



## 5 year Review of Equality Scheme

This report covers the review of the operation of the Equality Scheme for the period 2012-2017

The document is available in an accessible format if required

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## 1. Executive Summary

- 1.1. The Commission for Victims and Survivors was established in May 2008 under the Victims and Survivors Order 2006, as amended by the Commission for Victims and Survivors Act 2008.
- 1.2. The Commission is a Non-departmental Public Body of the Executive Office (formerly OFMDFM). The principal aim of the Commission is to promote the interests of victims and survivors of the Troubles/Conflict.
- 1.3. The Commission is unique in its construction and remit. Founded in May 2008 in the aftermath of 40 years of conflict in Northern Ireland and ten years after it was first recommended in the Good Friday Agreement which states:

*“The participants believe that it is essential to acknowledge and address the suffering of the victims of violence as a necessary element of reconciliation. They look forward to the results of the work of the Northern Ireland Victims Commission.*

*It is recognised that victims have a right to remember as well as to contribute to a changed society. The achievement of a peaceful and just society would be the true memorial to the victims of violence.”*

- 1.4. Anticipated by the Belfast/Good Friday Agreement in 1998, formulated in legislation in 2006, established by Ministers in 2008 and given a policy framework by the Northern Ireland Executive in 2009, the Commission’s principal aim is to promote the interests of victims and survivors.
- 1.5. This aim is the central reference point for all of the Commission’s work.

### **Equality of Opportunity and Good Relations**

- 1.6. The Commission’s Equality Scheme was developed in 2011-12 and approved by the Equality Commission in May 2012. The Commission Board has reviewed the approved scheme and the extent to which it has provided a workable basis for mainstreaming the need to promote equality of opportunity and good relations into policy making over the last 5 years. There is a commitment to promoting equality and good relations at the highest level in the organisation through the activities of the Commissioner.
- 1.7. Section 75 of the Northern Ireland Act 1998 (the Act) requires public authorities, in carrying out their functions relating to Northern Ireland, to have

due regard to the need to promote equality of opportunity and regard to the desirability of promoting good relations across a range of categories outlined in the Act<sup>1</sup>. Due to the remit of the work undertaken by the Commission for Victims and Survivors positive impacts can mainly be achieved for older people, for people with a disability, for both genders and for people from both communities.

- 1.8. In our Equality Scheme we set out how the Commission for Victims and Survivors proposed to fulfill the Section 75 statutory duties.
- 1.9. The Board is content that we have committed the necessary resources in terms of people, time and money to make sure that the Section 75 statutory duties are complied with and that the Equality Scheme was implemented effectively.
- 1.10. We committed to having effective internal arrangements in place for ensuring that we promote equality and good relations, and that it is mainstreamed into all of our activities. We recognise, however that we could do more in regard to monitoring the impact of our activities on the Section 75 groups and pledge to do more in the coming years to monitor and review our progress in this area.
- 1.11. We have developed and delivered a programme of communication and training and have ensured our staff and board members were fully aware of our Equality Scheme, providing induction and annual refresher training to ensure they understand the commitments and obligations within it. We plan to continue to update new staff and Forum Members on their responsibilities in relation to Section 75,
- 1.12. The Commission for Victims and Survivors, continues to be fully committed to effectively fulfilling our Section 75 statutory duties across all functions (including employment and procurement) through the effective implementation of the Equality Scheme. As a small organisation however with a staff of 12 and a low rate of turnover, effecting change in the composition of the workforce is slow. and a change in religious background of one postholder can produce a disproportionate impact on the overall workforce composition. Through our meetings with the Equality Commission on the Article 55 reviews they are satisfied that all necessary measures have been implemented to ensure fair participation in the workforce.
- 1.13. We realise the important role that the community and voluntary sector and the general public have to play to ensure the Section 75 statutory duties are effectively implemented. In our Equality Scheme we demonstrated our

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<sup>1</sup> See section 1.1 of our Equality Scheme.

commitment to ensuring there are opportunities, for people affected by our work, to positively influence how we carry out our functions in line with our Section 75 statutory duties. We aim to engage more fully with the community and voluntary sector in the future, and to consider how we can better promote Section 75 through working in partnership with others.

- 1.14. The Equality Scheme also offered the means whereby persons directly affected by what they consider to be a failure, on our part, to comply with our Equality Scheme, can make complaints.

### **Key Lessons Learned and what more can we do?**

- 1.15. From our experience of implementing the Equality Scheme we have now identified the need to adopt more formal mechanisms for quarterly review of the Action Plan and compliance with the Scheme at SMT and Board meetings.
- 1.16. Since 2013 the Commission has reduced expenditure on the use of consultants, which is reflective of the good practice and infrastructure put in place by the use of those consultants. Resourcing the implementation of the scheme has been through all staff ensuring that in their day to day duties they are cognisant of the Statutory Duties, and through allocating overall responsibility to the Head of Corporate Services. It is acknowledged that this is the most efficient way of discharging our duties for an organisation of our scale.
- 1.17. Good practice has been implemented in terms of the promotion of equality and good relations through the approaches adopted by the Commission to engagement. The replenishment of the Forum is a case in point where changes to policy were made to ensure the Forum was more representative. Going forward consideration of nine equality categories will be embedded into the Commission's Communications Strategy as it is implemented and reviewed.
- 1.18. Since the appointment of the new Commissioner there have been increased opportunities for the organisation to demonstrate leadership in ensuring the people affected by our work, positively influence how we carry out our functions in line with our Section 75 statutory duties.
- 1.19. The Equality Scheme has ensured the annual review of the Commission's list of consultees and we will continue this practice and ensure all Section 75 categories are appropriately consulted and considered.

- 1.20. All those engaged in screening have been trained in the application of the screening template and the managers have found the application of screening a useful exercise in terms of ensuring the promotion of equality and good relations. There remains a need for the Commission to screen policies and provide advice to the Department on policy screening as part of our Advice to Ministers. We will ensure in the future that we are cognisant of the due regard duty is fully incorporated into the screening methodology. In addition to ensuring that there is a clear understanding that the Section 75 duties are regarded as continuous and that screening will be revisited if new evidence or information requires it.
- 1.21. There is a need to ensure annual monitoring is reflected in the Commission's Risk Register in order to ensure Equality remains a factor for consideration throughout the Commission's work and practice.
- 1.22. The scheme has resulted in a more targeted approach to implementing equality and good relations training. Short training sessions that are practical and contextualised to the work of the Commission have worked best. Some evaluation of training has been undertaken and this is an area where more attention will be directed in the future.
- 1.23. Since 2012, the Commission has published a range of reports and research documents which focus on achieving outcomes for victims and survivors, and, in turn, for the nine Section 75 categories. These include;

<b>Report/Area of Research</b>	<b>Aimed at</b>
Young People's Transgenerational Issues in Northern Ireland, April 2012	Young People and Children Political opinion Men and women
Pension for the Severely Injured Project Report, April 2014	Persons with a disability Political opinion Men and women Persons with dependants Marital Status Age
Towards a Better Future: The Transgenerational Impact of the Troubles on Mental Health, March 2015	Young People and Children Political opinion Men and women Persons with dependants
Evaluation of Personalised Budget, February 2016	Persons with a disability Political opinion Men and women Persons with dependants

Children and Young People Engagement Project: Research Report, April 2016	Young People and Children Political opinion Men and women
Victims and Survivors Mid-Term Review Project Final Summary Report, March 2017	Persons with a disability Political opinion Men and women Persons with dependants Marital Status Age

1.24. In 2016 the Commission undertook the Appointment of a Panel of victims and survivors to sustain membership of the Victims and Survivors Forum 2016-19 project. This was a new policy approach to creating a panel of people who have been deemed competent and ethical and who could;

- be used to populate the membership of the Victims and Survivors Forum; and
- widen the access and participation of victims and survivors in Commission consultation exercises.

1.25. The Appointment of a Panel took particular cognisance of the following Section 75 categories;

- Religious belief
- Political opinion
- Age
- Men and women
- Disability

Whilst monitoring and evaluation of the composition of the membership of the Forum following completion of the project has also resulted in feedback indicating that people with dependants are also considered.

1.26. In 2017 the Commission adopted a Memorandum of Understanding with the Victims and Survivors Service (VSS). The Commission, in partnership with VSS, has developed new monitoring arrangements which will fulfil the Commission's statutory duty to "keep under review the adequacy and effectiveness of services provided for victims and survivors by bodies or persons." These new arrangements will cover all support services and funding invested by the VSS under the Individual Needs Programme, Victims Support Programme and Peace IV and will take account of two key strategic developments: Standards for Services (as a measure of the 'Adequacy' of service provision) and Strategic Outcomes for Victims and Survivors (as a measure of 'Effectiveness' of service provision). This partnership, and the exchange of data from and to the VSS, is inclusive of a number of the nine Section 75 categories, but will notably provide the starting point for policy

advice regarding the children and grandchildren of victims and survivors and ensuring they get the best start in life.

- 1.27. The Commission has engaged with a wide range of victims and survivors groups in order to learn more about the needs of victims and survivors and to develop policy advice which is submitted to Ministers. These groups include people who are severely physically injured or psychologically injured as a result of a conflict related incident, people who are carers, both men and women and both older and younger people. There are however, some Section 75 categories which the Commission does not hold data on, or does not take steps to specifically and deliberately engage with. The Commission has noted the need to be more cognisant of these groups in future.
- 1.28. In the course of its work the Commission has acknowledged that it needs to undertake more activity in order to proactively engage with and consider the needs and requirements of the following Section 75 categories;
  - Racial group
  - Sexual orientation

## **2. Purpose of the Equality Scheme and Section 75 and the commitment to statutory duties**

- 2.1. The purpose of the Commission's Equality Scheme is to fulfill obligations under Section 75 of the Northern Ireland Act 1998 on the promotion of equality or opportunity and good relations. The Forum, Commissioner and staff of the Commission are committed to providing equality to all people of Northern Ireland, regardless of whichever group within the Section 75 categories they may belong.
- 2.2. The scheme sets out how the Commission proposes to fulfill the commitment to equality of opportunity with regard to all policies, powers, duties and functions.
- 2.3. Section 75 of the Northern Ireland Act 1998 (the Act) requires the Commission for Victims and Survivors to comply with two statutory duties when carrying out its functions in relation to Northern Ireland:
- 2.4. Section 75 (1)

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

  - persons of different religious belief, political opinion, racial group, age, marital status or sexual orientation
  - men and women generally
  - persons with a disability and persons without
  - persons with dependants and persons without.
- 2.5. Section 75 (2)

In addition, without prejudice to the obligations above, in carrying out our functions in relation to Northern Ireland we are required to have regard to the desirability of promoting good relations between persons of different religious belief, political opinion or racial group.
- 2.6. "Functions" include the "powers and duties" of a public authority<sup>2</sup>. This includes our employment and procurement functions.
- 2.7. The Commission is legally defined as a 'Body Corporate' which would normally be comprised of a Board of Directors. However, as a single appointment, the Commissioner solely fulfils the role of the Board. The Board is attended by the Secretary to the Commission, Head of Corporate

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<sup>2</sup> Section 98 (1) of the Northern Ireland Act 1998.

Services, Head of Policy & Research, and the Head of Communications and Engagement.

- 2.8. The Board and the Commissioner, are committed to the discharge of Section 75 obligations in all parts of the organisation and have committed the necessary available resources in terms of people, time and money to ensure that the Section 75 statutory duties are complied with and that our Equality Scheme can be implemented effectively.
- 2.9. The Commission's Corporate Plan details how the Commission plans activity under the strategic direction of the Victims and Survivors Strategy 2009-19 and how the Commission advises government on how it should address the comprehensive and complex needs of many victims and survivors. The Commission believes that supporting the needs of victims and survivors could make a substantial difference to life in Northern Ireland and contribute to many of the cross cutting outcomes in the draft Programme for Government 2016-21.
- 2.10. Research by the Commission indicates that almost one in three people in Northern Ireland consider themselves to be victims and survivors of the conflict. This equates to approximately 500,000 people and includes up to 200,000 adults with mental health problems, 40,000 people suffering with injuries and 3,720 families bereaved.
- 2.11. In considering and providing advice on how to meet the needs of those who identify as victims and survivors the Commission has also been aligned to the draft Programme for Government outcomes as follows:
  - Outcome 4 - We enjoy long, healthy, active lives;
  - Outcome 5 – We are an innovative, creative society where people can fulfil their potential;
  - Outcome 7 - We have a safe community where to respect the law and each other;
  - Outcome 8 - We care for others and we help those in need; and
  - Outcome 14 - We give our children and young people the best start in life.
- 2.12. Whilst the Corporate Plan acknowledges that the breadth of Section 75 categories are included in the Commission's work the Commissioner and the leadership in the organisation pledge to do more in order to directly identify equality duties within the Corporate Plan, and will develop ways of reviewing progress in relation to the implementation for section 75 at Board level.

## **Extent to which Senior Management have ensured scheme compliance**

- 2.13. The Board is ultimately responsible for Section 75 within the Commission for Victims and Survivors, and delegates the implementation of our obligations to the Senior Management Team
- 2.14. Equality of opportunity and good relations is included in the Commission's Code of Conduct and in our Equality, Diversity and Inclusion Policy which was adopted in February 2016. This means that our obligations in Section 75 are reflected in how we undertake our work and means that they should be inherent in the services that our staff deliver. Good governance, therefore, provides the context for respect and best practice
- 2.15. It is noted that equality of opportunity and good relations are embedded within our work (office relocation exercise; the development of policy advice and research; event management – conferences and seminars; replenishment and establishment of the Forum; redesign and redevelopment of the website; recruitment; and employment).
- 2.16. The Commission has also procured an external service provider to provide external advice on Equality and Good Relations matters as the capacity for this does not exist within the current staffing compliment.
- 2.17. The Commission has developed new monitoring arrangements which will fulfil the Commission's statutory duty to "keep under review the adequacy and effectiveness of services provided for victims and survivors by bodies or persons." These arrangements cover all support services and funding invested by the VSS, ensuring the Commission provides a 'quality assurance' role and supports the development of policy for victims and survivors.
- 2.18. In the last 5 years the Commission has continued to lobby the mainstream political parties, senior civil servants, groups within voluntary and community sector and other key stakeholders within government and internationally on matters directly related to victims which also reflect the interests of the Section 75 categories. However, the current political impasse has constrained the Commission although we continue to engage with, and impact upon those, with influence.
- 2.19. The Commission's Scheme of Delegation details requirements and a programme for the Commission's Senior Management Team and Board to meet and review progress.

2.20. However, there has been no opportunity for formal review and assessment of the Commission's compliance with the Equality Scheme. Therefore we will ensure that formal mechanisms for quarterly review of the Action Plan and compliance with the Scheme.

### **Expenditure of resources to ensure compliance with statutory duties**

#### **Staff Time**

2.21. Whilst an understanding and cognisance of equality of opportunity and good relations are embedded within the work of all Commission staff, not all staff would dedicate time on an annual basis to Section 75 compliance.

2.22. The following details the cost of staff time dedicated to S75 on an annual basis;

Secretary to the Commission	0.5%	£900
Head of Corporate Services	2%	£1,040
Corporate Services Manager	3%	£1,290
Finance, Assets and Premises Officer	2%	£840
<b>Total</b>		<b>£4,070</b>

#### **2.23. Use of Consultants**

2013-14		£3,900
2014-15		£1,800
2015-16		£3,315
2016-17		£1,020
<b>Total</b>		<b>£10,035</b>

2.24. Since 2013 the Commission has reduced expenditure on the use of consultants, which is reflective of the good practice and infrastructure put in place by the use of those consultants.

### 3. Impacts and Outcomes

- 3.1. The Commission for Victims and Survivors for Northern Ireland has continued to progress equality of opportunity and good relations throughout its work and in all areas of its business with staff and stakeholders.
- 3.2. Leadership commitment to Equality and Good Relations has been demonstrated through the role of the Forum, the Commissioner and the staff in the Commission. The Forum has been replenished and is now more representative of the nine section 75 groups.
- 3.3. The Commissioner has met with a wide range of victims' groups to identify on-going and emerging needs. Feedback from the Commissioner provides evidence that a wide variety of people of different ages, backgrounds, gender and political opinion engaged with the Commission. This included International engagement with 3 victims' groups in America.
- 3.4. A Communication and Engagement Strategy has been developed and a new post Head of Communications appointed and implementation of Social media strategy and communications strategy. The new strategy takes into consideration the need to engage with people from each of the Section 75 categories and the impact of which was a greater awareness of issues relation to victims and survivors and the Commissions role. Consideration of nine equality categories will be embedded into Communicaitons Strategy as it is implemented and reviewed.
- 3.5. Inequality of physical access to the Commission headquarters for team members and clients was addressed through relocation of the offices to Equality House. Annual monitoring is undertaken to ensure accessibility of physical access to the Commission offices in Equality House and external venues as arranged by the Commission for people with disabilities and older people.
- 3.6. Training has been provided for all staff on Section 75 and they are reminded of their roles and responsibilities in implementing Section 75 and on how it needs to be mainstreamed into all policy making and decision-making activities of the Commission.
- 3.7. Specific targeted training has been provided for staff undertaking screening activities and two of the policies screened such as the policy on replenishment of the Forum and Updated standards document for services for Victims and Survivors both polices will ensure better targeting and promotion of equality of opportunity in the delivery of services to victims and survivors.

- 3.8. Evaluation of the equality and good relations training has indicated there is an enhanced awareness of roles and responsibilities in promoting equality and good relations among new staff.
- 3.9. A significant review has been undertaken of monitoring and evaluation of services to victims and survivors and establishment of partnership with VSS to implement new monitoring arrangements to fulfil the Commissions statutory duties.
- 3.10. Due to the scale of the Commission the impact that can be delivered for the nine Section 75 groups will be enhanced through working in partnership. Accordingly the VSS and the Commission are working collaboratively to:
- Improve the Health and Wellbeing of Victims and Survivors
  - Care for Victims and Survivors and support those most in need
  - Support Victims and Survivors to engage in legacy issues
  - Improve opportunities for learning and development.
  - An important addition to the list of outcomes is as follows:
  - Giving children and grandchildren of Victims and Survivors the best start in life.
- 3.11. Therefore the impacts of the work of the Commission will aim to focus on positive impacts for young people in the future, as well as continuing to support and achieve outcomes for victims and survivors in a number of the other Section 75 categories.

## 4. Consultations, Screening and Equality Impact Assessments

- 4.1. In the last 5 years, there were no consultation exercises undertaken in relation to screening, EQIA or the impact of the Scheme. Consultees were advised of the outcome of screenings through screening reports which were published on the Commission's website. The Commission will continue to report on and publish the outcome of screening reports and EQIAs.
- 4.2. The Commission's list of consultees is updated and reviewed at the beginning of any or every consultation process.
- 4.3. The following policies have been screened in the last 5 years;

Year	Policy	Screened In or Out
2016-17	Procedure for the Replenishment of Panel and Forum Members	Screened out
2015-16	Equal Opportunities Policy	Screened out
	Procedure for the Replenishment of Panel and Forum Members	Screened out
2013-14	Code of Conduct Policy	Screened out
	Equal Opportunities Policy	Screened out
	Harassment Policy	Screened out
	Internal Complaints Policy	Screened out
	External Complaints Policy	Screened out

- 4.4. There have been no EQIAs undertaken in the last 5 years.
- 4.5. A Policy Review Schedule is presented at each SMT meeting. This schedule indicates policies which are due to be reviewed and provides a timeline for their review.
- 4.6. The Commission consulted on its Corporate Plan in 2017;

Year	Consultation	Details
2016-17	Corporate Plan 2017-2020	Consultation period ran from 28 February to 21 March 2017 with the Forum workshop taking place on 24 February 2017

4.7. The Commission has also responded to, and published, a range of consultations inclusive of a number of the Sections 75 categories. These include;

<b>Year</b>	<b>Consultation</b>
<b>2017 - 2018</b>	Consultation Response to Reforms of the Social Fund's Funeral Expenses Payment Scheme
	Consultation Response on the Safeguarding Board for Northern Ireland's Multi-Agency Neglect Strategy 2017-2019
<b>2016 - 2017</b>	Second Consultation Response on the Programme for Government 2016 - 2021
	Consultation Response on Project Life 2 - A draft Strategy for Suicide Prevention in the North of Ireland
	Consultation Response on the Draft PfG Framework 2016 - 2021
<b>2015 - 2016</b>	Consultation Response on Age Discrimination Legislation
<b>2014 - 2015</b>	Consultation Response on Lifeline Crisis Response Service
	Consultation Response on the Department of Justice Draft Victims Charter
<b>2013 - 2014</b>	Response to OPONI Consultation on the Disability Action Plan 2013 - 2018
	Consultation Response on Reform Package for OPONI
	CVSNI Response to COPNI Consultation
	Consultation Response on Good Relations Indicator Review 2013 - 2014
	Consultation Response on a Proposed Justice Bill
<b>2012 - 2013</b>	Consultation Response on the Future Operation of the OPONI
	CVSNI Response to SEUPB Consultation on PEACE IV 2014 - 2020
	CVSNI Response to DSD Consultation Paper on DLA Reform and PIP
	EU Consultation Response

## **Lessons Learned and what more can we do?**

- 4.8. Ongoing review of the Commission's list of consultees ensures all S75 categories are consulted and considered.
- 4.9. There remains a need for the Commission to screen policies and provide advice to the Department on policy screening as part of our Advice to Ministers.
- 4.10. In order to ensure the Commission continues to learn from good practice within this area, going forward the Commission will;
  - Continue to provide practical training and consultancy support to managers when they are engaged in screening
  - Develop a spreadsheet recording all existing, revised and new policies and record of section 75 activity and review cycle
  - Give consideration to how to more effectively access useful internal and external data sets when conducting screening in the future.
  - Continue to use the informal contacts that have been established with various representative groups willing to offer advice and comment when conducting screening
  - Consult on its Corporate Plan to ensure victims and survivors, and the general public have the opportunity to provide input to our work.

## **5. Monitoring Policies**

- 5.1. The Commission is required to complete a review of employment composition and practices Under Article 55 of the Fair Employment and Treatment (NI) Order 1998 at least once every three years. This review enables the Commission to determine whether or not we need to take action to ensure that Protestants and Roman Catholics are enjoying and are likely to continue to enjoy fair participation in employment at the Commission.
- 5.2. The Commission has used HRConnect in order to undertake a number of recruitment competitions in the last 5 years. An equality monitoring form is included as part of the application process, allowing the Commission to use this information to complete the Article 55 Review.
- 5.3. In reviewing and monitoring the Commission's workforce, we have determined gaps and taken steps to include welcome statements in recruitment advertising in order to encourage applications from certain community backgrounds.
- 5.4. In 2016/17 the Commission ensured the following arrangements were also in place to monitor policies;
- 5.5. The Commission has developed new monitoring arrangements which will fulfil the Commission's statutory duty to "keep under review the adequacy and effectiveness of services provided for victims and survivors by bodies or persons." These arrangements monitor the support services and funding provided by the VSS, and ensures the Commission monitors and evaluates the effectiveness of services and supports the development of policy for victims and survivors.

## **Communication and Accessibility**

- 5.6. Annual monitoring of accessibility of physical access to the Commission offices in Equality House and external venues as arranged by the Commission.
- 5.7. Website developed in March 2016 will give improved access to information along with monitoring and review of site traffic.
- 5.8. Consultation on Corporate Plan and feedback received and implemented.
- 5.9. Head of Communications and Engagement appointed, resulting in implementation and monthly review of Social Media Strategy and Communications Strategy

- Through implementation of the Communications Strategy there will be greater access to the Commission's work and information for people with sensory impairment or learning disability, children and young people.
- The Communications and Engagement Team have consistently developed the profile to the Commission to broader Social Media channels and audiences. This includes the significant growth of the Commission's Twitter account, the launch of a Facebook account as well as driving t viewers to the website. Other platforms such as YouTube have been updated and are aimed at reaching a wide audience.
- The Victims and Survivors Forum has a key role to the Communications Strategy. The Commission will present Forum activity and deliberations through the use of news articles, blogs and vlogs, again aimed at reaching a wide audience.

## **Human Resources**

5.10. Induction and training for new Forum members.

5.11. Provision of refresher training and evaluation of training to Commissioner and staff.

- Implementation of monitoring and evaluation of training demonstrating an increased awareness of equality, good relations and disability equality among staff.
- Ongoing monitoring and evaluation of training for Forum and the Board demonstrating evidence of mainstreaming and cascading from the Strategic lead of the organisation.

## **Governance**

5.12. Annual review of audit of inequalities and equality action plan

- The Annual Review of the action plan will ensure better information is available to all Section 75 categories on the needs of victims and survivors.

5.13. Annual monitoring of equality legislation in risk management register

- Improved compliance with Section 75 in policy and procedures through reference to Equality legislation in the Risk Register.

5.14. More inclusive representation on the Forum through replenishment exercise designed to ensure wider participation.

- All Section 75 categories will be impacted by the measures implemented to promote engagement with victims and survivors.

5.15. Monthly Senior Management team update on Equality and Good Relations contract

### **Engagement**

- 5.16. New procedures implemented for replenishment of panel members and forum members to promote equality and inclusion.
- All Section 75 categories will be impacted by the measures implemented to promote engagement with victims and survivors.

### **Lessons Learned**

- 5.17. There is a need to ensure annual monitoring of equality legislation is reflected in the Commission's Risk Register in order to ensure Equality remains a factor for consideration throughout the Commission's work and practice.
- 5.18. The Commission has also noted the need of more effective collation of information in the course of its work and engagement in relation to the section 75 groups in the future.

## **6. Training**

- 6.1. Annual refresher training for Section 75 duties and Disability Awareness has been provided on an annual basis to Commissioner and staff. Relevant staff have also been provided with targeted training in relation to dealing with people who are vulnerable or who are mentally ill.
- 6.2. In addition to staff members, S75 and Disability Awareness training has been or is scheduled to be provided to the Forum, the Board and ARAC members.
- 6.3. The implementation of monitoring and evaluation of this training has demonstrated an increased awareness of equality, good relations and disability equality among staff.
- 6.4. In 2016-17 staff also received training with regards to the new Safeguarding Policy and relevant members of staff received training in Recruitment and Selection. These training programmes included reference to equality of opportunity and good relations as required.
- 6.5. In terms of providing training to staff, Senior Management, associated committees and the Forum over the last five years the Commission has determined that it needs to be practical, proportionate and contextualised to the nature of the work the Commission engages in.

## **7. Access to Information**

- 7.1. In 2016-17, as a result of monitoring and evaluation of services for providing information, the Commission undertook a redesign and redevelopment of its website.
- 7.2. This review has resulted in action and improvement in relation to the access to information and services.
- 7.3. In addition to this the Commission has adopted, and annually reviews, the Publication Scheme. The Scheme sets out the classes of information we hold the manner in which we publish information, and whether a charge will be made for the information. The purpose of the Publication Scheme is to ensure a significant amount of information is available, without the need for a specific request. The Schemes has enabled the Commission to publish more information pro-actively and to develop a greater culture of openness.

## **8. The Commission’s timetable for measures proposed in the scheme.**

8.1. Whilst the majority of the measures set out in the original timetable have been implemented, the Commission has determined that it needs to increase activity in order to meet the inequalities identified under effective governance;

<b>INEQUALITY IDENTIFIED</b>	<b>ACHIEVED?</b>
Data gaps for measuring equality impacts in Commission work	Policy advice provided to Ministers/The Executive Office includes recommendations with regards to equality of opportunity and good relations.
Need to reference equality legislation in the risk management register	Improved compliance with Section 75 in policy and procedures through reference to Equality legislation in the Risk Register.

8.2. The Commission will consider mechanisms to address identifying data gaps for measuring equality impacts and will take steps to explicitly reference equality legislation in the risk register.

8.3. The Commission commitment to providing an Annual Report to the Equality Commission, continuing training and communication on the equality scheme commitments have all been met.

### **Details of how the scheme will be published.**

8.4. Commitments on how the scheme would be published were met.

8.5. A summary of the scheme in an easy read format was produced. Notification of the draft and final version of the scheme were issued to all consultees on the consultation list and targeted consultation was undertaken. The scheme was made available to consultees on the website. The equality scheme is available to the public on the Commission website and will continue to be placed on the site.

### **Commission arrangements for dealing with complaints arising from a failure to comply with the scheme.**

8.6. The Commissions Equality scheme sets out the procedure for investigating any complaints regarding Section 75 duties. No complaints were lodged under the Commission Equality Scheme during the five year period.

**A commitment to conducting a review of the scheme within five years of its submission to the Equality Commission and to forwarding a report of this review to the Equality Commission.**

8.7. The review has helped to take stock of achievements to date and to reflect on where the organisation can improve upon section 75 activities going forward.