***November 2010***



***Model equality scheme***

***Guidance on use of the model equality scheme***

*The Commission has produced a model equality scheme for use by public authorities. The purpose and intent of the model equality scheme is to set out best practice.*

*Therefore it includes both legal requirements of Schedule 9 of the Northern Ireland Act 1998 and recommendations contained within the Commission’s guide ‘Section 75 of the Northern Ireland Act 1998 – A Guide for Public Authorities (April 2010)’.*

*Public authorities may use this document in full if they wish to meet best practice or adapt this guidance document as a basis to develop their own equality scheme. All equality schemes require the approval of the Equality Commission.*

*There are text boxes at the start of each chapter which provide further explanatory guidance for the completion of each section of the equality scheme.*

***Equality scheme for [insert name of public authority]***

***Drawn up in accordance with Section 75 and Schedule 9 of the Northern Ireland Act 1998***

***This document is available in a range of formats on request. Please contact us with your requirements (see page [insert reference] for contact details).***

Insert address of

public authority

Approved by the Equality Commission for Northern Ireland on [insert date].

**Foreword**

Section 75 of the Northern Ireland Act 1998 (the Act) requires public authorities, in carrying out their functions relating to Northern Ireland, to have due regard to the need to promote equality of opportunity and regard to the desirability of promoting good relations across a range of categories outlined in the Act[[1]](#footnote-1).

In our equality scheme we set out how [insert name of public authority] proposes to fulfil the Section 75 statutory duties.

We will commit the necessary resources in terms of people, time and money to make sure that the Section 75 statutory duties are complied with and that the equality scheme is implemented effectively, and on time.

We commit to having effective internal arrangements in place for ensuring our effective compliance with the Section 75 statutory duties and for monitoring and reviewing our progresss.

We will develop and deliver a programme of communication and training with the aim of ensuring that all our staff and board members are made fully aware of our equality scheme and understand the commitments and obligations within it. We will develop a programme of awareness raising for our consultees on the Section 75 statutory duties and our commitments in our equality scheme.

We, [the chair and CEO or equivalent] of [insert name of pubic authority], are fully committed to effectively fulfilling our Section 75 statutory duties across all our functions (including service provision, employment and procurement) through the effective implementation of our equality scheme.

We realise the important role that the community and voluntary sector and the general public have to play to ensure the Section 75 statutory duties are effectively implemented. Our equality scheme demonstrates how determined we are to ensure there are opportunities, for people affected by our work, to positively influence how we carry out our functions in line with our Section 75 statutory duties. It also offers the means whereby persons directly affected by what they consider to be a failure, on our part, to comply with our equality scheme, can make complaints.

On behalf of [insert name of public authority] and our staff we are pleased to support and endorse this equality scheme which has been drawn up in accordance with Section 75 and Schedule 9 of the Northern Ireland Act 1998 and Equality Commission guidelines.

*To be signed by the Minister and Permanent Secretary in the case of Government Departments and the Chair and Chief Executive in the case of other public authorities.*

*Date*

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*Please note: Foreword and Appendices 3 and 4 form part of this equality scheme.*

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*Throughout this model scheme we have primarily used present tense. We recognise that for most public authorities the vast majority of arrangements outlined in the equality scheme have been in place and operational for many years. (For example at 4.28 it says: “... we monitor …”)*

*However, if you are a newly designated public authority, we suggest that you use future tense for those arrangements that you do not have in place yet. Your scheme will therefore contain a commitment to put these in place as soon as possible. (For example, if you do not yet monitor the S75 categories, at 4.28 you would say “… we will monitor…”).*

*In those instances any such commitments should be matched by a corresponding entry in the “Timetable for measures proposed” (Appendix 4).*

**Chapter 1 Introduction**

**Section 75 of the Northern Ireland Act 1998**

1.1 Section 75 of the Northern Ireland Act 1998 (the Act) requires [us/name of public authority] to comply with two statutory duties:

Section 75 (1)

In carrying out our functions relating to Northern Ireland we are required to have due regard to the need to promote equality of opportunity between

* persons of different religious belief, political opinion, racial group, age, marital status or sexual orientation
* men and women generally
* persons with a disability and persons without
* persons with dependants and persons without.

Section 75 (2)

In addition, without prejudice to the obligations above, in carrying out our functions in relation to Northern Ireland we are required to have regard to the desirability of promoting good relations between persons of different religious belief, political opinion or racial group.

“Functions” include the “powers and duties” of a public authority[[2]](#footnote-2). This includes our employment and procurement functions.

Please see below under “Who we are and what we do” for a detailed explanation of our functions.

**How we propose to fulfil the Section 75 duties in relation to the relevant functions of [insert name of public authority]**

1.2 Schedule 9 4. (1) of the Act requires [insert name of public authority] as a designated public authority to set out in an equality scheme how it proposes to fulfil the duties imposed by Section 75 in relation to its relevant functions. This equality scheme is intended to fulfil that statutory requirement. It is both a statement of our arrangements for fulfilling the Section 75 statutory duties and our plan for their implementation.

1.3 We/the [insert name of public authority] are/is committed to the discharge of our/its Section 75 obligations in all parts of our organisation and we will commit the necessary available resources in terms of people, time and money to ensure that the Section 75 statutory duties are complied with and that our equality scheme can be implemented effectively.

**Who we are and what we do**

*We recommend that you include in your equality scheme an overview of what your organisation does. Please list and explain all your functions (powers and duties) in relation to Northern Ireland here. Please note this includes employment and procurement functions.*

**Chapter 2 Our arrangements for assessing our**

**compliance with the section 75 duties**

(Schedule 9 4. (2) (a))

2.1 Some of our arrangements for assessing our compliance with the Section 75 statutory duties are outlined in other relevant parts of this equality scheme [please insert cross-references to, for example, monitoring arrangements, assessment of impact of policies arrangements, consultation, publication, complaints etc].

In addition we have the following arrangements in place for assessing our compliance:

**Responsibilities and reporting**

*Please outline in this section the internal arrangements which you have established in your organisation for dealing with and reporting on the effective implementation of the Section 75 statutory duties. In outlining your arrangements it might be useful to include a flowchart of decision making.*

*We recommend that primary responsibility is designated to a senior member of staff, (for example at Board level, Chair or Chief Executive level) to ensure accountability for reporting on the delivery of the Section 75 statutory duties.*

*We also recommend that objectives and targets relating to the statutory duties are integrated into your strategic and operational plans.*

*Please adapt the text below to suit your organisational structure.*

2.2 We are committed to the fulfilment of our Section 75 obligations in all parts of our work.

2.3 Responsibility for the effective implementation of our equality scheme lies with the [insert appropriate detail]. The [insert appropriate detail] is accountable to the [insert name of public authority] for the development, implementation, maintenance and review of the equality scheme in accordance with Section 75 and Schedule 9 of the Northern Ireland Act 1998, including any good practice or guidance that has been or may be issued by the Equality Commission.

2.4 If you have any questions or comments regarding our equality scheme, please contact in the first instance [insert detail] at the address given below and we will respond to you as soon as possible:

[ insert insert full contact details, including a textphone or SMS number]

2.5 Objectives and targets relating to the statutory duties will be integrated into our strategic and operational business plans[[3]](#footnote-3).

2.6 Employees’ job descriptions and performance plans reflect their contributions to the discharge of the Section 75 statutory duties and implementation of the equality scheme, where relevant. The personal performance plans are subject to appraisal in the annual performance review.

2.7 The [name of public authority] prepares an annual report on the progress we have made on implementing the arrangements set out in this equality scheme to discharge our Section 75 statutory duties (Section 75 annual progress report).

The Section 75 annual progress report will be sent to the Equality Commission by 31 August each year and will follow any guidance on annual reporting issued by the Equality Commission.

Progress on the delivery of Section 75 statutory duties will also be included in our (organisational) annual report.

2.8 The latest Section 75 annual progress report is available on our website

[insert link]

or by contacting:

[insert appropriate contact details– should be in full and include a textphone/SMS number]

2.9 [We/Name of authority] liaise closely with the Equality Commission to ensure that progress on the implementation of our equality scheme is maintained.

2.10 [Insert any further arrangements you have for driving forward implementation of your equality scheme].

**Action plan/action measures**

*We recommend that in order for you to support and demonstrate the effective implementation of your Section 75 statutory duties you develop and include in your equality scheme a commitment to producing an* ***action plan****. In addition to being of value to the public authority it may be helpful as a means of demonstrating that you pay due regard to the need to promote equality of opportunity and regard to the desirability of promoting good relations.*

*This action plan should be relevant to your functions and detail the action measures you are planning to take to promote equality of opportunity and good relations. Please see chapter 8 in the Commission’s guidance ‘Section 75 of the Northern Ireland Act 1998 – A Guide for Public Authorities (April 2010)’ for further advice on how to develop an action plan.*

*We suggest you include the following wording here:*

2.11 [The insert name of authority] has developed an action plan to promote equality of opportunity and good relations. This action plan is set out in Appendix 6 to this equality scheme.

2.12 The action measures that will make up our action plan will be relevant to our functions. They will be developed and prioritised on the basis of an audit of inequalities. The audit of inequalities will gather and analyse information across the Section 75 categories[[4]](#footnote-4) to identify the inequalities that exist for our service users and those affected by our policies[[5]](#footnote-5).

2.13 Action measures will be specific, measurable, linked to achievable outcomes, realistic and time bound. Action measures will include performance indicators and timescales for their achievement.

2.14 We will develop any action plans for a period of between one and five years in order to align them with our corporate and business planning cycles. Implementation of the action measures will be incorporated into our business planning process.

2.15 We will seek input from our stakeholders and consult on our action plan before we send it to the Equality Commission and thereafter when reviewing the plan as per 2.16 below.

2.16 We will monitor our progress on the delivery of our action measures annually and update the action plan as necessary to ensure that it remains effective and relevant to our functions and work.

2.17 The [insert name of public authority] will inform the Commission of any changes or amendments to our action plan and will also include this information in our Section 75 annual progress report to the Commission. Our Section 75 annual progress report will incorporate information on progress we have made in implementing our action plans/action measures.

2.18 Once finalised, our action plan will be available:

[Insert appropriate information, e.g. available from main equality contact, website etc]

If you require it in an alternative format please contact us on the details provided.

[Please insert any other arrangements you may have in place for assessing your compliance with the Section 75 duties]

**Chapter 3 Our arrangements for consulting**

(Schedule 9 4. (2) (a)) - on matters to which a duty (S75 (1) or (2)) is likely to be relevant (including details of the persons to be consulted).

(Schedule 9 4. (2) (b)) on the likely impact of policies adopted or proposed to be adopted by us on the promotion of equality of opportunity.

*In addition to Equality Commission guidance referenced in this section you may find it useful to refer to:*

* *ODI guidance on accessible consultation events for people with disability* [*http://www.officefordisability.gov.uk/iod/channels/events.php*](http://www.officefordisability.gov.uk/iod/channels/events.php)*)*
* *Department for Business, Enterprise and regulatory Reform Code of Conduct on Consultation (2008)* [*http://www.berr.gov.uk/files/file47158.pdf*](http://www.berr.gov.uk/files/file47158.pdf)

3.1 We recognise the importance of consultation in all aspects of the implementation of our statutory equality duties. We will consult on our equality scheme, action measures, equality impact assessments and other matters relevant to the Section 75 statutory duties.

3.2 We are committed to carrying out consultation in accordance with the following principles (as contained in the Equality Commission’s guidance *‘Section 75 of the Northern Ireland Act 1998 – A Guide for Public Authorities (April 2010)’*):

3.2.1 All consultations will seek the views of those directly affected by the matter/policy, the Equality Commission, representative groups of Section 75 categories, other public authorities, voluntary and community groups, our staff and their trades unions and such other groups who have a legitimate interest in the matter, whether or not they have a direct economic or personal interest.

Initially all consultees (see Appendix 3), as a matter of course, will be notified (by email or post) of the matter/policy being consulted upon to ensure they are aware of all consultations. Thereafter, to ensure the most effective use of our and our consultees‘ resources, we will take a targeted approach to consultation for those consultees that may have a particular interest in the matter/policy being consulted upon and to whom the matter/policy is of particular relevance. This may include for example regional or local consultations, sectoral or thematic consultation etc.

3.2.2 Consultation with all stakeholders will begin as early as possible. We will engage with affected individuals and representative groups to identify how best to consult or engage with them. We will ask our consultees what their preferred consultation methods are and will give consideration to these. Methods of consultation could include:

* Face-to-face meetings
* Focus groups
* Written documents with the opportunity to comment in writing
* Questionnaires
* Information/notification by email with an opportunity to opt in/opt out of the consultation
* Internet discussions or
* Telephone consultations.

This list is not exhaustive and we may develop other additional methods of consultation more appropriate to key stakeholders and the matter being consulted upon.

3.2.3 We will consider the accessibility and format of every method of consultation we use in order to remove barriers to the consultation process. Specific consideration will be given as to how best to communicate with children and young people, people with disabilities (in particular people with learning disabilities) and minority ethnic communities. We take account of existing and developing good practice, including the Equality Commission’s guidance *Let’s Talk Let’s Listen – Guidance for public authorities on consulting and involving children and young people (2008)*.

[Please expand on what your specific considerations are.]

Information will be made available, on request, in alternative formats[[6]](#footnote-6), in a timely manner, usually within [insert timeline – as short as possible]. We will ensure that such consultees have equal time to respond.

3.2.4 Specific training is provided to those facilitating consultations to ensure that they have the necessary skills to communicate effectively with consultees.

3.2.5 To ensure effective consultation with consultees[[7]](#footnote-7) on Section 75 matters, we will develop a programme of awareness raising on the Section 75 statutory duties and the commitments in our equality scheme by undertaking the following:

[Please outline your information/awareness raising arrangements for consultees here]

3.2.6 The consultation period lasts for a minimum of twelve weeks to allow adequate time for groups to consult amongst themselves as part of the process of forming a view. However, in exceptional circumstances when this timescale is not feasible (for example implementing EU Directives or UK wide legislation, meeting Health and Safety requirements, addressing urgent public health matters or complying with Court judgements), we may shorten timescales to eight weeks or less before the policy is implemented. We may continue consultation thereafter and will review the policy as part of our monitoring commitments[[8]](#footnote-8).

Where, under these exceptional circumstances, we must implement a policy immediately, as it is beyond our authority’s control, we may consult after implementation of the policy, in order to ensure that any impacts of the policy are considered.

3.2.7 If a consultation exercise is to take place over a period when consultees are less able to respond, for example, over the summer or Christmas break, or if the policy under consideration is particularly complex, we will give consideration to the feasibility of allowing a longer period for the consultation.

3.2.8 We are conscious of the fact that affected individuals and representative groups may have different needs. We will take appropriate measures to ensure full participation in any meetings that are held. We will consider for example the time of day, the appropriateness of the venue, in particular whether it can be accessed by those with disabilities, how the meeting is to be conducted, the use of appropriate language, whether a signer and/or interpreter is necessary, and whether the provision of childcare and support for other carers is required.

3.2.9 We make all relevant information available to consultees in appropriate formats to ensure meaningful consultation. This includes detailed information on the policy proposal being consulted upon and any relevant quantitative and qualitative data.

3.2.10 In making any decision with respect to a policy adopted or proposed to be adopted, we take into account any assessment and consultation carried out in relation to the policy.

3.2.11 We provide feedback to consultees in a timely manner. A feedback report is prepared which includes summary information on the policy consulted upon, a summary of consultees’ comments and a summary of our consideration of and response to consultees’ input. The feedback is provided in formats suitable to consultees. (Please see also 6.3)

3.3 A list of our consultees is included in this equality scheme at Appendix 3. It can also be obtained from our website at

[Insert link]

or by contacting

[insert appropriate contact details– should be in full and include a textphone/SMS number]

[Insert any other arrangements you may have in place for obtaining your consultation list]

3.4 Our consultation list is not exhaustive and is reviewed on an annual basis to ensure it remains relevant to our functions and policies.

We welcome enquiries from any person/s or organisations wishing to be added to the list of consultees. Please contact [insert contact detail here] to provide your contact details and have your areas of interest noted or have your name/details removed or amended. Please also inform us at this stage if you would like information sent to you in a particular format or language.

**Chapter 4 Our arrangements for assessing,**

**monitoring and publishing the impact of policies**

(Schedule 9 4. (2) (b); Schedule 9 4. (2) (c); Schedule 9 4. (2) (d); Schedule 9 9. (1); Schedule 9 9.(2))

**Our arrangements for assessing the likely impact of policies adopted or proposed to be adopted on the promotion of equality of opportunity** (Schedule 9 4. (2) (b))

4.1 In the context of Section 75, ‘policy’ is very broadly defined and it covers all the ways in which we carry out or propose to carry out our functions in relation to Northern Ireland. In respect of this equality scheme, the term policy is used for any (proposed/amended/existing) strategy, policy initiative or practice and/or decision, whether written or unwritten and irrespective of the label given to it, eg, ‘draft’, ‘pilot’, ‘high level’ or ‘sectoral’.

4.2 In making any decision with respect to a policy adopted or proposed to be adopted, we take into account any assessment and consultation carried out in relation to the policy, as required by Schedule 9 9. (2) of the Northern Ireland Act 1998.

4.3 [insert name of authority] uses the tools of **screening** and **equality impact** **assessment** to assess the likely impact of a policy on the promotion of equality of opportunity and good relations. In carrying out these assessments we will relate them to the intended outcomes of the policy in question and will also follow Equality Commission guidance:

* the guidance on screening, including the screening template, as detailed in the Commission’s guidance *‘Section 75 of the Northern Ireland Act 1998 – A Guide for Public Authorities (April 2010)’* and
* on undertaking an equality impact assessment as detailed in the Commission’s guidance *‘Practical guidance on equality impact assessment (February 2005)’.*

**Screening**

4.4 The purpose of screening is to identify those policies that are likely to have an impact on equality of opportunity and/or good relations.

4.5 Screening is completed at the earliest opportunity in the policy development/review process. Policies which we propose to adopt will be subject to screening prior to implementation. For more detailed strategies or policies that are to be put in place through a series of stages, we will screen at various stages during implementation.

4.6 The lead role in the screening of a policy is taken by the policy decision maker who has the authority to make changes to that policy. However, screening will also involve other relevant team members, for example, equality specialists, those who implement the policy and staff members from other relevant work areas. Where possible we will include key stakeholders in the screening process.

4.7 The following questions are applied to all our policies as part of the screening process:

* What is the likely impact on equality of opportunity for those affected by this policy, for each of the Section 75 equality categories? (minor/major/none)
* Are there opportunities to better promote equality of opportunity for people within the Section 75 equality categories?

* To what extent is the policy likely to impact on good relations between people of a different religious belief, political opinion or racial group? (minor/major/none)
* Are there opportunities to better promote good relations between people of a different religious belief, political opinion or racial group?

4.8 In order to answer the screening questions, we gather all relevant information and data, both qualitative and quantitative. In taking this evidence into account we consider the different needs, experiences and priorities for each of the Section 75 equality categories. Any screening decision will be informed by this evidence .

4.9 Completion of screening, taking into account our consideration of the answers to all four screening questions set out in 4.7 above, will lead to one of the following three outcomes:

1. the policy has been ‘screened in’ for equality impact assessment
2. the policy has been ‘screened out’ with mitigation[[9]](#footnote-9) or an alternative policy proposed to be adopted
3. the policy has been ‘screened out’ without mitigation or an alternative policy proposed to be adopted.

4.10 If our screening concludes that the likely impact of a policy is ‘minor’ in respect of one, or more, of the equality of opportunity and/or good relations categories, we may on occasion decide to proceed with an equality impact assessment, depending on the policy. If an EQIA is not to be conducted we will nonetheless consider measures that might mitigate the policy impact as well as alternative policies that might better achieve the promotion of equality of opportunity and/or good relations.

Where we mitigate we will outline in our screening template the reasons to support this decision together with the proposed changes, amendments or alternative policy.

This screening decision will be ‘signed off’ by the appropriate policy lead within [insert name of public authority].

4.11 If our screening concludes that the likely impact of a policy is ‘major’ in respect of one, or more, of the equality of opportunity and/or good relations categories, we will normally subject the policy to an equality impact assessment. This screening decision will be ‘signed off’ by the appropriate policy lead within [insert name of public authority].

4.12 If our screening concludes that the likely impact of a policy is ‘none’, in respect of all of the equality of opportunity and/or good relations categories, we may decide to screen the policy out. If a policy is ‘screened out’ as having no relevance to equality of opportunity or good relations, we will give details of the reasons for the decision taken. This screening decision will be ‘signed off’ by the appropriate policy lead within [insert name of public authority].

4.13 As soon as possible following the completion of the screening process, the screening template, signed off and approved by the senior manager responsible for the policy, will be made available on our website

[insert link]

and on request.

[insert appropriate contact details– should be in full and include a textphone/SMS number - or cross-reference]

4.14 If a consultee, including the Equality Commission, raises a concern about a screening decision based on supporting evidence, we will review the screening decision.

4.15 Our screening reports are published quarterly [see below at 4.20 - 4.22 and 4.23 for details].

**Equality impact assessment**

4.16 An equality impact assessment (EQIA) is a thorough and systematic analysis of a policy, whether that policy is formal or informal, and irrespective of the scope of that policy. The primary function of an EQIA is to determine the extent of any impact of a policy upon the Section 75 categories and to determine if the impact is an adverse one. It is also an opportunity to demonstrate the likely positive outcomes of a policy and to seek ways to more effectively promote equality of opportunity and good relations.

4.17 Once a policy is screened and screening has identified that an equality impact assessment is necessary, we will carry out the EQIA in accordance with Equality Commission guidance. The equality impact assessment will be carried out as part of the policy development process, before the policy is implemented.

4.18 Any equality impact assessment will be subject to consultation at the appropriate stage(s). (For details see above Chapter 3 “Our Arrangements for Consulting”).

**Our arrangements for publishing the results of the assessments of the likely impact of policies we have adopted or propose to adopt on the promotion of equality of opportunity**

(Schedule 9 4. (2) (d); Schedule 9 9. (1))

4.19 We make publicly available the results of our assessments (screening and EQIA) of the likely impact of our policies on the promotion of equality of opportunity and good relations.

**What we publish**

4.20 Screening reports

These are published quarterly. Screening reports detail:

* All policies screened by [insert name of authority] over the three month period
* A statement of the aim(s) of the policy/policies to which the assessment relates
* Consideration given to measures which might mitigate any adverse impact
* Consideration given to alternative policies which might better achieve the promotion of equality of opportunity;
* Screening decisions, i.e:
* whether the policy has been ‘screened in’ for equality impact assessment.
* whether the policy has been ‘screened out’ with mitigation or an alternative policy proposed to be adopted.
* whether the policy has been ‘screened out’ without mitigation or an alternative policy proposed to be adopted.
* Where applicable, a timetable for conducting equality impact assessments
* A link to the completed screening template(s) on our website

4.21 Screening templates

For details on the availability of our screening templates please refer to 4.13.

4.22 Equality impact assessments

EQIA reports are published once the impact assessment has been completed. These reports include:

* A statement of the aim of the policy assessed
* Information and data collected
* Details of the assessment of impact(s)
* Consideration given to measures which might mitigate any adverse impact
* Consideration given to alternative policies which might better achieve the promotion of equality of opportunity
* Consultation responses
* The decision taken
* Future monitoring plans.

**How we publish the information**

4.23 All information we publish is accessible and can be made available in alternative formats on request. Please see 6.3 below.

**Where we publish the information**

4.24 The results of our assessments (screening reports and completed templates, the results of equality impact assessments) are available on our website

[insert link]

and by contacting:

[insert appropriate contact details– should be in full and include a textphone/SMS number]

4.25 In addition to the above, screening reports (electronic link or hard copy on request if more suitable for recipients) which include all policies screened over a 3 month period are also sent directly to all consultees on a quarterly basis.

4.26 We will inform the general public about the availability of this material through communications such as press releases where appropriate.

**Our arrangements for monitoring any adverse impact of policies we have adopted** **on equality of opportunity**

(Schedule 9 4. (2) (c))

*Please state here the arrangements you have in place within your organisation to collect and analyse both quantitative and qualitative information.*

*While Schedule 9 focuses on monitoring of any adverse impacts, the Commission recommends that you monitor more broadly to also identify opportunities to better promote equality of opportunity and good relations.*

*We further recommend that public authorities - as part of the monitoring arrangements - undertake at least an annual review of EQIA monitoring information. We further recommend that all other monitoring information is reviewed on a regular basis.*

4.27 Monitoring can assist us to deliver better public services and continuous improvements. Monitoring Section 75 information involves the processing of sensitive personal data (data relating to the racial or ethnic origin of individuals, sexual orientation, political opinion, religious belief, etc). In order to carry out monitoring in a confidential and effective manner, the [insert name of public authority] follows guidance from the Office of the Information Commissioner and the Equality Commission.

4.28 We monitor any adverse impact on the promotion of equality of opportunity of policies we have adopted. We are also commited to monitoring more broadly to identify opportunities to better promote equality of opportunity and good relations in line with Equality Commission guidance.

4.29 The systems we have established to monitor the impact of policies and identify opportunities to better promote equality of opportunity and good relations are:

• The collection, collation and analysis of existing relevant primary quantitative and qualitative data across all nine equality categories on an ongoing basis

• The collection, collation and analysis of existing relevant secondary sources of quantitative and qualitative data across all nine equality categories on an ongoing basis

• An audit of existing information systems within one year of approval of this equality scheme, to identify the extent of current monitoring and take action to address any gaps in order to have the necessary information on which to base decisions

• Undertaking or commissioning new data if necessary.

4.30 If over a two year period monitoring and evaluation show that a policy results in greater adverse impact than predicted, or if opportunities arise which would allow for greater equality of opportunity to be promoted, we will ensure that the policy is revised to achieve better outcomes for relevant equality groups.

4.31 We review our EQIA monitoring information on an annual basis. Other monitoring information is reviewed [please outline your timelines]

[Please outline here any additional arrangements you have put in place for monitoring]

**Our arrangements for publishing the results of our monitoring**

(Schedule 9 4. (2) (d))

4.32 Schedule 9 4. (2) (d) requires us to publish the results of the monitoring of adverse impacts of policies we have adopted. However, we are committed to monitoring more broadly and the results of our policy monitoring are published as follows:

4.33 EQIA monitoring information is published as part of our Section 75 annual progress report [see 2.7]

4.34 [Please state any additional arrangements in relation to how and where the results of your monitoring is published, eg, on website, by sending to consultees by email]

4.35 All information published is accessible and can be made available in alternative formats on request. Please see below at 6.3 for details.

**Chapter 5 Staff training**

(Schedule 9 4.(2) (e))

*Please state in this section your arrangements for training your staff on both the equality of opportunity and good relations duties.*

*We recommend that this includes an effective communication and training programme on the content of the equality scheme for all staff and a planned programme for the delivery of such training. We recommend that the training programme includes at least the following:*

*• Effective internal and external communication of the commitment of the head of the public authority to the Section 75 statutory duties*

*• A section on the equality duties in the induction training for new staff*

*• More focused training for staff in management roles, and other specialist staff (such as trainers, lawyers and staff involved in research and data collection, policy development, service design, conducting equality impact assessments, consultation, monitoring and evaluation)*

*• Arrangements to ensure staff have access to a copy of, and understand, the equality scheme*

*• Arrangements to ensure staff are kept up to date with Section 75 developments*

*• Monitoring and evaluation of training.*

*Please note: If training within your organisation is not fully within your control (eg, centralised training in the case of Departments), please adapt this section accordingly, bearing in mind that responsibility for training staff in accordance with Schedule 9 still remains with your organisation. You should therefore outline how you influence both content and delivery of awareness raising and training.*

**Commitment to staff training**

5.1 We recognise that awareness raising and training play a crucial role in the effective implementation of our Section 75 duties.

5.2 Our [Chief Executive/equivalent] wishes to positively communicate the commitment of the [insert name of authority] to the Section 75 statutory duties, both internally and externally.

To this end we have introduced an effective communication and training programme for all staff and will ensure that ourcommitment to the Section 75 statutory duties is made clear in all relevantpublications.

**Training objectives**

5.3 The [insert name of authority] will draw up/has drawn up a detailed training plan for its staff which will aim to achieve the following objectives:

* to raise awareness of the provisions of Section 75 of the Northern Ireland Act 1998, our equality scheme commitments and the particular issues likely to affect people across the range of Section 75 categories, to ensure that our staff fully understand their role in implementing the scheme
* to provide those staff involved in the assessment of policies (screening and EQIA) with the necessary skills and knowledge to do this work effectively
* to provide those staff who deal with complaints in relation to compliance with our equality scheme with the necessary skills and knowledge to investigate and monitor complaints effectively
* to provide those staff involved in consultation processes with the necessary skills and knowledge to do this work effectively
* to provide those staff involved in the implementation and monitoring of the effective implementation of the [insert name of authority] equality scheme with the necessary skills and knowledge to do this work effectively.

**Awareness raising and** **training arrangements**

5.4 The following arrangements are in place to ensure all our staff and [board members/equivalent] are aware of and understand our equality obligations.

* We will develop a summary of this equality scheme and make it available to all staff.
* We will provide access to copies of the full equality scheme for all staff; ensure that any queries or questions of clarification from staff are addressed effectively.
* Staff in the [insert name of authority] will receive a briefing on this equality scheme within [insert appropriate timescale – as soon as possible after approval of scheme].
* The Section 75 statutory duties form part of induction training for new staff.
* Focused training is provided for key staff within [insert name of authority] who are directly engaged in taking forward the implementation of our equality scheme commitments (for example those involved in research and data collection, policy development, service design, conducting equality impact assessments, consultation, monitoring and evaluation).
* Where appropriate, training will be provided to ensure staff are aware of the issues experienced by the range of Section 75 groups.
* When appropriate and on an ongoing basis, arrangements will be made to ensure staff are kept up to date with Section 75 developments.

[Please expand / insert any additional training arrangements that you have in place]

5.5 Training and awareness raising programmes will, where relevant, be developed in association with the appropriate Section 75 groups and our staff.

In order to share resources and expertise, the [insert name of authority] will, where possible, work closely with other bodies and agencies in the development and delivery of training.

**Monitoring and evaluation**

5.6 Our training programme is subject to the following monitoring and evaluation arrangements:

* We evaluate the extent to which all participants in this training programme have acquired the necessary skills and knowledge to achieve each of the above objectives.
* The extent to which training objectives have been met will be reported on as part of the Section 75 annual progress report, which will be sent to the Equality Commission.

[Please insert other appropriate monitoring and evaluation arrangements here (e.g. number of staff trained, the equality profile of staff trained, job roles of staff trained)]

**Chapter 6 Our arrangements for ensuring and**

**assessing public access to information and services we provide**

(Schedule 9 4. (2) (f))

*Please note:*

*Further information on producing alternative formats can be found at* <http://www.officefordisability.gov.uk/iod/formats/index.php> *though please note that audio tape is now not widely used in Northern Ireland and other formats such as CD, MP3 and DAISY are more appropriate.*

6.1 [We/Name of organisation] are/is committed to ensuring that the information we disseminate and the services we provide are fully accessible to all parts of the community in Northern Ireland. We keep our arrangements under review to ensure that this remains the case.

6.2 We are aware that some groups will not have the same access to information as others.

In particular:

• People with sensory, learning, communication and mobility disabilities may require printed information in other formats.

• Members of ethnic minority groups, whose first language is not English, may have difficulties with information provided only in English.

• Children and young people may not be able to fully access or understand information.

**Access to** i**nformation**

6.3 To ensure equality of opportunity in accessing information, we provide information in alternative formats on request, where reasonably practicable. Where the exact request cannot be met we will ensure a reasonable alternative is provided.

Alternative formats may include Easy Read, Braille, audio formats (CD, mp3 or DAISY), large print or minority languages to meet the needs of those for whom English is not their first language.

The [insert name of public authority] liaises with representatives of young people and disability and minority ethnic organisations and takes account of existing and developing good practice.

We will respond to requests for information in alternative formats in a timely manner, usually [insert timeline – as short as possible].

[In addition please also outline briefly the arrangements you have in place for providing information to children and young people, people with learning disabilities and minority ethnic communities]

6.4 In disseminating information through the media we will seek to advertise in the press where appropriate.

6.5 [Please outline any other arrangement you have in place for ensuring public access to information]

**Access to services**

6.6 [We /insert name of organisation] are committed to ensuring that all of our services are fully accessible to everyone in the community across the Section 75 categories.

The [insert name of organisation] also adheres to the relevant provisions of current anti-discrimination legislation.

6.7 [please outline any specific arrangement you have in place for ensuring public access to your services]

**Assessing public access to information and services**

6.8 We monitor [insert timeline] across all our functions, in relation to access to information and services, to ensure equality of opportunity and good relations are promoted.

6.9 [Please outline here your arrangements for this]

**Chapter 7 Timetable for measures we propose in this equality scheme**

**(**Schedule 9 4. (3) (b))

7.1 Appendix 4 outlines our timetable for all measures proposed within this equality scheme. The measures outlined in this timetable will be incorporated into our business planning processes.

7.2 This timetable is different from and in addition to our commitment to developing action plans/action measures to specifically address inequalities and further promote equality of opportunity and good relations. We have included in our equality scheme a commitment to develop an action plan. Accordingly, this commitment it is listed in the timetable of measures at Appendix 4. For information on these action measures please see above at 2.11 – 2.18.

**Chapter 8 Our complaints procedure**

(Schedule 9 10.)

*Please detail here your procedure for dealing with complaints, including where and how complaints may be raised and a timetable for responding.*

*The Commission recognises that many public authorities may already have established complaints procedures that allow for a high standard of complaints handling.*

*If Section 75 complaints are integrated into a general complaints procedure within your organisation, please include this procedure in this section of your equality scheme.*

*In any case you should ensure your procedure is at least compatible with the following:*

8.1 [insert name of organisation] are responsive to the views of members of the public. We will endeavour to resolve all complaints made to us.

8.2 Schedule 9 paragraph 10 of the Act refers to complaints. A person can make a complaint to a public authority if the complainant believes he or she may have been directly affected by an alleged failure of the authority to comply with its approved equality scheme.

If the complaint has not been resolved within a reasonable timescale, the complaint can be brought to the Equality Commission.

8.3 A person wishing to make a complaint that the [insert name of organisation] has failed to comply with its approved equality scheme should contact:

[insert appropriate contact details– should be in full and include a textphone/SMS number]

8.4 We will in the first instance acknowledge receipt of each complaint within [insert appropriate timescale – x days].

8.5 The [insert appropriate detail] will carry out an internal investigation of the complaint and will respond substantively to the complainant within one (1) month of the date of receiving the letter of complaint. Under certain circumstances, if the complexity of the matter requires a longer period, the period for response to the complainant may be extended to two (2) months. In those circumstances, the complainant will be advised of the extended period within one month of making the complaint.

8.6 During this process the complainant will be kept fully informed of the progress of the investigation into the complaint and of any outcomes.

8.7 In any subsequent investigation by the Equality Commission, the [insert name of organisation] will co-operate fully, providing access in a timely manner to any relevant documentation that the Equality Commission may require.

Similarly, the [insert name of organisation] will co-operate fully with any investigation by the Equality Commission under sub-paragraph 11 (1) (b) of Schedule 9 to the Northern Ireland Act 1998.

8.8 The [insert name of public authority] will make all efforts to implement promptly and in full any recommendations arising out of any Commission investigation.

**Chapter 9 Publication of our equality scheme**  (Schedule 9 4. (3) (c))

9.1 Our [insert name’s] equality scheme is available free of charge in print form and alternative formats from:

[insert appropriate contact details– should be in full and include a textphone/SMS number]

9.2 Our equality scheme is also available on our website at:

[Insert link to website]

9.3 The following arrangements are in place for the publication in a timely manner of our equality scheme to ensure equality of access:

* We will make every effort to communicate widely the existence and content of our equality scheme. This may include press releases, prominent advertisements in the press, the internet and direct mail shots to groups representing the various categories in Section 75.
* We will email a link to our approved equality scheme to our consultees on our consultation lists. Other consultees without e-mail will be notified by letter that the scheme is available on request. We will respond to requests for the equality scheme in alternative formats in a timely manner, usually [insert timeline – as short as possible].
* Our equality scheme is available on request in alternative formats such as Easy Read, Braille, large print, audio formats ( CD, mp3, DAISY) and in minority languages to meet the needs of those not fluent in English.
* [please also outline the arrangements you have in place for communicating your equality scheme effectively to children and young people and people with disabilities ].

9.4 For a list of our stakeholders and consultees please see Appendix 3 of the equality scheme, visit our website at [insert link]

or contact [insert appropriate contact details– should be in full and include a textphone/SMS number]

**Chapter 10 Review of our equality scheme**

(Schedule 9 8. (3))

10.1 As required by Schedule 9 paragraph 8 (3) of the Northern Ireland Act 1998 we will conduct a thorough review of this equality scheme. This review will take place either within five years of submission of this equality scheme to the Equality Commission or within a shorter timescale to allow alignment with the review of other planning cycles.

The review will evaluate the effectiveness of our scheme in relation to the implementation of the Section 75 statutory duties relevant to our functions in Northern Ireland.

10.2 In undertaking this review we will follow any guidance issued by the Equality Commission. A report of this review will be made public [insert any arrangements you have in place for publication] and sent to the Equality Commission.

**Appendix 1 Organisational chart**

*Please insert a diagrammatical overview of your organisation (including people and functions).*

**Appendix 2 Example groups relevant to the Section 75 categories for Northern Ireland purposes**

***Please note, this list is for illustration purposes only, it is not exhaustive.***

|  |  |
| --- | --- |
| **Category** | **Example groups** |
| Religious belief | Buddhist; Catholic; Hindu; Jewish; Muslims, people of no religious belief; Protestants; Sikh; other faiths.  For the purposes of Section 75, the term “religious belief” is the same definition as that used in the *Fair Employment & Treatment (NI) Order*[[10]](#footnote-10). Therefore, “religious belief” also includes any *perceived* religious belief (or perceived lack of belief) and, in employment situations only, it also covers any *“similar philosophical belief”.* |
| Political opinion[[11]](#footnote-11) | Nationalist generally; Unionists generally; members/supporters of other political parties. |
| Racial group | Black people; Chinese; Indians; Pakistanis; people of mixed ethnic background; Polish; Roma; Travellers; White people. |
| Men and women generally | Men (including boys); Trans-gendered people; Transsexual people; women (including girls). |
| Marital status | Civil partners or people in civil partnerships; divorced people; married people; separated people; single people; widowed people. |
| Age | Children and young people; older people. |
| Persons with a disability | Persons with disabilities as defined by the Disability Discrimination Act 1995. |
| Persons with dependants | Persons with personal responsibility for the care of a child; for the care of a person with a disability; or the care of a dependant older person. |
| Sexual orientation | Bisexual people; heterosexual people; gay or lesbian people. |

**Appendix 3 List of consultees**

(Schedule 9 4. (2) (a))

*This is a mandatory part, which* ***must*** *be included in the scheme. As it may be subject to change over time, we recommend that your list of consultees is included as an appendix.*

*We recommend that your list (of those to be consulted on your equality scheme and matters relevant to the Section 75 statutory duties) includes the Equality Commission and a range of voluntary, community and trades union groups, your staff, business organisations and organisations representing the various categories included in Section 75.*

*However, we also recommend that a consultation list should be indicative and not exhaustive and that it is reviewed on an annual basis to ensure it remains relevant to your functions and policies. We therefore suggest that a note to that effect is included on your list of consultees.*

**Appendix 4 Timetable for measures proposed**

(Schedule 9 4.(3) (b))

*You* ***must*** *specify in your equality scheme a* ***timetable for all those measures that you propose in your equality scheme.***

*This timetable is* ***different from and in addition to your commitment to developing action plans/action measures*** *to specifically address inequalities and further promote equality of opportunity and good relations.*

*Measures could include for example your training arrangements, timetable for developing your action plan, the review of your list of consultees.*

*You may also wish to include your quarterly screening reports, and, if it is foreseeable at this stage when these will happen, any EQIAs you will undertake.*

*You may wish to consider any measures you need to take in relation to monitoring of policies, ensuring and assessing access to information and services.*

*We recommend that public authorities who are newly established devise a timetable for the assessment (screening and EQIA) of all their policies.*

*You can also list here any other measure that your organisation plans to take in order to fulfil the Section 75 statutory duties and associated equality scheme, for example those that you would traditionally report on in your Section 75 annual progress report.*

*We recommend that the timetable for implementation of your proposed measures is linked to the implementation of your Corporate Plan.*

***The following table lists some examples for illustration purposes***

|  |  |  |
| --- | --- | --- |
| **Measure** (example**)** | **Lead responsibility** (example) | **Timetable** (example) |
| *Section 75 Annual Progress Report*  *[2.7]* | *Project Officer / Chief Executive* | *31 August (annually)* |
| *Action plan*  *Consultation on draft action plan*  *[2.15]*  *Finalised action plan published*  *[2.18]*  *Arrangements for monitoring progress in place*  *[2.16]* | *Equality Manager*  *Equality Manager/Chief Executive*  *Equality Manager* | *[in line with consultation on equality scheme]*  *December 2010*  *December 2010* |
| *Consultation list reviewed and updated*  *[3.4]* | *Equality Manager* | *September (annually)* |
| *Screening timetable*  *[4.4]*  *Screening Reports*  *[4.15]* |  |  |
| *EQIA timetable*  *[4.16]* |  |  |
| *Monitoring*  *Review of monitoring information*  *[4.31]*  *Publication of monitoring information*  *[4.33;4.34]* |  |  |
| *Training*  *Development of summary scheme*  *[5.4]*  *Development of overall training programme*  *[5.5]*  *Focussed training*  *[5.4]*  *Update training*  *[5.4]*  *Evaluation of training*  *[5.6]* |  |  |
| *Assessing access to information and services*  *[6.9]* |  |  |
| *Communication of equality scheme*  *[9.3]*  *Notification of consultees*  *[9.3]* |  |  |
| *Review of equality scheme*  *[10.1]* |  |  |
| *Any other measures proposed in equality scheme* |  |  |

**Appendix 5 Glossary of terms**

*The Commissions recommends that you include a glossary of all of the terms used in your equality scheme.*

*Please note that there is a glossary of terms included as Appendix 4 in the Commission’s Section 75 Guide.*

**Appendix 6 Action plan/action measures**

*The Commission recommends that you include here your action plan/action measures as per 2.11.*

1. See section 1.1 of our Equality Scheme. [↑](#footnote-ref-1)
2. Section 98 (1) of the Northern Ireland Act 1998. [↑](#footnote-ref-2)
3. See Appendix 4 ‘Timetable for measures proposed’ and section 2.11 of this equality scheme. [↑](#footnote-ref-3)
4. See section 1.1 of this equality scheme for a list of these categories. [↑](#footnote-ref-4)
5. See section 4.1 of this equality scheme for a definition of policies. [↑](#footnote-ref-5)
6. See Chapter 6 of our equality scheme for further information on alternative formats of information we provide. [↑](#footnote-ref-6)
7. Please see Appendix 3 for a list of our consultees. [↑](#footnote-ref-7)
8. Please see below at 4.27 to 4.31 for details on monitoring. [↑](#footnote-ref-8)
9. Mitigation – Where an assessment (screening in this case) reveals that a particular policy has an adverse impact on equality of opportunity and / or good relations, a public authority must consider ways of delivering the policy outcomes which have a less adverse effect on the relevant Section 75 categories. [↑](#footnote-ref-9)
10. See Section 98 of the Northern Ireland Act 1998, which states: *“In this Act…”political opinion” and “religious belief” shall be construed in accordance with Article 2(3) and (4) of the Fair Employment & Treatment (NI) Order 1998.”* [↑](#footnote-ref-10)
11. ibid [↑](#footnote-ref-11)