

EQUALITY COMMISSION FOR NORTHERN IRELAND

Public Authority Progress Report 2004 - 2005

Template to assist Public Authorities to report on implementation of the equality and good relations duties under Section 75 of the NI Act 1998

The information required from public authorities will be based on the period from **1 April 2004 to 31 March 2005**. Please ensure that it is submitted to the Commission by **31 August 2005**, electronically (by completing this template) and in writing, with a signed cover letter from the Chief Executive or, in his/her absence, the Deputy Chief Executive.

This year's progress report template builds upon earlier guidance, for purposes of consistency and comparison. It is important that the authority reports on what it views as being relevant in terms of progress made on the implementation of the statutory duties from April 2004 to March 2005. However, if no further progress has been made under a particular heading you may state 'Progress previously reported' indicating the year e.g. 2002/03, and provide the information from the relevant earlier progress report.

Please enter information at the end of each Section in the template.

Name of public authority (Enter details below)

Department for Regional Development

Equality Officer name and contact details (Enter details below)

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Section 1: Executive Summary

Please provide information about the impact of the implementation of Section 75 from April 2004 to the end of March 2005. This could include existing policies changed to better deliver equality of opportunity, information on the impact of new policies, or better provision and access to services.

Information should be provided in relation to:

1a) outcomes which have impacted on the authority in terms of efficiency or effectiveness.

(Enter text below)

- Emphasis on pre-consultation has ensured that the Department is aware of customer concerns and potential equality impacts while policy is developed, leading to increased efficiency in roll out and effectiveness when final policies are delivered to the public.
- Departmental policy makers have a noticeable increased awareness of equality and good relations issues when developing new policies and revising existing ones.
- Ongoing equality awareness and EQIA methodology training has aided policymakers in consideration of equality issues and impacts when developing policy. Training has been evaluated and tailored specifically to meet the needs of the Department.
- The creation of a 'Consultation Zone' on the Department's new internet site had enabled the Department to communicate more effectively with S75 groups as well as the general public.
- Feedback from consultee groups and the revised Section 75 guidance has led the Department to target consultation in order to avoid 'consultation overload' and increase the likelihood of feedback from groups that policies are more likely to affect.

1b) outcomes for people in the nine equality categories.

(Enter text below)

- The Department's Water Reform proposals contain a property-based domestic charging regime, which was assessed as having negative impacts on Protestants, Unionists, older people, single people and carers of older people. The inclusion of a standing charge and an upper limit charging cap are examples of action taken to reduce the overall property related element of the domestic charges and limiting the level to which charges can rise. Presently the policy is under consideration in light of the responses received to the draft EQIA.
- The Department finalised two policies on the Rural Transport Fund and Transport Programme for People with Disabilities. The completion of the related EQIA processes enabled the Department to better identify salient issues for older and disabled people. Initial screening of the TPPD policy identified an impact on two groups, older people and people with disabilities, further analysis revealed a need for the development of accessible public and community transport opportunities for people with reduced mobility using initiatives such as door-to-door transport. Consultation with people with disabilities, disability groups and other relevant bodies gathered information on how these services should operate to achieve maximum benefit. Older people are also likely to benefit as older people may experience more mobility problems and will therefore be aided by these transport services.
- The Planning Policy Statement 12 'Housing in Settlements' through the EQIA process has made adjustments to the Traveller policy. The policy was amended to be more positive when dealing with Traveller accommodation and to ensure that they are accommodated on a site most appropriate to their needs.
- The draft EQIA on the review of Housing Growth Indicators as part of the Regional Development Strategy brought about changes to figures on some council areas that are likely to lessen the adverse impacts identified on religious belief and political opinion.

1c) policy considerations and decisions which took account of equality implications in relation to major policy issues – in particular, please provide information in relation to: -

- employment policy;
- public procurement including PPP/PFI projects and programmes;
- accessibility to public services across the nine categories, and particularly in relation to migrant workers and Irish Travellers;
- early consideration of the Review of Public Administration; and
- any other significant policy areas relevant to your authority's work.

(Enter text below)

- The Planning Policy Statement 12 'Housing in Settlements' through the EQIA process has made adjustments to the Traveller policy. Consultation during the EQIA found that the setting of specific criteria to be met in seeking permission for Travellers' accommodation was discriminatory. The policy was amended to be more positive when dealing with Traveller accommodation and to ensure that they are accommodated on a site most appropriate to their needs.
- A Mobility and Inclusion Unit has been established as a result of the Department's Accessible Transport Strategy. The Unit will work to promote the implementation of the Strategy. This move has been praised by the Transport Advisory Committee who were also impressed with the approach to developing the Strategy and the 'comprehensive and inclusive' consultation process.
- The Department's website was revamped to enhance ease-of-use for online customers. This process enabled the Department to take account of accessibility needs and ensure that the website was compliant with accessibility standards.
- Water Service have been working in partnership with Dungannon and South Tyrone Borough Council and other partners on implementing a New TSN objective which has considered impacts on Section 75 groups not connected to the water main. A grant of

over £200,000 was made available by the Department for Agriculture and Rural Development, this will supplement Water Service's reasonable cost allowance and help connect additional properties in rural areas to mains water.

1d) Outline problems encountered and solutions developed in terms of achieving better equality outcomes.

(Enter text below)

- The draft EQIA on the review of Housing Growth Indicators as part of the Regional Development Strategy brought about changes to figures on some council areas that are likely to lessen the adverse impacts identified on religious belief and political opinion.
- The Water Reform proposals contain a property-based domestic charging regime, which was assessed as having negative impacts on Protestants, Unionists, older people, single people and carers of older people. As a result the Department suggested the inclusion of a standing charge and an upper limit charging cap are examples of action taken to reduce the overall property related element of the domestic charges and limiting the level to which charges can rise. Presently the policy is under consideration in light of the responses received to the draft EQIA.

Section 2: Strategic Implementation of the Section 75 Duties

Note: Please enter specific progress on implementation of the good relations duty under section 11 of this template.

- Outline evidence of progress made in developing equality and good relations objectives, performance indicators and targets for inclusion in corporate and annual operating plans during 2004-05. Your response should include any targets for 2005-06.
- Outline what additional strategic areas the Board and/or Senior Management Team identified for action by the authority during the year
Outline steps taken to work with other public authorities in progressing the duties
- Outline any details of partnership work developed or further progressed with the voluntary and/or community sector as a consequence of Section 75 work.
- Please provide details of the **direct** resourcing of Section 75 work during 2004–05. This should include staff appointed/directed (*not names*) and details of any budget allocation, to specifically deliver equality scheme commitments

(Enter text below)

- Objectives and targets relating to the statutory duties have been built into the Department's Corporate Plan 2004 -2006 and the Business Plan 2004 - 2005. Quarterly progress reports on SDA targets, including equality targets, were submitted to the Minister. Objectives and targets relating to the statutory duties are also included in Agency Corporate and Business Plans and Divisional and Branch Business objectives.
- A detailed action plan, to help implement all the commitments made in the Department's Equality Scheme, has been drawn up. During 2004-2005 quarterly monitoring reports on progress were submitted to the Minister and senior officers.
- Under the NICS Performance Management Framework equality objectives and associated performance indicators are built into the personal performance agreements of relevant staff and are

reviewed throughout the year, in conjunction with personal development plans.

- ❑ The Departmental Business Meeting (the Departmental Management Board), which involves the Permanent Secretary, Deputy Secretaries, the Chief Executive of Roads Service, and the Chief Executive of Water Service, meets weekly to review and monitor the corporate management of the Department. During this reporting period it has steered, monitored and periodically reviewed the implementation of the Section 75 obligations.
- ❑ Section 75 issues are also standing or regular agenda items at Agency and Divisional Senior Management meetings.
- ❑ The Department's Equality Unit comprising a Grade 7, Deputy Principal and Staff Officer assisted by a Working Group of officials, representing all Divisions and Agencies across the Department, has driven forward the practical implementation of the commitments set out in the Department's Scheme. The regular meetings of the Working Group have ensured consistency of approach and sharing of good practice across the Department.
- ❑ The Director of Central Policy and Management Unit, a member of the Senior Civil Service, represents the Department on an Interdepartmental Equality and Social Need Steering Group (ESNSG), chaired by a senior OFMDFM official.
- ❑ The Department's Principal Statistician is a member of the Equality and Social Needs Research and Information Group (ESNRIG), which includes as members officials of Northern Ireland Departments and the Northern Ireland Office, along with representatives of the Equality Commission and the Northern Ireland Council for Voluntary Action. The Department shares a statistician with the Department of the Environment and maintains a close relationship with that Department in developing Section 75 issues.
- ❑ The Department's Equality Officer represents the Department at Equality Practitioners' meetings organised by the OFMDFM Equality Unit to discuss practical issues of mutual concern.

Representatives from all Northern Ireland Departments attend these meetings.

- The Department has given advice to its associated Trust Ports and the Northern Ireland Transport Holding Company on the development of their Equality Schemes.
- A Flags/Emblems Joint Protocol was developed and subsequently launched in early April 2005, which sets out an agreed partnership approach in dealing with the flags/emblems issue. This Joint Protocol is between the PSNI, DRD (Roads Service), DOE, DSD, OFMDFM and the Northern Ireland Housing Executive. It is hoped that all local councils will examine this protocol and adopt it as a way forward in Northern Ireland. The protocol provides a mechanism by which all interested parties can discharge their respective functions in a cohesive, collaborative and supportive manner.
- Water Service have been working in partnership with Dungannon and South Tyrone Borough Council and other partners on implementing a New TSN objective which has considered impacts on Section 75 groups not connected to the water main, including older people, people with dependants and people with a disability, and the eligibility criteria have been weighted accordingly. The partnership formulated a bid for funding from DARD's Rural Development Programme. A grant of over £200,000 has now been made available and this will be used to supplement Water Service's reasonable cost allowance to connect additional properties in rural areas to mains water. The Council have invited bids from householders interested in the scheme and a formal evaluation process will take place. Water Service will provide a feasibility report, covering aspects such as costing and technical analysis, on the applications made.
- The Department holds biannual meetings with representatives of Section 75 groups. This Equality Forum provides a useful opportunity to engage with policy makers, discuss the major policy issues and EQIAs planned by the Department. It has been recognised by all those attending that these meetings are very

useful in developing Section 75 issues and relationships with policy makers.

- The Department's Equality Officer's role as the Department's representative on the Voluntary and Community Sector Forum is a useful complement to Section 75 responsibilities. The Equality Officer also represents the Department in a number of Interdepartmental Working Groups such as the Social Economy Forum, the Older People's Strategy, Disability Strategy and Children and Young People's Strategy.
- On Water Reform, the Department has developed a Domestic Users Stakeholder Forum with which it has been liaising on domestic charging policy issues; central to this work is the understanding of impacts on S75 groups.
- The Department incurred an average salary cost of approximately £174,000 to advance work specifically on equality issues in 2004/05. In addition some £143,000 was incurred on public consultation and draft EQIA's.

Section 3: Screening & Equality Impact Assessment (EQIA)

3a) If a Screening Report has not yet been submitted to the Commission please advise us on the current position with regard to producing this report and forwarding to the Commission.

(Enter text below)

- Water Service screened out its policy on septic tank emptying during the reporting period. However a review of the policy will take place in 2005/2006.

3b) If a Screening Report and EQIA Timetable has **previously been submitted** to the Commission please provide an update (**using the matrices in Appendix A**) detailing: -

- i) those policies that were subject to EQIA during 2004-05;
- ii) new/proposed/revised policies screened during 2004-05;
- iii) ongoing EQIA monitoring activities during 2004-05; and
- iv) timetable for Equality Impact Assessments in 2005-06.

Section 4: Training

- Indicate your organisation's progress on the delivery of Section 75 related training and development during 2004-05. Please state if the training is provided within a 5-year Training Plan.
- Outline details of staff and Management Board/Committee training associated with the Section 75 duties/Equality Scheme requirements. Provide details of types of training provision (e.g. general awareness raising, specialist training on EQIA, Screening and Consultation) and who this training was provided for.
- Provide details of training on awareness raising for new staff and refresher training for existing staff.
- Provide details of how affected groups have been involved in the development and/or delivery of training.
- Provide a summary of any training evaluations and comments on the benefits of such training.
- Provide details of arrangements to review training needs as a result of staff recruitment, promotion or reorganisation.

(Enter text below)

- The Department has a 5-year training and communication plan that is reviewed, and rolled forward each year in liaison with the Business Areas Equality Officers and Training Branch.
- The training records of all new staff transferred into the Department are checked to see if they have received Section 75 awareness training. During the course of this report 37 people were identified as requiring training and were added to the Department's Training Plan.
- Equality of Opportunity and anti-discrimination issues are included in all induction training courses, training courses for new managers and the Management Development Programme being rolled out across DOE, DRD and DCAL over 5 years.
- Overall 1880 staff in management grades, Executive Officer to Deputy Principal, have received a half-day general awareness course addressing Section 75 responsibilities, 81 of these in 2004-05. Further courses will be held in 2005.
- Focus Consultancy has delivered training to key staff in the Department on EQIA methodology and consultation training.
- Overall 257 staff have received training on the methodology of equality impact assessment and consultation, 6 of these in 2004-05. Further courses will be held in 2005.
- The Good Management Practice course, Industrial Training course and the AA/AO Awareness course run by the Department's Equal Opportunities all contain modules that relate to Disability Awareness, as does the Equal Opportunities element of the new staff Induction course.
- Reports of progress to the Departmental Business Meeting have kept senior staff alert to major S75 issues whilst a quarterly report is provided to the Minister on EQIA progress.

Awareness Training

- The Department's Equality Unit carried out a survey targeting those individuals who had attended training during 2004-05. The feedback was generally positive with most finding the training relevant and useful. The content of the awareness training was regularly reviewed and updated to ensure that the training material remained current.

Equality Impact Assessment Methodology and Consultation

- This training was delivered by way of a centralized NICS call off contract using Focus Consultancy. The content of the training was regularly reviewed to ensure that examples of EQIAs used were up to date and relevant to the staff attending. The Department is working with Focus Consultancy to ensure training in the coming year covers more fully the screening process and the revised Section 75 Guidance issued by the Equality Commission.
- As a matter of course all training is evaluated and as a consequence both the Equality Impact Assessment Methodology and Consultation courses have been tailored specifically to meet the needs of the Department. An example of this is the use of real EQIAs.
- The Equality Unit sought feedback from attendees of this years training which was generally positive.
- Subsequent to the release of the Revised Guidance for Implementing Section 75 of the Northern Ireland Act 1998, the Department's Equality Unit gave a short presentation to the internal Equality Working Group. The presentation underlined the main changes concerning consultation and screening, the effect this would have on policy development and implementation and how the Department would take these changes forward. Copies of a revised screening form and Complaints Procedure were circulated. The training material was subsequently disseminated throughout the Department and issued to OFMDFM Statutory Duty Office.

Section 5: Communication

- Provide details of internal and external communication of the authority's commitment to the statutory duties.
- Provide details of how the authority communicates progress on delivery of the statutory duties.
- Provide details of any review of communication activities to ensure effective communication on progressing the statutory duties.

(Enter text below)

- The Department's Equality Scheme includes a cover message from the Minister and the Permanent Secretary. This has been posted on the Internet and the Department's Intranet.
- The Department's Equality Working Group, made up of officials drawn from Divisions and Agencies and chaired by the Equality Unit, plays a key role in the internal communication of Section 75 issues and obligations.
- Issue 12 of the Equality Times magazine, an internal magazine for DRD, DOE and DCAL, contained articles on the DDA regulations and the Employers' Forum on Disability. An article in Radius, the house journal of the Department for Regional Development, detailed that Minister John Spellar had handed over 14 fully accessible minibuses to community transport organizations as part of the Rural Transport Fund and the Transport Programme for People with Disabilities.
- The Department's Section 75 Forum meets biannually. Meetings in June and November 2004 provided policy makers and Section 75 representatives with an opportunity to discuss policy issues and areas of ongoing concern. Presentations were given on the Accessible Transport Strategy and Water Reform.
- All consultation documents include a note of the Department's obligations under Section 75.

- Permanent Secretary and Minister have been provided with regular progress reports, including a report on the training objectives contained within the Department's Scheme.
- The Department also makes full use of the team briefing mechanism and regularly provides staff with information on Equality issues and major EQIAs such as Water Reform, the Belfast Metropolitan Transport Plan, the Accessible Transport Strategy, the Regional Strategic Transport Network Transport Plan. Staff have also been kept up to date on the revised Section 75 Statutory Duty Guidance, the launch of the Equality and Research Information Website and other examples of good practice.
- The Department's Equality objectives and associated performance indicators are built into the personal performance agreements of relevant staff.
- Roads Service internal magazine is used to flag up the Agency's commitment to Section 75 issues. The internal magazine is also used to keep staff up to date on related equality issues.
- Equality guidance is continually updated on the Roads Service Intranet, which is available to all staff. It also details EQIA's carried out and policies screened out. Roads Service commitment to Section 75 is available on the Roads Service Internet site.
- The Department also promotes its statutory duty obligations through attendance at local shows, exhibitions and career fairs.
- A commitment to S75 is included in European Grant Applications.
- DRD created a consultation section on the Home Page of the new DRD website. This seeks to address Section 75 communication issues by placing consultations in a prominent place (i.e. as a key feature of the Web site). Consultations placed here are also fed to the central OFMDFM consultation site found at <http://www.consultationni.gov.uk/>

- The Department continues to sponsor the provision of the website www.ni-transportguide.info for people who require information on accessible transport services.
- In light of the release of the Revised Guidance for Implementing Section 75, the Equality Unit will bi-annually contact Section 75 consultees to keep them informed of upcoming consultations and policies which have been screened out. It is hoped that this will give greater transparency to the processes involved in screening Departmental policies and provide an opportunity for groups to become involved in policy development at an early stage.
- In September 2004 there was direct engagement between the Department and the Equality Commission in relation to water charging. The charging announcement by the Minister in September 2004 included commitment to addressing equality issues arising from the draft EQIA; two meetings were held with the Domestic Users Stakeholder Forum, which included Section 75 representative organisations.

Section 6: Data Collection & Analysis

- Describe any systems that have been established to supplement your available statistical and qualitative research, including consideration given to using internal organisational data and external networks.
- Describe any systems established to monitor the future adverse impact of policies that have been equality impact assessed.
- Detail any research undertaken/commissioned to obtain data/information relating to the nine equality categories.
- Detail the Section 75 equality categories which were covered in any surveys which the authority commissioned/used during the year.

(Enter text below)

- Bilateral meetings have been held with each Agency, Division, the Equality Unit and the Department's statisticians, to ensure that the data requirements of the EQIA programme are being fulfilled. Where gaps are identified, efforts are made to source the information required, quantitatively or qualitatively as appropriate.
- Consultation is focused to reflect the issue under consideration with conferences, focus groups, and seminars organized to discuss the issues involved.
- The Department's Principal Statistician is a member of ENSRIG. The cross-departmental Information & Research Needs Strategy, sponsored by ESNRIG, sets the direction in assessing and filling gaps on information relating to Section 75 groups.
- The Equality Research and Information Website at <http://www.equality.nisra.gov.uk/>, launched in April 2004 by the Northern Ireland Statistics and Research Agency, is a new on-line resource providing information in relation to equality and Section 75 categories. The website contains publications, data tables, news items and links to other websites. It will be a valuable tool for those carrying out equality impact assessments.

- The Department contributes regularly to the NICS policy bulletin, which gives information about new policy relevant conferences/seminars, other events, publications, planned policy reviews, research, etc.
- The Department's Principal Statistician was a member of the Inter-Departmental Urban-Rural definition group, which published its report in February 2005.
- Copies of regular NICVA Research Updates are circulated to Business Areas.
- Screening of the policy on septic tank emptying coincided with the implementation of functionalisation across Water Service and collection of management information in a systematic way across the organisation. Water Service has committed to monitor data of households refused the service and to consider whether Section 75 impacts exist. Water Service has computerised its information on septic tank emptying agreements and refusals and is monitoring application of the policy across Water Service as opposed to on a divisional basis only.
- The Department's Principal Statistician was a member of the Steering Group for the Review of the Northern Ireland Multiple Deprivation Measure (NIMDM). The NIMDM 2005 was published in May 2005.

Section 7: Information Provision, Access to Information and Services

- Outline what action has been taken to review and develop arrangements for the provision of information in accessible formats.
- Detail any initiatives/steps taken to improve access to services.
- Describe any arrangements to develop monitoring systems regarding access to information and services to ensure equality of opportunity.

(Enter text below)

- During 2004/05 the Department reviewed its internal guidance on making information accessible. This guidance, which was developed in conjunction with the Section 75 Equality Forum, included specific arrangements to monitor access to information provided by the Department and review implementation of the guidance. The Equality Unit contacted Section 75 groups and asked for their opinions on the guidance and any recommendations for improvement. Consultation also took place with members of the internal Equality Working Group. Amended Guidance issued in July 2005.

Requests for the provision of information in accessible formats have been met with information provided by audiotape, Braille and computer disc.

- The Department holds biannual meetings between policymakers and representatives of Section 75 groups. These meetings provide an opportunity for policymakers to update on policy progress and issues of concern. The forum has also been used to facilitate presentations on policy. Section 75 representatives are given the opportunity to comment on reported progress and highlight their own areas of concern. The forum has reviewed accessibility of information and provided feedback on difficulties and problems. The lessons learned and good practice is then promulgated across the Department through the Equality Working Group.

- Information on Section 75 is published on the Internet. The Department also posts details of all consultations on the OFMDFM consultation website at www.consultationni.gov.uk. This can be accessed from the Department's internet site.
- During the reporting period the Department's Roads Service carried out a review of its internal and external communications strategies. A new Communication Strategy will be implemented during the coming year. Roads Service customer surveys include questions about quality and accessibility of information. These surveys help inform the stakeholder perspective on the services we provide and complement the external communications audit carried out by Weber Shandwick in 2004. A number of key findings emerged: closer integration between internal and external communication; close alignment between business strategy and engagement with stakeholders to explain what the Agency will deliver and to manage customer expectations about what is possible within budget constraints; anticipation of customer needs in terms of accessible formats and meaningful two-way engagement with staff and external customers; raising the profile of Roads Service to provide clarity on what the Agency is and the services it provides and the need to translate words into action through the development of Action plans.
- Water Service has a comprehensive website that sets out information on key policies and operational areas including the complaints process and key contact numbers. Water Service also provides information to schools to increase awareness of its work among young people.
- A consultation section has been created on the home page of the new DRD website. This seeks to address Section 75 communication issues by placing consultations in a prominent place (i.e. as a key feature of the website). The recently revised DRD Internet site and its consultation section were audited for accessibility compliance by an external organisation selected by the NICS. The site achieved the accessibility standards required by the independent assessor.

- A text phone number is provided on all consultation documents, large print is used where possible and an undertaking is given to consider requests for accessible formats where the subject matter is such that specific formats have not been prepared in advance.
- The Department has placed adverts in large print in the three main newspapers detailing the services provided by the Department.
- The Department's Equality Scheme, which was copied to a wide range of S75 representatives, contains a description of all the Department's functions and services.
- The Department's funding of a range of Voluntary and Community groups to assist the development of community-based transport solutions is reviewed annually.
- The Department's consultation document on "Extending Door-to-Door Transport Services Across NI" (dated 17 May 2004) was available on audiotape.
- Requests for the provision of alternative formats were invited during the 2004/05 consultation exercise on Water Reform. Documentation was issued in Braille and in large print.

Section 8: Complaints

- Identify, during 2004-05, the number of Section 75 complaints:
 - received by the authority;
 - resolved by the authority;
 - which were not resolved to the satisfaction of the complainant; and
 - which were referred to the Equality Commission

(Enter text below)

- The Department has a formal complaints procedure, which was reviewed during the period of this report. Complaints received are monitored regularly.
- During 2004-05 the Department received three equality related complaints.
- In July 2004, a complaint was received from a member of the public concerning the Concessionary Fares Scheme. The complainant felt that the policy had an adverse impact on women in the 60-64 age group and strongly recommended that the Department followed GB policy, which gives entitlement to concessionary fares from the age of 60 to both men and women. Whilst the Minister was sympathetic, he took the view that any additional resources should in the first instance be used to improve public transport for everyone rather than provide subsidised travel for a limited number of people.
- In July 2004 a complaint was registered under Schedule 9 of the NI Act 1998 from NIPSA regarding the Department's Water Service's Alpha PPP Project. NIPSA stated that the failure of management side to conduct a comprehensive EQIA on the project was in breach of the statutory duty. The Department advised the complainant that the overarching PPP policy had already been the subject of a full EQIA under the auspices of OFMDFM and that Trade Union Side were consulted as part of that process. However, the Department confirmed that a screening exercise on the Alpha Project would be carried out to determine the need for an EQIA prior to any binding agreement.

The Department stated that it did not accept that a breach of its Equality Scheme had taken place.

- During November 2004 the Department also received correspondence from the Equality Commission. The Commission alleged that the Department had failed in reaching its decision in respect of the Concessionary Fares Scheme to take into account the concerns raised in the EQIA consultation by the Equality Commission and a Pensioners' Association. The basis of the concerns by these consultees centred on the allegation that the Department was discriminating against women aged 60-64 by excluding them from free public transport. Further to investigation, the Equality Commission responded on the 21 March 2005 finding that a failure to comply with the Department's Equality Scheme had not been established.

Section 9: Scheme Timetable

- Provide an update of your equality scheme implementation timetable (covering all the scheme commitments), identifying any changes since your previous report. Please detail any planned actions outstanding.

(Enter text below)

- In spite of slippage on the original EQIA timetable due to the difficulties in forecasting precisely the pace of policy development work, over the report period – April 2004 to March 2005 – considerable progress has been made on the preparation of equality impact assessments, with eight final EQIAs issued up to the end of March 2005. Four draft EQIAs have issued and research undertaken for a further six draft EQIAs. Details are set out in the attached Annex A.
- Progress on all equality scheme commitments is reported quarterly to senior officers and the Minister. By and large, the Department is on target to meet the EQIA commitments in the Equality Scheme within the 5-year timetable. The Department has not carried out EQIAs on the operational transport policies in the programme. These will fall to the Northern Ireland Transport Holding Company (NITHC), which has subsequently been designated for Section 75.
- On the other commitments, further training courses on Section 75 awareness and EQIA methodology and consultation were organised for staff.
- The Department's Guide to Making Information Accessible has been reviewed and reissued to business areas in July 2005.
- The Department has a well-established system in place to monitor the impacts of completed EQIAs.

Section 10: Consultation, Participation and Engagement

- Provide details of organisational arrangements for managing Section 75 consultation exercises e.g. processes, methods and communication channels used.
- Provide details of processes adopted to engage with representative groups during 2004-05.
- Please indicate how effective your engagement was with Section 75 representative groups.
- Outline measures taken to enhance the level of engagement that were successful and unsuccessful.

(Enter text below)

- The Department is committed to carrying out consultations in accordance with the Equality Commissions guidelines. The main methods used are face-to-face meetings, conferences, advisory groups, focus groups, key stakeholder groups, issue of full and summary consultation documents to appropriate consultees, and advertisement of all consultations on the internet, including the central consultation website. The Department has also begun to use electronic (e-mail) consultation methods after communication with Section 75 groups who indicated a desire to use this format.
- The bi-annual meetings of the Department's Section 75 Equality Forum, made up of S75 representatives and Departmental policymakers have proved to be a useful method for consulting on general S75 issues.
- The Department has moved away from the blanket consultation commitment in its Equality Scheme towards a more tailored and flexible approach in order to help focus on the S75 groups most likely to be affected by particular policies. This move pre-empted the launch of the revised Section 75 guidance, which supported the approach.
- Pre-consultation is carried out on all relevant policies as part of our policy/legislation process. A more tailored approach has been adopted to pre-consultation in order to focus on those Section 75

groups most likely to be affected by a particular policy. The Department's database of consultees is also continuously updated and refined.

- Roads Service carried out extensive consultation on the development of the Belfast Metropolitan Transport Plan (BMTP) and the Regional Strategic Transport Network Transport Plan (RSTNP). This was in the form of a working conference, focus, reference and stakeholder groups.
- Consultation and engagement with Section 75 representative groups is a positive mechanism that helps to raise the profile of the policies. This engagement has helped to inform the development of the transport plans.
- Water Service to date has not had any Section 75 consultations and thus contact with Section 75 groups was through the Department's Section 75 meetings. Water Service also provides presentations to local councils to help ensure that it is meeting local needs.
- During the year Ports and Public Transport Division undertook 2 EQIAs: one on the Transport Programme for People with Disabilities and the other on the Rural Transport Fund. Both these programmes were identified to produce positive impacts to, amongst others, people with disabilities and older people. The Department liaised closely with the Northern Ireland Transport Advisory Committee in developing and managing the schemes.
- In preparation for consultation on the assessment of impacts on the proposals for water and sewerage services, including the EQIA, a total of 15 pre-consultation meetings were arranged, which included a meeting with the Equality Commission and 3 District Councils. During the consultation period a further 25 meetings were undertaken with stakeholders, including 11 with District Councils as well as representative groups with Section 75 interest. Water Reform Unit's direct engagement with stakeholder interests through meetings has been an effective method of engaging representative groups with Section 75 interests. This

has assisted in analysing the initial findings of EQIA analysis and augmenting available data.

- In light of the release of the Revised Guidance for Implementing Section 75, the Equality Unit will bi-annually contact Section 75 consultees to keep them informed of upcoming consultations and policies which have been screened out. It is hoped that this will give greater transparency to the processes involved in screening Departmental policies and provide an opportunity for groups to become involved in policy development at an early stage.
- The Department received positive feedback from the Transport Advisory Committee over its consultation process on the Accessible Transport Strategy. The Committee stated they were impressed with the approach to developing the Strategy and the 'comprehensive and inclusive' consultation process. It also believed that the process would be 'an excellent template for future consultations by Government'. The TAC also welcomed the formation of a Mobility and Inclusion Unit to promote the implementation of the ATS.
- The completion of the EQIA processes for the Rural Transport Fund and Transport Programme for People with Disabilities enabled the Department to better identify salient issues for older people and people with disabilities. Initial Screening of the TPPD policy identified an impact for both groups. Further analysis revealed a need for the development of accessible public and community transport opportunities for people with reduced mobility using initiatives such as door-to-door transport. Consultation with people with disabilities, disability representative groups and other relevant bodies gathered information on how these services should operate to achieve maximum benefit.

Section 11: The Good Relations Duty

Provide details of steps taken to implement or progress the good relations duty during the year. Examples of such steps might include: undertaking a good relations audit; developing a strategy or adopting a framework; providing training; and/or any targeted work done to promote or achieve better relations with or between one or more relevant group (e.g. Irish Travellers; groups dealing with political opinion issues etc). Please indicate any findings or expected outcomes from this work.

(Enter text below)

- All EQIAs considered the implications of proposals for Good Relations.
- The Department has participated fully in the follow-up to the Shared Future consultation and the development of a Good Relations Strategy.
- A Flags/Emblems Joint Protocol was developed and subsequently launched in early April 2005, which sets out an agreed partnership approach in dealing with the flags/emblems issue.
- This Joint Protocol is between the PSNI, DRD (Roads Service), DOE, DSD, OFMDFM and the Northern Ireland Housing Executive. It is hoped that all local councils will examine this protocol and adopt it as a way forward for the community in Northern Ireland. The protocol provides a mechanism by which all interested parties can discharge their respective functions in a cohesive, collaborative and supportive manner.
- During 2004/05 the Department continued to sponsor the Northern Ireland Transport Advisory Committee, whose main function is to advise government on matters relating to people with disabilities and transport. The Committee seeks to help achieve the development of an inclusive and integrated transport system in Northern Ireland accessible to everyone. The Committee aims to ensure that people with disabilities in Northern Ireland have the same opportunities as everyone else to travel when and where they want.

Section 12: Additional Comments on Mainstreaming

The main aim of the statutory duties is to mainstream equality of opportunity and good relations considerations into the functions of the authority, leading to better policies and service delivery. Many of the questions in the previous sections of this template relate to equality scheme commitments. Please provide any additional information/comments you think may be relevant including:

- any factors that enhanced or impeded equality scheme implementation during 2004-05;
- benefits for the authority resulting from mainstreaming; and
- ideas for future effective mainstreaming of the duties.

(Enter text below)

- The systems put in place across the Department and the NICS generally in support of the Equality Scheme – i.e. benchmarking, communication of good practice, training, regular meetings of working and steering groups, the Equality Forum and formal quarterly monitoring and reporting – have all played their part in mainstreaming Section 75 effectively across the Department. There is clearly awareness now among senior managers and policy-makers that equality screening and EQIAs are required when developing or changing policy.
- The benefits arising from mainstreaming ensures that Section 75 now forms part of the policy, legislative and programme development process within the Department. Benefits also include more effective policymaking and improved access to services and information.
- It enables a more joined up approach to policy formulation and review as a policy can be assessed in relation to all various impact assessments.
- The Department is committed to sustaining and consolidating the efforts made to mainstream the duties in the context of the revised guidance and the update of equality schemes.

- The Department awaits formal advice on the Good Relations Statutory duty in order to develop effective mainstreaming.

Section 13: Concluding Questions

This short questionnaire is included in the template to enable you to provide an overall view of the effectiveness of the statutory duties for your authority (Question A) and for the Section 75 categories (Questions B & C).

QUESTION A

Does the authority believe its work to date on implementing the statutory duties has produced positive benefits for the organisation? (Please tick) YES ___✓___ NO _____

If you answered yes to QUESTION A, please tick appropriate boxes below as to what extent the duties have:

	Very noticeably	Noticeably	No real change
Increased awareness of equality issues in policy making	✓		
Increased ability to ensure policies are designed and targeted to reflect equal opportunities objectives		✓	
Increased awareness of good relations issues in policy making			✓
Increased ability to ensure policies are designed and targeted to reflect good relations objectives			✓
Increased awareness of equality issues in service delivery		✓	
Increased ability to ensure services are designed and targeted to reflect Section 75 requirements		✓	

QUESTION B

Does the authority believe its work to date on implementing the statutory duties has produced positive benefits for groups within the Section 75 categories? (Please tick) YES NO

If you answered yes to the above QUESTION B, please tick appropriate boxes below as to what extent the authority's implementation of the statutory duties has increased equality of opportunity for:

	Very noticeably	Noticeably	No real change
Persons of different religious belief		<input checked="" type="checkbox"/>	
Persons of different political opinion		<input checked="" type="checkbox"/>	
Persons of different racial groups			<input checked="" type="checkbox"/>
Persons of different age		<input checked="" type="checkbox"/>	
Persons with different marital status		<input checked="" type="checkbox"/>	
Persons of different sexual orientation			<input checked="" type="checkbox"/>
Men and women generally			<input checked="" type="checkbox"/>
Persons with and without a disability		<input checked="" type="checkbox"/>	
Persons with and without dependents		<input checked="" type="checkbox"/>	

QUESTION C

If you answered **yes** to **QUESTION B**, for each of the categories where a noticeable or very noticeable change has occurred, please give examples of those changes to policies or practices which have resulted in positive change. If the change was a result of an EQIA please tick the appropriate box in column 3:

	Policy or Practice	Column 3: Result of EQIA
Persons of different religious belief	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • A property-based domestic charging regime, as the basis for determining proposed water & sewerage charges, was assessed as having negative impacts on Protestants. The inclusion of standing charge and an upper limit charging cap are examples of action taken to reduce the overall property related element of the domestic charges and limiting the level to which charges can rise. Presently the policy is under consideration in light of the responses received to the draft EQIA 	√
Persons of different political opinion	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • A property-based domestic charging regime, as the basis for determining proposed water & sewerage charges, was assessed as having negative impacts on Unionists. The inclusion of standing charge and an upper limit charging cap are examples of action taken to reduce the overall property related element of the domestic charges and limiting the level to which charges can rise. Presently the policy is under consideration in light of the responses received to the draft EQIA 	√

Persons of different racial groups	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> The Department adjusted its policy in respect of PPS12, Housing in Settlements. The policy was amended to be more positive when dealing with Traveller's accommodation and to ensure that they are accommodated on a site more appropriate to their needs. 	√
Persons of different age	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Completion of EQIA process has enabled the Department to better identify salient issues for older persons using public transport services. A property-based domestic charging regime, as the basis for determining proposed water & sewerage charges, was assessed as having negative impacts on older people. The inclusion of standing charge and an upper limit charging cap are examples of action taken to reduce the overall property related element of the domestic charges and limiting the level to which charges can rise. Presently the policy is under consideration in light of the responses received to the draft EQIA 	√
Persons with different marital status	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Presently the domestic charging policy is under consideration in light of the responses received to the draft EQIA. 	√
Persons of different sexual orientation	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> 	
Men and women generally	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> 	
Persons with and without a disability	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Completion of EQIA process has enabled the Department to better identify salient issues for disabled persons using public transport services. 	√
Persons with and	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Presently the domestic charging 	

without dependents	policy is under consideration in light of the responses received to the draft EQIA	√
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Appendix A

Screening & EQIA Update

Please enter details relating to the authority's progress using the following matrices.

i) EQIA Timetable – 2004-05

Title of policy EQIA underway during April 2004- March 2005	Stage (as per Steps 1-7 of EQIA Process) As at end March 2005	If joint-EQIA please state partner authorities	Outline any adjustments to policy intended to benefit individuals from the nine equality categories and outline the relevant categories affected.	Were adjustments to policy a result of <u>A</u>ssessment of adverse impact/ feedback from <u>C</u>onsultation, or <u>B</u>oth <i>Please enter A, C or Both</i>	If EQIA decision making stage completed, is amended policy being implemented? <u>Y</u>es/<u>N</u>o
1. Planning Policy Statement 12 Housing in Settlements	Stage 6 – Decision making complete but not yet published		Adjustments to Traveller policy	B	No (not yet published)
2. Draft Planning Policy Statement 5 – Retailing, Town Centres and Commercial Leisure	Stage 4		NA	NA	NA

Development					
3. Planning Policy Statement 13	Stage 7		NA	No	Yes
4. Accessible Transport Strategy	Stage 6 – Decision making complete but not yet published.		Consultation on the draft ATS led to a significant number of changes to policies and supporting actions. These changes will benefit all groups. The changes included the establishment of a Mobility and Inclusion Unit, the redrafting and reordering of policy statements and greater focus on accessibility of information.	C	Yes
5. Review of Housing Growth Indicators	Stage 6 – Decision making complete but not yet published.		Adjustments to figures in some council areas. Categories: Religious Belief, Political Opinion		
6. Belfast Metropolitan Transport Plan (BMTP)	Stage 6	No	N/A	N/A	Although EQIA decision making stage is complete the policies/ strategies within the BMTP have not yet been implemented
7. Regional Strategic Transport Network Transport	Stage 6	No	N/A	N/A	Although EQIA decision making stage is

Plan					complete the policies/ strategies within the RSTNTP have not yet been implemented
8. Households not connected to mains water and sewerage and provision of reasonable cost allowances.	1				
9. Developers' contributions/first-time charges	1				
10. Equality Impact Assessment of the Government's proposals for the Reform of Water and Sewerage Services	5	N/A	Adjustments to domestic charging proposals over the original options included the incorporation of a standing charge and capping of charging levels. The policy proposals are currently being further refined. This will take into account feedback in respect of the draft EQIA.	Adjustments resulted <u>mainly</u> from Assessment A	N/A
11. Rural Transport Fund	7		No policy adjustments	N/A	N/A
12. Transport Programme for People with	7		No policy adjustments	N/A	N/A

Disabilities					
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ii) Ongoing Screening Activities 2004-05

Title of policy subject to screening during April 2004- March 2005	If joint policy please state partner authorities	Was initial screening decision changed following consultation? <u>Yes/No</u>	If Screening completed is policy being subject to EQIA? <u>Yes/No</u>	If EQIA planned indicate year for assessment
1. Transport Assessment Guidelines for Development Proposals in NI	DRD Regional Planning and Transportation Division + DOE Planning Service	<u>No</u>	<u>No</u>	<u>N/A</u>
2. Review of Tourist Signing Policy	Northern Ireland Tourist Board	<u>No</u>	<u>No</u>	<u>N/A</u>
3. Draft Street Works (Records)Regulations (NI) 2003	DARD Rivers Agency	<u>No</u>	<u>No</u>	<u>N/A</u>
4. Strangford Lough Ferry Service Fare Review		<u>No</u>	<u>No</u>	<u>N/A</u>
5. The Traffic Signs (Amendment) Regulations (NI) 2004		<u>No</u>	<u>No</u>	<u>N/A</u>
6. Pedestrian Crossings Regulations (NI) 2004		<u>No</u>	<u>No</u>	<u>N/A</u>
7. Direction Signs Policy		<u>No</u>	<u>No</u>	<u>N/A</u>
8. Roads Service Design/ Build / Finance Operate Programme – Packages 1&2		<u>No</u>	<u>No</u>	<u>N/A</u>
9. Rural Dual Carriageways – Provision of right/u-turn facilities		<u>No</u>	<u>No</u>	<u>N/A</u>

<u>10. Street Works (Amendment) Order 2006</u>		<u>No</u>	<u>No</u>	<u>N/A</u>
<u>11. Roads Service Emergency Response Plan (RSERP) – Part 1</u>	<u>OFMDFM / PSNI/ DRD Water Service/DARD Rivers Agency and local councils</u>	<u>No</u>	<u>No</u>	<u>N/A</u>
<u>12. The Traffic Weight Restriction (Amendment) Order (NI) 2005</u>		<u>No</u>	<u>No</u>	<u>N/A</u>
<u>13. The Roads (Restriction of Waiting) Order (NI) 2005</u>		<u>No</u>	<u>No</u>	<u>N/A</u>
<u>14. Septic tank emptying policy</u>		<u>No</u>	<u>No</u>	
<u>15. Domestic Water Charging</u>		<u>Under Consideration</u>	<u>Yes</u>	<u>Ongoing</u>
<u>16. Economic and Consumer Regulation proposals</u>		<u>No</u>	<u>No</u>	
<u>17. Customer Representation proposals</u>		<u>No</u>	<u>No</u>	
<u>18. Business Model</u>		<u>No</u>	<u>Yes</u>	<u>Ongoing</u>
<u>19. Non – Domestic charging.</u>		<u>No</u>	<u>No</u>	

iii) Ongoing EQIA Monitoring Activities 2004-05

Title of EQIA subject to Stage 7 monitoring during April 2004- March 2005	If joint policy please state partner authorities	Indicate if differential impacts previously identified have reduced or increased	Indicate if adverse impacts previously identified have reduced or increased
1. Provision of Pedestrian Facilities	N/A	No change	N/A
2. Operation and Management of Car Parks	N/A	No change	N/A
3. Review of the Blue Badge Scheme	N/A	No change	N/A
4. Regional Transportation Strategy	N/A	No change	N/A
5. Closure of the Antrim Knockmore railway line	N/A	No change	N/A
6. Northern Ireland Concessionary Fares Scheme	N/A	No change	N/A

iv) 2005-06 EQIA Time-table

Title of EQIAs due to be commenced during April 2005 – March 2006	Existing or New policy? Please enter E or N below.	If joint-EQIA please state partner authorities	Please indicate expected date of completion of EQIA Stage 6 i.e Decision making stage
1. Planning Policy Statement 14 The Countryside	N		Dependant on Screening
2. Planning Policy Statement 20 Coastal Development	N		Dependant on Screening

3. Shaping Our Future – the Regional Development Strategy for Northern Ireland	E		Dependant on Screening
4. Sub-Regional Transport Plan (SRTP)	N		December 2006
5. Water Service – move to GoCo status and associated policies	N		December 2005
6. Water Service – households not connected to water and sewerage service and reasonable cost allowances – will be linked to water reform and the introduction of domestic charging	Existing – linked to new policy/ restructuring		March 2006
7. Water Service - Developers' contributions/first-time charges – will be linked to water reform the move to self-financing status as a GoCo	Existing – linked to new policy /restructuring		March 2006
8. Water Reform - EQIA's will be programmed upon resolution of all policy issues – and with regard to choice of business model, in advance of establishment of GoCo.			

Final EQIAs issued in 2004/05

- ❑ Rural Transport Fund
- ❑ Transport Programme for People with Disabilities
- ❑ Planning Policy Statement 13 – Transportation and Land Use
- ❑ Northern Ireland Concessionary Fares Scheme
- ❑ Provision of Pedestrian Facilities
- ❑ Operation and Management of Car Parks
- ❑ Belfast Metropolitan Transport Plan
- ❑ Regional Strategic Transport Network Transport Plan

Draft EQIAs issued in 2004/05

- ❑ Regional Development Strategy – Housing Growth Indicators
- ❑ Reform of Water and Sewerage services
- ❑ Regional Strategic Transport Network Transport Plan
- ❑ Accessible Transport Strategy

Research undertaken for draft EQIA

- ❑ Regional Development Strategy – Focused Assessment
- ❑ Planning Policy Statement 5 – Retailing and Town Centres
- ❑ Planning Policy Statement 14 – Housing in the Countryside
- ❑ Planning Policy Statement 20 – Development in the Coastal Zone
- ❑ Sub-Regional Transport Plan
- ❑ Reform of Water and Sewerage services