

**EQUALITY COMMISSION  
FOR NORTHERN IRELAND**

**Public Authorities Progress Reports 2002 - 2003**

**Template for 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 cover the period from 1 April 2002 to the 31 March 2003 and is to be submitted to the Commission by 31 July 2003, **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 builds upon the guidance provided for the past two years, for purposes of consistency and comparison. It also seeks some additional information on: the status of EQIAs planned and progressed, aspects of Section 75 consultation and the identified impact/outcomes of Section 75 implementation to date.

**Please report on progress by entering information at the end of each section in the template below.** Prompts are included under each Section to allow 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.

**Public authority**

Belfast City Council

**Equality Officer**

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

## **SECTION 1: Preparation of Equality Scheme**

1.1 Belfast City Council's Equality Scheme was approved by the Equality Commission in April 2001.

## **SECTION 2: Strategic Implementation of the Section 75 Equality Duties**

### **2.1 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.**

2.1.2 The Council adopted Good Relations as its fourth Corporate Strategic Objective in January 2001, demonstrating its commitment towards its Section 75 duties. The three other Corporate Strategic Objectives at that time were Civic Leadership, Best Value and Sustainable Development.

2.1.3 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 to support and help to achieve the Council's Corporate Priorities.

2.1.4. For 2002-2003, the year in question, the Corporate Plan included 'Promoting Good Relations' as a Corporate Strategic Objective. The Corporate Plan itself included a number of actions planned for the year, indicated how success would be measured and outlined both Committee and Officer responsibilities in relation to good relations and equality.

2.1.5 The measures of success for 2002-3 were outlined in the Corporate Plan as the adoption of the Good Relations Strategy and the establishment of a Good Relations Unit.

2.1.6 The Council 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 has commenced on the establishment of the Good Relations Unit. The Good Relations Strategy is being printed up and a copy will be forwarded to the Equality Commission in due course.

### **2.2 Outline steps taken to work with other public authorities in progressing the duties.**

2.2.1 Belfast City Council continues to convene the Public Authority Network (PAN), which meets regularly 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 Staff Commission for Education and Library Boards. This is an informal meeting which enables all participants to contribute topical issues, talk about problems and network.

2.2.2 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.

2.2.3 The Council participates in informal meetings with other Councils. A group of Equality Officers from Councils meet to discuss topics of interest relating to Equality and Good Relations. Members of this group consist of Lisburn City Council, Newry and Mourne, Craigavon, North Down and Belfast City Council. Meetings were convened in Lisburn City Council.

2.2.4 The Council has 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. The group has convened three times.

2.2.5 In addition a lunch time discussion forum was 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 highly successful and the group will now proceed to a formal discussion with all key agencies in Belfast to progress action.

2.2.6 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. Its Equality Training Strategy pack continues to be bought by other Councils in N. Ireland and England and by voluntary and community groups in N. Ireland.

2.2.7 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.

2.2.8 However, Belfast City 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, as outlined above at 2.2.3, has been extremely helpful.

### **2.3 Outline any details of partnership work developed with the voluntary/community sector as a consequence of S. 75 work**

2.3.1 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.

2.3.2 As outlined above, at 2.2.5, a lunch time discussion forum was 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 a formal discussion with all key agencies in Belfast to progress action will now be arranged.

2.3.3 The ongoing work with the joint consultation group and representatives from S. 75 categories is proving beneficial for both the Council and the S. 75 groups.

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

2.4.1 The officer-based Good Relations Working Group has responsibility for the operational monitoring and implementing of the Equality Scheme and Good Relations Strategy. The Working Group meets on a monthly basis.

2.4.2 The Equality Officer reports on the progress of the implementation of Section 75 at a more strategic level on a quarterly basis to the Chief Officers' Management Team. These reports reflect progress against the detailed action/work plans.

2.4.3 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](http://www.belfastcity.gov.uk).

2.4.4 It is envisaged that future quarterly reports to the Chief Officers' Management Team and Policy and Resources Committee will cover progress made on both equality and good relations.

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

## **2.5 Provide details of steps to progress the Good Relations duty**

2.5.1 The Council had established an inter-Departmental Good Relations Working Group of officers and a cross-party Good Relations Steering Group of Members and officers to draw up a Good Relations Strategy.

2.5.2 The Council unanimously adopted the Good Relations Strategy at its meeting in February 2003 and an extended Good Relations Steering Panel now has responsibility for the implementation and monitoring of the Good Relations Strategy.

2.5.3 The Good Relations Strategy encompasses all of the work the Council proposes to carry out in the areas of equality and good relations and has four main inter-related strands:

- to promote good community relations
- to celebrate cultural diversity
- to promote equality through service delivery and
- to promote equality through a representative workforce.

2.5.4 The first three refer to our services and wider community influence and the fourth refers to our own workforce.

2.5.5 The results of the Council's comprehensive Internal Audit, which illustrates the wide range of work already being undertaken by various Council Departments and Services in promoting good relations, are included as an Appendix to the draft Good Relations Strategy.

2.5.6 The Council recognises that it is not only a substantial service provider and employer in its own right, with an annual gross expenditure of over £100 million and a workforce of over 2,400, but is also in a position to exert considerable influence over other organisations in the City. The Council has stated in its Good Relations Strategy that it will use its influence as a democratically elected body to promote good relations throughout society.

2.5.7 Following a Special Meeting of the Council last summer, at which a resolution condemning sectarianism was passed, the Council's Good Relations Steering Group was requested to find ways of addressing the issue of sectarianism in the City. A public anti-sectarian rally was organised by the Council at the front of the City Hall. Subsequently, the Steering Group was extended to include representatives from the Churches, Trade Unions, the business sector and the Community Relations Council, since the Council acknowledges that this issue is not one that can be tackled by the Council alone. This broader group is known as the Good Relations Steering Panel and has been meeting at least monthly, and often twice monthly, since September 2002.

2.5.8 The Good Relations Steering Panel held a series of lunchtime consultation meetings in the autumn of 2002, to discuss the issues of sectarianism and to try to identify some practical ways in which the Council could contribute to the prevention of sectarian violence. Meetings were held with representatives from a wide variety of groups, including churches, faiths and minority ethnic groups; the Trade Unions and business sector; community relations practitioners, advisors and academics; statutory bodies; the community and voluntary sector; women; those working with children, the elderly and with a disability; and cultural groups.

2.5.9 These consultation meetings were also used to allow the Council to consult informally on the overall content of the Good Relations Strategy; a summary of this had been circulated to all those invited to the meetings.

2.5.10 The Council is currently in the process of appointing two full-time Good Relations Officers and establishing a Good Relations Unit to co-ordinate and integrate its work in equality and good relations.

2.5.11 The Strategy document is being printed up and a copy will be forwarded to the Equality Commission in due course.

## **2.6 Outline any factors that enhance or impede the process of Strategic implementation.**

2.6.1 Strategic implementation is enhanced through regular progress reports to the Good Relations Working Group, the Good Relations Steering Panel, the 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.

2.6.2 The Equality Officer plays a more informal role within the Council as she acts as the first port of call for all queries regarding equality. This reflects the range of work undertaken, from awareness raising, information, to formal training sessions; this work is considered vital to the mainstreaming of the equality function within the Council.

2.6.3 The Council has just learnt that it has been successful in its application for funding for 2003-4 to the Community Relations Unit within the Office of the First Minister/Deputy First Minister. This will support the establishment of a Community Relations programme and a Cultural Diversity Programme, with two posts as Good Relations Officers. This will greatly enhance our ability to mainstream equality and good relations issues within the Council.

## **SECTION 3: Screening & Equality Impact Assessment (EQIA) Timetable**

3a 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.

3b See Appendix A for matrices showing EQIA Timetables for those policies subject to EQIA 2002-3 and 2003-4.

3.1.1 The policy of the provision of sites for Travellers was scheduled to be reviewed in Year 1. At the time the policy audit and screening process for the Equality Scheme took place, the Council was operating two permanent sites for Travellers.

3.1.2 However, significant changes took place during the year in question. The Colin Glen site was closed and only three Traveller families were living on the Council's Glen Road site. In particular, the draft Housing Bill 2002 was published, which recommended the transfer of responsibility for the provision of sites for Travellers to the Housing Executive; this legislation would render current Council policy obsolete.

3.1.3 As little purpose would be served by carrying out an EQIA on the original policy, the Council agreed that the most appropriate solution was to widen the focus of the study and address the management of the transfer of responsibility from the Council to the Housing Executive; this is ongoing. The Council has agreed that community development work with Travellers should take place within an overall community development framework for the City.

3.1.4 The Council continues to provide a Travellers' site facility at Glen Road Heights and this will transfer as part of the arrangements between the Council and the NI Housing Executive as set out in Schedule 2 of the Housing (NI) Order 2003.

### **3.2 Outline other factors that enhance/impede the process of policy screening.**

3.2.1 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 Equality Officer has revised the screening process and screening form. These changes have been incorporated into an Equality Toolkit which has been developed as a step by step guide to developing new policies. Training in equality screening and mainstreaming equality through policy development has been planned for all key decision makers in Belfast City Council. This will be delivered from April 2003; a copy of the Equality Toolkit, which will be part of a series, is enclosed.

3.2.2 The Council is also conscious of the demands made on the Section 75 groups in consultation and is considering alternative innovative ways of addressing this issue through the Joint Consultation Group.

### **3.3 Outline how the authority, following screening of new policies, informs consultees of the outcomes from such screening exercises.**

3.3.1 The Good Relations Working Group (GRWG) has revised its screening procedure. All key decision makers in the Council have been requested to screen new policies on an on-going basis and submit them to the GRWG's Screening Sub-Group. This Screening Sub-Group meets on a six monthly basis and more frequently if required. All consultees are informed of our screening decisions on an annual basis.

## **SECTION 4: Training and Communication**

### **4.1 Indicate if your organisation has developed a 5 year Training Plan.**

4.1.1 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

Specialist Programmes

Affirmative Action Skills Enhancement programmes for employees who are members of under represented groups

Service Improvement

Seminars and Events

Equality Resource Bank

Evaluating Equality Outcomes

Capacity Building for Equality

4.1.2 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.

4.1.3 Specific training was carried out for those employees involved in the Year 2 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.

## **4.2 Outline details of staff and Management Board/Committee training provision associated with the Section 75 duties.**

### Elected Members

4.2.1 The Equality Officer has organised lunchtime seminars for elected Members of Council to keep them up to date on equality matters.

### Managers

4.2.2 Awareness Raising of Disability Discrimination Act (DDA) requirements and disability issues in general has been raised at the monthly meeting of the DDA Groups.

4.2.3 A comprehensive training programme has been arranged for all front line and managerial staff on disability awareness. This will be rolled out 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.

4.2.4 The Council has developed a Management Development Programme based around seven management issues. One of these modules is 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 is targeted at Directors, Heads of Service and other Council officers with responsibility for managing people.

### Employees

4.2.5 The Council has developed an equality training pack designed for use both within the Council and by external organisations. The Equality Training Pack has been a great success. The pack has been used for all in-house Training Induction courses and was also used in the Employee Equality Awareness programme, which commenced in 2002.

4.2.6 The training pack contains an Equality Training Strategy, Training Sessions, Notes for Trainers and two Equality videos. The Council commissioned two videos which form an integral part of the Equality Training Pack. The first video examines Council responsibilities and highlights the many services that are already geared towards those from the Section 75 categories. The second video includes views from representatives from the Section 75 categories about their expectations of the Council in light of the new equality duties.

4.2.7 The pack was developed through detailed consultation with employees, Members and representatives of Section 75 groups. The pack is available for purchase to all

organisations, including public authorities and the voluntary and community sector and has proved very successful to date, with enquiries coming from other UK authorities.

4.2.8 The Equality Officer is conscious of keeping the training process dynamic and challenging. It was felt that we must keep the training continuous and innovative to keep equality issues at the heart of decision making and policy development. To this end the Equality Officer has devised an Equality Toolkit to imbed and mainstream equality. The Equality Toolkit has been developed and will be delivered with training to all policy makers and key decision makers in the Council in April 2003. This training has been identified as specialist training (Equality Proofing Policy Development and Screening).

4.2.9 The staff induction programme 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.

4.2.10 Training staff on how to conduct Equality Impact Assessments is ongoing. This training has been identified as specialist training for all staff involved in the EQIA teams.

#### **4.3 Provide details of how affected groups have been involved in training.**

4.3.1 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. The training will involve all frontline staff. Quotations are sought from training providers in the disability arena.

#### **4.4 Provide a summary of any training evaluations.**

4.4.1 The Council's commitment to measuring the effectiveness of its Training Strategy is evidenced by ongoing evaluation procedures. A summary report of the evaluation of Equality training and comments in relation to our Year 3 (June 2002-May 2003) Equality Training Strategy milestones is attached.

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

4.5.1 The Chief Executive, Peter McNaney, has been called upon regularly to deliver talks on the Council's Equality Scheme and related equality issues. His willingness to contribute to these seminars and conferences highlights a commitment to equality at the heart of the Council's business.

4.5.2 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 has been requested to make a presentation to the Greater London Authority on the development of the Equality Toolkit.

4.5.3 The 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.

4.5.4 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 the introductions to the Council's public documents such as the Corporate Plan. On a more informal basis, the Equality Officer has been asked to give advice to various Departments on a range of issues.

4.5.5. The Lord Mayor's Office was in continual dialogue with the Equality Officer on a range of issues relating to equality. A number of events were held including an event to highlight the plight of the homeless, receptions for ethnic minorities, women's groups and an inter-school peace group.

#### **4.6 Outline any factors that enhance or impede the process of communication and training.**

4.6.1 Staff have been invited to form internal employee focus groups to discuss the EQIAs. The willingness and enthusiasm of the internal employee focus group during the EQIA consultations has been a positive experience. All seven Council Departments were represented. The Equality Officer is keen to build on staff involvement in focus groups as it is an ideal opportunity to build awareness and imbed equality issues throughout the workforce on an ongoing basis.

### **SECTION 5: Data Collection & Analysis**

#### **5.1 Describe systems that have been 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 has been set up to support each Service carrying out an EQIA. Members of these Teams have 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 Policy Services Section of 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. This includes the Census, workforce profiles, customer surveys and focus groups.

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

5.1.4. The Equality Officer is in the process of developing more comprehensive Monitoring Systems throughout the Council's Services and Facilities. As highlighted in 5.2.1 the monitoring procedures will be audited and developed to include the equality agenda. 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.

5.1.5 A very successful consultation exercise was carried out in April 4th 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 BCC'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.

5.1.6 Pre-consultation exercises have been conducted in relation to the four EQIAs, namely Disability, Human Resources, Flying of Flags on Council property and Community Services Grant Aid. The purpose of the Pre-consultation exercise was to ensure that all relevant matters and gaps of information were identified prior to the completion of the draft reports. A selection of EQIAs will proceed to formal consultation in June 2003.

## **5.2 Monitoring systems**

5.2.1 The Good Relations Working Group is progressing the issue of Monitoring throughout the Council. 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 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.

5.2.2 The Equality Officer has met with the Head of Projects and Corporate Systems to discuss corporate requirements, since there are obvious benefits in addressing and advancing the equality agenda through systematic recording, monitoring and evaluation of the Council's services and facilities. This work is ongoing.

## **SECTION 6: Information Provision and Access to Services**

6.1.1 The Council is committed to providing information in alternative formats as stated in its Equality Scheme. The Equality Officer has made links with key agencies and organisations available to produce work in alternative formats and languages as required.

6.1.2 The Equality Officer has had a series of informal discussions with representatives of Section 75 categories addressing information provision and access to services. For example the RNIB has invited the Equality Officer to talk on the radio to all their

members to discuss how the Council can improve information provision and access to services.

6.1.3 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. This has progressed the mainstreaming of equality considerably. For example, discussion is ongoing concerning a policy on signage/wayfinding.

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

6.1.5 The Executive Summaries of each EQIA in Year 2 will be translated into other languages on request. In addition documents will be provided in disc and audio tape cassette and can be made available in Braille, if requested.

6.1.6 All the Council's major public documents – e.g. the Corporate Plan and City Matters – can be made available in alternative formats on request.

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

## **SECTION 7: Complaints**

### **7.1 Identify the number of Section 75 complaints received and resolved during the year.**

7.1.1 One complaint was received in October 2002 from an Asylum Advice & Support Worker with Northern Ireland Council for Ethnic Minorities (NICEM), who had expressed concern that Belfast City Council did not provide interpreters for people who do not speak English as a first Language or have access to Language Line. The concern arose when a client of NICEM's was unable to proceed with the registration of his son as he was not accompanied by an interpreter. NICEM was advised that interpretation costs were met by the client.

7.1.2 The Equality Officer contacted the Registrar General and requested clarification of the responsibilities that Council Registrars have in relation to people who do not speak English as a first language. The Registrar General's Office has informed the Council that we are obliged to translate as required and that they will cover the cost of this service. The Equality Officer has initiated a language translation Service for the Council.

7.1.3 All parties have been informed of the decision and appropriate procedural action taken.

## **7.2 Identify the number of Section 75 complaints referred to the Commission**

7.2.1 None

## **7.3 Identify the number of ongoing Section 75 complaints**

7.3.1 One – the complaint outlined in last year's Annual Report on Progress, from a Councillor; this has been addressed in a number of ways, including the establishment of an Advisory Panel on City Hall Memorabilia and the initiation of an Equality Impact Assessment on the Flying of Flags on Council property, which is still in progress.

## **SECTION 8: Timetable**

### **8.1 Provide an update of Equality Scheme implementation timetable**

8.1.2 All the actions outlined in Section 14 of the Council's Equality Scheme have been achieved.

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

8.1.4 Regular reports on progress are made to the Chief Officers' Management Team and to the Policy and Resources Committee as outlined above. Good progress was made throughout the year by an all-party group of elected Members, culminating in the adoption by the Council of the Good Relations Strategy.

## **SECTION 9: Consultation**

9.1.1 The Council continues to be 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. The Council is considering setting up a consultative panel and has discussed this issue with Section 75 representatives. The outcome of this meeting identified relevant issues, including the fact that 'the usual suspects' in Belfast are being continually called upon to attend consultative panels.

As a response to 'consultation overload' evidenced by many informal conversations with the voluntary and community sector representatives, the Council initiated a discussion group with other key statutory agencies in Belfast. This Joint Consultation Group is investigating the possibility of a joint consultation panel for Belfast. We have recently invited representatives from Section 75 groups to participate in this discussion. The matter is ongoing.

9.1.3 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.

9.1.4 The Council is considering proposals to create a 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; work is continuing.

## **SECTION 10: Impacts and Outcomes**

10.1.1 The Council's Pricing and Human Resources policies were subjected to a EQIA and various recommendations were presented for consultation. The final amended version of the EQIAs has been published and consultees made aware of the changes; comments received from consultees and the Council response to these comments were included.

10.1.2 Please see attached decisions made in relation to the Pricing Policy and Human Resources EQIAs.

*As indicated in Section 4 - Training and Communication*

10.2.1 The Equality Officer devised and implemented a revised system of screening as it was important to keep the issue of Equality at the heart of policy development. Through an intensive meeting schedule with all key decision makers in the Council it was evident that a more in-depth integrated approach to equality proofing new policies was required. To this end an Equality Toolkit (a step by step guide to policy development including a revised screening form) was created to address the issue of policy development and mainstreaming equality at the heart of the Councils business. The Good Relations Working Group has considered this area of work as top priority and specialist training sessions have been devised to address the issues. The mainstreaming of equality is an incremental process. The training associated with the Equality Toolkit is another step in the process.

*As indicated in Section 5 – Data Collection and Analysis*

10.3.1 Data collection and analysis, equality considerations and the issue of monitoring throughout the Council is high on our agenda. As a direct consequence of our EQIAs the GRWG has addressed the importance of improving the monitoring systems throughout the Council and plans to create a phased comprehensive system of monitoring. Phase 1 of the process is to audit all existing structures and make recommendations for Phase 2: the amendment of monitoring systems. This work is ongoing.

10.3.2 One of the most important features of the proposed monitoring restructuring will be commitment to a partnership approach. It is proposed that the creation of changes to the monitoring system already in place will be made with an emphasis on consultation internally with all the relevant staff and externally with S. 75 groups.

## **SECTION 11: Additional Information**

### **11.1 Other matters considered relevant to implementation of the S. 75 duties**

11.1.1 Not applicable

### **11.2 Implementation of the duties leading to an improvement?**

11.2.1 The Equality Impact Assessments which the Council has completed have led to improvements and will continue to improve policy making and service delivery. The change progress required by S. 75 for Councils could not have had an instantaneous success. In real terms there is a developmental cycle to change and one example of the change is evidenced by people addressing equality more naturally today than before. The equality agenda is included in the business plans for all sections of the Council. The level of awareness has made a dynamic shift from understanding the terms and appreciating the language of S. 75, to incorporating equality into the daily work; an excellent example of this is the equality proofing of the disability audits. There are still steps to achieve. The incremental approach which the Council advocates, aims to imbed equality throughout the fabric of its business in a practical and realistic manner.

11.2.2 The implementation of S. 75 has resulted in improvements in how the Council undertakes its work. The basis on which this statement is made can be measured in a variety of ways. Firstly, the Council's commitment to training provides us with a more informed workforce. Secondly, our commitment to equality impact assessments has ensured a rigorous investigation of our policies in relation to good services and facilities. Finally, our enthusiasm for embedding the equality agenda throughout the Council is improving our service to all citizens of Belfast.

**APPENDIX A**  
**EQIA Timetables**

**Existing policies – included in initial Equality Impact Assessment timetable**

The following matrix indicates the Equality Impact Assessments of existing policies, included in the initial EQIA timetable, which commenced during the reporting period April 2002- March 2003. There are variations in the EQIA start times and not all those listed have been completed. Further information regarding the status of the EQIA commenced in this reporting period is attached.

Title of existing policy EQIAs due to be commenced pre-March 2003	Stage (as per Steps 1-7 of EQIA Process)	If joint -EQIA please state partner authorities	If EQIA completed is amended policy now being implemented? Y/N	If EQIA completed is amended were adjustments to policy a result of Assessment of adverse impact/ feedback from Consultation, or Both Please enter A, C or Both
1. Human Resources: i)Recruitment and Selection procedures ii) Placing of job advertisements iii)Removal expenses	1-3	n/a	To be completed	
2.Access Policies: Access to buildings and associated facilities	1-3	n/a	To be completed	
3.Community Services - Grant Aid Policy	1-3	n/a	To be completed	
4.Economic Initiatives- arts funding policy	1-2	n/a	To be completed	

**New or revised policies developed – not included in initial EQIA timetable**

1.Human Resources- Premature Retirement	1-3	n/a	To be completed	
2.Flying of Flags on Council property	1-3	n/a	To be completed	

**EQIA time-table for 2003-4**

<b>Title of EQIAs due to be commenced during April 2003 – March 2004</b>	<b>Existing or New policy?</b>	<b>If joint-EQIA please state partner authorities</b>	<b>Expected completion date of EQIA</b>
1.Parks & Amenities - Scale of Charges - public access to the countryside - planning of open spaces - strategy for the provision of playgrounds - Zoological Gardens customer care	Existing policy		June 2004
2.Capital Works/ Procurement - Supplier Charter	Existing policy		June 2004
Waste Management - Public conveniences provision and maintenance - recycling centres - charges for wheeled dustbins - refuse collection specification and monitoring	Existing policy		June 2004
Review of Leisure Provision	New policy		June 2004