

Equality Scheme

**Approved by the Equality Commission
for Northern Ireland 18 November 2011**

Reviewed (without substantive amendment)

March 2019 version 2.0

November 2025 version 3.0

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Version Control Index:

Version		
1.0	Original scheme approved by Equality Commission 18 November 2011	Adopted by Libraries NI Board December 2011
2.0	March 2019 Review Non-substantive amendments applied:	
I.	Names and contact details of relevant Officers, Board Members etc revised and updated to reflect changes in personnel.	
II.	References to former Dept of Culture Arts and Leisure replace with Dept for Communities or sponsoring Dept to reflect change in NI department structures and responsibilities	
III.	Statistical info updated to reflect changes in scope of service provision e.g. number of public libraries	
IV.	Organisational vision, mission and values update to reflect Corporate Plan in place at time of revision	
V.	Appendix 1 Board Membership update to reflect changes in membership and organisation structure revised.	
VI.	Appendix 3 – consultee list revised to reflect ‘active consultees’ at time of drafting/review.	
VII.	Appendix 4 – timescales update to reflect passage of time from original scheme approval.	
VIII.	Appendix 6 – action plan revised to reflect new corporate goals, measures to be taken and timescales for action	
3.0	December 2025 Review Non-substantive amendments applied:	
I.	Names and contact details of relevant Officers, Board Members etc revised and updated to reflect changes in personnel.	
II.	Corporate Vision, Mission, Values and Strategic Goals updated to reflect introduction of Libraries NI Corporate Plan 2025/30 superseding previous Corporate Plans.	
III.	Terminology update to reflect changes in technology and/or digital formats/systems no longer in use.	
IV.	Appendix 1 Board Membership update to reflect changes in membership and organisation structure revised.	
V.	Appendix 3 – consultee list revised to reflect ‘active consultees’ at time of drafting/review.	
VI.	Appendix 4 – timescales update to reflect passage of time from original scheme approval.	
VII.	Appendix 6 – action plan revised to reflect new corporate goals, measures to be taken and timescales for action	

Foreword

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.

In our equality scheme we set out how Libraries NI propose to fulfil Section 75 statutory duties.

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

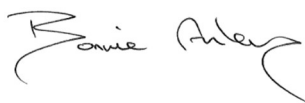
We commit to having effective internal arrangements in place for ensuring our effective compliance with the Section 75 statutory duties and for monitoring and reviewing our progress.

We will develop and deliver a programme of communication and training with the aim of ensuring that all our staff and board members are made fully aware of our equality scheme and understand the commitments and obligations within it. We will develop a programme of awareness raising for our consultees on the Section 75 statutory duties and our commitments in our equality scheme.

We, Bonnie Anley, Chairperson, and Jim O'Hagan Chief Executive, of Libraries NI, are fully committed to effectively fulfilling our Section 75 statutory duties across all our functions (including service provision, employment and procurement) through the effective implementation of our equality scheme.

We realise the important role that the community and voluntary sector and the general public have to play to ensure the Section 75 statutory duties are effectively implemented. Our equality scheme demonstrates how determined we are to ensure there are opportunities, for people affected by our work, to positively influence how we carry out our functions in line with our Section 75 statutory duties. It also offers the means whereby persons directly affected by what they consider to be a failure, on our part, to comply with our equality scheme, can make complaints.

On behalf of Libraries NI 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 Northern Ireland Act 1998 and Equality Commission guidelines.



Ms Bonnie Anley
Chairperson



Mr Jim O'Hagan
Chief Executive

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Please note: Foreword and Appendices 3 and 4 form part of this equality scheme.

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CHAPTER 1 INTRODUCTION

Section 75 of the Northern Ireland Act 1998

1.1 Section 75 of the Northern Ireland Act 1998 (the Act) requires Libraries NI to comply with two statutory duties:

Section 75 (1)

1.1.1 In carrying out our functions relating to Northern Ireland we are required to have due regard to the need to promote equality of opportunity between:

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

Section 75 (2)

1.1.2 In addition, without prejudice to the obligations above, in carrying out our functions in relation to Northern Ireland we are required to have regard to the desirability of promoting good relations between persons of different religious belief, political opinion or racial group.

1.1.3 “Functions” include the “powers and duties” of a public authority¹. This includes our employment and procurement functions.

1.1.4 Please see below under “Who we are and what we do” for a detailed explanation of our functions.

How we propose to fulfill our Section 75 duties

1.2 Schedule 9 4. (1) of the Act requires Libraries NI 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.

1.3 Libraries NI are committed to the discharge of our 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 statutory duties are complied with and that our equality scheme can be implemented effectively.

¹ Section 98 (1) of the Northern Ireland Act 1998

Who we are and what we do.

- 1.4 The primary role of the Northern Ireland Library Authority (known as Libraries NI), as set down in the Libraries Act (Northern Ireland) 2008, is to provide a comprehensive and efficient public library service for persons living, working or studying in Northern Ireland.
- 1.5 The Board of Libraries NI, when fully constituted, comprises a Chairperson and eighteen Members, the majority of whom are councillors within the meaning of the Local Government Act (Northern Ireland) 1972. All Members of the Board are appointed by the Minister of the Sponsor Department. The members of the Board of Libraries NI (as at 31 March 2025) are listed at Appendix 1.
- 1.6 The organisation is led by the Chief Executive and a senior team comprising the Director of Library Services and the Director of Business Support. The outline organisational structure chart for Libraries NI (as at 31 March 2025) is shown at Appendix 1A.
- 1.7 There are 96 public libraries and 2 specialist libraries (the Heritage Library, Armagh and the Mellon Centre for migration studies, based in the Ulster American Folk Park, Omagh) as well as 13 mobile libraries and 7 homecall vehicles which provide a wide range of free services including:
- books and other material such as audio books, newspapers, periodicals and magazines
 - downloadable eBooks, audio books and eMagazines and other online resources, many of which can also be accessed from home
 - computers for use by the general public with free internet access for library members
 - support for the development of ICT skills
 - free Wi-Fi, enabling library members to use their own devices
 - learning opportunities
 - school class visits
 - family history, heritage and local studies material
 - access to information from a range of sources and organisations
 - access to cultural and creative experiences
 - storytimes, rhythm and rhyme sessions and other activities for children
 - reading groups for children, teenagers and adults
 - study, meeting and shared social space.

Our Vision

- 1.8 A relevant, accessible and inclusive library service making a difference to the lives of people and communities.

Our Mission

- 1.9 To provide a comprehensive and efficient public library service for people living, working or studying in Northern Ireland.

We are passionate about libraries and as we deliver against our mission we will strive to encourage reading, creativity and lifelong learning, to enrich lives, and to connect people and communities with culture, heritage, information, ideas and experiences. We want to amplify the role, impact and contribution of our libraries in the lives of people and communities and to societal wellbeing.

Our Values

- 1.10 **Caring** - We care about our customers, the communities we serve, the colleagues we work with and the services we provide. We will provide a safe, friendly and welcoming environment, we will promote a culture of openness and transparency, respect diversity and treat our customers, staff and partners fairly.
- 1.11 **Accountable** – We are accountable, we will act with honesty and integrity and maintain high standards of governance, responsible leadership and efficient operations.
- 1.12 **Progressive** - We are a progressive, forward looking, learning organisation, responsive to our customers, open to new ideas and better ways to serve people and communities. We have a focus on quality, are creative and flexible and will continue to explore innovative ways of working to ensure that services are vibrant, effective and relevant to the changing needs of our customers.

Our Focus, Priorities and Strategic Goals

- 1.13 Our Vision and Values give rise to three overarching priorities which reflect the Programme for Government missions and priorities, and which serve to focus our activities to best.

Promote reading, inspire, support and connect people through all stages of life.

Contribute to inclusive cohesive communities and societal wellbeing.

Deliver a high performing library service, valued by society

CHAPTER 2 - OUR ARRANGEMENTS FOR ASSESSING OUR COMPLIANCE WITH THE SECTION 75 DUTIES

Responsibilities and Reporting

- 2.1 Some of our arrangements for assessing our compliance with the Section 75 statutory duties are outlined in other relevant parts of this equality scheme. In addition, we have the following arrangements in place for assessing our compliance:
- 2.2 We are committed to the fulfilment of our Section 75 obligations in all parts of our work.
- 2.3 Responsibility for the effective implementation of our equality scheme lies with the Director of Business Support. The Director is accountable to the Chief Executive who in turn is accountable to the Board of Libraries NI for the development, implementation, maintenance and review of the equality scheme in accordance with Section 75 and Schedule 9 of the Northern Ireland Act 1998, including any good practice or guidance that has been or may be issued by the Equality Commission.
- 2.4 If you have any questions or comments regarding our equality scheme, please contact the first instance Director of Business Support at the address given below and we will respond to you as soon as possible:
- Desi Miskelly
Director of Business Support
Portadown Branch Library
24-26 Church Street
Portadown
County Armagh
BT62 3LQ
- E-mail: desi.miskelly@librariesni.org.uk
- 2.5 Objectives and targets relating to the statutory duties will be integrated into our strategic and operational business plans².
- 2.6 Employees' job descriptions and performance plans reflect their contributions to the discharge of the Section 75 statutory duties and implementation of the equality scheme, where relevant. The personal

² See Appendix 4 'Timetable for measures proposed' and section 2.11 of this equality scheme

performance plans are subject to appraisal in the annual performance review.

- 2.7 Libraries NI prepares an annual report on the progress we have made on implementing the arrangements set out in this equality scheme to discharge our Section 75 statutory duties (Section 75 annual progress report). The Section 75 annual progress report will be sent to the Equality Commission by 31 August each year and will follow any guidance on annual reporting issued by the Equality Commission. Progress on the delivery of Section 75 statutory duties will also be included in our (organisational) annual report.
- 2.8 The latest Section 75 annual progress report is available on our website via the following link [Equality](#) or by contacting:

Heather Gardiner

Data Protection Officer
Libraries NI
Demesne Avenue
Ballymena
BT43 7BG

E-mail: heather.gardiner@librariesni.org.uk

Action Plan/Action Measures

- 2.9 Libraries NI will liaise closely with the Equality Commission to ensure that progress on the implementation of our equality scheme is maintained.
- 2.10 Libraries NI has developed an action plan to promote equality of opportunity and good relations. This action plan is set out in Appendix 6 for information. (Note that the action plan will not form part of the approved scheme).
- 2.11 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 categories³ to identify the inequalities that exist for our service users and those affected by our policies⁴. Currently the audit of inequalities is based on information obtained from the Continuous Household Survey as approved and analysed by DfC. This will be supplemented by the validation of data currently collected on users by Libraries NI, the collection of additional data for S75 categories and direct

³ See section 1.1 of this equality scheme for a list of these categories

⁴ See section 4.1 of this equality scheme for a definition of policies

consultation with key stakeholders. The audit of inequalities will be kept under continual review.

- 2.12 Action measures will be specific, measurable, linked to achievable outcomes, realistic and time bound. Action measures will include performance indicators and timescales for their achievement.
- 2.13 We will develop any action plans for a period of between one and four years in order to align them with our corporate and business planning cycles. Implementation of the action measures will be incorporated into our business planning process.
- 2.14 We will seek input from our stakeholders and consult on our action plan before we send it to the Equality Commission and thereafter when reviewing the plan as per 2.16 below.
- 2.15 We will monitor our progress on the delivery of our action measures annually and update the action plan as necessary to ensure that it remains effective and relevant to our functions and work.
- 2.16 Libraries NI will inform the Commission of any changes or amendments to our action plan and will also include this information in our Section 75 annual progress report to the Commission. Our Section 75 annual progress report will incorporate information on progress we have made in implementing our action plans/action measures.
- 2.17 Once finalised, our action plan will be available on our website via the following link [Equality](#). If you require it in an alternative format, please contact us using the details provided.

CHAPTER 3 OUR ARRANGEMENTS FOR CONSULTING⁵

- 3.1 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.
- 3.2 We are committed to carrying out consultation in accordance with the following principles (as contained in the Equality Commission's guidance '*Section 75 of the Northern Ireland Act 1998 – A Guide for Public Authorities (April 2010)*'):
- 3.2.1 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.
- 3.2.2 Initially all consultees (see Appendix 3), as a matter of course, 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 our and our consultees' resources, we will take a targeted approach to consultation for those consultees that may have a particular interest in the matter/policy being consulted upon and to whom the matter/policy is of particular relevance. This may include for example regional or local consultations, sectoral or thematic consultation etc.
- 3.2.3 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. We will ask our consultees what their preferred consultation methods are and will give consideration to these. Methods of consultation could include:
- face-to-face meetings
 - focus groups
 - paper and electronic documents with the opportunity to comment in writing
 - paper and electronic questionnaires
 - information/notification by email with an opportunity to opt in/opt out of the consultation
 - Internet discussions
 - telephone consultations.

⁵ (Schedule 9 4. (2) (a)) - on matters to which a duty (S75 (1) or (2)) is likely to be relevant (including details of the persons to be consulted).

(Schedule 9 4. (2) (b)) on the likely impact of policies adopted or proposed to be adopted by us on the promotion of equality of opportunity.

- 3.2.4 This list is not exhaustive, and we may develop other additional methods of consultation more appropriate to key stakeholders and the matter being consulted upon.
- 3.2.5 We will consider the accessibility and format of every method of consultation we use 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. We 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)*.
- 3.2.6 Information will be made available, on request, in alternative formats⁶, in a timely manner, usually within 20 working days. We will ensure that such consultees have equal time to respond.
- 3.2.7 We will ensure that specific training is available to those facilitating consultations to ensure that they have the necessary skills to communicate effectively with consultees.
- 3.2.8 To ensure effective consultation with consultees⁷ on Section 75 matters, we will develop a programme of awareness raising on the Section 75 statutory duties and the commitments in our equality scheme by undertaking the following:
- meeting with stakeholders focus groups
 - attendance at the Education Sector Joint Consultative forum
 - regular communication with consultees through the Libraries NI website, press releases and mail shots.
- 3.2.9 The consultation period lasts for a minimum of twelve weeks to allow adequate time for groups to consult amongst themselves as part of the process of forming a view. 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 commitments⁸.
- 3.2.10 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.

⁶ See Chapter 6 of our equality scheme for further information on alternative formats of information we provide

⁷ Please see Appendix 3 for a list of our consultees

⁸ Please see below at 4.27 to 4.31 for details on monitoring

- 3.2.11 If a consultation exercise is to take place over a period when consultees are less able to respond, for example, over the summer or Christmas break, or if the policy under consideration is particularly complex, we will give consideration to the feasibility of allowing a longer period for the consultation.
- 3.2.12 We 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.
- 3.2.13 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.
- 3.2.14 In making any decision with respect to a policy adopted or proposed to be adopted, we take into account any assessment and consultation carried out in relation to the policy.
- 3.2.15 We provide feedback to consultees in a timely manner. A feedback report is prepared which includes summary information on the policy consulted upon, a summary of consultees' comments and a summary of our consideration of and response to consultees' input. The feedback is provided in formats suitable to consultees. (Please see also 6.3)
- 3.3 A list of our consultees is included in this equality scheme at Appendix 3. It can also be obtained from our website via the following link [Equality](#) or by contacting:
- Heather Gardiner
Data Protection Officer
Libraries NI
Demesne Avenue
Ballymena
BT43 7BG
E-mail: heather.gardiner@librariesni.org.uk
- 3.4 Our consultation list is not exhaustive and is reviewed on an annual basis to ensure it remains relevant to our functions and policies.
- 3.5 We welcome enquiries from any person/s or organisations wishing to be added to the list of consultees. Please contact Libraries NI, to provide your contact details and have your areas of interest noted or have your name/details removed or amended. Please also inform us at any stage if you would like information sent to you in a particular format or language.

CHAPTER 4 - OUR ARRANGEMENTS FOR ASSESSING, MONITORING AND PUBLISHING THE IMPACT OF POLICIES ADOPTED OR PROPOSED TO BE ADOPTED ON THE PROMOTION OF EQUALITY OF OPPORTUNITY

(Schedule 9 4. (2)(b); Schedule 9 4. (2)(c); Schedule 9 4. (2)(d); Schedule 9 9. (1); Schedule 9 9. (2))

- 4.1 In the context of Section 75, 'policy' is very broadly defined, and it covers all the ways in which we carry out or propose to carry out our functions in relation to Northern Ireland. 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'.
- 4.2 In making any decision with respect to a policy adopted or proposed to be adopted, we 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.
- 4.3 Libraries NI use the tools of **screening** and **equality impact assessment** to assess the likely impact of a policy on the promotion of equality of opportunity and good relations. In carrying out these assessments we will relate them to the intended outcomes of the policy in question and will also follow Equality Commission guidance:
- the 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

- 4.4 The purpose of screening is to identify those policies that are likely to have an impact on equality of opportunity and/or good relations.
- 4.5 Screening is completed at the earliest opportunity in the policy development/review process. Policies which we propose to adopt will be subject to screening prior to implementation. For more detailed strategies or policies that are to be put in place through a series of stages, we will screen at various stages during implementation.
- 4.6 The lead role in the screening of a policy is taken by the policy decision maker who has the authority to make changes to that policy. However, screening will also involve other relevant team members, for example, equality specialists, those who implement the policy and staff members from

other relevant work areas. Where possible we will include key stakeholders in the screening process.

4.7 The following questions are applied to all our 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?

4.8 In order to answer the screening questions, we gather all relevant information and data, both qualitative and quantitative. In taking this evidence into account we consider the different needs, experiences and priorities for each of the Section 75 equality categories. Any screening decision will be informed by this evidence.

4.9 Completion of screening, taking into account our consideration of the answers to all four screening questions set out in 4.7 above, will lead to one of the following three outcomes:

1. the policy has been 'screened in' for equality impact assessment
2. the policy has been 'screened out' with mitigation⁹ or an alternative policy proposed to be adopted
3. the policy has been 'screened out' without mitigation or an alternative policy proposed to be adopted.

4.10 If our 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, we may on occasion decide to proceed with an equality impact assessment, depending on the policy. If an EQIA is not to be conducted, we will nonetheless 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.

4.10.1 Where we mitigate, we will outline in our screening template the reasons to support this decision together with the proposed changes, amendments or alternative policy.

⁹ Mitigation – Where an assessment (screening in this case) reveals that a particular policy has an adverse impact on equality of opportunity and/or good relations, a public authority must consider ways of delivering the policy outcomes which have a less adverse effect on the relevant Section 75 categories.

- 4.10.2 This screening decision will be ‘signed off’ by the appropriate policy lead within Libraries NI.
- 4.11 If our 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, we will normally subject the policy to an equality impact assessment. This screening decision will be ‘signed off’ by the appropriate policy lead within Libraries NI.
- 4.12 If our 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, we may decide to screen the policy out. If a policy is ‘screened out’ as having no relevance to equality of opportunity or good relations, we will give details of the reasons for the decision taken. This screening decision will be ‘signed off’ by the appropriate policy lead within Libraries NI.
- 4.13 As soon as possible following the completion of the screening process, the screening template, signed off and approved by the senior manager responsible for the policy, will be made available on our website via the following link [Equality](#) and on request from:
- Heather Gardiner
Data Protection Officer
Libraries NI
Demesne Avenue
Ballymena
BT43 7BG
E-mail: heather.gardiner@librariesni.org.uk
- 4.14 If a consultee, including the Equality Commission, raises a concern about a screening decision based on supporting evidence, we will review the screening decision.
- 4.15 Our screening reports are published quarterly [see below at 4.20 - 4.22 and 4.23 for details].

Equality impact assessment

- 4.16 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.

- 4.17 Once a policy is screened and screening has identified that an equality impact assessment is necessary, we will carry out the EQIA in accordance with Equality Commission guidance. The equality impact assessment will be carried out as part of the policy development process, before the policy is implemented.
- 4.18 Any equality impact assessment will be subject to consultation at the appropriate stage(s). (For details see above Chapter 3 “Our Arrangements for Consulting”).
- 4.19 We make publicly available the results of our assessments (screening and EQIA) of the likely impact of our policies on the promotion of equality of opportunity and good relations.

What we publish

- 4.20 **Screening reports** - these are published quarterly. Screening reports detail:
- all policies screened by Libraries NI over the three-month period
 - a statement of the aim(s) of the policy/policies to which the assessment relates
 - 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
 - screening decisions, i.e.:
 - whether the policy has been ‘screened in’ for equality impact assessment
 - whether the policy has been ‘screened out’ with mitigation or an alternative policy proposed to be adopted
 - whether the policy has been ‘screened out’ without mitigation or an alternative policy proposed to be adopted
 - where applicable, a timetable for conducting equality impact assessments
 - a link to the completed screening template(s) on our website
- 4.21 **Screening templates** - for details on the availability of our screening templates please refer to 4.13.
- 4.22 **Equality impact assessments** - EQIA reports are published once the impact 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
- future monitoring plans.

How we publish the information

4.23 All information we publish is accessible and can be made available in alternative formats on request. Please see 6.3 below.

Where we publish the information

4.24 The results of our assessments (screening reports and completed templates, the results of equality impact assessments) are available on our website via the following link [Equality](#) and by contacting:

Heather Gardiner
Data Protection Officer
Libraries NI
Demesne Avenue
Ballymena
BT43 7BG
E-mail: heather.gardiner@librariesni.org.uk

4.25 In addition to the above, screening reports (electronic link or hard copy on request if more suitable for recipients) which include all policies screened over a 3-month period are also sent directly to all consultees on a quarterly basis.

4.26 We will inform the general public about the availability of this material through communications such as press releases where appropriate.

Our arrangements for monitoring any adverse impact of policies we have adopted on equality of opportunity. (Schedule 9 4. (2) (c))

4.27 Monitoring can assist us to deliver better public services and continuous improvements. Monitoring Section 75 information involves the processing of sensitive personal data (data relating to the racial or ethnic origin of individuals, sexual orientation, political opinion, religious belief, etc.). In order to carry out monitoring in a confidential and effective manner, Libraries NI follows guidance from the Office of the Information Commissioner and the Equality Commission.

- 4.28 We monitor any adverse impact on the promotion of equality of opportunity of policies we have adopted. We are also committed to monitoring more broadly to identify opportunities to better promote equality of opportunity and good relations in line with Equality Commission guidance.
- 4.29 The systems we have established to monitor the impact of policies and identify opportunities to better promote equality of opportunity and good relations are:
- the collection, collation and analysis of existing relevant primary quantitative and qualitative data across all nine equality categories on an ongoing basis
 - the collection, collation and analysis of existing relevant secondary sources of quantitative and qualitative data across all nine equality categories on an ongoing basis
 - an audit of existing information systems within one year of approval of this equality scheme, to identify the extent of current monitoring and take action to address any gaps in order to have the necessary information on which to base decisions
 - undertaking or commissioning new data if necessary.
- 4.30 If over a two-year period monitoring and evaluation show that a policy results in greater adverse impact than predicted, or if opportunities arise which would allow for greater equality of opportunity to be promoted, we will ensure that the policy is revised to achieve better outcomes for relevant equality groups.
- 4.31 We review our EQIA monitoring information on an annual basis. Other monitoring information is reviewed on an ongoing basis.

Our arrangements for publishing the results of our monitoring.

- 4.32 Schedule 9 4. (2) (d) requires us to publish the results of the monitoring of adverse impacts of policies we have adopted. However, we are committed to monitoring more broadly and the results of our policy monitoring are published as follows:
- 4.33 EQIA monitoring information is published as part of our Section 75 annual progress report [see 2.7]
- 4.34 The Section 75 annual progress report will be made available on our website and hard copies will be provided on request.
- 4.35 All information published is accessible and can be made available in alternative formats on request. Please see below at 6.3 for details.

CHAPTER 5 - STAFF TRAINING (Schedule 9 4. (2) (e))

Commitment to staff training

- 5.1 We recognise that awareness raising and training play a crucial role in the effective implementation of our Section 75 duties.
- 5.2 Our Chief Executive, Jim O'Hagan, wishes to positively communicate the commitment of Libraries NI to the Section 75 statutory duties, both internally and externally.
- 5.2.1 To this end we have introduced an effective communication and training programme for all staff and will ensure that our commitment to the Section 75 statutory duties is made clear in all relevant publications.

Training objectives

- 5.3 Libraries NI will draw up a detailed training plan for its staff which will aim to achieve the following objectives:
- to raise awareness of the provisions of Section 75 of the Northern Ireland Act 1998, our equality scheme commitments and the particular issues likely to affect people across the range of Section 75 categories, to ensure that our staff fully understand their role in implementing the scheme
 - to provide those staff involved in the assessment of policies (screening and EQIA) with the necessary skills and knowledge to do this work effectively
 - to provide those staff who deal with complaints in relation to compliance with our equality scheme with the necessary skills and knowledge to investigate and monitor complaints effectively
 - to provide those staff involved in consultation processes with the necessary skills and knowledge to do this work effectively
 - to provide those staff involved in the implementation and monitoring of the effective implementation of Libraries NI equality scheme with the necessary skills and knowledge to do this work effectively.

Awareness raising and training arrangements.

- 5.4 The following arrangements are in place to ensure all our staff and Board Members are aware of and understand our equality obligations:
- we will develop a summary of this equality scheme and make it available to all staff

- we will provide access to copies of the full equality scheme for all staff; ensure that any queries or questions of clarification from staff are addressed effectively
- staff in Libraries NI will receive a briefing on this equality scheme within 6 months of approval of this scheme
- the Section 75 statutory duties form part of induction training for new staff
- focused training is provided for key staff within Libraries NI who are directly engaged in taking forward the implementation of our equality scheme commitments (for example those involved in research and data collection, policy development, service design, conducting equality impact assessments, consultation, monitoring and evaluation)
- where appropriate, training will be provided to ensure staff are aware of the issues experienced by the range of Section 75 groups
- when appropriate and on an ongoing basis, arrangements will be made to ensure staff are kept up to date with Section 75 developments.

5.5 Training and awareness raising programmes will, where relevant, be developed in association with the appropriate Section 75 groups and our staff. In order to share resources and expertise, Libraries NI will, where possible, work closely with other bodies and agencies in the development and delivery of training.

Monitoring and evaluation

- 5.6 Our training programme is subject to the following monitoring and evaluation arrangements:
- we evaluate the extent to which all participants in this training programme have acquired the necessary skills and knowledge to achieve each of the above objectives
 - 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.

CHAPTER 6 - OUR ARRANGEMENTS FOR ENSURING AND ASSESSING PUBLIC ACCESS TO INFORMATION AND SERVICES WE PROVIDE (Schedule 9 4. (2) (f))

- 6.1 Libraries NI is committed to ensuring that the information we disseminate and the services we provide are fully accessible to all parts of the community in Northern Ireland. We keep our arrangements under review to ensure that this remains the case. Information and services are provided in accessible buildings, through mobile libraries, home call services, residential services and prison services. In addition, online resources are made available.
- 6.2 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.
 - children and young people may not be able to fully access or understand information.

Access to information

- 6.3 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.
- 6.3.1 Alternative formats may include Easy Read, Braille, audio formats, large print or minority languages to meet the needs of those for whom English is not their first language.
- 6.3.2 Libraries NI liaises with representatives of young people and disability and minority ethnic organisations and takes account of existing and developing good practice.
- 6.3.3 We will respond to requests for information in alternative formats in a timely manner, usually within 20 working days.
- 6.4 In disseminating information through the media we will seek to advertise in the press where appropriate.
- 6.5 We will also provide information through our website, Corporate and Business Plans, posters and the staff newsletter.

Access to services

- 6.6 Libraries NI is committed to ensuring that all of our services are fully accessible to everyone in the community across the Section 75 categories. Libraries NI also adhere to the relevant provisions of current anti-discrimination legislation.
- 6.7 Libraries NI is committed to marketing its services effectively and efficiently to ensure widespread uptake across the Section 75 categories.

Assessing public access to information and services

- 6.8 We monitor on an ongoing basis across all our functions, in relation to access to information and services, to ensure equality of opportunity and good relations are promoted.
- 6.9 This includes monitoring of comments and complaints, staff surveys, and the provision of interpreting/translation services.

CHAPTER 7 - TIMETABLE FOR MEASURES WE PROPOSE IN THIS EQUALITY SCHEME (Schedule 9 4. (3) (b))

- 7.1 Appendix 4 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 is listed in the timetable of measures at Appendix 4. For information on these action measures please see above at 2.11 – 2.18.

CHAPTER 8 - OUR COMPLAINTS PROCEDURE (Schedule 9 10.)

- 8.1 Libraries NI are responsive to the views of members of the public. We will respond to all complaints made to us and endeavour to resolve where possible.
- 8.2 Schedule 9 paragraph 10 of the Act refers to complaints. A person can make a complaint to a public authority if the complainant believes he or she may have been directly affected by an alleged failure of the authority to comply with its approved equality scheme. If the complaint has not been resolved within a reasonable timescale, the complaint can be brought to the Equality Commission.
- 8.3 A person wishing to make a complaint that Libraries NI has failed to comply with its approved equality scheme can do so using the Libraries NI Customer Feedback procedure (available via our web site and at all branch libraries) or by contacting:
- Heather Gardiner
Data Protection Officer
Libraries NI
Demesne Avenue
Ballymena
BT43 7BG
- E-mail: heather.gardiner@librariesni.org.uk
- 8.4 We will in the first instance acknowledge receipt of each complaint within 2 working days (provided an email contact has been provided)
- 8.5 The Director of Business Support will carry out an investigation of the complaint and will respond substantively to the complainant within 15 working days of receipt of a 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 these circumstances, the complainant will be advised within 7 working days (of receipt) of the reasons for delay and anticipated period for completion of a substantive response.
- 8.6 During this process the complainant will be kept fully informed of the progress of the investigation into the complaint and of any outcomes.
- 8.7 In any subsequent investigation by the Equality Commission, Libraries NI will co-operate fully, providing access in a timely manner to any relevant documentation that the Equality Commission may require. Similarly, Libraries NI 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.

8.8 Libraries NI will make all efforts to implement promptly and in full any recommendations arising out of any Commission investigation.

CHAPTER 9 - PUBLICATION OF OUR EQUALITY SCHEME

Schedule 9 4. (3)

9.1 Libraries NI equality scheme is available free of charge in print form and alternative formats from:

Heather Gardiner
Data Protection Officer
Libraries NI
Demesne Avenue
Ballymena
BT43 7BG

E-mail: heather.gardiner@librariesni.org.uk

9.2 Our equality scheme is also available on our website via the following link [Equality](#).

9.3 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 shots to groups representing the various categories in Section 75.
- we will email a link to our approved equality scheme to our consultees on our consultation lists. Other consultees without e-mail will be notified by letter that the scheme is available on request. We will respond to requests for the equality scheme in alternative formats in a timely manner, usually within 20 working days.
- our equality scheme is available on request in alternative formats such as Easy Read, Braille, large print, audio formats and in minority languages to meet the needs of those not fluent in English.
- Libraries NI liaises with representatives of young people and disability and minority ethnic organisations and takes account of existing and developing good practice.

9.4 For a list of our stakeholders and consultees please see Appendix 3 of the equality scheme, via the following link [Equality](#) or by contacting:

Heather Gardiner
Data Protection Officer
Libraries NI
Demesne Avenue
Ballymena
BT43 7BG

E-mail: heather.gardiner@librariesni.org.uk

CHAPTER 10 - REVIEW OF OUR EQUALITY SCHEME (Schedule 9 8. (3))

- 10.1 As required by Schedule 9 paragraph 8 (3) of the Northern Ireland Act 1998 we will conduct a thorough review of this equality scheme. This review will take place 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. 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.
- 10.2 In undertaking this review we will follow any guidance issued by the Equality Commission. A report of this review will be made public on our website and sent to the Equality Commission.

The Board of Libraries NI Membership as at 31 March 2025

Ms Bonnie Anley (Chairperson)

Councillor Julie Gilmour (Vice-Chairperson)

Councillor Alistair Cathcart

Mr Adrian Driscoll

Councillor Rosie Kinnear

Councillor Roisin Lynch

Councillor Andrew McAuley

Councillor Martin McRandal

Ms Ursula O'Hare

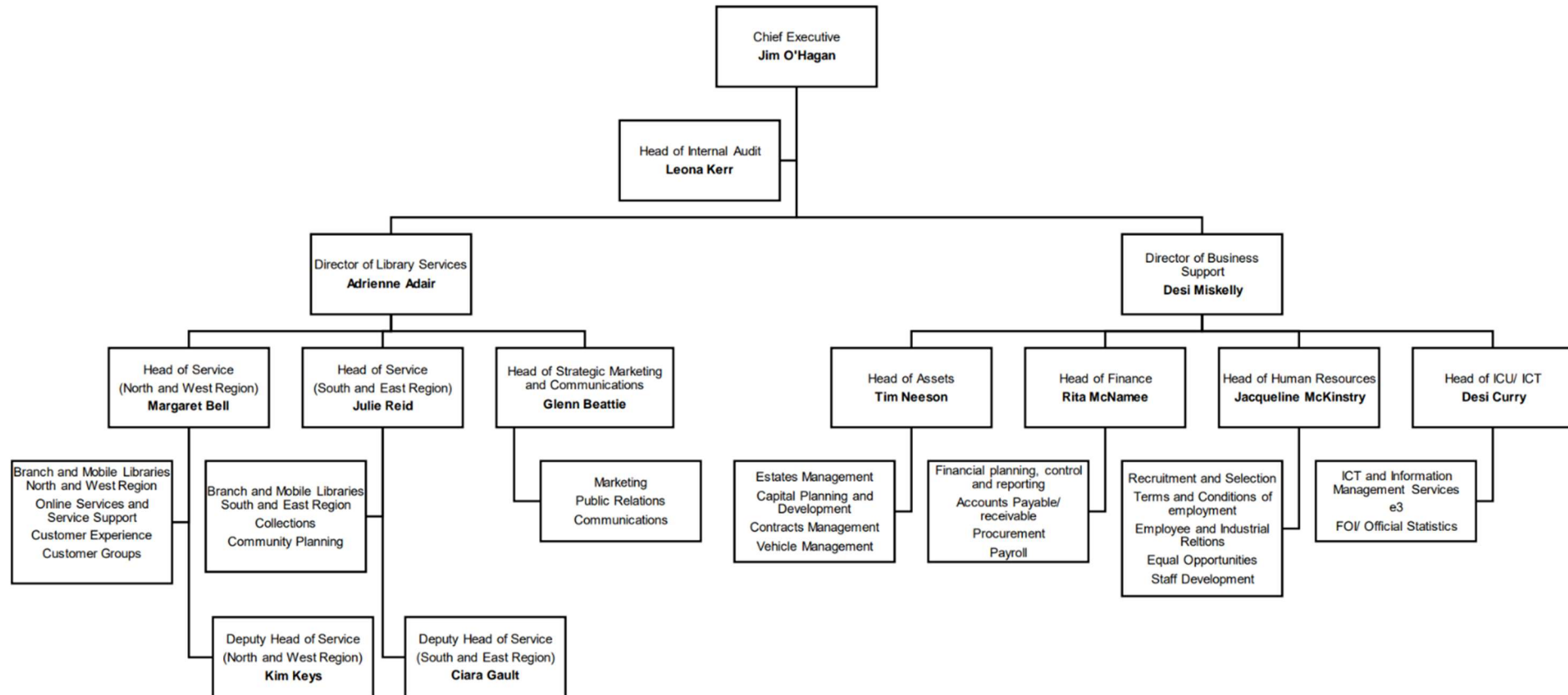
Mrs Wendy Osborne OBE

Mr John Peto

Councillor Gareth Sharvin

Miss Linda Wilson

Libraries NI Organisational Structure



Appendix 2

Example groups relevant to the Section 75 categories for Northern Ireland purposes *(this list is not exhaustive)*

Category	Example groups
Religious belief	<p>Buddhist; Catholic; Hindu; Jewish; Muslims, people of no religious belief; Protestants; Sikh; other faiths.</p> <p>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>¹⁰. 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>”.</p>
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.

¹⁰ See 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*.”

Councils

Antrim and Newtownabbey Borough Council
Ards and North Down Borough Council
Armagh, Banbridge and Craigavon Borough Council
Belfast City Council
Causeway Coast and Glens Borough Council
Derry and Strabane District Council
Fermanagh and Omagh District Council
Lisburn and Castlereagh City Council
Mid and East Antrim Borough Council
Mid Ulster District Council
Newry, Mourne and Down District Council

Political Parties

Alliance Party
Democratic Unionist Party
Green Party
People Before Profit Alliance
Sinn Féin
Social Democratic and Labour Party
Traditional Unionist Voice
Ulster Unionist Party

Organisations

Action Mental Health
Action on Hearing Loss
Age NI

Alzheimer's Society
Atlas
Autism NI
Aware Defeat Depression
Belfast Butterfly Club
Belfast Charitable Society
Carers NI
Children's Law Centre
Chinese Welfare Association
Clerk to the Committee for Communities at the Assembly

Community Development and Health Network
Community Relations Council
Council for Catholic Maintained Schools
Community Development and Health Network

Community Relations Council
Council for Catholic Maintained Schools
Department for Communities
Disability Action
Education Authority (EANI)
Equality Coalition
Equality Commission NI
Extern
Falls Community Council
Fermanagh Voluntary Association of the Disabled
First Lane Presbyterian Church
Friends of Millview
General Teaching Council for Northern Ireland
GMB Trade Union
Hearing Loss
Include Youth
Indian Community Centre
Information Commissioners Office
Irish National Teachers Organisation
Italian Consulate Italian Community
Labour Relations Agency
Law Society
Local Government Staff Commission
Mediation Northern Ireland
Mencap
Mindwise
MS Society NI
National Union of Students
Newry & Mourne Senior Citizens Consortium
NI Commission of Catholic Education
NI Dyslexia Centre
NI Human Rights Commission
NI Museums
NIPSA
Northwest Community Network
Northern Health & Social Care Trust
Northern Ireland Commissioner for Children & Young People
Northern Ireland Housing Executive
Northern Ireland Women's Forum
Northern Regional College
Orchardville Society
Parenting NI
Playboard
POBAL
Presbyterian Church in Ireland
Queens University Belfast
Relate NI
RNIB
Rural Community Network
South Eastern Health & Social Care Trust
South West College

Southern Health and Social Care Trust
Southern Regional College
St Mary's University College
Training for Women Network (TWN)
Ulster-Scots Agency
UNISON
UNITE the Union
University of Ulster
Wah Hep Chinese Community Association
Western Health & Social Care Trust
Women's Aid Federation Northern Ireland
Women's Forum NI
Women's Platform
Women's Support Network
Youth Action NI

Timetable for measures proposed
(Schedule 9 4. (3) (b))

Appendix 4

The following may be subject to review and/or revision in line with business demands

Measure	Lead responsibility	Timetable
Section 75 Annual Progress Report [2.7]	Director of Business Support	Draft Submitted to ECNI by 31 August (annually) subject to approval at subsequent September Committee meeting and approval by Board
Action plan		
Consultation on draft action plan [2.14]	Director of Business Support	In line with consultation on equality scheme review – December 2025 to February 2026
Finalised action plan published [2.17]	Director of Business Support	March 2026
Implement/Deliver Action Plan	Director of Business Support	Ongoing
Arrangements for monitoring progress in place [2.16]	Director of Business Support	Reported annually by 31 August to ECNI
Consultation list reviewed and updated [3.4]	Director of Business Support	August (annually)
Screening timetable [4.4]	Director of Business Support	In line with policy review timeframes or on introduction of a new policy etc.
Screening Reports [4.15]	Director of Business Support	Published Quarterly
EQIA timetable [4.16]	Director of Business Support	Notice given to consultees ahead of each consultation exercise
Monitoring		
Review of monitoring information [4.31]	Policy owner	On going
Publication of monitoring information [4.33;4.34]	Director of Business Support	Annually

Training		
Development of summary scheme [5.4]	Director of Business Support	Within 6 months of adoption of updated Equality Scheme
Development of overall training programme [5.5]	Director of Business Support/Staff and Corporate Development Officer	September 2026
Update training programme [5.4]	Director of Business Support/Staff and Corporate Development Officer	Annually
Evaluation of training effectiveness [5.6]	Director of Business Support/Staff and Corporate Development Officer	In conjunction with training delivery timeframes
Assessing access to information and services [6.9]	Director of Business Support	On going
Communication of equality scheme [9.3]	Director of Business Support	On going
Notification of consultees [9.3]		On going
Review of equality scheme [10.1]	Director of Business Support	Within 5 years previous review (2025)

Action Plan

A plan which sets out actions a public authority will take to implement its Section 75 statutory duties. It is a mechanism for the realisation of measures to achieve equality outcomes for the Section 75 equality and good relations categories.

Action measures and outcomes

Specific measures to promote equality and good relations for the relevant Section 75 and good relations categories, linked to achievable outcomes, which should be realistic and timely.

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.

Audit of Inequalities

An audit of inequalities is a systematic review and analysis of inequalities which exist for service users and those affected by a public authority's policies. An audit can be used by a public authority to inform its work in relation to the Section 75 equality and good relations duties. It can also enable public authorities to assess progress on the implementation of the Section 75 statutory duties, as it provides baseline information on existing inequalities relevant to a public authority's functions.

Consultation

In the context of Section 75, consultation is the process of asking those affected by a policy (i.e. 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.

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.

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."

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.

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 cover 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.

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.

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 Equality 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 Equality Commission, where it believes that a public authority may have failed to comply with its approved equality scheme.

Action plan/action measures (December 2025)

Appendix 6

Corporate Priority	Targeted S75 Category	Strategic Goal	Timescale	Expected Outcome	Monitoring Source
Priority 1: Promote reading, inspire, support and connect people through all stages of life. (Connect, support, inspire)	All-Religious belief, political opinion, racial group, age, marital status, sexual orientation, gender, with or without disability, with or without dependents	Promote reading, literacy and lifelong learning through delivery of resources, services, programmes, activities and initiatives for children and adults.	Ongoing for life span of plan	Delivery and implementation of the Reading and Reader Development Strategy 2024 – 2027 Collaboration with partners to increase the number of people participating in programmes and initiatives to encourage engagement in reading related activities, including storytelling/oral tradition	Continuous Household Survey (CHS) Library Management System (LMS) Activities Data Triennial Customer Survey Department of Education and EANI RAISE programme outputs
		Provide opportunities for people to engage in an evolving digital world and improve digital literacy while promoting libraries as trusted access points to services and information, including other public services.	Ongoing for life span of plan	Deliver a relevant Digital Service Offer by providing a range of accessible services, programmes and training opportunities. Provide comprehensive access to ICT, including computer resources, Wi-Fi, PATs and internet access across the library network.	Customer Feedback
		Provide library resources, services and activities to support and help children develop through their early years	Ongoing for life span of plan	Collaborate with a range of partners to increase and retain the number of children and young people who become library members, engage with	

				library services and participate in library programming.	
Priority 2: Contribute to inclusive, cohesive, communities and societal wellbeing.		Provide a relevant, accessible library service that meets the evolving needs of people in Northern Ireland.	Ongoing for life span of plan	Maintain multiple channels to deliver effective library services, including static libraries, mobile libraries and online Develop and deliver a service offering to meet the needs of existing customers and to engage new customers.	Continuous Household Survey (CHS) Library Management System (LMS) Activities Data Triennial Customer Survey Customer Feedback
		Promote awareness and use of library services, engage new audiences and provide an exemplary customer driven approach and experience for people who use library services.	Ongoing for life span of plan	Progress the implementation of the Strategic Marketing Plan 2024 – 2026, specifically promoting and raising awareness of library services using a range of communication channels and methods. Implement the CustomerFirst Strategy 2025 – 2028.	
		Provide information, programmes and services that contribute to positive health and wellbeing.	Ongoing for life span of plan	Deliver a range of programming which promotes libraries as welcoming spaces in which to participate in activities that impact positively on Health and Wellbeing.	
		Build, develop and use the extensive library collections to illustrate and increase understanding of a shared cultural heritage.	Ongoing for life span of plan	Promote access to, engagement with, and participation in Cultural Heritage Services and Resources.	

Priority 3: Deliver a high performing library service, valued by society		Support and develop our people to be a highly capable, engaged and empowered workforce.	Ongoing for life span of plan	Develop and Implement a Health and Wellbeing Strategy to support our people's physical and mental health and positive lifestyle choices by October 2025.	Staff Appraisal Feedback Staff Survey responses
		Collate, prepare and disseminate evidence to demonstrate the impact of libraries, library programmes and service offers, and contribute to debate and discussion on wider library developments		Build a library of evidence illustrating the positive societal, health, cultural and educational impacts of library services.	Continuous Household Survey (CHS) Triennial Customer Survey Customer Feedback
		Shape our libraries to be attractive, accessible, and trusted spaces		Review and refresh Libraries NI's five-year Asset Management Plan to reflect physical library infrastructure needs and inform investment decisions	