

Equality Impact Assessment

The Executive Office's Spending Plans for 2023–2024

May 2023

Foreword

1. TEO's aim 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.

2. Tackling disadvantage and promoting equality of opportunity are core priorities for the Executive Office (TEO) and its arm's-length bodies. 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; in our co-ordinating responsibilities for equality and human rights and sponsorship of the Equality Commission for Northern Ireland; in support for minority ethnic people and groups and, increasingly, co-ordination of the Executive's responsibilities for refugees and asylum seekers; and in trauma-informed policy development and practical support for Ending Violence Against Women and Girls, victims of the Troubles / Conflict, and survivors of historical institutional abuse.
3. Executive Departments are collectively facing the most challenging budget in recent history, with pressures of over half a billion pounds in 2023/2024. Every Department will be affected. The budget allocation announced in the Written Ministerial Statement by the Secretary of State on 27 April 2023 shows that TEO

will have to cope with a reduction equating to £9.5m or around 11.1% of its projected baseline budget requirement of £85.2m. Earmarked funds including

HIA / Victims' Payments / Truth Recovery £98.9m;

Communities in Transition £3.3m;

Dedicated Mechanism £1.0m;

NI Protocol £0.1m; and

EU Peace Match Funding £2.7m

have been allocated to TEO but can be used only for their designated purposes and not at the discretion of the Department. While our primary efforts will be on reducing administrative costs, this could not (as explained further at paragraph 26) achieve the necessary level of savings, meaning that reductions to front-facing funding will be inevitable.

4. TEO will of course continue to seek to deliver its principal aims. But in some cases it will have to find different ways of doing so; using ways that are less reliant on funding, with implications for our delivery partners and for the range and scope of the projects we had hoped to fund. We recognise the impacts on employment, continuity of services, and wellbeing. (These impacts have been highlighted by TEO through the budget development processes.) TEO officials are acutely aware of the need to meet our statutory equality duties. In addition to fulfilling this purpose this EQIA, 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.
5. The creative thinking, collaboration and innovation required will, we hope, result in new approaches to how we do business – approaches which retain their value after the current financial year. It is a matter of very real regret to TEO, however, that the implications of this year's budget will be felt so keenly in our community.

Introduction

6. The process of setting budgets can in some cases have an unintentionally greater impact on some specific Section 75 groups than others, for example, on males, females, young people or pensioners. In allocating budgets the Department aims to avoid any adverse impacts and, where possible, action will be taken to mitigate against specific adverse impacts. This paper examines potential options for potential reductions and the potential equality impacts of these options.

7. 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.

8. 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.

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

- promote positive attitudes towards disabled people; and
 - encourage participation by disabled people in public life.
10. 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.
11. TEO has previously submitted an Equality Impact Assessment Screening document to DoF on 2 March 2023 for the purposes of a Budget Scenario Planning Exercise, in order to draw attention to the particular Section 75 groups where general funding reductions are likely to have an equality impact. This document attempted to outline mitigating actions where possible and examined budget scenario reductions of 10% and 15%, after allowances for ‘earmarked’ and EU Protocol related funding was protected. As a result of the EQIA screening, the budget allocation provided in the Written Ministerial Statement by Secretary of State on 27 April 2023 has been ‘screened in’ for a full Equality Impact Assessment process.
12. 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

13. In response to this, the Department has examined a number of potential scenarios for the actions required to live within its budget allocation for the 2023/24 financial year, and, following a screening exercise, has decided to proceed with an EQIA and consultation, in order to collate views from interested stakeholders. This document is the draft of the EQIA prior to incorporating the outcomes of a public consultation.
14. In the absence of Executive Ministers, the Secretary of State has taken budget decisions and has indicated his intention to take a Budget Bill through Parliament. Given the particular urgency of making allocations between its respective budgets, TEO is proceeding to consult at this stage. 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.
15. 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: 2023/2024 TEO Budget Consultation Responses
Finance Branch
The Executive Office
Block B5
Castle Buildings
Stormont Estate
BELFAST BT4 3SR

Telephone: 028 9052 2568
Email: rff@executiveoffice-ni.gov.uk

16. Some of the decisions required by the budget will fall to the Permanent Secretary of the Executive Office under the Northern Ireland (Executive Formation etc) Act 2022. Other decisions are of a kind normally reserved to a Minister. The guidance says (our emphasis):

“Some decisions should not be taken by civil servants without the direction of elected Ministers. NI departments should therefore first consider the public interest of having elected Ministers taking and guiding decisions. Any major policy decisions, such as the initiation of a new policy, programme or scheme, including new major public expenditure commitments, or a major change of an existing policy, programme or scheme, should normally be left for Ministers to decide or agree.

“When considering whether there is a public interest in taking a decision in the absence of NI Ministers, principles to be taken into account by senior officers in NI departments include:

- (a) The primary principle that departments must control and manage expenditure within the limits of the appropriations set out in Budget Acts, and as set out in the Secretary of State’s statement to Parliament of 24 November.

...”

17. Budget allocations may be revisited 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. The EQIA and consultation responses will be used to inform such reallocations should the need arise.

TEO's Financial Position

18. The overall total draft budget for TEO in the last financial year (2022/2023), as set out in the Budget 2022/25 consultative document and published in February 2022, was £210.7m. Around half of this was represented by ring-fenced resources required for Victims' Payments, Historical Institutional Abuse services and redress, work on supporting victims-survivors of Mother and Baby Homes and Magdalene Laundries, and funding for Good Relations which was previously awarded under the Shared Future Agreement.
19. In the event, during 2022/23 actual spending plans changed following a review of expenditure on Victims' Payments which had been based on estimates, and issues with supply of new recruits which impacted on the speed of filling vacancies. The final budget outcome announced by Secretary of State on 24 November 2022 was £156.7m, while the final budget post December reductions was £153.7m.
20. The Department was proactive in returning funding to DoF centrally when there was a risk it would not be spent, and offered other easements to assist in addressing the overall pressures facing NICS Departments. Indeed, TEO offered up £10 million ahead of the 2023/2024 year. (This has not been offset against the baseline savings requirement for next year.)
21. In preparing for 2023/2024, DoF has worked with the NIO to produce a number of scenarios to model how allocations to Departments could be made in light of the reduced funding available to the Block as a result of repaying the Budget Resource Claim for 2022/23 to the Treasury. The allocation to TEO announced by the Secretary of State represents an amount equivalent to the final allocation for 2022/23 less reductions of 3.9% for non-ringfenced areas, together with a specific allocation for earmarked ringfenced schemes. The expectation is that ring-fenced funding (for Victims' Payments, HIA redress and services, Mother and Baby Homes, Communities in Transition, Homes for Ukraine, Peace+ and some smaller budget lines), will be adequate for our needs; indeed HIA costs and Victims' Payments are statutory requirements and there is Ministerial commitment to funding these areas. Capital allocations are also sufficient to

meet projected needs. The main focus of this consultation is therefore on the non-ringfenced, baseline spend areas.

22. A nominal 3.9% reduction on 2022/23 means a reduction from £78.8 million to £75.8 million in baseline resources. However, in the meantime, TEO's expenditure requirements had increased substantially, to £85.2m, for the reasons explored below. This excludes approximately £4m in respect of Shared Future/Good Relations programmes delivered in partnership with other Departments. Applying the above reduction results in a required reduction of some £9.5m (11.1%) against planned baseline requirements. This is an unprecedented reduction, and it is clear it will have significant implications for the outcomes delivered by this Department, if some of them are deliverable at all.

Strategic Context for TEO Resource Pressures

23. These additional savings requirements need to be seen in the context of existing baseline challenges, related to both loss of income sources and new spend commitments. Specifically TEO has seen reductions in funding in respect of:
- (a) Financial Transactions Capital (FTC) interest spending power due to the repayment of these loans by the public sector debtors and loss of FTC interest;
 - (b) end of separate COVID-19 funding, even though TEO's responsibility now includes co-ordination the Executive's response to the Covid Inquiry;
 - (c) additionality of new business areas mandated by the Executive or by legislation including Ending Violence Against Women and Girls; the Truth Recovery Programme on Mother and Baby Institutions and Magdalene Laundries; responsibility for the free provision of period products across Northern Ireland; and specialists to support the NICS Transformation Programme.
24. Additional pressures for TEO have also materialised in 2022/2023 in respect of:

- (a) the Ukraine Refugee schemes instigated by the UK Government, and an increasing number of asylum seekers making their home here;
 - (b) the Covid Inquiry; and
 - (c) preparations for the establishment of three new ALBs mandated by the Identity and Language (Northern Ireland) Act 2022, introduced by the Secretary of State and passed by Parliament.
25. This context resulted in acute staffing pressures, which were so severe that a former Accounting Officer raised staffing as a governance concern in 2021/22. Addressing this governance concern meant increasing the pay bill. Vacancies filled progressively during 2022/2023 will result in a full 12 months of recurring costs in 2023/2024. In addition, TEO is (like other organisations) facing increases due to pay and price inflation. These will lead to further increases in costs in the year ahead.
26. Without stopping delivery and implementing a Voluntary Exit Scheme (VES), there is no opportunity to reduce these costs other than through natural churn. When ring-fenced funds are discounted, TEO's budget funds ALBs (37%, of which half is taken up with VSS and the services for Troubles victims and survivors it provides), staff costs (33%), programme and grant spend together with general administrative expenditure (total 17%), and Shared Future (13%). In the absence of a voluntary exit scheme, there are very few options open for internal administrative reductions and efficiencies. This means that, when actions for reducing the pay bill are taken into account, externally delivered programmes are the only alternative areas for consideration.

Actions Taken to Date

27. Since last year, TEO has been achieving efficiencies in its approach to new areas of work in line with its commitment, in 2022/2023 budget bids, to agile policy development. Staffing for the free provision of period products across NI, support for the Covid Inquiry, and Green Growth, by way of example, have been resourced through redeployment from other areas of the Department's work. None of these new areas came with dedicated funding streams. This has required some standing down of other areas of work. Staff from the Ministerial Private Offices have also been redeployed on other priorities in the absence of Ministers.

28. In light of the urgency and the levels of the impact, the Department has already paused any recruitment and filling of vacancies, other than in instances of exceptional need. We estimate that this will save £2.9m in 2023/2024; impacting on 86 vacancies we had been intending to fill now that supply at key grades is again available. Further staffing savings would be dependent on a Voluntary Exit Scheme. All of these measures will place significant pressure on the Department and its staff, for whose wellbeing we are responsible, and it will be important to reprioritise work to match the resources available.

Key Principles for TEO's Strategic Approach

29. 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 mean making very difficult decisions between areas of expenditure, all of which we should regard as important and necessary. TEO proposes to adopt the following key principles as it strives to achieve the necessary reductions in 2023/2024 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 services and funding; and
 - (d) live within its budget.
30. 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 reflected changing priorities and any potential availability of reallocated funding.
31. Based on clarification from DoF, our assumption is that the Written Ministerial Statement (WMS) from the Secretary of State has provided Departments with budget allocations on the same basis as the WMS of November 2022 (for 2022/23) and the interim indicative allocation provided in April 2023. This means that, for Shared Future programmes delivered in partnership with other Departments, the allocation for 2023/24 has been provided to those Departments through the WMS and is not a cost to TEO. This includes T:BUC Camps and Planned Interventions.

32. TEO has considered the general approach to reductions across the Department's business areas. Two options were identified:
 1. Apply a common reduction of 11.1% across all non-ringfenced business areas. This would include, for example, Good Relations and the Victims' budget, which funds VSS's work with victims and survivors and support for victims' groups (but not Victims' Payments).
 2. Use the EQIA to inform decisions on where cash releasing savings could be realised in a way that limited the impact on the most vulnerable people served by TEO.
33. TEO prefers Option 2 as being more in line with its equity ethos. Applying a fixed amount would have an adverse impact on disability, age and dependants Section 75 categories disproportionately.
34. Option 2 has therefore been chosen for further analysis. The remainder of this paper considers the impacts of this and the basis for decisions on where cash-releasing reductions should lie.

Analysis of Impacts: Core Department

Consideration of Available Data and Research

35. 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.
36. Impacts have been considered against the backdrop of available data, as derived from:
- 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.
37. The analysis has focussed on those areas of substantial expenditure from which cash releasing savings could be made in 2023/2024. 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. That is not to say, however, that we will not look for efficiencies in these areas: there is further detail in the conclusions and mitigations section.

38. 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 ringfenced budget is received 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.
39. TEO continues to work together along with its arm’s-length bodies to understand the impact of the budget for 2023-24 outcome on service delivery, the potential impacts of the policy on the various Section 75 groups and how any impacts could be mitigated. 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 across Northern Ireland. It is therefore difficult to assess the impact of service reductions on Section 75 groups. The Department will seek to gather further information on potential impacts through consultation.

Assessment of Impacts

| Section 75 Category | Details of Impact |
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| Religious belief | <p>An analysis of the information held by TEO indicates that a 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 (48%/~20,000 participants CNR, 35%/~15,000 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> |

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| Political opinion | <p>It should be noted that religious belief / background can, in many instances, be considered a proxy guide to political opinion.</p> <p>An analysis of the information held by TEO indicates that a 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 a 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> <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 2021/22 it is estimated around 4,000 participants came from an ethnic minority background.</p> <p>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.</p> <p>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). NB it is widely recognised that census figures undercount the minority ethnic group population.</p> <p>We are aware of specific risks to refugee and migrant women in relation to VAWG.</p> |
| Age | <p>The age profile of CGRF participants indicates that around two thirds were under 18. Across all areas of the programme, some 26,000-28,000 children and young people participated in 2021/22. Given the high proportion of CGRF funding that is allocated to projects that directly support children and young people, a cut to the CGRF would have a more significant and adverse impact on this S75 group than on others.</p> <p>The Planned Intervention Programme is for children and young people from 10 up to the age of 25 (circa 1,300 people), however</p> |

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| | <p>the outcomes delivered by the programme impact on people of all ages by addressing anti-social behaviour and community tensions.</p> <p>A third of participants in the District Council Good Relations Programme are 18 or under (circa 35,000 people).</p> <p>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:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • 97% had made new friends with someone from a different religious/community background. • 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) | Expenditure on the development of the Equally Safe strategy has necessarily been largely on staff costs to date. Plans for 2023/2024 would have seen the beginning of an implementation programme and campaign. 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.. Reduction of |

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| | <p>funding to the EVAWG programme will 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 people of any gender, data for 2021/22 indicates that females make up a substantially higher percentage of participants than males – out of 40,000 participants, circa 25,000 were female. 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> |
| <p>Disability (with or without)</p> | <p>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 2021/22, between 6,000-7,000 of CGRF participants had a disability or illness.</p> <p>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.</p> <p>The EVAWG Call for Views responses quoted rates of 1:2 D/deaf and disabled women suffering gender violence, including specific risks from carers.</p> |
| <p>Dependants (with or without)</p> | <p>The presence of children or other dependents can make it more difficult for women to leave a violent home.</p> <p>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.</p> |

Analysis of impacts: Arm's-Length Bodies

40. Some 37% of TEO's 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

41. The following section provides a summary of major impacts which would be felt by the Department's ALBs. This was based on a request to model the impact of a 10% reduction in budget allocations. In the interests of clarity, a summary is given here, but more detailed information is available on request.

- 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 cuts - people with disabilities, particularly learning disabilities, people from a range of minority ethnic groups; including Newcomers, older people, children, LGBT people, women and people with caring responsibilities. Across the equality grounds, people in or at risk of poverty are amongst 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. Cuts 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. Cuts would therefore have a disproportionate impact in these areas.
- 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. A cut will need to be met by reducing 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 aims and objectives of the Together: Building a United Community within their local communities as a

direct result of these cuts will therefore be reduced at a time when the threat level has been increased. Some funding streams would be unable to operate, with particular impacts on the Media, Publications, and Pathfinder schemes, and some impact on the Small Grants Scheme.

- The cut will present a significant risk to an already small team in terms of capacity, service delivery, human resource management and other challenges.
- The Community Relations Council delivers a Core Funding Scheme that supports 62 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 81 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.
- CRC will require to reduce the depth and scale of its T:BUC Engagement activity.
- 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.

- A cut of 10% to the **Attorney General for NI** budget can only be made to salaries as GAE is for contractual payments. Reducing staffing levels will impact will on the Attorney's ability to deliver on her statutory functions and will have a read across all the Section 75 categories, eg 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.
- At a 10% reduction in TEO funding, the **NI Judicial Appointments Commission**, after examining some non-recurring costs it might be able to bear in the short-term eg training and reactive maintenance, would still need to find approximately £109k to work within the TEO funding level. Given the fact 84% of NIJAC's costs (staff and Headline Building) are fixed, to find the remaining monies NIJAC would have to reduce the number of judicial recruitment schemes carried out from an annual average of 8 to 5; and rely on staff vacancies arising in 2023-24 equivalent to 1.7 WTE staff from a complement of 12.6 WTE (no vacancies currently exist).
- Failure to fill judicial vacancies to fill judicial vacancies will in turn will add to the post-COVID backlog of cases to be heard. 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** 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 80% staffing and 20% other costs to include all other services. A 10% reduction would directly impact on staffing which would detrimentally effect services provided to victims and survivors. Early evidence has shown that contact to the office is predominately male callers. Many victims and survivors who would have been eligible for Redress 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.

Consideration of Mitigations

42. The impact of the budget allocation for 2023/2024 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, though 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.
43. The Department has identified the following potential areas for mitigation:
- a. seeking to protect the most vulnerable people with whom TEO works, including victims and survivors;
 - b. prioritising projects for funding where the safety of a group is at risk or there is risk of civic disorder;
 - c. protecting where possible funding which is matched or releases further resources, eg the Department's contribution to the Peace programmes;
 - d. where possible, staff will work to seek to mainstream implementation of the Department's policy aims in other Departments' strategies as part of good cross-Departmental working, so that the implementation of those strategies would incorporate TEO's principal outcomes. This would include seeking to ensure good relations is fully incorporated as an objective in other strategies; that people who have experienced trauma can obtain services reflective of their needs; and that the emerging findings of good practice on Ending Violence Against Women and Girls are promulgated and widely embedded;
 - e. protecting work, including through the Urban Villages Programme, that has the potential to lead to more effective ways of supporting TEO's aims in

future, eg the Test and Learn work on support for vulnerable communities, while ensuring such areas are challenged to identify where savings are feasible;

- f. having regard to situations where there is a legitimate expectation of continuing funding;
- g. carrying out a line-by-line review of the Department's expenditure to identify any further savings which could be transferred to front-line support;
- h. taking into account that, in general, larger organisations are better able to sustain reductions than smaller;
- i. taking into account timing of spend, eg where it is needed early in the year if it is to be effective, and therefore would not be mitigated by any further resources identified in-year. Payments (eg for self-directed assistance) to individual victims, and the first tranche of funding for groups supporting victims and survivors of the Troubles / Conflict, have therefore been released;
- j. working with the Department's ALB Forum on the potential to reduce administration costs and duplication, to release funding for priority outcomes;
- k. continuing to make the case to DoF, the Secretary of State, and Ministers for the Department's outcomes, especially in monitoring rounds, and using the EQIA to prioritise distribution of any additional resources obtained;
- l. working with other organisations in the public, private, and voluntary sectors to identify alternative sources of support for groups impacted by the budget allocations.

Conclusion

44. This document has set out an analysis of the Department'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.
45. Taking account of the impacts and mitigations identified and applying these to the Department's work areas, the Department's provisional analysis would lead to the following measures:
 1. continuing the moratorium on filling vacancies and new posts (other than in exceptional circumstances) – **£2.9m** (see para 28). In addition, we will take forward a series of actions on reviewing processes, challenging traditional ways of doing things, and other measures to reduce costs.
 2. 10% top-slicing of the Department and ALBs (other than VSS) – **£3.6m**;
 3. 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 the Minority Ethnic Development Fund and the Urban Villages programme (which also releases a greater amount in capital funding) to the 10% top-slicing. However we will work with these areas to identify where savings could be identified without major impacts;
 4. reductions in Good Relations work, affecting the Central Good Relations Fund and District Council Good Relations Programme this year – **£3.5m**. This would mean significant reductions in these programmes. The allocation for Central Good Relations would be about half of that last year and would enable 38 projects. For District Council Good Relations, the

reduction would mean a TEO contribution of £1.6m would leverage about £0.5m of Council support, reducing delivery by 50% compared with last year.

46. This would leave a small balance of approximately £0.5m to support additional urgent work in priority areas.

47. **It is important to stress that these are not recommendations that would be made by officials under normal circumstances. Rather, they are actions required as a consequence of an extremely constrained budget allocation.**

Consultation, Publication and Decision

48. 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.
49. 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

50. Decisions around the budget reductions need to be made urgently. This is so they can be implemented in time to take effect over as much of the financial year as possible; and also so that business areas, arm's-length bodies (ALBs) and organisations who depend on our funding can make the necessary plans as soon as possible.
51. The Department has decided that it can best balance the challenges presented by the tight financial timescales, with its own desire to hold a meaningful consultation, by adopting a two-stage approach.
52. 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 initial allocation of funds to its business areas and ALBs as well as any early mitigations that can be put in place. 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.

Consultation Method

53. The Department will publish this EQIA on its website, alerting its list of consultees of 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 Questions for Public Input](#)

Consultation Questions

1. Do you agree that TEO has gathered the necessary data to inform its decisions around the allocation of its budget?
If not, what other sources of data should the Department consider?
2. Do you agree with TEO's assessment of the options for budget reductions?
If not, what other areas of the Department's spend should be considered?
3. Do you agree with TEO's assessment of equality impacts of the options considered for budget reductions?
If not, what other equality impacts does the Department need to take account of?
4. Do you agree that the TEO has correctly identified all relevant mitigations that could help reduce the adverse equality impacts of the budget reductions?
If not, what additional mitigation measures should the Department consider?

5. Do you agree with TEO's overall assessment of the business areas where budget reductions will need to be made?

If not, which areas of the Department's business would be better able to withstand reductions?

6. Do you have any other comments you would like to add about this consultation – yes or no?

54. Replies should be sent by **7 June 2023** (for the first phase) and/or **2 August 2023** (for the second phase) to:

Reference: 2023/2024 TEO Budget Consultation Responses
Finance Branch
The Executive Office
Block B5
Castle Buildings
Stormont Estate
BELFAST BT4 3SR

Telephone: 028 9052 2568

Email: rff@executiveoffice-ni.gov.uk

55. 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 2023/2024 allocations. Any such findings will be used to inform further development of mitigations, revised budget allocations and in-year bids.

Confidentiality

56. 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.

57. 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.
58. Personal addresses and telephone numbers will not be disclosed.
59. 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>