

DRAFT 21 July 2011



***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***

Approved by the Equality Commission for Northern Ireland on **[insert date]**.

Date of Draft

Foreword

Section 75 of the Northern Ireland Act 1998 (the Act) requires public authorities, in carrying out their functions relating to Northern Ireland, to have due regard to the need to promote equality of opportunity and regard to the desirability of promoting good relations across a range of categories outlined in the Act¹.

This Equality Scheme sets out how the Office of the Police Ombudsman for Northern Ireland (the Office) proposes to fulfill its Section 75 statutory duties.

The Office will commit the necessary resources to make sure that the Section 75 statutory duties are complied with and that the Equality Scheme is implemented effectively in the Office.

The Office is committed to having effective internal arrangements in place for ensuring our effective compliance with the Section 75 statutory duties and for monitoring and reviewing our progress.

The Office will develop and deliver a programme of communication and training with the aim of ensuring that all our staff are made fully aware of our Equality Scheme.

The Office is fully committed to effectively fulfilling its Section 75 statutory duties across all our functions (including service provision, employment and procurement) through the effective implementation of the Equality Scheme.

We appreciate the important role that the community and voluntary sector and the general public have to play to ensure the Section 75 statutory duties are effectively implemented. Throughout this Scheme we demonstrate the Office's commitment to ensure that those affected by our work can contribute to that work in an open and transparent way. 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 of the Police Ombudsman for Northern Ireland we are pleased to support and endorse this Equality Scheme which has been drawn up in accordance with Section 75

¹ See section 1.1 of our Equality Scheme.

and Schedule 9 of the Northern Ireland Act 1998 and Equality Commission guidelines.

Al Hutchinson

Police Ombudsman

Sam Pollock

Chief Executive

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Chapter 1 Introduction

Section 75 of the Northern Ireland Act 1998

1.1 Section 75 of the Northern Ireland Act 1998 (the Act) requires the Office of the Police Ombudsman for Northern Ireland to comply with two statutory duties:

Section 75 (1)

In carrying out our functions relating to Northern Ireland the Office 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.

Section 75 (2)

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

“Functions” include the “powers and duties” of a public authority². 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 4. (1) of the Act requires the Office as a designated public authority, to set out in an Equality Scheme how it proposes to fulfil the duties imposed by Section 75 in relation to its relevant functions. This equality scheme is intended to fulfil that statutory requirement. It is both a statement of our arrangements

² Section 98 (1) of the Northern Ireland Act 1998.

for fulfilling the Section 75 statutory duties and our plan for their implementation.

1.3 The Office is committed to the discharge of its Section 75 obligations in all parts of our organisation and we will commit the necessary available resources in terms of people, time and money to ensure that the Section 75 statutory duties are complied with and that our equality scheme can be implemented effectively.

Who we are and what we do

1.4 The Police Ombudsman is appointed under Royal Warrant and is a corporation sole. The Police Ombudsman receives and investigates complaints against police made by members of the public, and also matters of public interest involving the Police Service of Northern Ireland (PSNI) Belfast Harbour Police, Larne Harbour Police, Belfast International Airport Police and the Ministry of Defence Police in Northern Ireland and the Serious Organised Crime Agency, when its staff operate in this jurisdiction. The Office is also responsible for the investigation of criminal allegations made against staff of the UK Borders Agency whilst exercising the powers of constable in Northern Ireland.

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

In undertaking his statutory duties, the Police Ombudsman currently employs approximately 144 staff in a number of specialist and support roles. The Office of the Police Ombudsman is an Executive Non-Departmental Public Body funded by means of grant aid by the Department of Justice.

The vision of the Office is:

“Excellence in the independent and impartial investigation of police complaints”.

The mission of the Office is:

“Providing an effective, efficient and accountable Police Complaints system which is independent, impartial and designed to secure the confidence of the public and the police”.

The Office has 3 primary Goals:

1. *Building confidence*
2. *Contributing to improving policing with the community*
3. *Dealing with the Past*

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

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

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 and IT functions of the Office.

Director of Legal Services is responsible for the provision of legal advice to the Police Ombudsman and senior officers on all matters pertaining to the law.

Director of Information is advisor to the Police Ombudsman on external communications and the management and control of information and media communications.

Director of Research and Performance is responsible for the management and control of all statistical research, analysis, survey and monitoring information which measures Office performance against key performance indicators.

An organisational chart for the Office is available at Appendix 1

Chapter 2 Our arrangements for assessing our compliance with the section 75 duties (Schedule 9 4. (2) (a))

2.1 Some of our arrangements for assessing our compliance with the Section 75 statutory duties are outlined in other relevant parts of this equality scheme.

2.2 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 its Section 75 obligations in all parts of its work.

2.4 Responsibility for the effective implementation of our equality scheme lies with the Police Ombudsman. The Police Ombudsman has delegated the Chief Executive 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 Section 75 and Schedule 9 of the Northern Ireland Act 1998, including any good practice or guidance that has been or may be issued by the Equality Commission.

2.5 The Office has established an Equality Working Group (Headed by the Equality Champion) to share good practice and ensure a joined up and consistent approach to Section 75 issues in the Office. The Working Group will report and make recommendations to the Police Ombudsman, through the Directors 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 Section 75 statutory duties and implementation of the equality scheme, where relevant. The personal performance plans are subject to appraisal in the annual performance review.

2.8 The Office prepares an annual report on the progress it has made on implementing the arrangements set out in this Equality Scheme to discharge its Section 75 statutory duties (Section 75 annual progress report).

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

2.10 Progress on the delivery of Section 75 statutory duties will also be included in the Office's (organisational) annual report.

2.11 The latest Section 75 annual progress report is available on the Office's website www.policeombudsman.org (an Equality section is available under the Publications tab)

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
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

Action plan/action measures

2.13 The Office has developed an action plan to promote equality of opportunity and good relations. This action plan is set out in Appendix 6 to this Equality Scheme.

2.14 The action measures that will make up our action plan will be relevant to our functions. They will be developed and prioritised on the basis of an audit of inequalities. The audit of inequalities will

gather and analyse information across the Section 75 categories³ to identify the inequalities that exist for our service users and those affected by our policies⁴.

2.15 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.

2.16 We will develop any action plans for a period of between one and five years in order to align them with its corporate and business planning cycles. Implementation of the action measures will be incorporated into our business planning process.

2.17 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 2.18 below.

2.18 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.

2.19 We will inform the Commission of any changes or amendments to its action plan and will also include this information in its Section 75 annual progress report to the Commission. Our Section 75 annual progress report will incorporate information on progress it has made in implementing its action plan.

2.20 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.policombudsman.org

³ See section 1.1 of this equality scheme for a list of these categories.

⁴ See section 4.1 of this equality scheme for a definition of policies.

Chapter 3 Our arrangements for consulting

(Schedule 9 4. (2) (a)) - on matters to which a duty (S75 (1) or (2)) is likely to be relevant (including details of the persons to be consulted).

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

3.1 We recognise the importance of consultation in all aspects of the implementation of our statutory equality duties. We will consult on our equality scheme, action plan, equality impact assessments and other matters relevant to the Section 75 statutory duties.

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

3.3 All consultations will seek the views of those directly affected by the matter/policy, the Equality Commission and representative groups. To ensure the most effective use of consultee resources, the Office will take a targeted approach to consultation for those whom the matter/policy is of particular relevance.

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 consider a range of consultation methods that are appropriate to the needs of stakeholders including:

- Face-to-face meetings
- Focus groups
- Questionnaires
- Telephone consultations

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)*.

3.6 Information will be made available, on request, in alternative formats⁵, and the Office will aim to achieve this within 20 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 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 commitments⁶.

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

3.9 If a consultation exercise is to take place over a period when consultees are less able to respond, for example, over the summer or Christmas 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.

⁵ See Chapter 6 of our equality scheme for further information on alternative formats of information we provide.

⁶ Please see below at 4.29 to 4.31 for details on monitoring.

3.10 We are conscious of the fact that affected individuals and representative groups may have different needs. We will take appropriate measures to ensure full participation in any meetings that are held. We will consider for example the time of day, the appropriateness of the venue and in particular whether it can be accessed by those with disabilities.

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. A feedback report is 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 section 75 consultees is included in this Equality Scheme at Appendix 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.policombudsman.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 Equality Officer 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))

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

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

4.2 In making any decision with respect to a policy adopted or proposed to be adopted, we take into account any assessment and consultation carried out in relation to the policy, as required by Schedule 9 9. (2) of the Northern Ireland Act 1998.

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

4.8 In order to answer the screening questions, the leading policy official 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 Section 75 equality categories. Any screening decision will be informed by this evidence.

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

1. the policy has been 'screened in' for equality impact assessment
2. the policy has been 'screened out' with mitigation⁷ 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

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.

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 senior manager responsible for the policy, will be made available on our website at www.policombudsman.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 Section 75 categories and to determine if the impact is an adverse one. It is also an opportunity to demonstrate the likely positive outcomes of a policy and to seek ways to more effectively promote equality of opportunity and good relations.

4.19 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 equality impact assessment 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.

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 equality impact assessments
- 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 Equality impact assessments

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

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

How we publish the information

4.25 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 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 3 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 Section 75 information involves the processing of sensitive personal data (data relating to the racial or ethnic origin of individuals, sexual orientation, political opinion, religious belief, etc). In order to carry out monitoring in a

confidential and effective manner, the 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.

Our arrangements for publishing the results of our monitoring (Schedule 9 4. (2) (d))

4.34 Schedule 9 4. (2) (d) requires us to publish the results of the monitoring of adverse impacts of policies we have adopted.

However, we are committed to monitoring more broadly and the results of our policy monitoring are published as follows:

4.35 EQIA monitoring information is published as part of our Section 75 annual progress report [see 2.7] which is published on the Office's website 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 4.(2) (e))

Commitment to staff training

5.1 We recognise that awareness raising and training play a crucial role in the effective implementation of our Section 75 duties.

5.2 The Chief Executive will positively communicate the commitment of the Office to the Section 75 statutory duties, both internally and externally.

5.3 We have an effective communication and training programme for all staff and will ensure that our commitment to the Section 75 statutory duties is made clear in all relevant publications.

Training objectives

5.4 Our Performance Management System identifies individual, team and corporate learning and development needs, including those associated with Section 75 of the Northern Ireland 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 Section 75 of the Northern Ireland Act 1998, our equality scheme commitments and the particular issues likely to affect people across the range of Section 75 categories, to ensure that our staff fully understand their role in implementing the scheme
- to provide those staff involved in the assessment of policies (screening and EQIA) with the necessary skills and knowledge to do this work effectively
- to provide those staff who deal with complaints in relation to compliance with our equality scheme with the necessary skills and knowledge to investigate and monitor complaints effectively
- to provide those staff involved in consultation processes with the necessary skills and knowledge to do this work effectively
- to provide those staff involved in the implementation and monitoring of the effective implementation of 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 as soon as possible after approval of scheme.
- The Section 75 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 Section 75 groups.
- When appropriate and on an ongoing basis, arrangements will be made to ensure that staff are kept up to date with Section 75 developments.

5.6 Training and awareness raising programmes will, where relevant, be developed in association with the appropriate Section 75 groups and our staff.

In order to share resources and expertise, the 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 We will outline training as part of our Annual Progress Report to the Equality Commission.

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

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

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

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

In particular:

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

Access to information

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

6.4 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).

6.5 We liaise with representatives of young people and disability and minority ethnic organisations and take account of existing and developing good practice.

6.6 We will respond to requests for information in alternative formats in a timely manner.

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

Access to services

6.6 We are committed to ensuring that all of our services are fully accessible to everyone in the community across the Section 75 categories. The Office also adheres to the relevant provisions of current anti-discrimination legislation.

6.6 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

6.8 We will monitor access to access to information and services across all our services to ensure equality of opportunity and good relations are promoted.

Chapter 7 Timetable for measures we propose in this equality scheme

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

- 7.1 Appendix 4 outlines our timetable for all measures proposed within this equality scheme. The measures outlined in this timetable will be incorporated into our business planning processes.
- 7.2 This timetable is different from and in addition to our commitment to developing action plans/action measures to specifically address inequalities and further promote equality of opportunity and good relations. We have included in our equality scheme a commitment to develop an action plan. Accordingly, this commitment is listed in the timetable of measures at Appendix 4. For information on these action measures please see above at 2.11 – 2.18.

Chapter 8 Our complaints procedure

(Schedule 9 10.)

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.

8.3 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)90828632
Textphone (028)90828618
Email: 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 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.

Similarly, the Office will co-operate fully with any investigation by the Equality Commission under sub-paragraph 11 (1) (b) of Schedule 9 to the Northern Ireland Act 1998.

8.8 The 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 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

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

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

- We will make every effort to communicate widely the existence and content of our equality scheme. This may include press releases, prominent advertisements in the press, the internet and direct mail shots to groups representing the various categories in Section 75.
- We will email a link to our approved equality scheme to our consultees on our consultation lists. Other consultees without 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 3 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).

9.4 For a list of our stakeholders and consultees please see Appendix 3 of the Equality Scheme, visit our website at www.policombudsman.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)90828632
Textphone (028)90828618
Email: 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 Northern Ireland Act 1998 we will conduct a thorough review of this equality scheme. This review will take place either within five years of submission of this Equality Scheme to the Equality Commission or within a shorter timescale to allow alignment with the review of other planning cycles.

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

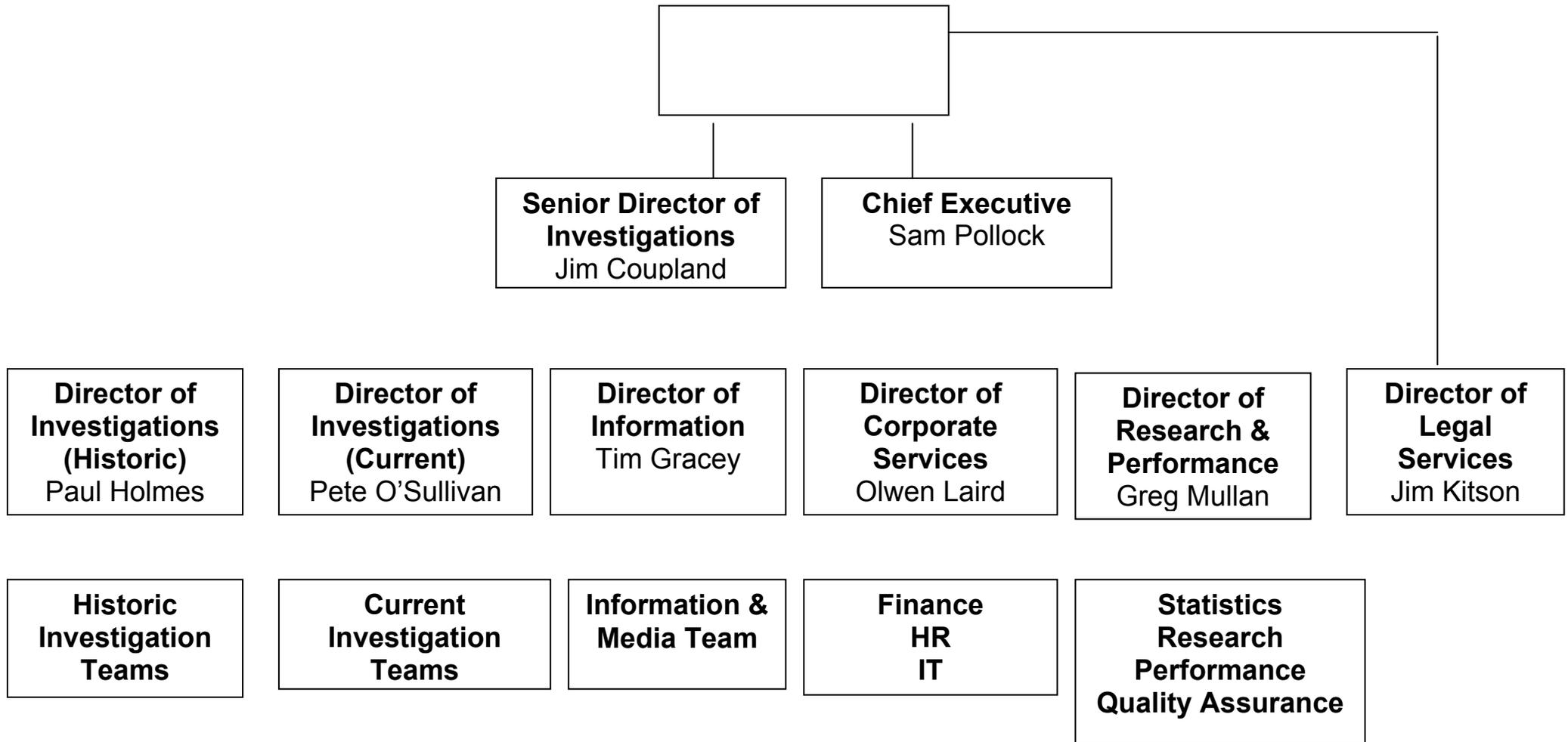
10.3 In undertaking this review we will follow any guidance issued by the Equality Commission. A report of this review will be made public via the Office website and sent to the Equality Commission.

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OFFICE OF THE POLICE OMBUDSMAN FOR NORTHERN IRELAND

Appendix 1

ORGANISATION CHART



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

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

Category	Example groups
Religious belief	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 <i>Fair Employment & Treatment (NI) Order</i> ⁸ . Therefore, “religious belief” also includes any <i>perceived</i> religious belief (or perceived lack of belief) and, in employment situations only, it also covers any “ <i>similar philosophical belief</i> ”.
Political opinion 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.

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.*”

⁹ *ibid*

Appendix 3 List of consultees (Schedule 9 4. (2) (a))

Age NI
Age Sector Platform
Agency for Legal Deposit Libraries
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
Commissioner for Children/Young People
Committee on the Administration of Justice
Community Relations Council
Compensation Agency
Contact Youth
COSO
Criminal Justice Inspectorate
Departmental Solicitor's Office Library
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 Siochan Ombudsman Commission Library
George Best Belfast City Airport
Girls Brigade
House of Commons Library
Human Rights Commission
Indian Community Centre
Information Commissioner
Information Services
Justice for the Forgotten
Juvenile Justice Board

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

Measure	Lead responsibility	Timetable
<i>Section 75 Annual Progress Report</i>	<i>Chief Executive/HR Manager</i>	<i>31 August (annually)</i>
<i>Action plan</i>	<i>Chief Executive/HR Manager</i>	<i>September 2011</i>
<i>Consultation on draft action plan</i>	<i>Chief Executive/HR Manager</i>	<i>July to October 2011.</i>
<i>Finalised action plan published</i>	<i>Chief Executive/HR Manager</i>	<i>November 2011</i>
<i>Arrangements for monitoring progress in place</i>	<i>Chief Executive/HR Manager</i>	<i>December 2011</i>
<i>Consultation list reviewed and updated [3.4]</i>	<i>HR Manager</i>	<i>November (annually)</i>
<i>Screening Reports [4.15]</i>	<i>HR Manager</i>	<i>Quarterly after approval of Equality scheme</i>
<i>Training</i>		
<i>Development of overall training programme</i>	<i>HR Manager/Training Officer</i>	<i>Within 3 months of approval of Equality Scheme</i>
<i>Communication of equality scheme [9.3]</i>	<i>Director of Information</i>	<i>Within one month of approval of the equality scheme</i>
<i>Review of equality scheme</i>	<i>Chief Executive</i>	<i>Within 5 years of equality scheme approval</i>

Appendix 5 Glossary of terms

Action Plan

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

Adverse Impact

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

Audit of inequalities

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

Consultation

In the context of Section 75, consultation is the process of asking those affected by a policy, i.e. service users, staff, the general public for their views on how the policy could be implemented more effectively to promote equality of opportunity across the 9 categories. Different circumstances will call for different types of consultation. Consultations could, for example, include meetings, focus groups, surveys and questionnaires.

Equality impact assessment

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

Equality of opportunity

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

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

Equality Scheme

A document which outlines a public authority's arrangement for complying with its Section 75 obligations. An Equality Scheme must include an outline of the public authority's arrangements for carrying out consultations, screening, 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 Section 75 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 Section 75 categories; this is known as mitigating adverse impact.

Monitoring

Monitoring consists of continuously scrutinizing and evaluating a policy to assess its impact on the Section 75 categories. Monitoring must be sensitive to the issues associated with human rights and privacy. Public authorities should seek advice from

consultees and Section 75 representative groups when setting up monitoring systems.

Northern Ireland Act

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

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

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 Section 75 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 Section 75 groups, are considered taking into account qualitative and quantitative data. Based on this information the screening outcome decision will be made.

Section 75

Section 75 of the Northern Ireland Act provides that each public authority is required, in carrying out its functions relating to

Northern Ireland, to have due regard to the need to promote equality of opportunity between:

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

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

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Appendix 6 Action plan/action measures

INEQUALITY IDENTIFIED	EVIDENCE or RESREACH	SECTION 75 CATEGORIES	PERFORMANCE INDICATORS	ACTION MEASURES	TIMESCALE
Under-representation of males at lower grades (grades D&C).	Evidence from annual monitoring returns to the Equality Commission and analysis of information from trends from Article 55 Review.	Gender	Increase in the proportion of males in these grades.	Affirmative Action statement in future recruitment exercise and a review of the selection criteria used.	Prior to the next recruitment exercise. Date cannot be given due to project budget constraints and recruitment freeze.
Under-representation of females at Senior Grades.	Evidence from annual monitoring returns to the Equality Commission and analysis of information from trends from	Gender	Increase in the proportion of females in these grades.	Affirmative Action statement in future recruitment exercise and targeted advertising through	Prior to the next recruitment exercise. Date cannot be given due to project budget constraints and recruitment

	Article 55 Review.			Northern Ireland's Business Women's Network.	freeze.
Those under 35 were less likely to be satisfied with how clearly the complaints process was explained to them and the overall time taken to resolve their complaint.	Quantitative evidence from statistical reports on the results of customer satisfaction surveys.	Age	Decrease in the difference in the level of satisfaction rates between younger and older service users.	Investigate possible reasons for the difference and take appropriate measures if possible.	Set up group to investigate by April 2012 and report findings in 2013 Annual Section 75 Report.
Men were less likely to think they were treated fairly by the Office	Quantitative evidence from statistical reports on the results of customer	Gender	Decrease in the difference in the level of satisfaction rates between	Investigate possible reasons for the difference and take	Set up group to investigate by April 2012 and report findings in 2013 Annual

than women.	satisfaction surveys.		male and female service users.	appropriate measures if possible.	Section 75 Report.
Those not living as part of a couple less likely to think they were treated fairly by the Office than those living as part of a couple.	Quantitative evidence from statistical reports on the results of customer satisfaction surveys.	Marital Status	Decrease in the difference in the level of satisfaction rates between service users not living as part of a couple than those living as part of a couple.	Investigate possible reasons for the difference and take appropriate measures if possible.	Set up group to investigate by April 2012 and report findings in 2013 Annual Section 75 Report.
Catholics were less likely to be satisfied with how seriously the Office took their complaint than "Other	Quantitative evidence from statistical reports on the results of customer satisfaction surveys.	Religious Belief	Decrease in the difference in the level of satisfaction rates between Catholic service users than "Other Christians".	Investigate possible reasons for the difference and take appropriate measures if possible.	Set up group to investigate by April 2012 and report findings in 2013 Annual Section 75 Report.

Christians.”					
Those with a disability were less likely to be satisfied with overall outcome of their complaint and the overall service they felt they received from the Office.	Quantitative evidence from statistical reports on the results of customer satisfaction surveys.	Disability	Decrease in the difference in the level of satisfaction rates between those service users with a disability and those without a disability.	Investigate possible reasons for the difference and take appropriate measures if possible.	Set up group to investigate by April 2012 and report findings in 2013 Annual Section 75 Report.
Under reporting of Hate Crime	Quantitative evidence from Police recorded statistics, NI Crime survey, regional statistics on Hate Incident Practical Action, data from Racial	Race Religious Belief Political Opinion Sexual Orientation Disability	To improve confidence within communities to report allegations of police failings associated with Hate Crime to	To develop a Hate Crime Policy appropriate to the functions of the Office.	Consult upon and publish a Hate Crime Policy by 31st March 2012.

	Equality Strategy. Qualitative research commissioned by the Office and the Policing Board on Policing, Accountability and BME/LGBT communities.		the Office.		
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