

EQUALITY COMMISSION FOR NORTHERN IRELAND

Public Authority 2009 – 2010 Annual Progress Report on Section 75 of the NI Act 1998 and Section 49A of the Disability Discrimination Order (DDO) 2006

This report template includes a number of self assessment questions regarding implementation of the Section 75 statutory duties from

1 April 2009 to 31 March 2010. This template also includes a number of questions regarding implementation of Section 49A of the DDO from the **1 April 2009 to 31 March 2010.** Please enter information at the relevant part of each section and ensure that it is submitted electronically (by completing this template) and in hardcopy, with a signed cover letter from the Chief Executive or, in his/her absence, the Deputy Chief Executive to the Commission by **31 August 2010.**

In completing this template it is essential to focus on the application of Section 75 and Section 49. This involves progressing the commitments in your equality scheme or disability action plan which should lead to outcomes and impacts in terms of measurable improvement for individuals from the equality categories. Such outcomes and impacts may include changes in public policy, in service provision and/or in any of the areas within your functional remit.

Name of public authority (Enter details below)

STRABANE DISTRICT COUNCIL

Equality Officer (Enter name and contact details below)

S75: Ms Paula Donnelly
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S75 Executive Summary

- What were the key policy/service developments made by the authority during this reporting period to better promote equality of opportunity and good relations and what outcomes were achieved?
- The Council participated in the Disability in Local Councils initiative and appointed an officer and elected member Disability Champion to lead the initiative at Council level.
- The Council successfully bid to become a partner organisation in a £0.5m project to support people with disabilities (Co-operation And Working Together (CAWT) Community Awareness Programme).
- External funding was received from Sports Northern Ireland for an Active Communities programme. The aim of this programme is to increase participation in sport and physical recreation among under-represented groups including women and those with a disability.
- The Council agreed to take affirmative action including the use of a welcoming statement to help address the under-representation of Protestant applicant flows.
- The Council partnered Ilex, Derry's Urban Regeneration company to bring a "Future Search" conference to the district. The aim of this conference was to begin a regeneration planning process and positive action was taken to ensure adequate representation from the Section 75 categories.
- The Council's Alley Theatre received the William Keown Trust's coveted Prestige Access Award, highlighting the venues' excellent design, access and service to people with disabilities.
- A three year evaluation of the Council's Good Relations strategy commenced and the Good Relations plan was updated to reflect this.
- What are the main initiatives planned in the coming year to ensure the authority improves outcomes in terms of equality of opportunity and good relations for individuals from the nine categories covered by Section 75?

- A new equality scheme will be developed which will include an audit of inequalities and an action plan.
- A revised Disability Action Plan will be developed.
- A Local Disability forum will be set up.
- The Council in partnership with Donegal County Council will assist with the delivery of the Co-operation and Working Together (CAWT) Community Awareness Programme.
- An equal pay audit is to be carried out.
- Ongoing implementation of Good Relations action plan.
- Please give examples of changes to policies or practices which have resulted in outcomes. If the change was a result of an EQIA please tick the appropriate box in column 3 and reference the title of the relevant EQIA in the space provided below:

| | Outline change in policy or practice which have resulted in outcomes | Tick if result of EQIA |
|---|---|------------------------|
| Persons of different religious belief | <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Affirmative action in place to increase the representation of Protestants. | |
| Persons of different political opinion | <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • | |
| Persons of different racial groups | <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • | |
| Persons of different age | <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • | |
| Persons with different marital status | <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • | |
| Persons of different sexual orientation | <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • | |
| Men and women generally | <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Active Communities Programme in place to increase participation in sport and physical recreation among women. | |

| | | |
|---------------------------------------|---|--|
| Persons with and without a disability | <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • The Council's Alley Theatre designed to ensure that a high standard of access and services are available to those with a disability. • Significant sporting opportunities and coaching offered as part of our leisure and sports programmes. | |
| Persons with and without dependants | <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Active Communities Programme in place to increase participation in sport and physical recreation among women. | |

- Title/s of EQIAs referenced:

Section 1: Strategic Implementation of the Section 75 Duties

- Please outline evidence of progress made in developing and meeting equality and good relations objectives, performance indicators and targets in corporate and annual operating plans during 2008-09

The Council continues to mainstream Equality and Good Relations targets within the Council's business plans and performance management tools.

Within its current Corporate Strategy the Council includes a customer focused value which states.

"We aim to be a supportive, listening and responsive Council, valuing the well-being of our citizens and promoting equality of opportunity and good relations at all times".

Specific corporate objectives to promote equality of opportunity and good relations are cascaded down from the corporate plan to departmental business plans and to individual employees through the Personal Development planning process.

The business plans are developed in the format of a balanced scorecard with specific objectives and performance indicators.

Corporate Objectives for 2009/2010 included:

- To promote equality and good relations.
- To enhance the positive image of Strabane District Council.

Measures included:

- Implementation of Good Relations action plan.
- Ratio of policies developed:screened.
- % of people who feel Strabane District Council treats everyone fairly and without discrimination.

The following was achieved:

- 100% of Good Relations action plan.
- Annual screening of 100% of policies.
- 57% of those surveyed feel Strabane District Council treats everyone fairly and without discrimination.

Section 2: Screening

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

| Title of policy subject to screening | Was the <u>F</u>ull Screening Report or the <u>R</u>esult of initial screening issued for consultation? <i>Please enter <u>F</u> or <u>R</u></i> | Was initial screening decision changed following consultation? <u>Y</u>es/<u>N</u>o | Is policy being subject to EQIA? <u>Y</u>es/<u>N</u>o? If yes indicate year for assessment. |
|--|---|--|--|
| Playing Pitch Strategy | R | NO | NO |
| Credit Card Policy | R | NO | NO |
| Policy for Council receptions | R | NO | NO |
| Building Control Customer Care Policy | R | NO | NO |
| Building Control Lone Worker Policy | R | NO | NO |
| Conditions of Hire for Recreation Facilities | R | NO | NO |
| Pitch Booking Conditions | R | NO | NO |
| DCAL Strategy, Organisation Structures, Alley Facilities | R | NO | NO |
| Alley/TIC Core duties manual | R | NO | NO |
| Alley/TIC Human Resources Guidance Manual | R | NO | NO |
| Alley/TIC Standards/Customer Care/Customer Feedback | R | NO | NO |
| Alley/TIC Financial Procedures | R | NO | NO |
| Alley/TIC General Financial Procedures | R | NO | NO |
| Alley/TIC Financial and Ticketing Procedures | R | NO | NO |
| Alley/TIC Library Room Hire Procedures | R | NO | NO |
| Alley/TIC IT policies and support | R | NO | NO |

Section 3: Equality Impact Assessment (EQIA)

- Please provide an update of policies subject to EQIA during 2009-10, stage 7 EQIA monitoring activities and an indicative EQIA timetable for 2009-10

EQIA Timetable – April 2009 - March 2010

| Title of Policy EQIA | EQIA Stage at end March 09 (Steps 1-6) | Outline adjustments to policy intended to benefit individuals, and the relevant Section 75 categories due to be affected. |
|----------------------|--|---|
| None | | |
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- Where the EQIA timetable for 2009-10 (as detailed in the previous annual S75 progress report to the Commission) has not been met, please provide details of the factors responsible for delay and details of the timetable for re-scheduling the EQIA/s in question.

Ongoing EQIA Monitoring Activities April 2009- March 2010

| Title of EQIA subject to Stage 7 monitoring | Indicate if differential impacts previously identified have reduced or increased | Indicate if adverse impacts previously identified have reduced or increased |
|---|--|---|
| None | | |
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- Please outline any proposals, arising from the authority’s monitoring for adverse impacts, for revision of the policy to achieve better outcomes the relevant equality groups:

2010-11 EQIA Time-table

| Title of EQIAs due to be commenced during April 2010 – March 2011 | Existing or New policy? | Please indicate expected timescale of Decision Making stage i.e. Stage 6 |
|---|-------------------------|--|
| None | | |
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Section 4: Training

- Please outline training provision during the year associated with the Section 75 Duties/Equality Scheme requirements including types of training provision and conclusions from any training evaluations.
- The Council continues to provide equality awareness training as part of its induction for new employees.

Specific training during the 2009-10 period included:

- Good Relations training for elected members and staff. This included good practice in implementing Good Relations in the workplace.
- Traveller awareness training was provided to front line Council staff.
- Section 75 Awareness training was provided to elected members by Mr John Kremer, Queen's University, Belfast.
- A Council Officer and Elected Member were trained as Disability Champions as part of the Disability in Local Councils Initiative.

In addition, a number of Council employees attended external conferences and seminars on Equality and Good Relations issues.

Feedback and evaluation from any training carried out was positive and further training has been planned for the 2010/2011 year.

Section 5: Communication

- Please outline how the authority communicated progress on delivery of the Section 75 Duties during the year and evidence of the impact/success of such activities.
- Equality and Good Relations continues to be on the agenda of Senior Management team meetings.
- The Good Relations and Equality Committee continue to meet on a monthly basis.
- A Flags & Emblems Forum has been established and a process for community engagement agreed.
- A dedicated Equality Page is included on the Council's website where reports are available to view or download.
- A Good Relations leaflet was produced and was distributed across Council facilities and community groups.

Section 6: Data Collection & Analysis

- Please outline any systems that were established during the year to supplement available statistical and qualitative research or any research undertaken/commissioned to obtain information on the needs and experiences of individuals from the nine categories covered by Section 75, including the needs and experiences of people with multiple identities.

Grant Aid Equality Monitoring

Following the Commission's analysis of public authority compliance with the legislation and the subsequent guidance issued in 2007, namely: "*Monitoring Guidance for Use by Public Authorities*", Strabane District Council has been collecting equality data from grant aid recipients. The sample monitoring questionnaire recommended by the sub group of the Local Government Statutory Duty Network - based on best practice guidelines has been issued to all grant aid recipients. As recommended, these questionnaires are completed voluntarily and anonymously by the grant aid recipient and returned to the equality officer who collates and analyse the data.

Strabane District Council's good relations and equality committee adopted this best practice recommendation and permitted the issue of equality monitoring questionnaires to grant aid recipients in 2009. It was thought that this information would allow Council to identify any differential equality impacts and put measures in place to control these impacts.

Subsequently, a report was compiled following submission of all grant aid equality monitoring forms in the 2009/10 financial year and presented to those officers who have overall responsibility for its distribution. The report provides us with an illustration of what grant aid recipients in Strabane District Council are doing to promote equality and good relations and reaffirms Council's commitment to delivering services on a fair and equitable basis. The results, however rudimentary, provide some indication that recipients of Strabane District Council's grant aid are reflective of the demographic distribution of Strabane District in terms of religious breakdown and gender. This report also highlights that there has been a concentration on those aged within the 26 – 65 age bracket and those within a Protestant community background on the 2009/10 Financial Year. These trends will be monitored again in the 2010/11 financial year in order to ensure that our grant aid is distributed fairly and equitably.

Customer satisfaction levels

Every year Strabane District Council undertakes a customer feedback survey to ascertain customer satisfaction about the way that we deliver services. Each year residents are asked whether they agree that Strabane District Council treats everyone fairly and without discrimination. In 2009/10, 57% agreed with this statement, 26% neither agreed nor disagreed and 10% disagreed. It is also notable that there has been a decrease in the overall perception this year that Strabane District Council treats everyone fairly and without discrimination compared to others. It is important to highlight however that this trend was experienced against all questions that were asked in this survey. The results of which have been presented to Council. Council have suggested that this overall decrease in satisfaction across all Council's services and supports is somewhat reflective of the current economic climate, the impact of preparations for local government reform in 2011 and an overall sense of public discontent. Strabane District Council will be monitoring this again in November 2010.

Section 7: Information Provision, Access to Information and Services

- Please provide details of any initiatives/steps taken during the year, including take up, to improve access to services including provision of information in accessible formats.
- In accordance with the Equality Scheme, the Council has arrangements in place for providing information in alternative formats. These arrangements are outlined in the Linguistic Diversity Policy. The policy includes a monitoring form to inform the Council of which formats have been requested. The policy continues to be promoted in the local newspapers and in the Council's Snapshot Magazine. The format of the magazine including the font size is based on the guidelines of the RNIB. The Council also subscribes to Browse Aloud Software to assist the visually impaired.
- The Council continues to develop welcome packs in Polish, Lithuanian, Vidu, Arabic and Hindu.
- The Council will continue to keep under review the methods for providing information and access to services.

Section 8: Complaints

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

The Council is currently dealing with a complaint in relation to the sale of land at Vaughans Holm, Newtownstewart. This has been referred to the Equality Commission.

Section 9: Consultation and Engagement

- Please provide details of the measures taken to enhance the level of engagement with individuals and representative groups during the year.
- Please outline any use of the Commission's guidance on consulting with and involving children and young people.

During the year the Council held a number of consultative meetings particularly in relation to the implementation of the Good Relations Strategy.

Future Search

Strabane District Council partnered Ilex, Derry's Urban Regeneration Company in early 2009 to bring a "FutureSearch" conference to Strabane District. The ultimate aim of this conference was to begin a regeneration planning process. The conference delegate invitation list was reviewed to ensure that there was adequate representation from the nine equality categories and positive action was taken to ensure that the delegation was as representative as possible. A follow up youth event was held at the end of March. Again, officers proactively targeted a disabled young person's group and youth members of the gay, lesbian bisexual and transsexual young people's group.

Membership of the sectoral working groups, established after the conference to begin work on action planning has also been informally reviewed to examine whether there are any gaps in terms of the nine equality categories. Again, positive action has been taken to try to address any imbalance identified in terms of representation.

A sectoral working group is looking at the theme of social inclusion and partnership and the outcomes of which will be fed into the overall regeneration plan. Strabane District Council by inclusion of section 75 representatives at the outset, has enabled people likely to be affected by the policy to participate directly in the development process.

Section 10: The Good Relations Duty

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

- The Flags and Emblems Forum is now established and a process for community engagement agreed. A series of meetings and projects will take place across Council areas to address issues pertaining to flags and emblems.

- The Good Relations and Equality Committee continues to meet on a quarterly basis to oversee the work of Good Relations.

- Good Relations training has taken place in a number of areas
 1. Training sessions with Councillors, Council staff and ASDA Team Leaders on developing a Good Relations policy and good practice in implementing Good Relations in the workplace.
 2. Good Relations training was delivered to community and voluntary sector representatives on the history of the conflict in Northern Ireland and the development of the peace process.
 3. Mediation training was delivered to community and voluntary sector representatives. This included an accredited OCN Level 2 Handling Life's Conflicts, 3 day course.
 4. Travelling Awareness training was delivered to community representatives and agencies in the Strabane District.
 5. "Ending Hate in our Communities" training was delivered to community representatives.

- An annual Good Relations planning day was held with speakers from the Community Relations Council, Derry Travellers Support Group, Rainbow and Northern Ireland Council for Ethnic Minorities.

- An open day was held to promote Community Relations week and Good Relations activities in the District.

- Vision Management Consultants carried out an attitudinal survey which comprised questionnaires to 2,800 households in the District, focus groups with agencies, Councillors, Council staff, community and voluntary sector representatives and other key stakeholders. The key findings showed that while 80% of those responding said they would like to become involved in Good Relations projects, very few did, particularly in the area of “Hard Issues” which includes flags and emblems, parading and other contentious issues.
- A 3 year external evaluation began and will continue throughout the life of the Good Relations Strategy 2008-2011. A report was produced and the action plan amended accordingly.
- Please outline any use of the Commission’s Good Relations Guide.

In all aspects of Good Relations activity the Commission’s guide is referenced.

Section 11: Additional Comments

- Please provide any additional information/comments