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***Equality Scheme for The Office of the Police Ombudsman for Northern Ireland (The Office)***

***This scheme has been developed in accordance with Section 75 and Schedule 9 of the Northern Ireland Act 1998***

***This document is available in a range of formats on request. Please contact us with your requirements (see page 9 for contact details).***

Approved by the Equality Commission for Northern Ireland on 25 January 2012 and subsequently revised on 25 January 2022.

**Contents**

|  |  |  |
| --- | --- | --- |
|  | **Foreword** | **3** |
| **1** | **Introduction** | **4** |
|  | S75 of the Northern Ireland Act 1998 | 4 |
|  | How we propose to fulfil the s75 duties in relation to the relevant functions of the Office | 4 |
|  | Who we are and what we do | 5 |
| **2** | **Our arrangements for assessing our compliance with the s75 duties** | **7** |
|  | Responsibilities and reporting | 7 |
|  | Action plan/action measures | 8 |
| **3** | **Our arrangements for consulting** | **12** |
| **4** | **Our arrangements for assessing, monitoring and publishing the impact of policies** | **14** |
|  | Assessing the likely impact adopted or proposed on the promotion of equality of opportunity of policies | 14 |
|  | Screening | 14 |
|  | Equality impact assessment | 17 |
|  | 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 | 17 |
|  | What we publish | 17 |
|  | How we publish the information | 18 |
|  | Where we publish the information | 18 |
|  | Arrangements for monitoring any adverse impact of policies we have adopted on equality of opportunity | 19 |
|  | Arrangements for publishing the results of our monitoring | 20 |

|  |  |  |
| --- | --- | --- |
| **5** | **Staff training** | **21** |
|  | Commitment to staff training | 21 |
|  | Training objectives | 21 |
|  | Awareness raising and training arrangements | 21 |
|  | Monitoring and evaluation | 22 |
| **6** | **Arrangements for ensuring and assessing public access to information and services we provide** | **23** |
|  | Access to information | 23 |
|  | Access to services | 23 |
|  | Assessing public access to information and services | 24 |
| **7** | **Timetable for measures we propose in this equality scheme** | **24** |
| **8** | **Our complaints procedure** | **25** |
| **9** | **Publication of our equality scheme** | **26** |
| **10** | **Review of our equality scheme** | **27** |
|  |  |  |
| **Annex 1** | **Organisational chart** | **28** |
| **Annex 2** | **Example groups relevant to the Section 75 categories for Northern Ireland purposes** | **29** |
| **Annex 3** | **List of consultees** | **30** |
| **Annex 4** | **Timetable for measures proposed** | **34** |
| **Annex 5** | **Glossary of terms** | **36** |
| **Annex 6** | **Action plan/action measures** | **39** |

**Foreword**

Section 75 (s75) of the Northern Ireland Act 1998 (the Act) requires public authorities, in carrying out their functions relating to Northern Ireland, to have due regard to the need to promote equality of opportunity and regard to the desirability of promoting good relations across a range of categories outlined in the Act[[1]](#footnote-1). This Equality Scheme sets out how the Office of the Police Ombudsman for Northern Ireland (the Office) proposes to fulfil its s75 statutory duties.

The Office will commit the necessary resources in terms of people, time and money to make sure that the s75 statutory duties are complied with and that the equality scheme is implemented effectively, and on time.

The Office is committed to having effective internal arrangements in place for ensuring our effective compliance with the s75 statutory duties and for monitoring and reviewing our progress.

The Office will develop and deliver a programme of communication and training aimed at ensuring all our staff are fully aware of our equality scheme and understand the commitments and obligations within it.

The Police Ombudsman and the Chief Executive are fully committed to effectively fulfilling the s75 statutory duties across all our functions (including service provision, employment and procurement) through the effective implementation of the Equality Scheme.

We realise the important role that the community and voluntary sector and the general public have to play to ensure the s75 statutory duties are effectively implemented. Our Equality Scheme demonstrates how determined we are to ensure there are opportunities, for people affected by our work, to positively influence how we carry out our functions in line with our s75 statutory duties. It also offers the means whereby persons directly affected by what they consider to be a failure, on our part, to comply with our equality scheme, can make complaints.

On behalf of the Office and our staff, we are pleased to support and endorse this Equality Scheme which has been drawn up in accordance with s75 and Schedule 9 of the Act and Equality Commission for Northern Ireland (the Equality Commission) guidelines.

Marie Anderson Olwen Laird

Police Ombudsman Chief Executive**Chapter 1 Introduction**

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

1.1 S75 of the Act requires the Police Ombudsman to comply with two statutory duties:

S75 (1) In carrying out our functions relating to the Act the Police Ombudsman is 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.

S75 (2) In addition, without prejudice to the obligations above, in carrying out our functions in relation to the Act the Ombudsman is required to have regard to the desirability of promoting good relations between persons of different religious belief, political opinion or racial group.

“Functions” include the “powers and duties” of a public authority[[2]](#footnote-2). This includes our employment and procurement functions. (Please see below under “Who we are and what we do” for a detailed explanation of our functions).

**How we propose to fulfil the Section 75 duties in relation to the relevant functions of the Office.**

1.2 Schedule 9 paragraph 4(1) of the Act requires the Police Ombudsman as a designated public authority, to set out in an Equality Scheme how it proposes to fulfil the duties imposed by s75 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 s75 statutory duties and our plan for their implementation.

1.3 The Office is committed to the discharge of its s75 obligations in the discharge of all relevant functions the conduct of members of the and we will commit the necessary available resources in terms of people, time and money to ensure that the s75 statutory duties are complied with and that our equality scheme can be implemented effectively.

**Who we are and what we do**

* 1. The Police Ombudsman is appointed under Royal Warrant and is a corporation sole. The Police Ombudsman receives and investigates complaints about the conduct of members of the Police Service for Northern Ireland made by members of the public, and also matters of public interest involving the Police Service of Northern Ireland (PSNI) National Crime Agency officers in Northern Ireland, Belfast Harbour Police, Larne Harbour Police, Belfast International Airport Police and the Ministry of Defence Police in Northern Ireland, Immigration officers and some customs officials in Northern Ireland (serious cases only).

Where appropriate the Police Ombudsman makes recommendations in respect of criminal and misconduct matters, in respect of which she may also publish reports and make policy recommendations. In addition she has a power to investigate police policy and practice, and to publish results of any such investigation.

In undertaking her statutory duties, the Police Ombudsman currently employs approximately 150 staff in a number of specialist and support roles. The Office of the Police Ombudsman for Northern Ireland is an Executive Non-Departmental Public Body funded by means of grant aid by the Department of Justice for Northern Ireland.

The vision of the Office is:

“A world class police complaints body with modern ombudsman legislation and a centre of best practice in investigations”.

Our aim is:

“Delivering a fair, efficient and effective police complaints system for the people of Northern Ireland”.

The Office has four strategic objectives based around themes of transparency, fairness and human rights based approach, collaborative and ethical ways of working. These are:

1. To provide a high quality complaints and investigation service which is accessible and fair to all parties reflecting human rights standards in order to hold the police to account
2. To further increase transparency in decision making in relation to police complaints, referrals and investigations and their outcomes
3. To work with criminal justice stakeholders to ensure our recommendations and research reports positively impact on policing policy, standards and practices
4. To be ethical and accountable in our service delivery and use of public funds

In structural terms the Office is headed by the Police Ombudsman who is supported and advised by the Chief Executive.

The Police Ombudsman is further supported by the Senior Management Team consisting of the Chief Executive and four Directors:

**Senior Director of Investigations** is responsible for the management and control of all investigations conducted by the Police Ombudsman's Office, including those relating to current policing and matters arising from legacy issues.

**Director of Investigations (Current)** is responsible for leading the current complaint handling and investigation function of the Office.

**Director of Investigations (Historic)** is responsible for leading Historic complaint handling and investigation, arising from policing practice during Northern Ireland’s troubled past.

**Director of Corporate Services** is responsible for supporting the Accounting Officer (Chief Executive) by advising on Corporate Governance and Risk Management issues, along with management of the Finance, HR, IT and records management functions of the Office.

An organisational chart for the Office is available at Annex 1

**Chapter 2 Our arrangements for assessing compliance with the s75 duties** (Schedule 9 paragraph 4. (2) (a))

* 1. Some of our arrangements for assessing our compliance with the s75 statutory duties are outlined in other relevant parts of this equality scheme:

monitoring arrangements Chapter 4

impact assessments Chapter 4

consultation arrangements Chapter 3

publication arrangements Chapter 4

training arrangements Chapter 5

complaints arrangements Chapter 8

review arrangements Chapter 10

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

**Responsibilities and reporting**

2.3 We are committed to the fulfilment of our s75 obligations in all areas of our work.

2.4 Responsibility for the effective implementation of our equality scheme lies with the Police Ombudsman. The Police Ombudsman has delegated to the Chief Executive the responsibility to oversee the process. The Chief Executive has designated the Director of Corporate Services as Equality Champion accountable to the Chief Executive and the Police Ombudsman, for the development, implementation, maintenance and review of the equality scheme in accordance with s75 and Schedule 9 of the Act, including any good practice or guidance that has been or may be issued by the Equality Commission.

2.5 The Office has established an Equality Working Group to share good practice and ensure a joined up and consistent approach to s75 issues in the Office. The Equality Working Group will report and make recommendations to the Police Ombudsman and Chief Executive through the Senior Management Team.

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

2.7 Employees’ job descriptions and performance plans reflect their contributions to the discharge of the s75 statutory duties and implementation of the equality scheme, where relevant. The personal performance plans are subject to appraisal in the annual performance review.

2.8 The Police Ombudsman prepares an annual report on the progress made on implementing the arrangements set out in this Equality Scheme to discharge its s75 statutory duties (s75 annual progress report).

2.9 The s75 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.

2.10 Progress on the delivery of s75 statutory duties will also be included in the Police Ombudsman’s (organisational) annual report.

2.11 The latest s75 annual progress report is available on the Office’s website [www.policeombudsman.org](http://www.policeombudsman.org) (an Equality section is available under the Publications tab) or alternatively from the HR Manager (contact details at 2.13 below).

2.12 The Office will liaise closely with the Equality Commission to ensure that progress on the implementation of its equality scheme is maintained.

2.13 If you have any questions or comments regarding the Office’s Equality Scheme, please contact in the first instance the HR Manager at the address given below and he/she will respond as soon as possible.

The HR Manager

Office of the Police Ombudsman for Northern Ireland

New Cathedral Buildings

11 Church Street

Belfast

BT1 1PG

Telephone (028)90828622

Textphone (028)90828618

Email: [HR@policeombudsman.org](mailto:HR@policeombudsman.org)

**Action plan/action measures**

2.14 The Office has developed an action plan to promote equality of opportunity and good relations. This action plan is set out in Annex 6 to this Equality Scheme. However, it should be noted that the Equality Commission does not consider the content of action plans or action measures as part of the approval process and therefore the attached action plan does not form part of this approved Equality Scheme.

2.15 The action measures that will comprise our action plan will be relevant to our functions. They will be developed and prioritised on the basis of an audit of inequalities. The audit of inequalities will gather and analyse information across the s75 categories[[3]](#footnote-3) to identify the inequalities that exist for our service users and those affected by our policies[[4]](#footnote-4).

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

2.17 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.

2.18 We will seek input from our stakeholders and consult on our action plan before sending it to the Equality Commission and thereafter when reviewing the plan as per 2.19 below.

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

2.20 We will inform the Commission of any changes or amendments to our action plan and will also include this information in our s75 annual progress report to the Commission. Our s75 annual progress report will incorporate information we have made in implementing this action plan.

2.21 Once finalised, the action plan will be available from the Office’s Equality contact at 2.13 above and in alternative formats on request and on the Office’s website at [www.policeombudsman.org](http://www.policeombudsman.org)

**Chapter 3 Our arrangements for consulting**

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

3.1 We recognise the importance of consultation in all aspects of the implementation of our statutory equality duties. We will consult on our equality scheme, action plan, equality impact assessments and other matters relevant to the s75 statutory duties.

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

3.3 All consultations will seek the views of those directly affected by the matter/policy, the Equality Commission, representative groups of s75 categories, other public authorities, voluntary and community groups, our staff and their trades unions and such other groups who have a legitimate interest in the policy/procedures.

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

3.4 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
* Questionnaires
* Telephone consultations
* Written documents (with opportunity to respond)
* Information via email with an opportunity to opt in/out of consultation
* Social Media

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

3.5 We will consider the accessibility and format of every method of consultation we use in order to remove barriers to the consultation process. Specific consideration will be given as to how best to communicate with children and young people, people with disabilities (in particular people with learning disabilities) and minority ethnic communities. We take account of existing and developing good practice, including the Equality Commission’s guidance “*Let’s Talk Let’s Listen – Guidance for public authorities on consulting and involving children and young people (2008)”* as well as the Northern Ireland Commissioner for Children and Young Person’s Publication “Participation with Children and Young People: Advice to Public Bodies, January 2018”.

The Office will utilise engagement arrangements it already has in place with support groups such as Schools, Include Youth, Mencap, NICEM and the Northern Ireland Commissioner for Children and Young Persons. Where the opportunity arises the Office will seek to build additional networks to support the consultation process.

3.6 Information will be made available, on request, in alternative formats[[5]](#footnote-5) in a timely manner and the Office will aim to achieve this within 15 working days of the request. The Office will ensure that such consultees have sufficient time to respond.

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

3.8 The consultation period normally lasts for a minimum of twelve weeks to allow adequate time for groups to consult amongst themselves as part of the process of forming a view. However, in exceptional circumstances when this timescale is not feasible (for example implementing EU Directives or UK wide legislation, meeting Health and Safety requirements, addressing urgent public health matters or complying with Court judgements), we may shorten timescales to eight weeks or less before the policy is implemented. We may continue consultation thereafter and will review the policy as part of our monitoring commitments[[6]](#footnote-6).

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

3.9 If a consultation exercise is to take place over a period when consultees are less able to respond, for example, due to public health restrictions, over the summer or Christmas season, or if the policy under consideration is particularly complex, the Office will give consideration to the feasibility of allowing a longer period for the consultation.

3.10 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 appropriateness of the venue, in particular whether it can be accessed by those with disabilities, how the meeting is to be conducted, the use of appropriate language, whether a signer and/or interpreter is necessary, and whether the provision of childcare and support for other carers is required.

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

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

3.13 We will provide feedback to consultees in a timely manner and in a format suitable to the consultee. A feedback report will be prepared which includes summary information on the policy consulted upon, a summary of consultees’ comments and a summary of the Office’s consideration of and response to consultees’ input.

3.14 A list of our s75 consultees is included in this Equality Scheme at Annex 3. It can also be obtained from the Office’s Equality contact at 2.13 above and in alternative formats on request and on the Office’s website at [www.policeombudsman.org](http://www.policeombudsman.org)

3.15 The consultation list is not exhaustive and is reviewed on an annual basis to ensure that it remains relevant to the functions and policies of the Office.

3.16 We welcome enquiries from any person/s or organisation/s wishing to be added to the list of consultees. Please contact the Office’s HR Manager at 2.13 above 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))

**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 s75, ‘policy’ is very broadly defined and it covers all the ways in which we carry out or propose to carry out our functions in relation to Northern Ireland. In respect of this equality scheme, the term policy is used for any (proposed/amended/existing) strategy, policy initiative or practice and/or decision, whether written or unwritten and irrespective of the label given to it, e.g. ‘draft’, ‘pilot’, ‘high level’ or ‘sectoral’.

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

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

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

**Screening**

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

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

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

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

* What is the likely impact on equality of opportunity for those affected by this policy, for each of the s75 equality categories? (minor/major/none)
* Are there opportunities to better promote equality of opportunity for people within the s75 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, the policy lead gathers all relevant information and data, both qualitative and quantitative. In taking this evidence into account we consider the different needs, experiences and priorities for each of the s75 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[[7]](#footnote-7) 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.

4.11 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.

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

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

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

4.15 As soon as possible following the completion of the screening process, the screening template, signed off and approved by the Chief Executive, will be made available on our website at [www.policeombudsman.org](http://www.policeombudsman.org) and on request (see the Office’s Equality contact at 2.13 above).

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

4.17 The screening reports are published quarterly [see below at 4.21 - 4.22 for details].

**Equality impact assessment**

4.18 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 s75 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.

4.19 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 EQIA will be carried out as part of the policy development process, before the policy is implemented.

4.20 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))

4.21 We make publicly available the results of our assessments (screening and EQIA) of the likely impact of our policies on the promotion of equality of opportunity and good relations. These are made available as part of our Freedom of Information Publication Scheme.

**What we publish**

4.22 Screening reports

These are published quarterly on our website. Screening reports detail:

* All policies screened by the Office 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 EQIAs
* A link to the completed screening template(s) on our website

4.23 Screening templates. For details on the availability of our screening templates please refer to 4.15.

4.24 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**

4.25 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**

4.26 The results of our assessments (screening reports and completed templates, the results of equality impact assessments) are available on our website at [www.policeombudsman.org](http://www.policeombudsman.org). They can also be obtained from the Office’s Equality contact at 2.13 above.

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

4.28 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))

4.29 Monitoring can assist us to deliver better public services and continuous improvements. Monitoring s75 information involves the processing of sensitive personal data (data relating to the racial or ethnic origin of individuals, sexual orientation, political opinion, religious belief, etc). In order to carry out monitoring in a confidential and effective manner, the Office follows guidance from the Office of the Information Commissioner and the Equality Commission.

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

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

* + The collection, collation and analysis of existing relevant primary quantitative and qualitative data across all nine equality categories on an ongoing basis
  + The collection, collation and analysis of existing relevant secondary sources of quantitative and qualitative data across all nine equality categories on an ongoing basis
  + An audit of existing information systems within one year of approval of this equality scheme, to identify the extent of current monitoring and take action to address any gaps in order to have the necessary information on which to base decisions
  + Undertaking or commissioning new data collection if necessary.

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

4.33 We review our EQIA monitoring information on an annual basis. The Office also collects equality monitoring information completed by service users. This information is reviewed and analysed on a regular basis and reported on annually and published on the Office’s website.

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

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

4.34 Schedule 9 paragraph 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: the Office website and by letter or email to consultees.

4.35 EQIA monitoring information is published as part of our s75 annual progress report [see 2.11] which is published on the Office’s website [www.policeombudsman.org](file:///\\ezjvfsv01\oponi$\SMT_Personal_Folders\lairdo\Documents\Offline%20Records%20(CT)\5%20Year%20Review%202017\www.policeombudsman.org)

4.36 All information published is accessible and can be made available in alternative formats on request. Please see below at 6.4 for details.

**Chapter 5 Staff training** (Schedule 9 paragraph 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 s75 duties.

5.2 The Chief Executive will positively communicate the commitment of the Office to the s75 statutory duties, both internally to staff and externally to stakeholders.

5.3 We have an effective communication and training programme for all staff and will ensure that ourcommitment to the s75 statutory duties is made clear in all relevantpublications.

**Training objectives**

5.4 Our Performance Management System identifies individual, team and corporate learning and development needs, including those associated with s75 of the Act. We will draw up a detailed training plan for staff which will aim to achieve the following objectives:

* to raise awareness of the provisions of s75 of the Act, our equality scheme commitments and the particular issues likely to affect people across the range of s75 categories, to ensure that our staff fully understand their role in implementing the scheme
* to provide those staff involved in the assessment of policies (screening and EQIA) with the necessary skills and knowledge to do this work effectively
* to provide those staff who deal with complaints in relation to compliance with our equality scheme with the necessary skills and knowledge to investigate and monitor complaints effectively
* to provide those staff involved in consultation processes with the necessary skills and knowledge to do this work effectively
* to provide those staff involved in the implementation and monitoring of the effective implementation of the Office’s equality scheme with the necessary skills and knowledge to do this work effectively.

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

5.5 The following arrangements are in place to ensure all our staff are aware of and understand our equality obligations.

* We will provide a summary of this equality scheme and make it available to all staff.
* We will provide access to copies of the full equality scheme for all staff; ensure that any queries or questions of clarification from staff are addressed effectively.
* Staff in the Office will receive a briefing on this equality scheme within 3 months of the scheme being approved by the Equality Commission.
* The s75 statutory duties form part of induction training for new staff.
* Focused training is provided for key staff within the Office who are directly engaged in taking forward the implementation of our equality scheme commitments (for example those involved in research and data collection, policy development, service design, conducting equality impact assessments, consultation, monitoring and evaluation).
* Where appropriate, training will be provided to ensure staff are aware of the issues experienced by the range of s75 groups.
* When appropriate and on an ongoing basis, arrangements will be made to ensure that staff are kept up to date with s75 developments.

5.6 Training and awareness raising programmes will, where relevant, be developed in association with the appropriate s75 groups and our staff.

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

**Monitoring and evaluation**

5.7 We require staff to evaluate with their line manager the extent to which training and development objectives have been met following each training and development opportunity. This is to ensure that individuals have acquired the necessary skills and knowledge to achieve their business objectives.

5.8 The extent to which training objectives have been met will be reported on as part of the s75 annual progress report, which will be sent to the Equality Commission.

**Chapter 6 Our arrangements for ensuring and assessing public access to information and services we provide** (Schedule 9 paragraph 4. (2) (f))

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

* 1. We liaise with representatives of young people and disability

and minority ethnic organisations and take account of existing and developing good practice.

6.5 We will respond to requests for information in alternative formats in a timely manner and aim to achieve this within 15 working days.

6.6 When issuing information through the media we will seek to advertise in the press where appropriate.

**Access to services**

6.7 We are committed to ensuring that all of our services are fully accessible to everyone in the community across the s75 categories. The Office also adheres to the relevant provisions of current anti-discrimination legislation.

* 1. We have a range of options to ensure public access to our services such as:
* Office in a city centre location which is open during normal office hours, when members of the public can seek advice without an appointment.
* A website which is accessible to a high standard and enables members of the public to contact us in a variety of ways e.g. telephone, textphone, email, fax or arranged appointment.
* The Office, upon request, can and does meet with members of the public wishing to use its services at locations which meet the individual’s needs e.g. their own home, Citizens Advice Office or offices of their representative or representative body.

**Assessing public access to information and services**

* 1. We will monitor access to information and services across all functions to ensure equality of opportunity and good relations are promoted. The Office has a number of mechanisms in place for doing this which include:
* Complainant satisfaction surveys (which are given to all service users)
* Annual Omnibus Survey conducted by Northern Ireland Statistics and Research Agency
* Feedback from Police Ombudsman complaints process and audits by the Independent Assessor of Complaints

**Chapter 7 Timetable for measures we propose in this equality scheme** (Schedule 9 paragraph 4. (3) (b))

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

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

**Chapter 8 Our complaints procedure**

(Schedule 9 paragraph10.)

8.1 The Office is responsive to the views of members of the public. We will endeavour to resolve all complaints made to us.

8.2 Schedule 9 paragraph 10 of the Act refers to complaints. A person can make a complaint to a public authority if the complainant believes he or she may have been directly affected by an alleged failure of the authority to comply with its approved equality scheme. If the complaint has not been resolved within a reasonable timescale the complaint can be brought to the Equality Commission.

* 1. A person wishing to make a complaint that the Office has failed to comply with its approved equality scheme should contact:

The HR Manager

Office of the Police Ombudsman for Northern Ireland

New Cathedral Buildings

11 Church Street

Belfast

BT1 1PG

Telephone (028) 9082 8632

Textphone (028) 9082 8618

Email: [HR@policeombudsman.org](mailto:HR@policeombudsman.org)

8.4 We will in the first instance acknowledge receipt of each complaint within 3 working days.

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

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

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

8.8 The Office will cooperate fully and give full consideration to any recommendations arising out of any Equality Commission investigation.

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

9.1 The Office of the Police Ombudsman’s Equality Scheme is available free of charge in print form and alternative formats from:

The HR Manager

Office of the Police Ombudsman for Northern Ireland

New Cathedral Buildings

11 Church Street

Belfast

BT1 1PG

Telephone (028)90828632

Textphone (028)90828618

Email: [HR@policeombudsman.org](mailto:HR@policeombudsman.org)

9.2 Our Equality Scheme is also available on our website at:

[www.policeombudsman.org](http://www.policeombudsman.org)

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

* We will make every effort to communicate widely the existence and content of our equality scheme. This may include press releases, prominent advertisements in the press, the internet and direct mail shots to groups representing the various categories in s75.
* We will email a link to our approved equality scheme to our consultees on our consultation lists. Other consultees without e-mail will be notified by letter that the scheme is available on request. We will respond to requests for the equality scheme in alternative formats in a timely manner, usually within 15 working days.
* Our Equality Scheme will be made available on request in alternative formats such as Easy Read, Braille, large print, audio formats and in minority languages (to meet the needs of those not fluent in English).
  1. For a list of our stakeholders and consultees please see Annex 3 of the Equality Scheme, visit our website at [www.policeombudsman.org](http://www.policeombudsman.org) or contact:

The HR Manager

Office of the Police Ombudsman for Northern Ireland

New Cathedral Buildings

11 Church Street

Belfast

BT1 1PG

Telephone (028)9082862 2

Textphone (028)90828618

Email: [HR@policeombudsman.org](mailto:HR@policeombudsman.org)

**Chapter 10 Review of our equality scheme**

(Schedule 9 8. (3))

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

10.2 The review will evaluate the effectiveness of our scheme in relation to the implementation of the s75 statutory duties relevant to our functions in Northern Ireland.

10.3 In undertaking this review we will follow any guidance issued by the Equality Commission. A report of this review will be made public via the Office website and sent to the Equality Commission.

**OFFICE OF THE POLICE OMBUDSMAN FOR NORTHERN IRELAND Annex 1**

**ORGANISATION CHART**

**Police Ombudsman**

**Chief Executive**

**Senior Director of Investigations**

**Police Ombudsman**

**Al Hutchinson**

**Current Investigation Teams**

**Information, Statistics & Media Team**

**Finance**

**HR**

**IT**

**Historic Investigation Teams**

**Director of Investigations (Historic)**

**Director of Investigations (Current)**

**Director of Corporate Services**

**Head of Information**

**Confidential Unit**

**Head of Legal Services**

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

***(Note, this list is for illustration purposes only, it is not exhaustive.***

|  |  |
| --- | --- |
| **Category** | **Example groups** |
| Religious belief | Buddhist; Catholic; Hindu; Jewish; Muslims, people of no religious belief; Protestants; Sikh; other faiths.  For the purposes of Section 75, the term “religious belief” is the same definition as that used in the *Fair Employment & Treatment (NI) Order*[[8]](#footnote-8). Therefore, “religious belief” also includes any *perceived* religious belief (or perceived lack of belief) and, in employment situations only, it also covers any *“similar philosophical belief”.* |
| Political opinion[[9]](#footnote-9) | Nationalist generally; Unionists generally; members/supporters of other political parties. |
| Racial group | Black people; Chinese; Indians; Pakistanis; people of mixed ethnic background; Polish; Roma; Travellers; White people. |
| Men and women generally | Men (including boys); Trans-gendered people; Transsexual people; women (including girls). |
| Marital status | Civil partners or people in civil partnerships; divorced people; married people; separated people; single people; widowed people. |
| Age | Children and young people; older people. |
| Persons with a disability | Persons with disabilities as defined by the Disability Discrimination Act 1995. |
| Persons with dependants | Persons with personal responsibility for the care of a child; for the care of a person with a disability; or the care of a dependant older person. |
| Sexual orientation | Bisexual people; heterosexual people; gay or lesbian people. |

**Annex 3 List of consultees**

Age NI

Age Sector Platform

Agency for Legal Deposit Libraries

Alliance Party

Amnesty International

ASCONI

Assistant Librarian - Northern Ireland Bar Library

Association of Baptist Churches in Ireland

Bahai Office of NI

Bangladeshi Welfare Association

Bar Council

Belfast Butterfly Club

Belfast Harbour Commissioners

Belfast Harbour Police

Belfast Hebrew Congregation

Belfast International Airport

Belfast Islamic Centre

Belfast Traveller Education & Development Group

Belfast Travellers Support Group (An Munia Tober)

Boys Brigade

British Irish Rights Watch

Chief Executive Forum

Children’s Law Centre

Chinese Welfare Association

Church of Ireland

CIS TURNING POINT

Citizen's Advice Bureau

City of Derry Airport

Coleraine Women’s Aid

Commission for Victims and Survivors

Committee on the Administration of Justice

Community Relations Council

Compensation Agency

Conservative Party

Contact Youth

COSO

Criminal Justice Inspectorate

Departmental Solicitor's Office Library

Democratic Unionist Party

Derry Well Woman

Disability Action

DPP Library

DPP Managers

Equality Commission.

FAIR

Falls Road Community Council

Fermanagh Women's Network

Force Librarian - PSNI Training Centre

Forensic Science Northern Ireland

Foyle Women's Information Network

Free Presbyterian Church

Garda Siochana Ombudsman Commission Library

George Best Belfast City Airport

Girls Brigade

House of Commons Library

Human Rights Commission

Indian Community Centre

Information Commissioner

IOPC

Information Services

Justice for the Forgotten

Juvenile Justice Board

LADZ Project

Larne Harbour

Law Society in Northern Ireland - Librarian

Lesbian Advocacy Services

Librarian - Assembly Library

Librarian - DOJ

Libraries NI

Live and Let Live Group

Maghaberry Prison

Magilligan Prison

MENCAP(Royal Society for Mentally Handicapped Children and Adults)

Methodist Church in Ireland

Mid-Ulster Women's Network

MLAs

Multi-Cultural Resource Centre

N I Commissioner for Children and Young People

NIPSO

National Police Library

National Schizophrenia Fellowship

NI Courts and Tribunal Service

NI Prisons Service

NI Women’s Aid Federation

NI Youth Forum

NIACRO

NICEM

NIPSA

North West Chinese Community Association

Northern Ireland African Cultural Centre

Northern Ireland Association for Mental Health

Northern Ireland Association of Citizens Advice Bureau

Northern Ireland Pakistani Association

Northern Ireland Publications Resource

Northern Ireland Retired Police Officers' Association

Northern Ireland Sikh Community Centre

Northern Ireland Women's European Platform (NIWEP)

NUS USI Northern Ireland Student Centre

Omagh Women's Area Network

Parades Commission for Northern Ireland

Pat Finucane Centre

PIRC

Police Federation

Policing Board Members

Polish Association for Northern Ireland

Presbyterian Church

Presbyterian Woman’s Association

Princes Trust

Prisoner Ombudsman for NI

Probation Board for Northern Ireland

Progressive Unionist Party

People Before Profit Party

PSNI

Public Prosecution Service

Rainbow Project

Relatives For Justice

Roman Catholic Church

Royal National Institute for Deaf People (RNID)

Royal National Institute for the Blind (RNIB)

RQIA

Shankill Women’s Centre

Sinn Fein

Social Democratic & Labour Party

Social Security Agency

Students' Union - Queen's University Belfast

Students' Union - University of Ulster

Superintendents' Association

The Blind Centre (NI)

The British Library

The Cedar Foundation

The Coroner's Service for Northern Ireland

The Grand Orange Lodge

The Green Party

The Legal Services Commission

The Linen Hall Library

The Peace People

The Rainbow Project

The State Pathologist's Department

The Women's Centre

The Workers Party

Traditional Unionist Voice

Transgender NI

TURNING POINT

Ulster Unionist Party

UNISON

Victim Support NI

Waterside Women’s Centre

Wave

WAVE TRAUMA CENTRE

Windsor Women’s Centre

Women Together for Peace

Women’s Aid Federation

Women's Forum

Women's Information Group

Women's Resource and Development Agency (WRDA)

Women's Support Network

YMCA Ireland

Young Offenders Centre

Youth Action

Youth Council for Northern Ireland

Youth Initiatives

Youth Justice Agency

Youthnet

**Annex 4 Timetable for measures proposed** (Schedule 9 4.(3) (b))

|  |  |  |
| --- | --- | --- |
| **Measure** | **Lead responsibility** | **Timetable** |
| *Section 75 Annual Progress Report* | *Chief Executive/HR Manager* | *31 August (annually)* |
| *Action plan*  *To implement and deliver the Action Plan*  *Finalised action plan published* | *Chief Executive/HR Manager*  *Chief Executive/HR Manager*  *Chief Executive/HR Manager* | *September 2022*  *As per action plan timescales*  *October 2022* |
| *Consultation list reviewed and updated [3.4]* | *HR Manager* | *November (annually)* |
| *Screening timetable*  *Screening Reports*  *[4.15]* | *HR Manager*  *HR Manager* | *Annually*  *Quarterly after approval of Equality scheme* |
| *EQIA Timetable* | *HR Manager* | *Annually* |
| *Review of monitoring information*  *Publication of monitoring information* | *HR Manager*  *HR Manager* | *Annually*  *Annually* |
| *Training*  *Development of summary scheme*  *Development of overall training programme*  *Focused training*  *Evaluation of training* | *HR Manager*  *HR Manager/Training Officer*  *HR Manager/Training Officer*  *HR Manager/Training Officer* | *Within 2 months of approval of Equality Scheme*  *Within 3 months of approval of Equality Scheme*  *Within 9 months of scheme approval*  *Depending upon type of training as set out in Office training strategy* |
| *Assessing access to information and services* | *Head of Communications* | *Annually* |
| *Communication of equality scheme [9.3]* | *HR Manager* | *Within one month of approval of the equality scheme* |
| *Review of equality scheme* | *Chief Executive* | *Within 5 years of equality scheme approval* |

**Annex 5 Glossary of terms**

**Action Plan**

A plan which sets out actions a public authority will take to implement its s75 statutory duties. It is a mechanism for the realisation of measures to achieve equality outcomes for the s75 equality and good relations categories.

**Adverse Impact**

Where a s75 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 s75 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.

**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 s75 equality and good relations duties. It can also enable public authorities to assess progress on the implementation of the s75 statutory duties, as it provides baseline information on existing inequalities relevant to a public authority’s functions.

**Consultation**

In the context of s75, consultation is the process of asking those affected by a policy, i.e. service users, staff, the general public for their views on how the policy could be implemented more effectively to promote equality of opportunity across the 9 categories. Different circumstances will call for different types of consultation. Consultations could, for example, include meetings, focus groups, surveys and questionnaires.

**Equality impact assessment**

The mechanism underpinning s75, where existing and proposed policies are assessed in order to determine whether they have an adverse impact on equality of opportunity for the relevant s75 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, persons with or without 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 s75.

**Equality Scheme**

A document which outlines a public authority’s arrangement for complying with its s75 obligations. An Equality Scheme must include an outline of the public authority’s arrangements for carrying out consultations, screening, and equality impact assessments, monitoring, training and arrangements for ensuring access to information and services.

**Evaluation**

Analysis of completed or ongoing activities that determine / support accountability, effectiveness and efficiency.

**Measures and Outcomes**

Specific measures to promote equality and good relations for the relevant s75 and good relations categories, linked to achievable outcomes, which should be realistic and timely.

**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 affect on the relevant s75 categories; this is known as mitigating adverse impact.

**Monitoring**

Monitoring consists of continuously scrutinising and evaluating a policy to assess its impact on the s75 categories. Monitoring must be sensitive to the issues associated with human rights, data protection and privacy. Public authorities should seek advice from consultees and s75 representative groups when setting up monitoring systems.

**Northern Ireland Act 1998**

The Northern Ireland Act 1998, implementing the Good Friday Agreement, received Royal Assent on 19 November 1998. S75 of the Act created the statutory equality duties.

**Performance Management System**

This system follows the stages of the performance management through the year with the aim enabling staff to perform effectively in their role, encourage assessment and recognition of performance and is linked to identification of learning needs for staff via personal development programs.

**Public Authority**

This is defined for the purposes of section 75 duties at section 75 paragraph (2) of the Act. A national, state or local government agency. Some public authorities responsibilities are covered under the Human Rights Act 1998.

**Schedule 9**

Schedule 9 of the Northern Ireland Act 1998 sets out detailed provisions for the enforcement of the s75 statutory duties, including an outline of what should be included in an Equality Scheme.

**Screening**

Part of the equality impact assessment screening is a process used to assess the likely impact of a policy on the promotion of equality of opportunity and good relations. This takes place at the earliest opportunity and the lead role is taken by the policy decision maker. Screening questions, for example, in relation to the impact on equality of opportunity on s75 groups, are considered taking into account qualitative and quantitative data. Based on this information the screening outcome decision will be made.

**Section 75**

S75 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.

**Annex 6 Action plan/action measures**

**DRAFT ACTION PLAN**

**Objective 1: To ensure that PONI workforce is representative of the communities it services**

|  |  |  |  |  |  |
| --- | --- | --- | --- | --- | --- |
|  | What do we want to do? | What do we need to do to achieve this? | How will we measure it? | Timescale? | Responsible for taking forward? |
| 1a. | Ensure that the Office is representative of the community it services. | * Monitor recruitments to ensure promotion of job opportunities are available to all, especially under-represented groups | * Monitor the number of applications received from under-represented groups. * Ensure equality monitoring information is accurate and up-to-date and is kept in a confidential database to ascertain uptake by S75 groupings | On-going and as and when recruitment takes place | Human Resources |
| 1b. | Ensure that fair employment legislation is followed and that the principles of merit, fairness and openness are imbedded in all recruitments. | * Continually check that all recruitments follow fair employment legislation and best practice * Highlight any areas of concern and take corrective action * Use affirmative action statements where appropriate | * Review of recruitment material against best practice guidelines * Ensue that candidates are assessed against the competencies for the role * Review number of complaints received in relation to the recruitment process | On-going | Human Resources |

**Objective 2: To engage with customers effectively and be accountable for our actions**

|  |  |  |  |  |  |
| --- | --- | --- | --- | --- | --- |
|  | What do we want to do? | What do we need to do to achieve this? | How will we measure it? | Timescale? | Responsible for taking forward? |
| 2a. | Improve engagement with customers across all S75 categories to increase confidence in the work of the Office | * Consult with S75 groups to understand their needs in relation to the provision of information | * Respond to requests for information in alternative formats/language * Monitor percentage of complaints about the Office, leading to better informed decision-making and improved customer service | As and when requested | Head of Communications |
| 2b. | Ensure the Office communicates effectively with customers, using assistive technology and maintaining standards such as plain English and Web Content Accessibility Guidelines AA standards | * Review PONI website meets the required standards as per WCAG AA standards | * Monitor percentage of queries received in relation to customer accessibility to website | As and when requested | Head of Communications |
| 2c. | Provide accessible channels of communication to reflect diverse customers’ needs | * Greater opportunities for 2-way communication using Customer Feedback Survey * Accessible online service * Translated documents of interest available on request | * Review Customer Feedback Survey responses to identify areas of improvement * Monitor response times for requests for information in alternative formats. |  | Information and Communications Unit |

**Objective 3: To promote equality of opportunity within PONI workforce**

|  |  |  |  |  |  |
| --- | --- | --- | --- | --- | --- |
|  | What do we want to do? | What do we need to do to achieve this? | How will we measure it? | Timescale? | Responsible for taking forward? |
| 3a. | To ensure all staff understand our S75 duties | * Develop a S75 workshop to highlight our duties * To include S75 duties in all job descriptions * To include S75 duties in all performance development plans * Promotion of the Equality Scheme throughout the Office | * Evidence the number of staff who attend the workshop * Review job descriptions prior to recruitment taking place * Issue guidance to staff when forwarding PDPs | 2022 -2023 | Human Resources |
| 3b. | Promote equality screening awareness | * Develop a workshop/training for relevant staff | * Increase in number of policies/procedures being screened | 2022 -2023 | Human Resources |
| 3c. | To train all staff in equality and diversity | * Development and facilitation of appropriate equality and diversity training course | * Staff attendance at in-house training | 2023 – 2024 | Human Resources – Training Department |

**Objective 4: To ensure that all recruitments undertaken are in line with equality legislation and best practice**

|  |  |  |  |  |  |
| --- | --- | --- | --- | --- | --- |
|  | What do we want to do? | What do we need to do to achieve this? | How will we measure it? | Timescale? | Responsible for taking forward? |
| 4a. | In our recruitment campaigns ensure that the vacancies advertised are available to the widest possible range of candidates and that equality of opportunity is promoted between S75 groups | * Ensure the Office advertises in relevant media outlets, as well as using social media platforms to encourage as diverse a range of candidates as possible * Offer the Guaranteed Interview Scheme and provide candidates with the opportunity to record any special interview arrangements required | * Review where applicants see our advertisements to measure effectiveness of advertising campaign * Monitor number of applicants seeking the Guaranteed Interview Scheme * Record all equal opportunities data provided by applications in a confidential database to ascertain uptake by S75 groupings | On-going | Human Resources |
| 4b. | Ensure all staff who participate in recruitment panels are trained in the relevant techniques | * Maintain a register of staff trained and identify 3 yearly review dates | * Number of staff fully trained and able to sit on panels * Number of staff attendance at refresher training courses | On-going for those new to recruitment & selection training  3 yearly for those who require refresher training | Human Resources – Training Department |
| 4c. | To review the Recruitment & Selection Policy and Procedure | * Conduct a review of the policy in line with legislation and best practice | * Implementation of policy across the Office | 2022-2023 | Human Resources |

1. See section 1.1 of our Equality Scheme. [↑](#footnote-ref-1)
2. Section 98 (1) of the Northern Ireland Act 1998. [↑](#footnote-ref-2)
3. See section 1.1 of this equality scheme for a list of these categories. [↑](#footnote-ref-3)
4. See section 4.1 of this equality scheme for a definition of policies. [↑](#footnote-ref-4)
5. See Chapter 6 of our equality scheme for further information on alternative formats of information we provide. [↑](#footnote-ref-5)
6. Please see below at 4.29 to 4.31 for details on monitoring. [↑](#footnote-ref-6)
7. Mitigation – Where an assessment (screening in this case) reveals that a particular policy has an adverse impact on equality of opportunity and / or good relations, a public authority must consider ways of delivering the policy outcomes which have a less adverse effect on the relevant Section 75 categories. [↑](#footnote-ref-7)
8. See Section 98 of the Northern Ireland Act 1998, which states: *“In this Act…”political opinion” and “religious belief” shall be construed in accordance with Article 2(3) and (4) of the Fair Employment & Treatment (NI) Order 1998.”* [↑](#footnote-ref-8)
9. ibid [↑](#footnote-ref-9)