



# Revised Equality Scheme for

# Northern Ireland Fire & Rescue Service

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

This Equality Scheme can be made available in a range of formats on request. Please contact us with your requirements (see below for contact details):

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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<sup>1</sup>.

Since 2001, Northern Ireland Fire & Rescue Service (NIFRS) has had an Equality Scheme in place setting out proposals for fulfilling the Section 75 statutory duties. The Scheme was revised in 2011 and has now been further reviewed to ensure it is relevant and up to date for 2016 and the foreseeable future.

The NIFRS Board and Corporate Management Team are committed to having an Equality Scheme that effectively brings about positive outcomes for the nine equality dimensions. We will commit to having in place appropriate resources and internal arrangements to make sure the statutory equality duties are complied with as fully as possible.

We will raise awareness of revised Scheme commitments and obligations through ongoing communication and also provision of training to employees and Board Members. This will have an emphasis on equality-proofing NIFRS strategies and policies and facilitating meaningful consultation with stakeholders.

As Chairperson and Chief Fire & Rescue Officer, we will ensure the Section 75 statutory duties are implemented across all corporate functions. We acknowledge that mainstreaming equality into all that we do involves active engagement with our employees and with our external stakeholders across the wider community.

In keeping with previous versions of our Equality Scheme, this revised Scheme continues to offer a complaint mechanism for any individual directly impacted by what may be a failure on the part of NIFRS to comply with the Scheme.

On behalf of Northern Ireland Fire & Rescue Service Board it gives us pleasure to endorse the revised NIFRS Equality Scheme, drawn up in accordance with Section 75 and Schedule 9 of the Northern Ireland Act 1998 and Equality Commission for Northern Ireland guidelines.

**Carmel McKinney MBE**  
**Chairperson**  
**NIFRS Board**

**Dale Ashford**  
**Chief Fire & Rescue Officer**

August 2016

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<sup>1</sup> See section 1.1 of our Equality Scheme.

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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 Northern Ireland Fire & Rescue Service to comply with two statutory duties:

##### Section 75 (1)

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

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

##### Section 75 (2)

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

“Functions” include the “powers and duties” of a public authority<sup>2</sup>. 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 Northern Ireland Fire & Rescue Service

#### 1.2

Schedule 9 4. (1) of the Act requires Northern Ireland Fire & Rescue Service (NIFRS), 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 available resources in terms of people, time and money to ensure that the Section 75 statutory duties are complied with and that our equality scheme can be implemented effectively. We also 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.

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<sup>2</sup> Section 98 (1) of the Northern Ireland Act 1998.

## Who we are and what we do

### 1.4

Northern Ireland Fire & Rescue Service is funded by the Department of Health. We serve over 1.8 million people across the whole of Northern Ireland covering a geographic area of 5,500sq miles, responding to fires, road traffic collisions and other specialist rescue incidents. We also provide community safety education and advice.

The Northern Ireland Fire & Rescue Service Board is responsible for giving strategic leadership to the ongoing implementation of the Fire & Rescue Services (Northern Ireland) Order 2006 and to ensure NIFRS is resourced to meet its challenges. The organisation is strategically managed by the Chief Fire & Rescue Officer (Accounting Officer), assisted by the Corporate Management Team comprising 3 Assistant Chief Fire Officers, the Director of Finance, Director of Planning, Performance & Governance and the Director of Human Resources.

The organisational structure of NIFRS is under review. At present the organisation is divided into four operational Command Areas – Northern, Southern, Eastern and Western. Area Commanders manage operational activity on a day to day basis and report to the Assistant Chief Fire Officer (Operations). The four Area Commands are supported by 14 Districts, strategically placed across Northern Ireland and which create a community focus for NIFRS activities.

NIFRS Headquarters and the Regional Control Centre are both situated in Lisburn, Co Antrim and the Fire & Rescue Service Training Centre is currently situated at Boucher Crescent, Belfast.

We employ over 1,850 people who provide the highest standard of fire and rescue service to the community. During 2014/15 our Regional Control Centre dealt with 33,992 emergency 999 calls and mobilised crews to 22,781 emergency incidents. Responding to emergencies and developing a safer community are at the heart of everything we do. Responding and protecting our community from fires, road traffic collisions and other emergency situations such as flooding, building collapses and chemical incidents is part of the daily life of a modern day Firefighter.

Our Firefighters either work as Wholetime (Full-time) or Retained (Part-time) Firefighters. Wholetime Firefighters are based at Fire Stations in the larger towns and cities throughout Northern Ireland and are organised into Watches (shifts) to crew Fire Stations 24 hours a day.

Our Retained Firefighters live and work in their local town or village and respond to emergency calls in their area, when alerted by a beeper, by making their way to their local Fire Station to meet the rest of the crew and respond to the incident. Retained Firefighters normally have other jobs as their primary employment but must be available to be at the Fire Station within 5 minutes to respond to emergency calls immediately.

Our Support employees work behind the scenes running the business side of NIFRS in support of service delivery. Support employees are based at Headquarters in Lisburn and at our four Area Commands, our District Commands and Training Centre locations. Management and support service functions range across NIFRS including Finance and Procurement, Human Resources, Corporate Communications, Information and Communications Technology, Estates and general administration.

## **Our Vision, Mission and Values**

### **1.5**

Our Vision is *'Protecting Our Community'*.

Our Mission is *'To deliver a fire and rescue service and work in partnership with others to ensure the safety and well-being of our community'*

Our Values are

<i>People</i>	<i>We value keeping our people safe and well trained</i>
<i>Leadership</i>	<i>We value leading by example</i>
<i>Teamwork</i>	<i>We value working together</i>
<i>Integrity</i>	<i>We value the utmost integrity in everything we do</i>
<i>Diversity</i>	<i>We value equality and fairness and we consider the needs of our staff and the community we serve</i>
<i>Communication</i>	<i>We value open and honest communication with our staff and with all our stakeholders</i>
<i>Partnership</i>	<i>We value working in partnership</i>
<i>Pursuit of Excellence</i>	<i>We value continuous improvement at all levels of our organisation</i>

## **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 (see paragraphs 4.1-4.35, 5.6, 6.8, 6.9, 10.1 and 10.2 below).

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

#### **Responsibilities and reporting**

The management arrangements put in place to enable NIFRS to carry out its statutory responsibilities and to conduct its business are illustrated at Appendix 1.

#### **Management Structure**

##### **(a) NIFRS Board**

The NIFRS Board forms the statutory body responsible for all the activities of the organisation and is responsible for the overall policies of NIFRS. The Board comprises 8 non-executive Members, including a non-executive Chairperson and the Chief Fire & Rescue Officer. The Chair of the Board works closely with the Chief Fire & Rescue Officer to ensure that key and appropriate issues are brought to the Board for discussion in a timely manner. The Board is responsible for steering the strategic leadership of the organisation and for considering the managerial issues facing NIFRS in carrying out its statutory and other functions. Equality is a standard agenda item at Board Committee level.

##### **(b) Chief Fire & Rescue Officer (Accounting Officer)**

The Chief Fire & Rescue Officer is responsible for the overall performance of the executive functions of NIFRS. He is the designated Accounting Officer with responsibility for maintaining a sound system of internal control that supports the achievement of NIFRS policies, aims and objectives, whilst safeguarding public funds and assets. The Chief Fire & Rescue Officer is also the accountable Equal Opportunities Officer which includes accountability for delivery of the Section 75 statutory duties.

##### **(c) Corporate Management Team**

The Chief Fire & Rescue Officer meets with a group of Directors collectively known as the Corporate Management Team. This team currently comprises the Assistant Chief Fire Officer (Community Protection), Assistant Chief Fire Officer (Operations), Assistant Chief Fire Officer (Operations Support), Director of Human Resources, Director of Finance and the Director of Planning, Performance & Governance.

The Corporate Management Team is responsible for the implementation of NIFRS strategies and policies for key operational matters. It also plans and develops service delivery for the NIFRS Board and makes recommendations within national and local policy frameworks and guidelines. The Corporate Management Team ensures that

equality considerations are included in Corporate Plans and Annual Business Plans. Performance of NIFRS in relation to corporate business plans is reported to the Board and to the Department of Health. Benchmarking also takes place against national indicators monitored by the Department of Communities & Local Government (DCLG). The Equality, Inclusion & Legal section is part of the Human Resources Directorate and implementation of equality and fairness is corporately considered as a responsibility for all members of the Corporate Management Team.

(d) Individual Directorates

NIFRS Board manages service delivery through a structure of Directorates, each of which is headed up by a Director. The organisational structure of NIFRS is under review and the Directorates are currently as follows:-

- Human Resources
- Finance
- Planning, Performance & Governance
- Community Protection
- Operations
- Operations Support

The quality of our service delivery and compliance is monitored regularly within the organisation against prescribed standards. We are also accountable through our procurement processes that specific service standards are met. The Human Resources Directorate ensures that Annual Business Plans under the key strategic theme 'Supporting our People' include equality related actions and that progress is reported on these quarterly.

### **Accountability Structure**

(a) Department of Health

The Department has a statutory duty to secure the provision of a Fire and Rescue Service for the population of Northern Ireland and for appointing a NIFRS Board. The Department is responsible for Fire Services legislation pertaining to Northern Ireland and for directing on effective stewardship of resources to maintain NIFRS.

(b) NIFRS Board

The NIFRS Board is accountable to the Department of Health and through it to the Northern Ireland Assembly. Through its Committees, the NIFRS Board ratifies and approves all statutory reports compiled in the organisation and this includes annual reporting to the Equality Commission for Northern Ireland.

### **External Relationships**

In order to ensure the people who avail of our services have a stronger voice to influence the shape and range of our organisation and what we deliver, we are committed to building on the links already established with partner agencies including the Police Service of Northern Ireland, Northern Ireland Ambulance Service, Northern Ireland Water, Rivers Agency, Department of Agriculture, Environment & Rural Affairs

and the Maritime & Coastguard Agency. Joint North-South partnership is also in place for the promotion of fire safety week across the whole of Ireland. We also participate in numerous local community partnerships to promote Home Fire Safety and alongside Health & Social Care partners to assist the vulnerable in the community. We work with community sport associations and clubs to facilitate the access to defibrillators.

We will continue to develop links with other Government agencies, independent sector providers, voluntary and community groups representing all categories of persons specified in Section 75 of the Northern Ireland Act 1998, including Trade Unions and professional organisations and individuals.

### **NIFRS Equality & Inclusion Steering Group**

An Equality & Diversity Forum, chaired by a Board Member 'Champion' was established under the previous Equality Scheme. The purpose of this Forum was to advise the NIFRS Board, through the relevant Board Committee, on equality and diversity matters and to encourage implementation of the long-term Corporate Equality & Diversity Strategy in employment and service delivery matters. Review of the Equality Scheme has also considered the role of the Forum and it is now recommended to reconstitute to 'the Equality & Inclusion Steering Group'. The Group will be chaired by the Chief Fire & Rescue Officer and will comprise managers from across the organisation along with Trade Union representatives. The purpose of the Group will be to contribute to and support the implementation of the statutory equality duties across all corporate functions.

#### **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 Chairperson and Chief Fire & Rescue Officer on behalf of the NIFRS Board. The Director of Human Resources is accountable to the NIFRS Board for the development, implementation 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**

The Director of Human Resources has responsibility for implementation of this Scheme in discharge of the NIFRS Board's duties under Section 75 and reporting progress to the NIFRS Board.

#### **2.5**

If you have any questions or comments regarding our revised Equality Scheme, please contact the NIFRS HR Manager (Equality, Inclusion & Legal), at the address given below and we will respond to you as soon as possible:

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Textphone: 02892 628800  
Email: [adele.davidson@nifrs.org](mailto:adele.davidson@nifrs.org)

## **2.6**

Objectives and targets relating to the statutory duties will be integrated into our strategic and operational business plans<sup>3</sup>.

## **2.7**

Employees job descriptions will reflect their contributions to the discharge of the Section 75 statutory duties and implementation of the Equality Scheme, where relevant.

## **2.8**

NIFRS prepares an annual report on the progress we have made on implementing the arrangements set out in this Equality Scheme to discharge our Section 75 statutory duties (Section 75 Annual Progress Report).

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

Progress on the delivery of Section 75 statutory duties will also be included in our NIFRS Annual Report.

## **2.9**

The Section 75 annual progress report is available on our website

[www.nifrs.org/equality](http://www.nifrs.org/equality)

or by contacting:

Mrs Adèle Davidson  
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## **2.10**

NIFRS liaises closely with the Equality Commission to ensure that progress on the implementation of our equality scheme is maintained.

## **2.11**

Progress on implementing this Equality Scheme will be reported regularly to NIFRS Equality & Inclusion Steering Group, chaired by the Chief Fire & Rescue Officer and also to the appropriate Board Committee and full Board, as appropriate. Progress will

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<sup>3</sup> See Appendix 4 'Timetable for measures proposed' and section 2.11 of this equality scheme.

also be reported to the Corporate Management Team as part of routine updates on implementation of Corporate and Annual Business Plans.

We will continue with our meetings with members of the Equality Commission Statutory Duty Unit at which Section 75 matters arise, from time to time.

### **2.12**

NIFRS has developed an action plan to promote equality of opportunity and good relations. This action plan which is in addition to the NIFRS Equality Scheme and is a component of the '2020 Vision – Ten Year Equality & Diversity Strategy for NIFRS' is set out in **Appendix 6** to this Equality Scheme. The action plan was revised in 2015.

### **2.13**

The action measures that make up our action plan are relevant to our functions. The actions were developed following a comprehensive review of the Equality Strategy and progress made against original action plan. An audit of inequalities was carried out as part of the five year review of the Equality Scheme in 2011. This has been reviewed again as part of the review of the NIFRS Equality & Diversity Strategy 2010-2020. The audit of inequalities gathered and analysed information across the Section 75 categories<sup>4</sup> to identify the inequalities that exist for our service users and those affected by our policies<sup>5</sup>. The audit of inequalities is a living document that will be amended as continued evidence is gathered on newly identified inequalities.

### **2.14**

We are committed to ensuring action measures are specific, measurable, linked to achievable outcomes, realistic and time bound. Action measures will include performance indicators and timescales for their achievement.

### **2.15**

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.

### **2.16**

We will seek input from our stakeholders and consult on our action plan (**Appendix 6**) before we send it to the Equality Commission; and thereafter when reviewing the plan as per 2.17 below.

### **2.17**

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

### **2.18**

We will inform the Equality 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.

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<sup>4</sup> See section 1.1 of this Equality Scheme for a list of these categories.

<sup>5</sup> See section 4.1 of this Equality Scheme for a definition of policies.

**2.19**

Our action plan will be available on the NIFRS website and also internally for staff on the Global Drive 'Document Management System' folder.

If you require the action plan in an alternative format please contact Adèle Davidson at the contact details provided at paragraph 2.5.

## 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

NIFRS recognises the importance of consultation in all aspects of the implementation of our statutory equality duties. We will consult on our equality scheme, action plan at Appendix 6 and equality impact assessments. Equality considerations will be included in all public consultations on any aspect of NIFRS activity.

### 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); also the Commission's 'An Outline Guide' (February 2012); and the Commission's 'Budgets and Section 75: a short guide' (2015)*):

#### 3.2.1

All formal consultation exercises carried out by NIFRS 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 employees and recognised trade unions and such other groups who have a legitimate interest in the matter, whether or not they have a direct economic or personal interest.

For formal consultation exercises, initially all consultees (see **Appendix 3**), as a matter of course, will be notified (by email in the first instance; 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. Awareness of consultation will also be raised through our website and social media networks.

#### 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 and social media sites 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 our consultation methods in order to remove barriers to the consultation process. Specific consideration will be given as to how best to communicate with children and young people, people with disabilities (in particular people with learning disabilities) and minority ethnic communities. We take account of existing and emerging good practice.

Information will be made available, where reasonable and on request, in alternative formats<sup>6</sup>, normally in a timely manner and in as short a time frame as possible. We will endeavour that this will be within 20 days. If it is expected this may take longer, the HR Manager Equality, Inclusion & Legal will write out providing the reason(s) for the delay and an estimated response date. Where the exact request cannot be met we will ensure a reasonable alternative is provided.

### **3.2.4**

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

### **3.2.5**

To ensure effective consultation with consultees<sup>7</sup> 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 displaying information in this regard on our website and providing this to any service user or other engagement/consultative panels established. We will produce guidance on good practice engagement and consultation for managers to ensure effective consultation processes.

### **3.2.6**

The consultation period lasts for 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 safety 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<sup>8</sup>.

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<sup>6</sup> See Chapter 6 of our equality scheme for further information on alternative formats of information we provide.

<sup>7</sup> Please see Appendix 3 for a list of our consultees.

<sup>8</sup> Please see below at 4.27 to 4.35 for details on monitoring.

Where, under these exceptional circumstances, we must implement a policy immediately, we may consult after implementation of the policy, in order to ensure that any impacts of the policy are considered.

### **3.2.7**

If, for business reasons, 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 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 accessibility of the venue, how the meeting is to be conducted, the use of appropriate language, and whether a signer and/or interpreter is necessary.

### **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 are committed to providing feedback to consultees in a timely manner. Following a formal consultation exercise, a feedback report will be prepared which includes summary information on the policy consulted upon, a summary of consultees' comments and a summary of our consideration of and response to consultees' input. Where appropriate, we will provide this feedback in formats suitable to consultees. (Please see also 6.3).

## **3.3**

A list of our consultees is included in this revised Equality Scheme at Appendix 3. It can also be obtained from our website or by contacting Adèle Davidson (contact details at paragraph 2.5).

## **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.

## **3.5**

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

## Chapter 4 Our arrangements for assessing, monitoring and publishing the impact of policies

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

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

### 4.1

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

### 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

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

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

## Screening

### 4.4

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

### 4.5

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

### 4.6

The lead role in the screening of a policy is taken by the policy lead officer/decision maker 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 employees from other relevant work areas, and guidance and support will be

available from the HR Equality, Inclusion & Legal team. Where possible we will include key stakeholders in the screening process.

#### **4.7**

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

- What is the likely impact on equality of opportunity for those affected by this policy, for each of the Section 75 equality categories? (minor/major/none)
- Are there opportunities to better promote equality of opportunity for people within the Section 75 equality categories?
- To what extent is the policy likely to impact on good relations between people of a different religious belief, political opinion or racial group? (minor/major/none)
- Are there opportunities to better promote good relations between people of a different religious belief, political opinion or racial group?

#### **4.8**

In order to answer the screening questions, we gather all relevant information and data, both qualitative and quantitative. This may include Census data, local community information, incident data and risk analysis, previous feedback from stakeholders, up to date articles and reports, and specific commissioned research. The list is not exhaustive. In taking this evidence into account we consider the different needs, experiences and priorities for each of the Section 75 equality categories. Any screening decision will be informed by this evidence.

#### **4.9**

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

1. the policy has been 'screened in' for equality impact assessment
2. the policy has been 'screened out' with mitigation<sup>9</sup> or an alternative policy proposed to be adopted
3. the policy has been 'screened out' without mitigation or an alternative policy proposed to be adopted.

#### **4.10**

If our screening concludes that the likely impact of a policy is 'minor' in respect of one or more of the equality of opportunity and/or good relations categories, we may on occasion decide to proceed with an equality impact assessment, depending on the policy. If an EQIA is not to be conducted we will nonetheless consider measures that might mitigate the policy impact as well as alternative policies that might better achieve the promotion of equality of opportunity and/or good relations. Where we mitigate we will outline in our screening template the reasons to support this decision together with the proposed changes, amendments or alternative policy.

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<sup>9</sup> 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.

This screening decision will be ‘signed off’ by the appropriate policy lead within NIFRS.

#### **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 NIFRS.

#### **4.12**

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

#### **4.13**

As soon as possible following the completion of the screening process, the screening template, signed off and approved by the lead officer responsible for the policy, will be made available on our website at [www.nifrs.org/equality](http://www.nifrs.org/equality) and on request from Adèle Davidson, Equality Manager (contact details at paragraph 2.5).

#### **4.14**

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

#### **4.15**

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

### **Equality impact assessment**

#### **4.16**

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

#### **4.17**

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

#### **4.18**

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

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

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

### **4.19**

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

### **What we publish**

### **4.20**

#### Screening reports

These are published quarterly. Screening reports detail:

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

### **4.21**

#### Screening templates

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

### **4.22**

#### Equality impact assessments

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

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

## **How we publish the information**

### **4.23**

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

## **Where we publish the information**

### **4.24**

The results of our assessments (screening reports and completed templates, the results of EQIAs) will be available on our website or by contacting our Equality Manager, Adèle Davidson (contact details at paragraph 2.5).

### **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, NIFRS follows guidance from the Office of the Information Commissioner and the Equality Commission.

### **4.28**

We monitor any adverse impact on the promotion of equality of opportunity of policies we have adopted. We also endeavour to monitor 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 and secondary quantitative and qualitative data across all nine equality categories on an ongoing basis
- There are particular challenges associated with collecting Section 75 related data for those accessing services delivered by an Emergency Service such as NIFRS.

The Equality Inclusion & Legal team will work with colleagues in Community Protection directorate and also with the Operations Risk Management team to consider statistical information held and commission new data if necessary.

#### **4.30**

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

#### **4.31**

We review our EQIA monitoring information on an annual basis. Other monitoring information is reviewed on an ongoing basis.

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

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

#### **4.32**

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

#### **4.33**

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

#### **4.34**

Monitoring information will also be published and made available on the NIFRS website.

#### **4.35**

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

## **Chapter 5 Staff training**

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

### **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**

Both our Chairperson and Chief Fire & Rescue Officer on behalf of the NIFRS Board wish to positively communicate the commitment of NIFRS to the Section 75 statutory duties.

To this end we have introduced an effective communication and training programme for new and existing employees and will ensure that our commitment to the Section 75 statutory duties is made clear in all relevant publications.

## **Training objectives**

### **5.3**

NIFRS has a training plan for employees under 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 Equality Scheme.
- to provide employees involved in the assessment of policies (screening and EQIA) with the necessary skills and knowledge to do this work effectively.
- to provide employees 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 employees involved in consultation processes with the necessary skills and knowledge to do this work effectively.
- to provide employees involved in the implementation and monitoring of the effective implementation of the NIFRS 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 employees, Directors and NIFRS Board Members are aware of and understand our equality obligations:

- We will develop a summary of this Equality Scheme and make it widely available.
- We will provide access to the full Equality Scheme for all employees; ensure that any queries or questions of clarification are addressed effectively.
- Employees will receive a briefing on this Equality Scheme within 6 months of the issue of the revised Scheme.
- The Section 75 statutory duties form part of induction training for new employees.
- Focused training is provided for key employees within NIFRS who are directly engaged in progressing 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 employees 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 employees 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 employees.

In order to share resources and expertise, NIFRS will, where possible, work closely with other bodies and agencies, in particular with Department of Health partners from across the Health Trusts, 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.
- Equality & Inclusion Steering Group review of further training needs requirements through engagement with Area Command, Headquarters and Training & Organisation Development line managers. The Station/Department and Area Audit programme also provides information on areas of need.

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

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

#### **6.1**

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

#### **6.2**

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

- People with sensory, learning, communication and mobility disabilities may require printed information in other formats.
- Members of ethnic minority groups, whose first language is not English, may have difficulties with information provided only in English.
- Children and young people may not be able to fully access or understand information.

### **Access to 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, audio formats (CD, mp3 or DAISY), large print or minority languages to meet the needs of those for whom English is not their first language. NIFRS is committed to liaising with representatives of young people and disability and minority ethnic organisations and taking account of existing and developing good practice.

We will respond to requests for information in alternative formats in a timely manner. As stated previously at 3.2.3, information will be made available, on request, in alternative formats, usually within 20 working days. If it is expected this may take longer, the HR Manager Equality, Inclusion & Legal will write out providing the reason(s) for the delay and an estimated response date. Where the exact request cannot be met we will ensure a reasonable alternative is provided.

We already have a bank of multi-lingual fire safety literature and information targeted at children and young persons. We also have fire safety literature designed specifically for members of the Traveller community.

#### **6.4**

In disseminating information through the media we will use our website and social media networks in the first instance. We may also use press advertisements and statements where appropriate.

## **6.5**

Published information including Corporate Plans, Annual Business Plans, Annual Reports, Equality News and Section 75 information is displayed on the NIFRS website and will be made available in alternative formats as appropriate.

### **Access to services**

## **6.6**

NIFRS is committed to ensuring that all of our services are fully accessible to everyone in the community across the Section 75 categories.

We also adhere to the relevant provisions of current anti-discrimination legislation.

## **6.7**

We are committed to providing appropriate interpreting services in the context of a Fire & Rescue Service and ensuring accessibility of our buildings and facilities.

### **Assessing public access to information and services**

## **6.8**

We are committed to monitoring on an ongoing basis across all of our functions, in relation to access to information and services. This is to ensure that equality of opportunity and good relations are promoted. This activity includes:

- Access to interpreting/translation services
- Monitoring of complaints
- Consideration and implementation of reasonable adjustments under the Disability Discrimination Act 1995
- Satisfaction Surveys
- Article 55 Review
- Voluntary Undertaking Agreement between NIFRS and Equality Commission for Northern Ireland reporting (subsumed into triennial Article 55 Review as of 2010)

## **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 differs from and is in addition to our commitment to developing specific action plans/action measures to 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 paragraphs 2.11–2.18.

## Chapter 8 Our complaints procedure

(Schedule 9 10.)

### 8.1

NIFRS is responsive to the view 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 NIFRS has failed to comply with its approved Equality Scheme should contact:

David Moore  
Director of Human Resources  
Northern Ireland Fire & Rescue Service  
Fire & Rescue Service Headquarters  
1 Seymour Street  
Lisburn  
BT27 4SX

Or via email to [customerscharter@nifrs.org](mailto:customerscharter@nifrs.org) or alternatively, the complaint can be submitted via the NIFRS website at <http://www.nifrs.org/feedback.php?sec=1069>

### 8.4

We will in the first instance acknowledge receipt of a complaint within 5 working days of receipt.

### 8.5

An internal investigation of the complaint will be carried out and a response issued to the complainant normally within 15 working days, in keeping with timescales outlined in the NIFRS Citizens Charter. As more complex complaints may take longer to investigate, the complainant will be kept informed during each stage of the investigation of the complaint until the matter has been resolved. We will commit to issuing a response 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 2 months. In those circumstances, the complainant will be advised of the extended period within one month of making the complaint.

### 8.6

During the 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, NIFRS will co-operate fully, providing access in a timely manner to any relevant documentation that the Equality Commission may require.

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

## Chapter 9 Publication of our equality scheme

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

### 9.1

Our Equality Scheme is available free of charge via email, or in print form, or in alternative formats from:

Adèle Davidson  
HR Manager  
Equality Inclusion & Legal  
Northern Ireland Fire & Rescue Service  
Fire & Rescue Service Headquarters  
1 Seymour Street  
Lisburn  
BT27 4SX

Telephone: 02892 664221  
Fax: 02892 600456  
Textphone: 02892 628800  
Email: [adele.davidson@nifrs.org](mailto:adele.davidson@nifrs.org)

### 9.2

Our Equality Scheme is also available on our website at [www.nifrs.org](http://www.nifrs.org)

### 9.3

The following arrangements are in place for the publication 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 includes NIFRS website postings and direct emails/letters to groups representing the categories in Section 75.
- We will email a link to our approved Equality Scheme to our consultees on our consultation lists. Other consultees without e-mail will be notified by letter that the Scheme is available on request. We will respond to requests for the Equality Scheme in alternative formats in a timely manner, within as short a time as possible.
- Our Equality Scheme will be made available on request in alternative formats such as Braille, large print, audio formats ( CD, mp3, DAISY) and in minority languages to meet the needs of those not fluent in English.
- A summary version of this Scheme will also be made available.

### 9.4

For a list of our stakeholders and consultees please see Appendix 3 of the Equality Scheme, visit our website at [www.nifrs.org](http://www.nifrs.org) or contact Adèle Davidson.

## **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. A review will also be carried out in the event of the Equality Commission instigating a review programme across public authorities.

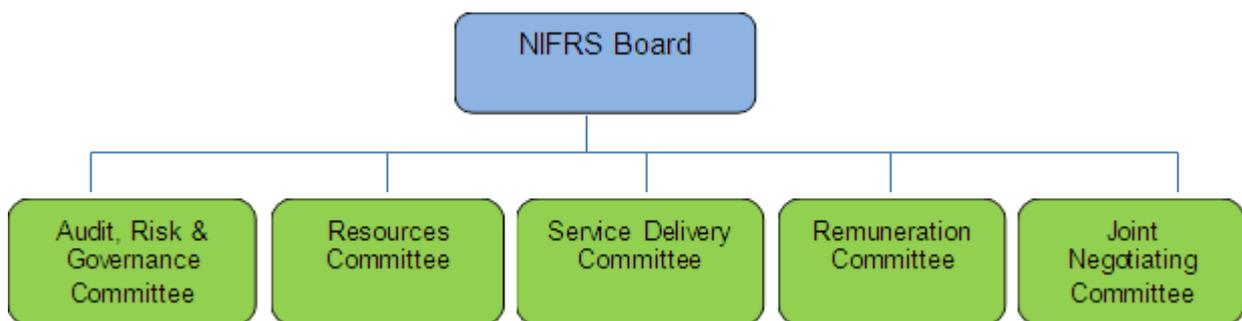
The review will evaluate the effectiveness of our Scheme in relation to the implementation of the Section 75 statutory duties relevant to our functions in Northern Ireland.

### **10.2**

In undertaking this review we will follow any guidance issued by the Equality Commission. A report of this review will be made public at [www.nifrs.org](http://www.nifrs.org), at NIFRS Board level and also sent to the Equality Commission.

# Appendix 1 Northern Ireland Fire & Rescue Service Organisation Chart

## Corporate Management Team



## 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	Protestant, Catholic, people of other Christian denominations, Buddhist; Hindu; Jewish; Muslim; Sikh; other faiths, people with no religious belief  For the purposes of Section 75, the term “religious belief” is the same definition as that used in the <i>Fair Employment &amp; Treatment (NI) Order</i> <sup>10</sup> . 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> ”.
Political opinion <sup>11</sup>	Nationalist generally; Unionists generally; members/supporters of other political parties.
Racial group	White people; Chinese; Indians; Pakistanis; Bangladeshis, people of mixed ethnic background; Black people, Polish; Roma; Travellers.
Men and women generally	Men (including boys); women (including girls) Trans-gendered people; Transsexual people.
Marital status	Married people, unmarried people, divorced people, civil partners; separated people; widowed people.
Age	Children, young people under 18; people aged between 18-65; people over 65.
Persons with a disability	Persons with disabilities as defined by the Disability Discrimination Act 1995 (DDA).
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	Heterosexual people; bisexual people; gay or lesbian people.

<sup>10</sup> 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*.”

<sup>11</sup> *ibid*

## **Appendix 3 List of consultees**

### **List of stakeholder consulted**

The following stakeholders were consulted with in relation to the NIFRS Equality Scheme

If there is an organisation, group or individual that you feel might be able to contribute as stakeholder consultee of NIFRS, please let us know.

Accord Northern Ireland  
Action Cancer  
Action Deaf Youth  
Action for Children  
Action Mental Health  
Action MS  
Action on Hearing Loss NI  
Adopt NI  
Advice NI  
Age NI  
Age Sector Platform  
Age Sector Reference Group  
Alliance Party  
Al-Nisa Association  
Alzheimer's Society  
Antrim & Newtownabbey Council  
Ards & North Down Borough Council  
Armagh City, Banbridge and Craigavon Borough Council  
Arthritis Care (NI)  
Arts & Disability Forum  
Aspergers Network  
Association of Baptist Churches in Northern Ireland  
Autism Initiatives NI  
Autism NI  
Barnardos  
Belfast Butterfly Club  
Belfast City Council  
Belfast Gurdwara  
Belfast Health and Social Care Trust  
Belfast Islamic Centre  
Black Youth Network  
Board of Social Witness, Presbyterian Church in Ireland  
British Deaf Association (NI)  
Bryson House  
Cancer Focus NI  
Cara-friend  
Carers NI  
Causeway Coast and Glens District Council  
Cedar Foundation  
Centre for Childcare Research  
Chief Officers 3<sup>rd</sup> Sector

Children in NI  
Children's Law Centre  
Chinese Welfare Association  
Church of Ireland Board for Social Responsibility (NI)  
Colleges NI  
Commissioner for Children and Younger People (NICCY)  
Commissioner for Older People in NI (COPNI)  
Committee on the Administration of Justice (CAJ)  
Community Fund NI  
Community Information Network (Fermanagh Trust)  
Community Relations Council  
Co-operation Ireland  
Corrymela Community  
Council for Catholic Maintained Schools  
Council for the Homeless  
Council on Social Responsibility (Methodist Church)  
Crossroads Young Carers Project  
Democratic Unionist Party  
Department for Communities  
Department for Infrastructure  
Department for the Economy  
Department of Agriculture, Environment and Rural Affairs  
Department of Education  
Department of Finance  
Department of Health  
Department of Justice  
Derry City and Strabane District Council  
Derry Well Women  
Diabetes UK  
Disability Action  
Disability Action NW  
Down's Syndrome Association  
Eagle Project  
Early Years  
East Belfast Community Development Agency  
Education Authority  
Employers' For Disability Northern Ireland  
Enable NI  
Equality Coalition  
Equality Commission for Northern Ireland  
Extern  
Falls Community Council  
Fermanagh and Omagh District Council  
Fire Brigades' Union  
Gingerbread Northern Ireland  
Greater Shankill Integrated Services for Children and Young People  
Green Party  
Headway  
Health and Social Care Board  
Home Start (NI)  
Integrated Services for Children and Young People

Lisburn and Castlereagh City Council  
Local Government Staff Commission for Northern Ireland  
Magherafelt Womens Group  
MENCAP  
Mid and East Antrim Borough Council  
Mid-Ulster Council  
Mind Yourself  
MINDWISE  
Multiple Sclerosis Society (NI)  
Muscular Dystrophy Group NI  
National Autistic Society NI  
National Deaf Children's Society  
National Society for the Prevention of Cruelty to Children (NSPCC)  
National Union of Students- Union of Students in Ireland  
Newry and Mourne Senior Citizens' Consortium  
Newry Rainbow Centre  
Newry, Mourne and Down District Council  
Newtownabbey Senior Citizens' Forum  
NI Social Care Council  
NI Youth Forum  
Northern Ireland Council for Ethnic Minorities (NICEM)  
North West Community Network  
Northern Health Trust  
Northern Ireland Ambulance Service  
Northern Ireland Association for Mental Health  
Northern Ireland Association for the Care and Resettlement of Offenders (NIACRO)  
Northern Ireland Chest, Heart and Stroke Association  
Northern Ireland Committee, Irish Congress of Trade Unions  
Northern Ireland Council for Voluntary Action (NICVA)  
Northern Ireland Gay Rights Association (NIGRA)  
Northern Ireland Hare Krishna Temple  
Northern Ireland Human Rights Commission  
Northern Ireland Local Government Association  
Northern Ireland Public Service Alliance  
Omagh Traveller Support Group  
Orchardville Society  
Parents Advice Centre (PAC)  
Parents and Professionals and Autism  
People Before Profit Alliance  
POBAL  
Positive Futures  
PRAXIS Care  
Press for Change  
Progressive Unionist Party  
Rainbow Project  
Roman Catholic Archdiocese of Armagh  
Roman Catholic Archdiocese of Down and Connor  
Roman Catholic Diocese of Down and Connor  
Roman Catholic Diocese of Dromore  
Retained Firefighters Union  
Royal National Institute for the Blind (RNIB)

Rural Community Network  
Sinn Fein  
Social Democratic and Labour Party  
South Eastern Health and Social Services Trust  
Southern Health Trust  
Speakability  
Springboard  
Start 360  
STEP  
The Executive Office  
The Irish Council of Churches  
The Omnibus Partnership  
Traditional Unionist Voice  
Training for Women Network  
Ulster Quaker Service  
Ulster Unionist Party  
Unison  
UNITE  
University of the 3<sup>rd</sup> age  
Ulster University  
Volunteer Now  
Voice of Young People in Care (NI)  
Wah Hep Chinese Community Association  
West Belfast Economic Forum  
West Belfast Partnership  
Western Health Trust  
Womens Aid Federation NI  
Womens Forum Northern Ireland  
Womens Support Network  
Youth Action NI  
Youth Council for Northern Ireland  
Youth Initiatives  
Youth Justice Agency  
Youthlink NI  
Youthnet

## Appendix 4 Timetable for measures proposed (Schedule 9 4.(3)(b) )

Measure	Action Taken/ To Be Taken	Lead responsibility	Timetable
<b>Arrangements for assessing our compliance with S75 duties</b>			
Have in place appropriate structures and reporting mechanisms [2.1]	Structures and reporting mechanisms established	Chief Fire & Rescue Officer	Ongoing
Ensure S75 duties are mainstreamed within the NIFRS [Intro]	S75 objectives and targets integrated into strategic and annual business plans [2.5]	Chief Fire & Rescue Officer, Director of Human Resources; Director of Planning Performance & Governance; HR Manager, Equality, Inclusion & Legal	In line with corporate planning cycle
Employees' job descriptions and performance plans reflect S75 duties [2.7]	Responsibility for equality reflected in all current job descriptions	HR Manager, Employee Services & Resourcing	Ongoing
Prepare Section 75 Annual Progress Report (APR) and include section in NIFRS own Annual Report [2.8]	Information collated throughout year for inclusion in APR	HR Manager, Equality, Inclusion & Legal	31 August (annually)
	Article to be written for inclusion in NIFRS Annual Report	HR Manager, Equality, Inclusion & Legal; Head of Corporate Communications	Annually
Regular reports to and from Equality & Inclusion Steering Group [2.11]	As above – information provided to Chief Fire & Rescue Officer as Chair of Equality & Inclusion Steering Group.	HR Manager, Equality, Inclusion & Legal	Quarterly
<b>Action Plan</b>			
Development of updated Action Based Plan to include performance indicators and timescales. Aligned to corporate and business planning cycle [2.12]	Review of original DHSSPS business family literature review and audit of inequalities and consultation with voluntary/community sector carried out. Considered alongside internal NIFRS review of NIFRS Equality & Diversity Strategy 2010-2020, to identify inequalities specifically relevant to NIFRS business.	HR Manager, Equality, Inclusion & Legal	December 2016
Consultation on draft action plan [2.16]	Consult with stakeholders before submitting revised Equality Scheme to Equality Commission.	HR Manager, Equality, Inclusion & Legal	December 2016-February 2017

Measure	Action Taken/ To Be Taken	Lead responsibility	Timetable
Finalised action plan published [2.19]	Publish on NIFRS website and promote internally as appropriate (e.g. Document Management System folder under Global Drive) for all employees and advise of its availability and take account of alternative formats etc.	HR Manager, Equality, Inclusion & Legal	March 2017
Arrangements for monitoring progress in place [2.17]	Identify whether targets have been met – update plan as necessary.	HR Manager, Equality, Inclusion & Legal in conjunction with other managers as appropriate	Every August in line with Annual Progress Report
<b>Arrangements for consulting</b>			
Consultation list reviewed and updated [3.4]	Review of consultees undertaken and preferred method/format of communication updated on central consultation list.	HR Manager, Equality, Inclusion & Legal	Annually
Training re. Consultation [3.2.4]	Specific training provided for those conducting consultations.	HR Manager, Equality, Inclusion & Legal	Ongoing.
Equality Scheme and Action Plan consulted upon taking account of various methods, accessibility and alternative formats etc [3.2.2]	Conduct as appropriate: <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>▪ Face-to-face meetings</li> <li>▪ Specific Questionnaires</li> <li>▪ Internet discussions</li> </ul>	HR Manager, Equality, Inclusion & Legal	December 2016 – March 2017
Undertake programme of awareness raising to ensure effective consultation with consultees [3.2.5]	Develop information leaflet for consultees	HR Manager, Equality, Inclusion & Legal	January 2017 (in conjunction with Corporate Communications review of NIFRS Consultation Strategy)
Take account of any assessment and consultation before decisions are taken regarding policies [3.2.10]	Outcome of impact assessment and analysis all consultation responses received.	Lead policy officer	Ongoing
Provide feedback report to consultees in timely manner in formats suited to consultees [3.2.11]	As per consultation list update exercise we will provide feedback to consultees in their preferred format.	Lead policy officer(s)	Ongoing

<b>Screening</b>			
Revise screening template and accompanying guidance notes. [4.3]	Review screening template and guidance notes to take account of ECNI guidance and to ensure approach remains relevant to NIFRS needs.	HR Manager, Equality, Inclusion & Legal	Revised in June 2016 and will be reviewed annually
Develop screening report template and publish quarterly in accessible formats [4.15]	Template developed which includes policy aims, consideration of mitigation, alternative policies, screening decision, timetable for EQIA.	HR Manager, Equality, Inclusion & Legal	Ongoing
	Report will be published quarterly on internet with links to each screening template. Will be issued to consultees as appropriate in their preferred format.	HR Manager, Equality, Inclusion & Legal	Quarterly
EQIA timetable [4.16]	Where possible we will give advance notice to consultees of forthcoming EQIAs and the consultation periods associated with each.	Lead policy officer(s)	Ongoing
Publishing of EQIA reports [4.22]	EQIA reports and outcomes of consultation will be published on the internet and issued to consultees as appropriate in their preferred format.	Lead policy officer(s)	Ongoing
	The reports will include all information as per 4.22 of this Scheme.	HR Manager, Equality, Inclusion & Legal	Ongoing
<b>Monitoring</b>			
Revision of policies as a result of monitoring [4.30]	We will collect and analyse qualitative and available quantitative data in order to monitor any adverse impact of policies we have adopted and also to identify opportunities to better promote equality of opportunity and good relations. We will do so in line with the Office of the Information Commissioner and ECNI.	Lead policy officer(s)	Ongoing

Review of monitoring information [4.31]	To ensure it is relevant and up-to-date in relation to the policy.	Lead policy officer(s)	Over a one year period from implementing the policy.
Publication of monitoring information [4.33;4.34]	We will publish monitoring information in our S75 Annual Progress Report and also on our website and it will be made available in alternative formats on request.	HR Manager, Equality, Inclusion & Legal	Ongoing and annually.
<b>Staff Training</b>			
Draw up a detailed training plan [5.3]	To include Equality Scheme awareness, training for employees involved in data collection, policy development, service design, conducting consultations and EQIAs, monitoring and evaluation, complaints.	HR Manager, Equality, Inclusion & Legal	Ongoing under current 3 year Training Plan (2015-2018)
Development of summary scheme [5.4]	Summary of Equality Scheme to be published	HR Manager, Equality, Inclusion & Legal	March 2017
Provide access to full copy of Scheme to all employees [5.4]	Full Scheme will be published on NIFRS website, accessible under the 'Policies Folder' within the Document Management System folder in the Global Drive available to all employee and made available in alternative formats on request.	HR Manager, Equality, Inclusion & Legal	March 2017
Development of overall training programme in conjunction with S75 categories [5.5]	All staff will receive briefing on revised Equality Scheme via NIFRS Core Brief, email etc.  S75 awareness included in Induction Training, supervisory Equality, Diversity, Dignity and Fairness Training as well as other current diversity training initiatives.	HR Manager, Equality, Inclusion & Legal	Ongoing
Awareness raising on the Section 75 statutory duties via consultative panels [3.2.5]	Guidance given on good practice engagement and consultation for managers to ensure effective consultation processes	HR Manager, Equality, Inclusion & Legal	Ongoing

<p>Focused training i.e. those involved in research and data collection, policy development, service design, conducting equality impact assessments, consultation, monitoring and evaluation [5.4]</p>	<p>Screening and EQIA “essentials” training will be held for policy lead officers and arranged as necessary.</p>	<p>HR Manager, Equality, Inclusion &amp; Legal</p>	<p>Ongoing</p>
<p>Update training [5.4]</p>	<p>Training will be kept up to date in line with ECNI guidance and employees will be advised accordingly.</p>	<p>HR Manager, Equality, Inclusion &amp; Legal</p>	<p>Ongoing</p>
<p>Evaluation of training [5.6]</p>	<p>Assess the extent to which those being trained have acquired the necessary skills and knowledge to e.g. undertake screening, conduct EQIAs etc.</p> <p>Provider Refresher training as required.</p> <p>Review of complaints received.</p>	<p>HR Manager, Equality, Inclusion &amp; Legal</p>	<p>Ongoing</p> <p>Ongoing</p> <p>Ongoing</p>
<p><b>Arrangements for ensuring and assessing public access to information and services we provide</b></p>			
<p>Ensure information we disseminate and service we provide are fully accessible to all parts of the community in Northern Ireland [6.1]</p>	<p>Update of S75 consultation list will ask for preferred methods and formats of communication.</p> <p>We will use various media methods where appropriate.</p> <p>We will also use our website, Corporate Plan, Core Brief system, internal ‘Fair Point Bulletin’, annual progress report etc</p>	<p>HR Manager, Equality, Inclusion &amp; Legal</p> <p>Head of Corporate Communications</p>	<p>Ongoing</p> <p>Ongoing</p> <p>Ongoing</p>
<p>Provide information in alternative formats on request [6.3]</p>	<p>NIFRS translates community protection information into various languages to meet the needs of those not fluent in English.</p> <p>Corporate information can also be translated or provided in disk, plain English summary, large print etc. on request.</p> <p>Will seek advice from those with specialist knowledge on how best to communicate with children and young people and also those with learning</p>	<p>Director of Community Protection</p> <p>Head of Corporate Communications/ HR Manager, Equality, Inclusion &amp; Legal</p> <p>HR Manager, Equality, Inclusion &amp; Legal</p>	<p>Ongoing</p> <p>Ongoing</p> <p>Ongoing</p>

	disabilities, older persons and those with mental illness. We will use the ECNI's 'Let's Talk, Let's Listen Guidance for public authorities on consulting and involving children and young people'.		
Provide interpreters and sign language interpreters [6.7]	NIFRS will review arrangements for interpreting services in emergency situation	HR Manager, Equality, Inclusion & Legal	Ongoing
Ensure buildings are accessible [6.7]	Access audits will continue to be conducted for publicly accessed buildings and remedial work undertaken as appropriate to ensure accessibility. New builds accessible to the public take account of all access requirements.	Director of Planning, Performance & Governance Estates Manager	Ongoing
Assessing access to information and services [6.8]	We will monitor uptake of interpreting services and requests for translations and alternative formats.	HR Manager, Equality, Inclusion & Legal	Ongoing
Provide reasonable adjustments [6.8]	As above, public buildings are accessible to all service users, using reasonable adjustments where necessary for both service users and staff members.	Reasonable Adjustment Panel (formerly known as Impairment Case Conference Team) Estates Manager	Ongoing
Monitor complaints [6.8]	We will monitor complaints received to identify areas where equality of opportunity and good relations could be improved.	HR Manager, Equality, Inclusion & Legal	Ongoing
<b>Complaints Procedure</b>			
How complaints are raised, timetable for responding etc.[8.1-8.7]	NIFRS has a Customer Charter containing a complaints procedure. Information can be made available in alternative formats e.g. various languages.  Complaints regarding failure to adhere to our Equality Scheme are to be acknowledged within 5 days and responded to within 15 working days of receipt of letter, with the complainant notified of progress should the matter become protracted.	ACFO Community Protection (Complaints Officer service related complaints)  Director of Human Resources (non service related complaints)	Ongoing  Ongoing

<b>Publication of our Equality Scheme</b>			
Equality Scheme on internet [2.9]	Equality Scheme and Annual Progress Report on our website.	HR Manager, Equality, Inclusion & Legal	Annually.
Communication of Equality Scheme and notification of consultees [9.3]	Once approved we will communicate the revised NIFRS Equality Scheme via website, social media engagement, email notifications, mailshots to all consultees on our consultation list	HR Manager, Equality, Inclusion & Legal	March- April 2017
Produce Scheme in alternative formats on request [9.3]	We will produce the Scheme in alternative formats on request as per 9.3 of this Scheme.	HR Manager, Equality, Inclusion & Legal	Ongoing
<b>Review of equality scheme</b>			
Scheme will be reviewed within five years of submission to the Equality Commission or within a shorter timescale to allow alignment with the review of other planning cycles [10.1]	We will conduct a thorough review of the scheme in line with the Corporate Planning cycle i.e. three years after approval.	HR Manager, Equality, Inclusion & Legal	September 2021 or earlier if required
<b>Any other measures proposed in equality scheme</b>			
Work closely with other public authorities to exchange learning and best practice [2.1]	Maintain already established links with Health & Social Care Trusts, PSNI, NIAS and other organisations in order to maximise on collaborative working.	HR Manager, Equality, Inclusion & Legal along with other HSC Equality Leads and Equality Leads in PSNI etc	Ongoing
Liaise closely with the ECNI to ensure that progress on the implementation of our Equality Scheme is maintained [2.10]	Continue communication with the ECNI.	HR Manager, Equality, Inclusion & Legal	Twice-yearly meetings

<p>Work with Trade Unions in the effective discharge of our equality duties. [2.1]</p>	<p>Maintain already established links with Trade Unions via Equality &amp; Inclusion Steering Group and direct channels</p>	<p>Director of Human Resources; HR Manager, Equality, Inclusion &amp; Legal</p>	<p>September 2016 and quarterly thereafter</p>
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## **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.

### **Article 55 Review**

Under the Fair Employment and Treatment (NI) Order 1998, all registered employers must conduct periodic reviews of the composition of their workforces and of their employment practices for the purposes of determining whether members of the Protestant and Roman Catholic communities are enjoying, and are likely to continue to enjoy, fair participation in employment in each employer's concern. These reviews, which are commonly known as Article 55 Reviews, must be conducted at least once every three years.

### **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, employees, 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.

## **Council of Europe**

The Council of Europe, based in Strasbourg, covers virtually the entire European continent, with its 47 member countries. Founded on 5 May 1949 by 10 countries, the Council of Europe seeks to develop throughout Europe common and democratic principles based on the European Convention on Human Rights and other reference texts on the protection of individuals.

## **Desk audit**

An audit of a draft equality scheme to ensure that the scheme conforms with the requirements on form and content as detailed in the Commission's Guidelines (the Guide).

## **Differential impact**

Differential impact occurs where a Section 75 group has been affected differently by a policy. This effect could either be positive, neutral or negative. A public authority must make a judgement as to whether a policy has a differential impact and then it must determine whether the impact is adverse, based on a systematic appraisal of the accumulated information.

## **Discrimination**

The anti-discrimination laws prohibit the following forms of discrimination:

- Direct discrimination
- Indirect Discrimination
- Disability Discrimination
- Victimisation
- Harassment

Brief descriptions of these above terms follow:

### Direct discrimination

This generally occurs where a public authority treats a person less favourably than it treats (or, would treat) another person, in the same or similar circumstances, on one or more of the statutory non-discrimination grounds. A decision or action that is directly discriminatory will normally be unlawful unless: (a) in an age discrimination case, the decision can be objectively justified, or (b) in any other case, the public authority can rely on a statutory exception that permits it – such as a *genuine occupational requirement exception*; or, a *positive action exception* which permits an employer to use “welcoming statements” or to take other lawful positive action to encourage participation by under-represented or otherwise disadvantaged groups.

### Indirect discrimination

The definition of this term varies across some of the anti-discrimination laws, but indirect discrimination generally occurs where a public authority applies to all persons a particular provision, criterion or practice, but which is one that has the effect of placing people who share a particular equality characteristic (e.g. the same sex, or religious belief, or race) at a particular disadvantage compared to other people. A provision, criterion or practice that is indirectly discriminatory will normally be unlawful unless (a) it can be objectively justified, or (b) the public authority can rely on a statutory exception that permits it.

## Disability discrimination

In addition to direct discrimination and victimisation and harassment, discrimination against disabled people may also occur in two other ways: namely, (a) *disability-related discrimination*, and (b) *failure to comply with a duty to make reasonable adjustments*.

(a) *Disability-related discrimination* generally occurs where a public authority, without lawful justification, and for a reason which relates to a disabled person's disability, treats that person less favourably than it treats (or, would treat) other people to whom that reason does not (or, would not) apply.

(b) *Failure to comply with a duty to make reasonable adjustments*: One of the most notable features of the disability discrimination legislation is that in prescribed circumstances it imposes a duty on employers, service providers and public authorities to take such steps as are reasonable to remove or reduce particular disadvantages experienced by disabled people in those circumstances.

## Victimisation

This form of discrimination generally occurs where a public authority treats a person less favourably than it treats (or, would treat) another person, in the same or similar circumstances, because the person has previously exercised his/her rights under the anti-discrimination laws, or has assisted another person to do so. Victimisation cannot be justified and is always unlawful.

## Harassment

Harassment generally occurs where a person is subjected to unwanted conduct that is related to a non-discrimination ground with the purpose, or which has the effect, of violating their dignity or of creating for them an intimidating, hostile, degrading, humiliating or offensive environment. Harassment cannot be justified and is always unlawful.

## **Economic appraisal**

An economic appraisal is a systematic process for examining alternative uses of resources, focusing on assessment of needs, objectives, options, costs benefits, risks, funding and affordability and other factors relevant to decisions.

## **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.

### **Northern Ireland Statistics & Research Agency (NISRA)**

The Northern Ireland Statistics and Research Agency (NISRA) is an Executive Agency within the Department of Finance (DoF). They provide statistical and research information regarding Northern Ireland issues and provide registration services to the public in the most effective and efficient way.

### **PAFT**

The Policy Appraisal and Fair Treatment (PAFT) Guidelines constituted the first non-statutory attempt at mainstreaming equality in Northern Ireland in January 1994. The aim of the PAFT Guidelines was to ensure that issues of equality and equity informed policy making and activity in all spheres and at all levels of government. PAFT has now been superseded by Section 75 of the Northern Ireland Act 1998.

### **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.

## **SACHR**

The Standing Advisory Commission on Human Rights (SACHR) has now been replaced by the Northern Ireland Human Rights Commission. SACHR, as part of its review of mechanisms in place to promote employment equality and reduce the unemployment differential, recommended that the PAFT Guidelines should be made a statutory requirement.

## **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.

**The Executive Office** (previously the Office of the First Minister and Deputy First Minister (OFMDFM)) is responsible for providing advice, guidance, challenge and support to other NI Civil Service Departments on Section 75 issues.



**Northern Ireland  
Fire & Rescue Service**

## Equality Scheme Action Plan

### **Introduction**

NIFRS has developed the following action plan to meet the requirements of its Equality Scheme and promote equality of opportunity and good relations. The action plan includes actions which are relevant specifically to NIFRS functions.

The actions have been developed and prioritised on the basis of an audit of inequalities which gathered and analysed quantitative and qualitative information across the Section 75 categories. The purpose of this exercise was to identify the inequalities that exist for our service users and those affected by our policies.

NIFRS is committed to ensuring action measures are specific, measurable, linked to achievable outcomes, realistic and time bound. Action measures include performance indicators and timescales for their achievement. Implementation of the action measures will be incorporated into our corporate and business planning process. 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.

## **Structure**

### **Section 1 – Themes to improve mainstreaming and compliance**

- Theme 1 – Accessibility of communications and information
- Theme 2 – Awareness raising, training and capacity
- Theme 3 – Making complaints accessible
- Theme 4 – Improving data quality

### **Section 2 – Strategic priorities under NIFRS long-term Equality & Diversity Strategy**

- Leadership and promoting inclusion
- Accountability
- Effective service delivery and community engagement
- Employment and training
- Evaluation and sharing good practice

## Section 1 – Themes to improve mainstreaming and compliance

### Theme 1 – Accessibility of communications and information

What do we want to do?	Equality category	How are we going to do it?	How will we prove it?	Timescale and ownership
<p><b>Ensure equality of access by service users and employees to information and communications provided by NIFRS</b></p>	<p>All 9 Equality categories</p>	<p>Accessible website</p> <p>Develop more Easy Read versions of key corporate communications</p> <p>Review corporate policies; service information for operational employees and prioritise for production in accessible formats</p>	<p>Introduce an Accessible Formats Policy</p> <p>Promote availability of alternative formats of key publications</p> <p>Establish corporate approach to producing alternative formats</p>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Equality Inclusion &amp; Legal team in conjunction with Corporate Communications Unit</li> <li>• Equality &amp; Inclusion Steering Group to be involved</li> </ul> <p><b>Timescale 2016-2017</b></p>

## Section 1 – Themes to improve mainstreaming and compliance (cont'd)

### Theme 2 – Awareness raising, training and capacity

What do we want to do?	Equality category	How are we going to do it?	How will we prove it?	Timescale and ownership
<p><b>Develop and maintain employee awareness, skills and competence in relation to Section 75 equality duties in accordance with their role</b></p>	<p>All 9 Equality categories</p>	<p>Provide targeted training and initiatives for employees.</p> <p>Share relevant equality data with policy lead officers and screening teams to inform decision making</p> <p>Involve Section 75 equality groups in the design and delivery of NIFRS equality training</p>	<p>Employee survey to assess impact of training</p> <p>All employees trained through either classroom/station training lecture/e-learning methodologies</p>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• All Directors</li> <li>• All Area Commanders</li> <li>• Equality, Inclusion &amp; Legal team</li> </ul> <p><b>Timescale 2016-2018</b></p> <p>Thereafter workforce equality training needs to be reviewed again in 2019</p>

## Section 1 – Themes to improve mainstreaming and compliance (cont'd)

### Theme 3 – Making complaints accessible

What do we want to do?	Equality category	How are we going to do it?	How will we prove it?	Timescale and ownership
<p><b>Identify and overcome barriers which prevent service users from making complaints and ensure that NIFRS complaints procedure is accessible for everyone in Northern Ireland</b></p>	<p>Age Disability Ethnicity</p>	<p>Develop partnership networks within disability; age reference and ethnicity sectors</p>	<p>Feedback from public meetings and targeted focus groups with service users on NIFRS Community Protection initiatives and Operations Risk Management proposals.</p>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• ACFO Community Development (service related complaints officer)</li> <li>• Director of Human Resources (non-service related complaints officer)</li> <li>• Equality, Inclusion and Legal team</li> <li>• Corporate Communications Unit</li> </ul> <p><b>Timescale 2016-2021</b></p>

## Section 1 – Themes to improve mainstreaming and compliance (cont'd)

### Theme 4 – Improving data quality

What do we want to do?	Equality category	How are we going to do it?	How will we prove it?	Timescale and ownership
<p><b>Improve the quality and availability of Section 75 quantitative and qualitative data available to NIFRS policy lead officers in support of mainstreaming</b></p>	<p>All 9 Equality categories</p>	<p>Review of existing applicant and employee monitoring system</p> <p>Review of methods for data collection and research on community information and 'people at risk'</p>	<p>Monitoring capability linked to online recruitment facility</p> <p>Reduced duplication of effort</p> <p>Increased and up to date workforce information across all 9 categories</p> <p>Good return on Section 75 monitoring survey of workforce</p> <p>Available bank of up to date Section 75 research information</p>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Director of Human Resources</li> <li>• Head of IT</li> <li>• Equality, Inclusion &amp; Legal team in conjunction with Operations Risk Management and Community Protection</li> </ul> <p><b>Timescale 2016-2018</b></p>

## Section 2 Strategic priorities under NIFRS long-term Equality & Diversity Strategy

Leadership and promoting inclusion, Accountability, Effective service delivery and community engagement, Employment and training and Evaluation and sharing good practice

1. Leadership and promoting inclusion		Task Owner	Annual Business Plan cycle	Desired outcomes
High level strategic aim	Action			
<p><b>Support for and ownership of the equality agenda</b> from Board, CMT and all levels of management with a shared commitment to create a <b>positive culture</b>, both in the workplace and in service delivery. Demonstrated by <b>active and visible promotion</b> of equality, diversity and inclusion in all areas of work and in the community</p>	<b>ACTIONS COMPLETED</b>			<p>Renewed and ongoing commitment to the equality agenda</p> <p>Measurable confidence in the leadership of NIFRS on its commitment to equality and inclusion, evidenced through surveys and feedback</p> <p>Evidential reduction in complaints</p> <p>Reduction in Shifts/Days lost per person due to sickness</p> <p>Health and Wellbeing Framework (Occupational Health) implemented to support employees</p>
	CMT agreement on CEO adopting 'Equality & Inclusion Officer' role or if it remains with CFO	CMT	14/15	
	Delivered Equality & Inclusion operational supervisory training	AC WAC HRM EIL	14/15	
	Statutory Duties obligations training for new Board Members	DHR	15/16	
	Developed structured training on Section 75 processes and deliver programme for stakeholders	HRM EIL	15/16	
	Reviewed level of Employee Relations and Dignity at Work complaints following roll-out of Dignity at Work training	HRM EIL	15/16	
	Reviewed and evaluated 2020 Vision Strategy and Action Plan	HRM EIL	15/16	
	<b>ACTIONS PLANNED</b>			
	Ongoing implementation of Action Plan	HRM EIL	16/17	
	Review, update and promote Statutory Disability Action Plan	HRM EIL	16/17	
	Refresher Training for Operational employees	HRM EIL	17/18	

2. Accountability		Task Owner	Annual Business Plan cycle	Desired outcomes
High level strategic aim	Action			
An identifiable 'Equality Champion' at the top and structure in place to formally report equality agenda progress to Board and relevant stakeholders. Awareness across organisation of employees personal statutory responsibility for equality and dignity and sustaining a good and harmonious working environment for all	<b>ACTIONS COMPLETED</b>			<p>Directors individually accountable for progressing equality agenda within functions</p> <p>Employees aware of personal accountability through performance development plans</p> <p>Board accountable for facilitating progress on the Statutory Duties</p>
	Reviewed role of the NIFRS Equality & Diversity Forum	DHR HRM EIL	14/15	
	Equality reporting requirements for the Board identified	DHR HRM EIL	14/15	
	Area Commanders ensured equality training included in area training plans	All ACs	15/16	
	Organisation-wide communication on equality agenda via bulletins, Service Circulars and website updates	CMT HRM EIL	15/16	
	<b>ACTIONS PLANNED</b>			
	Actions implemented to ensure substantial assurance in Internal Audit of Equality & Inclusion Procedures	DHR HRM EIL	16/17	
	Reconstitute Equality and Inclusion Steering Group (formerly Equality & Diversity Forum)	HRM EIL	16/17	

3. Effective service delivery and community engagement		Task Owner	Annual Business Plan cycle	Desired outcomes
High level strategic aim	Action			
<p>Delivering a quality service informed by an understanding of diverse local needs and a risk-based planned approach, balanced with organisational objectives.</p> <p>Reducing fire incidents, deaths and injuries and malicious calls and attacks on Firefighters.</p> <p>Creating an open and approachable FRS which is valued and engaged with by the community, including those at risk and/or hard to reach.</p>	<b>ACTIONS COMPLETED</b>			<p>External stakeholders informed, educated and engaged with fully on NIFRS service delivery plans</p> <p>Evidential reduction in fire incidents, deaths and injuries in the community with particular emphasis on at risk groups</p> <p>Reduced malicious calls and attacks on Firefighters.</p>
	Reviewed corporate memberships and maximised opportunities for availing of member benefits. Conducted annual evaluation and reported on outcomes to DHR	HRM EIL	15/16	
	<b>ACTIONS PLANNED</b>			
	Communicate internally and externally on progress on service delivery (bulletins, website, stakeholder emails/letters)	HRM EIL	16/17	
	Work with partner agencies and community advocates within local communities to improve/create new ways of communicating with community groups	HRM EIL	16/17	
	Assisted Operations Management in screening and equality impacts assessing IRMP proposals and actions	HRA EIL	16/17	
	Maintained database on NI population, migration data, local working population, areas of social deprivation and available quantitative and qualitative information and shared with Community Development and Operations colleagues in support of service delivery and planning	HRA EIL	16/17	
	Reviewed and updated Section 75 Stakeholder Consultee List and groupings under each of the 9 categories	HRA EIL	16/17	
	Evaluate community perceptions and satisfaction identified through surveys and complaints procedures	CMT HRM EIL	17/18	

4. Employment and training		Task Owner	Annual Business Plan cycle	Desired outcomes
High level strategic aim	Action			
Improved diversity of applicants and appointees to NIFRS and greater equality in promotion and retention from under-represented groups. Evidential reduction in bullying and harassment cases and dignity at work issues	<b>ACTIONS COMPLETED</b>			<p>Women applicants and appointees for operational roles consistently exceeding 10% of totals. Minority ethnic applicants and appointees in line with numbers in local working population.</p> <p>Women operational employees succeeding in promotions processes. Leadership development provided for women managers with potential.</p> <p>NIL formal bullying/harassment complaints</p> <p>Reasonable Steps Defence maintained</p>
	Revised gender and race outreach messages and website information.	HRM EIL	15/16	
	Developed equality and inclusion objectives aligned to role maps and job descriptions for all employees and PDP programme monitored to ensure consistent approach across organisation	HRM EIL	15/16	
	Targeted outreach to coincide with operational recruitment	HRM EIL	15/16	
	<b>ACTIONS PLANNED</b>			
	Screening of national processes under consideration for Wholetime recruitment	HRM EIL	16/17	
	Equality & Inclusion included in corporate Supervisory Management Training Module	HRM EIL	16/17	
	Deliver Dignity at Work Policy training and awareness training on equality, inclusion and Section 75	HRM EIL	16/17	
	Deliver training to managers on discipline and grievance procedures and handling of same	HRM EIL	16/17	
	Deliver training to Board Members on discipline and grievance procedures and handling of same	HRM EIL	17/18	

5. Evaluation and sharing best practice		Task Owner	Annual Business Plan cycle	Desired outcomes
High level strategic aim	Action			
Creating greater efficiency and effectiveness through sound evidence and dissemination of good practice and with employees, key stakeholders and the wider public better informed and involved	<b>ACTIONS COMPLETED</b>			Recognised by stakeholders for good practice  Measurable effectiveness in employment practices and service delivery
	Data published on upward trend in applicant and appointment rates for women and minority ethnic groups	HRM EIL	15/16	
	Data published on implementation and outcomes of disability equality initiatives	HRM EIL	15/16	
	Progressed 3 <sup>rd</sup> Section 75 employee monitoring exercise and published results	HRM EIL	15/16	
	Evidence of improvements to service delivery as a result of screening and mitigation reported in statutory Section 75 progress reports to ECNI	HRM EIL	15/16	
	<b>ACTIONS PLANNED</b>			
	Programme of screening on all Directorates policies, plans and procedures developed in line with objectives under corporate Annual Business Plan	HRM EIL	16/17	
	Employee and community surveys undertaken in partnership with the Representative Bodies and perceptions of NIFRS as an employer and service provider measured along and assessment of effective internal and external stakeholder engagement	HRM EIL	16/17	
	Effectiveness of Dignity at Work Policy monitored and evaluated	HRM EIL	17/18	
Identify awards for best practice in Equality and Inclusion and work towards achievement	HRM EIL	17/18		

