An Coimisinéir Gaeilge
Irish Language Commissioner

Irish Language Commissioner Equality Scheme 2026-2031

External Model Scheme Draft

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

This document is available in a range of formats on request. Please contact us with your requirements.

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Approved by the Equality Commission for Northern Ireland on [date to be provided by the Equality Commission].

Version 1.0

Foreword

Section 75 of the Northern Ireland Act 1998 (the Act) requires public authorities, in carrying out their functions relating to Northern Ireland, to have due regard to the need to promote equality of opportunity and regard to the desirability of promoting good relations across a range of categories outlined in the Act[1].

In our equality scheme we set out how the Irish Language Commissioner proposes to fulfil the Section 75 statutory duties.

We will commit the necessary resources in terms of people, time and money to make sure that the Section 75 statutory duties are complied with and that the equality scheme is implemented effectively, and on time.

We commit to having effective internal arrangements in place for ensuring our effective compliance with the Section 75 statutory duties and for monitoring and reviewing our progress.

We will develop and deliver a programme of communication and training with the aim of ensuring that all our staff and Audit & Risk Assurance Committee members are made fully aware of our equality scheme and understand the commitments and obligations within it. We will develop a programme of awareness raising for our consultees on the Section 75 statutory duties and our commitments in our equality scheme.

The Irish Language Commissioner is fully committed to effectively fulfilling our Section 75 statutory duties across all our functions

[1] See section 1.1 of our Equality Scheme.

Internal Model Scheme Draft

(including service provision, employment and procurement) through the effective implementation of our equality scheme.

We realise the important role that the community and voluntary sector and the general public have to play to ensure the Section 75 statutory duties are effectively implemented. Our equality scheme demonstrates how determined we are to ensure there are opportunities, for people affected by our work, to positively influence how we carry out our functions in line with our Section 75 statutory duties. It also offers the means whereby persons directly affected by what they consider to be a failure, on our part, to comply with our equality scheme, can make complaints.

As Irish Language Commissioner, I am pleased to support and endorse this equality scheme which has been drawn up in accordance with Section 75 and Schedule 9 of the Northern Ireland Act 1998 and Equality Commission guidelines.



Dr Pól Deeds
Commissioner
[Insert Date]

Model Scheme Draft

Contents

Please note: *Foreword and Appendices 3 and 4 form part of this equality scheme.*

Page

Foreword

Chapter 1 Introduction

- Section 75 of the Northern Ireland Act 1998
- How we propose to fulfil the Section 75 duties in relation to the relevant functions of the Irish Language Commissioner
- Who we are and what we do

Chapter 2 Our arrangements for assessing our compliance with the Section 75 Duties

- Responsibilities and reporting
- Action plan/action measures

Chapter 3 Our arrangements for consulting

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

- Our arrangements for assessing the likely impact adopted or proposed to be adopted on the promotion of equality of opportunity of policies
- Screening
- Equality impact assessment
- 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
- What we publish
- How we publish the information
- Where we publish the information

Internal Model Scheme Draft

- Our arrangements for monitoring any adverse impact of policies we have adopted on equality of opportunity
- Our arrangements for publishing the results of our monitoring

Chapter 5 Staff training

- Commitment to staff training
- Training objectives
- Awareness raising and training arrangements
- Monitoring and evaluation

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

- Access to information
- Access to services
- Assessing public access to information and services

Chapter 7 Timetable for measures we propose in this equality scheme

Chapter 8 Our complaints procedure

Chapter 9 Publication of our equality scheme

Chapter 10 Review of our equality scheme

Appendix 1 Organisational chart

Appendix 2 List of consultees

Appendix 3 Timetable for measures proposed

Appendix 4 Glossary of terms

Appendix 5 Action plan/action measures

Internal Model Scheme Draft

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 Irish Language Commissioner to comply with two statutory duties:

Section 75 (1)

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

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

Section 75 (2)

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

"Functions" include the "powers and duties" of a public authority[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.

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

Internal Model Scheme Draft

How we propose to fulfil the Section 75 duties in relation to the relevant functions of the Irish Language Commissioner

1.2 Schedule 9 (4) (1) of the Act requires the Irish Language Commissioner as a designated public authority to set out in an equality scheme how it proposes to fulfil the duties imposed by Section 75 in relation to its relevant functions. This equality scheme is intended to fulfil that statutory requirement. It is both a statement of our arrangements for fulfilling the Section 75 statutory duties and our plan for their implementation.

1.3 The Irish Language Commissioner 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 Irish Language Commissioner was established in November 2025, when the First and deputy First Minister appointed Pól Deeds as the first Irish Language Commissioner for Northern Ireland. This appointment was provided for in the Identity and Language (Northen Ireland) Act 2022 (‘the Act’). The Sponsor Department for the Irish Language Commissioner is The Executive Office.

1.5 The Act provides official recognition of the status of the Irish language in Northern Ireland, by providing for:

- the appointment of the Irish Language Commissioner
- the development of standards of best practice relating to the use of the Irish language by public authorities, and

Internal Model Scheme Draft

- a requirement upon public authorities to have due regard to the standards

1.6 The principal aim of the Irish Language Commissioner is to enhance and protect the use of the Irish language by public authorities in the provision of services to the public or a section of the public.

1.7 Accordingly, the Commissioner will be required to prepare, monitor and promote best practice standards for the use of the Irish language in the provision of services and public authorities will be required to have due regards to those standards.

1.8 The development of best practice standards will be a substantial body of work. The draft standards will be subject to extensive consultation to ensure they are balanced, evidence-based and reflective of both international best practice and the needs and expectations of people using services provided by the local authorities to which the standards apply.

1.9 Once agreed by the First and deputy First Minister, the act makes provision for a complaints procedure, whereby the Commissioner must investigate complaints from members of the public who feel that a public authority has failed to comply with its obligations to have due regard to the best practice standards.

Internal Model Scheme Draft

Chapter 2

Our arrangements for assessing our compliance with the section 75 duties

(Schedule 9 (4) (2) (a))

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

- arrangements for consulting on all aspects of the implementation of our equality duties – see Chapter 3;
- arrangements for assessing the impact of policies – see Chapter 4 paras. 4.1-4.18;
- arrangements for publishing the results of assessments – see Chapter 4 paras. 4.19-4.26;
- arrangements for monitoring the impact of policies – see Chapter 4 paras. 4.27-4.34;
- arrangements for publishing the results of monitoring – see Chapter 4 paras. 4.35-4.38;
- arrangements for ensuring and assessing public access to information and services we provide – see Chapter 6;
- arrangements for dealing with complaints – see Chapter 8.

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

Responsibilities and reporting

2.2 We are committed to the fulfilment of our Section 75 obligations in all parts of our work.

Internal Model Scheme Draft

2.3 Responsibility for the effective implementation of our equality scheme lies with the Irish Language Commissioner who is responsible 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. The Commissioner, as Accounting Officer, has ultimate responsibility for our Equality Scheme.

2.4 If you have any questions or comments regarding our equality scheme, please contact our office, in the first instance, and we will respond to you as soon as possible.

2.5 Objectives and targets relating to the statutory duties will be integrated into our strategic and operational business plans[3].

2.6 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.

2.7 The Irish Language Commissioner prepares an annual report on the progress made on implementing the arrangements set out in this equality scheme to discharge our Section 75 statutory duties (Section 75 annual progress report). The Section 75 annual progress report will be sent to the Equality Commission by 31 August each year and will follow any guidance on annual reporting issued by the Equality Commission.Progress on the

[3] See Appendix 3 'Timetable for measures proposed' and section 2.11 of this equality scheme

Internal Model Scheme Draft

delivery of Section 75 statutory duties will also be included in our (organisational) annual report.

2.8 The latest Section 75 annual progress report will be made available on our website (www.coimisineir.org). It can also be obtained by contacting our office.

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

Action plan/action measures

2.10 The Irish Language Commissioner has developed an action plan to promote equality of opportunity and good relations. This action plan is set out in **Appendix 5** to this equality scheme.

2.11 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 categories[4] to identify the inequalities that exist for our service users and those affected by our policies[5].

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

Internal Model Scheme Draft

[4] See section 1.1 of this equality scheme for a list of these categories.
[5] See section 4.1 of this equality scheme for a definition of policies.

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

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

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

2.16 We will inform the Equality Commission of any changes or amendments to our action plan and will also include this information in our Section 75 annual progress report to the Commission. Our Section 75 annual progress report will incorporate information on progress we have made in implementing our action plans/action measures.

2.17 Once finalised, our action plan will be available on the An Coimisinéir.org website or by contacting our office.

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Shaftesbury Square
Belfast
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2.18 Consultees on the list set out at Appendix 2 will be notified of the availability of the action plan (by electronic link or hard copy upon

Internal Model Scheme Draft

request of more suitable for recipients). If you require it in an alternative format, please contact us on the details provided.

Internal Model Scheme Draft

Chapter 3

Our arrangements for consulting

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

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

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

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

3.2.1 All consultations will seek the views of those directly affected by the matter/policy, the Equality Commission, representative groups of Section 75 categories, other public authorities, voluntary and community groups, our staff and their trades unions and such other groups who have a legitimate interest in the matter, whether or not they have a direct economic or personal interest.

Initially all consultees (see Appendix 2), 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.

Internal Model Scheme Draft

Thereafter, to ensure the most effective use of our and our consultees‘ resources, we will take a targeted approach to consultation for those consultees that may have a particular interest in the matter/policy being consulted upon and to whom the matter/policy is of particular relevance. This may include for example regional or local consultations, sectoral or thematic consultation etc.

3.2.2 Consultation with all stakeholders will begin as early as possible. We will engage with affected individuals and representative groups to identify how best to consult or engage with them. We will ask our consultees what their preferred consultation methods are and will give consideration to these.

Methods of consultation could include:

- Face-to-face meetings
- Focus groups
- Written documents with the opportunity to comment in writing
- Questionnaires
- Information/notification by email with an opportunity to opt in/opt out of the consultation
- Internet/Virtual meetings;or
- Telephone consultations.

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

3.2.3 We will consider the accessibility and format of every method of consultation we use in order to remove barriers to the consultation process. We will evaluate the range of tools and technological innovations which may be used to communicate

Internal Model Scheme Draft

with our stakeholders. 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).

To support inclusive participation, we will:

- Provide information, on request, in alternative formats[6] in a timely manner, usually within 2-6 weeks. We will ensure that such consultees have equal time to respond.
- Use plain language and minimal technical terminology to make consultation materials as accessible and understandable as possible.
- Consider the accessibility of consultation venues, including physical access requirements, transport links and any reasonable adjustments that may be required.
- Consider the need for interpretation, translation and culturally appropriate engagement methods when consulting with minority ethnic communities.
- Provide sufficient time for responses and, where appropriate, offer additional support to enable meaningful participation.
- Monitor participation levels and feedback from consultees to identify opportunities to improve the accessibility and inclusiveness of future consultations.

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

Internal Model Scheme Draft

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

3.2.5 To ensure effective consultation with consultees (Footnote 7) on Section 75 matters, we will develop a programme of awareness raising on the Section 75 statutory duties and the commitments in our equality scheme by undertaking the following:

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

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

[7] Please see Appendix 2 for a list of our consultees.

Internal Model Scheme Draft

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[8].

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

3.2.7 If a consultation exercise is to take place over a period when consultees are less able to respond, for example, over the summer or Christmas break, or if the policy under consideration is particularly complex, we will give consideration to the feasibility of allowing a longer period for the consultation.

3.2.8 We are conscious of the fact that affected individuals and representative groups may have different needs. We will take appropriate measures to ensure full participation in any meetings that are held. We will consider for example the time of day, the appropriateness of the venue, in particular whether it can be accessed by those with disabilities, how the meeting is to be conducted, the use of appropriate language, whether a signer and/or interpreter is necessary, and whether the provision of childcare and support for other carers is required.

3.2.9 We make all relevant information available to consultees in appropriate formats to ensure meaningful consultation. This includes detailed information on the policy proposal being

[8] Please see below at 4.27 to 4.31 for details on monitoring.

Internal Model Scheme Draft

consulted upon and any relevant quantitative and qualitative data.

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

3.2.11 We 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 our consideration of and response to consultees' input. The feedback is provided in formats suitable to consultees. (Please see also 6.3)

3.3 A list of our consultees is included in this equality scheme at Appendix 2. It can also be obtained from the An Coimisinéir.org website or by contacting our office.

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Equality House
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Belfast
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3.4 Our consultation list is not exhaustive and is reviewed on an annual basis to ensure it remains relevant to our functions and policies.

We welcome enquiries from any person/s or organisations wishing to be added to the list of consultees. Please contact our offices to provide your contact details and have your areas of interest noted or have your name/details removed or amended.

Internal Model Scheme Draft

Please also inform us at this stage if you would like information sent to you in a particular format or language.

Internal Model Scheme Draft

Chapter 4

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

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

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

4.1 In the context of Section 75, 'policy' is very broadly defined, and it covers all the ways in which we carry out or propose to carry out our functions in relation to Northern Ireland. In respect of this equality scheme, the term policy is used for any (proposed/amended/existing) strategy, policy initiative or practice and/or decision, whether written or unwritten and irrespective of the label given to it, eg, 'draft', 'pilot', 'high level' or '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 Irish Language Commissioner will use the tools of **screening** and **equality impact assessment** to assess the likely impact of a policy on the promotion of equality of opportunity and good relations. In carrying out these assessments we will relate them to the intended outcomes of the policy in question and will also follow Equality Commission guidance:

- the guidance on screening, including the screening template, as detailed in the Commission's guidance *'Section 75 of the*

Internal Model Scheme Draft

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:

Internal Model Scheme Draft

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

4.8 In order to answer the screening questions, we gather all relevant information and data, both qualitative and quantitative. 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 mitigation9 or an alternative policy proposed to be adopted

[9] 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.

Internal Model Scheme Draft

3. the policy has been ‘screened out’ without mitigation or an alternative policy proposed to be adopted.

4.10 If our screening concludes that the likely impact of a policy is ‘minor’ in respect of one, or more, of the equality of opportunity and/or good relations categories, we may on occasion decide to proceed with an equality impact assessment, depending on the policy. If an EQIA is not to be conducted we will nonetheless consider measures that might mitigate the policy impact as well as alternative policies that might better achieve the promotion of equality of opportunity and/or good relations.

Where we mitigate we will outline in our screening template the reasons to support this decision together with the proposed changes, amendments or alternative policy.

This screening decision will be ‘signed off’ by the appropriate policy lead within the Office of the Irish Language Commissioner.

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

4.12 If our screening concludes that the likely impact of a policy is ‘none’, in respect of all of the equality of opportunity and/or good relations categories, we may decide to screen the policy out. If a policy is ‘screened out’ as having no relevance to equality of opportunity or good relations, we will give details of the reasons

Internal Model Scheme Draft

for the decision taken. This screening decision will be 'signed off' by the appropriate policy lead within the Office of the Irish Language Commissioner.

4.13 As soon as possible following the completion of the screening process, the screening template, signed off and approved by the senior manager responsible for the policy, will be made available on the An Coimisinéir.org website or by contacting our office.

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

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

Equality impact assessment

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

Internal Model Scheme Draft

policy and to seek ways to more effectively promote equality of opportunity and good relations.

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

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

Our arrangements for publishing the results of the assessments of the likely impact of policies we have adopted or propose to adopt on the promotion of equality of opportunity (Schedule 9 4. (2) (d); Schedule 9 9. (1))

4.19 We 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

4.20 Screening reports

These are published quarterly. Screening reports detail:

- All policies screened by the Irish Language Commissioner over the three-month period;
- A statement of the aim(s) of the policy/policies to which the assessment relates

Internal Model Scheme Draft

- 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

Screening templates

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

Equality impact assessments

4.22 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

Internal Model Scheme Draft

- Details of the assessment of impact(s)
- Consideration given to measures which might mitigate any adverse impact
- Consideration given to alternative policies which might better achieve the promotion of equality of opportunity
- Consultation responses
- The decision taken
- Future monitoring plans.

How we publish the information

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

Where we publish the information

4.24 The results of our assessments (screening reports and completed templates, the results of equality impact assessments) are available on An Coimisinéir.org website or by contacting our office.

Office of the Irish Language Commissioner
Equality House
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Email: eolas@coimisineir.org

4.25 In addition to the above, screening reports (electronic link or hard copy on request if more suitable for recipients) which include all policies screened over a 3 month period are also sent directly to all consultees on a quarterly basis.

Internal Model Scheme Draft

4.26 We will inform the general public about the availability of this material through communications such as press releases where appropriate.

Our arrangements for monitoring any adverse impact of policies we have adopted on equality of opportunity (Schedule 9 4. (2) (c))

4.27 The Irish Language Commissioner is committed to monitoring the impact of its policies and functions on equality of opportunity and good relations. Monitoring will help identify any actual or potential adverse impacts across the nine Section 75 categories and support continuous improvement.

4.28 We will collect and analyse relevant quantitative and qualitative information from a range of sources, including consultations, stakeholder engagement, complaints, feedback, surveys, research, statistical data and policy reviews.

4.29 The Commissioner and senior management will oversee monitoring arrangements. Monitoring findings will inform policy development and review, screening, EQIAs and business planning. Where adverse impacts or opportunities to better promote equality of opportunity or good relations are identified, appropriate action will be taken.

4.30 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

Internal Model Scheme Draft

monitoring in a confidential and effective manner, the Irish Language Commissioner follows guidance from the Office of the Information Commissioner and the Equality Commission.

4.31 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.

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

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

4.33 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

Internal Model Scheme Draft

opportunity to be promoted, we will ensure that the policy is revised to achieve better outcomes for relevant equality groups.

4.34 We will review our EQIA monitoring information on an annual basis.

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

4.35 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:

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

4.37 The Section 75 annual progress report is made available on An Coimisinéir.org website.

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

Internal Model Scheme Draft

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 Irish Language Commissioner wishes to positively communicate the commitment to the Section 75 statutory duties, both internally and externally.

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

Training objectives

5.3 The Irish Language Commissioner will draw up up a detailed training plan for its staff which will aim to achieve the following objectives:

- to raise awareness of the provisions of Section 75 of the Northern Ireland Act 1998, our equality scheme commitments and the particular issues likely to affect people across the range of Section 75 categories, to ensure that our staff fully understand their role in implementing the scheme.
- to provide those staff involved in the assessment of policies (screening and EQIA) with the necessary skills and knowledge to do this work effectively

Internal Model Scheme Draft

- 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 Irish Language Commissioner equality scheme with the necessary skills and knowledge to do this work effectively.

Awareness raising and training arrangements

5.4 The following arrangements will be put in place to ensure all our staff are aware of and understand our equality obligations.

- We will develop a summary of this equality scheme and make it available to all staff.
- We will provide access to copies of the full equality scheme for all staff; ensure that any queries or questions of clarification from staff are addressed effectively.
- Staff in the Office of the Irish Language Commissioner will receive a briefing on this equality scheme within three months of the approval of the scheme.
- The Section 75 statutory duties form part of induction training for new staff.
- Focused training is provided for key staff within the Office of the Irish Language Commissioner who are directly engaged in taking forward the implementation of our equality scheme commitments (for example those involved in research and data

Internal Model Scheme Draft

collection, policy development, service design, conducting equality impact assessments, consultation, monitoring and evaluation).

- Where appropriate, training will be provided to ensure staff are aware of the issues experienced by the range of Section 75 groups.
- When appropriate and on an ongoing basis, arrangements will be made to ensure staff are kept up to date with Section 75 developments.

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

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

Monitoring and evaluation

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

- We evaluate the extent to which all participants in this training programme have acquired the necessary skills and knowledge to achieve each of the above objectives.
- The extent to which training objectives have been met will be reported on as part of the Section 75 annual progress report, which will be sent to the Equality Commission.

Internal Model Scheme Draft

Chapter 6

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

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

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

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

- People with sensory, learning, communication and mobility disabilities may require printed information in other formats.
- Members of ethnic minority groups, whose first language is not English, may have difficulties with information provided in English and/or Irish.
- Children and young people may not be able to fully access or understand information
- People whose physical location may restrict their access e.g. those in rural areas; and
- People without access to a computer will not be able to avail of internet-based dissemination.

Internal Model Scheme Draft

Access to information

6.3 To ensure equality of opportunity in accessing information, we provide information in alternative formats on request, where reasonably practicable.

Alternative formats may include Easy Read, Braille, instructions about use of screen readers, large print or versions in languages other than English or Irish.

The Office of the Irish Language Commissioner liaises with representatives of young people and disability and minority ethnic organisations and takes account of existing and developing good practice.

We will develop arrangements to communicate with children & young people, people with a learning disability and minority ethnic communities. Where the exact request cannot be met, we will ensure a reasonable alternative is provided.

We will respond to requests for information in alternative formats in a timely manner, usually within 10 working days .

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

Access to services

6.5 The Irish Language Commissioner is committed to ensuring that all of our services are fully accessible to everyone in the community across the Section 75 categories.

Internal Model Scheme Draft

The Irish Language Commissioner also adheres to the relevant provisions of current anti-discrimination legislation.

6.6 We intend that all our services are fully accessible to all parts of the community. Our arrangements for assessing the equality impacts of policies (including screening and equality impact assessments) will highlight any factors which create differential impact by making a service linked to a particular policy less accessible to particular groups. These arrangements will include:

- An access audit of premises to ascertain compliance with requirements for ease of physical access to buildings
- Inclusion of minority groups in outputs, for instance adequate representation in publications/social media posts/website etc
- staff training in EDI, including disability awareness training
- accessible web content, use of screen readers, etc.
- use of a text relay service such as Relay UK for people with hearing or speech difficulties to enable them to contact us by phone
- engagement with stakeholders to help them identify issues that might restrict access.

Internal Model Scheme Draft

Assessing public access to information and services

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

guidelines, access audits of premises and reviewing complaints related to equality issues.

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

Internal Model Scheme Draft

Chapter 7

Timetable for measures we propose in this equality scheme

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

7.1 Appendix 3 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 3. For information on these action measures please see above at 2.10 – 2.18.

Internal Model Scheme Draft

Chapter 8

Our complaints procedure

(Schedule 9 10.)

8.1 The Irish Language Commissioner are responsive to the views of members of the public. We will endeavour to resolve all complaints made to us.

8.2 Schedule 9 paragraph 10 of the Act refers to complaints. A person can make a complaint to a public authority if the complainant believes he or she may have been directly affected by an alleged failure of the authority to comply with its approved equality scheme.

If following the completion of the Irish Language Commissioner's complaints procedure, the complainant remains dissatisfied, or if the complaint has not been resolved within a reasonable timescale, the complaint can be brought to the Equality Commission in accordance with Schedule 9 of the Northern Ireland Act 1998.

8.3 A person wishing to make a complaint that the Irish Language Commissioner has failed to comply with our approved equality scheme should contact our office.

Office of the Irish Language Commissioner
Equality House
Shaftesbury Square
Belfast
BT2 7DP
Email: eolas@coimisineir.org

Internal Model Scheme Draft

Complaints may be submitted in writing by letter, email or through any other accessible format requested by the complainant.

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

8.5 The Irish Language Commissioner 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.

Where a complaint concerns the member of staff responsible for investigating complaints, alternative arrangements will be put in place to ensure the complaint is considered impartially.

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

Similarly, the Irish Language Commissioner will co-operate fully with any investigation by the Equality Commission under sub-

Internal Model Scheme Draft

paragraph 11 (1) (b) of Schedule 9 to the Northern Ireland Act 1998.

8.8 The Irish Language Commissioner will make all efforts to implement promptly and in full any recommendations arising out of any Commission investigation.

8.9 The Irish Language Commissioner will maintain records of Equality Scheme complaints and will periodically review complaints received to identify any recurring issues or trends.

8.10 We will use information arising from complaints to identify opportunities for organisational learning and service improvements to the implementation of our Equality Scheme where appropriate.

Internal Model Scheme Draft

Chapter 9

Publication of our equality scheme

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

9.1 The Irish Language Commissioner equality scheme is available free of charge in print form and alternative formats by contacting our offices.

Office of the Irish Language Commissioner
Equality House
Shaftesbury Square
Belfast
BT2 7DP
Email: eolas@coimisineir.org

9.2 Our equality scheme is also available on An Coimisinéir.org website.

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

- We will make every effort to communicate widely the existence and content of our equality scheme. This may include press releases, advertisements in 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

Internal Model Scheme Draft

request. We will respond to requests for the equality scheme in alternative formats in a timely manner, usually as soon as possible.

- Our equality scheme is available on request in alternative formats such as Easy Read, Braille, large print, screen readers and in minority languages to meet the needs of those not fluent in English or Irish.
- A summary of the scheme will be written and made available to employees in a range of formats on request.
- We will take steps to ensure that children and young people are aware of, and can access, information about our Equality Scheme. This may include the production of child-friendly summaries, the use of plain language, publication through digital and social media channels, and engagement with schools, youth organisations and youth representative bodies where appropriate.
- We will take steps to ensure that people with disabilities can access information about our Equality Scheme. This may include providing information in accessible formats such as Easy Read, large print, Braille, audio and accessible electronic formats; ensuring digital content complies with recognised accessibility standards; and working with organisations representing people with disabilities to promote awareness of the scheme.

9.4 For a list of our stakeholders and consultees please see Appendix 2 of the equality scheme, visit An Coimisinéir.org website or contact our office.

Internal Model Scheme Draft

Office of the Irish Language Commissioner
Equality House
Shaftesbury Square
Belfast
BT2 7DP
Email: eolas@coimisineir.org

Internal Model Scheme Draft

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.

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

10.2 In undertaking this review we will follow any guidance issued by the Equality Commission. A report of this review will be made available on An Coimisinéir.org website and a copy sent to the Equality Commission.

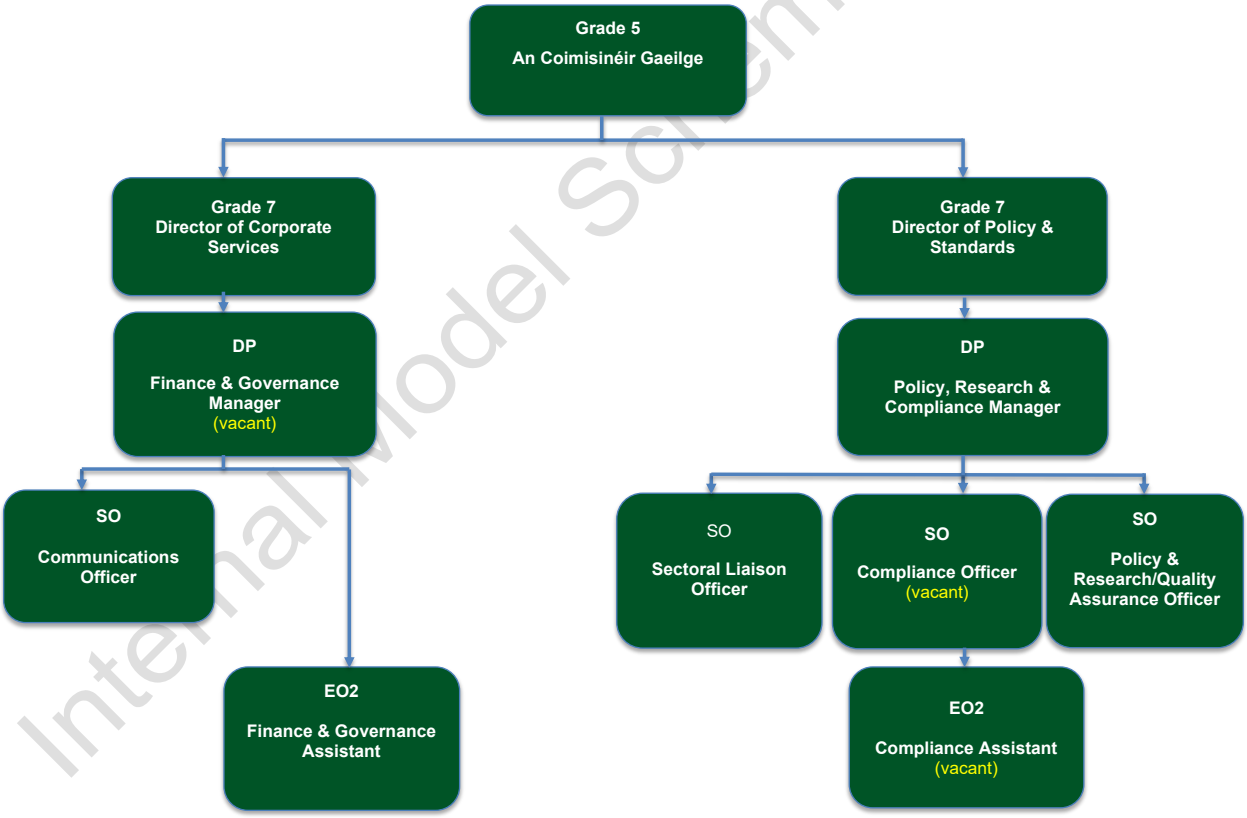
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Appendix 1

Organisational Chart

Membership, etc. of the Irish Language Commissioner is set out in schedule 9B of the Northern Ireland Act 1998 (as amended) https://www.legislation.gov.uk/ukpga/1998/47/schedule/9B

The office of the Irish Language Commissioner was established on 13 November 2025. The current organisational stucture (as at September 2026) is as follows:



Internal Model Scheme Draft

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

Note: This list is indicative and not exhaustive. The Irish Language Commissioner may engage with additional organisations, groups or individuals where appropriate. The list will be reviewed annually to ensure that it remains current and representative of those with an interest in the Commissioner's Section 75 duties.

Internal Model Scheme Draft

A
Action on Hearing Loss
Aeracha Uladh
AgeNI
Aisling Ghéar
Alliance Party NI
Altram
An Carn
An Ceathrú Póilí
An Droichead
An tÁisaonad
An Tor ar Lasadh
An tUltach
Antrim and Newtownabbey Borough Council
Antrim and Newtownabbey Policing and Community Safety Partnership
Ards and North Down Borough Council
Ards and North Down Policing and Community Safety Partnership
Armagh City, Banbridge and Craigavon Borough Council
Armagh City, Banbridge and Craigavon Policing and Community Safety Partnership
Arts and Business NI
Arts Council NI
Association of Governing Bodies of Controlled Grammar Schools
Autism NI

B
Barnardos
BBC Gaeilge
Belfast City Council
Belfast Harbour Commissioners

Belfast Health and Social Care Trust
Belfast Islamic Centre
Belfast Metropolitan College
Belfast Multicultural Association
Belfast Policing and Community Safety Partnership
Belfast Telegraph
Below the Radar Media
Business Services Organisation

C
Cara-Friend
Cairde Teo
Cairde Uí Néill
Care Association Alliance
Carers NI
Catholic Diocese of Down and Connor
Causeway Coast and Glens Borough Council
Causeway Coast and Glens Policing and Community Safety Partnership
Cedar Foundation
Children in Northern Ireland (CiNI)
Children's Law Centre
Chinese Welfare Association
Choice Housing
Church of Ireland Diocese of Armagh
Civil Service Commissioners for Northern Ireland
Clanmil Housing
Colearine Harbour Commissioners
Comhairle na Gaelscolaíochta
Commissioner for Older People NI
Commissioner for Survivors of Institutional Childhood Abuse
Commissioner for the Ulster Scots and the Ulster British tradition
Commission for Victims and Survivors for Northern Ireland
Community Places
Comptroller and Auditor General for Northern Ireland
Conradh na Gaeilge
Conradh na Gaeilge, Boirche Íochtair
Construction Industry Training Board Northern Ireland
Consumer Council for Northern Ireland
Craobh CnaG An Lorgáin
Craobh Cnag Mhic an Chrosáin
Craobh CnaG Port an Dúnáin
Craobh CnaG Sruth na hÉirne
Croí Éanna

Internal Model Scheme Draft

Cultúrlann Aonach Mhacha
Cultúrlann McAdam Ó Fiaich
Cultúrlann Uí Chanáin
Cumann Chluain Árd
Cumann Cultúrtha Mhic Reachtain
Cumann Gaelach Leath Chathail
Cumann Gaelach na hEaglaise
Cumann na bhFiann

D
Democratic Unionist Party
Department for Communities
Department for Infrastructure
Department for the Economy
Department of Agriculture, Environment and Rural Affairs
Department of An Taoiseach (Shared Island Initiative)
Department of Education
Department of Finance
Department of Foreign Affairs (Anglo-Irish Division)
Department of Health
Department of Justice
Derry City and Strabane District Council
Derry City and Strabane Policing and Community Safety Partnership
Development Trusts NI
Disability Action
Disability Sport NI

E
East Belfast Mission (Methodist)
Education Authority NI
Electoral Commission NI
Equality Coalition
Equality Commission for Northern Ireland
Evangelical Alliance

F
FDA (First Division Association)
Federation of Small Businesses
Fermanagh and Omagh District Council
Fermanagh and Omagh Policing and Community Safety Partnership
Food Safety Promotion Board
Fóram na nÓg
Foras na Gaeilge

Internal Model Scheme Draft

Forbairt Feirste
Foyle Women's Information Network

G
Gael Linn
Gaeláras Mhic Ardghail (Newry)
Gaelphobal Ard Mhacha Theas
Gaelphobal Cheantar an tSrátha Báin
Glór Dhún Geimhin
Glór Léim an Mhadaidh
Glór na Móna/Fís an Phobail
Glór na nGael
Glór na Speiríní
Glór Uachtar Tíre
Governing Bodies Association Northern Ireland
Grand Orange Lodge of Ireland
Guide Dogs for the Blind Association

H
HERe NI
Heritage Lottery Fund
Historical Institutional Abuse Redress Board
Housing Association Forum (NI)

I
Independent Remuneration Board
Indian Community Centre
Information Commissioners Office Northern Ireland
Inspire Wellbeing
Institute of Ulster-Scots Studies
InterTrade Ireland
Invest NI
Ionad na Fuiseoige
Ionad Teaghlaigh Baile an Chaistil
Ionad Teaghlaigh Ghleann Darach
Ionad Uíbh Eachach
Iontaobhas na Gaelscolaíochta
Irish Congress of Trade Unions

L
Labour Relations Agency
Laochra Loch Lao
Larne Harbour Ltd

Internal Model Scheme Draft

Libraries NI
Linen Hall Library
Lisburn and Castlereagh City Council
Lisburn and Castlereagh Policing and Community Safety Partnership
Livestock and Meat Commission for Northern Ireland
Local Government Staff Commission for Northern Ireland
Londonderry Port and Harbour Commissioners
Loughs Agency

M
Mencap Northern Ireland
Methodist Church in Ireland
Mid and East Antrim Borough Council
Mid and East Antrim Policing and Community Safety Partnership
Mid Ulster District Council
Mid Ulster Policing and Community Safety Partnership
Migrant Centre NI
Multi-Ethnic Sports and Cultures NI
Museums Association

N
National Museums NI
Newry, Mourne and Down District Council
Newry, Mourne and Down Policing and Community Safety Partnership
NI Commissioner for Children & Young People
NI Community Relations Council
North West Community Network
North West Regional College
Northern Health and Social Care Trust
Northern Ireland Anti-Poverty Network
Northern Ireland Audit Office
Northern Ireland Authority for Utility Regulation
Northern Ireland Council for Integrated Education
Northern Ireland Council for Voluntary Action (NICVA)
Northern Ireland Fire and Rescue Service
Northern Ireland Fishery Harbout Authority
Northern Ireland Guardian Ad Litem Agency
Northern Ireland Human Rights Commission
Northern Ireland Law Commission
Northern Ireland Local Government Association
Northern Ireland Medical and Dental Training Agency
Northern Ireland Museums Council
Northern Ireland Police Fund

Interim Model Scheme Draft

Northern Ireland Policing Board
Northern Ireland Public Services Alliance
Northern Ireland Rural Women's Network
Northern Ireland Screen
Northern Ireland Women's European Platform
Northern Regional College
Northern Visions

O
Office of the Certification Officer for Northern Ireland
Oireachtas na Gaeilge

P
Parenting Focus
People Before Profit
Presbyterian Church in Ireland
PSNI Lisnasharragh Equality and Diversity Unit
Pobal Mhuileann an tSiáin
Police Rehabilitation and Retraining Trust
Praxis Care
Public Health Agency

Q
Queen's University Belfast

R
Radius Housing
Raidió Fáilte
Rainbow Project
Regulation and Quality Improvement Authority
Regulator of Community Interest Companies
Royal National Institute for Deaf People NI
Royal National Institute of Blind People
Royal Ulster Constabulary George Cross Foundation

S
Safeguarding Board for Northern Ireland
Save the Children
SDLP
Sense NI
Sinn Féin
South Eastern Health and Social Care Trust
South Eastern Regional College

Final Model Scheme Draft

South Tyrone Empowerment Programme
South West College
Southern Health and Social Care Trust
Southern Regional College
Special EU Programmes Body
Special Olympics Ulster
Sport NI
St Mary's University College
Statutory Advisory Councils
Stranmillis College
Strategic Investment Board Limited

T
Tha Boord o Ulstér-Scotch/Ulster Scots Agency
The Agri-Food and Biosciences Institute
The Baha'i Council for Northern Ireland
The Board of Trustees of the National Museums and Galleries of Northern Ireland
The Charity Commission for Northern Ireland
The Committee on the Administration of Justice
The Council for Catholic Maintained Schools
The Education Authority
The Executive Office
The General Teaching Council for Northern Ireland
The Green Party in Northern Ireland
The Health and Safety Executive for Northern Ireland
The Health and Social Care Regulation and Quality Improvement Authority
The National Deaf Children's Society
The Northern Ireland Assembly
The Northern Ireland Commissioner for Children and Young People
The Northern Ireland Council for the Curriculum, Examinations and Assessment
The Northern Ireland Housing Executive
The Northern Ireland Library Authority
The Northern Ireland Local Government Officers' Superannuation Committee
The Northern Ireland Practice and Education Council for Nursing and Midwifery
The Northern Ireland Social Care Council
The Office of Identity and Cultural Expression
The Patient and Client Council
The Probation Board for Northern Ireland
The Regional Agency for Public Health and Social Well-being
The Regional Business Services Organisation
The Representative Church Body (CoI)
Tourism NI
Traditional Unionist Voice

Model Scheme Draft

Training for Women Network Ltd
Transgender NI
Turas

U
Ulster Scots Community Network
Ulster Sheltered Employment Limited
Ulster Unionist Party
Ulster University

V
Volunteer Now

W
Warrenpoint Harbour Authority
Waterways Ireland
Western Health and Social Care Trust
Wheelworks
Women's Resource and Development Agency

Y
Youth Council for Northern Ireland

Internal Model Scheme Draft

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

Theme	***Action Measures***	***Lead Responsibility***	***Equality Scheme Ref (para)***	***Timetable***
Development of the Equality Scheme	*Develop Equality Scheme*	***Irish Language Commissioner***	***1.2***	***2026/27 Q3***
	Consult on Equality Scheme		***3.1***	***2026/27 Q3/Q4***
	Finalise Equality Scheme and submit to Equality Commission for approval		***2.14***	***2026/27 Q4***
Publication of the Equality Scheme	*Publish on website*	***Director of Corporate Services***	***9.2***	***2026/27 Q4***
	Inform public of availability of Equality Scheme		***9.3***	
	Inform consultees of availability of scheme		***9.3***	
	Prepare summary version of Equality Scheme and make it available to staff		***9.3 & 5.4***	
	Provide access to full equality scheme for staff		***5.4***	
	Conduct a briefing for staff on the equality scheme		***5.4***	
Review of the Equality Scheme	*Conduct review of the Equality Scheme and prepare review report*	***Director of Corporate Services***	***10.1***	***Within 5 years***
	Submit review report to the Equality Commission		***10.2***	***Within 5 years***
	Publish review report on website		***10.2***	***Within 5 years***
Internal Arrangements	*Implementation of action plan measures incorporated into strategic and operational business planning processes*	***Irish Language Commissioner (strategic oversight) / Director of Corporate Services (implementation)***	***2.5***	***In line with planning processes***
	Update job descriptions and performance plans where relevant	***Director of Corporate Services***	***2.6***	***When required***

Internal Model Scheme Draft

Annual Review of Progress	*Conduct review of progress and prepare annual report*	***Director of Corporate Services***	***2.7***	***Annually by 31 August***
	Submit annual report to Equality Commission		***2.7***	
	Publish annual report on website		***2.8***	***Annually***
	Include reference to annual equality report in the organisational annual report of the Irish Language Commissioner		***2.7***	***Annually***
Consultee Management	*Review and update list of consultees*	***Director of Corporate Services***	***3.4***	***Annually***
Policy Screening	*Policies subject to screening prior to implementation*	***Director of Corporate Services***	***4.5***	***Ongoing/Prior to implementation***
	Publish screening reports and completed screeing templates on website		***4.24***	***Ongoing/Following completion of screening***
	screening reports including policies screened over a 3 month period are sent directly to all consultees on a quarterly basis.		***4.25***	***Quarterly***
	Inform general public of availability of materials as appropriate e.g. press releases		***4.26***	***Ongoing***
	Conduct EQIAs of existing and new policies as required		***4.17***	***As required***
	Publish EQIA reports on websites		***4.24***	***Following completion of EQIA***
	Monitor EQIAs		***4.31***	***Ongoing***
Monitoring	*Establish monitoring systems*	***Director of Corporate Services***	***4.32***	***Ongoing***
	Review monitoring information and prepare report		***4.34***	***Annually***
	Publish report on website		***4.37***	***Annually***
	Include results in an annual progress report		***4.36***	***Annually***
Staff Training	*Devise a detailed staff training plan*	***Director of Corporate Services***	***5.3***	***Upon approval of Equality Scheme***

Internal Model Scheme Draft

	Implement staff training programme		***5.4***	***Ongoing***
	Monitor and evaluate training programme		***5.6***	***Annually***
	Update induction materials		***5.4***	***As required***
	Provide staff refresher training		***5.4***	***every 3 years***
Access to Information and services	*Make arrangements for providing information in alternative formats*	***Director of Corporate Services***	***6.3***	***Ongoing***
	Review arrangements for ensuring access to information and services		***6.7***	***Annually***

Internal Model Scheme Draft

Appendix 4 Glossary of terms

Action plan	A plan which sets out actions a public authority will take to implement its Section 75 statutory duties. It is a mechanism for the realisation of measures to achieve equality outcomes for the Section 75 equality and good relations categories.
Action measures and outcomes	Specific measures to promote equality and good relations for the relevant Section 75 and good relations categories, linked to achievable outcomes, which should be realistic and timely.
Adverse impact	Where a Section 75 category has been affected differently by a policy and the effect is less favourable, it is known as adverse impact. If a policy has an adverse impact on a Section 75 category, a public authority must consider whether or not the adverse impact is unlawfully discriminatory. In either case a public authority must take measures to redress the adverse impact, by considering mitigating measures and/or alternative ways of delivering the policy.
Affirmative action	In general terms, affirmative action can be defined as being anything consistent with the legislation which is necessary to bring about positive change. It is a phrase used in the Fair Employment and Treatment Order (NI) 1998 to describe lawful action that is aimed at promoting equality of opportunity and fair participation in employment between members of the Protestant and Roman Catholic communities in Northern Ireland.
Article 55 Review	Under the Fair Employment and Treatment (NI) Order 1998, all registered employers

Internal Model Scheme Draft

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

Audit of inequalities

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

Consultation

In the context of Section 75, consultation is the process of asking those affected by a policy (ie, service users, 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.

Council of Europe

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

Internal Model Scheme Draft

Desk audit	An audit of a draft equality scheme to ensure that the scheme conforms with the requirements on form and content as detailed in the Commission's Guidelines (the Guide).
Differential impact	Differential impact occurs where a Section 75 group has been affected differently by a policy. This effect could either be positive, neutral or negative. A public authority must make a judgement as to whether a policy has a differential impact and then it must determine whether the impact is adverse, based on a systematic appraisal of the accumulated information.
Discrimination	The anti-discrimination laws prohibit the following forms of discrimination: • Direct discrimination • Indirect Discrimination • Disability Discrimination • Victimisation • Harassment
Direct discrimination	This generally occurs where a public authority treats a person less favourably than it treats (or, would treat) another person, in the same or similar circumstances, on one or more of the statutory non-discrimination grounds. A decision or action that is directly discriminatory will normally be unlawful unless: (a) in an age discrimination case, the decision can be objectively justified, or (b) in any other case, the public authority can rely on a statutory exception that permits it – such as a genuine occupational requirement exception; or, a positive action exception which permits an employer to use "welcoming statements" or to take other lawful positive action to encourage participation by under-represented or otherwise disadvantaged groups.

Internal Model Scheme Draft

Indirect discrimination	The definition of this term varies across some of the anti-discrimination laws, but indirect discrimination generally occurs where a public authority applies to all persons a particular provision, criterion or practice, but which is one that has the effect of placing people who share a particular equality characteristic (e.g. the same sex, or religious belief, or race) at a particular disadvantage compared to other people. A provision, criterion or practice that is indirectly discriminatory will normally be unlawful unless (a) it can be objectively justified, or (b) the public authority can rely on a statutory exception that permits it.
Disability discrimination	In addition to direct discrimination and victimisation and harassment, discrimination against disabled people may also occur in two other ways: namely, (a) disability-related discrimination, and (b) failure to comply with a duty to make reasonable adjustments. (a) Disability-related discrimination generally occurs where a public authority, without lawful justification, and for a reason which relates to a disabled person's disability, treats that person less favourably that it treats (or, would treat) other people to whom that reason does not (or, would not) apply. (b) Failure to comply with a duty to make reasonable adjustments: One of the most notable features of the disability discrimination legislation is that in prescribed circumstances it imposes a duty

Internal Model Scheme, Draft

	on employers, service providers and public authorities to take such steps as are reasonable to remove or reduce particular disadvantages experienced by disabled people in those circumstances.
Victimisation	This form of discrimination generally occurs where a public authority treats a person less favourably than it treats (or, would treat) another person, in the same or similar circumstances, because the person has previously exercised his/her rights under the anti-discrimination laws, or has assisted another person to do so. Victimisation cannot be justified and is always unlawful.
Harassment	Harassment generally occurs where a person is subjected to unwanted conduct that is related to a non-discrimination ground with the purpose, or which has the effect, of violating their dignity or of creating for them an intimidating, hostile, degrading, humiliating or offensive environment. Harassment cannot be justified and is always unlawful.
Economic appraisal	An economic appraisal is a systematic process for examining alternative uses of resources, focusing on assessment of needs, objectives, options, costs benefits, risks, funding and affordability and other factors relevant to decisions.
Equality impact assessment	The mechanism underpinning Section 75, where existing and proposed policies are assessed in order to determine whether they have an adverse impact on equality of opportunity for the relevant Section 75 categories. Equality impact assessments require the analysis of both quantitative and qualitative data.

Internal Model Scheme Draft

Equality of opportunity	The prevention, elimination or regulation of discrimination between people on grounds of characteristics including sex, marital status, age, disability, religious belief, political opinion, dependants, race and sexual orientation. The promotion of equality of opportunity entails more than the elimination of discrimination. It requires proactive measures to be taken to secure equality of opportunity between the categories identified under Section 75.
Equality scheme	A document which outlines a public authority's arrangements for complying with its Section 75 obligations. An equality scheme must include an outline of the public authority's arrangements for carrying out consultations, screening, equality impact assessments, monitoring, training and arrangements for ensuring access to information and services.
Good relations	Although not defined in the legislation, the Commission has agreed the following working definition of good relations: 'the growth of relations andstructures for Northern Ireland that acknowledge the religious, political and racial context of this society, and that seek to promote respect, equity and trust, and embrace diversity in all its forms'.
Mainstreaming equality	The integration of equal opportunities principles, strategies and practices into the every day work of public authorities from the outset. In other words, mainstreaming is the process of ensuring that equality considerations are built into the policy development process from the beginning, rather than being bolted on at the end. Mainstreaming can help improve methods of working by increasing a public authority's

Internal Model Scheme Draft

	accountability, responsiveness to need and relations with the public. It can bring added value at many levels.
Mitigation of adverse impact	Where an equality impact assessment reveals that a particular policy has an adverse impact on equality of opportunity, a public authority must consider ways of delivering the policy outcomes which have a less adverse effect on the relevant Section 75 categories; this is known as mitigating adverse impact.
Monitoring	Monitoring consists of continuously scrutinising and evaluating a policy to assess its impact on the Section 75 categories. Monitoring must be sensitive to the issues associated with human rights and privacy. Public authorities should seek advice from consultees and Section 75 representative groups when setting up monitoring systems. Monitoring consists of the collection of relevant information and evaluation of policies. It is not solely about the collection of data, it can also take the form of regular meetings and reporting of research undertaken. Monitoring is not an end in itself but provides the data for the next cycle of policy screening.
Northern Ireland Act	The Northern Ireland Act, implementing the Good Friday Agreement, received Royal Assent on 19 November 1998. Section 75 of the Act created the statutory equality duties.
Northern Ireland Human Rights Commission	A statutory body established under Section 68 of the Northern Ireland Act 1998, which works to ensure that the human rights of everyone in Northern Ireland are fully protected in law, policy and practice.
Northern Ireland Statistics &	The Northern Ireland Statistics and Research Agency (NISRA) is an Executive Agency within the Department of Finance and

Internal Model Scheme - Draft

Research Agency (NISRA)	Personnel (DFP). They provide statistical and research information regarding Northern Ireland issues and provide registration services to the public in the most effective and efficient way.
OFMdFM	The Office of the First Minister and Deputy First Minister was responsible for providing advice, guidance, challenge and support to other NI Civil Service Departments on Section 75 issues. OFMdFM was replaced by the Executive Office which is now responsible for the roles.
PAFT	The Policy Appraisal and Fair Treatment (PAFT) Guidelines constituted the first non-statutory attempt at mainstreaming equality in Northern Ireland in January 1994. The aim of the PAFT Guidelines was to ensure that issues of equality and equity informed policy making and activity in all spheres and at all levels of government. PAFT has now been superseded by Section 75 of the Northern Ireland Act 1998.
Policy	The formal and informal decisions a public authority makes in relation to carrying out its duties. Defined in the New Oxford English Dictionary as 'a course or principle of action adopted or proposed by a government party, business or individual'. In the context of Section 75, the term policies covers all the ways in which a public authority carries out or proposes to carry out its functions relating to Northern Ireland. Policies include unwritten as well as written policies.
Positive action	This phrase is not defined in any statute, but the Equality Commission understands it to mean any lawful action that a public authority might take for the purpose of promoting equality of opportunity for all persons in relation to employment or in accessing goods,

Internal Model Scheme Draft

	facilities or services (such as health services, housing, education, justice, policing). It may involve adopting new policies, practices, or procedures; or changing or abandoning old ones. Positive action is not the same as positive discrimination. Positive discrimination differs from positive action in that positive action involves the taking of lawful actions whereas positive discrimination involves the taking of unlawful actions. Consequently, positive action is by definition lawful whereas positive discrimination is unlawful.
Qualitative data	Qualitative data refers to the experiences of individuals from their perspective, most often with less emphasis on numbers or statistical analysis. Consultations are more likely to yield qualitative than quantitative data.
Quantitative data	Quantitative data refers to numbers, typically derived from either a population in general or samples of that population. This information is often analysed by either using descriptive statistics, which consider general profiles, distributions and trends in the data, or inferential statistics, which are used to determine 'significance' either in relationships or differences in the data.
SACHR	The Standing Advisory Commission on Human Rights (SACHR) has now been replaced by the Northern Ireland Human Rights Commission. SACHR, as part of its review of mechanisms in place to promote employment equality and reduce the unemployment differential, recommended that the PAFT Guidelines should be made a statutory requirement.
Screening	The procedure for identifying which policies will be subject to equality impact assessment,

Internal Model Scheme Draft

and how these equality impact assessments will be prioritised. The purpose of screening is to identify the policies which are likely to have a minor/major impact on equality of opportunity so that greatest resources can be devoted to improving these policies. Screening requires a systematic review of existing and proposed policies.

Schedule 9

Schedule 9 of the Northern Ireland Act 1998 sets out detailed provisions for the enforcement of the Section 75 statutory duties, including an outline of what should be included in an equality scheme.

Section 75

Section 75 of the Northern Ireland Act provides that each public authority is required, in carrying out its functions relating to Northern Ireland, to have due regard to the need to promote equality of opportunity between:

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

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

Section 75 investigation

An investigation carried out by the Equality Commission, under Schedule 9 of the NI Act 1998, arising from the failure of a public authority to comply with the commitments set out in its approved equality scheme.

Internal Model Scheme Draft

There are two types of Commission investigation, these are as follows:

1. An investigation of a complaint by an individual who claims to have been directly affected by the failure of a public authority to comply with its approved equality scheme;
2. An investigation initiated by the Commission, where it believes that a public authority may have failed to comply with its approved equality scheme.

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Appendix 5 Action Plan

This Action Plan has been developed to support the implementation of the Equality Scheme and fulfilment of the Section 75 duties across all functions of the Office of the Irish Language Commissioner, including the development of Irish Language Best Practice Standards, consultation, service delivery, complaints handling, communications, employment and procurement.

The Action Plan is designed to align with the Office's strategic and business planning processes and will be reviewed annually.

PRIORITY AREA	ACTION MEASURE	SECTION 75 GROUPS BENEFITING	SUCCESS MEASURE	TIMESCALE
Governance and Leadership	Complete an audit of inequalities to identify barriers and opportunities relevant to the Commissioner's functions and use findings to inform policy and business planning.	All Section 75 Categories	Audit completed and action measures developed.	Within 12 months of Equality Scheme approval
	Embed Section 75 responsibilities within governance	All Section 75 Categories	Equality considerations evidenced in business	Ongoing

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	arrangements, business planning, performance reporting and policy development processes.		plans, policies and annual reports.	
	Include Section 75 implementation and Action Plan monitoring within annual reporting arrangements to the Commissioner and ARAC.	All Section 75 Categories	Annual progress reports completed	Annually
Best Practice Standards	Screen all policies relating to the development of Irish Language Best Practice Standards ad undertake EQIA's where required.	All Section 75 Categories	100% of relevant policies screened.	Ongoing
	Ensure consultation on Best Practice Standards is accessible, evidence-	All Section 75 Categories	Diverse stakeholder participation demonstrated through consultation analysis.	During development of Best

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	based and reflects the views of people across the Section 75 categories			Practice Standards
Consultation and Engagement	Maintain and annually review a consultation database reflecting organisations representing all Section 75 groups.	All Section 75 Categories	Consultation list reviewed annually.	Annually
	Deliver targeted engagement with organisations representing people with disabilities, older people, young people, minority ethnic communities and other Section 75 groups.	Disability, age, racial group, dependants, All Categories	Increased stakeholder engagement and participation.	Ongoing
	Establish ongoing engagement arrangements with public authorities, community groups	Religious Belieft, Political Opinion, Racial Group, All Categories	Stakeholder engagement programme delivered.	Ongoing

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	and language stakeholders.			
Accessibility and Inclusion	Develop and implement accessibility arrangements for consultations, complaints, publications and events.	Disability, Age, Racial Group, Dependants	Accessible formats routinely available on request.	Year 1
	Ensure website, social media and digital communications comply with recognised accessibility standards.	Disability, Age	Annual accessibility review completed.	Ongoing
	Provide alternative formats including Easy read, large print, Braille, audio and translation where appropriate.	Disability, Racial Group, Age	Requests fulfilled within agreed timescales.	Ongoing

Internal Model Scheme Draft

Public Confidence and Awareness	Deliver a communications and engagement programme that raises awareness of the Commissioner's functions and services.	All Section 75 Categories	Increased awareness demonstrated through engagement statistics and feedback.	Ongoing
	Promote understanding of the Irish language and the Commissioner's role through inclusive communications and stakeholder engagement.	Religious Belieft, Political Opinion, Racial Group	Positive stakeholder feedback and broad engagement.	Ongoing
Advice, Enquiries and Complaints	Ensure advice, enquiries and complaints services are accessible and responsive.	All Section 75 Categories	Service standards achieved and monitored.	Ongoing
	Monitor complaints and enquiries to identify equality issues, barriers to	All Section 75 Categories	Analysis included within annual review.	Annually

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	access and opportunities for service improvement.			
Employment and Organisational Development	Monitor workforce development and training opportunities to promote an inclusive workplace culture.	All Section 75 Categories	Evidence of fair access to development opportunities.	Annually
Training and Capacity Building	Deliver Section 75, Equality Scheme and accessibility training to all staff and Audit and Risk Assurance Committee members.	All Section 75 Categories	100% completion rate	Annually
	Provide specialist training for staff responsible for screening, EQIAs, consultation and complaints handling.	All Section 75 Categories	Relevant staff completed training.	Ongoing as required.
Monitoring and Continuous Improvement	Establish monitoring arrangements covering consultations,	All Section 75 Categories	Monitoring framework implemented.	Year 1

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	engagement activity, service usage and complaints information.			
	Use monitoring information and stakeholder feedback to revise policies, improve services and update action measures where required.	All Section 75 Categories	Annual review completed and improvement actions identified.	Annually

Performance Measures

1. Audit of Inequalities completed within one year of Equality Scheme approval.
2. 100% of new and revised policies screened.
3. 100% of staff and ARAC members receive Section 75 training.
4. All consultations conducted in accessible formats.
5. Annual Section 75 Progress Report submitted to the Equality Commission.
6. Annual review of consultation, complaints and engagement data completed.
7. Accessibility review of website and communications undertaken annually.
8. Evidence of engagement with organisations representing all relevant Section 75 groups.
9. Equality considerations integrated into the development, consultation and implementation of Irish Language Best Practice Standards.
10. Evidence of actions promoting good relations through stakeholder engagement and communication activities.

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