

**Equality Impact Assessment (including the Rural
Needs Impact Assessment and Children’s Rights
Impact Assessment) for Public Consultation**

on

**The Executive Office’s Budget for
2024–2025**

14 August 2024

Foreword

1. The aim of the Executive Office (TEO) is wellbeing for all through improved relations, outcomes and governance. We do this by:
 - ensuring that the machinery of government works effectively;
 - developing overarching strategic policy frameworks, including the Programme for Government (PfG);
 - developing and delivering programmes which can support those frameworks, including those problems which need a cross-cutting response;
 - engaging internationally; and
 - ensuring we have effective contingency planning and delivery mechanisms.

Overall, we aim to make this a place where people thrive.

Tackling Disadvantage

2. Tackling disadvantage and promoting equality of opportunity are core priorities for the TEO and its Arm's Length bodies (ALBs). This Equality Impact Assessment (EQIA) reflects those priorities and the statutory equality duties that underpin them. Our priorities are also reflected in our responsibility for the Executive's Good Relations strategy, Together: Building a United Community (T:BUC) and its funding programmes. They are also reflected in our co-ordinating responsibilities for equality and human rights and sponsorship of the Equality Commission; in support for minority ethnic people and groups and, increasingly, co-ordination of the Executive's responsibilities for refugees and asylum seekers; as well as in trauma-informed policy development and practical support for Ending Violence Against Women and Girls, the Victims' Payment Scheme for Permanent Disablement for victims and survivors of the Troubles/Conflict, Historical Institutional Abuse redress and the Truth Recovery Programme (for the Mother and Baby Institutions and Magdalene Laundries and Workhouses).

2024-25 Budget Settlement

3. The 2024-25 budget settlement was agreed by the Executive on 25 April 2024. The TEO allocation is set out below:

TEO £000s	Resource	Capital	FTC
Non Earmarked Budget Baseline Position	80,821	-	-
Additional Allocation	1,000	10,000	7,325
	-	-	-
Earmarked (HIA, Victims and Truth Recovery)	100,000	520	
EU Match Funding Peace Plus	1,329		
2024-25 Budget Position	183,150	10,520	7,325

4. The outcome for TEO is significantly below forecast need. It is important to recognise however that no Department has been allocated resources to meet their forecast needs. The settlement for TEO represents:
- For non earmarked Resource DEL: a ‘flat cash’ baseline of £80.8m, rolling forward the opening allocation from 2023-24. The allocation includes an additional £1m (against bids totalling £7.5m) giving a total of £81.8m. This non earmarked resource baseline is some **£2.2m short of the forecast required need**. Challenges facing the Department include pay and price inflation, especially due to the fact that funding has not been increased to reflect the 2023-24 pay settlement, as well as increasing areas of activity for areas of responsibility allocated to the Department;
 - For earmarked Resource DEL Victims Payments/Historical Institutional Abuse/Truth Recovery programmes: an allocation of £100m, **some £28m lower than the forecast requirement**. As noted by the Finance Minister in her Written Statement in April 2024, we shall continue to update forecasts and bid in year when further evidence is available to support the need. It is important for those applying for redress or for Victims’ Payments to be assured that their payments will be made, both now and in the future: this is about the funding arrangements that sit behind the schemes;
 - For Capital DEL: an allocation of £10.25m, **some £4m lower than the forecast requirement**; and,

- For Financial Transactions Capital (FTC): an allocation of £7.3m for capitalised loan interest.

Flat Cash Baseline Budget

5. The 2024-25 baseline is based on the 2023-24 opening baseline. It is however important to note that allocations for programmes such as T:BUC, which had been baselined to other Departments in 2023-24, have now been moved back to TEO. Overall this does not however represent any additionality in funding to the Department.
6. Living within the 2023-24 baseline meant that the Department had to find savings and apply reductions totalling £10m to live within its means. While TEO did manage to live within this reduced budget settlement in 2023-24, this was only possible through reductions to Good Relations funding; an embargo on the creation of new posts or filling of all but business critical vacancies; and a 10% reduction applied for 2023-24 to budgets across the Department and ALBs, with the exception of Victims and Survivors and Urban Villages.
7. Given the flat budget settlement and the increasing forecast costs, it is therefore clear that difficult decisions will continue to be required for TEO to remain within the 2024-25 baseline budget. TEO will however be seeking opportunities to direct resources towards frontline delivery as far as possible, reflecting feedback from the 2023-24 consultation. As will be described later in the EQIA, Ministers have made additional allocations to Good Relations this year, enabling further on-the-ground delivery.

Urgency of Allocating Funding to TEO and ALB Budget Areas

8. Due to operational needs, initial allocations have now been made to business areas and ALBs. TEO is now proceeding to consultation stage. In year monitoring and further internal reallocation decisions will take on board the findings and responses from the public consultations on the EQIA, Rural Needs Impact Assessment and Children's Rights Impact Assessment.

9. DoF commissioned a June Monitoring Round exercise and the Executive has agreed to the findings. TEO requested bids and projected easements from its core business areas and Arm's Length Bodies (ALBs) as part of June monitoring. The outcome is noted at paragraph 17 below.
10. While timescales in an extremely difficult year financially did not afford the opportunity for a full public consultation prior to decisions being made on initial allocations, responses will be considered when decisions are taken later in the year on the allocation of any funding over and above that already assumed in TEO's plans and on internal reallocations. To delay further than this prior to making decisions would risk deeper cuts later in the year. Consultation on the implementation of individual measures will also be undertaken where appropriate. Any possible equality and good relations based impacts of the budget will be re-assessed as part of the monitoring round process during the year.
11. In the event that in-year changes to the allocations result in a substantially different outcome from that set out in this document, further information will be circulated to stakeholders.
12. No allocations have been made to Departments for pay and price inflation, and these costs are expected to be absorbed by the Department and ALBs. This results in a very challenging position and again emphasises the need to continue to seek efficiencies and better ways of working in order to live within our means.
13. We do recognise that while groups across all Section 75 categories may be impacted by the budget, when groups are considered collectively across the nine NICS Departments, some groups may be impacted more than others. These have been highlighted by the Equality Commission as including young people, older people, people with a disability, and women. These groups may be more likely to experience multiple adverse impacts across a range of budget decisions

by different departments, and may be potentially at more risk of substantive cumulative disadvantage than others.

14. TEO has sought to ensure that its constrained budget allocations, even in this difficult budgetary environment, advance equality of opportunity for people from across the full range of equality categories, while endeavouring to avoid creating new or exacerbated inequalities and mitigating any impacts over which it has control.

Equality Implications of TEO's Budget Allocations

15. Executive Departments are collectively facing the most challenging budget in recent history. Bids from Departments totalled £3.2 billion with pressures of over £2 billion in 2024-2025. Every Department will be affected. Inflation has compounded the impact of the reductions imposed by the 2023-24 budget.
16. Given the level of demand on funding across all departments, pressures identified through this monitoring round will be highly dependent on easements arising in other areas. Whilst we have been able to identify some mitigations to reduce the over-commitment, we also have to take into account of new and emerging pressures arising during the course of the year.
17. Bids for Resource DEL funding of totalling £11.5m were submitted to DoF for the June Monitoring Round. This resulted in the Executive allocating £2m on an earmarked basis for Good Relations (£0.5m) and Communities in Transition (£1.5m). Earmarked budget for TEO is mainly for victims related programmes.
18. DoF has advised that there will be a further Monitoring Round in October 2024. This will present a further opportunity to bid for additional funding. Please note that DoF lead on assessment of any potential cross-departmental impact assessment of the budget. This is outside the scope of TEO's authority.

Two Stage Consultation Process

19. The Department has decided that it can best balance the challenges presented by the tight financial budgeting timescales, with its own desire to hold a meaningful consultation, by adopting a two-stage consultation approach.
20. The Department will consult for a 12 week period and will particularly encourage responses within the initial 4 weeks of the consultation period. Views received during this initial period will be used to inform the Department's approach to October Monitoring, as well as for any early mitigations that can be put in place.
21. Responses received between Week 5 and Week 12 of the consultation will be used to consider further mitigation measures, to inform later in-year budget reallocation processes, and to direct any additional funding (or further reductions) that emerge over the course of the financial year, such as during the January Monitoring Round process.
22. TEO is acutely aware of the need to meet our statutory equality duties. This EQIA consultation, and your contributions to it, will help us to analyse how best we can structure our budget to ensure protection of the most vulnerable and to make the biggest impact we can with much more limited resources.

The Equality Impact Assessment Process

23. The process of setting budgets can in some cases have an unintentionally greater impact on some specific Section 75 groups than on others, for example, on males, females, young people or pensioners. In allocating budgets the Department aims to avoid any adverse impacts and, where possible, implement actions to mitigate against specific adverse impacts identified. This EQIA examines the potential equality impacts of TEO's Budget for 2024-25 .
24. Section 75 of the NI Act 1998 requires the Department, in carrying out its functions, to have 'due regard' to the need to promote equality of opportunity between:
- people with different religious beliefs;
 - people from different racial groups;
 - people of different ages;
 - people with different marital status;
 - people with different sexual orientations;
 - men and women generally;
 - people with or without a disability;
 - people with or without dependants; and
 - people with different political opinions.
25. In addition, but without prejudice to the duty above, the Department should also have regard to the desirability of promoting good relations between people with different religious beliefs, different political opinions or from different racial groups.
26. The Disability Discrimination (NI) Order 2006, requires all public authorities in carrying out their functions having due regard to the need to:
- promote positive attitudes towards disabled people; and,
 - encourage participation by disabled people in public life.
27. Equality scheme commitments require public authorities to determine if there are any impacts on equality of opportunity and if there are opportunities to better

promote equality of opportunity between people within the Section 75 equality categories. Where screening would not be an adequate means of gathering the information that is needed to assess the relevant equality impacts or opportunities, the public authority should proceed to carry out an Equality Impact Assessment (EQIA). It is for each Government Department and other public body to reach its own conclusions on screening in light of its particular circumstances.

28. The primary function of an EQIA is to assess whether policy proposals would have a differential impact and in particular, an adverse differential impact on the categories of persons listed in Section 75, and any subgroups within those categories. When conducting an EQIA, the Department acts in accordance with the guidance published by the Equality Commission in February 2005: [‘Section 75 of the Northern Ireland Act 1998: Practical Guidance on Equality Impact Assessment’](#), which recommends that there should be seven steps in the EQIA process:

- Step 1 Defining the aims of the policy
- Step 2 Consideration of available data and research
- Step 3 Assessment of impacts
- Step 4 Consideration of measures which may mitigate any adverse impact and alternative policies which may better achieve the promotion of equality of opportunity
- Step 5 Formal consultation
- Step 6 Decision and publication of the EQIA results
- Step 7 Monitoring for adverse impact

29. In response to this guidance, the Department has examined a number of potential scenarios for the actions required to live within its budget allocation for the 2024-25 financial year, and, following a screening exercise (included as Annex A), has decided to proceed with a full EQIA and consultation process, in order to collate views from interested stakeholders. This document is the draft of the EQIA prior to incorporating the outcomes of a public consultation.

30. Details of how to respond to the EQIA are at the end of this document. To request it in an alternative format please contact:

Reference: 2024-2025 TEO Budget Consultation Responses

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TEO's Financial Position

31. The Resource DEL opening budget position (excluding earmarked funds) for 2024-25 is a flat cash position based on the 2023-24 opening budget position. The opening 2023-24 position for TEO of £75.7m was net of £5.1m budget transfers to other departments. In 2023-24 these amounts were included in other Departments baseline budgets rather than the TEO baseline budget. Overall there is no increase in funding. It is important to take this into consideration when comparing the two years.
32. This approach was different to previous years where the opening budget was gross of these transfers. Had the 2023-24 budget been gross it would have been £80.8m. However, for 2024-25 the opening budget position has reverted back to the previous treatment and therefore the opening baseline is £80.8m.
33. Given the significant challenges facing the department, bids of £7.5m were submitted to DoF at the start of the year. However, TEO only received a general additional allocation of £1m.
34. TEO's resource baseline has therefore effectively been increased by £1m on 2023-24.
35. The 2023-24 opening position necessitated a reduction of £10m to spending plans in order to live within means, as noted in the 2023-24 EQIA. Actions comprised of:
 - £3.5m reductions to Good Relations funding;
 - £2.9m reductions delivered embargo on the creation of new posts or filling of all but business critical vacancies;
 - £3.6m delivered through 10% reduction applied for 2023-24 to budgets across the Department and ALBs, with the exception of Victims and Survivors and Urban Villages.

36. Whilst the department faced significant challenges in 2023-24, through careful management we were able to increase the Good Relations funding by £0.4m. It is important to note however that this is non recurring.
37. For 2024-25, planning assumptions (as advised by DoF) reflect an increase of 4% for pay uplift plus normal pay scale progression if relevant (subject to ongoing negotiations). In addition, forecasts include a 4.2% increase in employers' pension contributions from April 2024. These pay and pension costs are to be subsumed within baseline for the 2024-25 opening budget. This, together with the impact of the 2023-24 pay settlement and increasing costs due to additional activities and inflation, have resulted in a very challenging budget.

Actions Taken to Date

38. To inform the approach we have consulted with all areas where we are aware that expenditure is expected to increase in 2024-25 due to additional activity, as well as with other areas where recurrent pressures arose in 2023-24 and could not be sustained from within a flat cash baseline budget.
39. This has resulted in an overcommitment of £2.2m. The pressure of £2.2m will be addressed through the management of vacancies and other administrative efficiency savings, in addition to the reallocation of any underspends identified during the year.
40. The level of funding available does not allow for the reinstatement of reductions applied in 2023-24 to live within baseline.
41. Ministers have considered options to revisit spending plans in order to seek opportunities to direct further funding for frontline programmes, and to provide options to restore funding to Good Relations. We have considered the approach to resourcing across the Department and set out plans for review, along with examples of how the Department's staff will be used flexibly and potentially be redeployed to meet emerging needs. To that end, we have been able to prioritise

a further £750k from our baseline budget for Good Relations, in addition to which we have obtained £500k in June Monitoring.

Good Relations

42. The budget situation in 2023-24 resulted in decisions by officials on a £3m reduction in Good Relations delivery, split across the District Council Good Relations Programme (DCGRP) (£3m down to £1.6m) and the Central Good Relations Fund (CGRF) (£3m down to £1.4m). However, if we are to provide sustainable, long term solutions to the systemic issues of segregation and ultimately reduce the cost of division, then appropriate funding/investment is required.
43. Since the return of the Executive, Ministers have made clear that they wish to prioritise front-line activity.
44. Independent evaluations and the analysis of feedback from participants indicates that the programmes currently supported through TEO funding are having a significant positive impact on those who take part. Therefore, additional funding is being made available focused on providing resources for more projects on the ground, to enable greater numbers of people from all backgrounds to benefit from these interventions. It will also provide support for the ongoing review of the T:BUC Strategy. Having considered the impacts, Ministers have approved that the additional £750k found within spending plans in 2024-25 be allocated equally between Central and District Good Relations. In addition, the Executive has, through June Monitoring, allocated a further £0.5m to Central Good Relations on an earmarked basis. This means that, having taken account of the feedback to the 2023-24 EQIA consultation, it has been possible to restore £1.25m, providing an additional 36% to the Good Relations programme. Both programmes seek to contribute to the key aims of the current T:BUC Strategy and improve relations between and within communities here.

Central Good Relations Fund (CGRF)

45. In 2023-24 the CGRF delivered 40 projects involving nearly 20,000 participants. An additional allocation of £750k will allow a further 16 projects to be supported, bringing the total to 59 projects.
46. As a result of the significant reductions to the CGRF allocation in 2023-24 the size of the delivery team had been reduced. Notwithstanding the additional funding of £750k in 2024-25 we will maintain this leaner structure of delivery. Further work is underway to identify potential areas of efficiency from an administration perspective.

District Council Good Relations Programme (DCGRP)

47. The District Council Good Relations Programme Action Plans developed by the 11 District Councils contain a range of projects, programmes and events that directly support, and involve the work of the community & voluntary sector. This work directly impacts on people from all backgrounds, section 75 categories, and urban/rural areas.
48. Despite the reductions faced last year, the structure of Good Relations resources across Councils has been maintained, with any additional funding allocated in 2024-25 focused on direct delivery of programmes in local communities.
49. Delivery in 2023-24 totalled 73 programmes with 56,000 participants. Any additional allocation compared to 2023-24 will also leverage additional match funding from councils.
50. The further allocation of £750k will see £250k of match funding provided by councils. In this scenario, it is estimated that a further 30 programmes would be delivered, engaging an additional 25,000 participants. This would bring total programme delivery to over 100 programmes delivered to over 80,000 participants.

Earmarked Funding

51. In terms of Earmarked Resource funds for Victims' Payments, Historical Institutional Abuse (HIA) and the Truth Recovery Programme, an allocation of £100m has been agreed by the Executive on 25 April 2024, rather than the amount requested of £128m.
52. The opening budget position in 2023-24 was £100m, but funding was surrendered in year due to complexities and the pace of award determinations being slower than anticipated. There is no risk to funds not being made available should demand increase at a faster pace and DoF have confirmed that pressures in this area will be prioritised. In addition, DoF is allowing TEO to retain any receipts received from Institutions in respect of their contribution to HIA redress, which in turn is being used for services and support.
53. Earmarked funds will be managed and monitored closely throughout the year in order to highlight need at the earliest possible opportunity. TEO will continue to pool this allocation across the three areas, to allow for volatility given the demand led nature of the Schemes.

Other HMT Earmarked funding

Windsor Framework

54. In addition to the funding in the opening budget TEO have also received funding for the Windsor framework for the Dedicated Mechanism and to establish the TEO Dedicated team with overarching responsibility for engaging with the Dedicated Mechanism Unit and discharging the Article 2(1) commitments, both on its own and in conjunction with Articles 13(2), (3) and (4), and Annex 1 Windsor Framework. The team will have a central co-ordinating role in enhancing the ability of both TEO and the NICS generally to discharge correctly

the equality and human rights obligations as set out in the Articles and the Annex of the Windsor Framework.

Capital

55. Whilst TEO has been allocated £10.5m against a requirement of £14.3m which includes £0.5m for earmarked spend, there is potential to revise the timings for expenditure and there may be an option for in-year bids if necessary.

Key Principles for TEO's Strategic Approach

NICS Departments' Equality Obligations

56. Equality issues are central to TEO's core strategic functions. The Equality Commission has consistently advocated for an expansive definition of the concept of "policy" in their guidance for public authorities on Section 75.
57. This approach has been integrated into Para 4.1 of [TEO's Equality Scheme](#), which states: "In the context of Section 75, 'policy' is very broadly defined and it covers the ways in which we carry out or propose to carry out our functions in relation to this jurisdiction."
58. By treating each year's budget as a policy and screening it, TEO seeks to apply the ECNI's own interpretation of the statutory duty and to let this process influence its budgetary decisions.
59. All departments continue to operate in an environment of one-year budget settlements. This has had an impact on all TEO's public expenditure decisions. The budgeting process and the consideration of allocation of funding to carry out these functions begins, at a high level, prior to the beginning of a new financial year.
60. TEO budget areas submit 'High Level Impact Assessments' (HLIAs) towards the beginning of the budgetary cycle for the year and again as part of the monitoring round process. These documents require TEO budget managers to assess any potential Section 75, Good Relations, Rural Needs or Children's Rights impacts of their budget bids/easements.
61. ECNI guidance also recognises that policies are dynamic and that the Section 75 tools should be used dynamically in tandem. Budgeting is an iterative process, which spans the course of the financial year.

62. A public consultation is conducted for all individual TEO policies that are 'screened in'. For example, [TEO's Strategic Framework to End Violence Against Women and Girls and Foundational Action Plan](#) was published for public consultation in July 2023. This included the publication of an EQIA document.
63. When an initial budget allocation is received by TEO during a financial year, TEO attempts to consolidate learnings from EQIA consultations carried out during previous budgetary cycles. It then carries out a public consultation and shows 'due regard' to responses from stakeholders when allocating the scarce resources to TEO programmes, activities and expense categories.
64. However, the reality is that 2024-25 continues to represent a very difficult challenge for the NI Block as a whole and for TEO. In recent years, TEO had not previously had to consider the nature and extent of cuts such as were required by the 2023-24 and 2024-25 budget.

Budgetary Challenges Faced in 2023-24 and 2024-25

65. In previous years, the challenge was not being able to take forward all the developments identified as priorities; in 2023-24 it was having to cut back on existing programmes and deciding where the reductions needed to fall. As such, previous analyses were undertaken in a different environment and were of limited relevance to the policy challenges now facing the Department.
66. Instead, difficult choices were informed and mitigated using feedback from the 2023-24 Budget Allocation EQIA and the report on its outcomes - see [2023-24 Budget Allocation EQIA and the report on its outcomes](#). The feedback from the public consultations on the [Report and Recommendations on the Impacts of the Children's Rights Impact Assessment and the Rural Needs Impact Assessment](#) were also integrated into budgetary reallocation decisions.

67. The information on the impact of 2023-24 is being taken into account, very specifically in the ongoing discussions relating to 2024-25 funding, given the similarities between last year's and this year's budgetary challenges.

Prioritisation of TEO Budget Allocation

68. By definition, TEO's functions are Executive priorities and typically there was a reason for Ministers choosing to locate them in a central Department. Living within budget will continue to mean making very difficult decisions between areas of expenditure, all of which we should regard as important and necessary.
69. TEO proposes to adopt the following key principles as it strives to achieve the necessary reductions in 2024-2025 and to focus the available funding on the areas of greatest priority. Specifically, TEO aims to:
- (a) meet its statutory and contractual requirements;
 - (b) promote social, environmental and economic wellbeing for the people who live here;
 - (c) protect the needs of the most vulnerable people who depend on our funding; and
 - (d) live within its budget.

Analysis of Impacts: Core Department

Consideration of Available Data and Research

70. In assessing the impact of the budget against obligations under Section 75 of the Northern Ireland Act 1998, the Department concludes that there is evidence of some differential impact in respect of some Section 75 categories. Impacts have been considered against the backdrop of available data and the stated policy intent to determine whether differential impacts identified are adverse. Where this is the case, consideration will be given to potential mitigating factors.

71. Impacts have been considered against the backdrop of available data, as derived from:

- [Report and Recommendations of the Consultation on the TEO Budget Allocation for 2023-2024 - Equality Impact Assessment;](#)
- [Report on the Outcomes of the Children's Rights Impact Assessment and Rural Needs Impact Assessment for TEO's Spending Plans for 2023-24;](#)
- The TEO Business Improvement Plan 2024-26;
- 2021 Census;
- Northern Ireland Statistics and Research Agency statistics;
- Together: Building a United Community (T:BUC) programme data;
- Central Good Relations Fund (CGRF) data;
- Business Consultancy Services (BCS) review of Minority Ethnic Development Fund (MEDF);
- Crisis Fund data;
- District Council Good Relations Programme (DCGRP) data;
- Planned Interventions Programme (PIP) data;
- Racial Equality Indicators Report: 2014 – 2021;
- Good Relations Indicators Report 2020;
- Refugee Integration Strategy EQIA;
- NI Safe Community Survey 2019-20;
- Draft EQIA screening – Victims and Survivors Strategy;
- T:BUC headline actions data;

- Draft Ending Violence against Women and Girls EQIA.
- Equality Commission for Northern Ireland – Response to the Executive’s consultation on a Programme for Government Draft Outcomes Framework:
<https://www.equalityni.org/ECNI/media/ECNI/Consultation%20Responses/2021/NIO-PfGOutcomesFramework.pdf>
- Equality Commission for Northern Ireland – Briefing Note: Concerns regarding cumulative equality impacts of proposed Departmental Budget allocations for 2023-24:
<https://www.equalityni.org/ECNI/media/ECNI/Publications/Delivering%20Equality/Budget2023-24-ECNIbriefing-Sept23.pdf>
- The Executive Office – Section 75 – Equality Screening Guidance and Form:
<https://www.executiveoffice-ni.gov.uk/sites/default/files/consultations/execoffice/equality-screening-race-relations-order.pdf>

72. The analysis has focussed on those areas of substantial expenditure from which cash releasing savings could be made in 2024-25. For this reason, areas which are primarily based in staff and premises costs (eg Ministerial and Executive support, international relations, civil contingencies) have not been included. However, there is detail provided in the conclusions and mitigations section about how we will focus on delivery and ensure TEO’s structures match that aim.
73. Areas where there is a statutory requirement (eg meeting the Department’s obligations on equality or health and safety) have not been analysed, nor have those areas (eg HIA, Victims’ Payments for Permanent Disablement) for which earmarked budget is received to meet statutory obligations and which are unaffected by the current exercise. Data from Urban Villages was considered but comes from a variety of project types and cannot be broken down for this type of analysis.

74. TEO continues to work together along with its Arm’s Length Bodies to understand the impact of the budget for 2024-25 outcome on service delivery, the potential impacts of the policy on the various Section 75 groups and how any impacts could be mitigated.
75. However, the Department has also concluded that there is not enough sufficient robust data to determine impact on all Section 75 groups. The services provided by the Department are generally universal in nature and provide benefit to all citizens. It is therefore difficult to assess the impact of service reductions on Section 75 groups. Consultation on the 2023-24 EQIA yielded further information on impacts and the Department will again seek to gather further information on potential impacts through consultation.

Assessment of Impacts

Section 75 Category	Details of Impact
Religious belief	<p>An analysis of the information held by TEO indicates that any reduction in budget is likely to have a negative impact on good relations between people of different religious belief, political opinion or racial group as building relations between these groups is the key purpose of the funding programmes, T:BUC Strategy and District Councils Good Relations Programme.</p> <p>Figures indicate that a greater percentage of people who are Catholic benefit from participation in CGRF (45.2%/10,353 participants CNR, 42.5% 9,736 PUL) and Planned Interventions Programme (over 80% CNR) projects than might be expected based on the NI population. For the DCGRP, it is estimated that just under 40%/~40,000 of participants are from a PUL background with a further 40%~40,000 from a CNR background.</p>
Political opinion	<p>Political opinion may relate closely to religious belief and consequently may face the same challenges as in Religious Belief above.</p> <p>An analysis of the information held by TEO indicates that any reduction in budget is likely to have a negative impact on good relations between people of different religious belief, political opinion or racial group as building relations between these groups is the key purpose of the funding programmes / T:BUC Strategy.</p>
Racial group	<p>An analysis of the information held by TEO indicates that any reduction in budget is likely to have a negative impact on good relations between people of different religious belief, political opinion or racial group, as building relations between these groups is the key purpose of the funding programmes / T:BUC Strategy.</p>

The Central Good Relations Fund attracts a much larger percentage of participants from a minority ethnic background than would be reasonable to anticipate based on NI's demographic profile. In 2022-23 it was estimated around 2,825 participants came from an ethnic minority background.

In 2021-22, data for the DCGRP suggests that 88% of participants were from a white background, indicating that a significant number of participants are from a minority ethnic background.

The Minority Ethnic Development Fund (circa £1.2m per annum) provides support for voluntary and community organisations working with and representing minority ethnic people and groups. The Crisis Fund (circa £200k per annum) provides small sums of money at key moments for minority ethnic people and migrant workers, such as after losing work, reduced hours, or family breakdown to provide support for those at risk of destitution. Together they are the only direct funding schemes to support implementation of the Racial Equality Strategy for Northern Ireland. Evidence shows that this section 75 category is growing rapidly. On Census Day 2021, 3.4% of the population, or 65,600 people, belonged to minority ethnic groups. This is around double the 2011 figure (1.8% – 32,400 people) and four times the 2001 figure (0.8% – 14,300 people). Note that it is widely recognised that census figures undercount the minority ethnic group population.

We are aware of specific risks to refugee and migrant women in relation to EVAWG.

Age

The age profile of CGRF participants indicates that approx. 44.7% are under 18. Across all areas of the programme, approx. 10,000 children and young people participated in 2022-23. Given the high proportion of CGRF funding that is allocated to projects that directly support children and young people, any cut to the CGRF would have a more significant and adverse impact on this S75 group than on others.

The Planned Intervention Programme is for children and young people from 10 up to the age of 25 (circa 1,300 people), however the outcomes delivered by the programme impact on people of all ages by addressing anti-social behaviour and community tensions.

A third of participants in the District Council Good Relations Programme are 18 or under (circa 35,000 people).

Since the T:BUC Camps programme began in 2015-16, over 750 Camps have been delivered to over 26,000 young people between the ages of 11-19. Not funding the T:BUC Camps Programme would have an adverse impact on Children and Young People. The latest outcomes data shows that having taken part in a Camp:

- 97% had made new friends with someone from a different religious/community background.

	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • 87% felt more favourable towards people from a different religious/community background. • 86% felt more favourable towards people from a different ethnic background. <p>In addition, 98% felt a personal benefit from taking part in the Camp e.g. increased confidence, new skills, participation which improves the wellbeing of the young people.</p> <p>There are currently 37 T:BUC Camps Good Relations Ambassadors who are midway through their Ambassadors Programme. Withdrawing funding would prevent them from completing their programme. They would be unable to complete the OCN qualification they are working towards.</p> <p>The EVAWG Strategy will consider risks identified as more prevalent among older and younger people from VAWG, including financial abuse of the elderly and online abuse of young people.</p> <p>Individuals accessing services through VSS are predominantly older, with victims and survivors over the age of 56 making up:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • 75% of clients receiving Persistent Pain Framework support; • 66% of those accessing support through the Victims Support Programme or PEACE IV, and • 59% of those receiving support through the VSS Individual Needs Programme.
Marital status	At this time there is no evidence to indicate that the budget allocation would negatively impact this Section 75 category.
Sexual orientation	At this time there is no evidence to indicate that the budget allocation would negatively impact this Section 75 category.
Gender (men and women generally)	<p>Gender violence is more prevalent and the impacts are more severe among women and girls – 79% of all victims of sexual offences recorded by PSNI were female (Trends in Police Recorded Crime in Northern Ireland), 68% of victims of domestic abuse crimes were female and a domestic abuse incident was reported to the PSNI every 16 minutes in 2021-22. Any reduction of funding to the EVAWG programme would result in negative impacts to women and girls. The programme has also been asked to act intersectionally, and impacts on women and girls in all other Section 75 groups have been identified and will be addressed within the programme.</p> <p>While the CGRF is open to all, data for 2022-23 indicates that 52% (online questionnaires) and 55% (hard copy questionnaires) of participants were female and 44% (hard copy questionnaires) and 47% (online questionnaires) were male. For PIP, in 2021-22, 59% of participants were male. Latest figures show 58% of participants in the DCGRP were female.</p> <p>61% of victims and survivors receiving support for the Bereaved from VSS are females.</p>

Disability (with or without)

People with a disability face significant challenges and are often within the most disadvantaged and excluded sections of society. Cuts to funding are likely to have a particularly adverse impact on this group who may benefit from participation in CGRF projects that provide opportunities for inclusion and to build relations with different others while promoting respect, tolerance, and inclusion. In 2022-23, 13% - 516 (hard copy questionnaires) and 16% - 439 (online questionnaires) between 6,000-7,000 of CGRF participants had a disability or illness.

The latest outcomes show 14% of participants in DCGRP have a disability. This is a substantial percentage when compared to other programmes and removal of the programme would have a negative effect on the general population, the impact on the disabled community could be disproportionately negative.

The EVAWG Call for Views responses quoted rates of 1:2 D/deaf and disabled women suffering gender violence, including specific risks from carers.

Dependants (with or without)

The presence of children or other dependents can make it more difficult for women to leave a violent home.

Transgenerational trauma has been highlighted for victims and survivors, but the Department's supports for this are excluded from reductions by virtue of protection of the VSS budget and the ring-fenced nature of support for HIA and Truth Recovery Programme victims-survivors.

Analysis of impacts: Arm's Length Bodies

Circa 40% of TEO's non earmarked budget is spent by its arm's length or sponsored and analogous bodies (ALBs):

- Commissioner for Survivors of Institutional Childhood Abuse
- Commissioner for Victims and Survivors
- Community Relations Council
- Equality Commission for NI
- Historical Institutional Abuse Redress Board
- Maze/Long Kesh Development Corporation
- North South Ministerial Council Joint Secretariat (North)
- Northern Ireland Judicial Appointments Commission
- Office of the Commissioner for Public Appointments for NI
- Office of the Attorney General for NI
- Strategic Investment Board
- Victims and Survivors Service
- Victims' Payments Board

76. The following section provides a summary of major potential equality impacts on the Department's ALBs. This was based on a request to model the impact of opening budget allocations for 2024-25 and returns provided as part of the June Monitoring Round Process. In the interests of clarity, a summary is provided here, but more detailed information is available on request. Opportunities for generating additional income/ potential revenue raising were investigated by a DoF led exercise in June 2024. No significant income opportunities were identified by within TEO core business areas or in its ALBs.

- The **Equality Commission** provides services across all Section 75 groups. While their service provision is open to all, uptake will often be by the groups most in need. It is the groups who more often face discrimination or key inequalities that in many cases will be differentially and more negatively impacted by ongoing funding constraints – people with disabilities, particularly learning disabilities, people from a range of minority ethnic

groups; including Newcomers, older people, children, LGBTQ+ people, women and people with caring responsibilities. Across the equality groups, people in or at risk of poverty are likely to be among those most impacted.

- There will also be examples of sub-groups within categories and in relation to particular areas, for example in education, pupils entitled to free schools meals, particularly boys, including those who are from a Protestant community background; carers; single parents - disproportionately female; women and girls who are the majority of those subject to violence and abuse. The Commission has identified Travellers as a significantly disadvantaged group across all areas of life and government service provision.
- ECNI's discrimination advice and support is more often sought on the grounds of disability (50% enquiries) and sex (20% enquiries), particularly harassment and pregnancy/maternity, but also on the grounds of race, religion and sexual orientation. The draft budget would therefore have a disproportionate impact in these areas.
- ECNI's work to modernise and improve the efficiency and effectiveness of the equality framework is currently centred on securing improved race equality law; protection from hate crime; and implementing gender pay reporting. In addition, ECNI's wide-ranging work to inform the development and delivery of a range of TEO equality and DfC social strategies and wider policy initiatives (NI Skills Strategy; DfC Disability Employment Strategy; Anti-bullying in schools etc) has particular benefits for people from across a range of minority ethnic groups. The continuation of a flat cash budget would therefore have a disproportionate impact in these areas.
- ECNI have general duties and educational and advisory functions stated in Fair Employment (School Teachers) Act (NI) 2022 (FETO). Due to the FETO, ECNI will see an increase in registrations and requests for information from schools.

- ECNI will therefore need to establish:
 - i. A programme of awareness raising of these statutory requirements and expectations on school employers.
 - ii. A support framework for schools to provide ongoing advice and training support to comply with duties. Funding will allow ECNI to provide specialist advice to schools. This includes guidance on religion based Genuine Occupational Requirements (GORs), where a school might declare that a particular teaching post must be held by a person who holds a particular religious belief. ECNI will be required to draft guidance on employment practices and specifics around the FETO duties and create specific template advice/policies.
 - iii. adequately resourced administrative capacity to fulfil annual monitoring returns and 3 yearly Article 55 reviews processing and reporting needs. This funding has been flagged as vital in enabling ECNI to fulfil its general duties and educational and advisory functions stated in FETO. The employment relationships within the education sector are complex and governed by Education Orders.

- The 2022 Act creates new legal duties on ECNI who have sought resources to deliver these new statutory duties. ECNI is presently subject to a legal challenge for failure to properly advise and enforce on equality and budgetary matters which lie within its current remit. There is a significant risk to ECNI and TEO for failing to ensure the Fair Employment (School Teachers) Act (Northern Ireland) 2022 is implemented smoothly and effectively. There is currently no monitoring data in respect of the community background of teachers. A higher proportion of teachers are female and therefore more women than men will be impacted, although ECNI have highlighted impact across Section 75 groups.

- The **Community Relations Council** would be affected across all areas of its service delivery, including grants to front line work, an area that CRC has tried to protect as far as possible up until this point. Ongoing funding

constraints will need to be addressed by managing the number, depth and scale of Good Relations projects supported to deliver the objectives of T:BUC impacting the capacity to achieve outcomes in the respect / shared space / reconciliation and other identified indicators in the Outcomes Delivery Plan and T:BUC strategy. The number of participants delivering on the aims and objectives of the Together: Building a United Community strategy within their local communities will be impacted as a result of ongoing budget constraints. This is at a time when community tensions (such as those in Ardoyne) have once again begun to increase.

- Continuation of the 2024-25 baseline will present a significant risk to an already small team in terms of capacity, service delivery, human resource management and other challenges.
- In the 2024-25 EQIA, the Community Relations Council highlighted that it delivers a Core Funding Scheme that supports 61 jobs and core operating costs of groups engaged in Good Relations work. The Community Relations Council also delivers four other funding schemes to support Good Relations projects. These are the Community Relations/Cultural Diversity small grant scheme, Pathfinder scheme, Media scheme, and Publications Scheme. In addition, CRC administers the North Belfast Strategic Good Relations Programme which also supports 19 jobs. This Programme is a Ministerial initiative that CRC has administered on behalf of TEO in recent years. In total these two schemes support 80 jobs, almost 200 projects and thousands of participants in programmes each year ranging from anti-sectarian and racism programmes, cultural diversity projects and programmes aimed at the reduction of interface conflict particularly at flash points during key times of the year. As far as possible, CRC wishes to protect these posts from the worst impact of the cuts because they are the infrastructure on which future work can be built when the financial situation improves.
- The Community Relations Council highlighted the positive impact that its budget delivered in relation to the religion, political opinion and race Section 75 groups, as well as on Children and Young People and rural communities.

- The **Commission for Victims and Survivors** serves victims and survivors in each of the 9 categories under Section 75 and, if not able to fulfil its statutory duties, all will be negatively affected.
- Likewise, impacts on workshops, audits and public appointments in general brought about by spending reductions in the **Office of the Commissioner for Public Appointments** may impact all section 75 groups equally as appointment is based strictly on merit.
- **Victims and Survivors Service** supports victims and survivors across all nine categories under Section 75 and, if not able to meet its strategic objectives, all will be negatively affected. Its ability to improve the health and wellbeing of victims and survivors will also be negatively affected.
- Reductions to live within baseline budget for the Attorney General for NI can only be made to salaries as GAE is for contractual payments. Reducing staffing levels will impact will on the Attorney General's (AG) ability to deliver on her statutory functions and will have a read across all the Section 75 categories, e.g. impacting on the AG's ability to deliver on her protective function under the Mental Capacity Act (her power to refer deprivation of liberty cases to the Review Tribunal). The power conferred on the AG is a statutory measure designed to ensure equality of opportunity. If the AG is unable to consider cases thoroughly or speedily, the impact will predominantly be on people with disability and older people.
- Failure to fill judicial vacancies will in turn will add to the backlog of cases to be heard with particular pressures in the Crown Court. This will impinge on the access to justice and in particular backlogs in tribunals will hit the most vulnerable in our community including those with a disability and with mental health issues.
- The principal aim of the **Commissioner for Survivors of Institutional Childhood Abuse (COSICA)** is to represent the interests of victims and survivors, advising on matters concerning their interests of victims and survivors; encouraging the provision and coordination of services and where appropriate identifying gaps; monitoring specialist facilities for victims and survivors; and monitoring and publicising the Historical Institutional Abuse Redress Board. The budget allocation is 72% staffing

and 28% other costs to include all other services. Maintaining the budget at 2023-24 the baseline would directly impact on staffing which would detrimentally affect services provided to victims and survivors. Early evidence has shown that contact to the office is predominately made by male callers. Many victims and survivors who would have been eligible for redress may have since passed due to old age and ill health. The remaining eligible cohort are estimated to be in general over sixty years of age. Due to the neglect and abuse suffered, many of the victims experience socio-economic challenges which have led to poor health, addictions, lack of employment and mental health problems, with implications for the incidence of disability.

- The NI Judicial Appointments Commission (NIJAC) pointed to benefits across a range of s75 groups due to increased confidence in justice related outcomes. Maintaining the baseline budget at 2023-24 levels for the NI Judicial Appointments Commission would require NIJAC to find approximately £148k of savings to work within the TEO funding level. NIJAC has managed to secure £38k from the VPB ring-fenced monies to run two schemes in 2024-25 but with £110k still required the only significant cost reductions would come from running judicial recruitment schemes and even then also rely on savings arising from staff vacancies. With NIJAC expected to be at a full complement of 12.6 WTE by 1 September 2024 only a severe reduction in the appointment scheme plans in 2024-25 from 9 to 2 would bridge the funding gap. This reduction would render NIJAC effectively non-operational for most of the year.
- **Maze Long Kesh Development Corporation** highlighted the current budget allocation will have a negative impact on the 'Political Opinion' s75 group as the Corporation will be unable to fulfil its statutory object to secure the regeneration of Maze Long Kesh; together with Business Plan objectives relating to fulfilment of its statutory duties including with respect to Health & Safety and security, and to maintain the heritage assets. These include the former prison buildings; H Block, Hospital, Admin Building,

Chapel, etc, and the WW2 Hangars (all listed buildings). The Corporation will not be able to keep the site safe and secure and fulfil its potential of bringing tangible and sustainable benefits for all and promoting peace building and reconciliation within the proposed budgetary constraints.

Rural Needs Impact Assessment Consultation (RNIA)

84. A Rural Needs Impact Assessment (RNIA) has also been published in order to assess the impact of the budget on rural communities. This has been included as Annex B and details identified potential impacts and mitigations.
85. A separate consultation has been published to collate views on the RNIA.
86. Potential impacts identified included in TEO's RNIA 2023-24 consultation responses received last year focused on the nature of budget proposals by TEO, the downstream effects on Good Relations funding, and the possibility of this having adverse impacts on rural communities.
87. Mitigations identified included: proportionate consideration being given to look at ways to maintain delivery and mitigate costs by the programme managers themselves.
88. Ensuring fair rural outcomes was part of the budgeting review process. TEO is in close contact with councils and ALBs and a review of delivery mechanisms has been driven by this.
89. Information has been gathered via stakeholders, the main 'TEO Budget 2024-25' EQIA consultation, NISRA mapping and statistics. Councils, TEO programme and community organisations can tailor any delivery to that which they consider is best suited to their own area, rural or otherwise.

Children's Rights Impact Assessment Consultation (CRIA)

90. A Children's Rights Impact Assessment Consultation (CRIA) has also been completed in order to assess the impact of the draft budget on rural communities. This has been included as Annex C, which details identified potential impacts and mitigations.
91. It is the groups who more often face discrimination or key inequalities that in many cases will be differentially and more negatively impacted by cuts - people

with disabilities, particularly learning disabilities, people from a range of minority ethnic groups; including Newcomers, older people, and including CYP, women and girls and people with caring responsibilities. Across the equality grounds, people in or at risk of poverty are amongst those most impacted. Many of these groups are Children and Young People.

92. There will also be examples of sub-groups within categories and in relation to particular areas, for example in education, pupils entitled to free schools meals, particularly boys, including carers; single parents - disproportionately female; women and girls who are the majority of those subject to violence and abuse.
93. Mitigations identified include revisiting budget allocations during the financial year, particularly during the Monitoring Round process. Funding may be reallocated to other priority areas depending on relative spend levels in each TEO business area.
94. Reductions in Good Relations work, affecting the Central Good Relations Fund and District Council Good Relations Programme this year, continuing 2023-24 reductions of £3.5m, have been offset by mitigations of £1.25m. This is likely to mean continued significant reductions in these programmes compared to 2022-23, although there has been some mitigation.
95. Note that TEO has also considered children's rights under the Section 75 'Age' category in our EQIA.
96. The rights of children and young people are routinely considered in the development of most Departmental operational and policy responses. For example, recent work on refugee and asylum seekers incorporated a safeguarding review in order to ensure that the needs of this group were considered as part of the overall policy formulation.

Consideration of Women's Issues and Gender Issues

97. Particular attention was drawn in the responses to last year's EQIA consultation to women's issues and gender issues. These have been considered under the Section 75: 'Men and Women Generally' Section 75 category.
98. The Department for Communities has lead responsibility for the Gender Equality Strategy. This may include an action relating to gender based budgeting and a gender budgeting pilot. The Gender Equality Strategy will be subject to Executive approval. The Executive Office is not currently undertaking any gender based budgeting pilots; however TEO does have a number of policies and programmes that strive to improve the lives and opportunities of women and girls here.
99. These include a draft [Strategic Framework to End Violence Against Women and Girls and Action Plan](#) which highlights the need for better prevalence data about violence against women and girls and the need for effective mainstreaming of the issue in policy and budgeting across Departments.
100. Other areas where budget resources are being directed for 2024-25 and which have a positive impact on women and girls include:
- [Period Products \(Free Provision\) Act \(Northern Ireland\) 2022](#)
 - The [Executive Office Racial Equality Strategy 2015-2025](#) commits Departments to various key outcomes which impact the Minority Ethnic Communities here. The strategy recognizes that women and girls can be some of the most heavily impacted within these communities and in many cases remain the least visible. Some key areas include support for local groups through the Minority Ethnic Development Fund (MEDF); the review of the Race Relations Order; and progress on ethnic equality monitoring including in ensuring that census results are correctly interpreted.
 - Under the [PEACEPLUS Programme](#) TEO will be the Accountable Department for Local Community Peace Action Plans and Building Positive Relations projects. This is a significant investment in communities here and potential applicants have been strongly encouraged to give special

consideration to under-represented groups, including women, when developing their application.

101. The [Urban Villages Initiative](#) is a key action within the Executive's [Together: Building a United Community](#) Strategy (T:BUC). It is designed to improve good relations outcomes and to help develop thriving places where there has previously been a history of deprivation and community tension. To date this has focused on five areas spanning Belfast and Derry/Londonderry. Projects supported by Urban Villages Initiative include a range of projects designed to address inequality for Women and Girls.

Learnings from the 2023-24 Report and Recommendations on the EQIA for the Executive Office's Spending Plans for 2023-2024

103. A public consultation was carried out for the prior year 2023-24 budget in which TEO faced a similarly constrained budget position. Learnings from these consultations responses are relevant to the 2024-25 process and are contained in the [Report and Recommendations on the EQIA for the Executive Office's Spending Plans](#).
104. Many consultation responses did recognise and agree that unfortunately TEO had few options, given the budget situation at that time in 2023-24. Others questioned why the District Council Good Relations Fund (DCGRF) and Central Good Relations Fund (CGRF) had to bear the brunt of the budget cuts, given the positive impact that they were having on people's lives and on Good Relations in their local areas.
105. Councils tended to take the view that Good Relations funding creates conditions that save money in other areas of public purse – e.g., around cultural identity, bonfires, racial equality etc.
106. Councils also noted that the District Council Good Relations funding reductions would have a wider impact on council strategies and action plans such as their Corporate and Community Plans, as well as on Leisure, Arts and Culture etc. One council noted the impact of the loss of match funding.

107. Victims' groups and bodies welcomed the earmarked funding for their areas.

Consideration of Mitigations

108. The impact of the budget allocation for 2024-25 on the Department is extremely challenging. The promotion of wellbeing for all its stakeholders is the key mission for TEO, and attempts will be made to mitigate the impact where possible, although funding reductions will inevitably have significant impacts on service delivery. The Department will seek to ensure that its proposed budget allocations mitigate the effect on service delivery and are applied as far as possible in a manner that reduces the disproportionate impact on one Section 75 category over another.

109. The Department has identified the following potential areas for mitigation.

- a. streamlining administrative arrangements allows more funding to be released to the front line. As noted above, controls have been introduced on staffing. A programme of work is underway to review areas such as grants administration and vouching and verification arrangements;
- b. Ministers have tasked the Department with supporting delivery of Executive priorities. Proposals for a Reform and Delivery Unit to drive transformation are with Ministers, including on ensuring that investment is as impactful on outcomes for citizens as possible;
- c. 'earmarking' funding for areas where there is a statutory responsibility to fund programmes relating to victims and survivors. These include the Victims' Payment Scheme for Permanent Disablement for victims of the Troubles, Historical Institutional Abuse redress and the Truth Recovery Programme (for the Mother and Baby Institutions and Magdalene Laundries and Workhouses);
- d. seeking to protect the most vulnerable people with whom TEO works;
- e. prioritising projects for funding where the safety of a group is at risk or there is risk of civic disorder;
- f. protecting where possible funding, which is matched or releases further resources, e.g., the Department's contribution to the Peace programmes;

- g. working with the Department's ALB Forum on the potential to reduce administration costs and duplication, to release funding for priority outcomes; and
- h. working with other organisations in the public, private, and voluntary sectors to identify alternative sources of support.

Conclusions

110. This EQIA document has set out an analysis of TEO's financial situation; information on the resulting equality impacts on which we will welcome comments and supplementary information; and the principles and mitigations we can apply in making what are extremely difficult decisions in a very challenging fiscal environment. The latter include seeking to protect the most vulnerable people with whom the Department works, doing all that the Department itself can do to reduce costs, and the extent to which TEO investment helps to leverage other funds.

111. As set out in Paras 68 and 69, taking account of the impacts and mitigations identified and applying these to the Department's work areas, the Department's provisional analysis has led TEO to propose the following key principles as it strives to achieve the necessary reductions in 2024-2025 and to focus the available funding on the areas of greatest priority. Specifically, TEO aims to:

- (a) meet its statutory and contractual requirements;
- (b) promote social, environmental and economic wellbeing for the people who live here;
- (c) protect the needs of the most vulnerable people who depend on our funding; and
- (d) live within its budget.

112. Limited funding means that scarce financial resources will inevitably need to be prioritised. Feedback from the Departmental Board, TEO business areas, DoF where appropriate, and the EQIA consultation will be used to allocate funding between TEO activities. The EQIA will be re-visited during the financial year and updated to reflect changing priorities and any potential availability of

reallocated funding, whether these arise through the central DoF led monitoring round process, or through internal reallocations with the Department during the year.

113. Taking account of the impacts and mitigations identified, continuing actions taken to live within baseline during 2023-24 and applying these to the Department's work areas, the Department's provisional analysis would lead to the following measures:

- a. continuing the moratorium on filling vacancies and new posts (other than in exceptional circumstances). In addition, we will continue to take forward a series of actions on reviewing processes, challenging traditional ways of doing things, and other measures to reduce costs.
- b. continuing the 2023-24 10% top-slicing of the Department and ALBs (other than VSS);
- c. maintaining support for particularly vulnerable groups through the Victims and Survivors budget and VSS, and the Crisis Fund (supporting destitute people), and limiting impact on other programmes working with vulnerable communities;
- d. providing an additional £1.25m of funding to Good Relations programmes.

114. The Department will begin the year with a budget overcommitment of £2.2m, to be managed to zero during the year through efficiency savings and identification of easements in year.

Consultation, Publication and Decision

115. The Department is committed to seeking the views of those who are affected by the decisions that it will make in relation to its budget reductions. We are keen to hear from individuals and organisations about their views on the equality implications of the decisions being made and about any mitigations that the

Department could put in place to address what will undoubtedly be the adverse impacts of a reduction of this size.

116. TEO will consider the need for any further mitigating actions in light of responses received during the consultation. Promotion of equality of opportunity and the protection of services to vulnerable groups will be a key consideration in the Department's final Budget decisions.

Consultation Period

117. The Department has decided that it can best balance the challenges presented by financial timescales, with its own desire to hold a meaningful consultation, by adopting a two-stage approach.

118. The Department will consult for a 12-week period. The Department will particularly encourage responses within the initial four weeks of the consultation period. Views received during this time will be used to inform the Department's internal reallocations of funds to its business areas within TEO and its ALBs as well as bids and allocations in October Monitoring. Responses received between Week 5 and Week 12 of the consultation will be used to consider further mitigation measures, to inform in-year budget reallocation processes, and to direct any additional funding (or further reductions) that emerge over the course of the financial year, such during later Monitoring rounds.

Consultation Method

119. The Department will publish this EQIA on its website, alerting its list of consultees to the publication. The departmental consultation list has been brought up to date in advance of this exercise to ensure that it covers organisations that we are aware are active across the range of functions now performed by TEO. The Department will attempt to facilitate requests for alternative formats and for more direct stakeholder engagement where possible. A consultation questionnaire has been developed to encourage the expression of views across a few key areas. This can be accessed through Citizen Space at:

[Consultation on the Executive Office Budget Allocation 2024- 2025 - NI Direct - Citizen Space](#)

<https://consultations.nidirect.gov.uk/teo/teo-budget-2024-2025-equality-impact-assessment-co/>

Consultation Questions

1. Are you responding on behalf of an organisation or as an individual?
 2. Do you agree that TEO has gathered the necessary Section 75 data to inform its decisions around the allocation of its budget?
 3. Are there any adverse impacts in relation to any of the Section 75 equality categories that have not been identified?
 4. Please state what action you think could be taken to avoid new or exacerbated inequalities.
 5. Do you agree with TEO's assessment on budget allocations? Yes/No (and please provide some additional information as to why).
 6. What impact did the 2023-24 budget have on any TEO funded service delivery that your organisation is involved in?
 7. Do you have any other comments you would like to add about this consultation?
 8. Do you have any comments you would like to add about the Rural Needs Impact Assessment (RNIA) consultation (Annex B)?
 9. Do you have any comments you would like to add about the Children's Rights Impact Assessment (CRIA) consultation (Annex C)?
120. Replies should be sent by 13 September 2024 (for the first phase- Wks 1-4) and/or 08 November 2024 (for the second phase- Wks 5-12) to:
Reference: 2024-25 TEO Budget Consultation Responses
Corporate Governance Branch
The Executive Office
Block B5
Castle Buildings
Stormont Estate
BELFAST BT4 3SR
Telephone: 028 9052 8113
Email: corporategovernancebranch@executiveoffice-ni.gov.uk

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

Confidentiality

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

123. This means that information provided in response to the consultation is unlikely to be treated as confidential, except in very particular circumstances. The Lord Chancellor's Code of Practice on the Freedom of Information Act provides that the Department should only accept information from third parties in confidence if it is necessary to obtain that information in connection with the exercise of any of the Department's functions and it would not otherwise be provided; the Department should not agree to hold information received from third parties "in confidence" which is not confidential in nature; and acceptance by the Executive Office confidentiality provisions must be for good reasons, capable of being justified to the Information Commissioner.

124. Personal addresses and telephone numbers will not be disclosed.

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

Information Commissioner's Office – Northern Ireland

3rd Floor

14 Cromac Place

BELFAST

BT7 2JB

Telephone: 028 9027 8757 / 0303 123 1114

Email: ni@ico.org.uk

Website: <http://www.ico.org.uk>

Annex A

TEO Section 75 Equality Screening Form for 2024-2025 Budget

(Attach file CM: EO1/24/0147396)

Annex B

Budget Rural Needs Impact Assessment for 2024-2025 Consultation

(Attach file CM: EO1/24/0187120)

Annex C

Children's Rights Impact Assessment for 2024-2025 Consultation

(Attach file CM: EO1/24/0157578)