

**EQUALITY COMMISSION
FOR NORTHERN IRELAND
Public Authority Progress Report 2003 - 2004**

**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 2003 to 31 March 2004**. Please ensure that it is submitted to the Commission by **31 August 2004**, 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.

Please report on progress by entering information at the end of each Section in the template. Prompts are included under each Section to help you to assess the extent to which progress has been made within each area. Please note that these prompts are neither prescriptive nor inclusive. It is important that the authority reports on what it views as being relevant in terms of progress being made on implementation of the statutory duties.

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: Strategic Implementation of the Section 75 Duties

Please enter specific progress on implementation of the good relations duty under section 10 of this template.

- Outline evidence of progress made in developing/meeting equality and good relations objectives, performance indicators and targets and inclusion of these in corporate and annual operating plans. Your response should include any targets for 2004-2005.
- 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.
- Indicate if Section 75 is a standard agenda item for Board and/or Senior Management Team on a quarterly basis.
- Please provide details of the **direct** resourcing of Section 75 work during 2003 –4. This should include staff appointed/directed (*not names*) to specifically advance work on equality scheme delivery, and details of any budget allocation to specifically deliver equality scheme commitments.
- Outline any factors that enhanced or impeded the process of Strategic Implementation during the period.

Prompt:

Have the Board and Senior Officers reviewed the authority's progress report?

Has responsibility for equality been agreed and designated within the authority?

Has a clearly defined organisational structure with resources for implementation of the duties and assessment of policies been established?

Are equality objectives built into the job descriptions and performance targets of relevant staff and are these reflected in the appraisal process?

- Objectives and targets relating to the statutory duties have been built into the Department's Corporate Plan 2003-2006, the Business Plan 2003-2004 and Service Delivery Agreement (SDA) for 2003-2004. Quarterly progress reports on SDA targets, including equality targets, were submitted to the Minister in 2003-2004. 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 2003-2004 quarterly monitoring reports on progress were submitted to the Minister and senior officers.
- ❑ Under the new NICS Performance Management Framework equality objectives and associated performance indicators are built into the personal performance agreements of relevant staff and are reflected on regularly throughout the year, in conjunction with personal development plans.
- ❑ 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 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 S75 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 on the development of their Equality Schemes.
- ❑ Consideration is being given by the Department and the NIO to the Designation of NITHC as a public body for S75 purposes.
- ❑ The Department holds biannual meetings with representatives of S75 groups. This Equality Forum provides a useful opportunity to engage with policy makers, discuss the major policy issues and EQIAs planned by the Department. Members of the Forum provided advice on the Department's draft Guide to Making Information Accessible and advice on stationery. It has been recognised by all those attending that these meetings are very useful in developing S75 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 S75 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.

- A small 'project reference group' has been set up to provide advice about the conduct of the Department's Accessible Transport Strategy project and feedback on how the findings should be reported. Members include representatives from Translink, the Community Transport Association, NITAC, Equality Commission for NI, Age Concern and the General Consumer Council for Northern Ireland.
- The Integrated Transport Stakeholder Group, established by the Department in November 2003, draws together a wide range of stakeholders that can offer views on the implementation of the RTS including equality matters.
- An External Working Group has been setup, which draws together a wide range of stakeholders. It will assist the Department in scoping the key issues, including equality matters, that will focus the first 5-year review of the Regional Development Strategy (RDS) and it will provide a forum for the active exchange of information and views on the out-working of the RDS Strategic Guidelines since formulation of the Strategy in 2001.
- Within the development of the Belfast Metropolitan Transport Plan, Community Technical Aid chaired and facilitated a working conference.
- Community Technical Aid also provided independent facilitation and reports for a series of public meetings held across Northern Ireland on the initial public consultation on the Water Reform proposal.
- The Departmental Business Meeting (DBM), 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 report period it has steered, monitored and periodically reviewed the implementation of the S75 obligations. Members of DBM receive copies of Quarterly Progress Reports.
- S75 issues are also standing or regular agenda items at Agency and Divisional Senior Management meetings.
- The Department incurred an average salary cost of approximately £280,000 to advance specifically work on equality issues in 2003/2004. In addition, some £167,000 was incurred on the public consultations for Water Reform and consultations associated with draft EQIAs in 2003/2004.
- 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 the sharing of good practice across the Department.

- Bi-annual meetings of policy makers and representatives of S75 groups (the Equality Forum) have enhanced the process of strategic implementation.
- Responsibility for equality has been agreed and clearly designated within all parts of the Department with individual officers, or posts, in all Agencies and Divisions assigned responsibility for S75 issues.
- The quarterly progress reports prepared for the Minister and Senior Officers provide a useful means of focusing attention and charting progress on equality issues. In addition, Senior Officers and the Minister sign off this annual report to the Equality Commission.

Section 2: Screening & Equality Impact Assessment (EQIA)

2a)

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.

2b)

• If a Screening Report and EQIA Timetable has previously been submitted to the Commission please provide information on the following, in relation to new/proposed/revised policies during 2003-4:

Please list new/proposed/revised policies screened in or out during the period.

• Outline any factors that enhanced or impeded the process of policy screening or EQIA.

We have already requested (9 January 2004) that an update on progress regarding EQIAs is forwarded to the Commission. If your authority has not yet forwarded this information (deadline date was 29 February 2004) please do so as a matter of urgency.

2a) Not applicable.

2b) Update on EQIAs progress provided to Equality Commission in February 2004, policies screened out were:

Proposed Bangor, Groomsport, Ballycastle, Rathlin (Harbour Area) Orders
Use of Bus Lanes by Motor Cycles
DRD Stress Management Policy
Statutory Procedures involved in the Development of Road Schemes
Decriminalised Parking Enforcement
Road Safety Engineering Policy
Review of Controlled Pedestrian Crossings Procedures

- Good practice in EQIA is promulgated through the series of interdepartmental groups which meet regularly to discuss issues of mutual concern, such as ESNSG, ENSRIG and Equality Practitioners' meetings.
- Within the Department good practice and policy is disseminated by the Equality Working Group, which meets quarterly and is chaired by the Head of the Department's Equality Unit and has representatives from each Agency and Division.

- Progress on EQIAs is tracked closely by the Department's Equality Unit and is a major part of the regular reviews of progress prepared for the Minister.
- As part of the preparation of an EQIA, meetings involving the Equality Unit, the Department's Statistician and the relevant Agency or Division are held to identify the major issues, impacts and to help resolve any problems anticipated. The Equality Unit and the Department's Statistician both retain a strong advisory role for the Division or Agency throughout the EQIA process and quality assure all screening exercises and draft EQIAs.
- A screening template is now being used by all Business Areas. Completed forms are returned to the Equality Unit for monitoring purposes.
- Agencies and Divisions are encouraged to be proactive in speaking to affected groups at pre-consultation or screening stage. The regular meetings with S75 representatives at the Equality Forum also facilitate this; there is a strong agenda focus on EQIAs underway or planned.
- Consideration is being given to revising arrangements to consult with S75 groups on the outcome of screening exercises in a more comprehensive way. At present, consultees are informed of screening outcomes in the Equality Forum biannual meetings with the Department and by the Annual Progress Report.
- Consultation procedures have been refined to facilitate a more selective, flexible approach.
- Difficulties with data availability can make screening and EQIA processes difficult. In particular it is difficult to decide whether an EQIA is required particularly for low-level policies with positive impacts.
- The development by OFMDFM of a 'Policy Making Guide' and an Integrated Impact Assessment tool and the associated training on policy development have assisted the process of policy screening and EQIA within the Department.
- The meeting with the Equality Commission by members of the Water Reform Team and the Department's Equality Unit to discuss the equality dimensions of the proposals was very helpful.

Section 3: Training

- Indicate your organisation's progress on delivery of Section 75 related training and development during the period. 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.
- Please 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 of review training needs as a result of staff recruitment, promotion or reorganization.
- Outline any factors that enhanced or impeded the processes of Section 75 training during the period.

Prompt:

Does the authority monitor attainment of the training objectives contained within its equality scheme?

Has Section 75 training involved input from representatives of the nine categories? If so please state how this happened and if it proved useful?

Has Section 75 training been evaluated? If so, how has this happened and what are the lessons learned?

- The Department has developed a 5-year training and communication plan which is reviewed, and rolled forward each year in liaison with the Business Areas Equality Officers and Training Branch.
- Key staff attended seminars and awareness training in association with the preparation of the Department's Equality Scheme.
- 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.

- ❑ Each member of staff has received a synopsis of the Scheme, highlighting the main implications.
- ❑ Overall 1799 staff in management grades, Executive Officer to Deputy Principal, has received a half-day general awareness course addressing S75 responsibilities, 218 of these in 2003-2004. Further courses will be held in 2004.
- ❑ Overall 251 staff have received training on the methodology of equality impact assessments and consultation, 2 of these in 2003-2004. Further courses will be held in 2004.
- ❑ Deaf awareness training and training on the operation of a text phone has been delivered to staff on request.
- ❑ Seminars were held in May 2002 to apprise Senior Civil Servants of progress on equality of opportunity generally and equality impact assessments in particular.
- ❑ Reports of progress to the Departmental Business Meeting have kept senior staff alert to major S75 issues.
- ❑ Meetings with S75 Groups have provided an opportunity for senior staff to be aware of, and discuss, specific issues relating to policy development, consultations and other equality matters.
- ❑ Disability Action has delivered training to key staff in the Department on EQIA methodology and consultation training.
- ❑ The Royal National Institute for Deaf People (RNID) has delivered deaf awareness training and training on the use of a text phone to staff.
- ❑ Awareness training is provided as part of the induction process for all new DRD staff. Consideration is currently being given to the need for refresher courses.

Awareness Training

- ❑ Trainers checked the understanding of attendees after each session. Positive feedback was received from those attending. Attendees found 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 centralised NICS call off contract. Positive feedback was received from those attending. The content of this

training was regularly reviewed to ensure that examples of EQIAs used were up to date and relevant to the staff attending. Consideration is being given to expanding the training to cover more fully the screening process and the Revised Guidance to be issued by the Equality Commission.

- During the period of this report, the Department has introduced a mechanism to check the training records of those staff who have recently transferred into the Department with regard to S75 training and to ensure that appropriate training is provided. As a consequence, a total of 5 staff were identified as requiring Section 75 Awareness Training and have been included in the Department's Training Plan.
- 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. A good example of this is using real EQIAs, which have been developed by the Department.
- We are currently considering training needs with OFMDFM, with a view to organising training for Equality Unit staff and refresher training for key staff using the revised guidance and with a strong focus on screening procedures.

Section 4: 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.

Prompt:

Do the Board and/or Senior Officers promote the authority's equality objectives in public statements, interviews and external events such as conferences?

Does the authority have a plan for communication of progress on implementation of the statutory duties?

- ❑ 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 S75 issues and obligations.
- ❑ The Department has held meetings with representatives of all S75 groups.
- ❑ The Department's Corporate and Business Plans and Service Delivery Agreement for 2003/2004 include a commitment to S75 duties.
- ❑ All consultation documents include a note of the Department's obligations under S75.
- ❑ In announcing the extensions to both the Northern Ireland Concessionary Fares Scheme and the Transport Programme for People with Disabilities, the Minister gave assurances that the extensions to each of these schemes would be dependent upon the outcome of the Equality Impact Assessments and take S75 responsibilities into account.
- ❑ The Consultation Document, 'The Reform of Water and Sewerage Services in Northern Ireland', contained a chapter outlining possible Equality impacts of the reform process and sought initial views on the preliminary equality impact assessment. The feedback received during the consultation process was published by the Department in a report in October 2003.
- ❑ A household flyer was also delivered to all households in Northern Ireland during the consultation process, inviting all householders to participate in the

process. At a series of public meetings across Northern Ireland, senior officials stated the Department's commitment to consider Equality issues fully in the development of Water Reform policies. Equality issues raised during the consultation were highlighted.

- Permanent Secretary and Minister have been provided with regular progress reports, including a report on the training objectives contained within the Department's Scheme.
- Staff have been kept aware of developments generally on S75 through articles in the equal opportunities magazine, "Equality Times", and through Agency magazines and team briefs. In February 2004, "Equality Times" featured the Department's Disability Etiquette Guidance, which provides advice for staff on how to address people with disabilities.
- 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 and the Belfast Metropolitan Transport Plan. Staff have been updated on the Equality Commission's response to the Annual Progress Report, and examples of good practice such as the development of the OFMDFM Central Consultation Website, the PolicyLink Website and the Equality Research and Information Website.
- The Spring edition of the Roads Service staff magazine, "Broadcast", included an article on Equality Impact Assessments (EQIAs), - why we do them, what's involved and feedback from three members of staff who were involved in undertaking EQIAs on three separate policies. "Broadcast" and the Department's magazine "Radius" are used to keep staff updated on equality issues.
- The Department also promotes its statutory duty obligations through attendance at local shows, exhibitions and Career Fairs.
- Equality objectives and associated performance indicators are built into the personal performance agreements of relevant staff.
- The Department's equality objectives have been promoted through adverts placed in the three main newspapers.
- A copy of the Annual Progress Reports to the EC for 2001-2002, 2002 -2003 and 2003-2004 have been posted on the Department's website.
- A commitment to S75 is included in European Grant Applications.
- S75 Guidance is available on the Department's Roads Service Intranet, together with details of EQIAs and policies screened out.

Section 5: 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.
- Outline any factors that enhanced or impeded the process of data collection and analysis during the period.

Prompt:

Has an audit of data sources been undertaken?

Are the results of awareness or satisfaction surveys used to inform the development and review of policies? Is relevant external data (for example Census, workforce profiles, customer surveys, and focus groups) used to inform policy development?

Have new information systems been linked to arrangements for screening policies?

- Bilateral meetings have been held with each Agency, Division, the Equality Unit and the Department's Statistician, 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 organised to discuss the issues involved.
- The Department's Statistician is a member of ENSRIG. The cross-departmental Information & Research Needs Strategy, sponsored by ENSRIG, sets the direction in assessing and filling gaps. Research underway includes a review of indicators of equality and diversity and the development of guidance for public authorities and others in relation to Section 75 monitoring. In general, therefore, information deficits are being addressed cross-departmentally in liaison with the Equality Commission. The development of the Accessible Transport Strategy should provide specific information on disability and transport for the Department.
- Publication of the 2001 Census results has allowed updating of key statistics for equality analysis, as well as providing new datasets not previously available (eg. on ethnic minority numbers and on carers).

- The Equality Research and Information Website, launched in April 2004, 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.
- Copies of regular NICVA Research Updates are circulated to Business Areas.
- During the report period 1 final EQIA was issued on The Review of the Blue Badge Scheme. The impacts of the policy and those of other completed EQIAs will be monitored over their periods of implementation to identify any unforeseen outcomes and to ensure that all objectives are being achieved. Results will be analysed to determine whether or not the impact of the policies on any of the nine equality groups has changed significantly.
- The Department has established a formal monitoring system for completed EQIAs. Following issue of a final EQIA, the Equality Unit convenes a meeting with the policy holder and the Department's statistician to agree monitoring arrangements and the timing of the preparation of the first Annual monitoring report, usually 12 months after implementation. At the meeting it is agreed how the policy will be monitored in terms of impacts, the data sources to be used are confirmed, including whether any additional qualitative or quantitative analysis is required. Arrangements are made for an in-year review to assess progress in the production of an annual monitoring report. Monitoring Reports will be published as part of the Annual Progress Report to The Equality Commission.
- Monitoring reports on completed EQIAs on the Discontinuance of Service on the Antrim/Knockmore Railway Line and The Regional Transportation Strategy are appended to this report in Annex A.
- All policy development has a strong evidence base and data focus. This data is utilized fully in screening policies and in EQIAs.

Section 6: 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 steps taken to audit/improve arrangements to make affected groups more aware of information disseminated by the authority and the services it provides.
- Describe any arrangements to develop monitoring systems regarding access to information and services to ensure equality of opportunity.
- Outline any factors that enhanced or impeded the process of information provision and ensuring/improving access to services during the period.

Prompt:

Are alternative formats provided where appropriate to enable people from across the nine Section 75 categories to have access to all services?

Does the authority monitor uptake of services as a standard procedure?

- During the course of 2003/04 the Department developed internal guidance on making information accessible, which was issued to business areas on 21 January 2004. The Guidance was developed in conjunction with the Equality Forum. This included specific arrangements to monitor access to information provided by the Department and review implementation of the Guidance by March 2005. The review will assess demand for information in accessible formats, research the approaches adopted by the various business areas and gauge the views of customers and Section 75 Groups. The Guide will be amended and updated following the review.

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

- Bilateral meetings have been held with an Equality Forum, made up of representatives from Section 75 groups and senior officials of the Department, to provide information and review progress generally on S75 issues. The forum has reviewed accessibility of information and provided feedback on difficulties and problems. The lessons learnt and good practice is then promulgated across the Department through the Equality Working Group.
- The Commission aims to utilise the expertise and work undertaken by ESNRIG, and coordinate those with the work of an inter-agency advisory group which it facilitates, which includes representatives of public authorities,

the voluntary and community sector and trade unions. The coordination will build on the lessons from the Commission's consultation process on equality. This includes monitoring and will lead to the development of processes and mechanisms to produce additional S75 monitoring guidance for use by this Department and other public authorities.

- 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/rddocs.htm. This can be accessed from the Department's internet site.
- Following a general review of communications within the Department, a policy has been adopted whereby all new websites will be constructed in accordance with the standards provided by the e-Government Unit. This includes ensuring that the websites are capable of interacting with assistive technology. The policy will ensure that the standards are applied when the existing sites are refreshed.
- The Department's Roads Service is currently reviewing both its internal and external communication strategies.
- 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.
- Regular customer-based surveys are carried out by Water Service, Roads Service, and Ports and Public Transport Division. Roads Service carries out two annual customer based surveys; NISRA Omnibus Survey that provides quantitative feedback and PriceWaterhouseCoopers hold focus groups that provide qualitative feedback. Roads Service also provides information about the services it provides through its website, leaflets and attendance at local exhibitions/shows. Customer surveys will include questions about quality and accessibility of information provided by the Agency.
- The extension of the concessionary fares scheme was widely advertised in local and regional newspapers along with press releases and website

information with particular focus on people with disabilities. The Department took care to communicate effectively with the Blind. Application forms and Welcome packs were both issued with audio-tapes and information was broadcast in talking newspapers. Application forms are available on request. The Department is currently investigating ways of better advertising the Scheme to eligible persons.

- Uptake of concessionary fares is monitored. This provides headline figures for the number of people in each concessionary category who hold concessionary SmartPasses and can be used to calculate the number of journeys taken and the average annual cost of each SmartPass holder. Correspondence is monitored carefully to ensure any difficulties in obtaining and operating the SmartPass are remedied.
- The review of the “Getting Out and About” Website (funded by DRD) was completed in 2003/2004. The website at www.ni-transportguide.info makes an important contribution to raising the profile of accessible transport for disabled people.
- The Department’s Rural Transport Fund Internet Website is the first NICS site to obtain a Triple A accreditation for accessibility. The World Wide Web Consortium, an international vendor neutral consortium, has set the Triple A standard to promote the availability of web services and information for all, irrespective of disability.
- Work commenced on the preparation of an Accessible Transport Strategy with the publication of an Issues Paper in February 2004.
- Regional Planning and Transportation Division worked in partnership with Community Technical Aid to produce a guide on the Regional Development Strategy.

Section 7: Complaints

- Identify the number of formal Section 75 complaints received by the authority during the period.
- Identify the number of these Section 75 complaints which were resolved during the period.
- Identify the number of these Section 75 complaints which are in the process of being resolved.
- Identify the number of these Section 75 complaints which were not resolved to the satisfaction of the complainant.

Prompt:

*Does the authority have in place a Section 75 complaints procedure?
Does the authority monitor Section 75 complaints and the issues arising?*

Have complaints led to policy changes or an undertaking of an Equality Impact Assessment of a policy relating to a complaint?

- The Department has a formal complaints procedure. Complaints received are monitored regularly.
- During this report period the Department received one complaint from North Belfast Senior Citizen's Forum acting on behalf of a 62 year old lady who claimed she was directly affected by the fact that women aged between 60 and 64 are not included in the Concessionary Fares Scheme. The lady also attempted to take the Department to Court under Article 3 of the Sex Discrimination (NI) Order 1976. The Northern Ireland Transport Holding Company (NITHC) were named as the defendant in the case. NITHC brought the Department into the case as a third party given that it sets concessionary fares policy. When financial backing for the case was withdrawn the Plaintiff withdrew her case.
- The Department's view is that the scheme does not adversely impact on women between the ages of 60 and 65 and to have different eligibility ages for women and men would contravene the Sex Discrimination (NI) Order 1976. The complainant was informed of this and advised that they could pursue the matter further with the Equality Commission if they were not satisfied.

Section 8: Timetable

- Provide an update of your equality scheme implementation timetable, identifying any changes since your previous report. Please detail planned actions undertaken during the year and planned actions outstanding.

Prompt:

Is the authority on course to complete the commitments in its 5-year timetable? If not what action is being taken to ensure completion of timetable commitments?

Do Board and Senior Officers review the implementation timetable on a regular basis?

- Details of progress on the Equality Scheme EQIA Programme were been provided in February.
- Although there has been slippage on the original EQIA timetable due to the difficulties in forecasting precisely the pace of policy development work, over the report period – April 2003 to March 2004 - considerable progress has been made on the preparation of equality impact assessments, with one final EQIA issued up to the end of March 2004. Three EQIAs issued for consultation in 2002/2003 being finalised, 3 draft EQIAs issued, 6 draft EQIAs being prepared for issue, and research undertaken for a further 3 draft EQIAs. Details are set out in the attached Annex B. In addition during this period, a preliminary equality assessment was included in the Water Reform Consultation Document and an Issues Paper was published on the Accessible Transport Strategy.
- 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. It is likely that these will fall to the Northern Ireland Transport Holding Company (NITHC) once it is designated for Section 75.
- On the other commitments, further training courses on S75 awareness and EQIA methodology and consultation were organised for staff.
- The Department has developed a system for monitoring the impacts of completed EQIAs.
- A Departmental Guide to Accessible Information has been developed and was circulated to all Business Areas in January 2004.

- Areas such as the Good Relations Statutory Duty, consultation on screening and refinement of data collection and monitoring systems require further work in light of Guidance awaited from OFMDFM and the Equality Commission.

- Internal guidelines on consultation have also been held pending the completion of central guidance and further consideration of the issues highlighted in the OFMDFM sponsored review of consultation. Good practice in consultation is promulgated through the Department's Equality Forum and Equality Working Group meetings.

Section 9: Consultation, participation and engagement

Provide details of organisational arrangements for managing Section 75 consultation exercises and processes e.g. system, processes, methods and communication channels used.

Provide details of processes adopted to participate/engage with affected groups.

Prompt:

Describe the system put in place by the authority to plan and manage consultation exercises.

What are the main consultation methods that you have used?

Have consultation exercises involved consulting on equality/good relations in conjunction with other policy development/review areas e.g. best value, good practice reviews?

Has the authority used the existing communication channels of groups or consortia within the voluntary/community sector? If so please give examples and comment on the usefulness of using such mechanisms.

Have consultation exercises been 'joined-up', in relation to consulting on similar policies at the same time or in relation to joint consultation exercises with other public authorities?

Has the authority developed an overall strategy, plans or processes to engage directly with representatives of affected groups? If so what mechanisms have been used and have benefits been realised?

Has consultation/participation been evaluated and improved during the period? Has evaluation led to better approaches to engagement with affected groups?

- The Department is committed to carrying out consultations in accordance with the Equality Commission's Guidelines. The main methods used to date 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. Consultation has not yet been carried out by e-mail, although it is proposed to review the benefits of issuing consultation documents using a mixture of e-mail and post.
- Focused pre-consultation with key representatives of S75 Groups is carried out on all relevant policies as part of the policy/legislation process.
- The bi-annual meetings held with an Equality Forum, made up of S75 representatives and senior officials have proved to be a very useful method for consulting on general S75 issues. Presentations on major policies like the Belfast Metropolitan Area Plan and the Regional Strategic Transport Network

Transport Plan have been given at the Department's biannual Equality Forum meetings with S75 representatives.

- ❑ Where additional Departments, Local Councils or Harbour Authorities are affected the consultation papers reflect this, for example a joint making of legislation with DARD/DRD/DOE, etc.
- ❑ The Department has a representative on the Consultation Advisory Group set up to assist an OFMDFM sponsored review of consultation. The Department will be developing further internal consultation guidelines when the final recommendations are to hand.
- ❑ In the meantime, 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.
- ❑ The Department's database of consultees is continuously updated and refined.
- ❑ The Department sets great store on pre consultation. In the year 2003/2004, the Department undertook extensive consultation on the development of two major transport plans falling out of the Regional Transportation Strategy: the Belfast Metropolitan Transport Plan (BMTP) and the Regional Strategic Transport Network Transport Plan (RSTNTP). The BMTP was informed by the views of focus, reference and stakeholders groups and the outcome of a working conference. It will also inform the preparation of the Belfast Metropolitan Area Plan, which will also be subject to extensive consultation. The RSTNTP was also developed in light of the views of key stakeholders and the outcome of a working conference. Both draft plans are currently going through the full EQIA process.
- ❑ Detailed consultation was also carried out in respect of preliminary proposals to reform Water and Sewerage Services in Northern Ireland. Pre-consultation meetings were held with the Equality Commission and Age Concern and a series of six public meetings and 22 stakeholders' meetings were convened across Northern Ireland to allow full discussion of the proposals. A feedback report covering all the issues raised, including equality issues, was published in October 2003.

Section 10: The Good Relations duty

Provide details of steps to progress the good relations duty, such as undertaking a good relations audit, developing a strategy or providing training.

Prompt:

What steps has the authority undertaken to promote the good relations duty?

Has the authority developed a strategy for implementing good relations? If so please provide details of the key elements of this.

Has the authority undertaken an audit of its policies that impact on good relations?

What models or approaches to good relations has the authority adopted?

Has the authority worked in partnership with other public authorities or other bodies to develop its approach to promotion of good relations?

Have any policies been changed to better address the promotion of good relations? If so please provide some detail on these.

- ❑ All EQIAs carried out address the implications of proposals for Good Relations, pending final guidance on handling of S75 (2) obligations from OFMDFM.
- ❑ The Department has participated fully in the follow –up to the Shared Future consultation and the development of a Good Relations Strategy.
- ❑ Departmental representatives attended a bilateral meeting with the head of Community Relations and Reconciliation Division in OFMDFM in October 2003 to discuss good relations' issues relevant to the Department, such as the Regional Development Strategy, the Regional Transportation Strategy, the location of infrastructure projects and the erection of arches, flags and emblems.
- ❑ The Department has the power under Article 73 of the Roads (NI) Order 1993 to issue consents in respect of the erection of traditional arches. The Department's primary consideration in determining whether consents should be issued is the safety of the road user. Applicants must provide public liability insurance, outline drawings and an engineering certificate of safety. Advice is also sought from the PSNI on each proposal. Following a Judicial Review of a decision to approve the erection of an arch at Glengormley, revised guidance was issued to staff in 2003 to ensure that Human Rights, Good Relations and Equality issues are taken into account in reaching a

decision. Efforts are made to identify those responsible for the erection of illegal arches with a view to encouraging compliance with the legislation.

- The Department is becoming increasingly aware of the implications for Good Relations of actions to remove material such as flags which have been erected illegally on its property. The Department does not condone or support the unauthorised use of Departmental property for flying of flags, bunting or other emblems. Obligations to promote Good Relations under Section 75(2) must, however, be balanced against duty of care to staff or contractors who may have to remove the material in difficult circumstances. The Department has undertaken, in discussion with the Equality Commission to consider, later in the year, in light of the outcome of research carried out by the Equality Commission, the possibility of carrying out an EQIA on procedures which impact on the Good Relations Duty.

Section 11: Impacts and outcomes

Please provide relevant information about the impact of implementation of Section 75 to end of March 2004. Information provided should be in relation to outputs and outcomes being achieved. Also clarify the outcomes which have impacted on the authority, in terms of efficiency or effectiveness, and outcomes for people in the nine categories.

This could include: details of existing policies changed to better deliver equality of opportunity; incorporation of the EQIA process into policy development; information about impact of new policy (better service provision, alternative service provision, accessibility to services, information gathering on users/non-users of services, satisfaction survey information); information on improved policy/services for the nine categories.

Prompt:

How is policy formulation being managed to take account of the need to mainstream the Section 75 duties?

Are all new or revised policies equality proofed by the authority? If so what processes are used? Is the 7 step EQIA process mainstreamed into policy processes?

Is there any evidence of how newly formulated policies, or existing policies changed as a result of impact assessment, are better delivering equality and/or good relations?

Has EQIA led to better policy making and service delivery? Please provide specific examples. These should indicate which Section 75 groups have benefited from policy changes and how.

What, at this stage, do you perceive to be the main outcomes from implementation of the statutory duties?

- Assessment of equality implications is an integral part of the Department's policy development process.
- All new or revised policies are screened for possible equality implications using the Department's screening analysis form. Consideration is being given to the introduction of a mechanism to facilitate consultation on screening decisions.
- The Department usually carries out focused pre-consultation with appropriate S75 representatives. This helps in the formulation and screening of its policies.

- It is still very early to assess the benefits and outcomes of the EQIA process given the small number of final EQIAs issued to date. Effective pre-consultation also obviates the need for radical adjustment of policy proposals. Many of the outputs of the EQIA process are improved standards of consultation and accessibility of information. Notwithstanding this, however, it is clear that Section 75 has had a major influence in the development of policy and the delivery of services. This has been achieved through the increased awareness of staff at all levels of S75 considerations, and the needs of S75 groups, through engagement with representatives of S75 groups, generally, in the Department's Equality Forum and, specifically, through pre-consultation on policy proposals.

Examples of issues addressed in the EQIA process include:

- Following the consultation process on the RTS Draft EQIA, the Department agreed that research into the transport needs of disabled people should be considered as part of the Accessible Transport Strategy included in the RTS.
- Following the Concessionary Fares EQIA, changes were made to ensure that the Senior SmartPass application process was made as simple and accessible as possible with postal applications, large print and audio versions of the application form and offers of assistance in completion of it. An undertaking was also given to consider the Scheme in the context of the Accessible Transport Strategy.
- During the development of Planning Policy Statement (PPS) 12, there was criticism of the level of engagement with community groups. Community Technical Aid were then employed to engage with groups. Pro-consultation also demonstrated the need for Travellers' specific needs to be covered in the PPS.
- A number of issues were identified in the EQIA on the Blue Badge scheme, including the level of fees, which would merit separate, further consultation.

Section 12: Additional comments on Mainstreaming

The main aim of the statutory duties is to help to mainstream equality of opportunity and good relations considerations into the functions of the authority, leading to better policies and service delivery.

Whilst many of the questions in the previous sections of this template relate to actions on mainstreaming of Section 75 duties we would be grateful if you could provide any additional information/comment which you think may be relevant to your report. You may wish to report here on your view of the:

- extent of mainstreaming of the duties within the authority
 - benefits for the authority resulting from mainstreaming
 - factors which have impeded mainstreaming
 - plans for future effective mainstreaming of the duties.
-
- The systems put in place across the Department and the NICS generally in support of the Equality Scheme - ie 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.
 - The benefits arising from mainstreaming include more effective policy making and improved access to services and information.
 - 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.
 - Areas such as the Good Relations Statutory Duty, consultation on screening and refinement of data collection and monitoring systems require further work in light of Guidance awaited from OFMDFM and the Equality Commission.

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 and for the Section 75 categories.

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 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 QUESTION B, please tick appropriate boxes below on 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			✓
Persons of different political opinion			✓
Persons of different racial groups			✓
Persons of different age		✓	
Persons with different marital status			✓
Persons of different sexual orientation			✓
Men and women generally	✓		
Persons with and without a disability	✓		
Persons with and without dependents		✓	

Many thanks, in advance, for reporting to the Commission on your implementation of the duties during 2003 – 4. Please ensure that your completed progress report is forwarded to the Commission by 31 August 2004. This will enable us to produce and publish the overall progress report for the period in a timely way.

If a final signed off version of your report is not submitted by the closing date please ensure that the Commission receives a 'draft' report by that date.

Information in progress reports that do not meet the deadline date for submission will not be considered in the overall progress report for the year.

Monitoring Statement REGARDING THE CLOSURE OF the Antrim Knockmore Railway line

Background

Services on the Antrim-Knockmore rail line were discontinued at the end of June 2003; however, the line has been kept open for emergency diversionary purposes.

A review of the current use of the line for diversionary purposes is currently being undertaken by Translink : its publication is imminent.

Translink continue to operate a bus service (Service 109a), which has replaced rail services between Antrim and Lisburn. The number of bus services from Antrim to Lisburn is as follows:

Monday-Friday	9
Saturday	9
Sunday	5

The number of bus services from Lisburn to Antrim is:

Monday-Friday	10
Saturday	9
Sunday	5

Originally, 11 services operated daily. Translink have advised that the reduction in service apparent from the figures above was due insufficient passenger demand. Translink have advised that the 109a service was advertised via various media. Letters were sent to MLAs, Councillors and local Representatives. Also, leaflets were distributed to business premises and all rail halts have the service advertised; an advertising campaign in local papers has also taken place.

Every bus operating on the service is low-floor; stops are accessible. Bus fares have been subject to the annual inflation review, which also affected Rail fares.

Translink have recorded 21 telephone complaints and 5 written complaints about the line's discontinuance. No complaints have been received about the quality of the bus service.

Between 1 July 2003 and 22 February 2004, 3,900 passengers used the bus service. 323 of these were concession trips for young people up to 16 years old and 510 were school pass trips.

CONCLUSION

The Department believes that the discontinuance of normal passenger services on the line has had a limited differential impact on women generally, Roman Catholics and young people. The Department remains of the opinion that the bus substitution service alleviates any limited differential impact on all groups.

Annex A

Monitoring Statement on the Regional Transportation Strategy for Northern Ireland 2002-2012

The strategic direction and underlying principles of the Regional Transportation Strategy (RTS) were unanimously agreed by the Northern Ireland Assembly on 3 July 2002. The purpose of the RTS is to support the Regional Development Strategy and to make a significant contribution towards achieving the longer-term transportation vision:

“To have a modern, sustainable, safe transportation system which benefits society, the economy and the environment and which actively contributes to social inclusion and everyone’s quality of life.”

The RTS identifies a £3.5 billion programme of work that should be carried out over the 10 years to 2011/2012. However, it is important to note that, in relation to the level of public expenditure funding for the Strategy, the outcome will be determined through the normal budgetary process which will take account of the financial needs of other Departments and decisions on priorities. The rate of progress in implementing the RTS initiatives, both public transport and highways, will clearly be dependent on the level of funding secured.

In addition, as far as capital works are concerned, commitments to implement major infrastructure schemes cannot be given until appropriate economic and other relevant assessments have been considered, and statutory procedures (which may result in public inquiries) have been satisfactorily concluded.

The RTS Equality Impact Assessment carried out in 2002 found that the additional transportation initiatives within the RTS would benefit all categories of people in Section 75 of the Northern Ireland Act 1998.

The RTS will be implemented mainly through three transport plans, the Belfast Metropolitan Transport Plan, the Regional Strategic Network Transport Plan and the Sub-Regional Transport Plan. Each plan will be subject to an Equality Impact Assessment. Until the Transport Plans are finalised the Department will produce an annual Regional Transport Programme (RTP). The RTP for 2004-2005 reviews progress made in 2003-2004 and outlines a programme of work for 2004-2005.

The RTS is a ten year strategy and as yet it is too early to measure the impacts of initiatives contained within it. The Department will consider equality as part of the RTS mid-term review in June 2006.

One final EQIA issued in 2003/2004 -

- Blue Badge Scheme

Three draft EQIA's issued for consultation in 2002/2003 and now being finalised –

- Planning Policy Statement 12 - Housing in Settlements
- Planning Policy Statement 13 – Transportation and Land Use
- Provision of Pedestrian Facilities

Three draft EQIA's issued –

- Transport Programme for People with Disabilities
- Operation and Management of Carparks
- Review of Concessionary Fares

Six draft EQIA's being prepared for issue

- Rural Transport Fund
- Planning Policy Statement 5 – Retailing and Town Centres
- Belfast Metropolitan Transport Plan
- Regional Strategic Transport Network Transport Plan
- Water Reform
- Accessible Transport Strategy

Research undertaken for three EQIA's

- Planning Policy Statement 14 – Development in the Countryside
- Planning Policy Statement 20 – Sustainable Development in the Coastal Zone
- Households not connected to mains water or sewerage