

EQUALITY COMMISSION FOR NORTHERN IRELAND
Public Authority 2008 - 2009
Annual Progress Report on Section 75 of the NI Act 1998 and
Section 49A of the Disability Discrimination Order (DDO) 2006

This report template includes a number of self assessment questions regarding implementation of the Section 75 statutory duties from **1 April 2008 to 31 March 2009**. This template also includes a number of questions regarding implementation of Section 49A of the DDO from the **1 April 2008 to 31 March 2009**. Please enter information at the relevant part of each section and ensure that it is submitted electronically (by completing this template) and in hardcopy, with a signed cover letter from the Chief Executive or, in his/her absence, the Deputy Chief Executive to the Commission by **31 August 2009**.

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

Name of public authority (Enter details below)

CIVIL SERVICE COMMISSIONERS FOR NORTHERN IRELAND
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Equality Officer (Enter name and contact details below)

S75: Declan Leonard, 5 th Floor, Windsor House, Bedford Street, Belfast BT2 7SR Telephone no: 028 9054 9150 Declan.leonard@nio.x.gsi.gov.uk
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DDO (if different from above):

S75 Executive Summary

- What were the key policy/service developments made by the authority during this reporting period to better promote equality of opportunity and good relations and what outcomes were achieved?

The Civil Service Commissioners for Northern Ireland are fully committed to promoting equality of opportunity and good relations in all areas of their work in line with Section 75 of the Northern Ireland Act 1998.

The Commissioners' primary role is to regulate appointments to the Northern Ireland Civil Service (NICS) to ensure these are made on merit on the basis of fair and open competition. Appointments to the NICS must be made in line with the expectations set out in the Commissioners' Recruitment Code. An annual independent audit programme of different aspects of the Code is undertaken to examine the extent to which these expectations are being met. Commissioners are committed to continuing to work in close partnership with all key stakeholders to uphold the Merit Principle and promote public confidence in NICS recruitment.

The Commissioners' 2008/09 Business Plan included an objective to promote equality of opportunity and good relations and included targets to monitor implementation of the Recruitment Code and achieve the targets set in the Good Relations Strategy.

Monitoring the Recruitment Code

A key aspect of Commissioners' statutory role is to audit the recruitment policies and procedures followed by Departments and Agencies in making appointments to the NICS. This audit function seeks to ensure that Departments and Agencies satisfy the Commissioners' requirements in respect of the Merit Principle, which is underpinned by the four principles set out in the Recruitment Code. Each year Commissioners undertake an audit programme to scrutinise specific aspects of the NICS recruitment process to examine the extent to which the principles of the Recruitment Code are being delivered in practice and the extent to which the Commissioners' expectations are being met. This process is key to safeguarding the Merit Principle and to ensuring that Commissioners, and the general public, can have confidence in NICS recruitment. For Commissioners, the annual audit process is premised on a spirit of seeking improvement and with a view to sharing knowledge and learning from best practice in other comparable organisations.

As outlined above, a key aspect of the Commissioners' statutory role is to audit NICS recruitment processes and practices to ensure that requirements in respect of the Merit Principle are being met. In October 2007, the NICS transferred operational responsibility for recruitment to HRConnect. During this period Commissioners worked closely with the NICS to seek assurances that the recruitment function continued to meet the requirements of the Recruitment Code. The introduction of HRConnect brought significant changes in the structure and delivery of recruitment and the Commissioners considered that it would be particularly important that their 2008/09 Audit Programme examine communication processes and the effectiveness of training.

The Commissioners' approach to audit is to carry out a thematic examination of key aspects of recruitment policies and practices. This provides the basis for strategic discussions with Central Personnel Group (CPG) and a joint working approach to key areas of policy development. During the year, Commissioners were involved in two key audits: the first was an audit on Communication Processes and the second was on the Effectiveness of Training. A summary of each audit is outlined below.

Communication Processes Audit

The purpose of this audit was to examine and provide the Commissioners with an understanding of the communication processes and mechanisms deployed by the NICS throughout the selection process, to examine the effectiveness of these and, in particular, to focus on the extent to which the expectations in the Commissioners' Recruitment Code are being met. This audit commenced in May 2008 and a draft report was agreed in January 2009.

Overall the report concluded that while many aspects of communication were working effectively, there were a number of issues identified beyond actual process that needed to be addressed by the NICS.

Key recommendations included:

- the need for a further investigation of the NICS approach to and the effectiveness of advertising;
- the need for a wider scale study of the potential applicants to examine the attractiveness of a career in the NICS and to identify potential barriers to entry;
- the need for a study around the concept of employer branding;
- a study of the candidate experience of feedback in terms of effectiveness, value and consistency; and
- discontinuation of the use of person specification requirements communicated in “number of year’s experience” .

Effectiveness of Training Audit

The key objective of this audit was to examine and provide the Commissioners with an understanding of the recruitment and selection training provided by the NICS and to examine the effectiveness of the training. Commissioners regard appropriate training and skills development for those involved in recruitment as fundamental to ensuring adherence to the principles set out in the Recruitment Code. A key element of the audit was to examine the extent to which training covered not only the structure of the process but also the skills of those involved and the recruitment context, including equality issues, disability awareness and any current and forthcoming legislation. The audit also provided Commissioners with the opportunity to consider how the effectiveness of training was monitored and evaluated. This audit was not finalised by the end of this reporting period and, therefore, the outcome will be reported in more detail next year.

Overall the report concluded that the training provided by the NICS was not fit for purpose and that there was a lack of understanding of the key roles and responsibilities of the key contributors at each stage of the process, which led to misunderstanding and mismanagement of expectations with regard to responsibilities and outputs.

Key findings and recommendations emerging in the draft Report included:

- the need for a workshop, involving representatives from key stakeholders involved in the recruitment and selection process to clarify roles and responsibilities, align expectations, clarify policy issues and assist with knowledge transfer;
- the provision of clearer advice from CPG on key areas of the recruitment process with guidance updated to reflect this, particularly in areas of questioning, note-taking and scoring;
- the Centre for Applied Learning should review the content of all Criterion Based Interviewing training which should include a comprehensive training needs analysis of the wider processes of the recruitment and selection cycle; and
- the need to give greater emphasis to the issue of reasonable adjustment during the training.

Both audits examined the processes thoroughly to ensure compliance with the Recruitment Code and provide Commissioners with the opportunity to make recommendations and ask the NICS to provide an appropriate Action Plan to address any necessary action required as a result of the Audit Reports with details of the timescales within which these will be implemented.

Commissioners continue to actively pursue with the NICS outstanding Action Plans outlining how the NICS intends to take forward agreed recommendations relating to two previous audits – Attracting Candidates and Selection Processes.

Chairing Senior Civil Service (SCS) Competitions

Throughout this reporting period, Commissioners continued to undertake the role of panel chair for all external competitions for appointments to the Senior Civil Service (SCS) so as to oversee the process and ensure fairness and commonality of approach. This has proven to be an effective means of promoting the Merit Principle and of ensuring that the recruitment principles are upheld. Following discussions with the Head of the Civil Service, agreement was reached that Commissioners would be involved in any future discussions concerning SCS posts to be filled via internal competition and Commissioners welcomed this encouraging development. A protocol to facilitate this is currently being developed.

4 – Stage Approval Process

Throughout the year, the Commissioners' Secretariat continued to scrutinise all SCS competitions to ensure that they fully complied with the Commissioners' agreed 4-stage approval process.

Meetings with NICS

Commissioners held regular meetings with the Head of the Civil Service, the Permanent Secretaries Group (PSG) and the PSG Sub-group to discuss the broader strategic direction of the NICS and explore the potential impact of this in terms of selection and recruitment policy and practice. Commissioners used the annual meeting with the full

PSG to give a presentation explaining why diversity was a key consideration for Commissioners and why it should also be a key concern for the NICS. This presentation was very well received and effective in ensuring a deeper, shared understanding of the importance of addressing diversity in recruitment.

Commissioners have developed a regular programme of Links meetings with Departmental Permanent Secretaries and senior HR officials to explore issues of concern and ideas for development and improvement.

Commissioners had quarterly meetings with senior representatives of CPG, to discuss issues of concern and help inform and shape recruitment policy and encourage best practice throughout the organisation.

During all meetings with NICS representatives, Commissioners continued to seek to use their influence to encourage the NICS to take proactive measures to promote diversity, equality of opportunity and good relations throughout all stages of the recruitment process. Commissioners consider this to be crucial if the NICS is to be as reflective as possible of the community it seeks to serve and believe that using their influence makes a positive contribution in this area. A particular example of this was when Commissioners contributed a number of questions for inclusion in a questionnaire on Public Perceptions of the NICS as an Employer. The specific questions put forward by Commissioners sought to better understand the barriers, or perceived barriers, in recruitment to the NICS.

Secretariat

Staff in the Secretariat include targets and references to equality and Section 75 in their forward job plans and personal development plans which are reviewed bi-annually. Staff also identify training needs, aimed at raising their awareness of the statutory duties.

Raising awareness and understanding

Commissioners actively sought opportunities to ensure their understanding of equality issues was sound and up-to-date. During 2008/09, Commissioners engaged with Dr John Kremer, an applied social psychologist who provides external consultancy on equality and diversity, to present an overview of Section 75 and advice on the development of effective Equality Schemes, the EQIA process and notable developments in the equality arena. The sessions with Dr Kremer enhanced Commissioners' understanding, knowledge and awareness of their statutory duties.

Commissioners also continued to take advice from Dr John Mallon, NISRA who shared with Commissioners his professional knowledge on data and how it could be challenged and evaluated. Dr Mallon provided advice on managing adverse impact and on the consideration of NICS wide data in the diversity profiles of candidates in SCS competitions. The sessions with Dr Mallon provided Commissioners with a clearer and deeper insight into the use and impact of data in competitions which then informed

discussions with the NICS which sought to ensure that panels were well-equipped to address diversity considerations in recruitment.

Disability Action Plan

Commissioners, in consultation with a representative from the Equality Commission, revised the Disability Action Plan setting out measurable actions to promote positive attitudes towards disabled people and encourage participation by disabled people in public life. During the review of the Disability Action Plan, Commissioners revised the action measures to ensure there was greater focus on actions that would achieve practical outcomes, bearing in mind the Commissioners' focused remit. Performance indicators, outcomes and impact statements were included for each action measure and are detailed from page 21 of this report.

Good Relations Strategy

During this reporting period, Commissioners continued to honour their commitment to promote good relations by seeking to promote public confidence in the recruitment to NICS, ensuring that issues around under-representation were highlighted and discussed as appropriate with the NICS. Commissioners achieved these aims by seeking to influence the senior representatives of the NICS at every available opportunity and, in the spirit of openness and transparency, by keeping the Northern Ireland public up to date with developments and publishing all end year progress reports and other documentation on the Commissioners' website, which has been updated to facilitate downloading and completion of forms.

- What are the main initiatives planned in the coming year to ensure the authority improves outcomes in terms of equality of opportunity and good relations for individuals from the nine categories covered by Section 75?

A Business Plan was prepared by Commissioners setting out the strategic direction for the three year period 2008 – 2011. It outlined the Commissioners' 3-year strategic priorities and of the specific actions to be taken during 2009/10 that will contribute to the achievement of those priorities. All the objectives, targets and actions contained within the Plan have been developed to support Commissioners to fulfill their statutory responsibilities to uphold the principle that selection for appointment to posts in the NICS should be on merit on the basis of fair and open competition and to safeguard ethics within the NICS.

Strategic issues Commissioners will focus on during this period are to:

- be an exemplary regulator, guard the Merit Principle, promote public confidence in recruitment to the NICS, promote equality and diversity and safeguard NICS ethics;

- ensure that Commissioners and staff are led strategically, developed to effectively fulfil their role and responsibilities and supported to achieve their full potential;
- secure, deploy and account skilfully and effectively for the financial and other resources made available to Commissioners; and
- strive for innovation and continuous improvement in the working methods, systems and procedures adopted by Commissioners and staff.

Commissioners have a specific objective in the 2009/10 Business Plan to promote equality of opportunity, diversity and good relations in line with Section 75 of the Northern Ireland Act 1998. A target has been set to encourage the NICS to ensure that equality, diversity and good relations are effectively promoted in the NICS recruitment process. Specific actions to achieve this target include to:

- ensure that Commissioners effectively fulfil all their statutory equality responsibilities;
- continue to encourage the NICS to define the diversity information to be made available to panels at the outset of competitions (in line with the expectations of the Commissioners' Recruitment Code and the requirements of the NICS Recruitment Policies and Procedures Manual), with a view to improving the quality and reach of outreach measures;
- review and, as necessary, comment on progress reports on implementation of the NICS Employment Equality and Diversity Plan in so far as it relates to recruitment;
- work with the NICS to ensure implementation of the recommendations in the Communication Processes Audit, the Effectiveness of Training Audit and any outstanding action from previous audit reports;
- consider NICS Article 55 Review Reports and, as appropriate, invite the NICS to comment on recruitment-related actions planned to address any areas of under-representation.

Commissioners will evaluate progress towards both the strategic priorities and the annual objectives and targets on a quarterly basis and report formally on this in future Annual Reports.

Commissioners are fully committed to working in close partnership with key stakeholders in order to achieve the strategic priorities outlined in the 2009/10 Business Plan. The NICS, and in particular the Permanent Secretaries of the NI Departments and representatives of CPG in the Department of Finance & Personnel (DFP), have a shared interest in protecting the Merit Principle, upholding the Code of Ethics and

promoting public confidence in recruitment to the NICS. Commissioners will continue to work closely with these key stakeholders in order to achieve these common goals.

Chairing SCS Competitions

Commissioners will continue to chair all SCS external competitions for appointments to the SCS and develop a better understanding of the operation of NICS recruitment processes and policies. Commissioners will continue to use their influence to encourage the NICS to produce appropriate diversity data to enable panels to consider diversity and outreach issues during the recruitment process. This will give Commissioners the opportunity to oversee the process and ensure fairness and commonality of approach.

4 - Stage Approval Process

The Commissioners' Secretariat will continue to scrutinise all SCS competitions to ensure that they comply fully with the Commissioners' agreed 4-stage approval process.

Meetings with NICS

A programme of regular meetings has been scheduled with the Head of the Civil Service, the Permanent Secretaries Group (full group and sub-group), CPG and the planned series of Links meeting with Permanent Secretaries. The regular meetings with senior representatives of CPG will progress key priorities identified in the Commissioners' 2009/10 Business Plan, in particular the implementation of the NICS Employment Equality and Diversity Plan.

Secretariat

Staff in the Secretariat will continue to include targets and references to equality and Section 75 in their forward job plans and personal development plans and to review them twice a year. Staff will identify training needs aimed at raising awareness and enhancing knowledge and understanding of the statutory duties.

Raising awareness and understanding

Commissioners will continue to actively seek opportunities to ensure that their understanding of equality issues is sound and up-to-date. This will include awareness sessions and further engagement with, for example, Dr John Kremer to further develop the Commissioners' understanding, knowledge and awareness of their statutory duties and Dr John Mallon (NISRA) on how best to consider diversity and equality data.

Disability Action Plan

Commissioners will continue to implement, monitor and report on actions and targets set out in their Disability Action Plan and actively seek opportunities to promote positive

attitudes towards disabled people and encourage participation by disabled people in public life.

Good Relations Strategy

Commissioners will continue to proactively seek opportunities to promote good relations by seeking to promote public confidence in the NICS to ensure that issues around under-representation are highlighted and discussed with the NICS and to seek to ensure that the NICS is a best practice organisation insofar as its recruitment policies and processes are concerned.

- Please give examples of changes to policies or practices which have resulted in outcomes. If the change was a result of an EQIA please tick the appropriate box in column 3:

A key aspect of the Commissioners’ work is to use their influence to encourage the NICS to take proactive measures to promote equality of opportunity and good relations throughout all stages of recruitment process. Commissioners have adopted a partnership approach to working with the NICS in bringing about improvements in recruitment practices and policies to ensure equality of opportunity for all Section 75 groups. Commissioners used their influence to help shape and develop the first NICS Employment Equality and Diversity Plan, published in October 2008 and have contributed to an NICS questionnaire on the Public Perceptions of the NICS as an Employer.

	Outline change in policy or practice which have resulted in outcomes	Tick if result of EQIA
Persons of different religious belief	• N/A	
Persons of different political opinion	• N/A	
Persons of different racial groups	• N/A	
Persons of different age	• N/A	
Persons with different marital status	• N/A	
Persons of different sexual orientation	• N/A	
Men and women generally	• N/A	
Persons with and without a disability	• N/A	

Persons with and without dependants	• N/A	
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Section 1: Strategic Implementation of the Section 75 Duties

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

All Commissioners are involved in ensuring that commitments under Section 75 are met. Targets and objectives within the Equality Scheme were incorporated into the Commissioners' Strategic Priorities: 2008-11 & Business Plan 2008/09. The associated objectives and tasks for the Secretariat staff were included in their forward job plans and assessed via the performance management system. An acknowledged expert in equality and diversity is invited bi-annually to update Commissioners on developments and to advise on best practice. A quarterly position paper (linked to the quarterly review of the Business Plan) on the implementation of the Equality Scheme, the Good Relations Strategy and the Disability Action Plan has developed into an effective tool to maintain momentum and focus on the implementation of plans and in making Equality Scheme, Good Relations Strategy and Disability Action Plan commitments an integral part of Commissioners' role.

The following provides evidence of progress against key targets set by Commissioners for the 2008/09 business year:

Target 1 – To guard the Merit Principle and promote public confidence in recruitment to the NICS

Each year Commissioners undertake an audit programme to scrutinise specific aspects of the NICS recruitment process, to examine the extent to which the principles of the Recruitment Code are being lived up to in practice and to ensure that Commissioners' expectations are being met. The 2008/09 Audit Programme, outlined in the Executive Summary on page 3, involved two key audits which examined Communication Processes and Effectiveness of Training within the NICS.

Communication Processes Audit

The purpose of this audit was to examine and provide Commissioners with an understanding of the communication processes and mechanisms deployed by the NICS throughout the selection process, to examine the effectiveness of these and, in particular, to focus on the extent to which the expectations in the Commissioners' Recruitment Code were being met.

This audit commenced in May 2008, and a draft report was agreed in January 2009. Overall the report concluded that while many aspects of the communication process were working effectively, there were a number of issues identified, beyond actual process, that needed to be addressed by the NICS.

Key recommendations included:

- a further investigation of the NICS approach to and effectiveness of advertising;
- a wider scale study of the potential applicants to examine the attractiveness of a career in the NICS and to identify potential barriers to entry;
- further study around the concept of employer branding;
- a study of the candidate experience of feedback in terms of effectiveness, value and consistency; and
- discontinuation of the use of person specification requirements communicated in “number of year’s experience”.

Effectiveness of Training Audit

The key objective of this audit was to examine and provide the Commissioners with an understanding of the related recruitment and selection training provided by the NICS and to examine the effectiveness of the training. Commissioners regard appropriate training and skills development for those involved in recruitment as fundamental to ensuring adherence to the principles set out in the Recruitment Code. A key element of the audit examined the extent to which in practice the Commissioners’ expectation that training will not only cover the structure of the process, but also the skills of those involved and the recruitment context, including equality issues, disability awareness and any current and forthcoming legislation. The audit also provided Commissioners with the opportunity to consider how the effectiveness of training is monitored and evaluated.

Overall the report concluded that the training provided by the NICS is not fit for purpose and that there is a lack of understanding of the key roles and responsibilities of the key contributors at each stage of the process, which leads to misunderstanding and mismanagement of expectations with regard to responsibilities and outputs.

Key findings and recommendations emerging in the draft Report include:

- the need for a workshop, involving representatives from key stakeholders involved in the recruitment and selection process to clarify roles and responsibilities, align expectations, clarify policy issues and assist with knowledge transfer;
- the provision of clearer advice from CPG on key areas of the recruitment process with guidance updated to reflect this, particularly in areas of questioning, note-taking and scoring;
- Centre for Applied Learning should review the content of all Criterion Based Interviewing training which should include a comprehensive training needs analysis of the wider processes of the recruitment and selection cycle; and
- the need to give greater emphasis to the issue of reasonable adjustment during the training.

Both audits examined the processes thoroughly to ensure compliance with the Recruitment Code and provide Commissioners with the opportunity to make recommendations to the NICS for improvement, as appropriate.

Commissioners are also actively pursuing with the NICS outstanding Action Plans outlining how the NICS intends to take forward agreed recommendations relating to two previous audits – Attracting Candidates and Selection Processes.

Target 2 – To promote equality, diversity and good relations in line with Section 75 of the Northern Ireland Act 1998.

Commissioners are fully committed to the promotion of equality, diversity and good relations and seek to use their influence at every opportunity with the NICS to promote and encourage equality of opportunity and good relations through NICS recruitment practices. During the reporting period, Commissioners further developed their productive relationships with the Head of the Civil Service, the Permanent Secretaries and other senior NICS representatives. Commissioners used their annual meeting with the full PSG to give a presentation on diversity and explain why it is a key consideration for Commissioners and why it should be a key concern for the NICS. They have consulted with the NICS on a number of significant areas, including the provision and use of diversity data required by panels in preparation for competitions and contributed to the shape of the draft NICS Employment Equality and Diversity Plan published in October 2008. During the reporting period, Commissioners continued to adopt a successful partnership approach to working with the NICS, which has allowed them to explore key issues and concerns together in greater depth and enhanced the shared understanding of the common objectives to protect the Merit Principle and promote public confidence in recruitment to the NICS. Commissioners will continue to work with the NICS to ensure that recruitment panels have access to appropriate and improved data to inform diversity considerations.

Section 2: Screening

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

Commissioners have a very specific remit which focuses on regulating recruitment to the NICS, ensuring that appointments are made on merit on the basis of fair and open competition. The Commissioners' policy is the Recruitment Code was revised in June 2005. The Recruitment Code sets out the essential principles on which Commissioners believe recruitment to the NICS must be based and compliance with it is mandatory. Commissioners have included in their Business Plan an objective to consider the need to review/refresh the Code and this has been scheduled into the 2009/10 programme of work.

please provide details of the factors responsible for delay and details of the timetable for re-scheduling the EQIA/s in question.

Ongoing EQIA Monitoring Activities April 2008- March 2009

Title of EQIA subject to Stage 7 monitoring	Indicate if differential impacts previously identified have reduced or increased	Indicate if adverse impacts previously identified have reduced or increased
N/A		

2009-10 EQIA Time-table

Title of EQIAs due to be commenced during April 2009 – March 2010	Existing or New policy?	Please indicate expected timescale of Decision Making stage i.e. Stage 6
N/A		

Section 4: Training

- Please outline training provision during the year associated with the Section 75 Duties/Equality Scheme requirements including types of training provision and conclusions from any training evaluations.

The Commissioners’ Training and Development Plan reinforces their commitment to continue to ensure that all Commissioners and Secretariat staff receive equality / Section 75 training, including awareness training, as appropriate. Commissioners and Secretariat staff remain committed to receiving timely training and guidance on issues that will ensure that their Section 75 statutory duties are effectively understood and implemented and to keep up to date with recent developments.

Commissioners, via the Secretariat, are proactive in identifying opportunities to further their understanding of equality-related issues and recent developments. During the

reporting period, the Secretariat made arrangements for a number of training/awareness-raising sessions, including:

Induction Training

Two new Commissioners were appointed in February 2009 and a comprehensive four day training programme was developed for their Induction. This was attended by all Commissioners and members of the Secretariat. One session focused on the importance of, and responsibilities in relation to, equality and diversity, which included an overview of: the Commissioners' equality and diversity duties; the Commissioners' Equality Scheme; the Equality Scheme Implementation Plan; the Disability Action Plan; and the Good Relations Strategy. Representatives of the Equality Commission for NI (ECNI) joined Commissioners during the Induction Session to outline the Section 75 statutory duties and responsibilities. Commissioners and ECNI representatives discussed areas of common interest with regard to equality and diversity issues, such as: data monitoring within the NICS; the monitoring and provision of advice to employers; the new Unified Guide to promoting equality of opportunities in employment to ensure Commissioners are kept up-to date with developments. Commissioners agreed that the session was very valuable, in particular in terms of keeping up-to-date on developments in the equality arena, and decided that an annual meeting with ECNI should be scheduled into their programme of meetings.

Disability Action Plan

Following the revision of the Disability Action Plan during the year, Commissioners planned to hold a specific training session to focus on their responsibilities, as a public body, in relation to disability awareness. The training will provide an update on the type of disability-related issues Commissioners should be aware of when regulating NICS recruitment practices and in carrying out their role as chair of SCS competitions. Commissioners will also receive an update on the potential implications of the findings of any recent disability-related case law or industrial tribunals. The training for all Commissioners and Secretariat staff, although originally planned for March, has been re-scheduled to take place in June 2009.

Section 75 Guidance

The Commissioners' Equality Officer attended the ECNI consultation session organised to provide information on revised Section 75 Guidance in September 2008. She also met with the ECNI Disability Officer in September to discuss and take advice on the planned revision of the Commissioners' Disability Action Plan.

The Commissioners' Equality Officer attended the ECNI "Bridge the Gap" conference in March 2009.

The Secretary attended the ECNI seminar for Senior Civil Servants in February 2009.

Presentation by Dr John Kremer

John Kremer, an applied social psychologist who provides external consultancy on equality and diversity, attended the Commissioners' September 2008 business meeting to provide an update on notable developments in the equality arena and on the potential implications of recent case law on recruitment and selection.

Presentation by Dr John Mallon

Dr John Mallon from NISRA attended a meeting with Commissioners in May 2008 and shared his professional knowledge on data, how it can be challenged and evaluated how to manage adverse impact and on the consideration of NICS wide data in the diversity profiles of candidates in SCS competitions.

Human Rights

The Chief Executive and an Education officer from the Human Rights Commission attended the Commissioners' March 2009 business meeting and provided useful information and guidance on the Human Rights issues Commissioners should be aware of in carrying out their role. As a result, Commissioners are considering the development of a Human Rights policy statement.

Diversity Training

All Secretariat staff attended diversity training sessions organised by NIO in November and December 2008.

Section 5: Communication

- Please outline how the authority communicated progress on delivery of the Section 75 Duties during the year and evidence of the impact/success of such activities.

The primary means of communication is via the Commissioners' website. Annual updates are posted on the site to reflect progress made in relation to the implementation of equality duties, good relations duties and duties under the Disability Discrimination Act.

The Commissioners' Business Plan is published on the website and all details in relation to the equality duties are detailed with the associated targets and objectives.

Commissioners publish their Annual Report in hard copy which is issued to all Section 75 groups. The Annual Report includes a section on promoting equality and diversity providing detail on how the Commissioners have met their statutory obligations during the reporting period.

Section 6: Data Collection & Analysis

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

Commissioners rely on the DFP to provide recruitment monitoring and statistical information in relation to the composition of the NICS and applications for recruitment competitions. A key focus for Commissioners during the year was to encourage the NICS to develop appropriate mechanisms to ensure that recruitment panels have access to relevant data in relation to diversity considerations so that these can be taken into account during the recruitment process.

- Please outline any use of the Commission's Section 75 Monitoring Guide.

Commissioners make use of the ECNI Section 75 Monitoring Guide as a reference document.

Section 7: Information Provision, Access to Information and Services

- Please provide details of any initiatives/steps taken during the year, including take up, to improve access to services including provision of information in accessible formats.

All publications are available in alternative formats on request. The Commissioners' website was modified during 2007/08 to enable documents to be downloaded and completed on-line.

Section 8: Complaints

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

Commissioners have a complaints procedure in relation to the Equality Scheme. Where a person believes that he/she has been directly affected by a failure of the Commissioners to comply with the Equality Scheme, he/she should, in the first instance, bring the complaint to the attention of the Office of the Civil Service Commissioners for Northern Ireland. The Commissioners aim to respond within one month. No Section 75 complaints were received during the reporting period and there are no ongoing complaints.

Section 9: Consultation and Engagement

- Please provide details of the measures taken to enhance the level of engagement with individuals and representative groups during the year.

During the reporting period, the Secretariat consulted with the Disability Action Officer in the ECNI to take advice and guidance on how to update effectively and refresh the Commissioners' Disability Action Plan.

Commissioners have engaged with the RNID and purchased Christmas cards for issue to all internal and external stakeholders on their mailing list.

Section 10: The Good Relations Duty

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

Commissioners have a clearly defined area of responsibility and published a Good Relations Strategy in 2006 and refreshed it in 2007. The strategy, which is reviewed on a quarterly basis each year, concentrates on general aspects of promoting good relations through encouraging diversity by means of the Commissioners' functions and roles. The Good Relations Strategy consists of 3 main strands:

- Commissioners carrying out their statutory responsibilities in a totally objective manner and in a context which emphasises accessibility, diversity, equality of opportunity, fairness, transparency and merit;
- building constructive relationships with those involved in designing and operating recruitment policies and practices on behalf of the NICS; and
- appreciating the expectations and concerns of people interested in applying for jobs in the NICS and of stakeholder groups representing their interests.

The Strategy sets out key action points in relation to each of these strands.

The Good Relations Strategy implementation plan has been monitored in-year by the Commissioners and is reviewed quarterly as part of the business planning process. The end-of-year position of progress against actions was reported to the Commissioners at the end of 2007/08 and published on the website in May 2008. Commissioners believe that the Good Relations Strategy helps demonstrate their commitment to promoting good relations when carrying out their responsibilities to ensure appointment on merit and to safeguard ethics in the NICS. They recognise the importance of embracing diversity in attracting candidates to apply to the Civil Service and will continue to use their influence with the NICS and other interest groups to promote good relations and equality.

As reported in Section 1 (page 12), Commissioners have consulted with NICS on a number of significant areas, including the provision and use of diversity data required by panels in preparation for competitions, contributed to the shape of the draft NICS Employment Equality and Diversity Plan and also to the NICS survey on the Public Perceptions of the NICS as an Employer. During 2009/10, Commissioners will continue to work with the NICS to ensure that recruitment panels have access to appropriate and improved data to inform diversity considerations.

- Please outline any use of the Commission's Good Relations Guide.

Commissioners make use of the Commissions' Good Relations Guide as a reference document.

Section 11: Additional Comments

- Please provide any additional information/comments

Commissioners are fully committed to using their influence, where possible, with the NICS to encourage diversity and equality of opportunity through their recruitment practices to help create a Civil Service which broadly reflects the diversity of the community it seeks to serve.

Annual Report 1 April 2008 / 31 March 2009
'Disability Duties' Questions

1. How many action measures for this reporting period have been?



8 Fully
Achieved



Partially
Achieved



Not
Achieved

2. Please outline the following detail on **all actions that have been fully achieved** in the reporting period.

2 (a) Please highlight what **public life measures** have been achieved to encourage disabled people to participate in public life at National, Regional and Local levels:

Level	Public Life Action Measures	Outputs ¹	Outcomes / Impact ²
National ³			
Regional ⁴	Commissioners' Recruitment Code to clearly encourage the NICS to consider how best to facilitate disabled people to compete on merit in fair and open competition with others.	Commissioners have included a statement reflecting their commitment to this expectation in the Recruitment Code. All NICS Departments and Agencies are required to adhere to the Code. Commissioners sought assurances from Central Personnel Group on actions	NICS and general public are aware of the Commissioners' expectation in relation to facilitating disabled people to compete on merit. Commissioners were consulted on and played a key role in shaping and influencing the

¹ **Outputs** – defined as act of producing, amount of something produced over a period, processes undertaken to implement the action measure e.g. Undertook 10 training sessions with 100 people at customer service level.

² **Outcome / Impact** – what specifically and tangibly has changed in making progress towards the duties? What impact can directly be attributed to taking this action? Indicate the results of undertaking this action e.g. Evaluation indicating a tangible shift in attitudes before and after training.

³ **National** : Situations where people can influence policy at a high impact level e.g. Public Appointments

⁴ **Regional**: Situations where people can influence policy decision making at a middle impact level

	<p>Commissioners' Business Plan to promote the positive benefits of supporting and employing people with disabilities.</p> <p>Recognise the scale of disability amongst our stakeholders by ensuring positive and proportionate imagery on all corporate documentation.</p>	<p>being taken by the NICS to encourage disabled people into employment with the NICS.</p> <p>Commissioners have regular dialogue with senior NICS representatives and use their influence to encourage and support employment of people with disabilities and seek regular feedback on new initiatives within the NICS.</p> <p>All main corporate documents were reviewed.</p>	<p>development and implementation of the first NICS Employment Equality and Diversity Plan. Commissioners contributed to questions for the NICS survey on the Public Perception of the NICS as an Employer.</p> <p>Diversity, including issues facing disabled people has been included as a standing agenda item on Commissioners' Links meetings with Permanent Secretaries and in the regular meetings with Central Personnel Group. Commissioners met the full PSG in January 2009 and gave a presentation to explain why diversity was a key consideration for Commissioners and why it should also be a key consideration for the NICS. This ensured a deeper and a shared understanding of the importance Commissioners attach to diversity.</p> <p>Commissioners are content that their corporate documentation reflects their commitment to their statutory duties in relation to disability. The Commissioners' Annual Report uses font size 14</p>
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	<p>Review external and internal communication policies, practices and procedures.</p> <p>Ensure training on disability duties and disability legislation is delivered to existing Commissioners, new Commissioners and Secretariat staff.</p> <p>Ensure specialist training is provided for Commissioners and Secretariat staff involved in recruitment and selection panels</p>	<p>A comprehensive consultation process was held in November 2007 and will be reviewed as necessary.</p> <p>The Secretariat has contacted the Omnibus Partnership, a disabled-led group, who have agreed to deliver a specifically tailored disability training session to all Commissioners and Secretariat staff. The session was originally planned for March but has been scheduled for June 2009.</p> <p>All Commissioners and relevant staff attend regular training on recruitment processes and practices within the NICS. Commissioners will use</p>	<p>and introduced a revised lay-out in the 2007/08 Annual Report to ensure that it is more user-friendly to and meets the needs of the visually impaired.</p> <p>The Commissioners' website was upgraded and made more user-friendly to enable the download of documents and on-line completion of forms. A revised data base of consultees has been developed.</p> <p>Commissioners and Secretariat staff will have an increased awareness and knowledge of disability duties and any new requirements/changes in legislation will be identified and training provided, as necessary.</p> <p>Commissioners and staff enhance their knowledge and understanding of various strands and elements of the recruitment and selection processes and, in particular, emerging legislative</p>
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	<p>DDA and statutory duties in relation to recruitment to be taken into account when developing terms of reference for the Commissioners' schedule of audits.</p> <p>Discuss with sponsor Department as appropriate actions which might help attract disabled candidates to apply for Civil Service Commissioner appointments.</p>	<p>their influence with the NICS to ensure that diversity considerations, including the needs of disabled people, are properly considered by recruitment panels. An acknowledged authority in the field of equality and diversity is invited on a six monthly basis to provide Commissioners with updates in relation to legislative changes and emerging case law.</p> <p>An appropriate reference has been included in the audits. The findings and recommendations of audits are discussed with the NICS.</p> <p>This is raised with the NIO sponsor unit when considering arrangements for competitions to appoint new Commissioners.</p>	<p>changes and relevant case law.</p> <p>NICS and the consultant tasked with the audit(s) are aware of the Commissioners' commitment to their statutory duties in relation to disability and of Commissioners' expectations.</p> <p>Secretariat and Commissioners are content that the issue has been raised for action as appropriate.</p>
Local ⁵			

⁵ **Local** : Situations where people can influence policy decision making at lower impact level e.g. one off consultations, local fora.

2(b) What **training action measures** were achieved in this reporting period?

	Training Action Measures	Outputs	Outcome / Impact
1	Secretariat staff received verbal advice and guidance during a revision of the Disability Action Plan.	Advice and guidance received.	The Secretariat developed a better knowledge and understanding of how to improve the Commissioners' Disability Action Plan and have included action measures, performance indicators and outcomes and impact.
2			
3			
4			

2(c) What Positive attitudes **action measures** in the area of **Communications** were achieved in this reporting period?

	Communications Action Measures	Outputs	Outcome / Impact
1	None achieved in this reporting period		
2			

2 (d) What action measures were achieved to ‘**encourage others**’ to promote the two duties:

	Encourage others Action Measures	Outputs	Outcome / Impact
1	Commissioners meet with senior NICS officials 3 times per annum i.e.Full Permanent Secretaries Group (PSG), PSG sub-group – equality and diversity are agenda items for discussion.	Face to face discussion.	Awareness is raised within the NICS of the importance that Commissioners attach to the areas of equality and diversity and to meeting the needs of disabled people.
2	Commissioners meet with individual Permanent Secretaries once a year and diversity is a standard agenda item tabled for discussion.	Face to face discussion.	Permanent Secretaries are made aware of the importance that Commissioners attach to the areas of equality and diversity and to meeting the needs of disabled people.
3	Commissioners meet with representatives of Central Personnel Group a minimum of 4 times per annum and at each of the meetings during the period of this report equality and diversity have been discussed.	Face to face discussion.	The NICS representatives responsible for recruitment policy are aware of the importance Commissioners attach to the areas of equality and diversity and to meeting the needs of disabled people.
4	Commissioners were consulted on and asked to contribute to the draft NICS Employment Equality and	Face to face discussions and written exchanges.	The NICS representatives responsible for drafting the NICS Employment Equality and Diversity Plan are aware of the importance Commissioners attach to the areas of

	Diversity Plan. A number of measures and targets specific to disability were included in the draft Plan.		equality and diversity and to meeting the needs of disabled people.
5	Commissioners were invited to contribute questions to an NICS survey on the Public Perceptions of the NICS as an Employer	Face to face discussions and written exchanges	The NICS representatives responsible for drafting the NICS survey on the Public Perceptions of the NICS as an Employer are aware of the importance Commissioners attach to the areas of equality and diversity and to meeting the needs of disabled people.

2 (e) Please outline **any additional action measures** that were fully achieved other than those listed in the tables above:

	Action Measures fully implemented (other than Training and specific public life measures)	Outputs	Outcomes / Impact
1	NONE		
2			
3			

3. Please outline what action measures have been **partly achieved** as follows:

	Action Measures partly achieved	Milestones ⁶ / Outputs	Outcomes/Impacts	Reasons not fully achieved
1	N/A			
2				
3				
4				

4. Please outline what **action measures have not been achieved** and the reasons why?

	Action Measures not met	Reasons
1	N/A	
2		
3		

⁶ **Milestones** – Please outline what part progress has been made towards the particular measures; even if full output or outcomes/ impact have not been achieved.

5. What **monitoring tools** have been put in place to evaluate the degree to which actions have been effective / develop new opportunities for action?

(a) Qualitative

Commissioners revised the Disability Action Plan in line with advice and guidance received from the Disability Action officer attached to the ECNI.

*The Commissioners monitor the Disability Action Plan closely, review and report on it on a quarterly basis. Commissioners discuss reports at regular intervals at business meetings.

(b) Quantitative

See * above

6. As a result of monitoring progress against actions, has your organisation either:

- made any **revisions** to your plan during the reporting period or
- taken any **additional steps** to meet the disability duties which were **not outlined in your original** disability action plan / any other changes.

Please delete: NO

If yes please outline below:

	Revised/Additional Action Measures	Performance Indicator	Timescale
1			
2			
3			
4			
5			

7. Do you intend to make any further **revisions to your plan** in light of your organisations annual review of the plan? If so, please outline proposed changes?

_____ NO _____

