

**Northern Ireland (NI) Narrative for inclusion in UK Open Government,
National Action Plan
Self-Assessment Report**

August 2017

History of Open Government in Northern Ireland

A key group involved in progressing Open Government within Northern Ireland is the Northern Ireland Open Government Network (NIOGN).

At an event on 5 November 2014 to launch the Open Government Network the then Finance Minister, Simon Hamilton, welcomed the establishment of such a forum and committed to working with them going forward to progress the Open Government agenda here. Opening this event, the Minister outlined his aspirations in respect of Open Data, Open Budgeting and Open Policy making – in encouraging a more collaborative and transparent Executive in N Ireland.

Northern Ireland was first included in the UK National Action Plan in December 2016, when the then Finance Minister, Máirtín Ó Muilleoir secured agreement from the NI Executive to put forward a total of 4 commitments to the 3rd UK National Action Plan.

Process summary

Public Sector Reform Division (PSRD), Dept of Finance (Formerly Dept of Finance & Personnel) have been progressing NI's input to the 3rd UK National Action Plan. At a national level, this work has involved PSRD officials working collaboratively with representatives from the Cabinet Office in London, and the Scottish and Welsh Governments to develop the 3rd UK Action plan which would reflect challenges and progress in Open Government across the UK.

At a local level, PSRD officials have undertaken a programme of consultation to seek input on potential NI commitments for possible inclusion in the Action Plan. This work involved:

- A series of meetings with representatives from NI Open Government Network (NIOGN)

- Meetings with key stakeholders which included representatives from Northern Ireland Statistics Research Agency (NISRA), Digital Transformation Service, Department for the Economy (DFE) Innovation Unit and The Executive Office (TEO)
- A cross sectoral workshop including representatives from civic society, NIOGN, NICS departments and local government.
- A separate task and finish session to complete workshop outputs
- Seeking input from business areas within the NICS on specific commitments requiring clarification.

Through a process of collaboration and negotiation with the NIOGN and cross-departmental stakeholders, a set of 4 commitments, supported by a number of actions, was arrived at and for which NI Executive agreement was sought and secured.

Implementation of the commitments.

Although the NI commitments have only been included since December 2016, there has been some good progress in their implementation. Most areas are on target for completion within the timeframe of this NAP and where there have been delays, these are recoverable through the actions identified. The following table provides a summary of progress for each of the commitments:

Commitment	Status	Summary
1. Develop & trial effective open policy-making and public engagement methods	On Target (subject to action to address issues)	This commitment is led by DoF (PSRD) <u>Progress.</u> There has been some significant progress in most areas of the commitment, with the NI Innovation Lab leading the way in developing and utilising innovative approaches and methodologies to address difficult issues and problems across the public sector. The on-line consultation tool has been launched and is in use across the NICS Departments and beyond. <u>Issues.</u> There have been delays in identifying a suitable policy area to take forward a test of open policy making methodology.

		<p><u>Actions.</u> Work is ongoing to secure agreement to take forward a significant policy area in association with the NI Innovation Lab. In addition, the recently established cross-departmental Open Government Implementation Group has been tasked with identifying suitable policy areas within their Departments where open policy making pilots may be feasible.</p>
<p>2. Promote greater levels of public sector innovation.</p>	<p>On Target (subject to action to address issues)</p>	<p>This commitment is jointly led by DoF (PSRD) and DfE.</p> <p><u>Progress.</u> There has been good progress against most of this commitment. Data analytics training has been provided to NICS SCS and NISRA are developing a number of exemplar projects under the Data Science Labs. Funding has been secured for SBRI Challenge Fund and the Innovation Lab have secured EU funding to take forward a collaborative project to introduce service design to SMEs.</p> <p>Under this commitment, a number of projects have secured funding to support public sector innovations, such as an SBRI Challenge Fund, as well as developments made, for example in exploring opportunities in data analytics and for promoting cross border knowledge sharing and collaboration on digital government issues. A New Executive Innovation Fund will be considered as part of the draft Programme for Government for Northern Ireland.</p> <p><u>Issues.</u> The current political situation has stalled the establishment of an Executive Innovation Fund.</p> <p><u>Actions.</u> A number of officials have registered for and will be attending the cross border GovCamp Connect event on 2nd Sept and the Open Data Camp in October. Officials will consider further opportunities to engage on a cross border basis as they arise. On resumption of the Executive, agreement for an Innovation Fund will be sought.</p>
<p>3. To investigate implementation of the Open Contracting Data Standard (OCDS) in Central Procurement operations.</p>	<p>On Target</p>	<p>This commitment is led by DoF (CPD)</p> <p><u>Progress.</u> Analysis of the OCDS framework showed that CPD met the requirements for the Basic Disclosure Level (one-star). Actions have been identified to meet Intermediate Disclosure Level (two-star).</p> <p>Improved data disclosure actions have been introduced and to date the 'contracts awarded' data for the most recent financial year (2016/17) has been published on the Open Data NI portal.</p>

		<p>CPD has also worked in partnership with the Open Data NI portal team to ensure that data published is compatible with the visualisation tool provided within the portal, and is currently researching whether additional reports can be made available from eTendersNI, and published on the Open Data NI portal.</p>
<p>4. Open-up government for greater accountability, improve public services and building a more prosperous and equal society</p>	<p>On Target (subject to action to address issues)</p>	<p>This commitment is led by DoF (Digital Transformation Service)</p> <p><u>Progress.</u></p> <p>In general the progress towards fulfilling this commitment is on target, DTS are widening their engagement with the user community, have increased the numbers trained to publish data and have been successful in driving new innovative teaching products for Northern Ireland pupils.</p> <p><u>Issues.</u></p> <p>Areas where more work is needed include that of pro-active publication as very few Departments/organisations are publishing data without being pressed to release it via the suggestion facility on the open data website.</p> <p><u>Actions.</u></p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> ▪ Better utilisation of our Open Data Implementation and Advisory Boards to increase the release of data sets; ▪ more targeted engagement at senior level to highlight the benefits of publishing data as open data; ▪ planning to publically release a dashboard created from our open data publications, of the numbers of datasets by publisher and also the status of the suggested datasets; and ▪ working towards automated data publishing and currently running a pilot project.

Conclusion and next steps

Following a lengthy development and agreement process, good progress has been made in implementing the NI commitments. Where there are issues or delays, these are recoverable by the actions that have been identified.

Good relationships continue to be developed with both the NIOGN and the Democratic Society who have more recently engaged with the Open Government process in Northern Ireland.

PSRD officials have started discussion with civic society representatives around planning and developing input to the 4th UK National Action Plan, including the challenges that the current political situation in Northern Ireland may present.

PROGRESS TOWARDS OPEN GOVERNMENT COMMITMENTS – AUGUST 2017

Commitment title	COMMITMENT 1: Develop & trial effective open policy-making and public engagement methods	
Lead department(s)	DoF	
Civil society organisation(s) involved in implementation to date	-	
Report date	11 th August 2017	
Overall commitment status	On Target (one area behind schedule – recoverable)	
Overall progress against commitment	There has been some significant progress in most areas of the commitment, with the NI Innovation Lab leading the way in developing and utilising innovative approaches and methodologies to address difficult issues and problems across the public sector. The on-line consultation tool has been launched and is in use across the NICS Departments and beyond. The delays in identifying a suitable policy area to take forward a test of open policy making methodology is being addressed through the recently established cross-departmental Open Government Implementation Group.	
Progress against milestones/activities		
1. Government and civil society to co-design a pilot project to test open policy making methodology locally, ensuring that the lessons learned from the pilot are documented and shared across government.	<p>Work is ongoing to secure agreement to take forward a significant policy area, in association with the NI Innovation lab.</p> <p>Departmental Open Government Implementation Group members have been tasked with identifying further policy areas that are suitable for piloting open policy making</p>	Behind schedule
2. 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.	<p>NI Innovation Lab has taken forward a number of difficult areas utilising a range of innovative tools and methodologies such as:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> ● i-dec methodology – Innovation through Design, Experimentation and Creativity ● Service Design – Putting service users and stakeholders at the heart of policy and service design and using the ‘Double Diamond’ approach of Discover, Define, Develop and Deliver to progress projects. ● Behavioural Insights - A mix of psychology and economics to understand how people behave and make decisions in everyday life ● Systems dynamics modelling - System dynamics modelling looks 	On target

	<p>at patterns of behaviour over time and seeks to understand the underlying structure of relationships producing the observed patterns.</p>	
<p>3. Complete the on boarding process to encourage greater levels of uptake from all Executive departments and NDPBs to the NI Direct consultation portal.</p>	<p>DFP Digital Transformation Service conducted a pilot using Citizen Space from May 2015 – February 2016. Four NICS Departments created formal consultations of varying complexity and subject matter, in order to test and evaluate Citizen Space’s effectiveness and value as a digital Consultation Platform. After a formal evaluation NICS subscribed to Citizen Space and has worked to promote it across NICS and the wider public sector.</p> <p>It underwent a proportionate accreditation process and was approved by NICS Security Forum for use across NICS and its NDPBs and ALBs in March 2016 and launched by HOCS and Head of Policy Profession as NICS consultation tool in May 2016. It can also be used to undertake surveys and as such in June 2016 the NICS online survey policy revised to incorporate Citizen Space. It was also included in the revised Practical Guide to Policy Making in Northern Ireland document in November 2017.</p> <p>CPD were approached early in 2017 for advice on a proposal for a Direct Award Contract for Citizen Space with a duration of three years to allow stability so that a shared service “wrap” could be fully developed. CPD “approved” a direct award for a period of one year. This subscription expires in February 2018.</p> <p>A full procurement exercise will be now undertaken to establish a platform for 3 to 5 years (subject to advice from Finance and CPD) to allow the formalisation of processes and procedures, and allow a fully managed shared service to be developed.</p> <p>To date there are over 300 users with over 25,000 responses through the platform. Eight of the nine departments are using it, as well as numerous agencies and NDPBs including the Boundary Commission, NIO, and HSCNI.</p>	<p>On target</p>
<p>4. Showcase best practice and innovative examples of public engagement in policy development across Executive departments.</p>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ● Pain Hackathon – On 3rd June 17 the Innovation Lab organised a hackathon, #hackthepain. Its aim was to lay the foundations for an innovative, engaging and authoritative pain management information website for over 400,000 people in Northern Ireland estimated to suffer from persistent pain caused by many different long term conditions of ill health. #hackthepain attracted a 45 people from technical and non-technical backgrounds, who assembled in the colourful QUB Institute of Computer Sciences on Sat 3 June 2017 for a 12 hour cocktail of information exchange speed dating, design and development of IT solutions and judging to identify the best proposal for further development in coming months. ● Medicines Optimisation - Together with the Department of Health, 	<p>On target</p>

the Innovation Lab delivered a workshop to understand how to put patients at the centre of the medicines prescribing process and enable them to take ownership of their treatment. The Lab focused on patients and their experience to achieve the goals of reducing wastage of medicines, ensuring medicines are taken correctly and to help patients improve their outcomes. Six ideas were prototyped and presented to a team of stakeholders. One of these ideas, Family Carer Training Plan, was completely new to the Department of Health and will be integrated into a Lab project to support carers.

- NICS Live (St George's Market) – The Innovation Lab within the Department of Finance, along with PDR Wales and Belfast City Council, held an interactive and practical 2 day training event on the 18th and 19th of May, culminating in a feedback session at NICS Live on 24th May 2017 to look at how service design could be used in the public sector to provide solutions to a particular issue. **From Concept to Conference : Design Live at St Georges Market** was a look at rapid problem solving using Service Design and emphasised the point that good design could make a massive difference to the success of a policy, service or product. 20 Civil Servants from across NICS Departments took part in this event.
- The Innovation Lab has commenced a series of Lunch and Learn seminars inviting key personnel from across Departments to share knowledge and join in a discussion on a particular topic. The first session looked at the need for collective thinking around particular problems and was positively received. The next event is scheduled for September with the discussion based on the topic 'From Design Thinking to Systems Change'.

There is evidence of further pockets of "good practice" occurring in many of the Departments/Business Areas across the NICS and wider public sector. The cross-departmental Open Government Implementation Group members have been tasked with identifying these and bring them back to the group and to consider how best to showcase/share them initially across the NICS and wider as the opportunities arise.

Commitment title	COMMITMENT 2: Promote greater levels of public sector innovation.	
Lead department(s)	DoF/DfE	
Civil society organisation(s) involved in implementation to date	-	
Report date	11 th August 2017	
Overall commitment status	On target/behind	
Overall progress against commitment	There has been good progress against most of this commitment, however the current political situation has stalled the establishment of an Executive Innovation Fund. This cannot be progressed until a NI Executive has been formed.	
Progress against milestones/activities		
1. In line with the Executive's Innovation Strategy introduce a SBRI Challenge Fund to support public sector innovations	An initial £1.1m Northern Ireland SBRI Challenge Fund was secured in 2016/17 resulting in five new SBRI competitions being launched. A further £1m was secured for projects in 2017/18. This will fund two new SBRI's to be launched in 2017/18 as well as further funding for two of the 2016/17 projects to progress to Phase 2.	On target
2. Seek to establish a New Executive Innovation Fund to support public sector innovation including SBRI and Challenge Prizes	This will be considered as part of the draft Programme for Government for Northern Ireland. Cannot be progressed in the absence of an NI Executive.	Behind schedule
3. Explore funding opportunities for Public sector innovation beyond the region	NI Innovation Lab have secured €160k funding from the EU Interreg programme. This is to fund a collaborative project that seeks to develop and introduce service design within SME organisations. Further opportunities for funding are being sought.	On target
4. Explore opportunities for exemplar projects using data analytics to address voluntary, community, social enterprise, public and private sector needs	An Innovation Lab was held to build a comprehensive understanding of the potential for the application of big data and data analytics (data science) in the public sector. The recommendations from this project were split into two work streams, one of which was to deliver data science awareness seminars to all NICS Senior Civil Servants (SCS). Approximately 230 SCS were invited to data science awareness training which was delivered by Deloitte in their Technology studio	On target

	<p>January – March 2017. This training provided SCS with a high level of understanding of data science and the value of directing funding to this new area of work. The training included a number of case studies which demonstrated the benefits of data science in achieving business outcome, policy development, cost savings and customer service employments. The feedback from participants at the awareness sessions was very positive.</p> <p>Under data science labs, Northern Ireland Statistic Research Agency (NISRA) are developing 10 exemplar projects within NICS & building capacity through training of staff in data analytics.</p>	
<p>5. Explore opportunities for the Executive for projects under the Space for Smarter Government Programme</p>	<p>A call for projects under the Space for Smarter Government Programme is expected in autumn 2017.</p>	<p>On target</p>
<p>6. Develop a proposal for data analytics and research exploitation centre</p>	<p>Work is underway to establish the data analytics and research exploitation centre</p>	<p>On target</p>
<p>7. Explore opportunities, such as GovCamp, for promoting cross border knowledge sharing and collaboration on digital government ideas and issues.</p>	<p>GovCamp Connect is being held on 2nd September 2017 at Narrowwater Castle, Co. Down. A number of NICS staff have registered to attend and have shared details of the event with officials from the Irish Government.</p> <p>Digital Shared Services, DoF, have successfully pitched for UK Open Data Camp to come to Belfast on 21-22nd October 2017 and will be key local supporter of the event which will involve developers, analysts, policy consultants and community activists along with central and local government reps. This is a fantastic opportunity to engage with colleagues working with open data in other parts of the UK and further afield.</p> <p>Further opportunities will be considered as they arise.</p>	<p>On target</p>

Commitment title	COMMITMENT 3: To investigate implementation of the Open Contracting Data Standard (OCDS) in Central Procurement operations.	
Lead department(s)	DoF	
Civil society organisation(s) involved in implementation to date	-	
Report date	7 th August 2017	
Overall commitment status	On Target	
Overall progress against commitment	Central Procurement Directorate (CPD) has explored how the Open Contracting Data Standard (OCDS) could be embraced in CPD operations, and identified actions to be taken forward.	
Progress against milestones/activities		
1. DoF CPD to explore a pilot project implementing the Open Contracting Data Standard	<p>Central Procurement Directorate (CPD) within the Department of Finance, has carried out an exercise to explore how the Open Contracting Data Standard (OCDS) could be embraced in CPD operations.</p> <p>Analysis of the OCDS framework showed that CPD met the requirements for the Basic Disclosure Level (one-star). Extensive tender and contract award information was available to the public online, in PDF or Excel format.</p> <p>Further exploration then established some actions to take forward to reach the Intermediate Disclosure Level (two-star). This included (i) publishing data on contracts awarded by CPD in CSV format on the Open Data NI portal, and (ii) exploring additional reports that could be downloaded from the eTendersNI portal (the public procurement portal for the NI public sector) and published to the Open Data NI portal.</p> <p>To date, the contracts awarded data for the most recent financial year (2016/17) has now been published on the Open Data NI portal in CSV format. The data includes contract titles, name of contracting authority, estimated value of contract, date awarded, contract end date, name and addresses of contractors.</p> <p>CPD is currently researching whether additional reports can be made available from eTendersNI, and published on the Open Data NI portal.</p> <p>CPD will continue to explore ways to reach the OCDS Intermediate Disclosure Level (three-star), however this would be challenging as it</p>	On target

	<p>requires publication of data and documents related to implementation of contracts. CPD is not generally directly involved in contract management of the contracts awarded, unless a client escalates a problem with a contractor. Therefore CPD does not hold datasets suitable for publication, as each client maintains their own contract management records (for example tracking performance in delivery of the contract).</p> <p>In an effort to ensure contract information that is held by CPD is also available to the public, a new process has been agreed from 24 July 2017 onwards - where CPD is involved in a contract management problem (escalated from the client) and the contractor is issued with a formal warning or the contract is terminated, this information and the name of the supplier will be published online in the 'Register of Poor Contractor Performance'.</p>	
2. Develop visualisation tool with contracts data from CPD as part of the Open Data Strategy	Central Procurement Directorate (CPD) has worked in partnership with the Open Data NI portal team to ensure that the datasets published are compatible with the visualisation tool provided within the portal. This enables members of the public to view a location map showing the distribution of contractors.	On target

Commitment title	COMMITMENT 4: Open-up government for greater accountability, improve public services and building a more prosperous and equal society
Lead department(s)	DoF
Civil society organisation(s) involved in implementation to date	ODI Belfast/NICVA (via representation on Advisory Panel)
Report date	11 th August 2017
Overall commitment status	On target
Overall progress against commitment	In general the progress towards fulfilling this commitment is on target, we are widening our engagement with the user community, have increased the numbers trained to publish data and have been successful in driving new innovative teaching products for Northern Ireland pupils. However, areas where more work is needed include that of pro-active publication as very few Departments/organisations are publishing data without

	being pressed to release it via the suggestion facility on the open data website.
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Progress against milestones/activities		
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1. Increase the number of Showcases on OpenDataNI	We have a showcase area on the OpenDataNI site where people can highlight and promote their work with open data. The number of showcases published on the OpenDataNI portal is slowly increasing. There are now a total of 16, (there are at least 3 more that we know will be published shortly). We are using presentations and social media to promote awareness of the showcase facility.	On target
2. Support an annual competition to derive and promote innovative services and products	The 2016 Open Data Challenge was extremely successful with 2 innovative teaching resources created for NI schools using local data. One to teach SQL programming and one to teach about natural disasters. A 2017 challenge is currently being drafted and business case written.	On target
3. Support and host engagement events between the public sector and the developer community to focus on issues and problems locally and use technology, innovation and open data to find solutions	<p>We have presented at a number of large conferences to both developers and the public sector such as BelFOSS, BelTech, NICS Live (analogous to Civil Service Live in GB) and the NI Developer Conference. We also promoted the use of open data at a NI AI Hackathon.</p> <p>We successfully pitched for UK Open Data Camp to come to Belfast on 21-22nd October 2017 and we will be key local supporter of the event which will involve developers, analysts, policy consultants and community activists along with central and local government reps. This is a fantastic opportunity to engage with colleagues working with open data in other parts of the UK and further afield.</p>	On target
4. Increase engagement with a number of partners such as ODI Belfast, NI Digital Catapult, universities, business and developer groups	We have widened our engagement with universities, we presented to UU GIS Masters in Business students and held a meeting with 2 Directors of Research in QUB. We have increased engagement with developer groups, presenting at a major BelTech conference and the first ever NI Developer conference. We have widened remit of the Open Data Advisory Board which consists of non-government organisations to include more further education reps such as the Belfast Met and more local private sector companies. This group meets quarterly the week before the internal Open Data Implementation Board.	On target
5. Increase proportion of public sector agencies to have published open data	The numbers of public sector agencies publishing data is increasing very slightly, there was an increase of 3 new organisations from May to the beginning of August.	Behind schedule
6. Increase the number of public sector staff trained in producing and publishing open data	Training on how to publish to the OpenDataNI portal has been delivered to a total of 140 attendees, representing all NICS Departments as well as 11 Non-Departmental Public Bodies. The Open Data publishing course has now also been listed on the internal government training catalogue and will be run on demand.	On target

<p>7. Increase proactive publication of data from government departments</p>	<p>Despite extensive engagement by the OpenDataNI team with the broader NI public sector, we are still faced with low levels of proactive publication of open data by our public sector.... the majority of releases are driven by the Suggested Dataset mechanism by the user community. What we are hoping will change this is a combination of</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> ▪ Better utilisation of our Open Data Implementation and Advisory Boards to increase the release of data sets; ▪ more targeted engagement at senior level to highlight the benefits of publishing data as open data; ▪ planning to publically release a dashboard created from our open data publications, of the numbers of datasets by publisher and also the status of the suggested datasets; and ▪ working towards automated data publishing. We are currently running a pilot project. 	<p>Behind schedule</p>
<p>8. Publish 2 datasets as 4-star or 5 star linked Open Data as defined by W3C</p>	<p>ONS have completed a 5 star linked data project which includes data from NI. We have engaged with ONS and invited them to do a roadshow on their linked data project in Belfast – this was held in July.</p>	<p>On target</p>
<p>9. Work with ODI Belfast and partners to encourage innovative uses of open data for new products and services</p>	<p>The 2016 Open Data for Education Challenge (#ODNI4EDU) was supported by ODI Belfast, Ulster University, NI Digital Catapult, Catalyst Inc., Department for the Economy & the Council for the Curriculum, Examinations and Assessment. The challenge was successful in developing 2 innovative teaching products for schools in NI using local open data. These were launched at a major BelTech conference Education day in April.</p>	<p>On target</p>