

EQUALITY COMMISSION FOR NORTHERN IRELAND

Public Authority Annual Progress Report 2006 - 2007

This report template includes a number of self assessment questions regarding implementation of the Section 75 statutory duties from **1 April 2006 to 31 March 2007**. Please enter information at the relevant part of each section and ensure that it is submitted electronically (by completing this template) and in writing, with a signed cover letter from the Chief Executive or, in his/her absence, the Deputy Chief Executive to the Commission by **31 August 2007**.

Name of public authority (Enter details below)

Office of the Police Ombudsman for Northern Ireland

Equality Officer (Enter name and contact details below)

Mr. Sam Pollock
Chief Executive
Office of the Police Ombudsman
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Executive Summary

- What were the key policy/service developments made by the authority during this reporting period to better promote equality of opportunity and good relations?

The Office continued to build on the work previously carried out to maintain and improve equality of opportunity and good relations as a mainstream element of our corporate goals and values.

The Office continues to place significant emphasis on the monitoring of the diversity of complainants as part of its obligations under Section 75; a sample of the data collected is outlined in section 6 of this report.

Several initiatives were launched to further aid the capability of the Office to deliver our responsibilities under Section 75, such as extensive diversity training delivered to a significant number of staff during October and November of 2006 and the appointment and training of 11 designated harassment advisers.

- What are the main initiatives planned in the coming year to ensure the authority improves outcomes in terms of equality of opportunity and good relations for individuals from the nine categories covered by Section 75?

A new Police Ombudsman Al Hutchinson has been appointed and will take up post in November 2007. The Office recognises the specific contribution it can make regarding the promotion of Good Relations and as part of this process will continue to develop it's schedule of visits to District Policing Partnerships and community organisations which will enable the Office to continue to reach out to all sections of society we serve.

Section 75 matters continue to receive support from Senior Management in the development of our corporate objectives, indicators and targets as contained within the Corporate Plan (copy enclosed) for example:

OBJECTIVE 2

To ensure the public and police are accurately informed about the work of the Office of the Police Ombudsman, thereby helping to secure confidence in the police complaints system.

**INDICATOR: Informing the public and the police
*Provision of an active outreach programme***

Target: To provide a targeted programme of information and engagement within the community, including 40 events in schools in association with community organizations.

The main initiative planned for the coming year is to attend to the actions identified in the Disability Action Plan (copy enclosed), to review communication processes in relation to people with disabilities, in particular

accessibility to the website of the Office and to maintain and develop our existing relationship with NICEM.

Section 1: Strategic Implementation of the Section 75 Duties

- Outline evidence of progress made in developing and meeting equality and good relations objectives, performance indicators and targets in corporate and annual operating plans during 2006-07.

The Office continues to develop relationships with other public authorities that include the Equality Commission, voluntary and community sector groups NICEM and NITAP, Disability Action, religious groups and all mainstream political parties. A total of 52 presentations were made to community groups and schools during the year, covering a broad spectrum of local society, including people of different religious beliefs, political opinion, gender, racial background, sex and marital status.

Section 75 continues to be a standard agenda item for Senior Management Team meetings on a quarterly basis, where equality targets and performance are reviewed as highlighted and referenced in our Annual Report (Copy Enclosed). Both the Senior Management Team and staff representative Joint Negotiation and Consultative Committee review the Office's progress report.

Section 75 matters continue to receive support from Senior Management in the development of our corporate objectives, indicators and targets as contained within the Corporate Plan (copy enclosed) for example:

Responsibility for equality has been agreed and designated within the Office. An Equality Working Group, headed by the Chief Executive, exists and includes managers and staff representatives from a cross-section of the directorates including Corporate Services, Policy and Practice and Investigations. These representatives are selected to manage the on going process of improvement in equality awareness, monitoring and compliance.

The Office is progressing a triennial review (Article 55) of employment composition and practices pertinent to the workforce of the office.

The Office continues to meet its specific targets in relation to Section 75 for example, the completion of the Equality Monitoring of Complainants Report was published in September 2006, achieving the target set in the 2006/7 Business Plan.

During the coming year the existing Equality Scheme will come to an end and a new scheme is being developed for submission in February 2008.

Budget is allocated according to the identified need and all Section 75 training is approved.

Section 2: Screening

- Provide an update of new/proposed/revised policies screened during the year.

Title of policy subject to screening	Was the <u>F</u> ull Screening Report or the <u>R</u> esult of initial screening issued for consultation? Please enter <u>F</u> or <u>R</u>	Was initial screening decision changed following consultation? <u>Y</u> es/ <u>N</u> o	Is policy being subject to EQIA? <u>Y</u> es/ <u>N</u> o? If yes indicate year for assessment.
There were no policies			
screened in 2006/07			
A schedule of policies due for revision			
will be contained within			
the revised equality scheme due for			
submission in Feb 2008			

Section 3: Equality Impact Assessment (EQIA)

- Provide an update of policies subject to EQIA during 2006/07, stage 7 EQIA monitoring activities and an indicative EQIA timetable for 2007-08.

EQIA Timetable – April 2006 - March 2007

Title of Policy EQIA	EQIA Stage at end March 07 (Steps 1-6)	Outline adjustments to policy intended to benefit individuals, and the relevant equality & good relations categories due to be affected.
Improve Policy and Practice of Policing – Policy reviewed and screened out		

Ongoing EQIA Monitoring Activities April 2006- March 2007

Title of EQIA subject to Stage 7 monitoring	Indicate if differential impacts previously identified have reduced or increased	Indicate if adverse impacts previously identified have reduced or increased
No policies exist that require stage 7 monitoring		

2007-08 EQIA Time-table

Title of EQIAs due to be commenced	Existing or New policy?	Please indicate expected timescale of
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during April 2007 – March 2008		Decision Making stage i.e. Stage 6
Section 75 Five Year Review and timetable to be developed		

- Where the EQIA timetable for 2006/07 (as detailed in the previous annual S75 progress report to the Commission) has not been met, please provide details of the factors responsible for delay and details of the timetable for re-scheduling the EQIA/s in question.

Administrative Error in previous reports stating that an EQIA should be carried out on “Improve the Policy and Practice of Policing”. This policy was not screened in for EQIA.

Section 4: Training

- Outline training provision during the year associated with the Section 75 Duties/Equality Scheme requirements including types of training provision, numbers attending, and conclusions from any training evaluations.

The Office has developed and operates within a five-year training plan to ensure that the delivery of Section 75 related training and development is carried out in a structure that best meets the needs of the organization.

The Senior Management Team includes equality issues as a regular agenda item at its monthly meetings and has received training in corporate and individual responsibility to ensure compliance with Section 75 issues.

The Office undertakes periodic reviews of internal policies in compliance with Section 75 of the Northern Ireland Act 1998 and provides appropriate training on the policies amended and developed as a consequence of the review, e.g. lateral transfer policy, recruitment and selection etc.

General awareness training is provided for all staff on equality issues as part of the induction programme, and as refresher training for existing staff undertaking new duties, for example in the Investigations Directorate where there is direct interface with members of the general public.

The Office is grateful for the feedback received from organizations representing Section 75 Equality Categories, which helps the Office to continually develop its equality training objectives.

In addition to the general induction training provided to all new employees, the Office also undertakes an annual review of corporate goals and objectives. Included in this overall review, are individual reviews of all employees, where the key aspects of their performance and effectiveness are assessed. In addition to goals and objectives being established for the forthcoming year, training needs are reviewed and form part of the organisation's ongoing Training Needs Analysis. In addition to this formal review process, managers undertake regular reviews of performance against targets and highlight variances, which are then addressed.

More specific training of staff in how they can contribute to the values and responsibilities required under Section 75 carried out during the year was as follows:

The Next Stephen Lawrence Racist Violence Conference

Attended by one person in June 2006

Discrimination Law & Practice Conference

Attended by one person in September 2006.

Deaf Awareness/Sign Language

Attended by 30 staff in September 2006.

Human Rights Law Conference

Attended by one person in October 2006.

Bullying, Harassment & Diversity Training

Attended by 86 people in October/November 2006.

Civil Protection 06

Attended by one person in November 2006.

Annual Review of Employment Law

Attended by 2 people in November 2006.

Harassment Adviser Training

Attended by 12 people in February 2007.

Essentials of Employment Law

Attended by 3 people in September 2006

Section 5: Communication

- Outline how the authority communicated progress on delivery of the statutory duties during the year and evidence of the impact/success of such activities.

The Office has a number of means by which it communicates its commitment to its Statutory duty under Section 75 of the Northern Ireland Act 1998.

A key business objective for the year 2006-2007 is “To ensure the public and police are accurately informed about the work of the Office of the Police Ombudsman, thereby helping to secure confidence in the police complaints system”.

Press and media coverage about the Office during the year almost doubled that of 2005/6 and significantly awareness and confidence in the office is at the highest ever levels across society in Northern Ireland. An independent survey found that 88% of people in Northern Ireland are aware of the Office and 86% believe the Office is independent, 87% believe the Office is fair and 78% believe that we are impartial.

The Office communicates through its official publications, the organisational website, press releases and summary and full reports.

The Office also offers an online complaints form and makes material available in Ulster-Scots, Irish, Mandarin and other languages on request. Such documentation includes information about the Office, complaints leaflets, complaint forms and complaint statistics, which are all available in these languages. These publications are also available in PDF format and can be requested on audiotape.

In addition to the relevant training initiatives, the Office operates an Intranet to inform and advise all staff of Section 75 related issues and initiatives. Articles, reports and survey results are published and are available to all staff, as all have access to the Intranet system. Office policies and procedures are also available for reference purposes as are the Code of Ethics and the Investigator Manual.

Issues relating to Section 75 are discussed and details shared with employees through the JNCC mechanism as well as Team Briefings from management.

The Office's S.75 Progress Report is made available to all staff and performance measures are included in the Annual Report, Corporate Plan and Annual Business Plan. (Copies enclosed).

The Office also communicates its commitment to the statutory duty in public statements such as job advertisements, press releases, media interviews and events such as public awareness conferences. The Office's website is a key source of information on police complaints across all police districts and helps the public identify trends, patterns and profiles of complaints, including breakdown of gender, community background, age and occupational status in their immediate districts.

The website continues to experience increased usage (threefold over the last 2 years) and will continue to be revised to reflect this.

In addition the Office operates an outreach programme whereby presentations are delivered to schools, community groups and police officers. Access is provided to translation/interpretation services as required.

The Office continues to further develop its relationship with NITAP with sponsorship and attendance at the annual conference (NITAP is an umbrella organisation for almost 700 community groups across Northern Ireland, representing people from many different backgrounds in local society).

Over the period April 06 – March 07, the Office has made presentations to 52 community groups and District Policing Partnerships during the year, covering a broad spectrum of local society.

During the reporting year the Office has held meetings with representatives of the Lesbian, Gay & Bisexual community, and delivered a presentation.

Section 6: Data Collection & Analysis

- Outline any systems that were established during the year to supplement available statistical and qualitative research.
- Outline any research undertaken/commissioned to obtain information on the needs and experiences of individuals from the nine categories covered by Section 75.

Annual Research undertaken by NISRA has indicated a continuous high level of confidence in the work of the Office of the Police Ombudsman (See copy of Omnibus Survey on public awareness attached).

There were no new systems established during the reporting year. However, the Office continues to place considerable emphasis on the value of monitoring data in relation to the diversity of complainants. During the reporting period the Office published a monitoring report on the Section 75 profile of complainants covering the year 2005/6. A short synopsis of the findings is as follows:

- Almost one in five complainants (19 per cent) was a young male under 25 years old. A further third (32 per cent) were 25-44 year-old males. The most common age group for females was 35-44, which made up 10 per cent of the overall sample;

- 36 per cent of complainants were Catholic, 22 per cent were Presbyterian, 20 per cent were Church of Ireland, 5 per cent were Methodist, 9 per cent were 'other' religions, including other Christian and 8 per cent reported that they were of 'no religion';
- Ninety seven per cent of complainants declared themselves as White;
- 37 per cent were married, 7 per cent were living with a partner, 37 per cent were single, 9 per cent were separated, 8 per cent were divorced and 3 per cent were widowed;
- Twenty six per cent stated that they had a disability. This is slightly lower than the 28 per cent previously reported;
- Four per cent supported the Alliance Party, 26 per cent supported the DUP, 8 per cent supported the UUP, 13 per cent supported the SDLP, 9 per cent supported Sinn Fein, 2 per cent supported other parties and 38 per cent declared that they did not support any political party.
- Forty seven per cent stated that they had dependants. Female complainants (56 per cent) were more likely than males (42 per cent) to have dependants.

Research in relation to Section 75 Groups

The Complainant Satisfaction Survey allows complainants to the Police Ombudsman's Office to express their views on services provided by the Office. Over the last 3 years 1256 complainant satisfaction forms were returned (around 22% response rate).

Overall

- 72 % of respondents overall, thought that they were *treated fairly by the Police Ombudsman's Office*.
- 60 % of respondents overall, *taking everything into account, were satisfied with the service they received*.
- 74 % of respondents would use the complaints system again.

Gender

- Gender was known for 99% of complainants
- 67% of males compared to 82% of females *thought that they were treated fairly by the Police Ombudsman's Office*.
- 56% of males compared to 70% of females *taking everything into account, were satisfied with the service they received*.
- 70% of males compared to 81% of females *would use the complaints system again*.

Age

- Age was known for 79% of complaints
- 71% of 16-24 year olds, 70% of 25-34 year olds, 75% of 35-44 year olds, 76% of 45-54 year olds 74 % of 55-64 year olds and 65% of 65+'s *thought that they were treated fairly by the Police Ombudsman's Office*.

55% of 16-24 year olds, 60% of 25-34 year olds, 65% of 35-44 year olds, 66% of 45-54 year olds, 62 % of 55-64 year olds and 59% of 65+'s

taking everything into account, were satisfied with the service they received.

- 74% of 16-24 year olds, 68% of 25-34 year olds, 80% of 35-44 year olds, 77% of 45-54 year olds, 78 % of 55-64 year olds and 73% of 65+'s *would use the complaints system again.*

Religion

- Religion was known for 68% of complainants
- Due to small numbers responses were grouped into the following categories: 'Catholics', 'Other religion', 'No religion'. (There were insufficient numbers in the 'other' religion category to conduct any meaningful analysis)
- 76% of Catholics and 73% of those of 'Other religion' *thought that they were treated fairly by the Police Ombudsman's Office.*
- 63% of Catholics and 66% of those of 'Other religion', *were satisfied with the service they received.*
- 80% of Catholics and 74% of those of 'Other religion', *would use the complaints system again.*

Marital status

- Marital status was known for 68% of complainants
- 71% of 'single' respondents, 76% of those who were 'married or living together' and 70% of those who were 'divorced or separated' *thought that they were treated fairly by the Police Ombudsman's Office.*

- 58% of 'single' respondents, 67% of those who were 'married or living together' and 60% of those who were 'divorced or separated' *taking everything into account, were satisfied with the service they received.*
- 73% of 'single' respondents, 77% of those who were 'married or living together' and 78% of those who were 'divorced or separated' *would use the complaints system again.*

Disability

- Disability status was known for 66% of complaints
- 64% of those who were disabled and 76% of those who were not *thought that they were treated fairly by the Police Ombudsman's Office.*
- 60% of those who were disabled and 64% of those who were not *taking everything into account, were satisfied with the service they received.*
- 71% of those who were disabled and 77% of those who were not *would use the complaints system again.*

Ethnicity

- Ethnicity was known for 64% of complainants
- There were insufficient numbers in groups to conduct any meaningful analysis (96% of complainants were White)

Sexual orientation

- Sexual orientation was known for 64% of complainants
- There were insufficient numbers in groups to conduct any meaningful analysis (93% of complainants were Heterosexual)

We believe this level of monitoring of Section 75 Groups is an important advance for the public sector.

Section 7: Information Provision, Access to Information and Services

- Detail any initiatives/steps taken during the year to improve access to services including provision of information in accessible formats.

Over the course of the past year the Office has catered for the provision of information in accessible formats in the following ways:

- Minicom telephone number is now included in all Police Ombudsman advertising and publications.
- Offering an online complaints form
- Ensuring that the organisational website conforms with Level A of Web Content Accessibility Guidelines.
- Providing translation and interpreter services in Portuguese, Lithuanian Polish, French, Irish and Mandarin.
- Arranging for documentation such as complaints leaflets, complaint forms, complaint statistics to be published in Ulster-Scots, Irish and Mandarin.
- Arranging for publications to be made available on Audiotapes and Braille upon request.
- The Office provides information to the public through its media releases and via them coverage in broadcast and print media is available through Northern Ireland.
- The Office is actively considering the use of additional computer software “Browsealoud” to increase the accessibility of the Office website to people with disabilities and ethnic minority groups. Browsealoud makes websites more accessible for those with literacy Difficulties, Dyslexia, Mild Visual Impairments and English as a Second Language.

- Also through its presentations made to the range of community groups and District Policing Partnerships during the year, the Office aims to provide information in accessible formats to a broad spectrum of local society.
- Access to services of the Office have been accommodated on a regular basis with employees of the Office traveling to meet complainants at venues suitable to them, including Citizens Advice Bureau Offices, hotels, home visits etc.
- Also access to complainants is made available through use of a minicom service.

Section 8: Complaints

- Identify the number of Section 75 related complaints:
 - received by the authority;
 - resolved by the authority (including how this achieved);
 - which were not resolved to the satisfaction of the complainant;
 - which were referred to the Equality Commission.

The Office did not receive any Section 75 complaints during the period in question.

Section 9: Consultation and Engagement

- Provide details of the measures taken to enhance the level of engagement with individuals and representative groups during the year.

The Office has established a number of channels for managing Section 75 consultation exercises. Following a review of existing policies, procedures and practices and/or the establishment of new policies, procedures and practices, drafts are prepared of the new items by the department responsible for the policy documentation. An Equality Impact Assessment Working Committee has been established to review internally the impact of any proposed changes and to recommend additional amendments as required. This Committee has a core of members from the various directorates within the Office, but also seconds onto the Committee,

employees with specific knowledge of and experience in the issues under consideration. The draft documents are then presented to the Senior Management Team (SMT) for their consideration and approval.

The Office has formal Trade Union recognition agreements with the Northern Ireland Public Service Alliance (NIPSA) and UNISON, and meet in a Joint Negotiation Consultation Committee on a regular basis. These meetings enable open discussion on a range of issues pertinent to Section 75. Communication channels include Departments Heads and Trade Union representatives.

The Office also uses Team Briefings, emails circulated to all employees, and the organization's Intranet to provide information for internal consultation through the JNCC and SMT mechanisms.

The Office also engages with representatives of the nine Section 75 categories, and provides them with all policies, procedures, practices etc that may have an equality impact, however in the period April 2006 to March 2007, the Office had no changes to policies or procedures which required more formal consultation.

Section 10: The Good Relations Duty

Provide details of additional steps taken to implement or progress the good relations duty during the year. Please indicate any findings or expected outcomes from this work.

The Office continues to meet its equality and good relations objectives by continued use of the following:

- Maintaining a focus and priority in the corporate planning and monitoring for equality and good relations/performance.
- Commissioning questions in external public attitudes survey, assessing impact of the Office on all groups in the public domain.
- Continued commitment by supporting the access to work programme and offering work experience opportunities.

- For the Administrative Officer competition encouraging participation of people with disabilities in the recruitment process, by relaxing the minimum entry qualifications.
- In response to last years Staff Attitude Survey a Director was specifically tasked with the objective of engaging with staff representatives to deliver a “Good Practice Guide”. An action plan in relation to the objective was published in the February 2007 Office Information Bulletin and shared with all staff.
- Assessing the impact of organizational policies on all employees through the JNCC and management process.
- Further commitment to the promotion of Good Relations was evident in the Diversity training delivered to significant numbers of staff and the training and appointment of Harassment Advisors.
- A total of 52 presentations were made to community groups and schools during the year, covering a broad spectrum of local society, including people of different religious beliefs, political opinion, gender, racial background, sex and marital status.

Section 11: Additional Comments

- Please provide any additional information/comments

The Office of the Police Ombudsman values diversity by respecting our differences and reflecting this in the way we work and treat each other. Diversity at work builds on the traditional principles of equality of opportunity that focuses on ensuring that all people have access to employment opportunities and conditions. Diversity means accepting, welcoming and valuing the differences inherent in every individual and recognizing the contribution that a diverse workforce can make to organizational effectiveness and performance.

The following statements express our commitment to creating a working environment that values the diversity of people:

- The Ombudsman’s Equality Scheme incorporating Section 75 of the Northern Ireland Act 1998.

- Equal Opportunities Policy, Section 5.1 of the Staff Handbook.
- Harassment Policy, Section 5.7 of the Staff Handbook.
- Code of Ethics paragraphs 26-29.

The Office incorporates equality into every aspect of its business, and has annual goals, objectives and targets to measure performance at an organizational level. There is also an individual requirement on all Office staff to actively promote equality of opportunity and to support diversity in the workplace.