



NORTHERN
IRELAND
HUMAN
RIGHTS
COMMISSION

Revised Equality Scheme

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 7 for details)

Northern Ireland Human Rights Commission
4th Floor, Alfred House
19-21 Alfred Street
Belfast
BT2 8ED

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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.

In our equality scheme we set out how the Northern Ireland Human Rights Commission (the Commission) 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 progress.

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 the equality scheme.

We, the Chief Commissioner and Chief Executive of the Northern Ireland Human Rights Commission, 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 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 the Commission 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.



Chief Commissioner

Date 20 January 2020



Chief Executive

Date 20 January 2020

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Chapter 1 Introduction

Section 75 of the Northern Ireland Act 1998

- 1.1 Section 75 of the Northern Ireland Act 1998 (the Act) requires the Northern Ireland Human Rights Commission (the Commission) 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 authority¹.

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 the Northern Ireland Human Rights Commission

- 1.2 Schedule 9.4 (1) of the Act requires the Commission 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 Northern Ireland Human Rights Commission, are committed to the discharge of our Section 75 obligations in all parts of our organisation and we will commit the necessary available resources

¹ Section 98 (1) of the Northern Ireland Act 1998.

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

1.4 The Northern Ireland Human Rights Commission (the Commission) is a statutory body established under Section 68 of the Northern Ireland Act 1998. It is listed in Schedule 2 to the Parliamentary Commissioner Act 1967. As such it has been designated by the Secretary of State for Northern Ireland under Section 75(3) (a) of the Northern Ireland Act 1998 as a 'public authority'.

Functions:

- to keep Northern Ireland's law under review in order to make sure it properly protects human rights;
- to advise the Secretary of State on what should be contained in a Bill of Rights for Northern Ireland;
- to advise the Secretary of State and the Executive Committee of the Assembly about what additional steps should be taken to protect human rights in Northern Ireland;
- to advise the Northern Ireland Assembly whether new Bills are compatible with human rights;
- to promote an awareness of the importance of human rights in Northern Ireland through education and research;
- to do all that it can to establish a Joint Committee with the Republic of Ireland's Human Rights Committee;
- to report to the Secretary of State by March 2001 on the Commission's effectiveness and on the adequacy and effectiveness of (i) the functions conferred on the Commission and (ii) the provisions relating to it in Part V11 of the Northern Ireland Act 1998.

Powers:

- to assist individuals to bring cases on human rights issues to court;
- to bring cases on human rights issues to court itself;
- to investigate matters when it consider this to be appropriate including access to places of detention.
- to publish its advice and findings.

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, ie consulting (Chapter 3), assessing, monitoring and publishing the impact of policies (Chapter 4), ensuring and assessing public access to information and services (Chapter 6) and our complaints procedure (Chapter 8).

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

Responsibilities and reporting

- 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 the Commission's Equality Scheme lies with the Chief Executive. The Chief Executive is accountable to the Northern Ireland Human Rights Commission 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 the Commission's Equality Scheme, please contact in the first instance the Director (Finance, Personnel and Corporate Affairs) at the address given below and we will respond to you as soon as possible.

Northern Ireland Human Rights Commission, 4th Floor Alfred House,
19-21 Alfred Street, Belfast, BT2 8ED
Tel: +44 (0) 28 9024 3987
SMS Text: +44 (0) 7786 202075
Email: info@nihrc.org

- 2.5 Objectives and targets relating to the statutory duties will be integrated into the Commission’s strategic and operational business plans.²
- 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 Commission prepares an annual report on the progress it has made on implementing the arrangements set out in this Equality Scheme to discharge its 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 the Commission’s Annual Report.

- 2.8 The latest Section 75 Annual Progress Report is available on our website at www.nihrc.org

or by contacting

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- 2.9 The Commission liaises closely with the Equality Commission to ensure that progress on the implementation of our Equality Scheme is maintained.

² See Appendix 4 ‘Timetable for measures proposed’ and section 2.11 of this equality scheme.

Action Plan/action measures

- 2.10 The Commission has developed an Action Plan to promote equality of opportunity. This Action Plan is set out in Appendix 6 to this Equality Scheme.
- 2.11 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 categories³ to identify the inequalities that exist for our service users and those affected by our policies.⁴
- 2.12 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.
- 2.13 We will develop any action plans for a period of between one and three years in order to align them with our corporate and business planning cycles. Implementation of the action measures will be incorporated into the Commission's business planning process.
- 2.14 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.
- 2.15 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 the Commission's functions and work.
- 2.16 The Commission will inform the Equality Commission of any changes or amendments to its Action Plan and will also include this information in its 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.

³ See Section 1.1 of this Equality Scheme for a list of these categories.

⁴ See Section 4.1 of this Equality Scheme for a definition of policies.

2.17 Once finalised, our Action Plan will be available on our website at www.nihrc.org

or by contacting:

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

Chapter 3 Our arrangements for consulting

(Schedule 9.4 (2) (a)) – on matters to which a duty (S75 (1) of (2) is likely to be relevant (including details of the person to be consulted).

(Schedule 9.4 (2) (b)) on the likely impact of policies adopted or proposed to be adopted by the Commission on the promotion of equality of opportunity).

- 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 the 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 consultations 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 will 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)***.

As part of the Joint Monitoring Mechanism with the Equality Commission for Northern Ireland (ECNI) for the Convention of Persons with a Disability (CRPD), the Commission will be considering how it engages with persons with disabilities to ensure full and effective participation.

Information will be made available, on request, in alternative formats⁵, in a timely manner, usually within 12 weeks. We will ensure that such consultees have equal time to respond.

3.2.4 Specific training or support 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 consultees⁶ 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:

The Equality Scheme is available on our website and the revised and final versions of the Scheme are circulated to our consultees.

⁵ See Chapter 6 of our Equality Scheme for further information on alternative formats of information we provide.

⁶ Please see Appendix 3 for a list of our consultees.

Our Strategic Planning process is also subject to public consultation to ensure engagement with Section 75 groups.

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 commitments⁷

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 carers is required.

3.2.9 We will 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.

⁷ Please see below at 4.27 to 4.31 for details on monitoring.

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 the 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 www.nihrc.org

or by contacting

Director (Finance, Personnel and Corporate Affairs)
Northern Ireland Human Rights Commission, 4th Floor Alfred House,
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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:

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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 adopted or proposed to be adopted on the promotion of equality of opportunity of policies (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, e.g. '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 The Commission 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 then 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 1978 – 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 Chief Executive who has the authority to make changes to that policy. However, screening will also involve other relevant team members, for example, 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? (major/minor/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 the 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 mitigation⁸ 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 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 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.

The screening decision will be 'signed off' by the appropriate policy lead within the Commission.

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 the Commission.

4.12 If our screening concludes that the likely impact of a policy is 'none' in respect of all 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 the Commission.

⁸ 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.

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 at www.nihrc.org

and on request from

Director (Finance, Personnel and Corporate Affairs)
Northern Ireland Human Rights Commission, 4th Floor Alfred House,
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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 will be 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 the 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 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 promotion of equality of opportunity and good relations.

What we publish

4.20 Screening Reports

These are published electronically quarterly. Screening reports detail:

- All policies screened by the Commission 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.:
 - a) Whether the policy has been 'screened in' for equality impact assessment.
 - b) Whether the policy has been 'screened out' with mitigation or an alternative policy proposed to be adopted.
 - c) 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 assessments 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 decisions 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 at www.nihrc.org

and by contacting

Director (Finance, Personnel and Corporate Affairs)
 Northern Ireland Human Rights Commission, 4th Floor Alfred House,
 19-21 Alfred Street, Belfast, BT2 8ED
 Tel: +44 (0) 28 9024 3987
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 Email: info@nihrc.org

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))

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 Commission 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 policies we have adopted. We are also committed 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 will review our EQIA monitoring information on an annual basis. Other monitoring information is reviewed annually.

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 impact of policies we have adopted. 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 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))

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 wishes to positively communicate the commitment of the Commission 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 our commitment to the Section 75 statutory duties is made clear in all relevant publications.

Training objectives

- 5.3 The Commission will draw up/has drawn up a detailed training plan for its staff and Commissioners 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 and Commissioners 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 Commission's 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 Commissioners are aware of and understand the Commission's equality obligations.

- We will develop a summary of this Equality Scheme and make it available to all staff and Commissioners.
- We will provide access to copies of the full Equality Scheme for all staff and Commissioners.
- We will ensure that any queries or questions of clarification from staff and Commissioners are addressed effectively.
- Staff and Commissioners in the Commission will receive a briefing on this Equality Scheme within 3 months of the Scheme being approved.
- The Section 75 duties form part of induction training for new staff.
- Focused training is provided for key staff within the Commission 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.
- Where appropriate and on an ongoing basis, arrangements will be made to ensure staff and Commissioners are kept up to date with Section 75 developments.
- In order to share resources and expertise, the Commission will, where possible, work closely with other bodies and agencies in the development and delivery on training.

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 Commission 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.
- Line managers are responsible, as part of the Commission's performance management, to review training and development needs for staff, to update performance development plans on training requirements, the progress against meeting the requirement and to comment on the skills gained through the training which have been put into practice.

Chapter 6 Our arrangements for ensuring and assessing public access to information and services we provide

(Schedule 9.4(2) (f))

- 6.1 The Commission is committed to ensuring that the information we disseminates 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 full access or understand information.

Access to information

- 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, large print or minority languages to meet the needs of those for whom English is not their first language. The Commission 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 within 12 weeks.

- 6.4 In disseminating information through the media we will seek to advertise in the press where appropriate and through other bodies and agencies as well as our own publications.

Access to Services

- 6.5. The Commission is committed to ensuring that all of our services are fully accessible to everyone in the community across the Section 75 categories. The Commission also adheres to the relevant provisions of current anti-discrimination legislation.
- 6.6 In addition to provision of publically accessible offices in Belfast, the Commission provides legal, training and advice services in accordance with its statutory obligations under the NI Act and in line with its Strategic and Business Plan objectives.
- 6.7 The Commission's website includes Browsealoud to make it more accessible for those with visual impairments or reading difficulties and social media opportunities have also been developed in the public interest.

Assessing public access to information and services

- 6.7 We monitor monthly and annually across our functions, in relation to access to information and services, to ensure equality of opportunity and good relations are promoted.

Chapter 7 Timetables 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 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)

- 8.1 The Commission is 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 Commission has failed to comply with its approved Equality Scheme should contact:

Chief Executive
Northern Ireland Human Rights Commission, 4th Floor Alfred House,
19-21 Alfred Street, Belfast, BT2 8ED
Tel: +44 (0) 28 9024 3987
SMS Text: +44 (0) 7786 202075
Email: info@nihrc.org

- 8.4 We will in the first instance acknowledge receipt of each complaint within one week.
- 8.5 The Commission will carry out an internal investigation of the complaint and will respond substantively to the complainant within 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 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 Commission will co-operate fully, providing access in a timely manner to any relevant documentation that the Equality Commission may require.

Similarly the Commission 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 Commission will make all efforts to implement promptly and in full any recommendations arising out of any Equality Commission investigation.

Chapter 9 Publication of our Equality Scheme

9.1 The Commission's Equality Scheme is available free of charge in print format and alternative formats from:

Director (Finance, Personnel and Corporate Affairs)
Northern Ireland Human Rights Commission, 4th Floor Alfred House,
19-21 Alfred Street, Belfast, BT2 8ED
Tel: +44 (0) 28 9024 3987
SMS Text: +44 (0) 7786 202075
Email: info@nihrc.org

9.2 Our Equality Scheme is also available on our website at www.nihrc.org

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 email 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 within 12 weeks.
- Our Equality Scheme is available on request in alternative formats such as Easy Read, Braille, large print and in minority languages to meet the needs of those not fluent in English.
- We will make arrangements, if applicable, to have meetings with those with impairments, children and young people or 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 www.nihrc.org

or contact

Director (Finance, Personnel and Corporate Affairs)
Northern Ireland Human Rights Commission, 4th Floor Alfred House,
19-21 Alfred Street, Belfast, BT2 8ED
Tel: +44 (0) 28 9024 3987
SMS Text: +44 (0) 7786 202075
Email: info@nihrc.org

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 within 5 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.

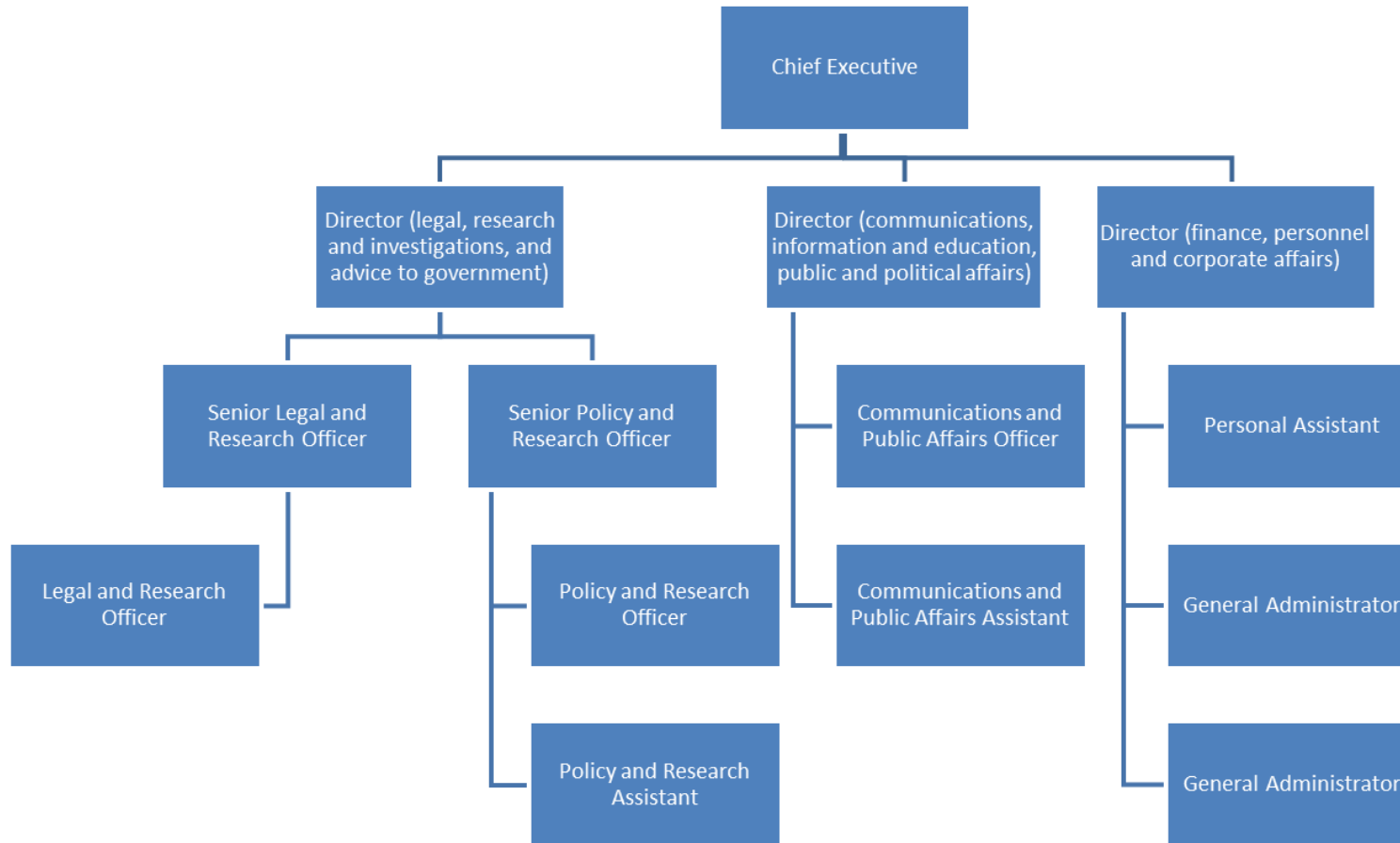
The review will evaluate the effectiveness of our Scheme in relation to the implementation of the Section 75 statutory duties relevant to our functions in Northern Ireland.

10.2 In undertaking this review we will follow guidance issued by the Equality Commission. A report of this Review will be made public and sent to the Equality Commission.

Appendices

Appendix 1	Organisational Chart
Appendix 2	Example groups relevant to the Section 75 categories for Northern Ireland
Appendix 3	List of Consultees (Schedule 9 4. (2) (a))
Appendix 4	Timetable for measures proposed (Schedule 9 4.(3) (b))
Appendix 5	Glossary
Appendix 6	Action plan/action measures 2019-2021

Appendix 1 Organisational Chart



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

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

Category	Example groups
Religious belief	<p>Buddhist; Catholic; Hindu; Jewish; Muslims, people of no religious belief; Protestants; Sikh; other faiths.</p> <p>For the purposes of Section 75, the term "religious belief" is the same definition as that used in the <i>Fair Employment & Treatment (NI) Order</i>⁹. Therefore, "religious belief" also includes any <i>perceived</i> religious belief (or perceived lack of belief) and, in employment situations only, it also covers any "<i>similar philosophical belief</i>".</p>
Political opinion ¹⁰	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.

⁹ 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."

¹⁰ *ibid*

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 list of Consultees is indicative, non-exhaustive and subject to annual review.

Religious Belief

Archdiocese of Armagh
Belfast Islamic Centre
Belfast Jewish Community
Church of Ireland
Embrace NI
Evangelical Alliance
Irish Council of Churches
Methodist Church
Presbyterian Church
Quaker Service

Political Opinion

Alliance Party
Democratic Unionist Party
Green Party of Northern Ireland
Labour Party
Northern Ireland Conservative Party
People Before Profit Alliance
Progressive Unionist Party
Sinn Fein
Social Democratic and Labour Party
Traditional Unionist Voice
Ulster Unionist Party

Race

African Caribbean Support Organisation Northern Ireland
An Munia Tober
An Tearmann
Armagh Travellers Support Group
Ballymena Inter-Ethnic Forum
Bryson Intercultural
Chinese Welfare Association
Craigavon Intercultural Programme
Craigavon Travellers Support Committee
Early Years (Travellers Toybox)
Horn of Africa People's Aid

Indian Community Centre
Local Government Partnerships on Travellers
Newry and Down Traveller Forum
North West Migrants' Forum
Northern Ireland Council for Racial Equality
Omagh Ethnic Support Group
Pavee Point Traveller Centre
Race Relations Integration Project
Roma Health Trust
Traveller Action Group
Traveller Gypsy Network
Travellers Action Group (West)
Ulster-Scots Advice Centre

Gender

Atlas Women's Centre
Belfast and Lisburn Women's Aid
BME Women's Group NI
DemocraShe
Falls Women's Centre
First Steps Women's Centre
Focus the Identity Trust
Footprints Women's Centre
Foyle Women's Information Network
Gender Jam NI
Greenway Women's Centre
Men to Men
Northern Ireland Rural Women's Network (NIRWN)
Northern Ireland Women's Network
Northern Ireland Women's European Platform (NIWEP)
Reclaim the Agenda
Shankill Women's Centre
Training for Women Network (TWN)
Windsor Women's Centre
Women's Aid Federation NI
Women's Forum NI
Women's Information Group
Women's Regional Consortium NI
Women's Resource and Development Agency
Women's Support Network
Women's Tec

Marital Status

Gingerbread NI
Relate NI

Age

Age NI
Age Sector Platform
Barnardo's NI
Children's Law Centre
Commissioner for Older People for Northern Ireland
Include Youth
Northern Ireland Hospice
Northern Ireland Commissioner for Children and Young People (NICCY)
NSPCC
Prince's Trust Belfast
Society for the Protection of Unborn Children
Voice of Young People in Care (VOYPIC)
Youth Action
Youth Council NI

Disability

Autism NI
Cedar Foundation
Disability Action
Livability
MENCAP
Mindwise
Royal National Institute for the Blind (RNIB)

Dependants

Carers NI
Cruse Bereavement Care NI
LIFE (NI)
Parenting Advice Centre
Survivors of Trauma
Wave Trauma Centre

Sexual Orientation

Belfast Butterfly Club
Cara Friend
Here NI

LGBT Consortium
LGBT Services Northern Ireland
Rainbow Project

Statutory / Voluntary / Public Agencies

Abbeyfield and Wesley Housing Association
ABC Community Network
Advice NI
Amnesty International UK
Antrim and Newtownabbey Borough Council
Apex Housing Association
Apprentice Boys
Ards and North Down Borough Council
Ark Housing Association (NI) Ltd
Armagh City, Banbridge and Craigavon Borough Council
Assembly and Executive Review Office
Attorney General's Office
Bar Library
Belfast City Council
Belfast Health and Social Care Trust
Big Lottery Project Northern Ireland
Causeway Coast and Glens District Council
Causeway Rural and Urban Network
Chartered Institute of Housing
Choice Housing Ireland Ltd
Citizen's Advice Bureau
Commission for Victims and Survivors
Committee on the Administration of Justice
Community Development and Health Network
Community Foundation for NI
Community Relations Council
Community Relations Forum
Consensus NI
Consumer Council for NI
Council for the Homeless NI
Criminal Justice Inspectorate NI
Department for Communities
Department for Infrastructure
Department of Justice
Derry City and Strabane District Council
Electoral Office NI
Equality Commission for Northern Ireland
Extern
Family Planning Association
Fermanagh and Omagh District Council

Flourish NI
Free Legal Advice Centre (FLAC)
Friends of the Earth
Grand Orange Lodge of NI
Health and Social Care Board (HSCB)
House of Commons
House of Lords
Housing Rights
Human Rights Consortium
Inspector of Prisons Ireland
Irish Congress of Trade Unions
Irish Human Rights and Equality Commission
Law Centre (NI)
Law Society NI
Legal Services Agency NI
Lisburn and Castlereagh City Council
Lower Ormeau Resident's Action Group
Marie Curie Hospice
Mid and East Antrim Borough Council
Mid Ulster District Council
National Energy Action NI
National University of Ireland
Newry, Mourne and Down District Council
NI Co-ownership Housing Association Ltd
NI Environmental Link
NI Housing Executive
NI Local Government Association
NI Medical and Dental Training Agency
NI Policing Board
Northern Health and Social Care Trust (NHSCT)
Northern Ireland Ambulance Service
Northern Ireland Association for the Care and Rehabilitation of Offenders (NIACRO)
Northern Ireland Blood Transfusion Service
Northern Ireland Civil Service
Northern Ireland Commonwealth Games Council
Northern Ireland Council for Voluntary Action (NICVA)
Northern Ireland Fire and Rescue Service
Northern Ireland Judicial Appointments Commission
Northern Ireland Office (NIO)
Northern Ireland Public Service Alliance (NIPSA)
Northern Ireland Rare Disease Partnership
Northern Ireland Social Care Council
Parades Commission
Pat Finucane Centre
Patient and Client Council

Phoenix Law
Planning Appeals Commission / Water Appeals Commission
Police Ombudsman
Police Service of Northern Ireland
Praxis Community Projects
Prisoner Ombudsman
Probation Board NI
Public Health Agency
Public Prosecutions Service (NI)
Queen's University
Radius Housing Association Ltd
Relatives for Justice
Royal Black Institution
Royal College of Nursing
Royal College of Physicians
Royal College of Psychiatrists
Rural Community Network
Rural Housing Association Ltd
Simon Community
South Eastern Health and Social Care Trust
South Tyrone Empowerment Programme (STEP)
Southern Trust
Star Neighbourhood Centre
Suffolk Lenadoon Interface Group
Supporting Communities NI
Survivors and Victims of Institutional Abuse
Survivors of Trauma
The Information Commissioner's Office
The PILS Project
The Regulation and Quality Improvement Authority (RQIA)
Transitional Justice Institute, University of Ulster
Triangle Housing Association Ltd
UNISON NI
Unite the Union
University of Ulster
US Consulate
Welsh Government
Western Health and Social Care Trust

Appendix 4 Timetable for measures proposed

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

The following table lists some examples for illustration purposes

Measure (example)	Lead responsibility (example)	Timetable (example)
<i>Section 75 Annual Progress Report</i> [2.7]	<i>Director (Finance, Personnel & Corporate Affairs)</i>	<i>31 August (Annually)</i>
<i>Action plan</i>		
<i>Consultation on draft action plan</i> [2.15]	<i>Director (Finance, Personnel & Corporate Affairs)</i>	<i>[in line with consultation on Equality Scheme]</i>
<i>Finalised action plan published</i> [2.18]	<i>Director (Finance, Personnel & Corporate Affairs)</i>	<i>[in line with consultation on Equality Scheme]</i>
<i>Arrangements for monitoring progress in place</i> [2.16]	<i>Director (Finance, Personnel & Corporate Affairs)</i>	<i>31 December (Annually)</i>
<i>Consultation list reviewed and updated</i> [3.4]	<i>Director (Finance, Personnel & Corporate Affairs)</i>	<i>(Annually)</i>
<i>Screening timetable</i> [4.4]	<i>Chief Executive / Director (Finance, Personnel & Corporate Affairs)</i>	<i>(Quarterly) (If applicable)</i>
<i>Screening Reports</i> [4.15]	<i>Chief Executive / Director (Finance, Personnel & Corporate Affairs)</i>	<i>(Quarterly) (If applicable)</i>

<i>EQIA timetable [4.16]</i>	<i>Chief Executive / Director (Finance, Personnel & Corporate Affairs)</i>	<i>As required</i>
<i>Monitoring</i>		
<i>Review of monitoring information [4.31]</i>	<i>Director (Finance, Personnel & Corporate Affairs)</i>	<i>(Annually)</i>
<i>Publication of monitoring information [4.33;4.34]</i>	<i>Director (Finance, Personnel & Corporate Affairs)</i>	<i>(Annually) (If applicable)</i>
<i>Training</i>		
<i>Development of summary scheme [5.4]</i>	<i>Chief Executive / Director (Finance, Personnel & Corporate Affairs)</i>	<i>Within 3 months of approval</i>
<i>Development of overall training programme [5.5]</i>	<i>Chief Executive / Director (Finance, Personnel & Corporate Affairs)</i>	<i>Within 3 months of approval</i>
<i>Focussed training [5.4]</i>	<i>Chief Executive / Director (Finance, Personnel & Corporate Affairs)</i>	<i>Ongoing</i>
<i>Update training [5.4]</i>	<i>Chief Executive / Director (Finance, Personnel & Corporate Affairs)</i>	<i>As required</i>
<i>Evaluation of training [5.6]</i>	<i>Chief Executive / Director (Finance, Personnel & Corporate Affairs)</i>	<i>As required</i>
<i>Assessing access to information and services [6.9]</i>	<i>Chief Executive / Director (Finance, Personnel & Corporate Affairs)</i>	<i>Annually</i>

<i>Communication of equality scheme [9.3]</i>	<i>Director (Finance, Personnel & Corporate Affairs)</i>	<i>Within 3 months of Scheme approval</i>
<i>Notification of consultees [9.3]</i>	<i>Director (Finance, Personnel & Corporate Affairs)</i>	<i>As above</i>
<i>Review of equality scheme [10.1]</i>	<i>Chief Executive / Director (Finance, Personnel & Corporate Affairs)</i>	<i>Within 5 years of submission of review (by March 2024)</i>
<i>Any other measures proposed in equality scheme</i>	<i>Chief Executive / Director (Finance, Personnel & Corporate Affairs)</i>	<i>As required</i>

Appendix 5 Glossary of terms

Action plan

A plan which sets out actions a public authority will take to implement its Section 75 statutory duties. It is a mechanism for the realisation of measures to achieve equality outcomes for the Section 75 equality and good relations categories.

Action measures and outcomes

Specific measures to promote equality and good relations for the relevant Section 75 and good relations categories, linked to achievable outcomes, which should be realistic and timely.

Adverse impact

Where a Section 75 category has been affected differently by a policy and the effect is less favourable, it is known as adverse impact. If a policy has an adverse impact on a Section 75 category, a public authority must consider whether or not the adverse impact is unlawfully discriminatory. In either case a public authority must take measures to redress the adverse impact, by considering mitigating measures and/or alternative ways of delivering the policy.

Affirmative action

In general terms, affirmative action can be defined as being anything consistent with the legislation which is necessary to bring about positive change. It is a phrase used in the Fair Employment and Treatment Order (NI) 1998 to describe lawful action that is aimed at promoting equality of opportunity and fair participation in employment between members of the Protestant and Roman Catholic communities in Northern Ireland.

Audit of inequalities

An audit of inequalities is a systematic review and analysis of inequalities which exist for service users and those affected by a public authority's policies. An audit can be used by a public authority to inform its work in relation to the Section 75 equality and good relations duties. It can also enable public authorities to assess progress on the implementation of the Section 75 statutory duties, as it provides baseline information on existing inequalities relevant to a public authority's functions.

Consultation

In the context of Section 75, consultation is the process of asking those affected by a policy (ie, service users, staff, the general public) for their views on how the policy could be implemented more effectively to promote equality of opportunity across the 9 categories. Different circumstances will call for different types of consultation. Consultations

could, for example, include meetings, focus groups, surveys and questionnaires.

Equality impact assessment

The mechanism underpinning Section 75, where existing and proposed policies are assessed in order to determine whether they have an adverse impact on equality of opportunity for the relevant Section 75 categories. Equality impact assessments require the analysis of both quantitative and qualitative data.

Equality of opportunity

The prevention, elimination or regulation of discrimination between people on grounds of characteristics including sex, marital status, age, disability, religious belief, political opinion, dependants, race and sexual orientation.

The promotion of equality of opportunity entails more than the elimination of discrimination. It requires proactive measures to be taken to secure equality of opportunity between the categories identified under Section 75.

Equality scheme

A document which outlines a public authority's arrangements for complying with its Section 75 obligations. An equality scheme must include an outline of the public authority's arrangements for carrying out consultations, screening, equality impact assessments, monitoring, training and arrangements for ensuring access to information and services.

Good relations

Although not defined in the legislation, the Commission has agreed the following working definition of good relations: 'the growth of relations and structures for Northern Ireland that acknowledge the religious, political and racial context of this society, and that seek to promote respect, equity and trust, and embrace diversity in all its forms'.

Mainstreaming equality

The integration of equal opportunities principles, strategies and practices into the every day work of public authorities from the outset. In other words, mainstreaming is the process of ensuring that equality considerations are built into the policy development process from the beginning, rather than being bolted on at the end. Mainstreaming can help improve methods of working by increasing a public authority's accountability, responsiveness to need and relations with the public. It can bring added value at many levels.

Mitigation of adverse impact

Where an equality impact assessment reveals that a particular policy has an adverse impact on equality of opportunity, a public authority must consider ways of delivering the policy outcomes which have a less adverse effect on the relevant Section 75 categories; this is known as mitigating adverse impact.

Monitoring

Monitoring consists of continuously scrutinising and evaluating a policy to assess its impact on the Section 75 categories. Monitoring must be sensitive to the issues associated with human rights and privacy. Public authorities should seek advice from consultees and Section 75 representative groups when setting up monitoring systems.

Monitoring consists of the collection of relevant information and evaluation of policies. It is not solely about the collection of data, it can also take the form of regular meetings and reporting of research undertaken. Monitoring is not an end in itself but provides the data for the next cycle of policy screening.

Northern Ireland Act

The Northern Ireland Act, implementing the Good Friday Agreement, received Royal Assent on 19 November 1998. Section 75 of the Act created the statutory equality duties.

Northern Ireland Human Rights Commission

A statutory body established under Section 68 of the Northern Ireland Act 1998, which works to ensure that the human rights of everyone in Northern Ireland are fully protected in law, policy and practice.

Policy

The formal and informal decisions a public authority makes in relation to carrying out its duties. Defined in the New Oxford English Dictionary as 'a course or principle of action adopted or proposed by a government party, business or individual'. In the context of Section 75, the term **policies** covers all the ways in which a public authority carries out or proposes to carry out its functions relating to Northern Ireland. Policies include unwritten as well as written policies.

Positive action

This phrase is not defined in any statute, but the Equality Commission understands it to mean any lawful action that a public authority might take for the purpose of promoting equality of opportunity for all persons in relation to employment or in accessing goods, facilities or services (such as health services, housing, education, justice, policing). It may

involve adopting new policies, practices, or procedures; or changing or abandoning old ones. *Positive action* is not the same as *positive discrimination*.

Positive discrimination differs from positive action in that *positive action* involves the taking of lawful actions whereas *positive discrimination* involves the taking of unlawful actions. Consequently, *positive action* is by definition lawful whereas *positive discrimination* is unlawful.

Qualitative data

Qualitative data refers to the experiences of individuals from their perspective, most often with less emphasis on numbers or statistical analysis. Consultations are more likely to yield qualitative than quantitative data.

Quantitative data

Quantitative data refers to numbers, typically derived from either a population in general or samples of that population. This information is often analysed by either using descriptive statistics, which consider general profiles, distributions and trends in the data, or inferential statistics, which are used to determine 'significance' either in relationships or differences in the data.

Screening

The procedure for identifying which policies will be subject to equality impact assessment, and how these equality impact assessments will be prioritised. The purpose of screening is to identify the policies which are likely to have a minor/major impact on equality of opportunity so that greatest resources can be devoted to improving these policies. Screening requires a systematic review of existing and proposed policies.

Schedule 9

Schedule 9 of the Northern Ireland Act 1998 sets out detailed provisions for the enforcement of the Section 75 statutory duties, including an outline of what should be included in an equality scheme.

Section 75

Section 75 of the Northern Ireland Act provides that each public authority is required, in carrying out its functions relating to Northern Ireland, 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 and sexual orientation;
- men and women generally;
- persons with a disability and persons without; and

- persons with dependants and persons without.

Without prejudice to these obligations, each public authority in carrying out its functions relating to Northern Ireland must also have regard to the desirability of promoting good relations between persons of different religious belief, political opinion or racial group.

Section 75 investigation

An investigation carried out by the Equality Commission, under Schedule 9 of the NI Act 1998, arising from the failure of a public authority to comply with the commitments set out in its approved equality scheme.

There are two types of Commission investigation, these are as follows:

1. An investigation of a complaint by an individual who claims to have been directly affected by the failure of a public authority to comply with its approved equality scheme;
2. An investigation initiated by the Commission, where it believes that a public authority may have failed to comply with its approved equality scheme.

Appendix 6 Action plan/action measures 2019-2021

	Action Point	Intended Outcome	Performance Indicator	Comment
1.	Encourage applications from persons with disabilities when recruiting new staff, including a statement on welcoming applications from people with disabilities and guaranteeing interviews to all people with disabilities who meet the essential criteria specified for each vacant post.	Participation in the workforce	Increase in applicants with a disability	Affirmative action strategies to be developed where appropriate.
2.	Ensure that there is appropriate disability access when the Commission moves to new premises.	People with a disability will have ease of access to new premises	Accessible premises	Liaison as appropriate to ensure DDA compliance
3.	Ensure that the Commission's Strategic and Business Plans include areas of work that will promote equality of opportunity and good relations.	To ensure public authority compliance at a domestic level and protect the rights of service users	Effective changes in law, policy and practice in the areas of work identified.	Strategic and Business Plans screened to ensure compliance with Section 75.
4.	Enhanced participation of Section 75 groups in determining the Commission's areas of work through community engagements.	To inform the Commission's operational priorities to ensure they align with Section 75, where appropriate.	Needs of Section 75 groups reflected in strategic and business plan objectives.	

5.	Sign language training for frontline staff and other relevant staff.	Frontline and other relevant staff will be able to engage with clients who are deaf or who are hard of hearing and use sign language.	Clients who are deaf or are hard of hearing will feel comfortable.	
6.	Follow up resilience training for relevant staff to include service provision to those with mental health disabilities			
7.	Equality training	Awareness of the provisions of Section 75 are equality scheme commitments and the particular issues likely to affect people across the range of Section 75 categories	Increased knowledge of Section 75	