a strategic framework to promote racial equality, tolerance and respect for cultural diversity. The implementation of the priority will, therefore have a positive impact on persons of different racial group, and will make a significant contribution to the promotion of good relations between people of different racial group.

Persons of different sexual orientation:

6.2.27 While attitudes towards lesbian, gay and bisexual (LGB) people are changing, experiences of discrimination and marginalisation are still common for many within the LGB community. The number of homophobic incidents reported to the Police Service of Northern Ireland has increased in recent years. In 2006/07 there were 155 reported homophobic incidents, of which 77% were violent.

6.2.28 The delivery of the priority therefore has the potential to have a positive impact in this area. There is no evidence to suggest it will have an adverse impact on persons of different sexual orientation.

³³ Statement on Key Inequalities in Northern Ireland, Equality Commission for Northern Ireland, October 2007

³⁴ PSNI, Statistical Report No.3, Hate Incidents and Crimes 1 April 2006 – 31 March 2007, 2007

Priority: Protecting and Enhancing our Environment and Natural Resources

Background

- 6.3.1 There are recognised links between a healthy environment, a thriving economy and a high quality of life. We have a rich and varied natural heritage, which includes habitats and species of international, national and local significance. In recent years, a combination of factors has resulted in major changes to our landscape and threats to the diversity of our wildlife. It is also clear that climate change and the consequences of growth which does not take account of the principles of sustainable development have become among the most significant challenges we face.
- 6.3.2 The priority aims to provide a framework and focus across Government to protect and enhance our environment and ensure that the principles of sustainable development underpin the Executive's approach to economic development and social progress. The priority focuses on reducing Northern Ireland's greenhouse gas emissions, protecting our built and natural environment, conserving our bio-diversity and embedding the principles of sustainable development at the heart of government. The priority area is also focused on reform of the planning system in Northern Ireland to ensure that it supports those objectives while meeting the needs of economic and social progress.

Assessment of Impacts

Overall:

- 6.3.3 Adopting a more sustainable approach to economic growth and social progress and taking action to protect and enhance our natural and built environment and bio-diversity will contribute to an increased quality of life for everyone. It is also likely to have additional benefits for disadvantaged urban and rural communities, who often live in the most degraded environments. The PfG also aims to enhance the sustainability of rural communities and businesses. It is, therefore, likely to have a positive impact on rural communities.

6.3.4 In light of this, there is no evidence to suggest the priority will have significant negative impacts, rather it is anticipated that delivery of the priority will have a positive impact on a number Section 75 groups and marginalised and isolated communities.

Between men and women generally:

6.3.5 No evidence of adverse impact.

Persons of different age:

6.3.6 No evidence of adverse impact.

Persons with or without a disability:

6.3.7 No evidence of adverse impact.

Persons of different religious belief:

6.3.8 No evidence of adverse impact.

Persons with/without dependants:

6.3.9 No evidence of adverse impact.

Persons of different political opinion:

6.3.10 No evidence of adverse impact.

Persons of a different racial group:

6.3.11 No evidence of adverse impact.

Persons of different sexual orientation:

6.3.12 No evidence of adverse impact.

Priority: Delivering Modern, High Quality and Efficient Public Services

Background

6.4.1 The priority area addresses the most wide ranging reform of public services for a generation. At the heart of the reform programme is a commitment to world class public services which meet the needs of the economy and wider society, while reducing bureaucracy and focusing resources on frontline services. This includes a range of key reform programmes in areas such as health, education, water and planning, local government and the Civil Service which will result in significant changes to both the structure and delivery of public services.

Assessment of Impacts

Overall:

6.4.2 Delivering modern, high quality, efficient public services to improve access to government and outcomes, may be seen to offer benefits to all groups. However, there is the potential that the implementation of this priority area will have a differential and more positive impact on those Section 75 groups who may encounter greater barriers in accessing public services. Improving access to public services, either physical or through enhanced utilisation of IT, also has the potential for a more positive impact upon those in marginalised, isolated and rural areas, particularly women, for whom access to public services can present distinct difficulties. People living in rural, less densely populated areas are likely to have to travel longer distances to access key services. This reflects the dispersed nature of the population in those areas.

6.4.3 In light of this, it is concluded that there is no evidence to suggest the delivery of this priority area will have an adverse impact on any Section 75 groups, rather it has the potential to deliver positive impacts on those groups that may experience particular difficulties in accessing public services. In addition, the development of more effective and efficient public services, which promote inclusion and accessibility, has the potential to contribute towards the promotion of good relations across all groups.

Between men and women generally:

- 6.4.4 Women, particularly older women, those from minority ethnic communities and those living in rural areas and/or disadvantaged and marginalised communities, may experience particular problems in accessing the full range of public services. This can result from the fact that women are much more likely than men to have caring responsibilities and are more reliant, particularly older women, on public transport. Delivery of actions which seek to improve access to services in line with the Executive's priority, offers an opportunity to address these issues and deliver improved outcomes for women. However, this should also result in improved outcomes for men who can also experience difficulties in accessing the full range of public services.

Persons of different age:

- 6.4.5 Older people, particularly women and those in isolated or marginalised areas can experience particular difficulties in accessing public services. Access to such services is particularly important in promoting social and economic inclusion for older people, recognising that almost 80,000 older people in Northern Ireland live alone. The obstacles older people may face in accessing services are varied and include such factors as access to transport.
- 6.4.6 The delivery of the reform programme has the potential to improve access to public services for older people and ensure they are more responsive to the specific needs of older people. In addition, proposals in relation to improving public transport and the extension of the concessionary fares scheme to everyone aged over 60 should further assist in this regard.

Persons with or without a disability:

- 6.4.7 Research highlights the fact that disabled people face difficulties when accessing public and social services³⁵. Delivery of measure to improve access both physical and through the enhanced provision of on-line access to services are likely, therefore to have a more positive impact on people with disabilities. However, improving access to services will also benefit those without disabilities and there is no evidence of an adverse impact on persons with or without a disability.

³⁵ "Difficulties Faced by Disabled People when accessing services and participating in social activities (Report 3)" NIDC & DHSS, 1999.
Barriers to Access to Essential Services, Independent Research Solutions, 2006

Persons of different religious belief:

6.4.8 No evidence of adverse impact.

Persons with/without dependants:

6.4.9 No evidence of an adverse impact.

Persons of different political opinion:

6.4.10 No evidence of adverse impact.

Persons of a different racial group:

6.4.11 In line with the Executive's goal of building a shared and better future, the reform of public services will seek to ensure equality of opportunity for minority ethnic people in accessing and benefiting from all public services. The aim is to ensure that people of different racial group can access the full range of public services, which in turn must become more representative of the increasingly diverse nature of Northern Ireland society. In this context, the delivery of the Executive's priority in this area may be seen to have a differential impact on persons of different racial group, with a more positive impact on those from ethnic minority communities. However, any such positive impact may be associated with the need to respond to the distinct and recognised barriers which those from ethnic minority communities may experience in accessing and benefiting from public services. In addition, the priority has been framed with the aim of benefiting all through the provision of more effective, efficient and accountable public services. In light of these factors it is concluded that there is no evidence to suggest an adverse impact on persons of different racial group.

Persons of different sexual orientation:

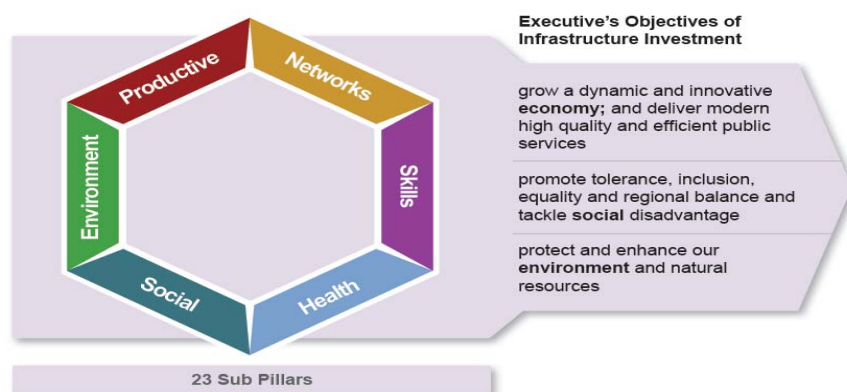
6.4.12 No evidence of adverse impact

6.5 INVESTMENT STRATEGY

Background

- 6.5.1 Considerable investment is needed in Northern Ireland's infrastructure to address major deficiencies in key areas, such as hospitals, schools, roads, public transport and water and sewerage infrastructure which limit the capacity for further economic and social development and undermine efforts to safeguard the environment and comply with key EU Directives.
- 6.5.2 Through the PfG, the Executive has identified Investment in Infrastructure as one its 5 priority areas. That priority focuses on the need to address the historical underinvestment in Northern Ireland's social and economic infrastructure and ensure that we can benefit from a modern, effective infrastructure fit for the 21st century. The priority also aims to improve the safety of the road network and enhance the provision of public transport, including enhanced provision for rural and isolated communities.
- 6.5.3 The Strategic Investment Board Limited (SIB) has worked with departments to ensure a strategic approach to the Executive's proposals for infrastructure investment. In that context, the Executive's strategic framework for infrastructure investment is set out in the Investment Strategy for Northern Ireland which has been published alongside the PfG and the Budget. Guided by the Executive's priorities, that framework categorises infrastructure under six 'Pillars', supported by three cross-cutting objectives as illustrated below in figure 1.

Figure 1: Investment Framework



Investment Pillars and Sub-Pillars

6.5.4 The Investment Strategy envisages that approaching £20bn will be invested in the next 10 years to deliver essential infrastructure – around £6bn of this in the next three years. The table below shows the amounts to be invested in each area in the next three years, and in the subsequent seven years. The figures at sub-pillar level for 2012-2018 are indicative for planning purposes only.

Pillar and Sub-Pillar	£m (Current prices)				
	Budget Period: 2008 – 2011		Indicative for the period: 2011/12 – 2017/18		Total
	NI Executive Funds	Additional Funds	NI Executive Funds	Additional Funds	
Roads	611.8		2,083	400	3,095
Public Transport	195.3		530		725
Gateways	5.6				6
Telecoms	28.7		7		35
Energy	19.7		154		174
NETWORKS	861.1		2,774	400	4,035
Schools & Youth Services	718.0		2,792		3,510
FE & HE	141.5		366		507
Libraries	31.6		107		139
SKILLS	891.1		3,265		4,156
Primary Care	152.6		354	355	862
Public Safety & Technology	163.8		408		572
Hospitals Modernisation	412.1		1,813		2,225
HEALTH	728.5		2,575	355	3,659
Regeneration	426.7		203		630
Housing	924.9		892		1,817
Welfare Reform	71.2				71
Culture, Arts, Sport	201.1		318		519
SOCIAL	1,623.9		1,413		3,037
Water & Waste Water	646.5	391.9	717	780	2,535
Waste Management	197.0	58.6	3	177	436
Flood Risk Management	23.2		59		82
Environment	14.5		51		65
ENVIRONMENT	881.2	450.5	830	957	3,118
Enterprise & Innovation	192.9		477		670
Tourism	72.0		19		91
Rural & Primary Industries	172.1		240		412
Public Sector Reform	59.9		89		149
PRODUCTIVE	496.9		825		1,322
Other & Misc.	6.8		10		17
GRAND TOTAL	5,489.5	450.5	11,692	1,712	19,344

- 6.5.5 While economic growth has been identified as the Executive's top priority, the allocations across the 6 pillars take account of the need to invest in social infrastructure and key areas of public service provision such as health and education. This reflects the Executive's commitment to address poverty and disadvantage and the associated priorities to *Promote Tolerance, Inclusion, Health and Wellbeing* and *Deliver Modern, High Quality and Efficient Public Services*.
- 6.5.6 Recognising the strategic nature of the Investment Strategy, the analysis below, focuses on the potential for the investment programme across the six Pillars to promote equality and good relations. The assessment also takes account of the additional policy initiatives outlined in the PfG and Budget in support of infrastructure investment.

Assessment of Impacts

Overall:

- 6.5.7 Delivering significant investment and improvements to Northern Ireland's infrastructure, as set out in the Investment Strategy, is likely to have a positive impact on all Section 75 groups, both directly and indirectly by contributing to economic growth, social progress and environmental protection. It is anticipated, however, that some areas of infrastructure investment will have a differential impact on a number of the Section 75 groups. That impact is likely to be positive and addresses recognised need. In this context, investing in infrastructure has the potential to promote equality and good relations while addressing issues of exclusion and marginalisation. However, that potential will only be realised where departments ensure that the delivery of individual investment projects are subject to and informed by due consideration of the need to promote equality and good relations.
- 6.5.8 Investment in networks, road and social infrastructure across the region has the potential to increase the attractiveness of the wider region as a destination for business investment in pursuit of the Executive's aim of promoting economic growth and social progress across the region. This will be important in reducing sub-regional differentials. However, it will remain important for government at both central and local level, to work with

agencies, business and social partners to ensure that the potential offered by infrastructure investment in this regard is realised.

Between men and women generally:

- 6.5.9 Investment in different forms of infrastructure may have a differential impact on men and women, though this reflects need and use of infrastructure. For example investment in health infrastructure and public transport may have a more positive impact on women. Women make more use of health infrastructure and make more use of public transport in Northern Ireland, accounting for 54% of rail passengers and 55% of Ulsterbus passengers in 2004³⁶. Similarly, road safety programmes are likely to target young male drivers aged 17-24, recognizing that this group is 4.2 times more likely to cause death or serious injury on our roads³⁷.
- 6.5.10 Improvements in education infrastructure may impact more on women than men, given that a higher proportion of girls than boys go on to higher and further education in Northern Ireland³⁸. There is also the potential for investment in education infrastructure to have a positive impact on addressing the gender differentials with regard to economic activity, where the delivery of such investment considers for example opportunities to facilitate increased or more accessible childcare provision and pre-school places.
- 6.5.11 While acknowledging the potential for a differential impact, however, both men and women will experience positive impacts through investment in infrastructure and there is no evidence of adverse impact on men or women generally.

Persons of different age:

- 6.5.12 Improving infrastructure, including the enhanced provision of public transport and maintenance of the Concessionary Fares Scheme, as set out in the PfG, has the potential to have a differential impact on persons of different age, with a more positive impact on older people and children and young people. The enhanced provision of public transport is also likely to have a positive impact on people of all ages by addressing a perceived barrier to employment and

³⁶ Sub Regional Transport Plan 2012 Equality Impact Assessment, DRD

³⁷ <http://www.roadsafetyni.gov.uk/index/publicity/publicityblame.htm>

³⁸ Qualifications and Destinations of Northern Ireland School Leavers 2004/05, DE

inclusion, particularly for those in isolated and rural areas, and by increasing access to key services for all. Measures to promote road safety will benefit all groups, however, the Executive's proposals on infrastructure investment aim, in response to recognised need, to reduce the numbers of children killed on our roads, including a focus on children from disadvantaged communities and to promote safer driving among young males.

6.5.13 Enhancing social infrastructure will benefit all groups, though investment in schools is likely to have a more positive impact on children and young people, while investment in health infrastructure may be more reasonably seen to benefit older people. Persons aged 65 or over represent 13% of the local population yet receive 31% of total inpatient activity³⁹ and account for 95% of delayed discharges.

6.5.14 In light of this, while recognising that there may be differential impacts, there is no evidence of an adverse impact on persons of different age, rather it is concluded, implementation of the measures associated with the priority will benefit all groups.

Persons with or without a disability:

6.5.15 Investing in infrastructure is likely to benefit all persons with or without a disability, though there are likely to be differential impacts, reflecting need. For example, the enhanced provision of public transport, including improved access and the enhancement of health infrastructure, particularly at community level is likely to have a more positive impact on persons with a disability. These measures, however, are intended for example to address the distinct barriers to accessing public transport⁴⁰ and the increased vulnerability to social and economic exclusion which people with a disability may encounter.

6.5.16 It is also recognised that there is a significant under-representation of those with disabilities within higher education⁴¹. While there are a number of contributing factors, investing in the education infrastructure offers an

³⁹ Equality and Inequalities in Health and Social Care in Northern Ireland: A Statistical Overview, DHSSPS, 2004

⁴⁰ All Aboard? The Experience of Disabled People using Transport in Northern Ireland: Equality Commission for Northern Ireland, 2003.

⁴¹ Dearing Report, NCIHE, 2007

opportunity to ensure that facilities are fully accessible to those with disabilities.

6.5.17 There is an opportunity through investment in public infrastructure to address the barriers to economic and social progress which disabled people may experience and therefore to deliver a positive impact on this group. However, there is no evidence of an adverse impact on persons without a disability. In addition, increasing mobility, inclusion and support for people with a disability is also likely to facilitate the promotion of good relations between people with or without a disability.

Persons of different religious belief:

6.5.18 The location of infrastructure, taking account of the geographic distribution of the overall population, may point to elements of that investment having a differential impact on persons of different religious belief. Investment in rail, for example may deliver marginal improvements for Protestants, reflecting the concentration of the rail network in the East, while investment in highways infrastructure is anticipated to deliver marginal improvements for Catholics⁴². Similarly, investment in the higher education estate has the potential to impact more on Catholics as a higher percentage of Catholic pupils go on to higher education, while a higher percentage of Protestant pupils go on to further education⁴³.

6.5.19 Potential differential impacts in this regard, however, emerge as a result of location, and also usage/need by persons of different religious belief for particular services, i.e. roads, health and education. However, it is important to note, that the investment programme is based on responding to recognised need and ensuring an efficient and effective infrastructure for the benefit of all and which facilitates economic and social progress across the region.

6.5.20 Infrastructure investment, in particular the building of new roads, investment in air and sea ports, hospitals and the education estate has benefits beyond the local area. Therefore, while recognising that individual projects or areas of infrastructure investment may result in differential impacts, there is no evidence to suggest an adverse impact on persons of different religious

⁴² Sub Regional Transport Plan 2012 Equality Impact Assessment, DRD

⁴³ Qualifications and Destinations of Northern Ireland School Leavers 2004/05, DE

belief. Rather, the provision of enhanced infrastructure, facilitating economic growth, social progress and environmental protection across the region will have a positive impact on persons of different religious belief and contribute to the promotion of good relations.

Persons with/without dependants:

6.5.21 Elements of the planned investment in infrastructure may have a differential positive impact on persons with dependants, including those with children and those caring for persons with disabilities. The most significant benefits are likely to arise from access improvements to bus and rail stations, schemes making it easier and safer to walk, demand responsive bus services in rural areas and improved health and education infrastructure. In this context, there is also the potential for the delivery of infrastructure investment to impact more on women than men, as women are more likely to provide informal care for dependants than men⁴⁴. Delivery of this priority, however, will also have positive impacts on persons without dependants and it is, therefore, concluded that there is no evidence of an adverse impact on persons with/without dependants.

Persons of different political opinion:

6.5.22 The location of infrastructure at a regional level, taking account of the geographic distribution of the overall population, may point to elements of that investment having a differential impact on persons of different political opinion. However, the investment programme is based on responding to recognised need and ensuring an efficient and effective infrastructure for the benefit of all. In light of this, there is no evidence to suggest an adverse impact on persons of different political opinion, rather delivery of this priority will have a positive impact on persons of different political opinion.

Persons of a different racial group:

6.5.23 No evidence of adverse impact

Persons of different sexual orientation:

6.5.24 No evidence of adverse impact

⁴⁴ Equality and Inequalities in Health and Social Care in Northern Ireland: A Statistical Overview, DHSSPS, 2004

6.6 BUDGET

Background

6.6.1 The Budget document sets out the Executive's spending plans for the 3-year period from April 2008 to March 2011. The allocation of available resources to departments as set out in the Budget document have been directed by 3 factors:

- i. the Executive's priorities as set out in the PfG;
- ii. the need to meet the costs of ongoing commitments; and
- iii. the need to ensure that current levels of frontline service provision in key areas, such as education and health, can be maintained and where possible improved over the Budget period.

6.6.2 The departmental budgets as set out in the Budget document are separated into capital budgets and current/resource budgets. The former reflect the Executive's programme for capital investment for 2008-11 as set out in the Investment Strategy. The potential impacts of the capital investment programme have been considered under the assessment of the Investment Strategy outlined above. Recognising this and to avoid duplication, the focus of this assessment on the Budget document is on current/resource budgets which include most direct expenditure on public service pay and providing services e.g. health and education.

Sources of Funding for Public Expenditure

6.6.3 There are four principal sources of funding for public expenditure in Northern Ireland departments. These are:

- i. **Share of UK Public Expenditure Allocations (Northern Ireland Block Grant)** - determined via the Barnett formula and allocated by the Treasury. Allocations are 'unhypothesized' which means that the Executive and Assembly can determine allocations to specific priorities and programmes within Northern Ireland.

- ii. **Regional Rates** – revenue received from taxation on business and domestic property in Northern Ireland. Revenue raised from the regional rate are also ‘unhypothecated’ and is added to the total sums available for allocation by the Executive and Assembly
- iii. **Borrowing under the Reinvestment and Reform Initiative (RRI)** – amounts can be borrowed each year for capital investment. This borrowing is subject to annual limits determined by HM Treasury, at present the limit is £200m per annum.
- iv. **EU Funding** – the level of funding from the EU has declined in recent years. This funding is targeted towards specific projects.

6.6.4 Together the Northern Ireland Block Grant (91.6%) and the regional rate (5.8%) account for the most significant source of funding available to the Executive for allocation through the Budget. In addition, it is only in these two areas that the Executive is free to determine how funds should be allocated to programmes and priorities through the resource budgets. In light of that, the focus of this draft assessment is on the following areas:

- i. the overall allocation of resources across departments; and
- ii. decisions on the regional rate

Public Expenditure Context

6.6.5 In assessing the potential impacts of the Executive’s decisions on the allocation of resources, it is important to consider the overall public expenditure context in which those decisions have been taken.

6.6.6 Since 2000 public expenditure has grown at 3.7% per annum in real terms. Public expenditure in Northern Ireland is strongly linked to the position at UK level, with 91.6% of the funding available to the Executive for allocation through the Budget derived from the Northern Ireland Block Grant as determined by the Barnett formula.

6.6.7 The amount of resources to be provided by the Treasury through the Northern Ireland Block Grant for 2008-11 were set out in the Comprehensive

Spending Review (CSR) announcement by the Chancellor on 9th October 2007. In overall terms, the outcome for Northern Ireland was annual growth across 2008-11 of 1.2% in real terms. This represents a significant slow down in the rate of growth in public expenditure, reflecting the position at UK level. While recognising this, however, in total the resources available to the Executive will increase by £254 million; £622 million; and £1,061 million over the next three years.

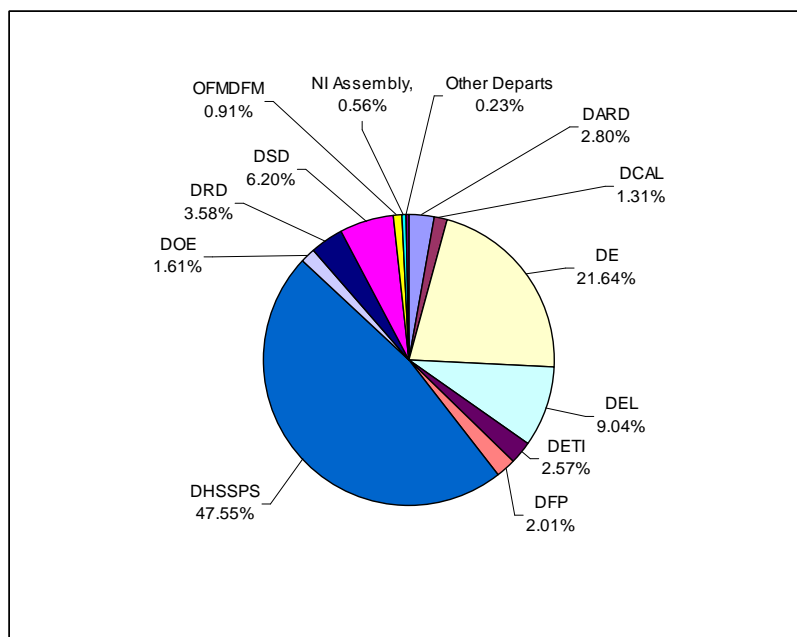
- 6.6.8 There would appear to be substantial additional resources available for the Executive to allocate through the Budget in support of its priorities. In reality, however, there are significant constraints. Most of the additional resources are required to meet the costs of ongoing commitments in public service provision, especially for public sector pay. In that context, there is, in particular, a need to ensure that sufficient resources are made available to ensure that current levels of frontline service provision in key areas, such as education and health, can be maintained and where possible improved over the Budget period, taking account of rising costs.
- 6.6.9 The Executive's room for manoeuvre in terms of allocating significant additional increases to any particular area of expenditure is therefore, strictly limited. To increase the room for manoeuvre, the Executive has agreed that NI departments should work to deliver cumulative efficiency gains of 3% per annum over the period 2008-11. In total departments plan to deliver some £790m efficiency gains by 2010-11. While it will be for departments to determine how best to deliver those efficiency gains, the Executive will wish to ensure that potentially adverse impacts on section 75 groups are avoided.
- 6.6.10 Aside from the Northern Ireland Block, the most significant source of revenue available to the Executive is the regional rate. Over the past five years, domestic regional rates have increased in the order of 62%, with a 19% rise in one year. In the Budget, the Executive confirmed its decision that the domestic regional rate should be held constant, in cash terms, over the next three years. In addition, the Budget also confirms the Executive's decision that there should be no increase in real terms in the business regional rate over the Budget period.

6.6.11 The Executive's decisions on the regional rate take account of the proposed phasing in of water charges over the Budget period and the need to limit potentially significant increases in the costs to domestic rate payers and local businesses.

Allocation of Resources

6.6.12 As outlined above, the allocation of resources as set out in the Budget has been directed by the Executive's priorities as set out in the PfG, the need to meet existing commitments and protect and enhance key frontline services. In line with this and recognising the constraints outlined above, the chart below highlights the proportion of current public expenditure allocated to each department over the Budget period.

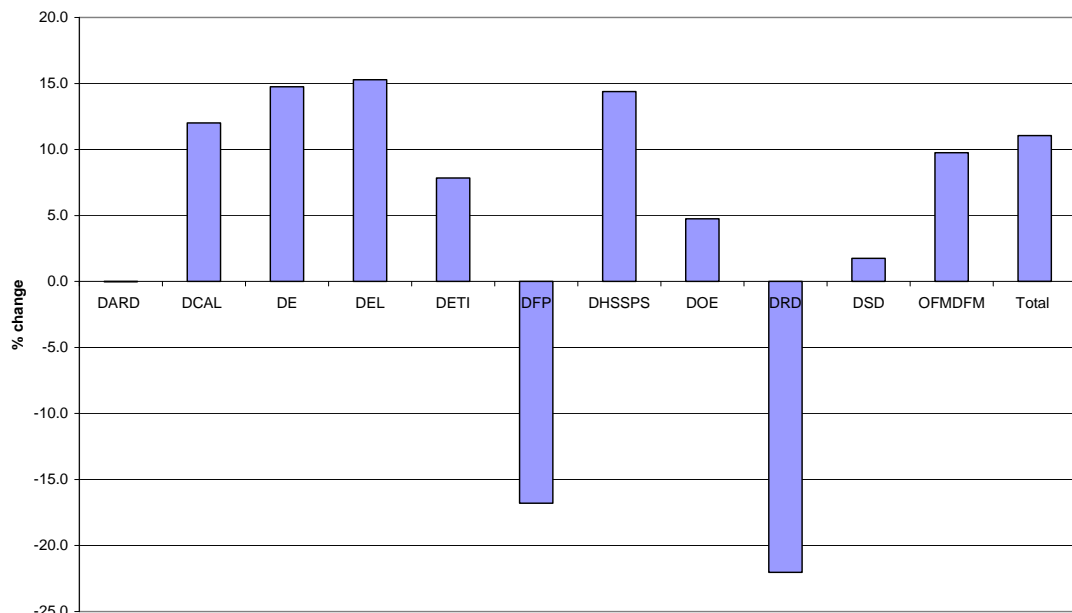
Chart 4: Proportion of Current Expenditure 2008-11 by Department



6.6.13 Notwithstanding the Executive's priorities, the chart above illustrates that the majority of current public expenditure is allocated to two main departments, the Department of Health, Social Services and Public Safety (DHSSPS) and the Department of Education (DE). This reflects a common trend with most industrialised countries over recent years and the need to respond to increased costs, changing demographics and increasing public expectations.

6.6.14 While the Executive has identified *Growing a Dynamic and Innovative Economy* as its top priority, Chart 2 below confirms the continuation of this trend in that the proportion of public funding allocated to DHSSPS, DE and DEL has increased significantly compared to other departments. This reflects the Executive's commitment to continue to protect the provision of key front line services in these areas. The increased proportion of funding allocated to OFMDFM and the Northern Ireland Assembly reflect the additional costs associated with the restoration of devolution on 8 May 2007.

Chart 5: 2007 Budget % Change in Resource Allocations by Department on 2005 Budget



Source: NI Priorities & Budget 2006-08, Budget 2008-2011

6.6.15 The apparently significant reduction in the DRD allocation as a proportion of the total Budget allocations reflects the establishment of Northern Ireland Water and the transfer of functions previously undertaken by Water Service within the Department

Assessment of Impacts

Overall

6.6.16 The resource allocations as set out in the Budget have been directed by the Executive's priorities as set out in the PfG and aim to support those priorities. In line with the assessment of the potential impacts associated with the PfG and the Investment Strategy as outlined in sections 6.1 to 6.5 of this

document, the allocation of resources in support of the Executive's priorities has the potential to result in significant positive impacts for a number of the section 75 groups.

6.6.17 The Executive recognises, however, that decisions to reprioritise the allocation of resources have the potential to impact on the provision of current services, with the potential for negative impacts on a number of section 75 groups. In that context, the allocation of the resources as set out in the Budget takes full account of the less benign fiscal environment the Executive is operating in.

6.6.18 While the Budget allocations aim to support the Executive's priorities, particularly in relation to economic growth, the proportion of funding allocated to the delivery of key frontline has increased over that provided in previous budgetary settlements. The increased proportion of funding allocated to these areas is in line with the Executive's commitment to safeguard and, where possible, enhance key services, particularly those in support of vulnerable groups. Recognising this and to ensure that as far as possible the allocation of resources resulted in positive impacts, all departmental spending proposals were subject to High Level Impact Assessments⁴⁵.

6.6.19 The departmental allocations set out in the Budget, therefore will enable departments to maintain and where possible enhance the current level of frontline service provision in key areas while ensuring that any reprioritisation of resources does not result in significant adverse impacts. Alongside the allocations of resources and action in support of the Executive's priorities, the Budget has the potential for a positive impact on a number of section 75 groups and there is no evidence to suggest a significant negative impact on any of the section 75 groups.

6.6.20 The Executive's decision, as set out in the Budget, on the regional rate will directly benefit homeowners and local businesses. This has the potential to impact directly more on a number of Section 75 groups where those groups are more likely to be homeowners or business owners. This does not,

⁴⁵ This was intended as a first stage. The departmental programmes funded through the Budget will be subjected to full Equality Impact Assessment as appropriate, in line with the statutory duties.

however, imply that the decision on regional rates will result in a differential or adverse impact on any section 75 group.

6.6.21 Account must also be taken of the significant increases in the regional rate over recent years. A further significant rise in the regional rate alongside the phasing in of water charges has the potential to adversely impact on the competitiveness of local business and the affordability margin of homeowners. Both have the potential to adversely impact on economic growth. Such an outcome has the potential for both a direct and indirect adverse impact on all section 75 groups, given the importance of further sustainable economic growth to provide the means and resources required to address poverty and key differentials. In light of this, there is no evidence to suggest that the Executive's decisions on regional rates will have a significant adverse impact on any of the section 75 groups.

Between men and women generally:

6.6.22 There is no evidence to suggest that the delivery of the Budget will have an adverse impact between men and women generally. In a number of areas, though, there is the potential for a differential impact on persons of different gender. For example, the Executive's decision that there should be no increase in real terms in the business regional rate over the Budget period may directly benefit more men than women, recognising that women are less likely than men to engage in entrepreneurial activity⁴⁶. However, this decision reflects the need to ensure a competitive cost environment for local business if the Executive is to realise its goal of growing the economy.

6.6.23 In that context, and in line with the PfG, there are a number of departmental programmes highlighted in the budget which aim to increase employment opportunities across the region and address the barriers to employment, including increased childcare provision in both rural and urban areas. This is particularly important if the differential in female and male employment rates is to be addressed.

6.6.24 There are a number of areas within the Budget which are likely to result in a differential impact on men and women generally. This includes, for example,

⁴⁶ Of the offers approved to support local business start-up through Invest NI's Start a Business Programme over the past 5 years, 60% have been to males and 40% to females.

the allocation of additional funding to address the growing disparities in male and female participation in sport. Increasing the proportion of public funding to Health in general is also likely to benefit more women than men, recognising that women are more likely to utilise health and social services than men. In particular the provision of increased support to carers and the introduction of a vaccination programme for cervical cancer are also likely to benefit more women than men⁴⁷. However, the potential differential impact in this regard results from targeting recognised need and existing differentials and does not imply an adverse impact on men.

6.6.25 Taking account of the issues outlined above, the allocation of resources as set out in the Budget has the potential to deliver a positive impact on both men and women. There is no evidence to suggest that the overall allocations outlined in the Budget are likely to result in an adverse impact on either men or women. Where differential impacts can be identified these reflect the targeting of resources towards recognised need.

Persons of different age:

6.6.26 In line with the assessment of the Executive's priorities as set out in the PfG, the allocation of resources set out in the Budget has the potential to deliver positive impacts on persons of all ages. However, there are a number of areas where there is the potential for a differential impact.

6.6.27 Increasing the proportion of public funding allocated to health, including those programmes to enable vulnerable people to remain within their communities and live more independent lives is likely to impact on more older people. However, this reflects recognised need and the increased rate of in-patient admission and uptake of social care by older people⁴⁸ rather than an adverse impact on other age groups. In addition, increasing funding in key areas of health and education, including targeted support for children is also likely to have a more positive impact on younger people, though again this is in response to recognised need.

⁴⁷ A fifth of women provide care compared with 14% of men – Equality and Inequalities in Health and Social Care in Northern Ireland: A Statistical Overview, DHSSPS, 2004

⁴⁸ Equality and Inequalities in Health and Social Care in Northern Ireland: A Statistical Overview, DHSSPS, 2004

- 6.6.28 The Executive's decision on the domestic regional rate will have a less positive direct impact on persons aged under 34 who are less likely to be homeowners⁴⁹. Similarly, the Executive's decision that there should be no increase in real terms in the business regional rate over the Budget period may have a less direct positive impact on younger people (18-24) who over the period 2002-2007 accounted for 13% of all offers approved to support local business start-up through Invest NI's Start a Business Programme.⁵⁰
- 6.6.29 The allocation of resources as set out in the Budget has the potential to deliver a positive impact on persons of all ages. Where differential impacts can be identified these reflect the targeting of resources towards recognised need and there is no evidence to suggest that the overall allocations outlined in the Budget are likely to result in an adverse impact on persons of different age.

Persons with or without a disability:

- 6.6.30 The allocation of resources in support of the Executive's priorities and the maintenance and enhancement of key services has the potential to deliver positive impacts for all persons with or without a disability.
- 6.6.31 A key focus in determining the Budget allocations has been on supporting vulnerable groups, including persons with a disability to live more independent lives and to play a full role in the economy and society. This is reflected in the additional proportion of public funding provided to DHSSPS and DEL in particular.
- 6.6.32 In response to the Budget allocations, departments have also identified a number of specific programmes to support people with a disability to overcome barriers to economic and social participation. These include measures to promote participation in physical recreation, delivery of a comprehensive careers advice service to meet the needs of disabled people and enhanced support to enable people with long-term conditions to live more active and independent lives.

⁴⁹ Continuous Household Survey 2006-07.

⁵⁰ While older people accounted for less than 1% of offers approved, the figures do not include established businesses owned by older people and it is therefore difficult to draw conclusions based on this data as to the impact of the Executive's decision on older people.

6.6.33 The Executive's decision on the domestic regional rate is likely to impact more on people without a disability than those with a disability. Data from the Continuous Household Survey indicates that 60% of those with limiting long-term illnesses are owner occupiers, compared to 75% of those without. The differential is more marked in relation to the business regional rate, with data from Invest NI's Start a Business Programme indicating that only 1% of offers approved were to individuals with a registered disability. While recognising the potential for a differential impact, there is no evidence to suggest that this will result in an adverse impact on persons with or without a disability.

6.6.34 Overall, the allocation of resources as outlined in the Budget has the potential to deliver a positive impact for persons with or without a disability. There is no evidence to suggest that the overall allocations outlined in the Budget are likely to result in an adverse impact on this section 75 group. The Executive recognises that in some areas there will be a differential impact, however, that results from the targeting of resources to address recognised need and existing differentials.

Persons of different religious belief:

6.6.35 No evidence of adverse impact.

Persons with/without dependants:

6.6.36 There is no evidence to suggest that the Executive's decisions on the regional rate will have an adverse impact on persons with or without dependants. Similarly, there is no evidence to suggest that the allocation of resources as set out in the Budget will have an adverse impact on this group.

6.6.37 There are, however, a number of specific programmes highlighted by departments in the Budget document which may have a more positive impact on persons with dependants. These include increased support for carers, targeted support for children and additional childcare provision, particularly in rural areas. Clearly such measures are likely to have a more positive impact on persons with dependants. The allocation of resources to these areas may be seen as part of the Executive's overall programme to address the barriers to social and economic participation experienced by a number of section 75

groups. The focus in this regard is on responding to need and there is no evidence to suggest an adverse impact on persons with or without a disability.

Persons of different political opinion:

6.6.38 No evidence of adverse impact.

Persons of a different racial group:

6.6.39 No evidence of adverse impact.

Persons of different sexual orientation:

6.6.40 No evidence of adverse impact.

7.0 MITIGATING MEASURES AND ALTERNATIVE POLICIES / OPTIONS

- 7.1 The Executive has sought to develop a PfG, Budget and Investment Strategy which contributes to a more tolerant, inclusive society and which promotes equality of opportunity. Consideration of the Executive's priorities as set out in the PfG, and the allocation of resources, as set out in the Budget and Investment Strategy, has not identified any potentially adverse impacts. Rather, the analysis concludes that the delivery of the PfG, Budget and Investment Strategy have the potential to have a positive, though differential impact on all Section 75 groups. As a result mitigating action or alternative policies are unnecessary at this stage.
- 7.2 The realisation of the potentially positive impacts identified in this assessment will be dependent upon the delivery of actions, programmes and investment projects at departmental level. As such, in delivering programmes, policies and projects in support of the Executive's priorities, it is recommended that departments should seek to identify further opportunities to promote equality and good relations, taking account of the findings of this assessment.
- 7.3 To facilitate that outcome, the specific policies, programmes and investment projects which departments will deliver in support of the Executive's priorities will continue to be subject to equality screening and, where appropriate, full EQIA by departments and their agencies and relevant statutory authorities, in accordance with the criteria set out in the guidance produced by the Equality Commission for Northern Ireland.

8.0 CONSULTATION AND POLICY DECISION

8.1 In line with the Executive's equality obligations and guidance issued by the Equality Commission for Northern Ireland, this draft Equality Impact Assessment, carried out at a strategic level, is being issued for formal consultation over a twelve week period. The final document will be prepared following consideration of the comments received during the consultation process and presented to the Executive for approval. Thereafter the assessment will be produced in final form.

8.2 Copies of the final assessment will be sent to all consultees who participated in the consultation process. It will also be made available on the internet and the general public will be informed of its availability through a press release.

9.0 MONITORING FOR ADVERSE IMPACT IN THE FUTURE

- 9.1 It is proposed that the strategic level impacts, considered within this assessment will be monitored by departments to identify any unforeseen impacts of implementation and to ensure that as far as possible all objectives and anticipated positive impacts are being achieved over the period of implementation.
- 9.2 Results of monitoring will be assessed by the Executive to determine whether the impact of the PfG, Budget and Investment Strategy on any of the nine equality groups has changed significantly. The outcome of that monitoring will also inform future PfG, Budget and Investment Strategy processes.
- 9.3 A final monitoring framework will be put in place following the outcome of consultation on this draft assessment.