

EQUALITY COMMISSION FOR NORTHERN IRELAND

Final Report of Commission Investigation under Paragraph 10 of Schedule 9 of the N. Ireland Act 1998

JAMES BEATTIE

FIRE AUTHORITY FOR NORTHERN IRELAND

FILE No: SDI/18/04

SUBJECT OF INVESTIGATION

The Fire Authority for Northern Ireland's (hereafter referred to as the FANI) alleged failure to comply with paragraph 6.4 of its approved equality scheme which commits it to conduct an Equality Impact Assessment (EQIA) on Employee Resourcing and Entry Standards beginning in 2000/1. The Complainant has initially complained that a policy requiring officers below the rank of Station Officer to retire at 55 had not been screened. In response to that complaint, the FANI indicated that this "retirement" policy had in fact been screened and timetabled for EQIA in 2000/1 as part of screening on Employee Resourcing and Entry Standards.

INVESTIGATION FINDINGS

The FANI had not commenced its EQIA on Employee Resourcing & Entry Standards as of 24 June 2004.

There is no indication that this EQIA will be commenced in the immediate future.

There is no evidence to support the FANI's contention that the retirement policy was actually considered as part of the screening that took place on Employee Resourcing & Entry Standards.

The Statutory Duty Investigations Committee therefore considers that a failure to comply with approved equality scheme has been established in this instance.

RECOMMENDATIONS

The Committee **recommends** that the FANI take the following action:

1) The policy requiring specified officers to retire at 55 should be subject to immediate screening. The purpose of this screening exercise will be to identify whether the policy in question is likely to have a significant impact on equality of opportunity.

2) In conducting such screening, the FANI will apply the screening criteria set out in the Equality Commission Guide to the Statutory Duties and engage in consultation about the likely impact (on the promotion of equality of opportunity) of this policy.

TIMESCALE

The FANI is required to complete the actions necessary to abide by the recommendations set out above **by Monday 4 March 2005** and to report to the Commission that the recommendations have been fulfilled.

FURTHER RECOMMENDATIONS

The Committee **further recommends** the following action:

The FANI should meet with the Commission's Statutory Duty Team to agree a revised timetable for the consideration of the Equality Impact Assessments which it is committed to undertake in its approved Equality Scheme.