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PRESS RELEASE

DSD proposals on Welfare Reform - response

The Statutory Duty Investigations Committee of the Equality Commission has considered the Welfare Reform Bill Section 75 Update published by the Department for Social Development (DSD) in April 2013.

The Committee found some evidence of improved analysis and assessment of impacts of welfare reform on benefit claimants, and actions that may be considered as mitigation. While acknowledging these improvements, the Committee also noted that there is still considerable work to be done in both analyzing and assessing the potential impacts of the reforms and bringing forward mitigating measures and it continues to have concerns about the full extent of compliance with the Department's Equality Scheme commitments.

Despite these reservations, however, it has concluded that an investigation under Paragraph 11 of Schedule 9 of the Northern Ireland Act 1998 would not be the most effective way to pursue and secure appropriate action at this stage. Accordingly, it has decided not to recommend the initiation of an investigation to the Commission.

The Committee was clear in its response to the Department, noting that it needed to focus on improving its work in order to ensure that it adequately addresses the equality implications of the Welfare Reform Bill and the associated Regulations and identifies and takes mitigating measures where necessary.

The Commission will continue to monitor the work of the Department in this important area and seek to ensure the effective application of the Department's duties under Section 75 of the Northern Ireland Act 1998.

Update: DSD proposals on Welfare Reform Bill (19 April 2013)