

Equality Scheme for the North/South Language Body

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



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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.¹

As the two agencies which comprise the Language Body deal with issues of diversity in language, culture and identity, we are in a special position to facilitate the exploration and validation of the complex identities and relationships at every level from the individual through community level to an all-island level. These identities and relationships are diverse and, it should be stressed, not necessarily mutually exclusive either at these various levels.

In our equality scheme we set out how the North/South Language Body² 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

¹ See section 1.1 of our Equality Scheme.

² For the purposes of Section 75, the designated public authority is the North/South Language Body which comprises the Ulster-Scots Agency and Foras na Gaeilge.

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 our equality scheme.

We, the Chair and Chief Executive Officer of the Ulster-Scots Agency and the Chairperson and Chief Executive Officer of Foras na Gaeilge, are fully committed to effectively fulfilling our Section 75 statutory duties across all our functions carried out in Northern Ireland (including service provision, employment and procurement) through the effective implementation of our equality scheme.

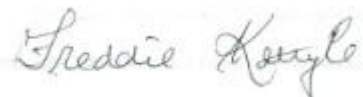
We look forward to exploring the implications of the emerging Strategy for Protecting and Enhancing the Development of the Irish Language and the Strategy for the Ulster-Scots Language, Heritage and Culture for the broader area of equality.

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 the North/South Language Body 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.

Ulster-Scots Agency



Freddie Kettle, Vice-Chairperson



Ian Crozier, Chief Executive Officer

Date: 3rd March 2025

Foras na Gaeilge

Regina Uí Chollataín

Professor Regina Uí Chollatáin, Chairperson



Seán Ó Coinn, Chief Executive Officer

Date: 3rd March 2025

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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 North/South Language Body 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 dependents 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.³ 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 North/South Language Body

1.2 Schedule 9 (4) (1) of the Act requires the North South Language Body 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 are committed to the discharge of our Section 75 obligations in all parts of our organisation and we will commit the necessary 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

1.4 The North/South Language Body is a single Body reporting to the North South Ministerial Council, but

³ Section 98 (1) of the Northern Ireland Act 1998.

composed of two separate and largely autonomous agencies: the Ulster-Scots Agency, (Tha Boord o Ulstèr-Scotch) and Foras na Gaeilge. The Sponsor Departments for the Language Body are the Department for Communities in Northern Ireland and the Department of Tourism, Culture, Arts, Gaeltacht, Sport and Media in the Republic of Ireland.

Ulster-Scots Agency

1.5 The function of the Ulster-Scots Agency is for the promotion of greater awareness and the use of Ullans and of Ulster-Scots cultural issues, both within Northern Ireland and throughout the island.

1.6 In carrying out its functions in relation to Ullans and Ulster-Scots cultural issues the Agency may:

- provide advice to both administrations, public bodies and other groups in the private and voluntary sectors;
- undertake research and promotional campaigns; and
- undertake support of projects and grant-aid bodies and groups as necessary.

1.7 The Agency's main office is in Belfast and there is a subsidiary office in Raphoe (Co. Donegal). There are currently 15.77 staff in post and the organisation is headed up by a Chief Executive Officer and three Directors. The structure of the organisation is set out at Appendix A.

Foras na Gaeilge

1.8 Foras na Gaeilge has responsibility for the promotion of the Irish language on an all-island basis. It has a role in advising administrations, North and South, as well as public bodies and other groups in the private and voluntary sectors, in all matters relating to the Irish language. It also undertakes supportive projects and grant aids bodies and groups throughout the island of Ireland.

1.9 The functions of Foras na Gaeilge are:

- promoting the Irish language;
- facilitating and encouraging its use in speech and writing in public and private life in the South and, in the context of Part III of the European Charter for Regional and Minority Languages, in Northern Ireland where there is appropriate demand;
- advising both administrations, public bodies and other groups in the private and voluntary sectors;
- undertaking supportive projects and grant aiding bodies and groups as considered necessary;
- undertaking research, promotional campaigns, and public and media relations;
- developing terminology and dictionaries;
- supporting Irish medium education and the teaching of Irish.

1.10 The main office of the organisation is in Dublin with subsidiary offices in Belfast, Ráth Chairn and Dunshaughlin (Co. Meath) and Gaoth Dobhair (Co.

Donegal). There are currently 63 staff in post and the organisation is headed up by a Chief Executive Officer and four Directors. The structure of the organisation is set out at Appendix A.

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:

- arrangements for consulting on all aspects of the implementation of our equality duties – see Chapter 3;
- arrangements for assessing the impact of policies – see Chapter 4 paras. 4.1-4.18;
- arrangements for publishing the results of assessments – see Chapter 4 paras. 4.19-4.26;
- arrangements for monitoring the impact of policies – see Chapter 4 paras. 4.27-4.31;
- arrangements for publishing the results of monitoring – see Chapter 4 paras. 4.32-4.35;

- arrangements for ensuring and assessing public access to information and services we provide – see Chapter 6;
- arrangements for dealing with complaints – see Chapter 8.

In addition, we have the following arrangements in place for assessing our 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 our equality scheme lies with the Chief Executive Officers of the Ulster-Scots Agency and Foras na Gaeilge. Each Chief Executive Officer is accountable to the appropriate Board and, jointly, to the North South Ministerial Council 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 one of the named officers at the address given below and we will respond to you as soon as possible:

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2.5 Objectives and targets relating to the statutory duties will be integrated into our respective strategic and operational business plans.⁴

2.6 Employees' job descriptions and performance plans will reflect their contributions to the discharge of the Section 75 statutory duties and implementation of the equality scheme, where relevant. The personal

⁴ See Appendix 4 'Timetable for measures proposed' and section 2.11 of this equality scheme.

performance plans are subject to appraisal in the annual performance review.

2.7 Although this is a joint scheme, we will prepare separate action plans and annual reports on the progress made by each Agency 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 each Agency's annual report.

2.8 The latest Section 75 annual progress report will be made available on the website of each Agency:

www.ulsterscotsagency.org.uk or www.forasnagaeilge.ie

It can also be obtained by contacting:

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2.9 We will liaise closely with the Equality Commission to ensure that progress on the implementation of our equality scheme is maintained.

Action plan/action measures

2.10 We are committed to developing an action plan to promote equality of opportunity and good relations. Renewed action plans for Foras na Gaeilge and the Ulster-Scots Agency will be published within 6 months of the approval of this Scheme.

2.11 The action measures that will make up our action plan will be relevant to our functions carried out in Northern Ireland. 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 categories⁵ to identify the inequalities that exist for our service users and those affected by our policies.⁶

⁵ See section 1.1 of this equality scheme for a list of these categories.

⁶ See section 4.1 of this equality scheme for a definition of policies.

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 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.

2.14 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 2.15 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 our functions and work. We will review the audits of inequalities and action plans in 2024-2026 and thereafter every three years, seeking input from and consulting with our stakeholders as appropriate.

2.16 We 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.

2.17 Once finalised, our action plan will be available on our websites at:

www.ulsterscotsagency.org.uk or www.forasnagaeilge.ie

and by contacting:

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2.18 Consultees on the list set out at Appendix 3 will be notified of the availability of the action plan (by electronic link or hard copy on request if more suitable for recipients). 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) 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.

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 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;
- Virtual meetings; 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. The North/South Language Body is committed to achieving effective two-way communication with its stakeholders and will take account of best practice and guidance. We will evaluate the range of tools and technological innovations which may be used to communicate with customers. 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 good practice and of developing best practice, including the Equality Commission document *Let's Talk, Let's Listen – Guidance for Public Authorities on Consulting and Involving Children and Young People* (2008).

Information will be made available, on request, in alternative formats,⁷ as quickly as possible, usually

⁷ See Chapter 6 of our equality scheme for further information on alternative formats of information we provide.

within 2-6 weeks. 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 consultees⁸ 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:

- we will issue our equality scheme to all consultees within one month of approval by the Equality Commission;
- we will keep our consultees informed on our progress in implementing this equality scheme by drawing attention to annual monitoring reports and the annual progress report and to any other documentation we issue as a consequence of the equality scheme;
- we will ensure that consultees are provided with appropriate information on our role, our approach to the Section 75 statutory duties and the commitments in this equality scheme in all consultation documentation and at all consultation meetings.

3.2.6 The consultation period lasts for a minimum of twelve weeks to allow adequate time for groups to

⁸ Please see Appendix 3 for a list of our consultees.

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.⁹

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

⁹ Please see below at 4.27 to 4.31 for details on monitoring.

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 will provide feedback to consultees in a timely manner, and in a suitable format 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.

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.ulsterscotsagency.org.uk or www.forasnagaeilge.ie

or by contacting:

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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, 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 will 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.

We will use 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 in this regard:

- 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

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

4.4 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.

4.5 The lead role in the screening of a policy will be 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.

4.6 The following questions will be 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?

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

4.8 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 mitigation¹⁰ 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.

4.9 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,

¹⁰ 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.

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 the Ulster-Scots Agency or Foras na Gaeilge.

4.10 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 Ulster-Scots Agency or Foras na Gaeilge.

4.11 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 the Ulster-Scots Agency or Foras na Gaeilge.

4.12 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 the relevant website:

www.ulsterscotsagency.org.uk or www.forasnagaeilge.ie

and on request from:

Ulster-Scots Agency:

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Director of Corporate Services

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

4.14 Our screening reports will be published quarterly (see below at 4.20 - 4.22 and 4.23 for details).

Equality impact assessment

4.15 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.

4.16 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. For existing policies, the equality impact assessment will be carried out within two years of the approval of our equality scheme. For new policies, or existing policies which are being revised, the equality impact assessment will be carried out as part of the policy development process, before the policy is implemented.

4.17 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))

4.18 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

4.19 Screening reports are published quarterly. Screening reports detail:

- All policies screened by the Ulster-Scots Agency and Foras na Gaeilge 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.

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

4.21 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

4.22 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

4.23 The results of our assessments (screening reports and completed templates, the results of equality impact assessments) are available on our websites:

www.ulsterscotsagency.org.uk or www.forasnagaeilge.ie

and by contacting:

Ulster-Scots Agency:

Karen Stewart

Director of Corporate Services

Ulster-Scots Agency

31 Gordon Street

Belfast BT1 2LG

Tel: 028 9023 1113

e-mail: kstewart@ulsterscotsagency.org.uk

or

Foras na Gaeilge:

Seán Ó Coinn

Chief Executive Officer

Foras na Gaeilge

Westgate House

2/4 Queens Street

Belfast BT1 6ED

Tel: 028 9089 0970

e-mail: comhairliuchan@forasnagaeilge.ie

4.24 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 three-month period are also sent directly to all consultees on a quarterly basis.

4.25 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))

4.26 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 Ulster-Scots Agency and Foras na Gaeilge follow

guidance from the Office of the Information Commissioner and the Equality Commission.

4.27 We will monitor any adverse impact on the promotion of equality of opportunity of 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.

4.28 We will establish appropriate systems to monitor the impact of policies and identify opportunities to better promote equality of opportunity and good relations, including:

- 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.

4.29 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.

4.30 We will review our EQIA monitoring information on an annual basis. Other monitoring information will also be reviewed on an annual basis.

Our arrangements for publishing the results of our monitoring

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

4.31 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:

4.32 EQIA monitoring information is published as part of our Section 75 annual progress report (see 2.7).

4.33 The Section 75 annual progress report is made available on the website of each Agency:

www.ulsterscotsagency.org.uk or www.forasnagaeilge.ie

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 Officers wish to positively communicate the commitment of the North/South Language Board to the Section 75 statutory duties, both internally and externally. To this end we will introduce 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 Each Agency will draw 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 this equality scheme with the necessary skills and knowledge to do this work effectively.

Awareness raising and training arrangements

5.4 The following arrangements will be put in place to ensure all our staff and Board Members 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 and ensure that any queries or

questions of clarification from staff are addressed effectively;

- Staff in the Ulster-Scots Agency and Foras na Gaeilge will receive a briefing on this equality scheme within three months of the approval of the scheme;
- The Section 75 statutory duties will form part of induction training for new staff;
- Focused training will be provided for key staff within each Agency 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.

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 Ulster-Scots Agency and Foras na Gaeilge will, where possible,

work closely together and with other bodies and agencies in the development and delivery of training.

Monitoring and evaluation

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

- We will 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.

Chapter 6

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

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

6.1 We are 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 will 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 or Irish, may have difficulties with information provided only in English and/or Irish.

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

6.3 To ensure equality of opportunity in accessing information, we will provide information in alternative formats on request, where reasonably practicable. We will develop arrangements to communicate with children and young people, people with a learning disability and minority ethnic communities. Where the exact request cannot be met, we will ensure a reasonable alternative is provided. Alternative formats may include Easy Read, Braille, instructions about use of screen readers, large print or versions in languages other than English or Irish.

We will respond to requests for information in alternative formats as quickly as possible, usually within 10 working days.

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

Access to services

6.5 We are committed to ensuring that all of our services are fully accessible to everyone in the community across the Section 75 categories. The Ulster-Scots Agency and Foras na Gaeilge also adhere to the relevant provisions of current anti-discrimination legislation.

6.6 We intend that all our services are fully accessible to all parts of the community. Our arrangements for

assessing the equality impacts of policies (including screening and equality impact assessments) will highlight any factors which create differential impact by making a service linked to a particular policy less accessible to particular groups. These arrangements will include:

- An access audit of premises to ascertain compliance with requirements for ease of physical access to buildings
- Inclusion of minority groups in outputs, for instance adequate representation in books/publications/social media posts/website etc
- Staff training in EDI, including disability awareness training
- Accessible web content, use of screen readers etc.
- Engagement with stakeholders to help them identify issues that might restrict access.
- Assessing public access to information and services

6.7 We will monitor annually across all our functions, in relation to access to information and services, to ensure equality of opportunity and good relations are promoted. This monitoring will comprise measures such as our annual progress reports, monitoring uptake of services, engagement with Section 75 groups, checking websites regularly for adherence to accessibility guidelines, access audits of premises and reviewing complaints related to equality issues.

6.8 Monitoring will be reported upon and the information included in the Annual Progress Report.

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 is listed in the timetable of measures at Appendix 4. For information on the action plan please see above at 2.10 – 2.18.

Chapter 8

Our complaints procedure

(Schedule 9 (10))

8.1 We 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 we have failed to comply with our approved equality scheme should contact either of the officers named below, by following the guidelines contained in the Services/Customer Charters of both organisations.

Ulster-Scots Agency:

Karen Stewart

Director of Corporate Services

Ulster-Scots Agency

31 Gordon Street

Belfast BT1 2LG

Tel: 028 9023 1113

e-mail: kstewart@ulsterscotsagency.org.uk

or

Foras na Gaeilge:

Seán Ó Coinn

Chief Executive Officer

Foras na Gaeilge

Westgate House

2/4 Queens Street

Belfast BT1 6ED

Tel: 028 9089 0970

e-mail: comhairliuchan@forasnagaeilge.ie

Chapter 9

Publication of our equality scheme

(Schedule 9 (4) (3) (c))

9.1 Our equality scheme will be made available free of charge in print form and alternative formats from:

Ulster-Scots Agency:

Karen Stewart

Director of Corporate Services

Ulster-Scots Agency

31 Gordon Street

Belfast BT1 2LG

Tel: 028 9023 1113

e-mail: kstewart@ulsterscotsagency.org.uk

or

Foras na Gaeilge:

Seán Ó Coinn

Chief Executive Officer

Foras na Gaeilge

Westgate House

2/4 Queens Street

Belfast BT1 6ED

Tel: 028 9089 0970

e-mail: comhairliuchan@forasnagaeilge.ie

9.2 Our equality scheme will also be available on our websites at: www.ulsterscotsagency.org.uk and www.forasnagaeilge.ie

9.3 The following arrangements will be put 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, advertisements in media 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 as quickly as possible, usually within 10 working days.
- Our equality scheme will be available on request in alternative formats such as Easy Read, Braille, large print, screen readers and in minority languages to meet the needs of those not fluent in English or Irish.
- A summary of the scheme will be written and made available to all Board Members and

employees and will be available in a range of formats on request.

9.4 For a list of our stakeholders and consultees please see Appendix 3 of the equality scheme, visit our websites at:

www.ulsterscotsagency.org.uk and
www.forasnagaeilge.ie or contact:

Ulster-Scots Agency:

Karen Stewart

Director of Corporate Services

Ulster-Scots Agency

31 Gordon Street

Belfast BT1 2LG

Tel: 028 9023 1113

e-mail: kstewart@ulsterscotsagency.org.uk

or

Foras na Gaeilge:

Seán Ó Coinn

Chief Executive Officer

Foras na Gaeilge

Westgate House

2/4 Queens Street

Belfast BT1 6ED

Tel: 028 9089 0970

e-mail: comhairliuchan@forasnagaeilge.ie

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.

10.2 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.

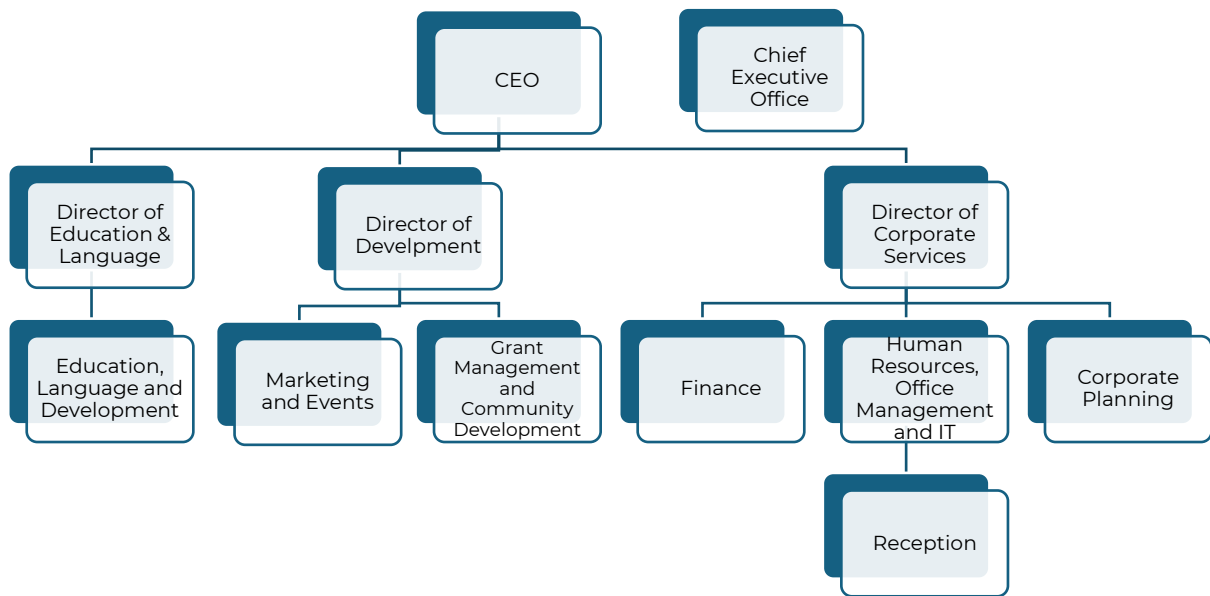
10.3 In undertaking this review we will follow any guidance issued by the Equality Commission. A report of this review will be sent to the Equality Commission and will be made public by publishing it on our websites:

www.ulsterscotsagency.org.uk and
www.forasnagaeilge.ie

10.4 We will also notify our stakeholders and consultees of the availability of the report and will respond to requests for the report in alternative formats as quickly as possible, usually within 10 working days.

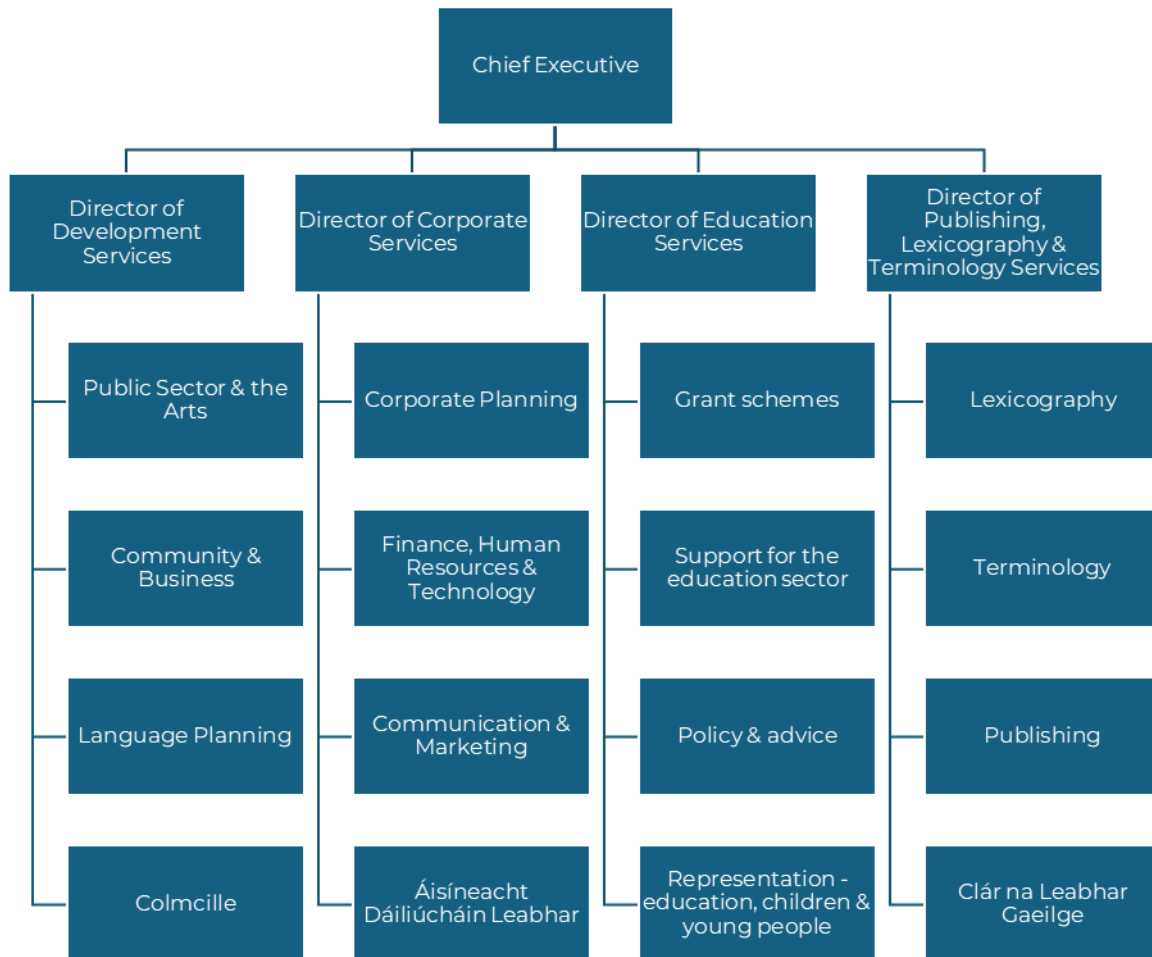
Appendix 1a

Organisational chart: Ulster-Scots Agency



Appendix 1b

Organisational chart: Foras na Gaeilge



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	<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 Fair Employment & Treatment (NI) Order¹¹. 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”.</p>
Political opinion ¹²	Nationalist generally; Unionists generally; members/supporters of other political parties.
Racial group	Black people; Chinese; Indians; Pakistanis; people of mixed ethnic

¹¹ 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.”

¹² *ibid*

	background; Polish; Roma; Travellers; White people.
Men and women generally	Men (including boys); Transgender 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))

Please note, this list is indicative not exhaustive and will be reviewed on an annual basis.

Action on Hearing Loss
AgeNI
Alliance Party NI
Altram
An Droichead
An Tor ar Lasadh
Antrim and Newtownabbey Borough Council
Ards and North Down Borough Council
Armagh City, Banbridge and Craigavon Borough Council
Arts and Business NI
Arts Council NI
Autism NI
Barnardos
Belfast City Council
Belfast Islamic Centre
Belfast Multicultural Association
Belfast Telegraph
Cara-Friend
Carers NI
Catholic Diocese of Down and Connor
Causeway Coast & Glens Borough Council
Cedar Foundation
Children in Northern Ireland (CiNI)
Children's Law Centre
Chinese Welfare Association

Church of Ireland Diocese of Armagh
Commissioner for Older People NI
Committee for the Administration of Justice
Community Places
Cultúrlann Aonach Mhacha
Cultúrlann McAdam Ó Fiaich
Cultúrlann Uí Chanáin
Cumann Gaelach na hEaglaise
Democratic Unionist Party
Department of An Taoiseach (Shared Island Initiative)
Department of Foreign Affairs (Anglo-Irish Division)
Derry City and Strabane District Council
Development Trusts NI
Disability Action
Disability Sport NI
East Belfast Mission (Methodist)
Education Authority NI
Electoral Commission NI
Equality Coalition
Equality Commission for Northern Ireland
Evangelical Alliance
FDA (First Division Association)
Federation of Small Businesses
Fermanagh and Omagh District Council
Foyle Women's Information Network
Gaeláras Mhic Ardghail (An tIúr)
Grand Orange Lodge of Ireland
Guide Dogs for the Blind Association
HERE NI
Heritage Lottery Fund
Indian Community Centre
Information Commissioners Office Northern Ireland
Institute of Ulster-Scots Studies
Irish Congress of Trade Unions

Libraries NI
Linen Hall Library
Lisburn and Castlereagh City Council
Local Government Staff Commission for Northern Ireland
Mencap Northern Ireland
Methodist Church in Ireland
Mid & East Antrim Council
Mid Ulster District Council
Migrant Centre NI
Multi-Ethnic Sports and Cultures NI
Museums Association
National Museums NI
Newry, Mourne and Down District Council
NI Commissioner for Children & Young People
NI Community Relations Council
North West Community Network
Northern Ireland Anti-Poverty Network
Northern Ireland Council for Voluntary Action (NICVA)
Northern Ireland Human Rights Commission
Northern Ireland Local Government Association
Northern Ireland Museums Council
Northern Ireland Public Services Alliance
Northern Ireland Rural Women's Network
Northern Ireland Screen
Northern Ireland Women's European Platform
Northern Visions
Parenting Focus
People Before Profit
Presbyterian Church in Ireland
PSNI Lisnasharragh Equality and Diversity Unit
Queen's University Belfast
Raidió Fáilte
Rainbow Project
Royal National Institute for Deaf People NI

Royal National Institute of Blind People
Save the Children
SDLP
Sense NI
Sinn Féin
South Tyrone Empowerment Programme
Special Olympics Ulster
Sport NI
St Mary's University College
Statutory Advisory Councils
Stranmillis College
The Baha'i Council for Northern Ireland
The Green Party in Northern Ireland
The National Deaf Children's Society
The Representative Church Body (Col)
Tourism NI
Traditional Unionist Voice
Training for Women Network Ltd
Transgender NI
Turas
Ulster Scots Community Network
Ulster Unionist Party
University of Ulster
Volunteer Now
Wheelworks
Women's Resource and Development Agency
Youth Council for Northern Ireland

Appendix 4

Timetable for measures proposed

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

Please note that all actions are the responsibility of the Director of Corporate Services (Ulster-Scots Agency) and the Chief Executive (Foras na Gaeilge).

	Theme		Action measures	Equality Scheme ref.	Next target date	
1	Development of the Equality Scheme	1.1	Develop Equality Scheme	-	Q4 2024	
		1.2	Consult on Equality Scheme	-	Q1 2025	
		1.3	Finalise Equality Scheme	-	Q1 2025	
		1.4	Submit to Equality Commission for approval	-	Q2 2025	
2	Publication of the Equality Scheme	2.1	Publish on websites	para 9.2	Following Commission approval	

	Theme		Action measures	Equality Scheme ref.	Next target date	
		2.2	Inform public of availability of Scheme	para 9.3 bullet 1	Following Commission approval	
		2.3	Inform consultees of availability of Scheme	para 9.3 bullet 2	Following Commission approval	
		2.4	Prepare summary version of Equality Scheme and circulate to relevant groups and staff	para 9.3 bullet 4 & para 5.4	Following Commission approval	
		2.5	Provide access to full Equality Scheme for staff	para 5.4	Following Commission approval	
		2.6	Staff briefing	para 5.4	Within 3 months of Commission approval	
3	Development of the Equality Action Plan	3.1	Undertake audit of inequalities	para 2.11	Q1 2025	
		3.2	Develop Equality Action Plan	para 2.10	Q1-Q2 2025	
		3.3	Consult on audit of inequalities and Equality Action Plan	para 2.14	Q2-Q3 2025	

	Theme		Action measures	Equality Scheme ref.	Next target date	
		3.4	Submit Equality Action Plan to Equality Commission	para 2.10	Within 6 months of approval of Equality Scheme	
		3.5	Publish on websites	para 2.17	Within 6 months of approval of Equality Scheme	
		3.6	Notify consultees of availability	para 2.18	Q4 2025	
4	Review of the equality scheme	4.1	Conduct review of Equality Scheme and prepare review Report	para 10.1	Q1 2030	
		4.2	Submit review report to Equality Commission	para 10.3	Q1 2030	
		4.3	Publish report on websites	para 10.3	Q1 2030	
		4.4	Notify consultees of availability	para 10.4	Q1 2030	
5	Review of the Equality Action Plan	5.1	Review audit of inequalities and equality action plan	para 2.15	Q1-Q2 2030	
		5.2	Consult on review of audit of inequalities/equality action plan	para 2.14	Q2 2030	

	Theme		Action measures	Equality Scheme ref.	Next target date	
		5.3	Integrate revised targets into corporate plans and operational business plans	para 2.15	Q3 2030	
		5.4	Inform Equality Commission of changes	para 2.16	Q3 2030	
		5.5	Publish updated plan on websites	para 2.17	Q3-Q4 2030	
		5.6	Notify consultees of availability	para 2.18	Q3-Q4 2030	
6	Internal arrangements	6.1	Integrate targets into annual operational business plan	para 2.5		
		6.2	Integrate targets into corporate plans	para 2.5		
		6.3	Update job descriptions and performance plans where relevant	para 2.6		
7	Annual review of progress	7.1	Conduct review of progress and prepare annual report	para 2.7		
		7.2	Submit report to Equality Commission	para 2.7		
		7.3	Publish report on websites	para 2.8		

	Theme		Action measures	Equality Scheme ref.	Next target date	
		7.4	Include reference in annual report of each Agency	para 2.7		
8	List of consultees	8.1	Update list of consultees	para 3.4		
9	Assessment of policies	9.1	Screen all existing policies	para 4.5	Within 1 year of approval of Equality Scheme	
		9.2	Screen all new policies and revisions of existing policies	para 4.5		
		9.3	Publish screening templates on websites	para 4.24		
		9.4	Publish quarterly screening reports and notify consultees	para 4.24 & 4.25		
		9.5	Issue press releases etc. as appropriate	para 4.26		
		9.6	Conduct EQIAs of existing policies as required	para 4.17	Within 2 years of approval of Equality Scheme	

	Theme		Action measures	Equality Scheme ref.	Next target date	
		9.7	Conduct EQIAs of new policies and revisions of existing policies as required	para 4.17		
		9.8	Publish EQIA reports on websites	para 4.24		
		9.9	Issue press releases etc. as appropriate	para 4.26		
		9.10	Monitor EQIAs	para 4.31		
10	Monitoring	10.1	Establish monitoring systems	para 4.29	Q4 2025	
		10.2	Review monitoring information and prepare report	para 4.31	Q4 2025	
		10.3	Publish report on websites	para 4.34	Q4 2025	
		10.4	Include results in annual progress report	para 4.33	Q4 2025	
11	Staff training	11.1	Draw up a detailed staff training plan	para 5.3		
		11.2	Implement training programme	para 5.4		

	Theme		Action measures	Equality Scheme ref.	Next target date	
		11.3	Monitor and evaluate training programme	para 5.6		
		11.4	Update induction materials	para 5.4		
		11.5	Provide refresher training	para 5.4	Within 1 year of staff briefing (see 2.6 above)	
12	Access to information and services	12.1	Make arrangements for providing information in alternative formats	para 6.3	Continuous	
		12.2	Review arrangements for ensuring access to information and services	para 6.7	Within 1 year of approval of Equality Scheme	

Appendix 5

Glossary of terms

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 (i.e. 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 nine categories. Different circumstances will call for different types of consultation. Consultations could, for example, include meetings,

focus groups, surveys and questionnaires.

Equality 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.

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, dependents, 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 Equality 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'.

Inequality Where something an organisation does has a differential or unfair impact on anyone in any of the

groups listed in Section 75 definition below.

Mainstreaming The integration of equal opportunities principles, strategies and practices into the everyday 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.

Monitoring Monitoring consists of continuously scrutinising and evaluating a policy to assess its impact on the Section 75 categories.

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 Belfast/Good Friday Agreement, received Royal Assent on 19 November 1998.

Section 75 of the Act created the statutory equality duties.

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 policy 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.

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.

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.