

DEPARTMENT FOR SOCIAL DEVELOPMENT

EQUALITY SCHEME

**Northern Ireland Act 1998
Section 75
Statutory Equality Obligations**

March 2001

Statement by the Minister and Permanent Secretary

The Department for Social Development is fully committed to complying with the Section 75 obligations of the Northern Ireland Act, which deal with the promotion of equality of opportunity and good relations. The Department has set out in this draft Equality Scheme how it proposes to fulfil those obligations.

As Minister for Social Development and Permanent Secretary respectively we will ensure that all officials within the Department are aware of their responsibilities and that they take account of the Equality Scheme when carrying out their duties. We are fully committed to complying with the statutory duty and will provide leadership in order to ensure that as a Department we fully comply with the obligations laid down in Section 75 of the Northern Ireland Act 1998.

Our Mission “Together, tackling disadvantage, building communities” highlights our commitment to work together with organisations both within and outside the Department in order to implement our statutory obligations.

We are committed to ensuring that the equality duty permeates all aspects of the Department’s work.



Maurice Morrow MLA
Minister for Social Development



John Hunter
Permanent Secretary

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1. Introduction

- 1.1 The Department for Social Development (DSD) has been created as part of the new departmental arrangements for the devolved administration. It amalgamates agencies and functions previously associated with the Department of Health and Social Services and the Department of the Environment for Northern Ireland.
- 1.2 *The Department's mission is "Together, tackling disadvantage, building communities".*
- 1.3 The Department has developed a Corporate Strategic Plan setting out its strategic direction and outlining its overall mission and values, its corporate aims and objectives and its key challenges for the year 2000/01.
- 1.4 Section 75 of the Northern Ireland Act 1998 ("the Act") requires the Department in carrying out its functions to have due regard to the need to promote equality of opportunity between:
 - persons of different religious belief, political opinion, racial group, age, marital status or sexual orientation;
 - men and women generally;
 - persons with a disability and persons without; and
 - persons with dependants and persons without.
- 1.5 In addition, and without prejudice to its obligation above, the Department shall, in carrying out all its functions relating to Northern Ireland, have regard to the desirability of promoting good relations between persons of different religious belief, political opinion or racial group.
- 1.6 Schedule 9 of the Act requires the Department to set out in an Equality Scheme how it proposes to fulfil the duties imposed by Section 75. This document is intended to fulfil that statutory requirement.

1.7 The functions of the Department for the purposes of the Act include all its powers and duties. They are wide-ranging and are usually defined in legislation. In this Scheme the following are to be regarded as the Department's functions. **More detail on the functions and their delivery is contained in Appendix 1.**

- Social Security, Pensions and Child Support
- Housing
- Urban Regeneration and Community Development

1.8 Within each of these functions the Department has identified its current main policies. **A fuller description of these policies is in Appendix 2.**

- Social Security, Pensions and Child Support

Children and families

(Child Benefit, Income Support, Widows Benefit, Social Fund, Guardians Allowance, Child Support, New Deal for Lone Parents)

People of Working Age

(Job Seekers Allowance, Income Support, Housing Benefit, Incapacity Benefit, Invalid Care Allowance)

People with a disability

(Incapacity Benefit, Disability Living Allowance, Severe Disablement Allowance, Industrial Injuries Benefit, Attendance Allowance)

Older people

(Retirement Pension, Attendance Allowance, Income Support, Housing Benefit, SERPS and Second State Pension)

Operational policies

(secure, timely and accurate claims and applications administration; information and advice; access to and uptake of social security benefits; fraud; child support enforcement/compliance; recruitment of casual staff)

Note: The Department also has responsibility for policy on the regulation of occupational, personal and stakeholder pensions. In addition the Department has shared responsibility for policy in connection with a series of New Deals with the Department of Higher and Further Education, Training and Employment

- **Housing**

- private sector housing grants
- financial assistance by the Department to voluntary bodies
- co-ownership housing
- social housing new build programme
- houses in multiple occupation
- promoting domestic energy conservation
- energy efficiency and fuel poverty

Note: It should be noted that the NI Housing Executive has its own separate Equality Scheme which reflects its responsibility for the everyday operation of schemes and policies. The NI Housing Executive will identify policies for impact assessment in addition to those identified by the Department.

- **Urban Regeneration and Community Development**

- Urban Regeneration (including Belfast and Londonderry)
- Supporting the Regional Infrastructure of the Voluntary and Community Sector
- Compact between Government and the Voluntary and Community Sector (Compact)

- Active Community Initiative
- District Council's Community Services Programme
- Accommodation for Travellers
- EU Transitional Objective 1 Programme for Northern Ireland 2000 - 2005 (Transitional Programme)
- EU Peace II Programme for Northern Ireland and the Border Counties 2000 - 2004 (Peace II)
- EU Structural Funds: Urban II Programme 2000 - 2006 (Urban II)
- Promoting and maintaining Social¹ and Charities legislation
- Sale of New Towns Land
- Town/City Centre re-invigoration

1.9 The Department acknowledges that there are difficulties in defining policies. In particular, it is recognised that:

- some policies cut across different functions and different Departments and agencies (eg New TSN and New Deal);
- a programme or service may serve more than one policy;
- no policy is discrete: every policy is affected by and affects other policies;
- there are different levels of policy, for example, European Union policies, UK Government Manifesto commitments, local policies adopted by District Councils, Boards and Trusts. Policies implemented by this Department may have been developed elsewhere.

¹Social legislation includes liquor licensing (including registration of clubs), street trading, gambling, Sunday trading and hare coursing

- 1.10 Where this Department has lead responsibility for a policy which requires close co-operation with, or is implemented by, other Departments, it would ensure that those other Departments actively participate in any equality impact assessment which may be necessary. This would include, in particular, their participation in a steering group for the assessment.
- 1.11 Similarly, where this Department has lead responsibility for a policy delivered by non-departmental public bodies or other public authorities, it will involve them with any equality impact assessment which may be necessary. The Department will also contribute appropriately to equality impact assessments carried out by other public bodies on their own policies when they derive substantially from the central policies of this Department.
- 1.12 When, as a result of an equality impact assessment, the Department identifies a significant equality of opportunity issue arising from a UK-wide or European Union policy, it will advise the appropriate UK Department or the European Commission of its findings.
- 1.13 Certain of the Department's policies are not determined by the Department itself. Employment policies and policies on public procurement are determined by the Department of Finance and Personnel (DFP). DFP will carry out equality impact assessments of those policies as they relate to Northern Ireland Departments. These arrangements will ensure that the policies followed by the Department for Social Development in relation to employment and public procurement are subject to impact assessment centrally by the Department which has ultimate policy responsibility for them. The Department will provide such information which may be required by DFP in carrying out these equality impact assessments and will participate in any steering group established by DFP to oversee the assessments.

- 1.14 In relation to personnel policies, the Department, as an integral part of the NICS, fully subscribes to and operates NICS corporate policies. In addition, the Department, in concert with other employing Departments and Agencies working in conjunction with Central Personnel Group in the Department of Finance and Personnel, contributes and will continue to contribute positively to the development and maintenance of such policies including any impact assessment, through existing NICS-wide personnel fora, for example, the Personnel Directors Group.

Note: [All Northern Ireland Departments and the Northern Ireland Office are represented at Grade 5 (Assistant Secretary) level on the Personnel Director's Group (PDG). The Group, which is chaired at Grade 3 (under Secretary) level by the Central Personnel Group meets at least 12 times a year to provide leadership and strategic direction on NICS Corporate personnel policies.]

- 1.15 The Department is committed to the fulfilment of its Section 75 obligations in all parts of its structure. Responsibility for driving forward implementation within the Department will be located in the Corporate Services Directorate, Equality and Corporate Planning Unit, Churchill House under the personal responsibility of a Grade 5 official, currently Bryan Davis². This Directorate will be a central point of contact for the Equality Commission and for complainants. The Grade 5 will represent the Department in inter-departmental structures to co-ordinate the implementation of Section 75 obligations. The Grade 5 will be supported in this role by the Equality and Corporate Planning Unit.

- 1.16 The Grade 5 will also report to the Departmental Management Board chaired by the Permanent Secretary. The Board will, on a quarterly basis, monitor and review the implementation of the Section 75 obligations and will report progress on a regular basis to the Minister. As part of the corporate planning process objectives and targets relating to the statutory obligations will be built into the Department's strategic and business plans and Chief Executives and Deputy Secretaries will be responsible for monitoring and reporting on progress to the Departmental board. An organisation chart setting out the lines of responsibility is shown at Appendix 3. Where relevant, for example those engaged in developing policy and legislation, implementation of the statutory duty will be included in staffs' personal performance plans.

²The officer named and the address given are currently correct. However, over the lifetime of the scheme it is likely that the postholder and office location will change. In that event, the Department will inform the Equality Commission and consultees listed at Appendix 5.

- 1.17 The Department will ensure that implementation of the Section 75 obligation is supported efficiently with the necessary resources to ensure that the statutory duties are complied with. It will communicate to and train its staff on the requirements of the statutory obligations and how these obligations can be implemented efficiently. (See section 7).
- 1.18 The Department recognises the complementarity between its Section 75 obligations and the New Targeting Social Need initiative. Focused programmes to redress social disadvantage may be an effective way of promoting equality of opportunity in terms of several Section 75 categories. The Department will seek to develop synergies between New TSN and the statutory obligations. Bryan Davis who has personal responsibility for the overall review and monitoring of the implementation of the Section 75 obligations within this Department is also responsible for implementation of the New TSN policy.

2. Assessing compliance with the equality of opportunity duty

- 2.1 In order to inform this scheme, the Department has examined its existing policies to assess whether they impact on the promotion of equality of opportunity or the good relations duty.
- 2.2 Over a five year period the Department will carry-out impact assessments on those policy areas where the initial screening indicates that there is evidence of significant implications on the equality of opportunity or good relations duty within the terms of Section 75 of the Act. The timetable for these impact assessments is shown at Appendix 4. Where appropriate, a number of policies within a function may be grouped together for one assessment. Where relevant, an equality impact assessment should include an annex on the promotion of good relations (without prejudice to the statutory obligation on equality of opportunity).
- 2.3 The Department will proactively develop its promotion of good relations, recognising that the statutory obligation relates to people of different religion, political and racial group. It notes that the Office of the First Minister and Deputy First Minister (OFM/DFM) will carry out equality impact assessments during the first year of its scheme on (i.) the Promoting Social Inclusion review on minority ethnic issues; and (ii.) mainstreaming

community relations within the public sector and other institutions. This Department will contribute, as necessary, to OFM/DFM's assessments. It will draw on them in further developing its practical commitments to the good relations statutory obligation.

- 2.4 The relevant organisations included in Appendix 5 in relation to each main policy area will be consulted on these equality impact assessments. This list is not exhaustive. Additional bodies may be added during the lifetime of this scheme to reflect the establishment of new organisations. If other organisations wish to be added to this list they should contact the address shown in Section 13. The Community Relations Council will also be consulted specifically in relation to the promotion of good relations.
- 2.5 The Department will conduct an annual review of progress made in implementing the arrangements specified in the Scheme and in complying with the statutory duties. This review will include progress made by other bodies for which the Department is responsible, namely, the Social Security Agency and the Child Support Agency. The review will be made public and will be sent to the Equality Commission to assist it in compiling its own Annual Report as required by sub-para 5 (1)(b) of Schedule 8 to the Act. The Department will liaise with the Equality Commission as appropriate to ensure that progress is maintained. The Department's Agencies will report progress on their Section 75 obligations in their annual reports.
- 2.6 The Department will monitor complaints that it has not fulfilled its statutory obligations and will seek to resolve such complaints and aim to give a substantive response to complaints within one month.
- 2.7 The Department will liaise with its non-departmental public bodies (NDPBs) to ensure that all policies are considered. The NDPBs which are required to submit their own schemes are:
 - Northern Ireland Housing Executive
 - Laganside Corporation

2.8 The Department will conduct a comprehensive review of this scheme within 5 years of its submission to the Equality Commission. The review will take account of any guidance which the Equality Commission may issue on such reviews. This review will include an assessment of how the Department has complied with its Section 75 obligations and how equality of opportunity and good relations have been advanced in relation to the main policy areas. The Department may wish to have some independent input to this review. The Department will consult with those bodies listed in Appendix 5 and other relevant bodies before submission of the review to the Equality Commission.

3. Assessing the impact of policies on the promotion of equality of opportunity

3.1 In identifying policies to be subject to equality impact assessment, the Department has considered its full range of policies and new policies which will be proposed for adoption during the term of the scheme. (A full list of the Department's functions and policies is contained in Appendix 1 and Appendix 2). Any proposed policies which emerge during the lifetime of the Scheme will be screened against the four criteria in paragraph 3.2 and those identified as having significant implications for equality of opportunity following such a review will be subject to a full impact assessment.

3.2 The Department through an initial screening exercise has considered the impact of each current policy on equality of opportunity in terms of the nine categories listed at Section 75 of the Act. For each policy the following criteria were applied:

- is there any evidence of higher or lower participation or uptake by different groups within any of the nine categories?
- is there any evidence that different groups have different needs, experiences, issues and priorities in relation to the particular main policy area?
- is there an opportunity to better promote equality of opportunity or good relations by altering policy or working with others in Government or the community at large?

- have consultations with relevant representative organisations or individuals within groups indicated that particular policies create problems that are specific to them?

The main groups within each of the nine categories are identified at Appendix 6.

- 3.3 The outcome of the screening exercise has resulted in the identification of a number of policies for impact assessment although each policy will not necessarily have a significant impact in terms of all of the nine Section 75 categories. Impact assessments will be carried out on the policies shown in paragraph 3.8 and Appendix 7 as the initial consideration (ie screening) indicates there is scope to promote better equality of opportunity. Policies, proposed by those consulted as appropriate for impact assessment, which have not been included, are listed in Appendix 8 together with the reasons why.
- 3.4 Since the inception of social security provision in Great Britain and Northern Ireland, the parity principle has applied. That principle is enshrined in Section 87 of the Northern Ireland Act 1998 and is designed to ensure uniformity of provision across the UK. Given the nature and scale of social security policy, full screening of these policies has not yet taken place. As a first step therefore, the Department will in Year 1 undertake a screening assessment of the policy areas identified in paragraph 1.8 to inform a detailed programme for the subsequent years.
- 3.5 An equality impact assessment will aim to identify whether, within each Section 75 category, the policy under consideration creates differential impacts between groups or has the potential to enhance equality of opportunity between groups, particularly in terms of:
- rights;
 - resources;
 - participation; and
 - values and norms (i.e. traditional roles, stereotypes, division of labour, attitudes and behaviour).

- 3.6 The Department will carry out equality impact assessments in accordance with the procedures set out in Annex 1 of the guidelines. It will also draw on work to be commissioned by the Equality Commission in the near future, in addition to guidance from the Equality Unit of OFM/DFM.
- 3.7 Within 5 years of the approval of this scheme, the Department will conduct equality impact assessments on all of the policies listed in paragraph 3.8, together with those which emerge from the screening exercise referred to in paragraph 3.4. The Department has prioritised on the basis of:
- relevance to social need
 - effect on people's daily lives
 - effect on economic, social and human rights
 - scale of expenditure incurred by the policy
 - availability of resources
 - cultural or political impact on people
- 3.8 The timetable³ established for the assessment of policies within the Department's functions is set out below.

Year 1

- Provision of relevant, accurate and timely information and advice about Social Security Benefits
- Private sector housing grants
- Accommodation for Travellers
- Child Support Agency's NI Field Operations
- District Council's Community Services Programme (new policy)

³ This timetable may be subject to review in the light of the Northern Ireland Programme for Government which will be finalised in 2001. Any re-prioritisation of equality impact assessments will be notified as soon as possible to the Equality Commission.

Year 2

- Urban Regeneration - Belfast
- Peace II
- Compact between Government and the Voluntary and Community Sector

Year 3

- Uptake of Social Security Benefits
- Customer Service (Access to social security benefits)
- Urban Regeneration - other areas
- Town/City Centre reinvigoration
- Social housing new build programme
- Recruitment of casual staff

Year 4

- Active Community Initiative
- Urban II
- Transitional Programme
- Urban Regeneration - Londonderry

Year 5

- Supporting the Regional Infrastructure of the Voluntary and Community Sector

- 3.9 In the light of consultation on its draft scheme, the Department appreciates that some consultees regarded the information given on functions, policies and the reasons for screening out policies to be insufficient. Following submission of this scheme, the Department will provide further details to the Equality Commission and affected groups on these issues. If, after further targeted consultation with the Commission and major representative organisations, the Department considers that additional policies should be listed for future equality impact assessment, the Department will, within six months of submission of this scheme, inform the Commission of these decisions and the timescale for additional assessments.
- 3.10 In making any decision on a current or proposed policy, the Department will take into account any relevant equality impact assessment and the outcome of associated consultation. This is a statutory requirement under para 9(2) of Schedule 9 to the Northern Ireland Act 1998.
- 3.11 When the Department puts forward a proposal for legislation, a summary assessment of the implications for the statutory obligations will be included with the paper to the Executive Committee and the Explanatory Memorandum to the Assembly Committee considering the Bill.
- 3.12 Legislation will normally be part of the process of implementing a policy. In most cases, prior to putting forward a proposal for legislation, the Department will have carried out an equality impact assessment, with associated public consultation, on the policy which gives rise to the legislation.

4. Consultation

- 4.1 In consulting on any matter to which the equality duty relates the Department will draw from the list in Appendix 5 which includes the Equality Commission, the Community Relations Council, voluntary, community and trade union groups. The Department will consult as appropriate with the Equality Commission and the Community Relations Council on issues relevant to the fulfilment of the Section 75 obligations. It will take account of proposals from those bodies relating to its compliance with the Section 75 obligation. The Department will work with representative groups and individuals of the Section 75 categories in order to identify how best to obtain their views. This will include specific consideration of how best to communicate with young people and people with learning disabilities. The way in which this will be operationalised will emerge during these discussions. On the draft Scheme itself, the Department consulted the organisations and individuals listed in Appendix 2 of the draft Scheme which was issued for consultation on 7th April 2000. The names of those consultees together with some additional names added since then can be found at Appendix 5 of this Scheme.
- 4.2 The Department will also consult on equality impact assessments with relevant public sector and affected groups drawn from the list in Appendix 5. For equality impact assessments on new policies which relate to a specific locality within Northern Ireland, the Department will also consult with the relevant District Council(s), affected groups and other elected representatives.
- 4.3 For policies within each functional area, the relevant public sector bodies and affected groups who will be consulted are included in Appendix 5. This list is not exhaustive and may be amended in the light of experience. The Department recognises the importance of consultation and in line with the guiding principles will endeavour to conduct consultation in a timely, open and inclusive way. It will ensure that systems are in place to ensure that information is available in accessible formats in a timely fashion. It will make information available to ensure that consultation is meaningful and this will include relevant qualitative and quantitative data and other relevant documentation such as consultant's reports. In other parts of this section the Department has demonstrated its commitment to inclusive consultation.

- 4.4 In addition to consultation on equality impact assessments, the Department may also decide, from time to time, to consult on legislation, strategies, reviews and other plans. Within each functional area, the relevant bodies from the list in Appendix 5 will be included in these consultations.
- 4.5 The Department will provide a period for response of at least 8 weeks and begin consultation as early as possible unless there are exceptional circumstances which make that impracticable. For example, the requirements of parity in the social security field may limit consultation where the legislative timetable set in GB requires urgent legislation for Northern Ireland.
- 4.6 From time to time Northern Ireland Departments are consulted on the development or implementation of a UK-wide (for example social security policies) or European Union policy. The time period usually allowed to Northern Ireland Departments for these purposes is usually too short to allow public consultation in Northern Ireland. However, this Department will use its best endeavours in the time available to identify any adverse impact on equality of opportunity or good relations. The sponsoring UK Department will be made fully aware of the Department's legal obligations under Section 75 and particularly the need for at least 8 weeks public consultation on proposed new policies or policy changes. The sponsoring Department will also be asked to take these matters into account when managing EU policy development. The Department will monitor, keep under review justify clearly and report on in the annual review any instances where it is not possible to provide the full 8 week consultation period.
- 4.7 In consulting on any matter to which this scheme relates, the Department will either write to the relevant bodies referred to in this section of the scheme or, in appropriate circumstances, consult through face to face meetings, small group meetings, advisory groups, surveys, questionnaires, consultative panels (standing or ad-hoc), or internet discussions.
- 4.8 It is intended that barriers to proper consultation should be removed by ensuring accessibility of language and appropriate format. Issues concerning access to information highlighted in Section 8 will be given particular consideration. Once the

assessment referred to in paragraph 8.3 has been carried out consideration will be given to making information available on request in alternative formats such as Braille, disc, large print, audio cassette, signed video cassette and in minority ethnic languages to meet the needs of those who are not fluent in English. Consideration will be given on how best to communicate information to young people and those with learning disabilities.

- 4.9 The Department will draw, in particular, on the outcome of a forthcoming conference to be organised by OFM/DFM on practical issues in carrying out future consultations in the context of Section 75 obligations. This would include inputs from representatives of groups which have traditionally been marginalised. It would also address the special difficulties in consulting children on policy issues in which they have an interest. In developing new approaches in this area, the Department will also draw on advice from the Equality Commission and lessons from other jurisdictions.
- 4.10 Specific training where appropriate will be given to those engaged in consultation exercises to ensure that those facilitating consultations have the necessary skills to communicate effectively. This training will be developed in consultation with the affected groups.
- 4.11 In organising consultation meetings, the Department will aim to ensure a full participation in the manner in which it arranges the time, appropriateness of the venue, in particular whether it can be assessed by those with disabilities, how the meeting is to be run, the use of appropriate language whether a signer is needed and the provision of childcare.

5. Monitoring

- 5.1 Knowledge of the uptake of services provided by the Department and the impact of its policies on the different groups within the Section 75 categories will assist the Department in assessing progress towards equality of opportunity. In the first year of the scheme (ie before 31st March 2001) the Department will assess the extent of existing monitoring within each of its main policy areas and the scope for extending it. This will include arrangements for monitoring access to information and services.

In addition to the value of any additional information required for assessing progress towards equality of opportunity, this assessment will also take into account the following factors:

- resource implications;
- readiness of the public to supply information;
- availability of proxy measures (e.g. postcode analysis).

The assessment will be made publicly available.

- 5.2 The Department recognises that the information currently available is not sufficient to conduct meaningful analysis of the impact of its policies on all of the nine categories. The assessment in Year 1 will identify where the gaps are and what needs to be put in place to rectify these shortfalls.
- 5.3 Where an equality impact assessment identifies an anticipated differential adverse impact on particular groups within the Section 75 categories, steps will be taken, where possible and appropriate, to mitigate the anticipated adverse impact, assuming that no alternative policy is feasible. In doing this the Department will take account of the guidance contained in Section 7 Annex 1 of the Equality Commission’s “Guide to the Statutory Duty” which states that, if the monitoring and evaluation show that the policy results in greater adverse impact than predicted or if opportunities arise which would allow for greater equality of opportunity to be promoted, public authorities must ensure that the policy is revised. The Department may, in these circumstances, commission special monitoring and analysis to confirm the extent of the adverse impact and/or the success of any mitigating measures. Information collected in this special monitoring would be taken into account in any future review of the policy.
- 5.4 The Department will co-operate closely with the Northern Ireland Statistics and Research Agency (NISRA) in its review of existing monitoring arrangements and its consideration of special monitoring of anticipated adverse impacts.

6. Publication of impact assessments and monitoring exercises

6.1 The Department will make publicly available the outcome of any equality impact assessment and of any monitoring undertaken in relation to paras 5.1 to 5.3 above. This material will be accessible on the Department's website. It will also be available in printed form and on request in alternative formats such as Braille, large print, disc, audio cassette and minority languages to meet the needs of those who are not fluent in English, from Departmental headquarters through a request to the Equality and Corporate Planning Unit, Churchill House, Victoria Square, Belfast, BT1 4SD. The Department may inform the general public about the availability of this material through press releases/advertisements. Specific consideration will be given to how best this information can be communicated to young people and those with learning disabilities. The Department will also directly inform appropriate bodies included in the list shown at Appendix 5 when this material is available.

6.2 Published documentation on an equality impact assessment will include:

- the aims of the policy
- details of the outcome of the assessment highlighting if an adverse impact has been identified
- associated available monitoring data
- details of any consideration given to mitigate any adverse impact of the policy on the promotion of equality of opportunity
- details of any consideration given to alternative policies which might better achieve the promotion of equality of opportunity.

7. Training and Awareness

- 7.1 In the Forward to this Scheme the Minister and the Permanent Secretary have set out their personal commitment to the Section 75 duty. This public commitment will be supplemented by a minute from the Permanent Secretary to all staff when the Scheme is approved once again stating his commitment and outlining to staff what the key issues relating to the equality duty are and how staff are expected to apply these to their duties. A summary of the equality duty will be provided to all staff.
- 7.2 The Department will ensure that all staff receive training, (including awareness training on the Section 75 obligations, the requirements of this equality scheme and the arrangements for carrying out equality impact assessments), appropriate to their grade and responsibilities. In addition, staff who are required to carry out impact assessments and other staff requiring specialist training will receive the necessary training during the first year of the scheme.
- 7.3 The content of training programmes on equality impact assessments and screening will reflect the Equality Commission's guidance. In particular, a number of staff involved in legislation and policy development have already been targeted and have received this training so that they know to build the equality obligations into their plans at an early stage and to screen and impact assess as appropriate.
- 7.4 The requirements of Section 75 and this equality scheme will be included in the induction training of all new staff. The Department has already given a commitment (paragraph 4.10) to provide training for those engaged in consultation exercises where they need to develop their skills.
- 7.5 The Department is committed to providing appropriate training and awareness. The delivery mechanisms will reflect the needs of individual staff and will involve a mixture of workshops, awareness leaflets and provision of information through the team briefing process. Where an agency is responsible for its own training the Department will ensure it complies with the requirements in relation to training.

- 7.6 As stated earlier (paragraph 1.15) responsibility for driving forward implementation of the statutory duty within the Department rests with the Equality and Corporate Planning Unit situated within the Corporate Services Directorate under the personal responsibility of Bryan Davis a Grade 5 official. Aside from this responsibility, the Equality and Corporate Planning Unit will also oversee the investigation of complaints and will ensure that those investigating complaints have the necessary expertise and support.
- 7.7 Evaluation is a feature of all training and the Department will continue to evaluate the training and awareness which is delivered to ensure that staff understand what is being communicated and can apply the knowledge acquired. The Department will report in its annual review on the extent to which training objectives have been met.
- 7.8 The Department will also assess the need for specialised training in communicating with, and understanding the needs of traditionally marginalised groups. The training could initially be targeted at staff most likely to deal with these marginalised groups but could in time be extended more widely. This focused training will be developed in association with the affected groups.
- 7.9 To date, training has been provided to Grade 7s and above and other key staff on the requirements of Section 75. In addition, middle and senior managers were advised that the draft scheme was available on both the Internet and the NICS internal system “the Intranet”. A copy of the Commission guidelines accompanied the letter and the statutory duty was set in context. Managers were instructed to make their staff aware of the draft scheme. All staff were advised through the team briefing process of the availability of the draft Equality Scheme and where they could obtain a copy.
- 7.10 To summarise the above commitments, the Department will by October 2001 draw up a detailed communication and training plan to cover all staff including its Agencies, over the 5 year Equality Scheme period which will aim to:

- Raise awareness of current anti discrimination legislation in Northern Ireland, including an explanation of the duties and their implications for all employees.
- Provide employees involved in the screening of policies with the necessary skills and knowledge to do this work effectively.
- Provide those employees who deal with complaints in relation to the implementation of the Department's Scheme with the necessary skills and knowledge to investigate complaints.
- Provide employees involved in the equality impact assessment of policies with the necessary skills and knowledge to do this work effectively.
- Provide employees involved in the consultation processes with the necessary skills and knowledge to do this work effectively.
- Provide employees involved in the implementation and monitoring of the effective implementation of the Equality Scheme with the knowledge to do this work effectively.
- Evaluate the extent to which the training programme has achieved its objectives.

7.11 A report on the extent to which the training objectives have been achieved will be included in the Annual Review to the Equality Commission.

8. Public access to information and services

8.1 In disseminating information through the local press, the Department will ensure that press statements and public advertisements are carried by all three Belfast daily newspapers. Where press statements or public advertisements are aimed at a particular area within Northern Ireland, the Department will ensure that the information is disseminated through at least two local newspapers circulating in that area, ensuring that the information is accessible to both main political-religious sections of the community.

8.2 While the Department is committed to effective communication with the public, it recognises that there is a risk that some sections will not enjoy equality of opportunity in accessing the information provided. The Department has identified three particular risk areas:

- people with sensory and learning disabilities who may have particular difficulties with information in print;
- members of minority ethnic groups, whose first language is not English and who may have difficulties with information provided only in English;
- some local newspapers are read predominantly by members of only one of the major religious/political groups (i.e. Protestants/Unionists or Catholics/Nationalists)

8.3 The Department will, within the first year following approval of this scheme, assess its arrangements for providing information in Braille, large print, audio cassette, signed video cassette and minority ethnic language formats taking account of the views of representative groups. The assessment will take account of:

- the statutory requirements of the Disability Discrimination Act 1995;
- the likely demand for information in such formats across its main policy areas;
- resource implications; and, in particular,
- the recommendations of the cross-departmental Promoting Social Inclusion (PSI) working groups on minority ethnic people and on access to information, which will report in 2000.

8.4 In conducting this assessment the Department will outline existing systems as they operate at the current time. In addition the Department will inform the Equality Commission of changes that will be made. The Department will consult with representative groups as it carries out this assessment and will consult on the findings and recommendations of the assessment prior to

implementation. The assessment will make recommendations on how public access to information can be better ensured by improving arrangements for providing information in different formats.

- 8.5 The Department's commitments in this scheme on equality of opportunity in assessing information are without prejudice to any rights to information in the current Code of Practice on Open Government or in the new Freedom of Information legislation.
- 8.6 In locating new offices, intended to be open to the public, the Department will seek to ensure that no section of the community is deterred from visiting, for whatever reason. All public offices will maintain a welcoming and harmonious environment. The Department will adhere to the relevant provisions of the Disability Discrimination Act 1995.
- 8.7 The Department is committed to ensuring that all of its services should be fully accessible to all parts of the community. Equality impact assessments will highlight any factors which result in services being less accessible to particular groups.

9. Publication of the Scheme

- 9.1 Following submission to the Equality Commission, the draft scheme will be available in print form and alternative formats (such as Braille, large print, disc, audio cassette and minority languages to meet the needs of those who are not fluent in English) free on request from the Equality and Corporate Planning Unit, Churchill House, Victoria Square, Belfast BT1 4SD. The Department will ensure that systems are in place to ensure that information is available in accessible formats in a timely fashion. Consideration will be given on how best to communicate information to young people and those with learning disabilities. The Scheme will also be available on the Department for Social Development's own website. Where staff do not have access to the Department's website or internal Intranet system arrangements will be made to provide them with access to a hard copy of the Department's Equality Scheme.

- 9.2 Following approval of the scheme by the Equality Commission, a further version (revised if necessary) will be available from the same sources. The Department will publicise the approved Scheme taking account of the options contained in the Equality Commission's guide namely press releases, prominent advertisements in the press, the internet and direct mail shots to groups representing the various Section 75 categories.

10. Complaints

- 10.1 When a person believes that they have been directly affected by a failure of the Department to comply with this scheme, they should, in the first instance, bring their complaint to the attention of Bryan Davis, Corporate Services Directorate, The Equality and Corporate Planning Unit, 7th Floor, Churchill House, Victoria Square, Belfast, BT1 4SD. Complaints can also be sent by e-mail or Fax to the address shown in Section 13. The Equality and Corporate Planning Unit will arrange for an internal initial investigation of the complaint to be carried out and a response issued to the complainant within 1 month.
- 10.2 In responding, the complainant will be informed of the procedure for pursuing the complaint further with the Equality Commission, as set out in paragraph 10 of Schedule 9 to the Northern Ireland Act 1998. In any subsequent investigation by the Equality Commission, the Department will co-operate fully, providing access to any relevant information which the Commission may require.
- 10.3 Similarly, the Department will co-operate fully with any investigation by the Equality Commission under sub-paragraph 11(1)(b) of Schedule 9 to the Northern Ireland Act 1998. This investigation would occur in circumstances where the Commission believes that a public authority may have failed to comply with a scheme which had been approved by the Equality Commission or which was made under paragraph 6 or 7 of Schedule 9 to the Act.

11. Responsibility and accountability

11.1 The lines of responsibility/accountability within the Department in relation to its compliance with the Section 75 obligations will be as follows:

- the Permanent Secretary will be accountable to the Minister and will be responsible for ensuring that the Department complies fully with the Section 75 obligations.
- Deputy Secretaries and Chief Executives will have personal responsibility for providing assurance to the Permanent Secretary that they are providing their services in accordance with the Equality Scheme.
- Directors will be personally responsible for implementing the Equality Scheme and for providing assurance that they are complying with the Section 75 obligations as laid down in the Scheme. In particular, when new policies are being introduced or where existing policies are being reviewed, the Director is responsible for ensuring that an impact assessment is carried out and equality considerations are taken into account.
- the Equality and Corporate Planning Unit, reporting to the Director of Corporate Services will be responsible for providing advice on the policy and keeping the Departmental Management Board regularly informed of progress on the activities set out in this Equality Scheme.

12. Timetable

12.1 The timetable showing the measures which the Department proposes to take during the five years following approval of this scheme is contained in Appendix 4.

13. Contacting the Department

13.1 You can contact the Department's Equality and Corporate planning Unit at the contact address and numbers shown below:

Address: Department for Social Development
Equality and Corporate Planning Unit
5th Floor
Churchill House
Victoria Square
BELFAST
BT1 4SD

Telephone No: 028 9056 9188 or
028 9056 9187

Fax No: 028 9056 9252

Email address: ecpu@dsdni.gov.uk

Website: www.dsdni.gov.uk

DESCRIPTION OF FUNCTIONS

Resources, Housing and Social Security Group negotiates and manages the allocation and control of the Department's resources. It sets the policy, legislative and funding framework within which housing providers (the Housing Executive and housing associations) operate. The group also has responsibility for social security policy in Northern Ireland, maintaining a separate but parallel body of social security legislation from that in Great Britain, and it compiles and analyses social security statistics here.

Urban Regeneration and Community Development Group is responsible for the regeneration of urban areas in Northern Ireland, with particular emphasis on Belfast and Londonderry. It targets resources on the most deprived areas, but also provides leadership on a range of physical development activities, including town and city centre development. The Voluntary Activity Unit forms part of this group, and it is responsible for co-ordinating and enhancing the effectiveness and efficiency of Government policy on support for the voluntary sector and community development.

The Social Security Agency is responsible for assessing accurately and paying securely a range of social security benefits, and supporting people into employment. It provides information and advice to its customers, processes reviews and appeals and carries out financial means assessments of individuals for other public bodies. In addition, the SSA provides a substantial service to the Benefits Agency in Great Britain

The Child Support Agency aims to help children whose parents live apart by assessing and periodically reviewing how much money non-resident parents should contribute to supporting them. The Agency can also arrange to collect money from the non-resident parent for payment to the parent with care. Like the SSA, the CSA carries out work for its counterpart in Great Britain.

DESCRIPTION OF POLICIES - (Paragraph 1.8)

Secure, timely and accurate claims and applications administration

The aim of the policy is to ensure that the right people get the right money at the right time every time and to make a significant and permanent reduction in the amount of money lost through incorrect payment of benefits.

Information and Advice

The aim of the policy is to ensure that potential customers have access to comprehensive information and advice on their entitlement to benefit and also to allow entitled customers to receive their full entitlement.

Customer Service (access to social security benefits)

The aim of the policy is to ensure that concerns identified in the two yearly customer satisfaction survey are addressed and to have a high level of customer satisfaction.

Uptake of Social Security Benefits

The aim of the policy is to ensure that all customers who are entitled to social security benefits are encouraged to claim their full entitlement.

Customer Services⁴ (CSA)

The aim of the policy is to improve the level of customer service etc. The nature of Child Support legislation means that non-resident parents and parents with care have different priorities, needs and perceptions.

Child Support Enforcement/compliance

The aims of the policy are to have regular maintenance in place, to secure child maintenance from the non-resident parent and to enforce maintenance when the non-resident parent is not complying.

Child Support Northern Ireland Field Operations

The aim of the policy is that local offices provide a face to face interview and visiting facility and gather information for the completion of a maintenance assessment. The local offices also provide access to child support information.

⁴ relates to information and advice as well as the secure, timely and accurate claims and applications administration

Fraud

Working in partnership with the Social Security Agency to prevent benefit fraud, by identifying the incorrect payment of benefits as a result of fraud and error.

Recruitment of Casual Staff

The aim of the policy is to have a pool of staff available to fill short-term vacancies.

Co-ownership Housing

The aim of the policy is to give those on low incomes, who might apply for a social rented property, an opportunity to move into home ownership on a phased basis.

Private Sector Housing Grants

The aim of the policy is to assist the most needy (via means testing) to remedy housing unfitness, make minor improvements or adapt housing to meet the needs of the disabled.

Payments to Voluntary Bodies

The aim of this policy is to assist with the running costs of organisations which help individuals and communities to resolve housing problems or become involved in housing policy, service and programme issues.

Social housing new build programme

The aim of the policy is to add to the stock of social housing, to help meet the needs of those who apply to the Housing Executive and housing associations to access that sector.

Houses in multiple occupation (HMO)

The aim of the policy is to improve the quality, safety and management standards of properties in this part of the private rented sector.

Promoting domestic energy conservation

The aim of the policy is to improve the energy efficiency of all public and private housing stock, particularly through schemes targeting those dwellings belonging to vulnerable groups.

Energy Efficiency

The aim of the policy is to improve the energy efficiency of housing in the domestic residential sector by installing loft insulation and draught stripping and providing advice on energy efficiency measures to qualifying households.

Fuel poverty

Through pilot projects, harnessing the efforts of various agencies and communities, the aim of the policy is to reduce the numbers of people experiencing fuel poverty.

Urban Regeneration (including Belfast and Londonderry)

The Department's urban regeneration policies seek to reverse and ameliorate decline and decay, particularly in urban inner areas, by improving the infrastructure, environment, economy and the social and community fabric, with resources being targeted in the context of the Government's overall Targeting Social Need (TSN) policy.

Supporting the Regional Infrastructure of the Voluntary and Community Sector

This policy aims to facilitate networking, information exchange, training and advice for voluntary and community sector organisations and volunteers in Northern Ireland.

Compact between Government and the Voluntary and Community Sector

The Compact between Government and the Voluntary and Community Sector in Northern Ireland was published in December 1998 as part of a UK-wide initiative. It is a jointly-prepared, agreed statement between Government and the voluntary and community sector in Northern Ireland which sets out the general principles and the shared values which will govern the further development of their relationship.

Active Community Initiative

The overall aim of this policy is to help rebuild a sense of community by encouraging and supporting all forms of community involvement. A recently published draft Action Plan established 4 key objectives: to bring about a change in attitudes to volunteering and community involvement, increase the numbers of volunteers, broaden the volunteer base and empower local communities.

District Councils' Community Services Programme

The District Councils' Community Services policy is a unique, complex and collaborative initiative involving the Department, district councils, voluntary and community groups and local advice-giving organisations. The policy supports the provision of community/resource centres, local advice services, grants to voluntary and community groups and the employment of community services staff.

Accommodation for Travellers

Under this policy the Department provides 100% grant to District Councils for the provision of serviced sites for Travellers. The NI Housing Executive is also taking forward, at the Department's request, a pilot scheme to provide grouped housing for Travellers. A Working Group, established under the New Targeting Social Need Initiative, will report later this year on the factors which can cause Travellers to be at risk of exclusion and develop an integrated strategy and policy to tackle these issues.

Promoting and Maintaining Social and Charities legislation

Social legislation includes the development of policy and promotion of legislation on gambling, liquor licensing, registration of clubs, opening hours for shops, hare coursing, street trading, and game and game dealer's licences. The aim is to update and streamline the law to reflect changing social attitudes and expectations, and to provide an effective framework for control and enforcement, whilst respecting the freedom of the individual and avoiding imposing unnecessary burdens on business.

Charities legislation - The aim of this policy is to implement the terms of charities legislation, review and update the law affecting charities in Northern Ireland and provide general advice on matters connected with charities.

Sale of New Towns Land

This is land formally acquired for the New Towns of Antrim/Ballymena and Craigavon which the Department is now selling to the private sector for the development of these areas. Planning permission is sought and the land is offered for sale on the open market following a disposal programme agreed with the Valuation and Lands agency.

Town / City Centre re-invigoration

This policy states the organisational framework within which central and local government, together with others from the private, community and voluntary sectors, will work in partnership towards an agreed vision for their town centre. It will set out the respective roles of each body and provide guidance on how policy can be implemented. In doing so it will take account of relevant government policies including equality.

Transitional Programme

The aim of this policy is to support actions to revitalise those parts of cities, towns and villages which are unlikely to benefit from private investment in the absence of support. It will support major urban infrastructure projects which can make important contributions at regional level.

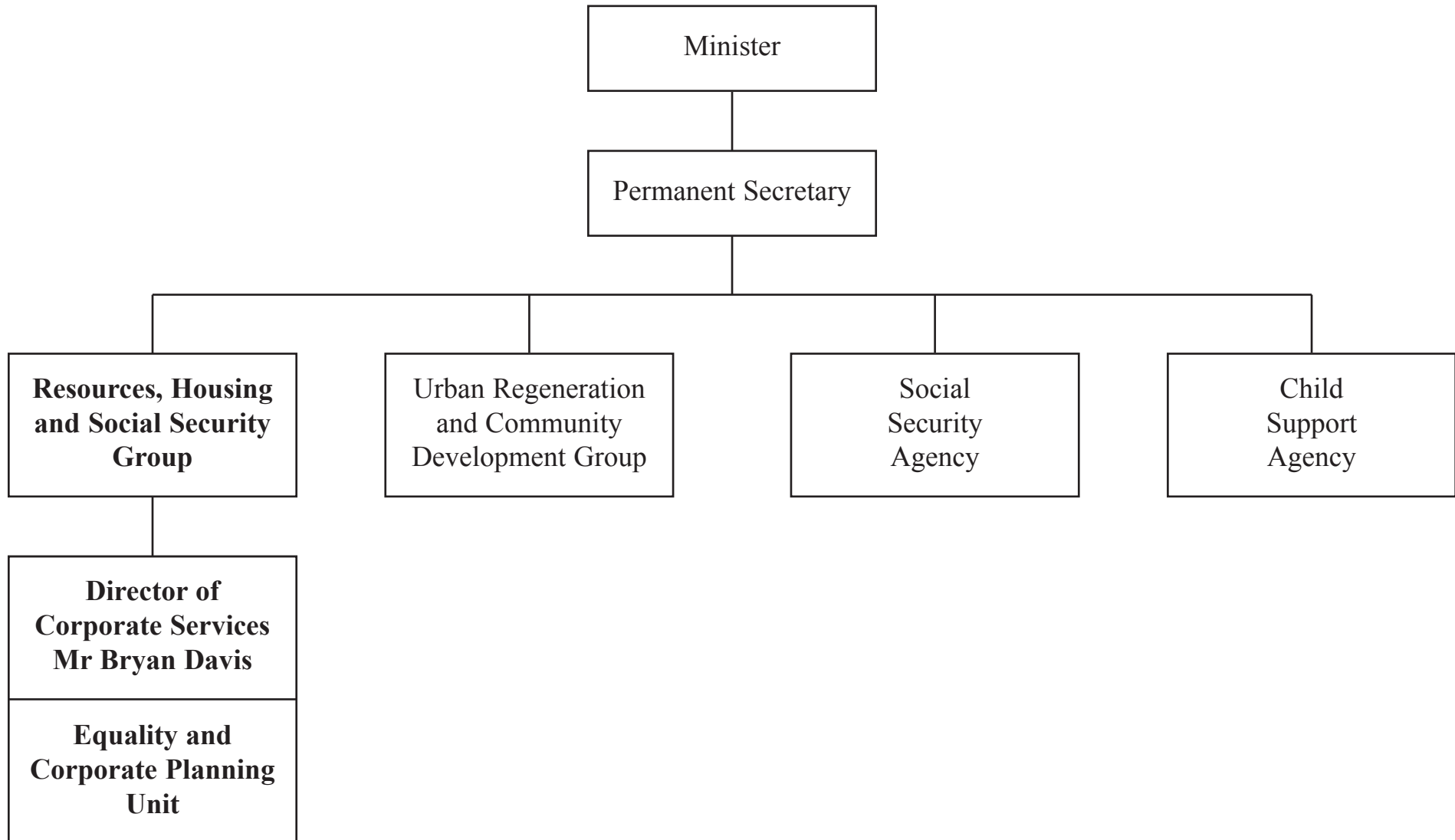
Peace II

Peace II is a special programme under the Community Support Framework. The aim is to assist in the process of economic renewal by building on the work of social inclusion, reconciliation, local development and cross-border co-operation begun under Peace I.

Urban II

The aim of this policy is to promote the formulation and implementation of particularly innovative strategies for sustainable economic and social regeneration of small and medium sized towns and cities or of distressed urban neighbourhoods of large cities.

DSD MANAGEMENT STRUCTURE



**TIMETABLE⁵ FOR MEASURES WHICH THE DEPARTMENT
PROPOSES TO TAKE FOLLOWING APPROVAL OF THE SCHEME**

Year 1

1. Equality impact assessments of the following policies:
 - Provision of relevant , accurate and timely information and advice about Social Security Benefits
 - Private sector housing grants
 - Accommodation for Travellers
 - Child Support NI Field operations
 - District Council's Community Services Programme (new policy)
2. Screening of all Social Security policies, development of a revised programme of impact assessments and consultation on this revised programme.
3. Assessment of monitoring arrangements
4. Assessment of arrangements for providing information to the public
5. Training and awareness for all relevant staff
6. Briefing for all staff on the Section 75 duty
7. Specialist training including impact assessment training for those staff required to carry out this task

Year 2:

1. Equality impact assessments of the following policies:
 - Urban Regeneration - Belfast
 - Peace II
 - Compact between Government and the Voluntary and Community sector

⁵ Whilst the list of equality impact assessments is in priority order in each year, other activities will be taken forward concurrently. The list of policies identified for impact assessment has been selected from the policies listed in paragraph 1.8

2. Ongoing training programme and awareness training of new entrants
3. Further training for staff who are required to carry out impact assessments

Year 3

1. Equality impact assessments of the following policies:
 - Uptake of Social Security Benefits
 - Customer Service (Access to social security benefits)
 - Urban Regeneration - other areas
 - Town/City Centre re-invigoration
 - Social housing new build programme
 - Recruitment of casual staff
2. Ongoing training programme and awareness training for new entrants

Year 4

1. Equality impact assessments of the following policies:
 - Active community initiative
 - Urban II
 - Transitional Programme
 - Urban Regeneration - Londonderry

Year 5

1. Equality impact assessments of the following policies:
 - Supporting the Regional Infrastructure of the Voluntary and Community Sector

CONSULTATION LIST

Active Community Unit, Home Office
Advice Services Alliance
Age Concern
Age Sector Reference Group
Archbishop of Armagh and Primate of All Ireland
Armagh Travellers Support Group
Association of Chief Officers of Voluntary Organisations
Association of Independent Advice Centres
Baha'i Office for Northern Ireland
Barnardos
Barnardos Tuar Ceatha Project
Belfast Butterfly Club
Belfast Partnership Boards
Belfast Resource Centre for the Unemployed
Belfast Traveller Education and Development Group
The Blind Centre NI
British Deaf Association
Bryson House
Business in the Community
Carafriend
Care
Carers National Association NI
Centre for Voluntary Action Studies, University of Ulster
"Challenge"
Chartered Institute of Housing
Child Care Northern Ireland
Child Poverty Action Group
Children's Law Centre
Chinese Welfare Association
Chrysalis Women's Centre
Coiste na n-iarchimi
Clerk to the Committee of the Centre
Coalition on Sexual Orientation
Committee on the Administration of Justice
Community Development and Child Health
The Community Relations Council
Community Relations Training/Learning Consortium
Community Technical Aid

Appendix 5 (cont)

Confederation of British Industry
Co-operation Ireland
Council for the Homeless (Northern Ireland)
Counteract
Craigavon Standing Conference of Women's Organisations
Cruse Bereavement Care (NI)
Democratic Dialogue
Departmental Solicitor's Office
Derry Well Woman
Disability Action
District Councils
Down's Syndrome Association
East Belfast Community Development Agency
Education and Library Boards
Employers' Forum on Disability
Equality Coalition
Equality Commission
Equality Forum NI
The Equality Unit
Falls Community Council
Falls Women's Centre
Family Planning Association NI
Fermanagh Women's Network
First Division Association
First Key
Foundry Regeneration Trust
Foyle Friend
Foyle Women's Information Network
Foyle Women's Network
Gay and Lesbian Youth NI
General Consumer Council
Gingerbread
The Guide Dogs for the Blind Association
Health and Social Services Boards
Help the Aged
Housing Rights Service
Indian Community Centre
Industrial Development Board
Institute of Charity Fundraising Managers
Irish Congress of Trade Unions

Appendix 5 (cont)

International Fund for Ireland
Knights of Columbanus
Laganside Corporation
The Law Centre (NI)
The Law Society
LEDU
Lesbian Line
Library, Parliament Buildings
The Local Government Staff Commission for NI
Members of the Northern Ireland Assembly
Mencap (Royal Society for Mentally Handicapped Children and Adults)
Methodist Church in Ireland
Mid-Ulster Women's Network
Multi-Cultural Resource Centre
National Association of Pension Funds
Newry and Mourne Senior Citizen's Consortium
Newry and Mourne Women
Newtownabbey Senior Citizen's Forum
NIACRO
NIC/ICTU
Northern Ireland African Cultural Centre
Northern Ireland Anti-Poverty Network
Northern Ireland Association of Citizens' Advice Bureaux
Northern Ireland Association for Mental Health
Northern Ireland Council for Ethnic Equality
Northern Ireland Council for Ethnic Minorities
Northern Ireland Council for Voluntary Action
Northern Ireland Economic Council
Northern Ireland Federation of Housing Associations
Northern Ireland Gay Rights Association
Northern Ireland Government Departments
Northern Ireland Housing Council
Northern Ireland Housing Executive
Northern Ireland Human Rights Commission
Northern Ireland Islamic Centre
Northern Ireland MPs and MEPs
Northern Ireland Partnership Boards
Northern Ireland Political Parties
Northern Ireland Public Service Alliance
Northern Ireland Spokespersons in House of Lords and House of Commons

Appendix 5 (cont)

Northern Ireland Statistics and Research Agency
Northern Ireland Tenants Action Project
Northern Ireland Union of Supported Employment
Northern Ireland Volunteer Development Agency
Northern Ireland Voluntary Trust
Northern Ireland Women's Aid Federation
Northern Ireland Women's European Platform
North West Community Network
North West Forum of People with Disabilities (Derry)
North West Forum of People with Disabilities (Enniskillen)
NSPCC
NUS/USI Northern Ireland Student Centre
OFREG
Omagh Women's Area Network
Parents Advice Centre
Parents and Professional and Autism
POBAL
Post Office Counters Ltd
Presbyterian Church in Ireland
Press for Change
Public Sector Support Services Forum
Putting Children First
Queer Space
The Rainbow Project
Relate
Rent Officer for Northern Ireland
Royal National Institute for the Blind
Royal National Institute for the Deaf
Royal Ulster Constabulary
Rural Community Network
Rural Development Council
Save the Children
Sense NI
Shelter (Northern Ireland)
Sikh Cultural Centre
Simon Community (Northern Ireland)
Social Economy Agency
South West Belfast Community Forum
Sperrin Lakeland Senior Citizens' Consortium
Staff Commission for Education and Library Boards

Appendix 5 (cont)

Training for Women Network Ltd
Traveller Movement Northern Ireland
Ulster Architectural Heritage Society
Ulster People's College
Ulster Scots Heritage Council
ULTACH
UNISON
Urban Institute
The Most Reverend Bishop Walsh
West Belfast Economic Forum
The Women's Centre
Women's Forum
Women's Information Group
Women's Resource and Development Agency
Women's Support Network
Women Together for Peace
Youth Council for NI

MAIN GROUPS RELEVANT TO THE SECTION 75 CATEGORIES FOR THE PURPOSES OF THE NORTHERN IRELAND ACT 1998

Category	Main Groups
Religious belief	Protestants; Catholics; people of non-Christian faiths; people of no religious belief
Political opinion	Unionists generally; Nationalists generally; members/supporters of any political party
Racial group	White people; Chinese; Irish Travellers; Indians; Pakistanis; Bangladeshis; Black Africans; Black Caribbean people; people of mixed ethnic group.
Men and women	Men (including boys); women (including girls); transgendered people; transsexual people
Marital status	Married people; unmarried people; divorced or separated people; widowed people
Age	For most purposes, the main categories are: children under 18; people aged between 18 and 65; and people over 65. However, the definition of age groups will need to be sensitive to the policy under consideration. For example, for some employment policies, children under 16 could be distinguished from people of working age.
Persons with a disability	Persons with a physical, sensory or learning disability as defined in sections 1 and 2 and Schedules 1 and 2 of the Disability Discrimination Act 1995
Persons with dependants	Persons with personal responsibility for the care of a child; persons with personal responsibility for the care of a person with an incapacitating disability; persons with personal responsibility for the care of a dependant elderly person
Sexual orientation	Heterosexuals; bi-sexuals; gays; lesbians

Appendix 7

Policy	Religious Belief	Political Opinion	Racial Group	Age	Marital Status	Sexual Orientation	Men and Women	Disabled or not disabled	With or without dependants
Information and advice about Social Security Benefits			✓	✓	✓		✓	✓	✓
Private Sector housing grants				✓	✓			✓	✓
Accommodation for travellers	✓		✓	✓			✓	✓	
CSA NI field operations	✓	✓							
Uptake of social security benefits			✓	✓	✓		✓	✓	✓
Urban Regeneration - Belfast	✓	✓	✓	✓	✓	✓	✓	✓	✓
Peace II	✓	✓	✓	✓	✓	✓	✓	✓	✓
Compact			✓					✓	
Active Community initiative	✓		✓	✓				✓	
Urban II	✓	✓	✓	✓	✓	✓	✓	✓	✓
Urban re-generation - other areas	✓	✓	✓	✓	✓	✓	✓	✓	✓
Town/city centre re-invigoration	✓	✓	✓	✓	✓	✓	✓	✓	✓
Social Housing new build programme	✓	✓	✓	✓	✓	✓	✓	✓	✓
Recruitment of casual staff	✓	✓	✓	✓	✓	✓	✓	✓	✓
Transitional Programme	✓	✓	✓	✓	✓	✓	✓	✓	✓
Urban regeneration - Londonderry	✓	✓	✓	✓	✓	✓	✓	✓	✓
Supporting the regional infrastructure of the voluntary and community sector	✓		✓	✓				✓	
District Councils' community service programme	✓		✓				✓	✓	
Customer Service (access to social security benefits)			✓	✓	✓		✓	✓	✓

CONSULTATION ON DRAFT EQUALITY SCHEME

The Department published its draft Equality Scheme for consultation on 7th April 2000. It specifically invited comments from over 300 groups and individuals listed at Appendix 5. It was also available on request and was posted on the Internet. It was available in Braille, large print, audio cassette and Cantonese. The Department received responses from 53 organisations.

The main comments received and the Department's response is set out in the attached Annex.

The following policies were suggested by consultees as appropriate for impact assessment but the Department did not include these in the timetable for the reasons stated:

- Access to Social Security benefits⁶ - This policy will be re-examined when the Department carries out its review of policies screened out following submission of the draft Scheme to the Equality Commission.
- Future Funding of the Community and Voluntary Sector - This is not a policy per se and matters it covers will be subsumed in wider impact assessments.
- Housing Estates Strategy - The Housing Estates Strategy is an operational matter and it would not be appropriate for it to be added to the list of policies identified for impact assessment within the Department's scheme. The issue is for the NIHE to consider and the Department has referred this comment to that body.
- EU transitional Objective 1/European Social Fund (ESF) and Peace II - EU Transitional Objective 1 is included in Year 4 for impact assessment. Peace II is included in Year 2 for impact assessment. ESF is not a policy for which DSD has responsibility.
- New TSN - The revised draft Equality Scheme now emphasises the positive linkage between New TSN and the Section 75 obligations.

⁶ As a result of the consultation exercise on policies screened out, this policy has now been included in the programme of equality impact assessments

Summary of main issues arising from the consultation process

Decision to charge for the results of impact assessments and monitoring exercises

Response: The Department does not propose to charge for this documentation and reference to this has been removed from the draft scheme

Evidence of Top Level commitment - Statement by Minister and/or Permanent Secretary not included

Response: The revised draft Scheme includes a statement from the Minister and Permanent Secretary

Some organisations would have liked a statement on how the Department intends to promote EO

Response: The Department's commitment to the promotion of Equality of Opportunity is demonstrated in the way it has set out its commitment to the statutory equality duty in the draft equality scheme. The statement from the Minister and Permanent Secretary further emphasises this commitment. In addition the Department will each year send a statement to the Equality Commission which will set out the steps taken during the year to promote equality of opportunity.

Lack of clarity about Personnel and Procurement policies in relation to DSD involvement

Response: The revised draft scheme now sets out in more detail the relationship between Departments on policies which cut across Departments, Non Departmental Public Bodies (NDPBs) etc. The revised draft states the input this Department will have on centrally driven policies and the relationship the Department will have on other public authorities where it leads on a particular policy.

Unable to understand the screening process for example clarification needed on what certain policies mean and which were screened out and why.

Response: In the light of comments received the Department has decided to review any decisions taken to screen out existing policies in consultation with the Equality Commission and other representative organisations. In addition, the Department has included in its draft scheme a fuller description of its policies and functional areas.

Include an organisational chart

Response: The revised draft Scheme now contains an organisational chart to show where responsibility for taking forward the Equality duty lies. This supplements the description of responsibilities already contained in the introduction to the draft scheme.

Objectives and Targets relating to the statutory duty need to be reflected in staffs' performance plans

Response: The revised draft Scheme has been amended to reflect this. In addition the scheme states that as part of the corporate planning process Chief Executives and Deputy Secretaries will be responsible for monitoring and reporting on progress to the Departmental Board

A range of organisations wanted to see a number of issues reflected in the scheme about the annual statement and 5 Year review

Response: The process relating to the annual statement and 5 Year review will only emerge over time and it is not possible at this stage to be prescriptive on how these elements of the equality duty will be complied with in relation to detail. The revised draft Scheme does however state that in relation to the 5 Year review, the Department will take account of any guidance the Commission may issue.

Some organisations raised issues surrounding the timetabling of impact assessments.

Response: The Department looked again at its timetable of impact assessments but considered that if it moved some policies to earlier years, other policies would need to move down the priority order. There did not appear to be sufficient justification for this. At any rate, the Department has committed to reviewing all policies not selected for impact assessment, in accordance with paragraph 3.9, so this may have an impact on the overall timetable.

A number of consultees raised issues surrounding the impact assessment process for example that detailed procedures should be included, assessments should be carried out over a shorter period and that information should be included on how and when results of impact assessments will be published and used in policy development.

Response: It is acknowledged that some public authorities had included detailed guidance on impact assessment procedures in their draft schemes. However, this has also come in for some criticism. In the light of this the Department has decided to await the outcome of work to be commissioned by the Equality Commission in the near future on developing guidance on impact assessment procedures.

All groups listed in Appendix 2 should be consulted on impact assessments and appendix 4 (now Appendix 7) should have additional categories “✓”

Response: The Department does not accept that all those listed in Appendix 5 (formerly Appendix 2) should be consulted on every equality impact assessment. Appendix 5 is a list of relevant public sector bodies and affected groups who may have an interest in DSD policies.

However, it is recognised that the comments made by consultees stem from the concern that they may not be consulted if the initial screening (“✓”) does not highlight an impact on a particular category. This was not the intention and the revised draft therefore emphasises the fact that the equality impact assessment will consider each Section 75 category. The outcome of this is that any public sector body or affected group with an interest will be selected from the extensive list in Appendix 5.

The main issues surrounding the consultation process in general related to the length of consultation period, the need to state that the consultation list shown was not exhaustive and that it should include additional groups suggested by consultees. There were also concerns expressed about the availability of material in appropriate formats and the issue of accessibility.

Response: Although the draft scheme stated that it was the Department's aim to provide a period of at least 8 weeks for response the draft also contained a commitment to begin consultation as early as possible unless there were exceptional circumstances which made that impracticable. The Department has also stated its commitment to minimising barriers to proper consultation and will during the first year assess its arrangements for providing information to the public and this will include assessing requirements for providing information in alternative formats.

The revised draft now also makes it clear that the list of consultees is not exhaustive and this list now includes a number of additional consultees.

There were wide ranging comments relating to monitoring none of which fell into any particular category. There were concerns about the existence of a current baseline, how one would be established and how gaps would be addressed. There were also questions surrounding how the data would be collected, stored and monitored.

Response: The Department recognises that in the context of the Section 75 duty, baselines and monitoring information is not currently available for all of the relevant categories. The Department has therefore committed to, during the first year of the scheme, carry out an examination of the extent of its existing monitoring. The revised draft Scheme also makes it clear that DSD recognises that the information currently available is not sufficient to enable meaningful analysis of the impact of its policies on all of the nine categories to take place.

There were some general issues raised in relation to training namely the need to give more information on training to be delivered and the need to involve trainers from voluntary organisations in providing specific training.

Response: It is not possible to be specific in the draft Scheme about the detailed training which will take place. However, the Department does give a firm commitment to train its staff and the detail of the training provided will be reported upon each year when the Department provides the Commission with its annual statement. The revised draft also reports in more detail on the training already provided.