

EQUALITY COMMISSION FOR NORTHERN IRELAND
Public Authority 2007 - 2008
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 2007 to 31 March 2008**. This template also includes a number of questions regarding implementation of Section 49A of the DDO from the **1 July 2007 to 31 March 2008**. 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 **30 September 2008**.

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)

OFFICE OF THE CIVIL SERVICE COMMISSIONERS

Equality Officer (Enter name and contact details below)

S75: Iris Lovell, 5th Floor, Windsor House, Bedford Street, Belfast
BT2 7SR Telephone no: 028 9054 9150

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 and 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' 2007/08 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 recruitment policies and procedures followed by Departments and Agencies in making appointments to the NICS. This audit role ensures that Departments and Agencies satisfy the Commissioners' requirements in respect of the Merit Principle, which is underpinned by the 4 principles set out in the Commissioners' 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 lived up to in practice and to ensure 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.

During 2007/08, the Commissioners' approach to audit continued to evolve from a traditional compliance-type approach to a thematic examination of key aspects of recruitment policies and practices. This has provided the basis for more strategic discussions with CPG and a joint working approach to key areas of policy development. During the year, Commissioners were involved in three key audits: an Attracting Candidates Audit (commenced in 2006); a Quality Assurance Audit; and a Selection Processes Audit. A summary of each of the audits is outlined below.

Attracting Candidates Audit

The purpose of this audit was to:

- review the policy initiatives developed, or being developed, by the NICS on a corporate basis and their effectiveness in attracting a diverse pool of applicants applying for positions in the NICS;
- audit the application of outreach measures identified in the NICS Recruitment Policy and Procedures Manual to attract under-represented sections of the community to consider a career in the NICS and assess the effectiveness of these measures in furthering the Merit Principle;

- undertake a benchmarking exercise against comparable bodies, in particular the Cabinet Office in the Home Civil Service (HCS); and
- comment on any potential additional opportunities in this area.

Commissioners considered this to be a particularly important audit topic as attracting a diverse and balanced pool of applicants goes to the very heart of the Merit Principle. Commissioners believe it is vital that diversity considerations during selection and recruitment are sufficiently detailed and robust to ensure the widest possible pool of applicants is attracted, and actively encouraged, to apply for positions in the Civil Service. Any barriers to this, at each stage of the recruitment process, should be identified and removed and, during the year ahead Commissioners will continue to use their influence to ensure this is the case.

In going forward, Commissioners will continue to promote and encourage the adoption of appropriate outreach measures and initiatives which fully embrace diversity in recruitment; look for strong evidence of the practical application of the robust policy statements detailed in the NICS Recruitment Policy and Procedures Manual; and work with the NICS to ensure that recruitment panels have access to appropriate and improved data to inform diversity considerations.

Quality Assurance Audit

This involved reviewing a selection of audits carried out in previous years in order that Commissioners might be assured that the NICS had taken adequate action to address the auditors' findings. The audit focused on reviewing the findings, recommendations and action plans produced following a compliance audit carried out in the Department for Regional Development (DRD) and on four thematic audits which covered training of panel members; appointment of disabled candidates; use of agency staff; and feedback processes.

Commissioners were pleased to note that, in the case of each earlier audit examined, the relevant Department and/or Agency had considered all of the initial recommendations. The vast majority of these had been taken on board and acted upon resulting in, for example, more detailed policy guidance. Following the Quality Assurance Audit, Departments agreed to take on board the few recommendations which remained outstanding from the initial audits.

Selection Processes Audit

The purpose of this audit was to examine the selection processes used by the NICS and, in particular, consider the extent to which these satisfied the Commissioners' expectations as set out in the Recruitment Code.

Commissioners were pleased to note the auditors' overall view that the four key principles of the Recruitment Code, and the expectations relating to these, were being adhered to in practice. The auditors noted that robust policies and processes were in

place and, importantly, were being followed. They also found evidence of a desire to modernise some areas of the recruitment process. While considerable good practice was identified, and is very much welcomed, the audit identified some scope for improvement. Commissioners are keen to ensure that the NICS is aware of, and benefits from, best practice in both the wider public sector and the private sector and will use their influence to promote this during the year ahead.

Chairing Senior Civil Service (SCS) Competitions

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. During the year, Commissioners were also invited to chair two internal SCS competitions. Following discussions with the Head of the Civil Service, agreement was reached, in principle, that Commissioners would be included in any future discussions concerning SCS posts to be filled via internal competition and Commissioners welcomed this encouraging development.

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 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 Central Personnel Group (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 sought to use their influence to encourage the NICS to take proactive measures to promote equality of opportunity and good relations throughout all stages of the recruitment process, in which Commissioners are closely and regularly involved. 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 when Commissioners sought to influence the NICS was during the development of the draft NICS Employment Equality and Diversity Plan. A number of

meetings took place to discuss the early draft Plan and Commissioners welcomed the opportunity to contribute to the shape and development of the Plan which will seek to ensure that the organisation effectively mainstreams equality and diversity within and across the NICS.

Secretariat

Staff in the Secretariat include targets and references to equality and Section 75 in their forward job descriptions and their personal development plans and these are reviewed bi-annually. Staff also use this opportunity to identify training needs to raise their own awareness of the statutory duties.

Raising awareness and understanding

Commissioners have actively sought opportunities to ensure their understanding of equality issues is sound and up to date. During 2007/08, 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 to provide advice on the development of effective Equality Schemes, the EQIA process and on notable developments in the equality arena. The session with Dr Kremer revised and enhanced Commissioners' understanding, knowledge and awareness of their statutory duties.

Commissioners also engaged with Dr John Mallon from NISRA who shared with Commissioners his professional knowledge on data and how it can 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.

Disability Action Plan

During this reporting period, Commissioners developed a Disability Action Plan setting out actions that they will take over the next five years to promote positive attitudes towards disabled people and encourage participation by disabled people in public life. In line with the Disability Action Plan, Commissioners oversaw a consultation exercise aimed at identifying and then removing/reducing any barriers to consultation with disabled people. The responses received were positive with no major barriers identified in relation to Commissioners' existing consultation methods. As a result of this exercise Commissioners have developed a database of consultees and have committed to undertaking any further consultation via electronic means and in hard copy on request.

Good Relations Strategy

During this reporting period, Commissioners continued to honour their commitment to promoting good relations by: seeking to ensure public confidence in the NICS; that it is achieving diversity in the composition of its workforce; and that it is a best practice organisation insofar as its recruitment policies and processes are concerned. 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 has been prepared by Commissioners setting out the strategic direction for the three year period 2008 – 2011. It outlines the Commissioners' 3-year strategic priorities and provides details of the specific actions to be taken during 2008/09 that will contribute to the achievement of those priorities. All of the objectives, targets and actions contained within this 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.

Objectives in 2008/09 Business Plan

Commissioners have a specific objective in the 2008/09 Business Plan to promote equality of opportunity, diversity and good relations in line with Section 75 of the Northern Ireland Act 1998. As a result of this objective, Commissioners have formed a Diversity Sub-group specifically to consider diversity issues. A target has been set to support the NICS to ensure that equality, diversity and good relations are effectively promoted in NICS recruitment process. Specific actions to achieve this target are:

- through the Commissioners' Diversity Sub-group, work closely with CPG to: (a) support the development of an effective Employment Equality & Diversity Plan for the NICS; and (b) better define the diversity information to be made available to panels at the outset of competitions, particularly with a view to improving the quality and reach of recruitment advertisements to under-represented groups;
- work with the NICS to ensure implementation of the recommendations in the Attracting Candidates Audit;
- consider NICS Article 55 Review Reports, as submitted to the Equality Commission for Northern Ireland (ECNI), and work with the NICS to improve areas of under-representation, as necessary; and
- examine the scope for research into the recruitment experiences of SCS candidates with a view to understanding their expectations and concerns and, in particular, to identifying barriers for applicants from under-represented groups.

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 this Plan. The NICS, and in particular the Permanent Secretaries of the NI Departments and representatives of Central Personnel Group 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.

Monitoring the Recruitment Code

As outlined in the previous section, 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 Commissioners' 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 training.

Communication Processes Audit

The purpose of this audit is to examine and provide the Commissioners with an understanding of the communications 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.

Effectiveness of Training Audit

The key objective of this audit is 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 will examine 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 and that the effectiveness of training is monitored and evaluated and follow-up action taken on an ongoing basis.

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

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 processes and policies in action. 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 new workshop–style approach to the regular meetings with senior representatives of Central Personnel Group will progress key priorities identified in the Commissioners' 2008/09 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 in their personal development plans and to review them twice a year. Staff will use this opportunity to identify training needs to raise their own awareness and enhance knowledge and understanding.

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 Kramer 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 continued to proactively seek opportunities to promote good relations by ensuring that there is public confidence in the NICS, that it is achieving diversity in the composition of its workforce and that it 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 measure to promote equality of opportunity and good relations throughout all stages of recruitment process, in which Commissioners are closely involved. 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.

In November 2007, and in line with commitments in the Disability Action Plan and the Equality Scheme Implementation Plan, Commissioners carried out a consultation exercise to seek views regarding their approach to consulting with Section 75 groups. The exercise had five objectives:

- to consider how best to communicate information to interested parties, including disabled people and the representative groups likely to be interested in the Commissioners' work;
- to identify and remove any possible barriers affecting Section 75 groups or disabled people;

- to invite consultees to propose any improvements which would ensure the requirements of Section 75 groups and disabled people were met during future consultations;
- to up-date the list of consultees and confirm that they wish to be included in Commissioners' future consultation exercises; and
- to consider if it would be feasible to receive any future consultations electronically.

Outcome

100 organisations and individuals, including NICS Departments were consulted by letter and, of the 34 responses received, no negative comments were presented. All respondents confirmed that:

- they wish to be included in future consultation exercises;
- no barriers were identified and no improvements to the process were proposed; and
- they were content to be consulted electronically – a number of respondents made suggestions in relation to how the documents might be made available for download from the website and the format in which they would like documents to be made available.

Action taken

As a result of the consultation exercise the following actions have been taken:

- the list of consultees has been updated; and
- appropriate software has been added to the website to meet the requirements of consultees.

	Outline change in policy or practice which have resulted in outcomes	Tick if result of EQIA
Persons of different religious belief	• See above	
Persons of different political opinion	• See above	
Persons of different racial groups	• See above	
Persons of different	• See above	

age		
Persons with different marital status	• See above	
Persons of different sexual orientation	• See above	
Men and women generally	• See above	
Persons with and without a disability	• See above	
Persons with and without dependants	• See above	

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 2007-08.

All Commissioners are involved in ensuring that commitments under Section 75 are met. Targets and objectives within the Equality Scheme are incorporated into the Commissioners' Strategic Priorities: 2008-11 & Business Plan 2008/09. The associated objectives and tasks for the Secretariat staff are included in their forward job plans and assessed via the performance management system. Equality Issues is a standard agenda item at Commissioners' business meetings. 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 established by Commissioners for the 2007/08 business year:

Target 1 – To monitor implementation of the Recruitment Code

Commissioners' audit role scrutinizes specific aspects of 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 the Commissioners' expectations are being met. Each year Commissioners undertake an audit programme. During 2007/08, Commissioners were involved in three key audits: an Attracting Candidates Audit (commenced in 2006); a Quality Assurance Audit; and a Selection Processes Audit. A summary of each of the audits is outlined within the Executive Summary on page 2.

Attracting Candidates Audit

Attracting a balanced pool of candidates to apply for positions in the civil service is one of the key expectations set out the Commissioners' Recruitment Code. Commissioners consider it is vital that diversity considerations during selection and recruitment are sufficiently detailed and robust to ensure the widest possible pool of applicants is attracted, and actively encouraged, to apply for positions in the Civil Service. Any barriers to this, at each stage of the recruitment process, should be identified and removed. As a result this audit, Commissioners will continue to use their influence to ensure this is the case. In addition, they will continue to promote and encourage the adoption of appropriate outreach measures and initiatives which fully embrace diversity in recruitment; look for strong evidence of the practical application of the robust policy statements detailed in the NICS Recruitment Policy and Procedures Manual; and work with the NICS to ensure that recruitment panels have access to appropriate and improved data to inform diversity considerations.

Quality Assurance Audit

Commissioners were assured through this audit that, in the case of each earlier audit examined, the relevant Department and/or Agency had considered all of the initial recommendations. The vast majority of these had been taken on board and acted upon resulting in, for example, more detailed policy guidance. Following the Quality Assurance Audit, Departments agreed to take on board the few recommendations which remained outstanding from the initial audits.

Selection Processes Audit

This audit also provides an assurance that the four key principles of the Recruitment Code, and the expectations relating to selection processes, were being adhered to in practice. The auditors noted that robust policies and processes were in place and, importantly, were being followed. They also found evidence of a desire to modernise some areas of the recruitment process. While considerable good practice was identified, and is very much welcomed, the audit identified some scope for improvement. Commissioners are keen to ensure that the NICS is aware of, and benefits from, best practice in both the wider public sector and the private sector and will use their influence to promote this during the year ahead.

Target 2 – To take forward the Commissioners' Good Relations Strategy and enhance relationships with Section 75 representative groups.

Commissioners are fully committed to the promotion of 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 have further developed their productive relationships with the Head of the Civil Service, the Permanent Secretaries and other senior NICS representatives. They have consulted with them 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. During the reporting period, Commissioners have 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 has 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. More specific detail on the progress on Commissioners' Good Relations Strategy is included in Section 10 (page 18/19).

Section 2: Screening

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 which they revised in June 2005. The Recruitment Code sets out the essential principles on which the Commissioners believe recruitment to the NICS must be based and compliance with it is mandatory. The Commissioners have included in their Business Plan an objective to consider the need to review/refresh the Code and, if appropriate, this would be scheduled into the 2009/10 programme of work.

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

Title of policy subject to screening	Was the <u>F</u> ull Screening Report or the <u>R</u> esult of initial screening issued for consultation? <i>Please enter <u>F</u> or <u>R</u></i>	Was initial screening decision changed following consultation? <u>Y</u> es/ <u>N</u> o	Is policy being subject to EQIA? <u>Y</u> es/ <u>N</u> o? If yes indicate year for assessment.
No policies were screened during the reporting period.			

Section 3: Equality Impact Assessment (EQIA)

- Please provide an update of policies subject to EQIA during 2007/08, stage 7 EQIA monitoring activities and an indicative EQIA timetable for 2008-09.

EQIA Timetable – April 2007 - March 2008

Title of Policy EQIA	EQIA Stage at end March 08 (Steps 1-6)	Outline adjustments to policy intended to benefit individuals, and the relevant Section 75 categories due to be affected.
No policies were subject to EQIA during the reporting period.		

- Where the EQIA timetable for 2007/08 (as detailed in the previous annual S75 progress report to the Commission) has not been met, please provide details of the factors responsible for delay and details of the timetable for re-scheduling the EQIA/s in question.

(Enter text below)

Ongoing EQIA Monitoring Activities April 2007- March 2008

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
No policies were subject to Stage 7 monitoring during the reporting period.		

2008-09 EQIA Time-table

Title of EQIAs due to be commenced during April 2008 – March 2009	Existing or New policy?	Please indicate expected timescale of Decision Making stage i.e. Stage 6
No EQIAs are due to be commenced during April 2008 – March 2009		

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

The new Secretary to the Commissioners and two new members of the Secretariat received Induction Training which included raising awareness of the Commissioners’ Equality Scheme Implementation Plan, the five year Review of the Equality Scheme, the Good Relations Strategy and the Disability Action Plan. The Commissioners’ Equality Officer, appointed in September 2007, attended the ECNI annual conference as part of her induction process.

Disability Action Plan

The Deputy Secretary and a member of the Secretariat staff attended an awareness session to provide guidance on developing the Disability Action Plan. The session was extremely helpful in providing help and guidance as the Secretariat prepared the Commissioners’ first Disability Action Plan.

Age Discrimination Legislation

All Commissioners along with the Secretary and Deputy Secretary attended an awareness session presented by a member of staff from the Equality Commission on the Age Discrimination Legislation. Commissioners welcomed the opportunity to be updated on the ongoing legislative developments with potential impact on their role and

invited the Equality Commission to come back to Commissioners when case law develops.

Section 75 Keeping It Effective

The Secretary and Deputy Secretary attended a presentation by the Equality Commission in relation to Section 75 requirements.

Presentation by Dr John Kremer

All Commissioners and Secretariat staff attended a presentation in February delivered by Dr John Kremer on Section 75. He provided advice on the development of effective Equality Schemes, the EQIA process and any notable developments in the area of equality. Commissioners welcomed the opportunity to engage directly with a recognised expert in the equality and diversity field.

Presentation by Dr John Mallon

All Commissioners and Secretariat staff attended a presentation in February delivered by Dr John Mallon on data and how it can be challenged and evaluated. The presentation provided Commissioners with a deeper and clearer understanding of data and its impact on the recruitment process.

Human Rights

The Secretary and the Deputy Secretary attended an awareness session in February on Human Rights. The session was useful in updating the members of staff on current developments.

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 to 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.

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.

The Commissioners rely on the Department of Finance and Personnel 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 the year 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.

The Commissioners have a complaints procedure in relation to their 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, in line with the Disability Action Plan and the Equality Scheme Implementation Plan, Commissioners carried out a consultation exercise to seek views regarding the Commissioners' approach to consulting with Section 75 groups. 100 organisations and individuals were consulted by letter and all responses received (34) were positive. As a result of this exercise Commissioners updated the list of consultees who confirmed that they would be content to be consulted electronically in any future consultation exercise with Commissioners – this is outlined in more detail above (see page 10) 'examples of changes to policies or practices which have resulted in outcomes'.

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 the Good Relations Strategy, published in 2006 and reviewed and refreshed on a quarterly basis, 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 was reviewed in November 2007 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 11), 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 and contributed to the shape of the draft NICS Employment Equality and Diversity Plan. During 2008/09 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

The Commissioners are fully committed to using their influence 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 July 2007/ March 2008
'Disability Duties' Questions

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



11 Fully
Achieved



0 Partially
Achieved



1 Not
Achieved

Empty rectangular box for data entry.

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 being taken by the NICS to encourage disabled people	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 development of the first NICS Employment Equality and

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' Communication Strategy to promote the positive benefits of supporting and employing people with disabilities.</p> <p>Encourage the NICS to actively take forward the new Disability Duties and other diversity matters in relation to recruitment.</p>	<p>into employment with the NICS.</p> <p>Commissioners reviewed their Communication Strategy with a view to identifying opportunities to influence and promote the benefits of supporting and employing people with disabilities with key stakeholders. Diversity was a key discussion point which includes consideration of issues facing disabled people.</p> <p>Commissioners have regular dialogue with senior NICS representatives and seek regular feedback on new initiatives within the NICS.</p> <p>Commissioners have regular dialogue with senior NICS representatives and seek regular feedback on new initiatives within the NICS.</p>	<p>Diversity Plan.</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 workshop approach to meetings with Central Personnel Group.</p> <p>NICS are aware of the importance that Commissioners attach to promoting the positive benefits of supporting and employing people with disabilities.</p> <p>Commissioners were consulted on and played a key role in shaping and influencing the development of the first NICS Employment Equality and Diversity Plan.</p>
--	--	---	--

		<p>Ensure the NICS reports the number of disabled people appointed to the NICS on an annual basis.</p>	<p>The NICS is aware of the importance that Commissioners attach to promoting the positive benefits of supporting and employing people with disabilities.</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 workshop approach to meetings with Central Personnel Group.</p> <p>The public has access to the Recruitment Service Annual Report. Commissioners analyse and monitor the data and discuss trends with the NICS.</p>
Local ⁵	Mainstream disability duties into all decisions and activities.	Equality Issues is a standing agenda item at the Commissioners' business meetings and regularly includes progress reports in relation to delivery of the Disability Action Plan.	Commissioners are regularly updated on progress against the Plan.

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

	<p>Recognise the scale of disability amongst our stakeholders by ensuring positive and proportionate imagery on all corporate documentation.</p> <p>Establish the role of the Secretary to the Commissioners as responsible officer for the delivery of the action plan.</p> <p>Review external and internal communication policies, practices and procedures.</p>	<p>All main corporate documents were reviewed.</p> <p>The Secretary's objectives and targets include the role as officer responsible for delivery of the Disability Action Plan.</p> <p>Consultation exercise on Commissioners' consultation process sought to identify any barriers / improvements required to ensure the consultation process met the requirements Section 75 groups and particularly disabled people.</p> <p>Commissioners' website has been upgraded to enable the download of documents and the completion of documents on-line.</p>	<p>Commissioners are content that their corporate documentation reflects their commitment to their statutory duties in relation to disability.</p> <p>The Plan was reviewed 3 times during the reporting period with the result that Commissioners are confident that they are honouring their responsibilities under the Disability Action Plan.</p> <p>Positive responses received indicate that consultees are content with the consultation process and a database of consultees has been developed.</p> <p>Website is regularly up-dated.</p>
--	--	---	--

	<p>Ensure training is provided on the disability duties to all staff and Commissioners.</p> <p>Ensure specialist training is provided for Commissioners and Secretariat staff involved in recruitment and selection panels.</p> <p>DDA and statutory duties in relation to recruitment to be taken into account when developing</p>	<p>All staff and Commissioners received development and guidance on the new disability duties. The Commissioners' Training and Development Plan is reviewed quarterly to ensure that any training needs in relation to the disability duties are identified and addressed.</p> <p>All Commissioners and relevant Secretariat staff attended workshop style meetings with Central Personnel Group to develop and influence the improvement of recruitment processes and practices within NICS. Commissioners and the Secretariat also attended training sessions on equality and on understanding statistical data in recruitment and selection.</p> <p>An appropriate reference has been included in the audits. The findings and</p>	<p>Secretariat staff and Commissioners have increased their knowledge and awareness of the disability duties. Secretariat staff and Commissioners are also confident that their training needs are reviewed on a timely basis to ensure that new requirements are identified and addressed, as necessary.</p> <p>Commissioners and Secretariat staff have enhanced their knowledge and understanding of various strands and elements of the recruitment and selection processes.</p> <p>NICS and the consultant tasked with the audit(s) are aware of the Commissioners' commitment to</p>
--	---	---	--

	<p>terms of reference for the Commissioners' schedule of audits.</p> <p>Barriers for effective consultation with disabled people on all policies and procedures to be removed.</p> <p>Discuss with sponsor Department as appropriate actions which might help attract disabled candidates to apply for Civil Service Commissioner appointments.</p>	<p>recommendations of audits are discussed with the NICS.</p> <p>Commissioners reviewed their consultation processes and asked 100 consultees to identify barriers to effective consultation.</p> <p>This is raised with the NIO sponsor unit when considering arrangements for competitions to appoint new Commissioners.</p>	<p>their statutory duties in relation to disability and of Commissioners' expectations.</p> <p>All responses received (34) were positive and no barriers were identified.</p> <p>Secretariat and Commissioners are content that the issue has been raised for action as appropriate.</p>
--	---	--	--

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

	Training Action Measures	Outputs	Outcome / Impact
1	Commissioners and Secretariat staff received written and verbal guidance when developing the Disability Action Plan.	Written and verbal guidance received.	Commissioners' and Secretariat Staff awareness and knowledge increased.
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	Commissioners undertook a consultation exercise to seek views on how best to communicate with consultees.	100 letters written and issued to consultees.	34 positive responses received with no barriers identified and all respondents agreeing to be consulted electronically in the future.
2			
3			
4			

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. 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 Diversity Plan. A number of measures and targets specific	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 equality and diversity and to meeting the needs of disabled people.

	to disability were included in the draft Plan.		
--	--	--	--

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	Support any staff with disabilities in respect of training and development needs and career development opportunities.	During this reporting period there were no staff with disabilities working in the Commissioners' office.
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?

* The Commissioners monitor the Disability Action Plan closely and review it on a quarterly basis as an agenda item at their business meetings. Commissioners undertook a consultation exercise and approached 100 consultees to seek views on how best to communicate with consultees and as a result have established that all are content to be consulted electronically in any future consultation exercise. The exercise also asked consultees to identify barriers to communication and to propose any improvements to the process. No barriers were identified and no improvements were proposed.

(a) Qualitative

See * above.

(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 revisions planned
