

UK Open Government National Action Plan 2019-21: Northern Ireland Commitments

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Introduction

Government and the public sector is data rich, holding huge amounts of data with more being generated every day.

When government makes effective use of data, we make better policy and deliver better, more tailored services for citizens.

Since the Open Data NI portal was launched over **453** datasets have been published. Great strides forward have been made but there is still much more to do.

This Action Plan is ambitious and challenging and sets out our commitment to improving the way people can understand, influence and participate in government's work. The level of engagement this year has been hugely successful, across departments and the NI Open Government Network, with all participants fully adopting the Open Government principles and values.

Our eight commitments focus on the Open Government Partnership values of Access to Information, Public Accountability, Public Participation and Technology and Innovation.

In this National Action Plan we have committed to delivering 36 milestones activities under eight themes:

- **Transparency in Government Contracting**
- **Access to Government Land and Property Data** – making available data relating to Government Land and Property assets
- **Open Data** – increase the number and quality of open datasets released
- **Improved Transparency and Public Accountability**
- **Greater Citizen Participation and Open Policy Making**
- **Increasing Open Government Skills across the Public Sector**
- **Greater Public Sector Innovation**
- **Greater Social Innovation**

The Northern Ireland Civil Service is committed to Open Government. This Action Plan is about harnessing the potential of open data further and continuing on our journey towards an 'Open by Default' approach.

Summary of Commitments

Commitment number and title	Commitment Summary	Lead implementing organisation (s)	Other actors involvement government	Other actors involved CSOs, private sector, working groups, multilaterals etc.
1. Transparency in Government Contracting	To improve the publication of data on public procurement activity and contract spend managed by Construction & Procurement Delivery (CPD). CPD will develop the current data set on contracts awarded to include the cumulative spend on contracts after they are awarded and explore the potential to include data on Key Performance Indicators performance and achievement against contract milestones.	Department of Finance – Construction & Procurement Delivery (CPD) Strategic Investment Board (SIB)		Department of Finance – Enterprise Shared Services (ESS)
2. Access to Government Land & Property Services (LPS) Data	To make comprehensive data on government land and property assets publicly available and create a channel to encourage collaboration and innovation on how assets could be best used. This includes increased free access to LPS OSNI location data.	Department of Finance – Land & Property Services (LPS)		
3. Open Data – increase the number and quality of open datasets released	Increase the number and quality of open datasets released. Significantly increasing Open Data publication by using the updated NICS Information Asset Registers as a metric. Continue to improve the quality of data in open data formats including moving where feasible and appropriate towards 5 star data sets.	Department of Finance – Enterprise Shared Services (ESS) Northern Ireland Statistics & Research Agency	Department of Finance – Land & Property Services (LPS)	
4. Improved Transparency and Public Accountability	To identify, develop and implement sustainable and ambitious open government actions to drive the open government agenda across the NI departments, in the areas of transparency and public accountability. To work with Community Planning Partnerships to identify innovative and original approaches that will encourage partners and the public to engage in a process that will give local people a direct say in how public funds are used to address local	Department of Finance – Strategic Policy and Reform Directorate and Public Spending Directorate Department of Agriculture, Environment and Rural Affairs Department for Communities	All NICS Departments	

Commitment number and title	Commitment Summary	Lead implementing organisation (s)	Other actors involvement government	Other actors involved CSOs, private sector, working groups, multilaterals etc.
	needs.			
5. Citizen Participation and Open Policy Making	<p>Develop and trial effective open policy-making and public engagement methods. Health & Social Care (HSC) organisations and the Department must publish their own consultation scheme setting out what arrangements they have in place to ensure that the Patient and Client Council and the general public, are involved in, and consulted on, matters relating to the planning and delivery of health and social care services.</p> <p>DoF will showcase best practice in relation to user centred service design across the NICS</p>	<p>Department of Health</p> <p>Department of Finance</p>	<p>Department of Health, Public Health Agency and HSC Trusts</p>	<p>HSC service users and carers, voluntary and community sectors</p>
6. Open Government Skills across the Public Sector	<p>Develop Open Government Skills across the Public Sector to enable staff to deliver the Open Government Agenda. Integrate an openness mind-set into day-to-day business activities.</p>	<p>Department of Finance – Enterprise Shared Services</p> <p>Department of Finance – Strategic Policy and Reform Directorate</p>		<p>Open Government Interdepartmental Action Group</p>
7. Public Sector Innovation	<p>To significantly improve the adoption and use of open innovation approaches within the public sector. Encouraging greater use of the Small Business Research Initiative (SBRI) by NI public sector bodies as a way of encouraging greater public sector innovation and also innovation in the economy.</p>	<p>Department for the Economy – Innovation and Specialisation Branch</p>	<p>All NI Departments, with scope for collaboration with other UK and ROI public sector bodies</p>	<p>Private Sector</p> <p>Academia</p>
8. Social Innovation	<p>Promote and encourage the use of social innovation by the local public sector, in collaboration with other sectors, to help address social challenges whilst delivering on economic impact.</p>	<p>Department for Communities – Policy and Innovation Branch, Voluntary and Community Division</p>	<p>Other NI Departments, Wider Public Sector</p>	<p>Voluntary and Community Sector</p> <p>Private Sector</p> <p>Academia</p>

Commitment 1: Transparency in Government Contracting

Objective

To improve the publication of data on public procurement activity and contract spend managed by CPD. CPD will develop the current data set on contracts awarded to include the cumulative spend on contracts after they are awarded and explore the potential to include data on KPI performance and achievement against contract milestones.

What is the problem that the commitment will address?

Publishing and using open, accessible and timely information on government contracting to engage citizens and businesses will help improve the transparency of public spending and enhance supplier interest and competitiveness in the public procurement market.

How will the commitment contribute to solve the public problem?

Citizens and businesses will be able to track spend with third party suppliers.

Lead implementing organisation

- Department of Finance - Policy and Performance Division, Construction & Procurement Delivery (CPD)
- Strategic Investment Board (SIB)

Timeline

January 2019 – September 2019

OGP Values

This commitment is relevant to OGP value of transparency and public accountability. Citizens and businesses will be able to assess the value for money in public spending decisions and challenge poor contract performance.

Other actors involved – government

- None

Other actors involved – CSO's private sector, working groups, multilaterals etc.

- Department of Finance - Enterprise Shared Services, Account NI
- Department of Finance - Enterprise Shared Services, OpenDataNI
- Strategic Investment Board

Milestone Activity	New or ongoing	Start date	End date
Complete a gap analysis of data sharing at each step of the contracting process.	New	January 2019	31 March 2019
Develop process and publish all contract award information and accumulative spend for contracts over £10k.	New	April 2019	September 2019
Develop process and publish the procurement forward pipeline.	New	January 2019	30 June 2019
Develop process and publish Invite To Tender	New	January	30 June 2020

Milestone Activity	New or ongoing	Start date	End date
		2019	
Use the eTender full functionality to move from 3 star level.	New	January 2019	30 September 2019
Develop process and publish eTender datasets by default.	New	January 2019	30 September 2019
Develop process and publish the major government construction projects over £500k and their associated contracts as well as procurement pipeline through the OpenDataNI portal.	New	January 2019	30 June 2020

Commitment 2: Access to Government Land and Property Data – making available data relating to Government Land and Property assets.

Objective

The commitment is to make comprehensive data on government land and property assets publicly available and create a channel to encourage collaboration and innovation on how assets could be optimally utilised. This includes increased free access to LPS OSNI location data.

What is the problem that the commitment will address?

Comprehensive data relating to land and property assets owned by the public sector is not easily accessible to the public, elected representatives, the private/voluntary/community sectors and public bodies. As a result, work within government departments and arm's length bodies on the management of their land and property assets is less efficient than it could be, opportunities for synergies in the use of land and property may be missed and third party organisations which may wish to acquire or make use of surplus or unused land and property held by the public bodies have to work through time consuming search exercises to gather the information.

How will the commitment contribute to solve the public problem?

Providing an increased level of no cost access will remove the perceived barrier to using accurate complete authoritative OSNI mapping data by developers and SMEs. It is expected that this will result in increased economic activity in the NI small business sector.

The Public Land for Housing Project led by Department for Communities is already underway to map government assets in order to assess suitability for housing development. Where robust datasets are available, these will be considered for release first.

Department of Finance has commenced a discovery exercise to identify how existing datasets and systems can be used to build a comprehensive register of government assets. Subject to access permission, a comprehensive list will be used as a foundation from which layers of data can be added. This will start with addressing, mapping and applying unique (GUID) referencing before publication.

The GUID referencing can then be more widely applied and/or linked to other systems to capture other information such as value, management and operating costs, condition, age and occupancy etc.

A commitment to making data relating to Government Land and Property assets publicly available and thus subject to scrutiny, will help to create the conditions necessary to ensure the data is robust and accurate and that public assets are being or planned to be fully utilised. It will also provide a channel to encourage collaboration and innovation on how assets could be optimised. It will also hold departments to account on how they are managing their assets.

Lead implementing organisation

- Department of Finance - Land & Property Service

Timeline

Ongoing – March 2021

OGP Values

The direct costs associated with delivery of increasing free access to LPS OSNI location data could potentially reach, in extremis, circa £11m per annum. Indirect costs associated with the consequent degradation of authoritative state mapping data are difficult to quantify.

OSNI is developing options to deliver on this commitment. The optimal option will be aligned, where possible, to the outcome of consultations and implementation of the UK strategy on geospatial data currently being developed by the UK Geospatial Commission.

The additional cost of resources required to implement the mapping of land and property assets, collating and releasing data related to those assets and registering the title on unregistered land might be in order of £500k per year for 3 years. Some of the work might be covered within existing mapping agreements with departments which will be subject to further discussion.

This commitment aligns positively with other government initiatives such as: Public land for Housing, Executive’s Asset Management Strategy and departmental estate strategies, Local Authority Community Planning, Community Asset Transfer.

Other actors involved – government

- None

Other actors involved – CSO’s private sector, working groups, multilaterals etc.

- None

Milestone Activity	New or ongoing	Start date	End date
Develop and implement model to increase the no cost access to current OSNI data	New	Ongoing	June 2020
Make available more components of OSNI historic data on OGL	New	Ongoing	31 July 2019

Milestone Activity	New or ongoing	Start date	End date
Release 98% of all requests for LPS derived data	New	Ongoing	31 July 2019
Put in place a process to make available existing data relating to Government land and property assets.	New	April 2019	March 2021 <i>(mapping only)</i>
Using existing LPS datasets, produce, publish and maintain a comprehensive dataset of Government land and property assets.	New	April 2019	March 2021 <i>(mapping only)</i>

Commitment 3: Open Data – Increase the number and quality of open datasets released.

Objective

Increase the number and quality of open datasets released. We are committed to base-lining and significantly increasing Open Data publication by using the updated NICS Information Asset Registers as a metric.

We will continue to improve the quality of data in open data formats including moving where feasible and appropriate towards 5 star data sets.

What is the problem that the commitment will address?

Increase accessibility and availability of open and statistical data to support innovation. To increase the awareness of data held in NI public sector that can be released under Open Government Licence.

How will the commitment contribute to solve the public problem?

It will increase the variety of data available for further reuse. NISRA already makes data available through gov.uk, its own website and the open data portal.

Lead implementing organisation

- Department of Finance – Northern Ireland Statistics & Research Agency
- Department of Finance - Enterprise Shared Services

Timeline

January 2019 – December 2019

OGP Values

This commitment is relevant to OGP value of transparency, increasing data being disclosed and improving accessibility by making more data will be available in machine readable formats.

NISRA already makes large quantities of statistical data available in open data formats, predominantly at 3*, and are committed to continuing to make regular data available and to push toward more machine readable outputs in 4 and 5* formats.

Other actors involved – government

- Department of Finance - Land & Property Services (LPS), (to make LPS data identified available for publication)

Other actors involved – CSO’s private sector, working groups, multilaterals etc.

- None

Milestone Activity	New or ongoing	Start date	End date
Drive further strength and depth of data access through the release of the first 5* dataset through the OpenDataNI portal.	New	January 2019	31 July 2019
Increased amount of NISRA data published through open data portal.	New	January 2019	30 June 2020
Baseline and significantly increase number of open datasets published through the OpenDataNI portal.	New	January 2019	30 September 2019
Develop and publish the NI Open Data Strategy by April 2019	New	January 2019	30 September 2019
Publish NICS Departmental Information Asset registers as open datasets on the OpenDataNI portal and update annually	New	January 2019	30 September 2019
Produce and publish an annual performance dashboard for the central government office estate, accessible through the OpenDataNI portal.	New	January 2019	31 December 2019
Produce and publish monthly paper reduction figures across NICS through OpenDataNI portal to evidence drive to Digital First	New	January 2019	30 September 2019
Increase publication of LPS datasets over and above those already available via OpenDataNI portal including: <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Customer complaints and correspondence • Customer information Centre Transaction Activity • Call handling- Channel Shift/Web Statistics • Registration cases in support of conveyancing • Registration of online transactions in support of conveyancing • Revenues and Benefits – annual rate collection and end of year debt position to include domestic and non-domestic profile • Valuation cases – number of rating cases to include New Builds, altered Domestic properties, Challenges and Appeals by council area. 	New	January 2019	30 September 2019

Commitment 4: Improved Transparency and Public Accountability.

Objective

To identify, develop and implement sustainable and ambitious open government actions to drive the open government agenda across the NI departments, in the areas of transparency and public accountability.

To work with Community Planning Partnerships to identify innovative and original approaches that will encourage partners and the public to engage in a process that will give local people a direct say in how public funds are used to address local needs.

What is the problem that the commitment will address?

To promote transparency, integrity and accountability in all aspects of governance, by publishing information and data in an open, accessible and timely way that will engage with Citizens and improve trust in government services.

How will the commitment contribute to solve the public problem?

Adopting the 'Open by Default' approach to publishing of all information, will increase government transparency, build public confidence and awareness, allowing them to make informed decisions and help them engage with government moving forward. Additionally mapping the Sustainable Development Goal's (SDG's) to the draft Programme for Government (PfG) will help focus government policy/actions in relation to ending poverty and hunger, promoting health and wellbeing and equality for all, achieving better.

Reporting and explaining budget decisions in an open and simplistic format will improve the public's knowledge and understanding of how much funding is received in Northern Ireland, how this is allocated and how it is spent.

Lead implementing organisation

- Department of Finance - Strategic Policy and Reform Division
- Department of Finance - Public Spending Directorate
- Department of Agriculture, Environment and Rural Affairs
- Department For Communities - Local Government Policy

Timeline

January 2019 – June 2020

OGP Values

This commitment is relevant to transparency, public accountability and citizen participation.

Other actors involved – government

- All NICS Departments

Other actors involved – CSO's private sector, working groups, multilaterals etc.

- None

Milestone Activity	New or ongoing	Start date	End date
Conduct a landscape review to identify opportunities for further government transparency and clear communication of access to government information/data	New	January 2019	July 2019
Review and standardise all publication schemes, disclosure logs and bring forward recommendations for standardisation across departments.	New	January 2019	June 2019
To present the budget material with more infographics to help aid citizen understanding and to improve the presentation in a more user friendly way.	New	March 2019	Ongoing
Mapping of draft Programme for Government Indicators against UN Sustainable Development Goal's and publication.	New	October 2018	February 2019
Showcase learning from previous and existing Participatory Budgeting exercises and opportunities in support of Community Planning	New	February 2019	30 June 2020

Commitment 5: Citizen Participation and Open Policy Making.

Objective

Develop and trial effective open policy-making and public engagement methods. HSC organisations and the Department must publish their own consultation scheme setting out what arrangements they have in place to ensure that the Patient and Client Council and the general public, are involved in, and consulted on, matters relating to the planning and delivery of health and social care services. DoF will showcase best practice in relation to user centred service design across the NICS

What is the problem that the commitment will address?

This commitment is aimed at improving citizen participation in service design and policy making particularly in health.

Personal and Public Involvement (PPI) is a process whereby service users, carers and the public are empowered and enabled to inform and influence the commissioning, planning, delivery and evaluation of services in ways that are meaningful to them.

PPI is a statutory duty as detailed in the Health and Social Care (Reform) Act 2009. Each HSC organisation is required to involve and consult service users, carers and the public in the planning and delivery of HSC services and in decisions that affect the provision of care.

How will the commitment contribute to solve the public problem?

Through full implementation of PPI and *Delivering Together* to make public participation in government policy making more effective and meaningful.

Lead implementing organisation

- Department of Health - Chief Nursing Officer,
- Department of Finance - Strategic Policy and Reform Division

Timeline

January 2019 – December 2019

OGP Values

This commitment is relevant to OGP value of citizen participation. PPI is about “putting the patient first”, enhancing patient choice, meeting demands and expectations, and ensuring views are heard and listened to. Effective PPI can really change things for people who use our health and social care services, both in their experience of the service they receive and in the quality and safety of their care.

Participation – support for a strong and independent civil society, the involvement of citizens and other stakeholders in decision making processes

Other actors involved – government

- Department of Health, Public Health Agency and HSC Trusts

Other actors involved – CSO’s private sector, working groups, multilaterals etc.

- HSC Service users and carers, voluntary and community sectors

Milestone Activity	New or ongoing	Start date	End date
Support the work of the PPI Forum in the implementation, embedding and delivery of PPI within the Health and Social Care System. Support research and experimentation to create new tools or utilise existing tools and platforms that empower users to be fully active in the government policy making process.	New	Ongoing	Ongoing
Develop the knowledge and skill base of service users and carers to enable them to fully participate in policy and service developments.	New	October 2018	Ongoing
Increase awareness in user centred design, research and experimentation, through project delivery and engagement with policy makers.	New	January 2019	December 2019
Showcase best practice and innovative examples of public engagement in policy development across Executive departments.	New	March 2019	December 2019

Commitment 6: Open Government Skills across the Public Sector.

Objective

Develop Open Government Skills across the Public Sector to enable staff to deliver the Open Government Agenda. Integrate an openness mind-set into day-to-day business activities.

What is the problem that the commitment will address?

Public sector staff must change how they design and deliver programs and services to support the Northern Ireland Executive's commitments to transparency and public engagement.

How will the commitment contribute to solve the public problem?

Individuals working in departments across government will have access to learning material to build their skills and capabilities for using open data, open information, and open dialogue to support better operational and policy decisions. Furthermore, to boost the value of available open data to citizens, public sector can be guided to understand how to set priorities for data or information publication, based on its potential value to users both inside and outside of government.

Lead implementing organisation

Department of Finance - Enterprise Shared Service

Department of Finance - Strategic Policy and Reform Division

Timeline

January 2019 – June 2020

OGP Values

This commitment is relevant to OGP value of transparency, public accountability and citizen participation.

Open data is useful not only to those who regularly evaluate and use data to support financial, statistical, and socio-economic analysis, but also to non-data specialists working in policy, operational, and service delivery areas.

Sharing and leveraging data, information, and technology across the government can help innovation flourish.

Other actors involved – government

- None

Other actors involved – CSO's private sector, working groups, multilaterals etc.

- Open Government Interdepartmental Action Group

Milestone Activity	New or ongoing	Start date	End date
Review and define the best approach to raise awareness and skills in Open Government/Open Data and implement approaches to increase staff ability to deliver the open government agenda.	New	January 2019	30 June 2020
To develop skills and capacity in creativity and innovation across the public sector in NI through practical training.	New	January 2019	30 June 2020

Commitment 7: Public Sector Innovation.

Objective

To significantly improve the adoption and use of open innovation approaches within the public sector. Encouraging greater use of the Small Business Research Initiative (SBRI) by NI public sector bodies as a way of encouraging greater public sector innovation and also innovation in the economy.

What is the problem that the commitment will address?

To increase the use of innovative approaches such as machine learning and natural language processing that can improve the accountability of government and better engage with citizens.

How will the commitment contribute to solve the public problem?

Encouraging greater use of innovative procurement.

Lead implementing organisation

- Department for Economy - Innovation and Specialisation Branch

Timeline

January 2019 – October 2019

OGP Values

Promoting new technologies that offer opportunities for information sharing, public participation, and collaboration. SBRI is designed to encourage new products and services to address public sector needs. In addition we have encouraged more use of open data as a resource for contractors and encouraged public bodies to make more of their data open as part of the process.

Supporting the ability of governments and citizens to use tech for openness and accountability; -for example the NI Audit Office are exploring use of Machine Learning to improve audit processes while NISRA are exploring the use of natural language processing to improve the analysis of qualitative and textual information.

Other actors involved – government

- All NI Departments, with scope for collaboration with other UK and ROI public sector bodies

Other actors involved – CSO’s private sector, working groups, multilaterals etc.

- Private Sector
- Academia

Milestone Activity	New or ongoing	Start date	End date
In line with the NI Innovation Strategy run a SBRI Challenge Fund call each year to encourage NI public bodies to run SBRI projects.	Ongoing	January 2019	31 October 2019
Target key technologies and approaches which can be developed through SBRI which will improve public sector accountability and openness	New	January 2019	31 October 2019
Explore and drive forward with opportunities for exemplar projects using digital technologies to address voluntary, community, social enterprise, public and private sector needs	New	January 2019	31 October 2019

Commitment 8: Social Innovation.

Objective

Promote and encourage the use of social innovation by the local public sector, in collaboration with other sectors, to help address social challenges whilst delivering on economic impact.

What is the problem that the commitment will address?

In a public sector environment which faces ongoing downward pressure on financial resources, it is vital that we consider new and innovative ways to solve the problems being faced by our society.

Within the Executive’s Innovation Strategy ‘InnovateNI’ – DfC leads on a key action, chairing a social innovation working group to identify and report on future opportunities and promote the concept of social innovation.

The Strategy recognises that whilst there has been a growing and focused interest in social innovation, it is distinct from work in the social economy and third sector. In that social innovations are new solutions that simultaneously meet a social need (more effectively than existing solutions) and lead to new or improved capabilities and relationships and better use of assets and resources. There is real potential to engage all sectors of the economy to bring about positive change, applying expertise and resources to resolving social problems, whilst delivering on economic impact.

How will the commitment contribute to solve the public problem?

To increase awareness of social innovation and subsequently the use of innovative solutions to social challenges, within the public sector in collaboration with other sectors.

Lead implementing organisation

- Department for Communities - Policy and Innovation Branch, Voluntary and Community Division

Timeline

January 2019 – June 2020

OGP Values

Open engagement between the wider public sector, third sector and private sector around the concept of Social Innovation, leading to potential collaborations, will further advance the following OGP values:

- Access to information
- Civic participation

Other actors involved – government

- Department for Communities
- Other NI Government Departments
- Wider public sector

Other actors involved – CSO’s private sector, working groups, multilaterals etc.

- Voluntary and Community Sector
- Private Sector
- Academia

Milestone Activity	New or ongoing	Start date	End date
Quarterly meetings of the ‘Social Innovation Working Group’ to be attended by public, third and private sectors. Purpose of which will be to promote the concept of social innovation and bring together key policy makers and practitioners to scope the current activity/ interest in social innovation developments, identify future opportunities and collaborations, to promote the concept across the public, private and third sectors and to pilot social innovation actions.	New	January 2019	30 June 2020
Sponsorship of relevant programmes/events, which aim to promote Social Innovation regionally within Northern Ireland. This will: <ul style="list-style-type: none"> - Further embed and promote the concept of social innovation across sectors. 	New	January 2019	30 June 2020

Milestone Activity	New or ongoing	Start date	End date
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> - Provide opportunities for learning. - Provide opportunities for cross-sectoral collaborations. 			
Encourage the growth of Social Innovation within the Northern Ireland economy	New	January 2019	30 June 2020