

Submission to TEO Committee on the draft Programme for Government November 2016

We welcome and strongly support the proposed focus on achieving outcomes.

We support the Executive's proposed focus on achieving outcomes; specifically given the potential that this offers to advance equality of opportunity and good relations for those who live with and experience inequalities and the absence of good relations.

Whilst we welcome the introductory high-level commitments to equality, these commitments need to be further mainstreamed into actions.

We welcome the Executive's proposed commitments to addressing key inequalities, particularly those experienced by the Section 75 equality groups; to tracking progress for these groups in relevant PfG indicators and to promoting good relations. However, we are concerned that these introductory high-level commitments are, in a number of cases, not mainstreamed into the actions associated with the PfG indicators or delivery plans. We also remain concerned that in some cases, indicators (and associated actions) are narrowly focussed, thus missing the opportunity to track and/or address inequalities for the full range of equality groups.

We recommend the focus of the proposed *equal society outcome* is on securing equality of opportunity for all S75 groups across all areas.

While we welcome the continued inclusion of the equality society outcome, we note that the primary stated focus of equality related actions is often on tackling socio-economic disadvantage, and not on inequalities by Section 75 grounds. We recommend a more explicit focus, across the wider PfG and associated actions, on ensuring that all relevant actions focus on addressing key inequalities by Section 75 grounds, *in addition* to the focus on addressing socio-economic disadvantage. We also note that the focus of this outcome is on addressing inequalities in the areas of health; employment; education; and poverty rather than across wider areas.

We recommend the '*shared society*' outcome, has a greater focus on improving outcomes and well-being across the Section 75 groups.

We welcome the continued inclusion of this outcome. However, whilst the '*shared society*' outcome refers to tackling barriers to participation in society experienced across the Section 75 groups, we are concerned that the proposed indicators and actions for the *shared society* outcome appear to largely focus on community background, with some limited mention of ethnicity and disability. Further, the proposed indicator focusing on *increasing quality of life* relates only to disabled people and not Section 75 groups more widely-despite the Executive's core PfG focus on *population* 'well-being'.

We recommend that indicators relating to '*Respect*' and '*Reconciliation*' (cultural identity respected) should seek to advance outcomes across all Section 75 grounds.

We note that the shared society outcome recognises that respect can be experienced differently for Section 75 groups and others and that a relevant delivery plan notes that

while the need for reconciliation is likely to be greatest between Catholics and Protestants, ‘particular issues and difficulties may be experienced ...by sub groups within communities, for example: ... Travellers and ethnic minorities’. We note however the current narrow focus of the associated indicators on certain groups (e.g. community background and gender). We therefore again recommend that the focus of the proposed respect and reconciliation (cultural identity respected) indicators, be across all Section 75 grounds.

We recommend the shared space indicator is widened to cover all Section 75 groups and there is a focus on wider spaces for sharing – with supporting indicators and actions.

We recommend that the shared space indicator is not limited to community background, but should consider the degree to which public areas are shared and open for all Section 75 groups. We also recommend that there is a more comprehensive consideration of shared spaces – with indicators and commitments aimed at measuring / ensuring sharing in *employment, education* and in *housing*.

We recommend that all relevant PfG measures are tracked for the impact across Section 75 grounds and that gaps in equality data are addressed.

We continue to recommend that all relevant PfG measures are not only tracked in aggregate but also for the impact on individuals from each of the Section 75 grounds. Whilst we note the introductory high level commitment to addressing key inequalities, particularly those experienced by the Section 75 equality groups, and to tracking progress for these groups in relevant PfG population indicators or associated performance indicators, we are concerned that planned actions across the PfG and delivery plans may fall short – including to address key data gaps.

We recommend a timetabled commitment to ensure the progress of equality law reform and to ensure effective equality/ good relations strategies are implemented and updated across the full range of equality grounds.

We welcome the Commitment to strengthen race equality law and to consider proposals to strengthen disability law. We note the absence of an explicit commitment to advance Age-GFS legislation; and the commitment to a limited amendment of FETO. Further, whilst there is a commitment to the continued development, implementation and review of some equality strategies, we note there is no specific reference to the development of a revised Gender Equality Strategy, a new Disability Strategy, nor a Sexual Orientation Strategy.

We recommend a clearer commitment in the PfG (and associated delivery plans) to engage with, and ensure delivery of, international obligations – including the UNCRPD

Whilst we welcome the introductory commitment to comply with international human rights obligations, we note that no actions in the PfG are explicitly linked to ensuring fulfilment of international obligations, or addressing concluding observations.

In the development of the PfG, budget and delivery plans, Departments should ensure compliance with their statutory equality and good relations duties.

We note the commitments in the PfG and the associated EQIA that equality assessments will be contained in the delivery plans. At this stage, there is a limited assessment presented of what the equality impacts of the PfG are considered to be and the delivery plans have not adequately demonstrated their use of equality tools of screening and EQIA.