



**EQUALITY COMMISSION FOR NORTHERN IRELAND**

**Response to the Department for  
the Economy's consultation on  
*Economy 2030: An Industrial  
Strategy for Northern Ireland***

April 2017

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## **1 Executive Summary**

- 1.1 The Equality Commission welcomes the opportunity to respond to the Department for the Economy's ('the Department') consultation on the draft *Economy 2030: An Industrial Strategy for Northern Ireland* ('the draft Industrial Strategy').
- 1.2 Overall, whilst we welcome a number of initiatives and commitments in the draft Industrial Strategy which have the potential to advance equality of opportunity for Section 75 equality groups, we consider that there is additional scope for the promotion of equality and good relations to be embedded and mainstreamed across the Industrial Strategy.

### ***Specific recommendations***

#### Vision

- 1.3 We recommend the inclusion of high-level commitments, underpinned by robust actions, to ensure the promotion of equality and good relations.

#### Pillars for Growth

- 1.4 We consider that the pillars should take account of known inequalities and ensure that actions are appropriately targeted to address the needs of particular Section 75 equality groups.
- 1.5 For example, we are concerned that there is no specific mention of actions in Industrial Strategy aimed at addressing the concentration of women in low paid, part-time employment or mitigating the impact on gender equality of rebalancing the economy; to promoting flexible working or to encouraging men to share family roles / responsibilities; or to tackle gender pay inequalities.
- 1.6 We also note that there is a lack of any specific action to deliver appropriate, accessible and affordable childcare – despite the contribution this could make to supporting economic participation and thus increasing our attractiveness and performance as an investment location.
- 1.7 We recommend a clearer commitment to addressing employment inequalities – particularly to support women's

economic independence, including through childcare; address the exploitation and low pay of some migrant workers; to support disabled people to access/remain in employment; and ensure employment and training are inclusive for all.

- 1.8 We recommend a clearer commitment to address the educational inequalities experienced by people across a range of Section 75 equality groups. Whilst we welcome the commitment to continued support for people with disabilities and special educational needs in further education (under Pillar 3), there is no reference to actions to address barriers experienced by people with disabilities in other areas of education. There are also no specific actions aimed at other Section 75 equality groups, including Irish Travellers; those entitled to free school meals, particularly boys, notably Protestant boys.
- 1.9 To add to the factors which might increase our attractiveness and performance as an investment location, we recommend actions to tackle prejudicial attitudes and behaviour, including in workplaces and places of education / training.
- 1.10 As the UK exits the EU, we recommend there is no regression from existing protections and no negative impact on equality and good relations.
- 1.11 We also recommend the inclusion of actions designed to embed equality of opportunity and good relations into procurement practices.

#### Measuring Success

- 1.12 We recommend that relevant Indicators should be tracked not only in aggregate terms, but also for the impact across all the Section 75 categories.
- 1.13 We also recommend actions to address gaps in equality data.

#### Compliance with statutory duties

- 1.14 The Department, in the development of the Industrial Strategy, preparation of budget proposals and associated action plans/strategies, should ensure compliance with its statutory equality and good relations duties.

## 2 Introduction

- 2.1 The Equality Commission for Northern Ireland ('the Commission') is an independent public body established under the Northern Ireland Act 1998. It is responsible for implementing the equality legislation on fair employment, sex discrimination and equal pay, race relations, sexual orientation, disability and age. An outline of our role and remit is attached at Annex 1.
- 2.2 We welcome the opportunity to respond to the Department for the Economy's ('the Department') consultation on the draft *Economy 2030: An Industrial Strategy for Northern Ireland*<sup>1</sup> ('the draft Industrial Strategy'). We have responded to those questions most relevant to our role and remit.
- 2.3 We have set out in our Programme for Government (PfG) recommendations<sup>2</sup> the priority issues that we wish to see advanced through the Executive's PfG, delivery plans and associated Strategies, *including the Industrial Strategy*.
- 2.4 These include specific recommendations across a number of areas relevant to the Industrial Strategy, including employment, social attitudes, and education. They also include recommendations on ensuring compliance with international human rights conventions; addressing gaps in equality data and ensuring that all relevant PfG measures are tracked for the impact on individuals from each of the Section 75 categories.
- 2.5 We have highlighted our PfG priorities in our response to the draft PfG<sup>3</sup> and expanded our specific recommendations on the economy, employment and training and education more recently in responses to the Senior Responsible Owners for draft PfG delivery plans relating to these policy areas<sup>4</sup>.

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<sup>1</sup> Department for the Economy (2017) [Economy 2030 - a consultation on an Industrial Strategy for Northern Ireland](#)

<sup>2</sup> ECNI (September 2016) [Programme for Government and Budget Recommendations](#). For further information on ECNI's Programme for Government recommendations see [www.equalityni.org/PfG](http://www.equalityni.org/PfG)

<sup>3</sup> ECNI (December 2016) [Response to the Executive's consultation on a draft Programme for Government 2016-2021](#)

<sup>4</sup> See, for example, ECNI responses to draft delivery plans for indicators 14 (proportion of workforce in employment qualified to level 1 and above, level 2 and above, level 3 and above and level four and above), 16 (seasonally adjusted employment rate, 16-64), 17 (economic inactivity rate excluding students), 18 (Better Jobs Index), 32 (employment rate of 16-34 year olds by deprivation quintile), 33

- 2.6 Overall, whilst we welcome a number of initiatives and commitments in the draft Industrial Strategy which have the potential to advance equality of opportunity for Section 75 equality groups, we consider that there is additional scope for the promotion of equality and good relations to be embedded and mainstreamed across the Industrial Strategy.

### 3 Vision

- 3.1 We recommend the inclusion of high-level commitments, underpinned by robust actions, to promote equality of opportunity and good relations.
- 3.2 In our PfG recommendations, we made clear that equality of opportunity and good relations must be central to all public policy development and implementation and that promoting equality of opportunity and good relations should be *cross cutting themes* across all Government strategies, policy development and actions<sup>5</sup>.
- 3.3 We consider that the PfG and Budget, associated delivery plans and key underpinning Strategies, *including the Industrial Strategy*, provide key mechanisms to maximise equality of opportunity and good relations outcomes, and to address key inequalities.
- 3.4 We note that the Department is proposing the draft vision - '*To be a globally competitive economy that works for everyone*'.
- 3.5 We note the draft vision combines increased competitiveness and inclusive growth under the draft PfG purpose of '*improving wellbeing for all by tackling disadvantage and driving economic growth*' in order to be '*a globally competitive economy that works for everyone*'.
- 3.6 We **welcome** the recognition in the text supporting the draft vision of the importance of ensuring that economic growth needs to be '*fair and inclusive across all sections of society*'. We also **welcome** the recognition that '*assisting people everywhere to access the labour market...will help address poverty and social exclusion..*'; as well as the link made with

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(% of people working part time who would like to work more hours), 34 (employment rate by council area), 41 (proportion of local graduates from local institutions in professional or management occupations or in further study six months after graduation). See [www.equalityni.org/PfG](http://www.equalityni.org/PfG)

<sup>5</sup> ECNI (September 2016) [Programme for Government and Budget Recommendations](#) Belfast

Executive commitments in the draft PfG to address health and education inequalities and diversity.

- 3.7 We particularly **welcome** the commitment in the Ministerial Foreword to the draft Strategy to work ‘to ensure that everyone, everywhere in Northern Ireland feels the benefits of an improving economy with more jobs and rising incomes’<sup>6</sup>.
- 3.8 However, whilst we welcome the above-mentioned commitments, we **recommend** the inclusion of additional stronger high level commitments, underpinned by robust actions, specifically relating to the promotion of equality and good relations. Our specific recommendations are outlined in more detail below.
- 3.9 We also **recommend** that the Department seeks to ensure that these commitments are embedded and reflected, not only in the Industrial Strategy for Northern Ireland, but also in the wider UK Industrial Strategy which is currently under development<sup>7</sup>.

### ***Specific recommendations***

We recommend there is a clear commitment, underpinned by robust measures, to address key inequalities experienced by the Section 75 equality groups, as well as to promote good relations.

- 3.10 Many key inequalities experienced by Section 75 equality groups, including inequalities in employment and education, remain persistent and hard to tackle. There is also a need for urgent action to address poverty and social exclusion experienced by a range of equality groups.
- 3.11 We draw the Department’s attention the clear commitment in the Executive’s draft PfG to addressing key inequalities, particularly those experienced by Section 75 equality groups<sup>8</sup>.
- 3.12 In this context, we note that in the text supporting the draft vision, there is no explicit reference to a commitment to address key inequalities experienced by the Section 75 equality

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<sup>6</sup> Department for the Economy (2017) [Economy 2030 - a consultation on an Industrial Strategy for Northern Ireland](#) Belfast

<sup>7</sup> HM Government (January 2017) [Building our Industrial Strategy Green Paper](#) page 14

<sup>8</sup> NI Executive (2016) [Draft Programme for Government](#) at p6

groups, as well as to promote good relations, as regards the areas within the remit of the Industrial Strategy.

- 3.13 We **recommend** there is a clear commitment in the text supporting the draft vision, and underpinned by robust measures across the Strategy, to address key inequalities experienced by the Section 75 equality groups, as well as to promote good relations.

We recommend that a clear link is made in the Industrial Strategy between increasing respect, shared space and reconciliation, and improving our attractiveness and international reputation.

- 3.14 We consider that actions that help create a ‘*more equal*’ and ‘*shared society*’ in Northern Ireland (which are proposed outcomes in the draft PfG), and where there is equality of opportunity for all and diversity is respected and celebrated, will improve our attractiveness as a ‘location of choice to invest, do business with, visit, study and live’ (one of the proposed priorities under Pillar 4).

- 3.15 We have, for example, welcomed the fact that the draft delivery plan for PfG Indicators 30 and 40 (Total spend by external visitors; nation brands index) recognises that “*respect, shared space and reconciliation affect the whole of society and cut across almost all aspects of the Executive’s work*”<sup>9</sup>.

- 3.16 We therefore **recommend** that a clear link, supported by targeted actions, is made in the Industrial Strategy between increasing respect, shared space and reconciliation, and improving our attractiveness as a destination, including as a tourist destination, and our international reputation.

We recommend that the promotion of equality of opportunity and good relations are cross- cutting themes.

- 3.17 The current Economic Strategy, includes an explicit reference to ‘equality’ as a cross- cutting principle<sup>10</sup>. The current

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<sup>9</sup> ECNI (2017) [Response to draft delivery plan for PfG Indicators 30 and 40 \(Total spend by external visitors; nation brands index\)](#)

<sup>10</sup> ‘We are determined that the wealth and prosperity we are seeking will be used to help reduce poverty, promote equality and tackle existing patterns of disadvantage and division.....**Equality:** we

*Economic Strategy* makes it clear that ‘we will ensure that no section of the community is left behind’ in order to determine that ‘the wealth and prosperity we are seeking will be used to help reduce poverty, promote equality and tackle existing patterns of disadvantage and division’<sup>11</sup>.

- 3.18 We also draw to the Department’s attention the Executive’s recognition in the draft PfG to equality of opportunity and good relations as ‘*framing themes*’ across all Executive strategies, development plans and delivery plans<sup>12</sup>.
- 3.19 The above stand in contrast to the draft Industrial strategy where we see no explicit reference in the text supporting the draft vision to the ‘promotion of equality of opportunity and good relations’ as cross-cutting themes.
- 3.20 The Commission in its response<sup>13</sup> to the *Consultation on Priorities for Sustainable Growth and Prosperity* (2011) had welcomed that equality had been established as a cross-cutting theme in the draft Strategic Framework for the proposed *Economic Strategy*. Our response<sup>14</sup> to *Building a Better Future* noted also the intention to eradicate poverty and social exclusion.
- 3.21 We therefore **recommend** that, in the text supporting the draft vision, it is made explicit that the promotion of equality of opportunity and good relations are **cross-cutting themes** within the Industrial Strategy and are central to achieving economic growth and prosperity.
- 3.22 We refer the Department to the Scottish Government’s strategy, *Scotland’s Economic Strategy (2015)* which sets out the twin purpose of competitiveness and tackling inequality and demonstrates that increasing growth and tackling inequality are ‘*mutually supportive*’<sup>15</sup>. It also makes clear that ‘reducing inequality is not only important in itself, but is vital to creating

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will ensure that no section of the community is left behind’ Northern Ireland Executive (2012) [Economic Strategy: Priorities for sustainable growth and prosperity](#) Belfast

<sup>11</sup> Ibid at page 14

<sup>12</sup> NI Executive (2016) [Draft Programme for Government](#) at p6

<sup>13</sup> ECNI to NI Economic Strategy Consultation, 3 March 2011

<sup>14</sup> ECNI (2012) [Building a Better future: Draft Programme for Government 2011-2015; Economic Strategy \(Priorities for Sustainable Growth and Prosperity\); draft Investment Strategy for Northern Ireland 2011-2021 - consultation response](#) Belfast (paragraph 8)

<sup>15</sup> The Scottish Government (March 2015) [Scotland's Economic Strategy](#)

the conditions to deliver sustainable economic growth over the long-term'<sup>16</sup>.

We recommend a clear commitment, underpinned by actions to address key shortfalls, to ensure compliance with the UK Government's obligations under international human rights conventions, including the UNCRPD.

- 3.23 We note that there is no reference in the text supporting the draft vision, or in the wider Strategy, to a commitment to ensure compliance with the UK Government's obligations under international human rights conventions, including the UN Convention on the Rights of Persons with Disabilities (UNCRPD).
- 3.24 In our response to the draft PfG we recommended that the high-level commitments in the draft PfG to compliance with international human rights conventions and the UN Sustainable Development Goals (SDGs)<sup>17</sup> should be mainstreamed into the specific actions associated with the PfG indicators and into delivery plans.
- 3.25 We draw to the Department's attention the Executive's proposed commitment in the draft PfG, under the proposed *equal society* outcome, to '*ensuring compliance with international human rights conventions*'.
- 3.26 Our PfG recommendations sought specific actions to address key shortfalls in policy and legislation in Northern Ireland to ensure compliance with obligations under international human rights conventions, including the UNCRPD. The Commission has identified a range of potential gaps in compliance with international obligations which may be of assistance in addressing this recommendation<sup>18</sup>.

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<sup>16</sup> Ibid at p7

<sup>17</sup> The SDGs which have been adopted by the UK Government include goals and targets on tackling poverty and reducing inequalities, as well as a specific goal on achieving gender equality.

<sup>18</sup> We have highlighted, for example, that there are key gaps, in terms of policies and programmes, aligned to a number of UNCRPD Articles to be addressed-see for example our recommendations on employment and education in our [UNCRPD jurisdictional parallel report](#) . Our CEDAW Shadow Report (2013) highlighted a range of areas that need to be addressed in regard to equality between women and men, including in employment and education. In our recent [FCNM Shadow Report](#)

3.27 We therefore **recommend** a clear commitment, underpinned by actions to address key shortfalls, to ensure compliance with the UK Government's obligations under international human rights conventions, including the UNCRPD.

## 4 Pillars of Growth

### *Introduction*

4.1 We note the proposed five Pillars for Growth but are concerned that the proposed priorities do not set out how each will be used to advance equality of opportunity and good relations. For example, how the enhancement of 'education, skills and employability' will be delivered so as to address key inequalities and barriers for specific equality groups.

4.2 In our PfG recommendations, we recommended actions to address inequalities in employment, education and social attitudes that are relevant to the proposed Pillar 2 (aimed at enhancing education, skills and employability) and Pillar 3 (aimed at driving inclusive sustainable growth) . These recommendations are set out in more detail below.

### *Employment*

We recommend a clearer commitment to addressing employment inequalities – particularly to support women's economic independence, including through childcare; address the exploitation and low pay of some migrant workers; to support disabled people to access/remain in employment; and ensure employment and training are inclusive for all.

4.3 In our PfG recommendations, we recommended actions to:

- support women's economic participation, including through access to appropriate, accessible and affordable childcare;
- address the exploitation and forced labour of migrant workers and the concentration of some minority ethnic workers in low paid employment;

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(2016) we raised, for example, the importance the need to maximise the participation of minority ethnic groups in employment.

- support people with disabilities to access and remain in the workplace;
- ensure training and programmes to enable people to access and progress in work are accessible and inclusive for all.

4.4 In general, we **welcome** the proposed focus on supporting those furthest from the workforce. We also **welcome** the proposal to tackle economic inactivity. We have, for example, made it clear that there is a need to tackle the high levels of economic inactivity experienced by women and disabled people. In addition, we **welcome** the proposal to support young people who face barriers to participation in the labour market.

4.5 However, we consider that the pillars should take account of known inequalities and ensure that actions are appropriately targeted to meet the needs of particular Section 75 equality groups.

4.6 As set out in more detail below, in general, there is limited or no reference to the range of key inequalities in employment experienced by particular Section 75 equality groups- including women, disabled people, minority ethnic workers and older people.

We recommend additional actions to support women's economic participation, including through childcare.

4.7 In our responses to the draft PfG and associated delivery plans, we noted that it had been identified that women have significantly lower employment rates than others, and we welcomed the commitment to target the gender (and age) profile of specific groups with lower employment rates under the Department's Economic Inactivity Strategy, *Enabling Success*.

4.8 We also welcomed the commitment to support women's entrepreneurship through introducing a new women's programme; which we note is also specifically referred to in the draft Industrial Strategy (under Pillar 3).

4.9 However, we reiterate our recommendations that we raised in our responses to the draft PfG and associated delivery plans,

calling for additional actions to support women's economic participation, including through the provision of childcare.

- 4.10 We have recently set out in our *Gender Equality Policy Priorities and Recommendations*<sup>19</sup> a series of recommendations to advance gender equality in access to, and progression within, employment, including to ensure women's economic independence, that we wish to see progressed, including through the PfG, and associated delivery plans and Strategies. We have also, for example, highlighted our concerns that measures to rebalance the economy may have additional negative impacts, for example on women<sup>20</sup>.
- 4.11 We further **recommend** the adoption of a gender sensitive approach to identifying key actions. We are concerned that there is no specific mention of actions in Industrial Strategy (or in the draft PfG delivery plans<sup>21</sup>) aimed at addressing the concentration of women in low paid, part-time employment or mitigating the impact on gender equality of rebalancing the economy; to promoting flexible working or to encouraging men to share family roles / responsibilities; or to tackle gender pay inequalities.
- 4.12 We also draw to the Department's attention that the requirements under the Employment Act (Northern Ireland) 2016<sup>22</sup> relating to increased pay reporting requirements on employers and the implementation of a strategy and action plan on closing the gender pay gap, provide an opportunity to address pay inequalities linked to gender, disability and ethnicity. We note there is no specific reference to this opportunity in the draft Industrial Strategy.
- 4.13 We note that the Department's screening document<sup>23</sup> refers to the fact that women are particularly under-represented within managerial roles in Northern Ireland and highlights the decline of the proportion of women in management positions, from 37% in 2015 to 31% in 2016.

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<sup>19</sup> ECNI (2016) [Gender Equality Policy Priorities and Recommendations](#)

<sup>20</sup> ECNI (2016) [Gender Equality: Policy Priorities and Recommendations](#) Belfast

<sup>21</sup> Indicators 16, 18, 34, 14, 41

<sup>22</sup> [Employment Act \(Northern Ireland\) 2016](#)

<sup>23</sup> DfE (2017) [Industrial Strategy Equality Screening Form](#)

- 4.14 Whilst there is a reference to possible local government initiatives aimed at helping women in business and to the proposal for a new region wide women's entrepreneurship programme, which we welcome, we recommend additional action to eliminating occupational and industrial segregation experienced by men and women within the labour market.
- 4.15 This includes, for example, measures to address the under-representation of women at a senior level in the Northern Ireland public sector and to encourage the representation of women in non-traditional roles, including in Science Technology, Engineering and Maths (STEM) related industries, and challenging gender stereotypes.
- 4.16 We have welcomed a range of initiatives by the former Department for Employment and Learning, in conjunction with the Commission, on improving the gender balance in STEM, including the development of a STEM Charter.
- 4.17 Whilst there is a proposal in the draft Industrial Strategy to increase skills/ employment in STEM, we note there is no specific reference to initiatives aimed at increasing the representation of women in the STEM workforce; in STEM – related apprenticeships; or studying STEM subjects in higher education.
- 4.18 The Department will also be aware that a recent investigation<sup>24</sup> carried out by the Commission has highlighted experiences of unfair treatment of pregnant workers and mothers in the workplace. The report outlines a number of recommendations aimed at addressing barriers to equality of opportunity for pregnant women and new mothers, including recommendations relevant to the work of the Department<sup>25</sup>.
- 4.19 We also reiterate our concern that there is a lack of specific actions to deliver a **comprehensive childcare strategy** and actions for appropriate, accessible and affordable childcare, including to support economic participation.

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<sup>24</sup> See ECNI (2016) [Expecting Equality-Summary Report](#) *A Formal Investigation into the treatment of pregnancy workers and mothers in Northern Ireland workplaces*.

<sup>25</sup> For example, a recommendation about working in partnership to ensure that the communication of the economic benefits of utilising and retaining the skills and experience of pregnant women and new mothers, and to develop effective approaches to attracting, developing and retaining women in the workforce before, during and after pregnancy.

- 4.20 The current *Economic Strategy* commits to developing and starting to implement a Childcare Strategy ‘with key actions to provide integrated and affordable childcare’<sup>26</sup>. The Executive’s *Report*<sup>27</sup> states only that a consultation has taken place.
- 4.21 The European Commission *Council Recommendation* on the 2016 UK National Reform Programme again highlights the need to improve supply of childcare; stating that proposals ‘to improve supply in childcare will require timely implementation as the availability and affordability of childcare remain a challenge’<sup>28</sup> and recommending that the availability of affordable, high-quality, full time childcare is further improved<sup>29</sup>.
- 4.22 The absence of an effective Childcare Strategy for affordable, accessible, high quality childcare is a continuing concern for the Commission and we **recommend** that there is clear commitment in the Industrial Strategy to implementing an effective childcare strategy to deliver good quality, accessible, affordable childcare.
- 4.23 Further, we refer the Department to the Scottish Government’s economic strategy, Scotland’s Economic Strategy (2015)<sup>30</sup> which sets out ‘that maximising economic opportunities for women to participate fully in the economy, and recognising the wider social role they provide, is key to improving economic performance and tackling inequality’.
- 4.24 We recommend that these points are addressed through the Industrial Strategy, the final PfG, and relevant associated delivery plans.

We recommend actions to address the exploitation of migrant workers and the concentration of some minority ethnic workers in low paid employment

- 4.25 We note that there are no specific actions in the draft Industrial Strategy aimed at tackling the concentration of some minority

<sup>26</sup> Northern Ireland Executive (2012) [Economic Strategy: Priorities for sustainable growth and prosperity](#) Belfast (page 14)

<sup>27</sup> Northern Ireland Executive (2016) [Northern Ireland Economic Strategy: 3rd annual monitoring report](#) (page 24)

<sup>28</sup> OJEU (18.08.2016) [Council Recommendation 12 July 2016 on the 2016 UK NRP \(2016/C 299/03\)](#)

<sup>29</sup> One of three recommendations.

<sup>30</sup> The Scottish Government (March 2015) [Scotland's Economic Strategy](#) at p64.

ethnic workers in low paid employment. We also note there are no specific references to tackling the exploitation or forced labour of migrant workers.

- 4.26 The Commission's formal investigation into the *Role of the Recruitment Sector in the Employment of Migrant Workers* (2010)<sup>31</sup> found evidence of exploitation of migrant workers in Northern Ireland and revealed that despite a considerable body of legislation governing the sector, not all recruitment agencies worked within these legislative terms and barriers to equality of opportunity existed for those who used their services. The investigation report outlines a number of recommendations aimed at addressing these findings, including recommendations relevant to the work of the Department<sup>32</sup>.
- 4.27 The Commission has previously highlighted research which found low grade, low paid employment appears commonplace among minority ethnic workers, despite many having high qualifications and skills and that migrant workers may find it difficult to improve their position in the labour market due to the lack of recognition of overseas qualifications by employers. We recommend that the Executive take measures to reduce ethnic minority disadvantage in employment; raise awareness of the rights of migrant workers (including the minimum wage) and maximising migrant workers access to the labour market.
- 4.28 Further, the Commission and others has recommended both mainstream and targeted actions by Government to address unemployment and underemployment experienced by Irish Travellers and Roma<sup>33</sup>.
- 4.29 We **recommend** that actions to address these recommendations are included in the Industrial Strategy, the final PfG and relevant associated delivery plans.

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<sup>31</sup> ECNI (2010) [Role of the Recruitment Sector in the Employment of Migrant Workers](#)

<sup>32</sup> It recommended that DEL gives consideration to how best to address the issues raised by the Law Centre in its input to the DEL review of the ESOL pilot, including the merits of designating English as an 'Essential Skill'. Steps to improve ESOL provision should also address the particular barriers experienced by refugee women. ECNI (2014): *Racial Equality Policy Priorities and Recommendations*, paragraph 5.6: page 21, paragraphs 5.19-5.22, pages 23-24. Available at: <http://www.equalityni.org/Race>

<sup>33</sup> ECNI (2014): *Racial Equality Policy Priorities and Recommendations*

We recommend additional actions to support disabled people into employment

- 4.30 We have welcomed commitments to support disabled people into employment, including through the *Enabling Success Strategy* and as outlined in draft PfG delivery plans. We have also welcomed commitments to upskill disabled people and to support them in further / higher education (as referenced in the draft Industrial Strategy).
- 4.31 We consider that there is further potential to underpin those commitments in the Industrial Strategy by setting out specific actions and associated resources, including as regards the Department's *Disability Employment Strategy*.
- 4.32 We **recommend** that the Industrial Strategy specifically refers to the *Disability Employment Strategy* and commits to ensuring it is effectively implemented and resourced in recognition of the significant barriers faced by disabled people in accessing and remaining in employment.

We recommend actions to ensure training and programmes to enable people to get into and stay in work that are accessible and inclusive of all.

- 4.33 We note that there are a number of planned interventions aimed at training, apprenticeships, as well as other actions aimed at improving skills (for example, to support businesses to upskill their workforce).
- 4.34 In addition, we **welcome** the proposed actions aimed at improving employment outcomes for young people. We had recommended action to address the proportion of young people not in education, training or employment<sup>34</sup>.
- 4.35 However, in general, it is not clear what actions will be taken to ensure such training and programmes are accessible and inclusive for all across the Section 75 equality groups, including, for example, women, disabled people and older people, and we recommend that this is addressed in the final Strategy.

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<sup>34</sup> See recommendations in ECNI (2016) draft [Age equality policy priorities and recommendations](#).

## ***Education***

We recommend a clearer commitment to address the educational inequalities experienced by people across a range of Section 75 groups.

- 4.36 In our PfG recommendations, we recommended actions to:
- address education inequalities, including those experienced by Irish Travellers; those entitled to free school meals, particularly boys, notably Protestant boys; and children/young people with disabilities;
  - tackle prejudice based bullying; address gender stereotyping in education; and remove the barriers facing looked after children and young carers;
  - ensure a move to a system of education which routinely teaches all pupils together via a shared curriculum in shared classes, and where sharing impacts meaningfully and substantively on every learner;
  - mainstream equality in education, including in the curriculum, teacher training and the policies/practices of schools and wider education bodies.
- 4.37 We also refer the Department to the Commission’s recommendations in respect of related draft delivery plans<sup>35</sup>, and also to our *Draft Statement on Key Inequalities in Education in Northern Ireland (2015)*<sup>36</sup> and to our identification of key policy recommendations in education across equality grounds<sup>37</sup>.
- 4.38 In general, we **welcome** the commitment to ‘improve educational outcomes from an early age’ and to ensure that ‘our education system must serve young people effectively and efficiently, especially those most at risk of underachieving’.

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<sup>35</sup> ECNI (2017) Response to [PfG Delivery Plans 16-18-34-14-41](#); ECNI (2017) Response to [PfG Delivery Plan 17-32-33](#)

<sup>36</sup> ECNI (2015) [Draft Statement of Key Inequalities in Education in Northern Ireland](#) Belfast

<sup>37</sup> ECNI (2016) [Age equality: Draft policy priorities and recommendations](#); UK Independent Mechanism for UNCRPD (2014) [List of Issues Interim Report](#); ECNI (2014) [Racial Equality Policy: Priorities and Recommendations](#); ECNI (2013) [Promoting Sexual Orientation Policy and recommendations](#)

- 4.39 We also **welcome** the commitment for colleges to continue to provide comprehensive support for people with special needs in pursuing further education studies because of illness or disability. Further, we **welcome** the commitment to work with councils as leaders of community planning to support their efforts to address social and economic disadvantage.
- 4.40 We welcome the focus on careers advice and guidance which could help young people to match their aspirations to realistic job prospects, by providing accurate information on the employment opportunities that exist for the skill / education level they hold. Alternatively, it may encourage individuals to take steps to gain the skills they require for a particular employment path. There needs to be a focus on job opportunities available in addition to educational achievement.
- 4.41 In summary, whilst we welcome these commitments and other measures which have the potential to address educational inequalities, in the main, we note that they are not targeted at particular Section 75 equality groups. It is therefore difficult to assess the degree to which actions will operate to address inequalities experienced by some Section 75 groups.

We recommend action to address education inequalities, including those experienced by Irish Travellers; those entitled to free school meals, particularly boys, notably Protestant boys; and children/young people with disabilities;

- 4.42 Whilst we welcome the commitment to continued support for people with disabilities and special educational needs in further education (under Pillar 3), there is no reference to actions to address barriers experienced by people with disabilities in other areas of education. There are also no specific actions aimed at other Section 75 equality groups, including Irish Travellers; those entitled to free school meals, particularly boys, notably Protestant boys.

We recommend actions to tackle prejudice based bullying; address gender stereotyping in education; and remove the barriers facing looked after children and young carers;

- 4.43 Prejudice based bullying, can blight the lives of young people, negatively affecting their attendance and attainment, as well as having a long-term impact on their life chances.

4.44 Furthermore, gender stereotyping in education and barriers in education facing looked after children and young carers can serve to limit the attainment and thus future economic contribution of learners.

4.45 We recommend that the industrial strategy include a commitment to work across government to address these issues.

We recommend actions to ensure a system of education that teaches all pupils together via a shared curriculum in shared classes, and where sharing impacts meaningfully and substantively on every learner.

4.46 As highlighted above, we recommend that a clear link is included in the Industrial Strategy between increasing respect, shared space (including in education) and reconciliation, and improving our attractiveness as a destination, including as a tourist destination, and our international reputation.

4.47 Sharing can allow pupils to access the full range of the curriculum and may encourage study of wider subjects at a further or higher education college. Pairing more effective schools with less effective schools may also offer the potential to close achievement gaps by improving standards and outcomes for all learners.

We recommend action to mainstream equality in education, including in the curriculum, teacher training and the policies/practices of schools and wider education bodies.

4.48 We note that there are no specific actions aimed at mainstreaming equality in education, including in the curriculum, teacher training and the policies/practices of schools and wider education bodies.

4.49 To add to the factors which might increase our attractiveness and performance as an investment location, we **recommend** that the Industrial Strategy includes further actions aimed at addressing the key inequalities in education highlighted in our PfG recommendations above, as well as in our draft *Draft Statement on Key Inequalities in Education in Northern Ireland (2015)*<sup>38</sup>.

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<sup>38</sup> ECNI (2015) [Draft Statement of Key Inequalities in Education in Northern Ireland](#) Belfast

## ***Social Attitudes***

We recommend actions to tackle prejudicial attitudes and behaviour, including in the workplace and education/training.

- 4.50 In our PfG recommendations, we recommended actions to challenge prejudicial attitudes, behaviour and hate crime so as to ensure that workplaces, services, public spaces and communities are free from harassment and/or discrimination. We also recommended actions to tackle gender stereotypes.
- 4.51 We note that there is no specific reference in the draft Industrial Strategy to actions to challenge prejudicial attitudes and behaviour in the workplace and/or education (including further and higher education), or tackle gender stereotypes.
- 4.52 We are aware that the former Department for Employment and Learning had undertaken a number of initiatives with businesses designed to tackle prejudicial attitudes in the workplace; including as regards promoting Lesbian, Gay and Bisexual (LGB) equality in the workplace.
- 4.53 We **recommend** that actions aimed at encouraging and supporting businesses, institutions of further and higher education and others to promote equality of opportunity and good relations, including through challenging prejudicial attitudes, gender stereotypes, and discrimination, are included in the Industrial Strategy.

As the UK exits the EU, we recommend there is no regression from existing protections and no negative impact on equality and good relations.

- 4.54 We note there is a reference in the draft Industrial Strategy to the ‘changing economic landscape’ as a result of exiting the EU and that *‘it is vital that we are responsive and adaptable in the ways we seek to achieve our objectives in trading globally’*<sup>39</sup>.

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<sup>39</sup> Department for the Economy (2017) [Economy 2030 - a consultation on an Industrial Strategy for Northern Ireland](#) p49.

- 4.55 In our recommendations on protecting equality and good relations as the UK exits the EU<sup>40</sup>, we have **recommended** that the Government ensures that the promotion of equality and good relations in Northern Ireland are treated as priority and core issues in the context of the UK's exit negotiations and final agreement with the EU.
- 4.56 To add to the factors which might increase our attractiveness and performance as an investment location, we **recommend** that there is no erosion of the current levels of equality rights; as well as employment rights that help promote equality of opportunity for Section 75 equality groups.
- 4.57 Further, we **recommend** that the Government should consider and fully mitigate any potential negative impact on work to promote equality and good relations. This should include addressing the potential impact of the loss of EU funding on programmes aimed at supporting peace and reconciliation, equality and good relations and social inclusion, including the impact on the voluntary and community sector.
- 4.58 It is clear that Northern Ireland has, for example, benefited from EU programmes designed to promote job opportunities, particularly for the unemployed, and upgrade skills levels. For example, the NI European Social Fund (ESF) Programme 2014-2020, led by the Department, has helped to combat poverty and enhance social inclusion by reducing economic inactivity and increasing the skills base of those currently in work and future potential participants in the workforce (including supporting people with disabilities and women).

We recommend the inclusion of actions designed to embed equality of opportunity and good relations into procurement practices.

- 4.59 We recommend that the Industrial Strategy should reflect the importance, in securing inclusive sustainable growth, of ensuring that the promotion of equality of opportunity and good

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<sup>40</sup> ECNI (2017) [Recommendations on protecting equality and good relations as the UK exits the EU](#).

relations is secured and advanced, including through public procurement<sup>41</sup>.

- 4.60 We note the commitment in Pillar 3 to ‘ensure that all parts of Northern Ireland and all sections of our society share equally in the benefits of sustainable economic growth....and....build a labour market that promotes opportunity across our cities, towns and rural areas’.<sup>42</sup>
- 4.61 The Commission welcomed the commitment to social clauses within the current Economic Strategy<sup>43</sup>. We note that while the Executive, in common with neighbouring jurisdictions, has made a clear policy commitment to the use of social clauses in public procurement contracts, an Assembly research paper (2014) has highlighted that the use of social clauses in the period 2012-2013 may not have been as significant as in earlier periods<sup>44</sup>.

## 5 Proposed indicators

We recommend that indicators should be tracked not only in aggregate terms, but also for the impact across all the Section 75 categories.

- 5.1 In our PfG recommendations, we recommended that all relevant (those relating directly to people) PfG indicators should be tracked not only in aggregate but also for the impact on individuals from each of the Section 75 categories.
- 5.2 Crucially, it is essential that commitments in the Industrial Strategy to the promotion of equality and good relations, underpinned by the inclusion of robust action measures flowing from them, are capable of being measured through the proposed Indicator framework.

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<sup>41</sup> ECNI and DFP (2008) [Equality of Opportunity and Sustainable Development in Public Sector Procurement](#)

<sup>42</sup> Department for the Economy (2017) [Economy 2030 - a consultation on an Industrial Strategy for Northern Ireland](#) (page 42)

<sup>43</sup> ‘Maximise the social benefits of investment through the use of social clauses in construction, supplies and services contracts.’ Northern Ireland Executive (2012) [Economic Strategy: Priorities for sustainable growth and prosperity](#) Belfast (page 84)

<sup>44</sup> ‘From the data provided by DFP, it is unclear whether the use of social clauses in Northern Ireland remained in 2012-13 as significant as appears to have been the case in the 2008-09 to 2011-2012 period.’ NIA RaiSe (2014) [The Implementation of social clauses policy in Northern Ireland](#) NIAR 925-13

- 5.3 We therefore **recommend** that Indicators used to track the progress of the Industrial Strategy should be tracked not only in aggregate but also for the impact on individuals from each of the Section 75 categories.
- 5.4 Our response<sup>45</sup> to the draft PfG sets out in more detail specific examples that highlight how a narrow focus on indicators and associated actions misses the opportunity to track and / or address inequalities across the full range of equality categories.
- 5.5 We also note that it is proposed to track progress of the Industrial Strategy against a number of proposed PfG indicators. We draw the Department's attention to our specific recommendations in respect of a number of Indicators (seasonally adjusted employment rate 16-64; A Better Jobs Index; employment rate of 16-64 year olds by deprivation quartile) in our responses on the related delivery plans<sup>46</sup>.
- 5.6 The Department will be aware that the proposed Indicator 'A *Better Jobs Index*' has yet to be developed. We also note that it is proposed in the draft PfG that this *Index* will include measures relating to 'earnings quality', job security and job satisfaction (including work that utilises skills, provides opportunities to develop and decent working conditions).
- 5.7 We **recommend** that this Index should be utilised to evaluate progress on addressing inequalities across the range of Section 75 categories; including, for example, in relation to the exploitation of migrant workers and the concentration of some migrant workers into low paid employment, as well as women's concentration in part time and often low-paid work. We look forward to further development of *A Better Jobs Index* in the context of refocusing the dual approach of rebuilding and rebalancing the economy<sup>47</sup>.
- 5.8 We note the commitment to benchmarking and to learning from global best practice. Again, any benchmarking should ensure

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<sup>45</sup> ECNI (December 2016) [Response to the Executive's consultation on a draft Programme for Government 2016-2021](#) (para 3.9 and example throughout)

<sup>46</sup> ECNI (2017) [PfG Delivery Plans 16-18-34-14-41](#); ECNI (2017) [PfG Delivery Plan 17-32-33](#)

<sup>47</sup> In our response to the PfG Delivery Plan *A Better Jobs Index* (Indicator 18), we noted the commitment 'to focus on creating well paid, secure jobs whilst also addressing the longer term challenge of improving living standards for those on lower wages'. We recommended that this Index should be used to evaluate progress on addressing inequalities across the range of Section 75 categories. ECNI (2017) [PfG Delivery Plans 16, 18, 34, 14, 41 - Employment Rate](#) Belfast

that measures are not only tracked in aggregate but also for the impact on individuals across all the Section 75 categories<sup>48</sup>.

We recommend actions to address gaps in equality data

- 5.9 Aligned to the above we recommend actions to address gaps in equality data.
- 5.10 We note from the Department's screening document<sup>49</sup> that it states that there is no available business data which shows an impact on employment opportunities as regards people within a number of Section 75 equality categories, including political opinion, marital status, sexual orientation, those with/without dependents.
- 5.11 Overall, the absence of key equality data means that it is difficult for the Executive, Departments and others to assess the nature and extent of key inequalities, as well as to track progress in achieving agreed equality and good relations outcomes.
- 5.12 We therefore call on the Department to ensure that the Industrial Strategy includes a commitment to take action to address these gaps in equality data and to improve equality monitoring in areas relating to the Industrial Strategy. This should include actions by the Department and others to encourage and support businesses, institutions of further and higher education and others to improve equality monitoring and address gaps in data.
- 5.13 The Department will note that our *Draft Statement on Key Inequalities in Education in Northern Ireland (2015)*<sup>50</sup> has, for example, identified that there remain significant and specific data gaps across a number of themes in relation to a number of equality grounds, specifically: gender identity; religion; political opinion; and sexual orientation. Additionally, there is lack of data disaggregation in relation to: ethnicity; disability status; marital status; and dependency status. In our PfG

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<sup>48</sup> ECNI (December 2016) [Response to the Executive's consultation on a draft Programme for Government 2016-2021](#) Belfast

<sup>49</sup> DfE (2017) [Industrial Strategy Equality Screening Form](#)

<sup>50</sup> ECNI (2015) [Draft Statement of Key Inequalities in Education in Northern Ireland](#) Belfast

recommendations<sup>51</sup> we recommended actions to address the key gaps in equality data, including on the grounds of gender identity, sexual orientation and race and to rectify the lack of data disaggregation in relation to ethnicity, disability and gender.

## 6 Compliance with statutory duties

In the development of the Industrial Strategy, preparation of budget proposals and associated action plans/strategies, the Department should ensure compliance with its statutory equality and good relations duties.

- 6.1 Meeting equality and good relations requirements in developing and delivering the Industrial Strategy, preparation of budget proposals and associated action plans/strategies requires leadership and commitment at the highest levels and throughout public policy making.
- 6.2 We have set out in [guidance](#)<sup>52</sup> (2015) how Section 75 duties and equality scheme commitments apply to the budget processes. As highlighted in this guidance, in the preparation of budget proposals, the Department and other public authorities should ensure that they fulfil their statutory equality and good relations duties.

## 7 Conclusion

- 7.1 Overall we welcome a number of initiatives and commitments in the draft Industrial Strategy which have the potential to advance equality of opportunity for Section 75 equality groups.
- 7.2 However, we consider that there is additional scope for the promotion of equality and good relations to be embedded and mainstreamed across the Industrial Strategy.

**Equality Commission for Northern Ireland  
April 2017**

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<sup>51</sup> ECNI (2016) [Programme for Government and Budget Recommendations](#)

<sup>52</sup> Equality Commission (2015) [Section 75 and Budgets: a short guide](#),

## **Annex 1: The Equality Commission for Northern Ireland**

1. The Equality Commission for Northern Ireland (the Commission) is an independent public body established under the Northern Ireland Act 1998. The Commission is responsible for implementing the legislation on fair employment, sex discrimination and equal pay, race relations, sexual orientation, disability and age.

2. The Commission's remit also includes overseeing the statutory duties on designated public bodies under Section 75 of the Northern Ireland Act 1998 (Section 75) and to promote positive attitudes towards disabled people and encourage participation by disabled people in public life under the Disability Discrimination Act 1995.

3. The Commission's general duties include:

- working towards the elimination of discrimination;
- promoting equality of opportunity and encouraging good practice;
- promoting positive / affirmative action
- promoting good relations between people of different racial groups;
- overseeing the implementation and effectiveness of the statutory duty on public bodies;
- keeping the legislation under review.

4. The Equality Commission, together with the Northern Ireland Human Rights Commission, has been designated under the United Nations Convention on the rights of Persons with Disabilities (UNCRPD) as the independent mechanism tasked with promoting, protecting and monitoring implementation of the Convention in Northern Ireland.