

EQUALITY COMMISSION FOR NORTHERN IRELAND

Public Authority Progress Report 2003 - 2004

Template to assist Public Authorities to report on implementation of the equality and good relations duties under Section 75 of the NI Act 1998.

The information required from public authorities will be based on the period from **1 April 2003 to 31 March 2004**. Please ensure that it is submitted to the Commission by **31 August 2004**, electronically (by completing this template) and in writing, with a signed cover letter from the Chief Executive or, in his/her absence, the Deputy Chief Executive.

This year's progress report template builds upon earlier guidance, for purposes of consistency and comparison.

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

Name of Public Authority

Belfast City Council
City Hall
Belfast
BT1 5GS

Equality Officer Name and contact details

Stella Gilmartin
Belfast City Council
Tel 028 90 320202 ext 2612
Direct Dial 028 90 270511
Fax 028 90 270573
Free phone 0800 0855 412
Email: gilmartinstella@belfastcity.gov.uk

SECTION 1: Strategic Implementation of the Section 75 Duties

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

1.1 Strategic Implementation of the Section 75 Equality Duties

Outline evidence of progress made in developing equality and good relations objectives, performance indicators and targets and inclusion of these in corporate and annual operating plans. Your response should include any targets for 2004-5.

1.1.2 The Council adopted Good Relations as its fourth Corporate Strategic Objective in January 2001, demonstrating its commitment towards its Section 75 duties.

1.1.3 The Council's Corporate Plan shapes the future direction of all its services. All Departments are required to include within their annual Departmental Business Plans and Service Business Plans the actions they intend to take which will support and help to achieve the Council's Corporate Priorities.

1.1.4 For 2003-2004, the year in question, the Corporate Plan included 'Promoting Good Relations' as a Corporate Objective. The Corporate Plan itself included a number of specific actions for the year, indicated how success would be measured and outlined both Committee and Officer responsibilities in relation to good relations and equality.

1.1.5 The measures of success for 2003-4 were clearly set out in the Corporate Plan as the establishment of a Good Relations Unit; the establishment of Community Relations and Cultural Diversity Programmes; the establishment of a Good Relations Fund; the formulation of a Good Relations training programme; 100% completion of the Equality Impact Assessments and other tasks as set out in the Equality Scheme; and the formulation of an Action Plan to address under-representation and/or imbalances in the Council's workforce. All these measures were either completed or substantially achieved during the year.

1.1.6 The Council had unanimously adopted the Good Relations Strategy at its meeting in February 2003. The Good Relations Strategy has four themes – promoting community relations, celebrating cultural diversity, promoting equality through service delivery and promoting equality through a representative workforce. The Good Relations Strategy includes a number of activities to be achieved over the next few years and work is continuing on the development of more specific indicators and targets. Work on the establishment of the Good Relations Unit took place during the year and the Unit was formally set up in April 2004. The Good Relations Strategy was publicly launched in January 2004 and a copy sent to the Equality Commission.

1.1.7 Targets for 2004-5, as stated in the Council's Corporate Plan Up-date are:

- Complete 2003-2004 Equality Impact Assessments
- Commence 2004-2005 Equality Impact Assessments
- Develop appropriate monitoring systems incorporating equality considerations

- Establish a Consultation Forum for the Council comprising representatives from Section 75 groups
- Complete the detailed 5 year training plan contained in the Equality Scheme's Action Plan
- Continue to implement a number of targeting initiatives to increase applications from groups currently under-represented in the workforce

1.2 Outline steps taken to work with other public authorities in progressing the duties.

1.2.1 Belfast City Council continues to convene the Public Authority Network (PAN), which meets in the City Hall to discuss good practice, share experience and plan for joint events together. Four meetings were held during the year in question. Members of the PAN include representatives from the Office of the First Minister and Deputy First Minister, Local Government Staff Commission, Northern Ireland Housing Executive, Down and Lisburn Trust, Mater Hospital Trust, Green Park Trust and the Staff Commission for Education and Library Boards. This is an informal meeting which enables all participants to contribute to topical issues, talk about problems and network.

1.2.2 The Council continues to participate in the Statutory Duty Network (SDN), a local government forum that is chaired through the Local Government Staff Commission. This SDN meets on an ad hoc basis to discuss relevant issues and information is shared regularly through e-mail.

1.2.3 The Council participates in informal meetings with other District Councils. A group of Equality Officers from local Councils meet to discuss topics of interest relating to Equality and Good Relations.

1.2.4 During the year in question the Council initiated a discussion forum among key statutory agencies in Belfast to discuss the possibility of an area based joint consultation project. The group consists of NI Housing Executive, Belfast Institute of Further and Higher Education, Belfast & Education Library Board, North and West Belfast Social Services Trust, South & East Belfast Social Services Trust, Eastern Health & Social Services Board and Belfast City Council.

1.2.5 These agencies have agreed to hold an event in Oct 2004 to address the issues of consultation and monitoring. This initiative has been championed by the Chief Executives' Group and is evidence of commitment to the equality agenda at the heart of statutory bodies. This high-level direction is also evidence that the Chief Executives of these various organisations are aware of the current issues in the equality arena and are providing a practical response to these concerns.

1.2.6 The Council has participated in training sessions and shared training materials with the Local Government Staff Commission and has taken a pro-active role in equality matters within local government. The Council's Equality Training Strategy pack continues to be in demand from other Councils in N. Ireland and England and by voluntary and community groups in N. Ireland.

1.2.7 The Greater London Authority (GLA) has used the equality toolkit extensively.

1.2.8 Eleven Councils in the eastern region of Northern Ireland, including Belfast, have worked together successfully in the preparation of the arc21 Waste Management Plan and an EQIA was completed during the year on behalf of the participating Councils.

1.2.9 The Council is conscious of the fact that, in general, District Councils in Northern Ireland, unlike the Health Boards and Education & Library Boards, have not joined together in 'family groups' to impact assess policies which affect all authorities. This has resulted in considerable duplication of resources since many policies are very similar, although participation in informal meetings with other Councils has been extremely helpful.

1.2.10 The Equality Officer shares information and receives documents from other Councils. Belfast City Council participates actively in all requests for information and assistance. Many requests for information, assistance, and general talks are provided to a variety of institutions for e.g. Equality Commission, NI Tourist Board, Community Relations Council, Greater London Authority, requests from British Embassies in Macedonia and Serbia and Montenegro.

1.3 Outline any details of partnership work developed or further progressed with the voluntary and/or community sector as a consequence of Section 75 work.

1.3.1 The Equality Officer continues to liaise closely with all S. 75 groups within Belfast. In particular, the Council has initiated an annual Focus Group meeting for all representatives on our Equality Scheme Consultation list who have an interest in disability. We are currently developing a communication plan, as suggested by our consultees, to make the public more aware of the accessibility of Council buildings.

1.3.2 Lunch time discussion forums were held with the statutory agencies and representatives from Section 75 categories to discuss the merit of advancing the concept of area based consultation techniques. The meeting was very successful and the event will be held in Belfast in October 2004.

1.3.3 The Council is working closely with CoSO to develop consultation guidelines for work with the LGBT community.

1.4 Indicate if Section 75 is a standard agenda item for Board and/or Senior Management Team on a quarterly basis.

1.4.1 The officer-based inter-Departmental Good Relations Working Group has responsibility for the operational monitoring and implementing of both the Equality Scheme and Good Relations Strategy. The Working Group meets on a monthly basis and is chaired by the Assistant Chief Executive.

1.4.2 The Good Relations Manager reports on the progress of the implementation of Section 75, covering both equality and good relations, at a more strategic level on a quarterly basis to the Chief Officers' Management Team and Good Relations Steering Panel. These reports reflect progress against the detailed action/work plans.

1.4.3 These progress reports are also submitted to the meetings of the Policy and Resources Committee on a quarterly basis before adoption by full Council. The minutes of these meetings are available to the public via public libraries and the Council's website www.belfastcity.gov.uk

1.4.4 The Annual Report on Progress to the Equality Commission is submitted also to the Good Relations Working Group, Chief Officers' Management Team, Good Relations Steering Panel and Policy and Resources Committee. The positive response from the Equality Commission regarding last year's progress was reported back to these groups.

1.5 Provide details of the direct resourcing of Section 75 work during 2003-4. This should include staff appointed/directed to specifically advance work on equality scheme delivery and details of any budget allocation to specifically deliver equality scheme commitments.

1.5.1 During the year, the Council set up a Good Relations Unit to co-ordinate and integrate its work in equality and good relations. This Unit consists of the Equality Officer, who has direct responsibility for the implementation of the Council's Equality Scheme, and two Good Relations Officers, who report to a Good Relations Manager, along with administrative and business support. Staff costs of the Good Relations Officers are supported through funding from the Community Relations Unit within the Office of the First Minister/Deputy First Minister. The costs of the equality work within the Council, i.e. the salary of the Equality Officer, fees of consultants engaged to undertake EQIAs, equality training and associated expenditure, are met entirely from Council revenue estimates.

1.5.2 The current annual budget for the Good Relations Unit, as shown in the Council annual estimates, is £326,250, of which around £30,000 is estimated to be for equality, including equality training, but excluding salaries. The remainder is allocated to Good Relations work.

1.6 Outline any factors that enhanced or impeded the process of Strategic implementation during the period.

1.6.1 Strategic implementation is enhanced through regular reporting on progress to the Good Relations Working Group, the Good Relations Steering Panel, Chief Officers' Management Team and to the Policy and Resources Committee, the principal Committee of the Council. These maintain the high profile given to equality matters in the organisation.

1.6.2 An entire one-day module on equality was included within the Council's Management Development Programme, which was rolled out throughout the year to 280+ senior managers within the Council. This reflected the importance granted to equality issues within the Council.

1.6.3 The Council in general is moving towards a competency based framework in terms of recruitment, training and promotion, to enable career development for its employees. A commitment to equality and equal opportunities is included as a core competency within this framework and employees will have to demonstrate evidence of such a commitment. This will help to consolidate the culture of equality within the Council environment.

SECTION 2: Screening & Equality Impact Assessment (EQIA)

An update on progress regarding EQIAs has already been forwarded to the Commission in response to a request of 9 January 2004.

2.1 A full and detailed report on the Council's approach to Screening and its programme of Equality Impact Assessments was submitted to the Equality Commission in May 2001.

2.2 The EQIA schedule this year has been busy; in addition to those scheduled, EQIAs on the Strategic Review of Leisure and the Flying of the Union Flag were carried out.

2.3 In view of its experience in Years 1 & 2 of the EQIA programme, the Council continues to examine its screening process to ensure that it is relevant and effective. The screening procedure and screening form were revised and incorporated into an Equality Toolkit, developed as a step by step guide to developing new policies. Training in equality screening and mainstreaming equality through policy development is planned for all key decision makers in Belfast City Council.

2.4 All key decision makers in the Council have been requested to screen new policies on an on-going basis and submit them to the Good Relations Working Group's Screening Sub-Group. This Screening Sub-Group meets on a six monthly basis and more frequently if required. All consultees will be informed of our screening decisions on an annual basis.

2.5 The following table shows the list of proposed new/proposed/revised policies screened in/out during the period:

Policy Screened	Screened In/Out
Flying of the Union Flag on Council Property	Screened In
Good Relations Strategy	Screened Out
Review of Civic Amenity Site operational requirements	Screening abandoned as this policy is now integrated within the new Waste Management Strategy
Records Management Policy	Screened Out
Environmental Policy	Screened Out

2.6 The Council has spent considerable time and energy developing the most appropriate systems to perfect the screening process. We are in the final stages of amending the procedures to screen all items of Council business through the Committee procedure; this is still progressing through the procedures.

2.7 New policies have been screened and will be consulted on during the consultation phase of the current EQIAs in an attempt to reduce consultation fatigue. This is an ongoing process.

2.8 The Council is conscious of the demands made on the Section 75 groups in consultation and is considering alternative and innovative ways of addressing this issue through the Joint Consultation Group. The Council has decided to investigate the benefits of a consultation forum which may be of assistance with the screening process.

SECTION 3: Training

3.1 Indicate your organisation's progress on delivery of Section 75 related training and development during the period. Please state if the training is delivered within a 5-year Training Plan.

3.1.1 Belfast City Council has expended considerable efforts and resources in developing a 5-year training plan and strategy in consultation with representatives from the Section 75 groups as well as employees of the Council. The training strategy is based around 16 components:

- Equality Awareness Programme
- New Employee Induction Programme - with Equality dimension built in
- Equality Videos
- Managing Equality
- Leading for Equality
- Equality and Governance
- Recruitment and Selection
- Customer Care and Equality
- Training the Trainers
- Specialist Programmes
- Service Improvement
- Seminars and Events
- Equality Resource Bank
- Evaluating Equality Outcomes
- Capacity Building for Equality
- Affirmative Action Skills Enhancement Programmes for employees who are members of under-represented groups

3.1.2 An inter-Departmental Equality Training Sub-Group was established in 2001 and continues to implement the training plan. This Sub-Group reports to the Good Relations Working Group, which provides regular reports to the Chief Officers' Management Team and Policy and Resources Committee, as outlined above.

3.1.3 Specific training was carried out for those employees involved in the Year's EQIAs. In addition a mechanism of rolling out Equality Training for all staff is now complete. All managers were trained and they are cascading this training to their staff. The Equality Training Team regularly monitors and evaluates the equality training.

3.1.4 We will review our Equality Training Strategy in year 4. It is our intention to amalgamate the current Equality Training Strategy with a new Good Relations Training Strategy, which is currently under development.

3.2 Outline details of staff and Management Board/Committee training associated with the Section 75 duties/Equality Scheme requirements.

Elected Members

3.2.1 The Equality Officer has organised specific seminars for elected Members of Council, held over lunchtime to facilitate Councillors, to keep them up to date on equality matters.

3.2.2 In addition elected members of Council are welcome to attend any other general equality training seminars being delivered.

Managers

3.2.3 Awareness Raising of Disability Discrimination Act (DDA) requirements and disability issues in general was discussed by the DDA Group at its monthly meeting.

3.2.4 As a result, a comprehensive training programme is being delivered to all managerial staff on disability awareness. This will be rolled out over two years in 2003 – 2004. The DDA training is for all managers with responsibility for buildings to raise awareness of the implications of the Disability Discrimination Act 1995 – Part III.

3.2.5 Evaluation forms an integral part of all equality training. A focus group of people with disabilities plus a group of employees with disabilities helped discuss ideas regarding the content of disability training and provided suggestions for its design.

3.2.6 The Council developed a Management Development Programme based around seven management issues. One of these modules was entitled Managing Equality, indicating the significance allotted to equality issues within the Council. The Equality Officer and members of the Good Relations Working Group assisted in the compilation of the Equality module. The programme was targeted at Directors, Heads of Service and other Council officers with responsibility for managing people.

3.2.7 Again the attention given to the evaluation of training by the Council can be demonstrated. Following the first series of the Management Development Programme, a focus group of employees was held to evaluate its effectiveness. As a result of feedback from course participants, the Equality module was amended and the Equality Officer herself took part in the delivery of the second tranche. The roll out of the second tranche of the Management Development Programme has now been completed. This invited attendees to identify issues on which they would like more information. The Equality Officer is currently analysing the responses to these requests and further specialist training will follow as appropriate.

Employees

3.2.8 The Council developed an equality training pack designed for use both within the Council and by external organisations. The Equality Training Pack was a great success and is still very popular, being requested by many Councils and organisations in N. Ireland and other parts of the UK.

3.2.9 The pack is used for all in-house training induction courses, for new staff, and also in the Employee Equality Awareness programme, which commenced in 2002.

3.2.10 Preparatory work to improve employees' skills in customer care and in working with users and groups in a diverse community has begun. A training schedule has been devised to address disability issues in the Council, which will involve all frontline staff.

3.2.11 The Council is conscious of the need to keep the training process dynamic and challenging. Training has to be continuous and innovative to keep equality issues at the heart of decision making and policy development. Specialist training on the use of the equality Toolkit - equality proofing, policy development and screening - was provided to all policy makers and key decision makers in the Council beginning in April 2003.

3.2.12 The induction programme for newly appointed employees has been revised to include an equality module. This training is compulsory for all new staff and is identified as awareness raising in our equality training strategy.

3.2.13 Specialist training for all staff involved in the EQIA teams is ongoing.

3.2.14 The Equality officer attends Senior Management Teams meetings providing updates, awareness raising sessions and information sessions. This is the best way to provide immediate updates to senior staff throughout the Council who in turn can relay the message to other staff.

3.2.15 The Equality Officer is currently developing the equality screening of new policies and procedures using the Council's established Committee and Sub-Committee structure. This work is still in a developmental pilot phase.

SECTION 4: Communication

4.1 Provide details of internal and external communication of the authority's commitment to the statutory duties.

4.1.1 The Chief Executive was called upon regularly to deliver talks on the Council's Equality Scheme and related equality issues. His willingness to contribute to these seminars, Conferences and events, both internal and external, highlights a commitment to equality at the highest level of the Council's business.

4.1.2 On occasions the Equality Officer is interviewed by external agencies (national and international) on the Council's equality work. As evidenced by the Corporate Plan, the Council is committed to civic leadership and promoting equality and good relations. The Equality Officer was requested by the British embassies in Macedonia and Serbia and Montenegro to present at seminars on equality legislation in N. Ireland. In addition she gave a presentation on the Council's work under S. 75 and our Equality Scheme to the Greater London Authority (GLA) conference in July 03.

4.2 Provide details of how the authority communicates progress on delivery of the statutory duties

4.2.1 Opportunities are taken where possible, to communicate the Council's commitment to equality and good relations. These include speeches by the Lord Mayor and Chairmen of Committees and Sub-Committees and introductions to the Council's public documents such as the Corporate Plan. On a more informal basis, the Equality Officer gives advice to various Departments on a range of issues.

4.2.2 Internal Council newsletters are used as a vehicle to provide up-dates to inform employees of equality/good relations developments and future issues. The website is continually updated on equality matters.

4.2.3 The external Council newsletter – City Matters – includes articles and up-dates to inform the wider population about developments in the field of equality and good relations.

4.2.4 The Council was delighted to receive many comments to the EQIAs from the consultees. In accordance with the Council's Equality Scheme we respond to all comments and include a matrix detailing the responses in the appendix to the EQIA.

4.2.5 The Lord Mayor's Office was in frequent dialogue with the staff from the Unit on a range of issues relating to equality. Events held during the year covered a range of relevant issues, including a group discussion on racism in Belfast, young people participating in decision making in Belfast City Council, disability and human rights and ethnic minority issues.

4.2.6 Communication plans are actively created in various services throughout the Council regarding policy proposals. At present new communication plans are being developed in relation to Corporate Hospitality, Waste Management and Open Spaces.

SECTION 5: Data Collection & Analysis

5.1 Describe systems established to supplement available statistical and qualitative research including consideration given to using internal organisational data and external networks

5.1.1 An EQIA Team was set up to support each Service carrying out an EQIA. Members of these Teams collated any existing internal information databases and other sources of data which relate to the Service. In addition, considerable statistical information is held centrally within the Council e.g. the Baseline Profile of Belfast, which is up-dated annually and used in the development of the Council's Corporate Planning process.

5.1.2 The Council carries out a major Public Consultation exercise every two years and included a sample boost in its 2001 survey to ensure that it was representative of all nine groups defined in the equality legislation. The results of this survey have been used to inform and direct the Council's Corporate Plan. Other external data is also used to inform the development of both policy and procedure within the Council. These include the Census, workforce profiles, customer surveys and focus groups.

5.1.3 A very successful consultation exercise was carried out in April 2003 for all consultees on issues related to the Council's approach to disability issues. The agenda consisted of an updated report concerning work carried out since March 2002, a presentation of the EQIA on disability and a request for comments on the Council's progress. The meeting was well attended and well received by a large group of representatives from organisations addressing disability, along with relevant Council staff. This has since become an annual event.

5.1.4 Statistical evidence in respect of the EQIAs conducted in this current year, namely Access Policy, Human Resources, Flying of Flags on Council property and Community Services Grant Aid, Culture and Arts Plan is continually updated.

5.2 Describe any systems established to monitor the future adverse impact of policies that have been equality impact assessed.

5.2.1 The Council monitors uptake of services as part of its normal procedure but details and standards vary. Consultation with service users is also common with many services having user forums, customer panels etc.

5.2.2 The Good Relations Working Group is in the process of developing more comprehensive monitoring systems throughout the Council's services and facilities. Existing procedures will be audited and developed to have specific regard to equality considerations.

5.2.3 A comprehensive system of monitoring with equality considerations will be phased into the various systems and structures, in two Phases. Phase One of the process, which is now complete, is to audit all existing structures and make recommendations for Phase Two, the amendment of monitoring systems. The importance of monitoring and equality considerations has been a direct result of the Equality Impact Assessments. This work is ongoing.

5.2.4 The inclusion of Section 75 categories in monitoring systems will be progressed with the involvement of service users and providers through a series of meetings. It is anticipated that this will be extremely important to the development of mainstreaming equality throughout the Council. Both quantitative and qualitative methods of monitoring will be considered.

5.2.5 In addition, the Council monitors completed EQIAs to ensure compliance with their findings.

SECTION 6: Information Provision, Access to Information and Services

6.1 The Council is committed to providing information in alternative formats as stated in its Equality Scheme. Links have been made and arrangements are in place with key agencies and organisations to produce work in alternative formats and languages as required.

6.2 The Equality Officer has had a series of informal discussions with representatives of Section 75 categories addressing information provision and access to services.

6.3 The Equality Officer is a member of the Disability Group specifically to progress the equality agenda. The Council has adopted the BS 8300 standard in relation to compliance with the DDA Act 1995. As part of an ongoing strategy to review information and access to services continually, the Equality Officer has equality proofed the access audits. The auditors are now required to consider Section 75 categories when conducting audits, which has progressed the mainstreaming of equality considerably. For example, discussion is ongoing concerning a policy on signage/way finding.

6.4 The Council has become a member of Disability Action's Business Support Scheme. This will enable the Council to improve the lives of people with disabilities by looking at recruitment practices, checking access to our work place and buildings and enabling employers to provide more effective services for people with disabilities. In essence it is seen as a proactive approach to improving our entire business. We will be looking more strategically at access, training, communication material, policy and procedures and marketing initiatives in partnership with Disability Action.

6.5 All Departments have been requested to include the Council's textphone number on their stationery and other publications where their phone number is included.

6.6 All the Council's major public documents – e.g. the Corporate Plan, City Matters, EQIA Executive Summaries – can be made available in alternative formats on request, i.e. in other languages, in disc or audio cassette, or in Braille.

6.7 Signers have been employed at focus group meetings and seminars and launches as appropriate.

6.8 The Council is committed to increasing our representation of people with disabilities in the workforce. The Equality Officer in conjunction with the Human Resources Section held a lunchtime seminar with representatives of disability organisations to tease out the key issues in relation to increasing the participation of people with disabilities in the workforce. This work is ongoing.

SECTION 7: Complaints

7.1 Identify the number of formal Section 75 complaints received by the authority during the period

7.1.1 The Council has a formal Equality Complaints procedure in place and monitors all Section 75 complaints and the issues arising from them.

7.1.2 Only one complaint was received in February 2004 from the Coalition on Sexual Orientation who had expressed concern in respect of the Community Support Plan Consultation process. CoSO raised issues concerning the Council's use of Consultants, the consultation process in general and the lack of sensitivities around people being 'out' or not in relation to the pre-consultation period conducted on the Community Support plan.

7.2 Identify the number of these S. 75 complaints resolved during the period

7.2.1 The Chief Executive requested a full report from the relevant officers and responded to CoSO on all issues raised in the complaint. The CoSO Board has accepted the Council's response and has agreed that the Equality Officer and the Convenor of CoSO are to draw up new consultation guidelines in respect of consultation with the LGBT community.

SECTION 8: Timetable

8.1 Provide an update of your equality scheme implementation timetable, identifying any changes since your previous report.

8.1.1 All the actions outlined in Section 14 of our Equality Scheme have been achieved.

8.1.2 The work of the Equality Officer and the implementation of the Equality Scheme is directed by the Good Relations Working Group which meets on a monthly basis.

8.1.3 Both the Members of the Council and its Chief Officers receive regular reports on progress and review the implementation of the equality scheme implementation as outlined earlier in this report.

8.1.4 The Council is well on target to complete all the commitments in its 5-year timetable.

SECTION 9: Consultation, participation and engagement

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

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

9.1.1 The Council is committed to effective consultation and conducts its consultation in accordance with the guidelines set out in the Equality Scheme.

9.1.2 Substantial consultation was undertaken during the screening process and these contacts have been maintained.

9.1.3 The Council is considering setting up a consultative panel and has discussed this issue with Section 75 representatives. The matter is ongoing.

9.1.4 The Council has developed its own set of Consultation Guidelines, informed by a consultation exercise with Section 75 groups to determine how they wished to be consulted. The Council continues to conduct consultation in accordance with the guidelines.

9.1.5 The Council is considering proposals to create a broader consultation strategy, which would integrate and co-ordinate all consultation exercises throughout the Council. This process would allow for a more equality proofed, integrated, efficient, cost effective system which would avoid duplication and consultation overload. This consultation strategy is in the early stages of development.

9.1.6 Formal consultation was undertaken in relation to all of the EQIAs conducted during the period: i.e. Human Resources - Recruitment and Selection procedures, Placing of job advertisements, Removal expenses, Premature Retirement; Access Policies: Access to buildings and associated facilities; Community Services Grant Aid Policy; Economic Initiatives, Culture and Arts funding policy; Flying of Flags on Council property; and the Strategic Review of Indoor Leisure Provision.

9.1.7 The Equality Officer continues to liaise and network with Equality Officers from a range of other organisations. The Public Authority Network – a group of Equality Officers from various public authorities - continues to meet to discuss common equality issues.

9.1.8 A group of Equality Officers from District Councils continues to meet to discuss relevant equality matters.

9.1.9 The Joint Consultation Working Group of Equality Officers based in Belfast representing the Council, the Health and Social Services Trusts, the Education and Library Board and the NI Housing Executive, has discussed issues surrounding consultation. The group has met with representatives from Section 75 groups and the Equality Commission. The Belfast Chief Executives' Group has agreed that a joint consultation event should be held in September/October 2004, at which the main topics to be discussed will be monitoring and consultation.

9.1.10 The Equality Officer is seeking to create a more structured consultation forum for the Council and Section 75 representatives. The Good Relations Working Group is currently considering the issues.

9.1.11 In conjunction with the Human Resources Section, the Equality Officer organised a series of lunchtime discussions with various Section 75 groups to discuss equality representation in the Council workforce. Meetings have been arranged with minority ethnic groups, women's groups and disability groups and further meetings will be held with other groups throughout 2004.

SECTION 10: The Good Relations Duty

Provide details of steps to progress the good relations duty

Introduction

10.1 Our Good Relations Strategy, entitled 'Building our Future Together', was approved in February 2003 and launched officially in January 2004. It represents the culmination of an intensive period of work by a number of people. It was developed by a Steering Panel made up of one Councillor from each of the six political parties on the Council, plus representatives from the Churches, trade unions, business sector, minority ethnic groups and the Community Relations Council. The Strategy, adopted unanimously by the Council, sets out our Vision for Belfast of "a stable, tolerant, fair and pluralist society, where individuality is respected and diversity is celebrated, in an inclusive manner". We have chosen the title of our Strategy carefully - 'Building our Future Together' – to reflect the fact that we can only achieve the City we all hope for by working together.

Background

10.2 In January 2001, the Council adopted Promoting Good Relations as a corporate objective. The impetus for this was derived partly from the new statutory duties in S. 75 of the NI Act 1998 but was based primarily on work on community relations and cultural diversity, which had been initiated and developed by Sub-Committees within the Council. As corporate objectives shape the direction of all Council services, the Promoting Good Relations objective provided the opportunity to integrate our developing work in the area of equality with community relations and cultural diversity and demonstrate our commitment to their underlying principles.

Methodology

10.3 In April 2001, the Equality Commission approved our Equality Scheme, which contained a commitment to produce a Good Relations Strategy. We established a Steering Group of elected Members, with a representative from each of the political parties in the Council, to direct our work on good relations. The Steering Group agreed a project plan and terms of reference for a Good Relations Working Group, set up at staff level and made up of representatives from all Council Departments. The Working Group, chaired by the Assistant Chief Executive, supported the work of the Steering Group and reported to it.

10.4 Audits of both the internal and external environments were undertaken to inform the progress of the strategy and ensure that it took account of recent developments and incorporated best practice. An extensive range of literature was reviewed, including reports and documents from the Community Relations Council, organizations and individuals involved with community relations, cultural diversity and diversity in the workplace. The community relations policies of other District Councils in NI were requested and analysed.

Consultation

10.5 We ensured that our second major Public Consultation Survey in the autumn of 2001 included specific questions to gauge public perceptions of the state of community relations in the City. Over half of those interviewed stated that the worst things about living in Belfast were the Troubles, the level of violence, sectarianism and poor community relations. When asked (without prompting) what the Council's top priority should be, the top response was that it should be community relations. The Good Relations Strategy is a response to the clear public desire from Belfast's own residents for the Council to take action in this regard.

10.6 In the autumn of 2002, the Good Relations Steering Panel undertook a wide-ranging series of round-table consultation meetings with representatives from various sectors within the City, including Churches, faiths, minority ethnic groups, trade unions, business, statutory bodies, voluntary organizations, community groups, community relations specialists, advisors and academics. This series of consultation meetings was well attended and discussions were lively; views expressed on the Council's proposals were very positive and were incorporated into the strategy.

10.7 We acknowledge that a great deal has been achieved to date by many individuals, groups, and organisations that are working, often behind the scenes, to improve community relations and reduce tension and mistrust in the City. However, much remains to be done. The Council recognizes that it cannot effect change in community relations in society on its own and is already working in partnership with other public and private agencies in the City to address wider policy issues and examine the factors that cause division and exclusion.

10.8 Our Good Relations Steering Panel is unique within Council structures as it has been expanded to include representatives from the Churches, business sector, trade unions, Community Relations Council and minority ethnic groups, as well as the original elected Member representatives from each of the six political party groups. The Good Relations Steering Panel continues to direct the work of the Good Relations Unit in equality, community relations and cultural diversity.

10.9 We recognise that bringing communities together in order to build trust, confidence and real relationships will be a slow process which can only be achieved over time.

Belfast Context – why good relations is a priority for us

10.10 Although social divisions between Catholics and Protestants are prevalent throughout N Ireland, they are most evident within Belfast, with at least 17 purpose-built peace-lines and many more interface areas; often these divisions are expressed in physical form e.g. flags, murals and kerb painting. Levels of segregation are increasing with polarisation particularly evident in Housing Executive estates.

10.11 Social deprivation continues to have a significant impact on Belfast, which ranks as the most deprived Council area in NI on 4 out of 6 measures used in the Noble index. Rates of social, economic and environmental disadvantage are consistently high in interface communities.

10.12 Belfast has more resident minority ethnic groups than any other Council in NI, although the total figures are still relatively small. Despite a common misconception that racism is not a problem, it appears to be much more significant than sectarianism in influencing people's attitudes and social survey evidence indicates that Catholic, Protestant and minority ethnic groups portray low levels of tolerance. (Recent racial attacks in Belfast support this view).

Context within the Council

10.13 In the past 20 years, there has been a marked improvement in political relationships within the Council with the concept of proportionality well embedded regarding the allocation of seats on Committees and Sub-Committees. All positions of Chairman and Deputy Chairmen are allocated according to the d'Hondt system of proportionality and this system is now extended to representation on over 80 outside bodies. The composition of the Council has changed and become more finely balanced and there is more cross-party working, with all Councillors recognizing the benefits of working together on major issues.

10.14 These developments and growing interest in community relations at City level have reflected the profound social, political and legislative changes that have taken place at regional level in NI. The Council has agreed that it is now time to make efforts to tackle the challenges of our divided society and make a positive contribution towards becoming a more stable, diverse and equitable society. It has acknowledged that, as a democratically elected body, it is in a prime position to demonstrate civic leadership and promote good relations in society.

10.15 Despite ongoing political differences, all parties agree that better relations among our citizens will contribute to a better future for everyone.

Our definition of Good Relations

10.16 We have defined Good Relations simply as "living and working together with understanding and respect and without fear or mistrust". The Council recognises that it is in everyone's interest to promote good relations between its employees, between Members, between employees and Members, between employees and management, between the Council and all those who use its services and facilities and between the Council and those who provide supplies for it.

10.17 The Council also aims to promote good relations in a broader sense, indirectly, between people from all the differing communities within the city, by using its influence as a civic leader with its partners and other leading agencies in Belfast.

10.18 The Council recognises that it has a responsibility not only as a service provider for those who live and work in Belfast, but also as an employer of a substantial workforce.

Themes of Good Relations Strategy

10.19 This Good Relations Strategy has four separate strands or themes. The first three of these refer to the Council's services and influence in the wider community and the fourth to its own workforce; all of these are considered to be inter-related and fundamental to the overarching principle of Good Relations.

10.20 These four themes are:

1. To promote Good Community Relations
2. To celebrate Cultural Diversity
3. To promote Equality through Service Delivery
4. To promote Equality through a Representative Workforce

10.21 The full strategy report gives details of each of the four themes, along with background information, best practice in the area and the current position within the Council; it concludes with a summary of actions the Council proposes to take.

Key actions to be taken include the following:

10.22 *Promoting community relations*

- establishing a community relations programme to support and promote good community relations across the City
 - support local projects and activities to promote good community relations
 - develop a community relations training programme for all Councillors and staff
- Celebrating cultural diversity*
- establishing a cultural diversity programme to promote the shared history of Belfast
 - support local projects and activities which celebrate cultural diversity
- Equality through service delivery*
- ensure that all our policies take account of the needs of every section of the community and that all tasks set out in the 5-year action plan in our Equality Scheme are completed
 - complete the 5-year training scheme for staff
 - complete the audit to ensure that all Council buildings (over 100) comply with the Disability Discrimination Act deadline of October 2004
- Equality through a representative workforce*
- investigate the issues that prevent or reduce the number of job applications from certain groups (e.g. women, minority ethnic groups and people with disabilities).

10.23 We have already made good progress in the implementation of our Equality Scheme. Our Good Relations Strategy represents the second stage of this Scheme and will ensure that equity, diversity and interdependence become core values of Council policy, with good relations principles given due weight in all our activities.

Establishment of Good Relations Unit

10.24 We have already implemented one of the key recommendations of this strategy by establishing a Good Relations Unit within the Council. Following re-structuring within the

Chief Executive's Department, a Good Relations Unit was established, which reports direct to the Assistant Chief Executive. The Unit will co-ordinate and integrate the Council's work on equality and good relations, developing the community relations, race relations and cultural diversity aspects of the work. This will enable the Council to deliver effectively on the contents of the strategy.

Benefits of Strategy

10.25 The Good Relations Strategy encapsulates the Council's vision and sets a direction and priorities for it and other organizations. It links to other Council strategies and promotes effective partnerships, assuming a holistic Council viewpoint, rather than a Departmental perspective. As it was developed using evidence gained from original research, it illustrates and will utilize best practice. From a practical point of view, it will ensure that detailed action plans for implementation, with associated monitoring and review measures, are drawn up to ensure the efficient and effective delivery of the strategy.

Response to local demand

10.26 The strategy addresses directly the divisions and diversity which exist in Belfast and takes account of the needs, demands and aspirations of all the communities the Council serves. The broad round-table consultation undertaken during its development has informed the strategy and made it more meaningful. From a social and economic perspective, it acts as a rationale and lever for attracting additional funding from other agencies and in the long term, it will help to enhance the image and profile of Belfast and encourage investment.

Model of Good Practice

10.27 The Council's innovative model of a Good Relations Unit, which co-ordinates and integrates work on equality with developing work in the area of good relations, has been recognised as a model of good practice by the Community Relations Council, the Community Relations Unit within the Office of the First Minister/Deputy First Minister and welcomed very positively by the Equality Commission, who regard Belfast as a pathfinder Council.

10.28 The concept of the creation and establishment of a Good Relations Steering Panel, where external members from a wide range of bodies also contribute to the Council's work in good relations, has also been widely acclaimed.

10.29 The Council is particularly proud of the fact that the development of the strategy was all undertaken in-house, by an inter-Departmental team of staff, with no need for any input from external consultants. There is no doubt that their enthusiasm and commitment resulted in a greater sense of ownership by staff from all Departments of the contents of the final strategy.

10.30 In addition, the elected Members of the Good Relations Steering Panel spent a considerable amount of time considering, drafting and re-drafting the text of the strategy and while this proved time-consuming, the process proved as valuable as the end result.

Partnership working

10.31 The Council has already co-operated with the Community Relations Council in a couple of joint funding applications and has worked closely with the Community Relations Council and other funding bodies to ensure that the criteria established for the allocation of grant-aid are complementary and avoid duplication. The Council has just jointly commissioned research to carry out an audit of Good Relations activities and projects in Belfast; the cost of this will be shared 50/50 with the Community Relations Council and many other bodies, including the Community Relations Unit and Belfast LSP have already expressed interest in the work.

Communication

10.32 Proper communication of the strategy was considered a fundamental element of its development. Consequently three versions of the final Strategy were produced – a full report, a summary report and an A4 leaflet, written in plain English, which was distributed to all staff just after the strategy had been launched in January 2004. The launch itself, hosted by the Lord Mayor, took place in the City Hall and received good local media coverage.

We also considered it essential that community groups in Belfast could learn about the strategy and availability of the new Good Relations Grant-Aid Fund. A public advertisement was placed in local papers to alert them to the fact and articles were included in the NICVA magazine Scope and in the Belfast Telegraph, which profiled one of the Good Relations Officers. Articles were included in 'City Matters', the Council's own newspaper. An article will soon be published in the Local Government Staff Commission News.

10.33 All the grant-aid forms and supplementary guidelines were written in plain English and have been awarded the Crystal Mark.

Technology

10.34 Modern technology was used where possible. Information about the establishment of the Good Relations Unit, the grant-aid fund and the Strategy documents is available on both the internal and external Council websites. Application forms may be downloaded from the website and all Equality Impact Assessments carried out by the Council are available on-line.

Teamwork

10.35 Apart from the wider team which developed the strategy through the Good Relations Working Group, a small team within the then Policy Services, now Good Relations Unit, was responsible for the planning, design and production of the final documents, including commissioning of appropriate photographs etc. The same staff also planned the launch of the Strategy in early January 2004 (this had to be postponed from autumn 2003 because of Assembly elections).

Image of Local Government and Civic Leadership

10.36 The Steering Panel has agreed that the Council should be more pro-active in promoting the strategy and also in challenging actions that are in conflict with it – e.g. the

Chairman's recent condemnation of racist attacks in South Belfast. Such media coverage is bound to enhance the Council's leadership role and the image of the Council. The Lord Mayor and Chief Executive have also provided examples of leadership and inspiration in dealing with difficult and sensitive issues.

Reporting procedures

10.37 The Council's Good Relations Strategy states that an inter-Departmental Working Group of officers will manage the work of the Programme and direct the work of the Good Relations Unit. This Working Group, chaired by the Assistant Chief Executive, has been meeting monthly since October 2002 and reports to the Good Relations Steering Panel.

10.38 Progress reports on Good Relations, including Equality, are submitted on a quarterly basis to the Good Relations Working Group, Good Relations Steering Panel, the Chief Officers' Management Team and then to the Policy and Resources Committee.

10.39 The work undertaken by the Good Relations Steering Panel and Good Relations Unit during the year is too extensive to be reported here but includes the following:

- Consideration and response to the 'A Shared Future – Consultation Paper from the Community Relations Unit'
- Preparing responses on behalf of the Council to other Consultation Documents - Race Crime and Sectarian Crime Legislation in N Ireland; Race Equality Strategy; Draft Criminal Justice (NI) Order 2004: Legislative Proposals on 'Hate Crime'; and to the NI Affairs Committee who are conducting an Inquiry into Hate Crime in N Ireland.
- Participation in a panel debate in the City Hall as one of the main events in Community Relations Week
- Commissioning of expert research on the Somme Commemoration and the Remembrance Sunday Ceremonies, as part of ongoing work on Council Commemorations and Ceremonies and remembrance
- St. Patrick's Day – provision of grant-aid for local celebrations and support for major concert in the Waterfront Hall
- Flags – draft principles for the display and removal of flags in Belfast
- Languages – provision of translation service and compliance with the European Charter for Regional or Minority Languages
- Commencement of the development of a comprehensive good relations training strategy, to complement and integrate with the Council's existing equality training strategy

- Baseline Profile Survey – commissioning research, in partnership with the Community Relations Council, on a comprehensive audit/mapping exercise of good relations activities and initiatives in Belfast
- National Holocaust Memorial Day - the organisation and delivery of a number of events which supplemented the principal UK National Holocaust Ceremony in the Waterfront Hall in January 2004. These included, in summary: a lecture by Fergal Keane; the signing of Holocaust Memorial Books in all 26 District Council areas; a series of postcards which were signed and returned; a photographic exhibition by local Jewish young people; and a lecture on the life of Sir Otto Jaffe by Councillor McCausland in the Belfast synagogue.
- Memorabilia in the City Hall – consideration of reports to implement the findings of an Advisory Panel of experts
- Racist attacks – issuing of Press Releases in the Chairman’s name condemning racist attacks in Belfast; issuing internal e-mail up-dates on appropriate occasions, e.g. at the start of the European Week against Racism, to remind all staff that as part of its Good Relations Strategy, the Council is committed to combating all forms of racism and discrimination.
- Holding a special meeting of the Good Relations Steering Panel in the offices of the Chinese Welfare Association, as an expression of solidarity
- Receiving presentations from:
 - representatives of the Fire Service, following attacks on fire-fighter personnel in Belfast
 - a representative from the Institute for Conflict Research, on the rising number of homophobic and racist attacks in Belfast.
- Visits – to/from other authorities, Nottinghamshire County and Newtownabbey Councils, on equality and good relations issues.

SECTION 11: Impacts and outcomes

11.1 Impact of Implementation of S. 75 - Impacts and Outcomes

11.1.1 The level of awareness of equality issues has shifted from understanding the terms and appreciating the language of S. 75, to incorporating such issues into daily work.

11.1.2 The implementation of S. 75 has resulted in a range of improvements in how the Council undertakes its work. First, our commitment to training provides us with a more informed workforce. Second, our commitment to equality impact assessments has ensured a rigorous investigation of our policies in relation to goods, services and facilities. Third, our enthusiasm for embedding the equality agenda throughout the Council is improving our service to all citizens of Belfast.

11.2 Equality Impact Assessments

11.2.1 Implementation of the statutory duty requirement has seen an over reliance on a process driven approach at the cost of meaningful outcomes. EQIAs are perceived to be cumbersome and the undertaking of EQIAs has sometimes resulted in negative attitudes being shown towards equality issues.

11.2.2 Nevertheless, the changes ensuing from the EQIAs have resulted in direct improvements to our service, meeting the needs of our customers. They include:

- Improvements in our community outreach work and targeted recruitment drives
- More active addressing of the issue of a more representative workforce in general across the section 75 categories
- An effort to increase the numbers of people with disabilities participating in the disability employment support scheme
- Improvements to our consultation processes
- A Mitigation Plan as a result of the proposed closure of Maysfield Leisure Centre
- Improvements to our communication plans throughout service delivery
- Broadening of our Access Audits to cover all 9 equality dimensions
- Addressing of issues concerning way finding (signage) and mobility e.g. age and dependency
- Better information to consultees re. the Council's response to all the issues raised in relation to a EQIA in a matrix format at the end of the final EQIA report
- The acknowledgement of the need to progress the development of more robust monitoring systems.

11.2.3 The information and insights from the Equality Impact Assessments which the Council has completed will continue to improve policy making and service delivery.

11.3 Disability Issues

11.3.1 The Council participated in many engagements relating to the European Year of People with Disabilities (EYPD) and hosted a major conference on disability, '*Barriers to Change*'.

- The Disability Access group meets monthly, chaired by the Director of Corporate Services, to assess the Council's requirements for meeting the requirements of the Disability Discrimination Act (DDA). The Equality Officer attends these meetings and the agenda has been extended to include consideration of all Section 75 groups.
- A major training programme for all staff on disability issues has been launched. In addition, specialist training for front line staff will be provided. This will in turn raise awareness about disability issues and improve our overall service for people with disabilities.
- The Council received a deputation of young people with disabilities who came to the City Hall to raise our awareness of the difficulties of people with a variety of disabilities accessing services throughout Northern Ireland. The young people met the Lord Mayor, Director of Client Services, and various officers from Leisure Services, the Good Relations Unit and Human Resources.
- The Council is registered with the Disability Business Support Scheme organised by Disability Action.

11.4 General - Dissemination of good practice

11.4.1

- The Council's Equality Scheme and Equality Toolkit are requested by other organisations as evidence of good practice. The Equality Officer gave a talk to an Equality Conference at the Greater London Authority (GLA) in July 2003. The evaluations reported that the participants benefited and appreciated the Council's experience. A number of requests for the Equality Video and Equality Toolkit have been received; the GLA has subsequently drafted a very similar toolkit for use in London Boroughs.
- The Equality Officer presented a paper on equality in the Council to a group of senior politicians in Macedonia on 8-12th September 2003; the politicians from Macedonia visited Belfast in October 2003.
- Politicians from Serbia & Montenegro visited Belfast in March 2004 and were welcomed by the Lord Mayor. The Equality Officer met the visitors and answered queries regarding equality issues. The group requested that the Equality Officer address a similar group in Serbia and Montenegro in April 04.
- The Equality Officer has participated in module 4 (Equality) of the Council's own Management Development Programme. This process enabled the Equality Officer to meet many staff from a variety of sections, listen to concerns and discuss equality matters. This broad-brush approach is another step in the direction of mainstreaming equality throughout the organisation.

11.4.2 The approach the Council has taken to the equality agenda in general – i.e. making it meaningful and realistic to officers who are applying it - has led to better service delivery,

specific examples of which are outlined above. Equality is now considered a key feature of the way the Council conducts its business.

11.4.3 The Council has sought to mainstream its processes at the outset so as to embed equality at the heart of the development of policy. This will enable us to equality proof our decisions early on and is intended to reduce the requirement to conduct full EQIA. The Equality Officer is increasingly requested to attend Departmental meetings to discuss the equality implication of new policies, plans and procedures.

11.4.4 One of the key developments in terms of mainstreaming equality in this current year is the development of a Committee reporting system. All reports to Committee, i.e. where managers are developing recommendations for Committee and Council decisions, will require an equality assessment based on the four screening questions; this procedure is currently being piloted. This will enable the Council to consider equality issues at an early stage and will allow for a more robust screening process.

11.4.5 The Council is aware that there is always room for improvement. The incremental approach which we advocate aims to embed equality throughout the fabric of our business in a practical and realistic manner.

11.4.6 Section 75 groups are now more aware of their rights and of their ability to challenge us to address more issues. This in turn has improved the Council's service for all.

SECTION 12: Additional comments on Mainstreaming

12.1 One of the outcomes of the statutory duty has been an over reliance on a process driven approach at the cost of meaningful outcomes. The Council expects this to be addressed in the future as the process becomes mainstreamed throughout all public bodies.

12.2 However, the main outcome from the implementation of the statutory duty is that the equality agenda is fairly and truly at the heart of the way the Council conducts its business. In the longer term, the equality agenda will become as familiar and as much part of the process as the consideration of health and safety issues. Legislation and the statutory duty has created this reality.

SECTION 13: Concluding questions

This short questionnaire is included in the template to enable you to provide an overall view of the effectiveness of the statutory duties for your authority and for the Section 75 categories.

QUESTION A

Does the authority believe its work to date on implementing the statutory duties has produced positive benefits for the organisation? **YES**

If you answered yes to QUESTION A, please tick appropriate boxes below to what extent the duties have:

	Very noticeably	Noticeably	No real change
Increased awareness of equality issues in policy making	✓		
Increased ability to ensure policies are designed and targeted to reflect equal opportunities objectives	✓		
Increased awareness of good relations issues in policy making		✓	
Increased ability to ensure policies are designed and targeted to reflect good relations objectives		✓	
Increased awareness of equality issues in service delivery	✓		
Increased ability to ensure services are designed and targeted to reflect Section 75 requirements	✓		

QUESTION B

Does the authority believe its work to date on implementing the statutory duties has produced positive benefits for groups within the Section 75 categories? YES

If you answered yes to QUESTION B, please tick appropriate boxes below on what extent the authority's implementation of the statutory duties has increased equality of opportunity for:

	Very noticeably	Noticeably	No real change
Persons of different religious belief			✓
Persons of different political opinion			✓
Persons of different racial groups	✓		
Persons of different age		✓	
Persons with different marital status			✓
Persons of different sexual orientation	✓		
Men and women generally			✓
Persons with and without a disability	✓		
Persons with and without dependants			✓

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

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

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