



General Teaching Council
for Northern Ireland

Promoting Teacher Professionalism

General Teaching Council for Northern Ireland

Equality Scheme

*Drawn up in accordance with Section 75 and Schedule 9 of the
Northern Ireland Act 1998*

August 2018

Version 1.8

GTCNI Equality Scheme

The GTCNI Equality Scheme sets out our commitment to promote equality of opportunity and good relations. If you have any questions or comments on this scheme or require it in an alternative format e.g. Large print, Braille, audio format, easy read or another language please contact us by any of the following methods:

Email: info@gtcni.org.uk

Phone: 028 9033 3390

Text Relay: 18001 028 9033 3390 (If you can't hear or speak on the phone)

By Post: **Communications Team**

The General Teaching Council for Northern Ireland
3rd Floor Albany House,
73 - 75 Great Victoria Street,
Belfast
BT2 7AF

Approved by the Equality Commission for NI on: 28.11.2018

Foreword

In our Equality Scheme we set out how the General Teaching Council for Northern Ireland proposes to fulfil the Section 75 statutory duties.

Section 75 of the Northern Ireland Act 1998 (the Act) requires public authorities, in carrying out their functions relating to Northern Ireland, to have due regard to the need to promote equality of opportunity and regard to the desirability of promoting good relations across a range of categories outlined in the Act

We will commit the necessary resources in terms of people, time and money to make sure that the Section 75 duties are complied with and that the equality scheme is implemented effectively, and on time.

The General Teaching Council for Northern Ireland has committed the necessary resources to implement this scheme and to having effective internal arrangements in place for ensuring our effective compliance with the Section 75 statutory duties and for monitoring and reviewing our progress.

The General Teaching Council for Northern Ireland are committed to the development and delivery of a planned programme of communication and training for staff and Council members on the equality scheme and commitments made, and will ensure that staff are trained in the duties and that the scheme is correctly implemented.

On behalf of the General Teaching Council for Northern Ireland and our staff we are pleased to support and endorse this Equality Scheme which has been drawn up in accordance with Section 75 and Schedule 9 of the NI Act 1998 and taking into consideration Equality Commission guidelines.

Signed by the Chairperson of the General Teaching Council for Northern Ireland and the Accounting Officer:

Chair David Gunning
Date: 5/9/18

Chief Executive Officer:


Date: 5th September 2018

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INTRODUCTION

- 1.1 The General Teaching Council for Northern Ireland (the GTCNI/Council) is the statutory, professional and regulatory body for the teaching profession established under the Education (Northern Ireland) Order 1998 and is funded by teachers' annual registration fees.
- 1.2 The GTCNI is an Executive Non Departmental Public Body (NDPB). Its sponsor Department is the Department of Education (DE).
- 1.3 The overall aims for the GTCNI are to:
 - Represent the professional interests of teachers;
 - Provide a voice for the teaching profession by speaking with authority on education matters reflecting the experience of practising teachers; and
 - Work with other bodies on matters affecting the well-being of teachers to improve teachers' working lives.
- 1.4 The statutory functions of the GTCNI set out in legislation include:
 - The establishment and maintenance of a register of teachers;
 - The approval of qualifications for the purposes of registration;
 - The regulation of the teaching profession;
 - The provision of advice to the Department and employing authorities on registration; the training, career development and performance management of teachers; standards of teaching; standards of conduct for teachers; and
 - Additional functions as the Department considers appropriate.
- 1.5 The GTCNI has a Council of 33 members, the majority of whom are teachers, elected or appointed in accordance with The General Teaching Council for Northern Ireland (Constitution) Regulations (Northern Ireland) 2001. Of these, four are Ministerial appointments made in line with the Code of Practice issued by the Commissioner for Public Appointments.
- 1.6 The Council has corporate responsibility for ensuring that the GTCNI fulfils the aims and objectives agreed with the Department of Education (DE) and approved by the Minister for Education, and for promoting the efficient, economic and effective use of staff and other resources by the GTCNI.
- 1.7 The Chair of the Council is elected from within its membership, by the Council's members, in accordance with the Constitution Regulations and the Council's Standing Orders. The Chair is responsible to the Minister for Education and must ensure that the GTCNI's policies and actions support the wider strategic policies of DE, and that the GTCNI's affairs are conducted with probity.

- 1.8 The Chief Officer (Registrar) is designated as the GTCNI's Accounting Officer by the Department of Education's Accounting Officer and is personally responsible for safeguarding the public funds for which he/she has charge; for ensuring propriety and regularity in the handling of those public funds; and for the day-to-day operations and management of the GTCNI.
- 1.9 The GTCNI's Executive Team provides administrative support to the Chief Officer in discharging their responsibilities, including the delivery of GTCNI's functions set out at 1.4.
- 1.10 The General Teaching Council for Northern Ireland is committed to the discharge of its Section 75 obligations in all parts of our organisation and we will commit the necessary available resources in terms of people, time and money to ensure that the Section 75 duties are complied with and that the equality scheme is implemented effectively.
- 1.11 If you have any questions or comments regarding our equality scheme, please contact in the first instance the communications team at the address given below and we will respond to you as soon as possible:

Communications Team
The General Teaching Council for Northern Ireland
3rd Floor Albany House,
73 - 75 Great Victoria Street,
Belfast BT2 7AF
Telephone: 028 9033 3390
E-mail: info@gtcni.org.uk
Text Relay: 18001 028 9033 3390

2 STATUTORY DUTIES

- 2.1 Section 75 of the NI Act 1998 (the Act) requires the GTCNI to comply with two statutory duties:

Section 75(1) Duties

In carrying out its functions, GTCNI is required to have due regard of the need to promote equality of opportunity between:

- Persons of different religious belief, political opinion, racial group, age, marital status or sexual orientation;
- Men and women generally;
- Persons with a disability and persons without; and
- Persons with dependants and persons without.

Section 75(2) Duties

In addition, without prejudice to the obligations above, in carrying out its functions the GTCNI is required to have regard to the desirability of promoting good relations between persons of different religious belief, political opinion or racial group.

'Functions' include the 'powers and duties' of a public authority. This includes employment and procurement functions.

- 2.2 Schedule 9 4. (1) of the Act requires GTCNI as a designated public authority to set out in an equality scheme how it proposes to fulfil the duties imposed by Section 75 in relation to its relevant functions. This equality scheme is intended to fulfil that statutory requirement. It is both a statement of our arrangements for fulfilling the Section 75 statutory duties and our plan for their implementation.

3 COMPLIANCE WITH THE SECTION 75

Schedule 9 (4)(2)(a)

- 3.1 The GTCNI is committed to the discharge of its Section 75 obligations in all parts of our work and we will commit the necessary available resources in terms of people, time and money to ensure that the Section 75 statutory duties are complied with and that our Equality Scheme can be implemented effectively.
- 3.2 The General Teaching Council for Northern Ireland will liaise closely with the Equality Commission to ensure that progress on the implementation of our Equality Scheme is maintained.
- 3.3 The GTCNI's arrangements for assessing compliance with the Section 75 statutory duties are outlined in this Equality Scheme. Some of our arrangements for assessing our compliance with the Section 75 statutory duties are outlined in other relevant parts of this equality scheme (e.g. consultation 4.1-4.15, screening 5.4-5.12 and equality impact assessment 5.13-5.16).
- 3.4 We are committed to the fulfilment of our Section 75 obligations in all parts of our work.
- 3.5 Responsibility for the effective implementation of the GTCNI Equality Scheme lies with the Accounting Officer, who acts under the direction of the Council and is responsible for the development, implementation, maintenance and review of the scheme in accordance with Section 75 and Schedule 9 of the Northern Ireland Act 1998, including consideration of any good practice guidance issued by the Equality Commission.
- 3.6 Objectives and targets relating to the statutory duties will be integrated into GTCNI strategic and operational business plans.

- 3.7 GTCNI will liaise closely with the Equality Commission to ensure that progress on the implementation of our equality scheme is maintained.
- 3.8 By 31 August each year, the GTCNI will submit an Annual Progress Report to the Equality Commission on the implementation of the statutory duties and section 49A of the Disability Discrimination Order (2006). The latest report will be available on our website www.gtcni.org.uk
- 3.9 The GTCNI will demonstrate its commitment to equality of opportunity and good relations through the tools of screening and equality impact assessment (EQIA) and early engagement with stakeholders.
- 3.10 GTCNI will develop an action plan to promote equality of opportunity and good relations.
- 3.11 The action measures that will make up our action plan will be relevant to our functions. They will be developed and prioritised on the basis of an audit of inequalities. The audit of inequalities will gather and analyse information across the Section 75 categories to identify the inequalities that exist for our service users and those affected by our policies.

4 CONSULTATION

Schedule 9(4)(2)(a) on matters to which a statutory duty (S75(1) or (2)) is likely to be relevant

Schedule 9(4)(2)(b) on the likely impact of existing or proposed policies on the promotion of equality of opportunity

Schedule 9(9)(2) in making any decision with respect to existing or proposed policies, taking into account any assessment and consultation as is set out in paragraph 4(2)(b)

- 4.1 We recognise the importance of consultation in all aspects of the implementation of our statutory equality duties. We will consult on our equality scheme, action measures, equality impact assessments and other matters relevant to the Section 75 statutory duties.
- 4.2 We are committed to carrying out consultation with the following principles (as contained in the Equality Commission's guidance 'Section 75 of the NI Act 1998 - A Guide for Public Authorities (April 2010)').
- 4.3 All consultations will seek the views of those directly affected by the matter/policy, the Equality Commission, representative groups of Section 75 categories, other public authorities, voluntary and community groups, our staff and their trades unions and such other groups who have a legitimate interest in the matter, whether or not they have a direct economic or personal interest.
- 4.4 A list of our consultees is included in this equality scheme at Annex III. It can also be obtained from our website at www.gtcni.org.uk or by contacting:

Communications Team

The General Teaching Council for Northern Ireland
3rd Floor Albany House,
73 - 75 Great Victoria Street,
Belfast BT2 7AF
Telephone: 028 9033 3390
E-mail: info@gtcni.org.uk
Text Relay: 18001 028 9033 3390

4.5 Initially all consultees (see Annex III) will be notified (by email or post) of the matter/policy being consulted upon to ensure they are aware of all consultations. Thereafter, to ensure the most effective use of both our and our consultees' resources, we will take a targeted approach, engaging with those that may have a particular interest in the matter/policy being consulted upon and to whom the matter/policy is of particular relevance. Consultation with all stakeholders will begin as early as possible. We will engage with affected individuals and representative groups to identify how best to consult or engage with them. The GTCNI will ask consultees what their preferred consultation methods are and will give consideration to these. Methods of consultation could include:

- Face-to-face meetings;
- Focus groups;
- Written documents with the opportunity to comment in writing;
- Questionnaires;
- Information/notification by email with an opportunity to opt in/opt out of the consultation;
- Internet discussions; or
- Telephone consultations.

This list is not exhaustive and is reviewed on an annual basis to ensure it remains relevant to our functions and policies. We may develop other additional methods of consultation more appropriate to key stakeholders and the matter being consulted upon.

4.6 We welcome inquiries from any person or organisations wishing to be added to the list of consultees. Please contact the GTCNI Communications Team to provide your contact details and have your area of interest noted or have your name/details removed or amended. Please inform us at this stage if you would like information sent to you in a particular format or language.

4.7 We are committed to ensuring that all of our services are fully accessible to everyone in the community across the Sections 75 categories (see section 8). The General Teaching Council for Northern Ireland also adheres to the relevant provisions of current anti-discrimination legislation.

4.8 The GTCNI also monitor annually across all our functions, in relation to access to information and services to ensure equality of opportunity and good relations are promoted.

- 4.9 The GTCNI will consider the accessibility and format of every consultation method used in order to remove barriers to the consultation process. Specific consideration will be given as to how best to communicate with children and young people, people with disabilities (in particular people with learning disabilities) and minority ethnic communities. Where appropriate, the GTCNI will take account of existing and developing good practice, including the Equality Commission's guidance *'Let's Talk Let's Listen - Guidance for public authorities on consulting and involving children and young people (2008)'*.
- 4.10 GTCNI are conscious of the fact that affected individuals and representative groups may have different needs. We will take appropriate measures to ensure full participation in any meetings that are held. We will consider for example the time of day, the appropriateness of the venue, in particular whether it can be accessed by those with disabilities, how the meeting is to be conducted, the use of appropriate language, whether a signer and/or interpreter is necessary, and whether the provision of childcare and support for other carers is required.
- 4.11 We make all relevant information available to consultees in appropriate formats to ensure meaningful consultation. This includes detailed information on the policy proposal being consulted upon and any relevant quantitative and qualitative data.
- 4.12 Information will be made available, on request, in alternative formats, in a timely manner, usually within 4 weeks. We will ensure that such consultees have equal time to respond.
- 4.13 Consultation with all stakeholders will begin as early as possible. The consultation period for this scheme and other equality consultations will last for a minimum of twelve weeks.
- 4.14 However, in exceptional circumstances when this timescale is not feasible (for example implementing EU Directives or UK wide legislation, meeting Health and Safety requirements, addressing urgent public health matters or complying with Court judgements), we may shorten timescales to eight weeks or less before the policy is implemented. We may continue consultation thereafter and will review the policy as part of our monitoring commitments.
- 4.15 Where, under these exceptional circumstances, we must implement a policy immediately, as it is beyond our authority's control, we may consult after implementation of the policy, in order to ensure that any impacts of the policy are considered.
- 4.16 Specific training is provided to those facilitating consultations to ensure that they have the necessary skills to communicate effectively with consultees.
- 4.17 Consultation will always precede and inform any change of policy proposed by the Council. However, if a policy must be implemented immediately it will be reviewed and consulted on as part of the ongoing monitoring process, and comments received will be taken into consideration.

- 4.18 In making any decision with respect to existing or proposed policy, the GTCNI shall take into account any such assessment and consultation carried out into the likely impact on the promotion of equality of opportunity and good relations in relation to the policy.
- 4.19 The GTCNI will provide feedback to consultees in a timely manner. A feedback report will be prepared which includes summary information on the policy consulted upon, a summary of consultees' comments and a summary of the GTCNI's consideration of and response to consultees' input. The feedback will be provided in formats suitable to consultees.

5 ASSESSING AND MONITORING THE IMPACT OF POLICIES AND PUBLICATION OF REPORTS

Schedule 9(4)(2)(b); Schedule 9(4)(2)(c); Schedule 9(4)(2)(d); Schedule 9(9)(1); and Schedule 9(9)(2) on the arrangements for assessing, monitoring and publishing the impact of policies

Schedule 9(4)(2)(b) on the arrangements for assessing the likely impact of existing policies or proposed policies on the promotion of equality of opportunity

- 5.1 In the context of Section 75, 'policy' is broadly defined and covers all the ways in which the GTCNI carries out or propose to carry out its functions. In respect of this Equality Scheme, the term policy is used for any (proposed/amended/existing) strategy, policy initiative or practice and/or decision, whether written or unwritten and irrespective of the label given to it, e.g. 'draft', 'pilot', 'high level' or 'sectoral'.
- 5.2 In making any decision with respect to existing or proposed policies, the GTCNI will take into account any assessment and consultation carried out in relation to the policy, as required by Schedule 9(9)(2) of the Northern Ireland Act 1998.
- 5.3 The GTCNI will use the tools of screening and equality impact assessment (EQIA) to assess the likely impact of a policy on the promotion of equality of opportunity and good relations. In carrying out these assessments the GTCNI will relate them to the intended outcomes of the policy in question and follow Equality Commission guidance:
- On screening, including the screening template, as detailed in the Commission's guidance '*Section 75 of the Northern Ireland Act 1998 - A Guide for Public Authorities*' (April 2010); and
 - On undertaking an equality impact assessment as detailed in the Commission's guidance '*Practical guidance on equality impact assessment*' (February 2005).

Screening

- 5.4 The purpose of screening is to identify which policies are likely to have an impact on equality of opportunity and/or good relations. This will be completed at the earliest

opportunity in the policy development/review process and includes criteria defining minor/major/none impact(s). The Team responsible for the development of the policy will lead the screening process and involve key stakeholders, including teaching professionals, in the process.

- 5.5 The following questions will be applied to all the GTCNI's policies as part of the screening process:
- What is the likely impact on equality of opportunity for those affected by this policy, for each of the Section 75 equality categories? (minor/major/none)
 - Are there opportunities to better promote equality of opportunity for people within the Section 75 equality categories?
 - To what extent is the policy likely to impact on good relations between people of a different religious belief, political opinion or racial group? (minor/major/none)
 - Are there opportunities to better promote good relations between people of a different religious belief, political opinion or racial group?
- 5.6 The GTCNI will gather relevant information and data, both qualitative and quantitative, giving consideration to the different needs, experiences and priorities for each of the Section 75 categories before completing a screening template.
- 5.7 The completed screening template will list the reasons to support the decisions, any proposed changes, amendments and the likely impact of a policy in respect of one, or more, of the equality of opportunity and/or good relations categories, setting out why the policy:
- Has been 'screened in' for equality impact assessment (EQIA); or
 - Has been 'screened out' with mitigation or an alternative policy proposed to be adopted. Mitigation being where an assessment (screening in this case) reveals that a particular policy has an adverse impact on equality of opportunity and/or good relations, and consideration of ways to deliver the policy outcomes which have a less adverse effect on the relevant Section 75 categories; or
 - The policy has been 'screened out' without mitigation or alternative policy proposal.
- 5.8 If the screening concludes that the likely impact of a policy is 'minor' in respect of one, or more, of the equality of opportunity and/or good relations categories, the GTCNI may decide to proceed with an EQIA (depending on the policy) or consider measures that might mitigate the policy impact as well as alternative policies that might better achieve the promotion of equality of opportunity and/or good relations. Where mitigation occurs, the GTCNI will outline in the screening template the reasons to support this decision together with the proposed changes, amendments or alternative policy. This screening decision will be 'signed off' by the GTCNI Accounting Officer and Council.

- 5.9 If screening concludes that the likely impact of a policy is 'major' in respect of one, or more, of the equality of opportunity and/or good relations categories, GTCNI will normally subject the policy to an EQIA. This will be agreed by the GTCNI Accounting Officer.
- 5.10 If the screening concludes that the likely impact of a policy is 'none', in respect of all of the equality of opportunity and/or good relations categories, the GTCNI may decide to screen the policy out. If a policy is 'screened out' as having no relevance to equality of opportunity or good relations, the GTCNI will give details of the reasons for the decision taken. This screening decision will be 'signed off' by the GTCNI Accounting Officer and Council.
- 5.11 If a consultee, including the Equality Commission, raises a concern about a screening decision based on supporting evidence, the GTCNI will review the screening decision.
- 5.12 As soon as possible following the completion of the screening process, the screening report, will be made available on the GTCNI website - www.gtcni.org.uk – or as a minimum, be published quarterly.

Equality Impact Assessment (EQIA)

- 5.13 An equality impact assessment (EQIA) is a thorough and systematic analysis of a policy, whether that policy is formal or informal, and irrespective of the scope of that policy. The primary function of an EQIA is to determine the extent of any impact of a policy upon the Section 75 categories and to determine if the impact is an adverse one. It is also an opportunity to demonstrate the likely positive outcomes of a policy and to seek ways to more effectively promote equality of opportunity and good relations.
- 5.14 EQIA reports are published once the assessment has been completed. These reports include:
- A statement of the aim of the policy assessed;
 - Information and data collected;
 - Details of the assessment of impact(s);
 - Consideration given to measures which might mitigate any adverse impact;
 - Consideration given to alternative policies which might better achieve the promotion of equality of opportunity;
 - Consultation responses;
 - The decision taken; and
 - Future monitoring plans.
- 5.15 Once screening has identified that an equality impact assessment is necessary, the GTCNI will carry out the EQIA in accordance with Equality Commission guidance. The EQIA will be carried out as part of the policy development process, before the policy is implemented.
- 5.16 Any EQIA will be subject to consultation at the appropriate stage(s).

Publishing the assessments of the likely impact of policies

Schedule 9(4)(2)(d) and Schedule 9(9)(1)

- 5.17 The GTCNI will make publicly available the results of assessments (screening and EQIA) of the likely impact of the GTCNI's policies on the promotion of equality of opportunity and good relations.
- 5.18 Screening reports will be published quarterly detailing:
- All policies screened by the GTCNI over the previous three month period;
 - A statement of the aim(s) of the policy/policies to which the assessment relates;
 - The Screening decisions, and:
 - Whether the policy has been 'screened in' for equality impact assessment;
 - Whether the policy has been 'screened out' with mitigation or an alternative policy proposal; or
 - Whether the policy has been 'screened out' without mitigation or an alternative policy proposal.
 - Where applicable, a timetable for conducting equality impact assessments; and
 - A link to the completed screening template(s) on the GTCNI's website www.gtcni.org.uk
- 5.19 All information the GTCNI publishes is accessible and will be made available in alternative formats on request.
- 5.20 The results of the GTCNI's assessments (screening reports and completed templates, the results of equality impact assessments) will be made available on the GTCNI's website www.gtcni.org.uk and on request.
- 5.21 In addition to the above, screening reports (electronic link or hard copy on request) which include all policies screened over a 3 month period will be sent directly to all consultees on a quarterly basis.
- 5.22 Where the GTCNI considers it appropriate the GTCNI will inform the general public about the availability of this material through communications such as press releases.

Monitoring adverse impact of policies

Schedule 9(4)(2)(c)

- 5.23 The GTCNI recognises that monitoring can assist with the delivery of better public services and continuous improvement. Monitoring Section 75 information (e.g. race/ethnic origin,

sexual orientation, political opinion, religious belief, etc.) involves the processing of sensitive personal data. In order to carry out monitoring in a confidential and effective manner, the GTCNI follows guidance from the Office of the Information Commissioner and the Equality Commission.

- 5.24 The GTCNI will monitor any potential adverse impact of policies adopted on the promotion of equality of opportunity and also seek to monitor more broadly to identify opportunities to better promote equality of opportunity and good relations in line with Equality Commission guidance.
- 5.25 The GTCNI has established systems to monitor the impact of policies and identify opportunities to better promote equality of opportunity and good relations including, where available, the collection, collation and analysis of existing relevant quantitative and qualitative data across all nine equality categories
- 5.26 If, over a two year period, monitoring and evaluation indicates that a policy results in greater adverse impact than expected, or if opportunities arise which would allow for greater equality of opportunity to be promoted, the GTCNI will ensure that the policy is revisited and revised, where possible, to determine if better outcomes can be achieved for the relevant equality groups.
- 5.27 The GTCNI will review EQIA monitoring information and other monitoring information on an annual basis.

Publishing the results of monitoring

Schedule 9(4)(2)(d)

- 5.28 Schedule 9(4)(2)(d) requires the GTCNI to publish the results of the monitoring of adverse impacts of policies adopted. The results of EQIA and other monitoring information will be published as part of the GTCNI's Section 75 annual progress report. Consultees will be informed by e-mail or mail of the annual report publication and hard copies can be provided on request.
- 5.29 All information published is accessible and can be made available in alternative formats on request.

6 TRAINING FOR GTCNI STAFF AND COUNCIL MEMBERS

Schedule 9 (4)(2)(e)

Commitment to staff training

- 6.1 The GTCNI recognises that awareness raising and training play a crucial role in the effective implementation of the Section 75 duties.
- 6.2 Our Chief Executive wishes to positively communicate the commitment of the GTCNI to the Section 75 statutory duties, both internally and externally.
- 6.3 The GTCNI will communicate both internally and externally, its commitment to the promotion of equality and implementation of its Section 75 statutory duties. To this end the GTCNI will develop an effective communication and training programme for all staff and will ensure that the GTCNI's commitment to the Section 75 statutory duties is made clear in all relevant publications.

Awareness raising and training arrangements

- 6.4 The following arrangements will be put in place to ensure all our staff and all Council members are aware of and understand our equality obligations:
- We will develop a summary of this equality scheme and make it available to staff and Council members;
 - We will provide access to copies of the full equality scheme for all staff and Council members and ensure that any queries or questions of clarification from staff are addressed effectively;
 - Staff in the GTCNI will receive a briefing on this equality scheme within six months of its approval;
 - The Section 75 statutory duties form part of induction training for new staff;
 - Where appropriate, training will be provided to ensure awareness of the issues experienced by the range of Section 75 groups;
 - When appropriate and on an ongoing basis, arrangements will be made to keep staff and Council members up to date with Section 75 developments.
 - In addition, focused training will be provided for key staff within the GTCNI who are directly engaged in taking forward the implementation of our equality scheme commitments.
- 6.5 Training and awareness raising programmes will, where relevant, be developed in association with appropriate Section 75 groups and our staff.
- 6.6 The GTCNI will draw up a training plan for all staff and Council members. Personal training requirements will be agreed with line managers, as required. When this equality scheme is approved by the Equality Commission, the GTCNI will take measures to raise the general awareness of all staff and Council members about:
- Current anti-discrimination legislation (including Section 75 and Schedule 9);
 - The commitments within this equality scheme; and
 - The important role all staff and Council members have in implementing the scheme.

6.7 In addition, specific training will be available to equip appropriate staff with the necessary skills and knowledge to carry out key tasks effectively including:

- Assessment of policies (screening and EQIA);
- Dealing with complaints in relation to compliance with this equality scheme;
- The consultation processes; and
- The implementation and monitoring of effective implementation of equality scheme.

6.8 In order to share resources and expertise and ensure cost effectiveness, the GTCNI will, where possible, work closely with other bodies and agencies in the development and delivery of training.

Monitoring and evaluation of training

6.9 Our training programme will be subject to the following monitoring and evaluation arrangements:

- We will evaluate the extent to which participants in the training programmes have acquired the necessary skills and knowledge to achieve the above objectives, including feedback from participants on the quality and effectiveness of the training and identification of any further training needs; and
- The extent to which training objectives have been met will be reported on as part of the Section 75 annual progress report, which will be sent to the Equality Commission.

7 Timetable for measures proposed in equality scheme

Schedule 9, paragraph 4(3)(b)

7.1 Annex IV outlines our timetable for all measures proposed within this equality scheme. The measures outlined in this timetable will be incorporated into our business planning processes.

7.2 This timetable is different from and in addition to our commitment to developing action plans/action measures to specifically address inequalities and further promote equality of opportunity and good relations. We have included in our equality scheme a commitment to develop an action plan. Accordingly, this commitment it is listed in the timetable of measures at Annex IV.

8 PUBLIC ACCESS TO INFORMATION AND SERVICES

Schedule 9 (4)(2)(f)

8.1 The GTCNI is committed to ensuring that the information we disseminate and the services we provide are fully accessible to all parts of the community. We keep our arrangements under review to ensure that this remains the case.

8.2 We are aware that some groups will not have the same access to information as others. In particular:

- People with sensory, learning, communication and mobility disabilities may require printed information in other formats;
- Members of ethnic minority groups, whose first language is not English, may have difficulties with information provided only in English; and
- Children and young people may not be able to fully access or understand information.

Access to information

8.3 To ensure equality of opportunity in accessing information, we provide information in alternative formats on request, where reasonably practicable. Where the exact request cannot be met we will ensure a reasonable alternative is provided. Alternative formats may include Easy Read, Braille, audio formats (CD, mp3 or DAISY), large print or minority languages to meet the needs of those for whom English is not their first language. The GTCNI will respond to requests for information in alternative formats in a timely manner, usually within 20 working days. If it is expected that this target cannot be met e.g. because of the complexity or volume of material requested, the GTCNI will write out providing the reason(s) for the delay and an estimated response date.

Access to services

8.4 The GTCNI is committed to ensuring that all of our services are fully accessible to everyone in the community across the Section 75 categories. We also adhere to the relevant provisions of current anti-discrimination legislation.

8.5 In terms of accessibility of services, and makes sure that consultation venues have a high level of accessibility for all users.

Assessing public access to information and services

8.6 Annually we monitor and review delivery across all business areas/functions, in relation to access to information and services, to ensure equality of opportunity and good relations are promoted. This will be reported on in our annual review to the Equality Commission.

- 8.7 GTCNI are committed to ensuring that facilities are designed to the requirements of all our customers.

9 COMPLAINTS PROCEDURE

Schedule 9 (10)

- 9.1 The GTCNI is responsive to the views of members of the public. We will endeavour to resolve all complaints made to us.
- 9.2 Schedule 9 paragraph 10 of the NI Act refers to complaints, where a person can make a complaint to a public authority if they believe they may have been directly affected by an alleged failure of the authority to comply with its approved equality scheme. If this complaint has not been resolved within a reasonable timescale, the complaint can be brought to the Equality Commission.
- 9.3 A person wishing to make a complaint that the GTCNI has failed to comply with its approved Equality Scheme should contact:
- Communications Team
The General Teaching Council for Northern Ireland
3rd Floor Albany House,
73 - 75 Great Victoria Street,
Belfast BT2 7AF
Telephone: 028 9033 3390
E-mail: info@gtcni.org.uk
Text Relay: 18001 028 9033 3390
- 9.4 We will, in the first instance, acknowledge receipt of each such complaint about a failure to comply with our Equality Scheme within 10 working days.
- 9.5 The GTCNI will carry out an internal investigation of the complaint and will respond substantively to the complainant within one month of the date of receiving the letter of complaint. Under certain circumstances, if the complexity of the matter requires a longer period, the period for response to the complainant may be extended to two months. In those circumstances, the complainant will be advised of the extended period within one month of making the complaint.
- 9.6 During this process the complainant will be kept fully informed of the progress of the investigation into the complaint and of any outcomes.
- 9.7 In any subsequent investigation by the Equality Commission, the GTCNI will co-operate fully, providing timely access to any relevant documentation the Equality Commission may require. Similarly, the GTCNI will co-operate fully with any investigation by the Equality Commission under sub-paragraph 11(1)(b) of Schedule 9 to the Northern Ireland Act 1998.

10 PUBLICATION OF THE EQUALITY SCHEME

Schedule 9 4. (3) (c)

- 10.1 The GTCNI Equality Scheme is available on our website at www.gtcni.org.uk and free of charge in print form and alternative formats from:

Communications Team
The General Teaching Council for Northern Ireland
3rd Floor Albany House,
73- 75 Great Victoria Street,
Belfast BT2 7AF
Telephone: 028 9033 3390
E-mail: info@gtcni.org.uk
Text Relay: 18001 028 9033 3390

- 10.2 The following arrangements are in place for the publication in a timely manner of our equality scheme to ensure equality of access:

- We will make every effort to communicate widely the existence and content of our equality scheme. This may include press releases, prominent advertisements in the press, the internet and direct mail to groups representing the Section 75 categories;
- We will email a link to our approved equality scheme to consultees on our consultation lists. Other consultees without e-mail facilities will be notified by letter that the scheme is available on request. We will respond to requests for alternative formats in a timely manner, usually within 20 working days.
- Our equality scheme will be made available on request in alternative formats such as Easy Read, Braille, large print, audio formats (CD, mp3, DAISY) and in minority languages to meet the needs of those not fluent in English.

- 10.3 For a list of our stakeholders and consultees please see Appendix III of this equality scheme.

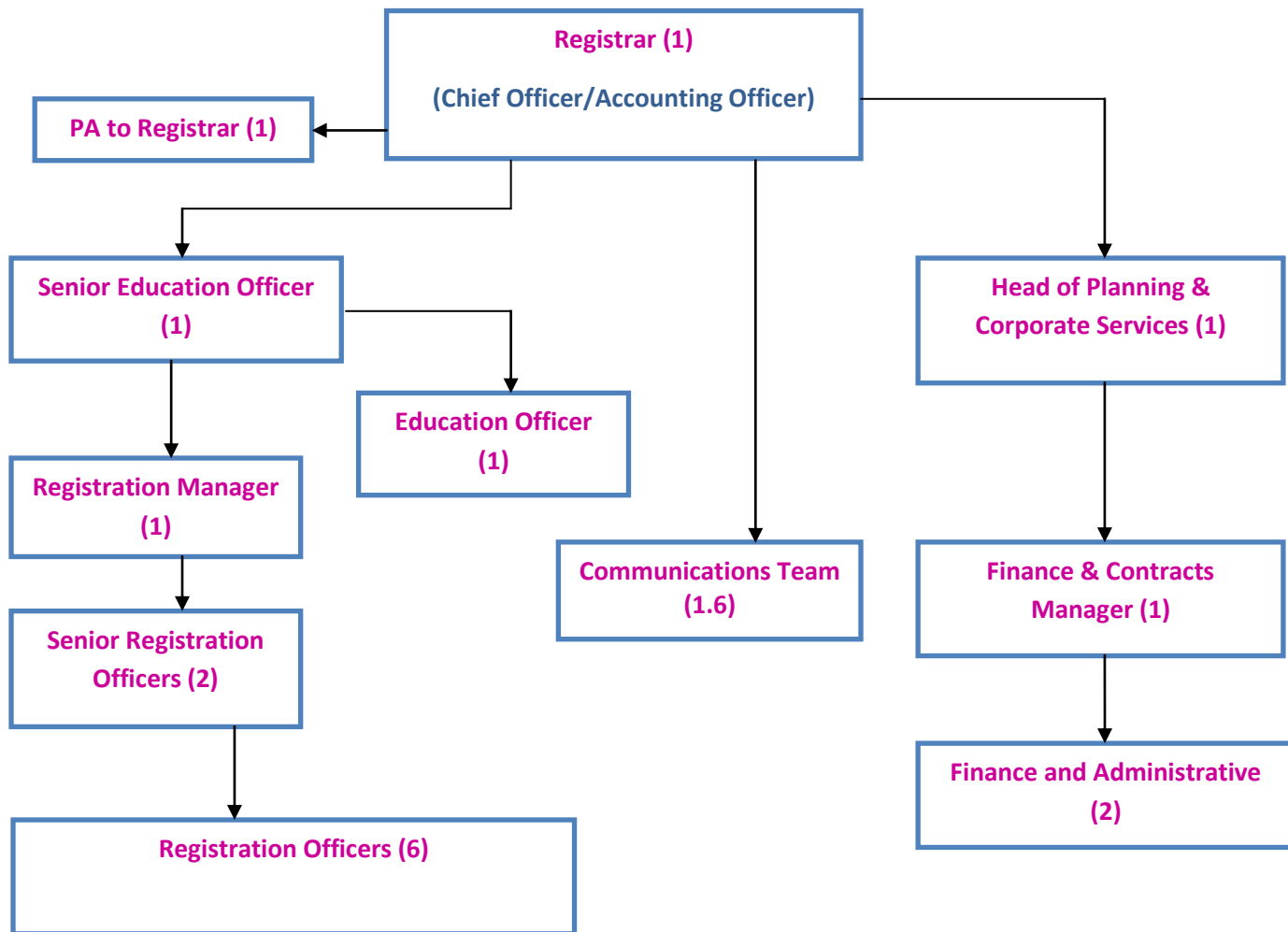
11 REVIEW OF THE EQUALITY SCHEME

Schedule 9 (8)(3)

- 11.1 The GTCNI will conduct a thorough review of this equality scheme either within five years of submission of this equality scheme to the Equality Commission or within a shorter timescale to allow alignment with the review of other planning cycles.

- 11.2 The review will evaluate the effectiveness of our scheme in relation to the implementation of the Section 75 statutory duties relevant to our functions in Northern Ireland.
- 11.3 In undertaking this review we will follow any guidance issued by the Equality Commission. A report of this review will be made public through our website www.gtcni.org.uk and sent to the Equality Commission.

Annex I Organisational Chart



Annex II Example groups relevant to the Section 75 categories for Northern Ireland purposes

Please note, this list is for illustration purposes only, it is not exhaustive.

Category	Example groups
Religious belief	Buddhist; Catholic; Hindu; Jewish; Muslims, people of no religious belief; Protestants; Sikh; other faiths. For the purposes of Section 75, the term “religious belief” is the same definition as that used in the <i>Fair Employment & Treatment (NI) Order</i> ¹ . Therefore, “religious belief” also includes any <i>perceived</i> religious belief (or perceived lack of belief) and, in employment situations only, it also covers any “ <i>similar philosophical belief</i> ”.
Political opinion *	Nationalist generally; Unionists generally; members/supporters of other political parties.
Racial group	Black people; Chinese; Indians; Pakistanis; people of mixed ethnic background; Polish; Roma; Travellers; White people.
Men and women generally	Men (including boys); Trans-gendered people; Transsexual people; women (including girls).
Marital status	Civil partners or people in civil partnerships; divorced people; married people; separated people; single people; widowed people.
Age	Children and young people; older people.
Persons with a disability	Persons with disabilities as defined by the Disability Discrimination Act 1995.
Persons with dependants	Persons with personal responsibility for the care of a child; for the care of a person with a disability; or the care of a dependant older person.
Sexual orientation	Bisexual people; heterosexual people; gay or lesbian people; Transgender.

¹See Section 98 of the Northern Ireland Act 1998, which states: “*In this Act...“political opinion” and “religious belief” shall be construed in accordance with Article 2(3) and (4) of the Fair Employment & Treatment (NI) Order 1998.*”

Annex III List of consultees

Schedule 9(4)(2)(a)

This consultation list is reviewed on an annual basis to ensure it remains relevant to the GTCNI's functions and policies. Any person or organisations wishing to be added or removed from the list should contact info@gtcni.org.uk

Please also inform us if you would like information sent to you in a particular format or language.

EXTERNAL STAKEHOLDERS

Agencies in Consortium for Education and Training (ACET)
Association for Quality Education (AQE)
Association of Head Teachers in Secondary Schools (AHTSS)
Association of School and College Leaders (ASCL)
Association of Teachers and Lecturers (ATL)/National Education Union (NEU)
British Council NI
Catholic Principals Association
CCEA
Council for Catholic Maintained Schools (CCMS)
Comhairle na Gaelsolaiochta
Controlled Schools' Support Council
Department of Education
Department for the Economy
Early Years
Education Authority
Education Committee
Equality Commission for Northern Ireland
EWC
GBA NI
GTCS
Information Commissioner
Inspectorate, DENI
Integrated Education Fund
Irish National Teachers Organisation (INTO)
Middletown Centre for Autism
National Association of Head Teachers (NI)
NI Commission for Catholic Education
Northern Ireland Council for Integrated Education (NICIE)
NI Commissioner for Children and Young Persons (NICCY)
Primary Schools Governors Association
PTA NI
Queen's University Belfast
Registered Teachers
Retired Teachers Association
St Mary's University College
Stranmillis University College
Teaching Council Ireland
The Controlled Schools' Support Council
The National Association of Schoolmasters and Union of Women Teachers (NASUWT)
The Open University
Transferor Representatives' Council
Universities Council for the Education of Teachers

Ulster Teacher's Union (UTU)
University of Ulster

INTERNAL STAKEHOLDERS

GTCNI Council Members
GTCNI Staff

TARGET GROUPS

Action Mental Health
Action MS
Action on Elder Abuse Northern Ireland
Action on Hearing Loss
Advice NI
Afasic Northern Ireland
Afro-Community Support Organisation, Northern Ireland (ACSONI)
Age NI
Alliance Party of NI
Al-Nisa Association
Altram
Alzheimer's Disease Society (NI Regional Office)
Amnesty International
An Munia Tober Traveller Support Group
An Tearmann Project Ltd (Coalisland)
Antrim and Newtownabbey Borough Council
Ards and North Down Borough Council
Armagh City, Banbridge and Craigavon Borough Council
Armagh Traveller Support Group Lisanally House
Artability NI Ltd
Arthritis Care (NI)
Arts and Disability Forum
Arts Council of Northern Ireland
Aspect
Aspergers Network
Association of Educational Psychologists
Association of University Teachers
Atlas Womens Centre
Autism(NI)
Aware
Bahai Community of Belfast
Ballybeen Womens Centre
Barnardos
Belfast Butterfly Club
Belfast City Council
Belfast Health and Social Care Trust
Belfast Hebrew Congregation
Belfast Islamic Centre
Belfast Pride
Belfast Solicitor's Association
Belfast Womens Aid
Belfast Youth Forum
Brainwaves NI
British Deaf Association
British Epilepsy Association
British Psychological Society (NI)
British Red Cross Society

Bryson House
Bryson Intercultural
Buddy Bear Trust
Business Services Organisation
Cancer Focus NI
Carafriend
CARE for Northern Ireland
Carers National Association Northern Ireland
Catholic Bishops of NI
Causeway Coast and Glens Council
Causeway Health and Social Services Trust
Cedar Foundation
Centre for Womens Politics
Changing Faces
Chartered Institute of Library and Information Professionals
Child Poverty Action Group (NI)
Childline (NSPCC)
Children in Northern Ireland
Children with Disabilities Strategic Alliance
Children's Law Centre
Chinese Welfare Association
Chrysalis Women's Centre
Church Of Ireland
Circles Network
Citizens Advice
CO3
College of Occupational Therapists
Colleges Northern Ireland
Commissioner for Older People for Northern Ireland
Committee on the Administration of Justice
Community Arts Forum
Community Development & Health Network
Community Evaluation Northern Ireland (CENI)
Community Foundation for Northern Ireland
Confederation of British Industry (Northern Ireland)
Construction Industry Training Board
Contact a Family NI
Cookstown & Western Shores Area Network (CWSAN)
Co-operation Ireland
Corrymela Community
Council for the Homeless
County Armagh Community Development (CACD)
Craigavon Travellers Support Committee
Crossfire Trust
Cystic Fibrosis Trust
Democratic Unionist Party
Derry City and Strabane District Council
Derry Well Woman
Disability Action
Disability Equality
Downs Syndrome Association
East Down Rural Community Network
Eastern Area Child Protection Committee
Elim Pentecostal
Embrace

Employer's Forum on Disability
Engineering Employers Federation
Engineering Training Council
Equality Coalition
Extern
Falls Community Council
Family Planning Association
Federation of Small Businesses (NI)
Fermanagh and Omagh District Council
Fermanagh Rural Community Network
Fibromyalgia Support NI
First Larne Presbyterian Church
Focus
Fold Housing Association
Food & Drink Training Council
Foras na Gaeilge
Foyle Women's Information Network (FWIN)
Free Presbyterian Church in Ireland
Gay & Lesbian Youth Northern Ireland (GLYNI)
Gender Jam
Gingerbread NI
GMB
Green Party
Headway Belfast
HereNI
Include Youth
Inclusive Mobility Transport Advisory Committee
Indian Community Centre
Institute of Directors (NI)
Institute of Professional Legal Studies (QUB)
Institute of Ulster-Scots Studies
Irish Congress of Trade Unions
Irish Council of Churches
Irish Sign Link Ltd.
Irish Travellers movement
Labour Relations Agency
Law Centre (NI)
Law Reform Advisory Committee
MENCAP
LGB Branch of the National Union of Students/Union of Students in Ireland
LGBT Branch of Unison Northern Ireland
Linguistic Diversity DCAL
Lisburn and Castlereagh City Council
Loughry College
Macmillan Support & Information Centre
Magherafelt Womens Group
Mediation-Network
Mencap
Mens Action Network
Methodist Church in Ireland
Mid and East Antrim Borough Council
Mid Ulster District Council
Mindwise
Multiple Sclerosis Society NI
Muscular Dystrophy Campaign

National Autistic Society
National Deaf Children's Society
National Women's Council for Ireland
Newry & Mourne Senior Citizens' Consortium
Newry, Mourne and Down District Council
Nexus
Museum of Orange Heritage
NI Association for Mental Health
NI Association of Citizens Advice Bureau
NI Chest, Heart and Stroke Association
NI Community of Refugees & Asylum Seekers (NICRAS)
NI Community Relations Council
NI Council for Voluntary Action (NICVA)
NI Law Commission
NI ME Association
NI Music Therapy Trust
NI Open College Network
NI Women's European Platform
NIACRO
NIADD Support Centre
North Antrim Community Network
North West Community Network
North West Regional College
Northern Area Child Protection
Northern Health and Social Care Trust
Northern Ireland Agricultural Producers Association NIAPA
Northern Ireland Chamber of Commerce & Industry
Northern Ireland Children's Enterprise
Northern Ireland Gay Rights Association
Northern Ireland Health & Social Services Interpreting Service
Northern Ireland Human Rights Commission
Northern Ireland Inter Faith Forum
Northern Ireland Library Authority
Northern Ireland Local Government Association
Northern Ireland Muslim Family Association
Northern Ireland Ombudsman
Northern Ireland Public Service Alliance (NIPSA)
Northern Ireland Rural Women's Network
Northern Ireland Sports Forum
Northern Ireland Union of Supported Employment
Northern Ireland Women's European Platform
Northern Ireland Youth Forum
Northern Regional College
NOW
NSPCC
NUSUSI
Omagh Ethnic Community Support Group
Omagh Forum for Rural Associations
Omagh Traveller Support Group
Omagh Woman's Network
Parent's Education as Autism Therapists
Parenting Forum
Parenting NI
Parents for Choice
Parents Outloud

Parkanaur College
Parkinson's Disease Society
PCS Proud
POBAL
Positive Futures
Positive Life
Praxis Mental Health
Praxis Care Group
Presbyterian Church in Ireland
Press for Change
QAA for Higher Education
Quakers
Queerspace
Rainbow Project
Real Network
Relate NI
RNIB
Roman Catholic Church
Rural Community Network
Rural Development Council (RDC)
Rural Network for NI
Rural Support
Sail
Save the Children
School Libraries Association
School of Law QUB
SDLP
SENAC
SENSE
SHINE
Signature (CACPD)
Simon Community
Sinn Fein
Society for the Protection of the Unborn Child
Society of Local Authority Chief Executives(SOLAS)
South Antrim Rural Network (SARN)
South Eastern Health and Social Care Trust
South Tyrone Empowerment Programme (STEP)
South West Regional College
Southern Area Child Protection Committee
Southern Health and Social Care Trust
Southern Regional College
SPEAC
Staff Commission for Education and Library Boards
Stepping Stones
Strabane & District Community Network
Survivors of Trauma
Syringomyelia Self Help Group
The British Association of Teachers of the Deaf (BATOD)
The Centre for Global Education
The Children's Advisory Service
The Deaf Association (NI)
The General Consumer Council for NI
The Good Shepherd Centre
The Green Party

The Guide Dogs for the Blind Association
The Institute of Conflict Research
The Law Society NI
The Local Government Staff Commission for NI
The Mens Project
The Omnibus Partnership
The Orchardville Society
The Prince's Trust
The Stroke Association Northern Ireland
The Ulster-Scots Agency
The Ulster-Scots Language Society
The Workers Party
The Young Farmers' Clubs of Ulster
TIDY Northern Ireland
Training for Women Network
Traveller and Gay (TAG)
Traveller Led Initiative
Triangle Housing Association
Tuar Ceatha Barnardos
Tyrone, Armagh, Down & Antrim (TADA)
Ulster Farmer's Union
Ulster Museum
Ulster Unionist Party
Ultach Trust
UNISON
UNITE
University and College Union
USEL
Victim Support
VOICE the Union
Voices of Young People in Care
Volunteer Development Agency
Wah Hip Chinese Community Association
Welcome Trust
West Belfast Partnership Board
Western Health and Social Care Trust
Willowbank Community Resource Centre
WIMPS, Public Achievement
Women into Politics
Women's Aid NI
Women's Centre
Women's Forum NI
Women's Support Network
Women's Resource and Development Agency
Working with Diversity
Youth Action
Youth Council for Northern Ireland
Youth Link Northern Ireland
Youth Net

ANNEX IV Timetable for Measures Proposed

Schedule 9 4.(3) (b)

These measures will be incorporated into our business planning processes.

This timetable is different from and in addition to our commitment to developing action plans/action measures to specifically address inequalities and further promote equality of opportunity and good relations.

Measure	Lead responsibility	Timetable
Reflect Section 75 objectives and targets in Corporate and Business Plan and Business Areas' plans		Annually (April)
Section 75 Annual Progress Report		31 August (Annually)
Reviewing and updating consultation lists		Annually
Distribution of screening reports		Quarterly
Finalised scheme published		Within 1 week of Equality Commission approval of Scheme
Annual review of Monitoring information		December (Annually)
Publication of Monitoring Information		31 August (Annually)
Notify consultees of publication of Annual Report		31 August (Annually)
Development of overall training programme		31 August (Annually)
Evaluation of Training		31 August (Annually)
Assessing access to information and services		31 August (Annually)
Notification of approved scheme to consultees		Within 3 months of scheme approval
Circulate summary of scheme to Section 75 groups representing children and young people, people with disabilities and minority/ ethnic people		Within 3 months of scheme approval
Review of Equality Scheme		Within 5 years
Action Plan		TBC
Arrangements for monitoring action plan		Report to Policy,

		Registration and Regulation Committee (PRRC) at every meeting and to full Council
EQIA timetable		As required
Any other measures proposed in equality scheme		As required

ANNEX V Glossary of terms

Adverse impact

Where a Section 75 category has been affected differently by a policy and the effect is less favourable, it is known as adverse impact. If a policy has an adverse impact on a Section 75 category, a public authority must consider whether or not the adverse impact is unlawfully discriminatory. In either case a public authority must take measures to redress the adverse impact, by considering mitigating measures and/or alternative ways of delivering the policy.

Affirmative action

In general terms, affirmative action can be defined as being anything consistent with the legislation which is necessary to bring about positive change. It is a phrase used in the Fair Employment and Treatment Order (NI) 1998 to describe lawful action that is aimed at promoting equality of opportunity and fair participation in employment between members of the Protestant and Roman Catholic communities in Northern Ireland.

Article 55 Review

Under the Fair Employment and Treatment (NI) Order 1998, all registered employers must conduct periodic reviews of the composition of their workforces and of their employment practices for the purposes of determining whether members of the Protestant and Roman Catholic communities are enjoying, and are likely to continue to enjoy, fair participation in employment in each employer's concern.

These reviews, which are commonly known as Article 55 Reviews, must be conducted at least once every three years.

Consultation

In the context of Section 75, consultation is the process of asking those affected by a policy (ie, service users, staff, the general public) for their views on how the policy could be implemented more effectively to promote equality of opportunity across the 9 categories. Different circumstances will call for different types of consultation. Consultations could, for example, include meetings, focus groups, surveys and questionnaires.

Desk audit

An audit of a draft equality scheme to ensure that the scheme conforms with the requirements on form and content as detailed in the Commission's Guidelines (the Guide).

Differential impact

Differential impact occurs where a Section 75 group has been affected differently by a policy. This effect could either be positive, neutral or negative. A public authority must make a judgement as to

whether a policy has a differential impact and then it must determine whether the impact is adverse, based on a systematic appraisal of the accumulated information.

Discrimination

The anti-discrimination laws prohibit the following forms of discrimination:

- Direct discrimination
- Indirect Discrimination
- Disability Discrimination
- Victimisation
- Harassment

Brief descriptions of these above terms follow:

Direct discrimination

This generally occurs where a public authority treats a person less favourably than it treats (or, would treat) another person, in the same or similar circumstances, on one or more of the statutory non-discrimination grounds. A decision or action that is directly discriminatory will normally be unlawful unless: (a) in an age discrimination case, the decision can be objectively justified, or (b) in any other case, the public authority can rely on a statutory exception that permits it – such as a *genuine occupational requirement exception*; or, a *positive action exception* which permits an employer to use “welcoming statements” or to take other lawful positive action to encourage participation by under-represented or otherwise disadvantaged groups.

Indirect discrimination

The definition of this term varies across some of the anti-discrimination laws, but indirect discrimination generally occurs where a public authority applies to all persons a particular provision, criterion or practice, but which is one that has the effect of placing people who share a particular equality characteristic (e.g. the same sex, or religious belief, or race) at a particular disadvantage compared to other people. A provision, criterion or practice that is indirectly discriminatory will normally be unlawful unless (a) it can be objectively justified, or (b) the public authority can rely on a statutory exception that permits it.

Disability discrimination

In addition to direct discrimination and victimisation and harassment, discrimination against disabled people may also occur in two other ways: namely, (a) *disability-related discrimination*, and (b) *failure to comply with a duty to make reasonable adjustments*.

- (a) ***Disability-related discrimination*** generally occurs where a public authority, without lawful justification, and for a reason which relates to a disabled person’s disability, treats that person less favourably than it treats (or, would treat) other people to whom that reason does not (or, would not) apply.

- (b) ***Failure to comply with a duty to make reasonable adjustments:*** One of the most notable features of the disability discrimination legislation is that in prescribed circumstances it imposes a duty on employers, service providers and public authorities to take such steps as are reasonable to remove or reduce particular disadvantages experienced by disabled people in those circumstances.

Victimisation

This form of discrimination generally occurs where a public authority treats a person less favourably than it treats (or, would treat) another person, in the same or similar circumstances, because the person has previously exercised his/her rights under the anti-discrimination laws, or has assisted another person to do so. Victimisation cannot be justified and is always unlawful.

Harassment

Harassment generally occurs where a person is subjected to unwanted conduct that is related to a non-discrimination ground with the purpose, or which has the effect, of violating their dignity or of creating for them an intimidating, hostile, degrading, humiliating or offensive environment. Harassment cannot be justified and is always unlawful.

Economic appraisal

An economic appraisal is a systematic process for examining alternative uses of resources, focusing on assessment of needs, objectives, options, costs benefits, risks, funding and affordability and other factors relevant to decisions.

Equality Impact Assessment

The mechanism underpinning Section 75, where existing and proposed policies are assessed in order to determine whether they have an adverse impact on equality of opportunity for the relevant Section 75 categories. Equality impact assessments require the analysis of both quantitative and qualitative data.

Equality of opportunity

The prevention, elimination or regulation of discrimination between people on grounds of characteristics including sex, marital status, age, disability, religious belief, political opinion, dependants, race and sexual orientation.

The promotion of equality of opportunity entails more than the elimination of discrimination. It requires proactive measures to be taken to secure equality of opportunity between the categories identified under Section 75.

Equality scheme

A document which outlines a public authority's arrangements for complying with its Section 75 obligations. An equality scheme must include an outline of the public authority's arrangements for

carrying out consultations, screening, equality impact assessments, monitoring, training and arrangements for ensuring access to information and services.

Good relations

Although not defined in the legislation, the Commission has agreed the following working definition of good relations: 'the growth of relations and structures for Northern Ireland that acknowledge the religious, political and racial context of this society, and that seek to promote respect, equity and trust, and embrace diversity in all its forms'.

Mainstreaming equality

The integration of equal opportunities principles, strategies and practices into the every day work of public authorities from the outset. In other words, mainstreaming is the process of ensuring that equality considerations are built into the policy development process from the beginning, rather than being bolted on at the end. Mainstreaming can help improve methods of working by increasing a public authority's accountability, responsiveness to need and relations with the public. It can bring added value at many levels.

Mitigation of adverse impact

Where an equality impact assessment reveals that a particular policy has an adverse impact on equality of opportunity, a public authority must consider ways of delivering the policy outcomes which have a less adverse effect on the relevant Section 75 categories; this is known as mitigating adverse impact.

Monitoring

Monitoring consists of continuously scrutinising and evaluating a policy to assess its impact on the Section 75 categories. Monitoring must be sensitive to the issues associated with human rights and privacy. Public authorities should seek advice from consultees and Section 75 representative groups when setting up monitoring systems.

Monitoring consists of the collection of relevant information and evaluation of policies. It is not solely about the collection of data, it can also take the form of regular meetings and reporting of research undertaken. Monitoring is not an end in itself but provides the data for the next cycle of policy screening.

Northern Ireland Act

The Northern Ireland Act, implementing the Good Friday Agreement, received Royal Assent on 19 November 1998. Section 75 of the Act created the statutory equality duties.

Northern Ireland Human Rights Commission

A statutory body established under Section 68 of the Northern Ireland Act 1998, which works to ensure that the human rights of everyone in Northern Ireland are fully protected in law, policy and practice.

Policy

The formal and informal decisions a public authority makes in relation to carrying out its duties. Defined in the New Oxford English Dictionary as ‘a course or principle of action adopted or proposed by a government party, business or individual’. In the context of Section 75, the term **policies** covers all the ways in which a public authority carries out or proposes to carry out its functions relating to Northern Ireland. Policies include unwritten as well as written policies.

Positive action

This phrase is not defined in any statute, but the Equality Commission understands it to mean any lawful action that a public authority might take for the purpose of promoting equality of opportunity for all persons in relation to employment or in accessing goods, facilities or services (such as health services, housing, education, justice, policing). It may involve adopting new policies, practices, or procedures; or changing or abandoning old ones. *Positive action* is not the same as *positive discrimination*.

Positive discrimination differs from positive action in that *positive action* involves the taking of lawful actions whereas *positive discrimination* involves the taking of unlawful actions. Consequently, *positive action* is by definition lawful whereas *positive discrimination* is unlawful.

Qualitative data

Qualitative data refers to the experiences of individuals from their perspective, most often with less emphasis on numbers or statistical analysis. Consultations are more likely to yield qualitative than quantitative data.

Quantitative data

Quantitative data refers to numbers, typically derived from either a population in general or samples of that population. This information is often analysed by either using descriptive statistics, which consider general profiles, distributions and trends in the data, or inferential statistics, which are used to determine ‘significance’ either in relationships or differences in the data.

Screening

The procedure for identifying which policies will be subject to equality impact assessment, and how these equality impact assessments will be prioritised. The purpose of screening is to identify the policies which are likely to have a minor/major impact on equality of opportunity so that greatest resources can be devoted to improving these policies. Screening requires a systematic review of existing and proposed policies.

Schedule 9

Schedule 9 of the Northern Ireland Act 1998 sets out detailed provisions for the enforcement of the Section 75 statutory duties, including an outline of what should be included in an equality scheme.

Section 75

Section 75 of the Northern Ireland Act provides that each public authority is required, in carrying out its functions relating to Northern Ireland, to have due regard to the need to promote equality of opportunity between:-

- persons of different religious belief, political opinion, racial group, age, marital status and sexual orientation;
- men and women generally;
- persons with a disability and persons without; and
- persons with dependants and persons without.

Without prejudice to these obligations, each public authority in carrying out its functions relating to Northern Ireland must also have regard to the desirability of promoting good relations between persons of different religious belief, political opinion or racial group.

Section 75 investigation

An investigation carried out by the Equality Commission, under Schedule 9 of the NI Act 1998, arising from the failure of a public authority to comply with the commitments set out in its approved equality scheme.

There are two types of Commission investigation, these are as follows:

1. An investigation of a complaint by an individual who claims to have been directly affected by the failure of a public authority to comply with its approved equality scheme;
2. An investigation initiated by the Commission, where it believes that a public authority may have failed to comply with its approved equality scheme.