
Office of the Social Fund
Commissioner

EQUALITY SCHEME

DRAWN UP IN ACCORDANCE WITH SECTION 75
OF THE NORTHERN IRELAND ACT 1998

Office of the Social Fund
Commissioner
Scottish Amicable Building
11 Donegall Square South
Belfast
BT1 5JE

FOREWORD

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

As Commissioner and Office Manager of the OSFC, we are personally committed to complying with the statutory duty and will provide effective leadership to ensure that as an organisation we fully comply with our obligations. To this end we will ensure that:

- all staff within the organisation, through training and communication, are aware of their responsibilities and that they take account of the Equality Scheme when carrying out their duties.
- the Department for Social Development (DSD), who is the OSFC'S sponsoring department, are made aware of the resources in terms of people, time and money that the OSFC need to support the effective promotion of equality of opportunity and good relations in all the OSFC's policies and practices.
- the OSFC will allocate the necessary resources to ensure that the statutory duties are complied with and that the Equality Scheme can be drawn up and implemented effectively and on time.
- there are effective internal arrangements in place to ensure that the duties are effectively complied with and for monitoring and reviewing progress.

We are confident that these measures will ensure that equality considerations are at the very heart of the OSFC's policy making and the delivery of our services.

Sir Richard Tilt
Social Fund Commissioner

Eileen Tinnelly
Office Manager

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1.0 INTRODUCTION

1.1 Section 75 of the Northern Ireland Act 1998 ('the Act') requires the Office of the Social Fund Commissioner (OSFC) for Northern Ireland in carrying out all its functions, powers and duties to have due regard to the need to promote equality of opportunity between:

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

1.2 Also, without prejudice to its obligation above, the OSFC will, in carrying out its functions, power and duties relating to Northern Ireland have regard to the desirability of promoting good relations between persons of different religious belief, political opinion or racial group.

1.3 Schedule 9 of the Act requires the OSFC to set out in an Equality Scheme how the OSFC proposes to fulfil the duties imposed by Section 75. This scheme has been developed to satisfy that statutory requirement.

2.0 DUTIES AND RESPONSIBILITIES

The Office of the Social Fund Commissioner (OSFC), is an independent statutory body, established in 1988. The duties and powers of the OSFC are defined by the Social Security (Northern Ireland) Order 1998. The OSFC is headed by the Social Fund Commissioner who is appointed by the Department for Social Development (DSD). The Commissioner has a statutory duty to provide the Minister for Social Development with an annual report detailing the standard of Inspector's decisions.

2.1 The OSFC staff comprises of the Commissioner, the Office Manager, seven Inspectors and two support staff. Staff are recruited by open competition from the Northern Ireland Civil Service (NICS) and appointed by the Commissioner. Appointed staff are seconded from the NICS for a minimum of three years.

2.2 Core Values

The OSFC's commitment to equality is shown in the core values that underpin the work of the organisation. The core values of the OSFC are to:

- provide an open and accessible service to all customers
- treat everyone with respect and courtesy
- strive to improve standards for customers and increasing the efficiency of our work
- be an open learning organisation
- deliver the best service for the customer and balance fairly the needs of our staff.

2.3 The functions of the OSFC, including its powers and duties, are detailed below.

2.4 The main role of the OSFC is to carry out independent reviews for applicants who are dissatisfied with the decision made by the Social Security Agency (SSA) on their applications to the discretionary part of the Social Fund.

The OSFC also:

- provides information to the public, their advisers and staff of the Social Security Agency (SSA) about the social fund, the role of the OSFC and the right of applicants to seek an independent review
- provides advice and guidance to the Social Security Agency (SSA) about operational performance.
- when appropriate contributes to research to help improve the operation of the social fund.

The following policies are not determined by the OSFC:

- development of benefit policy in respect of the social fund. This is a matter for the Social Security Policy and Legislation Division of the Department for Social Development (DSD).
- recruitment and general employment of OSFC staff. This is a matter for the Department of Finance and Personnel (DFP) who determine these policies for the whole of the Northern Ireland Civil Service (NICS). The OSFC will contribute such information as may be required by DFP in carrying out equality impact assessments on these policies.

3.0 ARRANGEMENTS FOR ASSESSING COMPLIANCE WITH SECTION 75 DUTIES

Organisational Arrangements

- 3.1 The OSFC is committed to the fulfilment of its Section 75 obligations in all aspects of its work. Statutory Responsibility for the effective implementation of the Scheme lies with the Commissioner.
- 3.2 Responsibility for driving forward implementation of the equality scheme and the point of contact within the OSFC will be:

The Office Manager
Office of the Social Fund Commissioner
Scottish Amicable Building
11 Donegal Square South
Belfast
BT1 5JE
Tel: 028 90247202
Fax: 028 90230921
E-mail: sfc@osfcni.org.uk

- 3.3 They will report regularly to the Commissioner and respond to any queries for all those affected by the statutory duties.
- 3.4 Objectives and targets relating to the statutory duties will be integrated into the OSFC's corporate planning process, which sets out the aims and objectives of the organisation. Staff who are directly engaged in this work will include implementation of the statutory duties in their personal performance plans, which are subject to appraisal in the annual performance review. In addition, a commitment to the statutory duties will be included in all job descriptions. Progress on meeting the range of objectives will be monitored and reported upon to the Commissioner on a quarterly basis.
- 3.5 The progress of the OSFC in the implementation of its statutory duties in relation to Section 75 will also form part of the Commissioner's annual report on the work of the OSFC to the Minister for Social Development.

Progress Reporting

- 3.6 The OSFC will conduct an Annual Review of Progress in relation to the implementation of the Equality Scheme, in complying with the statutory duties. The OSFC will forward a report of this review to the Equality

Commission by 31 July each year. This report will follow any guidance on annual reporting issued by the Equality Commission.

- 3.7 Moreover, the OSFC will liase closely with the Equality Commission to build a close working relationship so that progress on the implementation of the Scheme is maintained.

Consultation

- 3.8 The OSFC acknowledges the emphasis on consultation in the development and implementation of the Scheme, and is committed to full and meaningful consultation on its Equality Scheme, equality impact assessments and monitoring arrangements. Details of this commitment are set out in section four.

Complaints

- 3.9 When a complaint is made on the grounds that the OSFC has failed to comply with the Scheme, the point of contact will be:

The Office Manager
Office of the Social Fund Commissioner
Scottish Amicable Building
11 Donegal Square South
Belfast
BT1 5JE
Tel: 028 90247202
Fax: 028 90230921
E-mail: sfc@osfci.org.uk

- 3.10 This Officer will carry out an internal investigation of the complaint and respond to the complainant within one month. During this process, the complainant will be kept fully informed of the procedures for dealing with the complaint under Schedule 9 of the Northern Ireland Act. The OSFC will also undertake to provide assistance to any complainant who requires information in a format that ensures equality of opportunity.
- 3.11 In any subsequent investigation by the Equality Commission, the OSFC will co-operate fully, providing access to any relevant documentation that the Equality Commission may require. Similarly, the OSFC will co-operate fully with any investigation by the Equality Commission under para 11 (1) (b) (Investigations) of Schedule 9 to the Northern Ireland Act 1998.

Review of the Scheme

- 3.12 The OSFC will conduct a thorough review of the Scheme within five years of its submission to the Equality Commission. This review will evaluate the effectiveness of the OSFC in meeting its Section 75 obligations. In undertaking this review the OSFC will follow any guidance issued by the Equality Commission. A report of this review will be made public and sent to the Equality Commission.

4.0 CONSULTATION

- 4.1. The OSFC recognises the importance of consultation in all aspects of the implementation of its statutory equality duties. The OSFC will comply with the Equality Commission's Guiding Principles as detailed in its 'Guide to Statutory Duties'. In particular, it will endeavour to conduct all consultations in a timely, open and inclusive way in accordance with these guiding principles.
- 4.2. The OSFC will consult as widely as possible to ensure that any organisation or group which has a legitimate, particular interest in its work and /or the likely impact of its policies on the promotion of equality of opportunity and good relations will be included in the process of engagement.
- 4.3. The OSFC will consult with relevant interest groups as well as the Equality Commission, the Community Relations Council, other public bodies, voluntary, community, trade union and other groups with a legitimate interest on any matter to which equality duties relate, such as, screening of existing or new policies, or equality impact assessments.
- 4.4. A list of those being consulted on matters relevant to the OSFC equality duties, including screening and equality impact assessments and the Scheme itself, is detailed in Appendix 2. The list is not exhaustive and may be amended and reviewed throughout the lifetime of the equality scheme to promote inclusive consultation. The OSFC welcomes enquiries from any organisation wishing to be added to the list of consultees, and they should contact the Office Manager in the OSFC to have their interest noted.

Timescale for Consultation

- 4.5. In order to facilitate meaningful consultation, the OSFC will ensure that consultation with groups and individuals will begin as early as possible.
- 4.6. The OSFC is conscious that some groups will need sufficient time to consult among themselves in order that their contributions to any consultation may be informed. All consultations will aim to allow a period of at least eight weeks except in emergencies. Such situations will include policies which have to be implemented urgently to:
- protect health and safety;
 - comply with court judgements.
- 4.7. The OSFC wishes to minimise the number of exceptions to good practice guidelines on the timescale for consultation. When exceptions do occur, the OSFC will report such instances. Exceptions to the normal

eight-week consultation period will be monitored, kept under review, justified very clearly and reported by the OSFC in its annual report to the Equality Commission.

Procedures for Ensuring Inclusive Consultation

- 4.8. In consulting on any matter to which this scheme relates, the OSFC will work with representative groups and individuals of the Section 75 categories in order to identify how best to obtain their views¹. This will include specific consideration of how best to communicate with young people and people with learning disabilities.
- 4.9. In consulting on any matter to which this scheme relates, the OSFC will either write to the relevant bodies referred to in this section of the scheme or, in appropriate circumstances consult through face-to-face meetings, advisory groups, surveys, consultative panels, e-mail discussions and other innovative ways of consulting.
- 4.10. It is intended that barriers to proper consultation will be removed by ensuring that language is as clear as possible. Systems will be developed to enable presentations on this Scheme to be provided, on request, in an appropriate format to representatives of people with learning disabilities, minority community language speakers, people with disabilities, young people, and travellers.
- 4.11. To ensure the highest level of inclusivity in any policy decision-making, information will be made available in consultation with groups affected by Section 75. Systems will be in place to ensure that information will be available on request in accessible formats in a timely fashion such as Braille, disc, and audiocassette and in minority languages to meet the needs of those who are not fluent in English.
- 4.12. Extra consideration will be given to ensuring that all consultations reflect the needs of young people and those with learning disabilities through the provision of accessible formats in a timely manner. The OSFC will liaise with representatives of young persons and learning disability organisations in the first place and take account of good practice elsewhere (e.g. Lead Report/MENCAP's guidance on accessible formats), in order to reflect the needs of these groups in consultations.

¹ The main groups within the Section 75 categories are detailed at Appendix 4
A list of those to those being consulted is detailed at Appendix 2

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- 4.13. The OSFC believes it especially important that sufficient timely and appropriate information is provided to enable all affected groups and individuals to consider the full implications of proposals, and it will take steps to ensure this. This will include quantitative and qualitative data that the OSFC holds or has collated, and other documents such as consultants' reports. This will apply to all consultations.
- 4.14. Specific training will be arranged for OSFC staff undertaking consultation exercises to ensure they have the necessary skills to communicate effectively. This training will draw upon the programmes of the Department for Social Development (DSD) who consulted with affected groups.² (See section 7 Training and Communication).
- 4.15. The OSFC will aim also to ensure full participation in any consultation meetings that are held. The OSFC will consider the time of day, the suitability of the venue, whether it can be accessed by those with disabilities, how the meeting is to be run, the use of languages other than English, whether a signer is needed, and childcare arrangements. The OSFC will recognise and in good faith meet access related costs.

² Ref: DSD Equality Scheme, page 20, paragraph 4.10.

5.0 ASSESSING THE IMPACT OF POLICIES ON THE PROMOTION OF EQUALITY OF OPPORTUNITY

Screening

- 5.1 The OSFC is committed to carrying out a systematic review of all its existing and new/proposed policies to determine whether there are any equality of opportunity implications.
- 5.2 The definition of a 'policy' under the Equality Commission's Guide to the Statutory Duties has a wide remit and includes policies relating to all functions and activities. The OSFC will monitor the implementation of a policy that it operates of behalf of another public authority, and will work in partnership with other bodies where such a policy is subject to an equality impact assessment.
- 5.3 The OSFC will consider the impact of each current and new/proposed policy on equality of opportunity in terms of the nine categories listed at Section 75 of the Act³ when considering which policies will be subject to equality impact assessment. A systematic review of each policy is required and the OSFC will take the following steps when screening:
- identify all policies, written and unwritten;
 - appraise the significance of equality of opportunity and good relations for each policy, taking account of the screening criteria and prioritisation factors detailed below;
 - detail policies to be subject to equality impact assessment, together with a draft timetable for conducting the assessments. This should take account of the need to join up equality impact assessments of related policies;
 - consult with Section 75 groups⁴ to seek their views on whether all policies have been identified, whether all equality impacts have been identified, and whether they agree with the list of policies to be subject to equality impact assessment and the proposed timetable;
 - consider and take account of feedback from the consultation exercise;
 - provide information to consultees, in a screening report, on the conclusions reached following the initial consultation on screening, on amendments made to the list of policies, and on the final equality impact assessment timetable.
- 5.4 For each policy the following criteria will be applied:

³ The main groups within each of the nine categories are identified at Appendix 4

⁴ A list of those being consulted is detailed at Appendix 2

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- is there any indication or evidence of higher or lower participation or uptake by different groups?
 - is there any indication or evidence that different groups have different needs, experiences, issues and priorities in relation to the particular policy?
 - have previous known consultations with relevant groups, organisations or individuals indicated that particular policies create problems that are specific to them?
 - is there an opportunity to better promote equality of opportunity or good relations by altering the policy or working with others in government or in the larger community?

If the answer to any of these four questions is yes, consideration will be given to whether to subject the policy to the equality impact assessment procedure.

Evidence

- 5.5 The OSFC will make arrangements to obtain relevant information, whether quantitative or qualitative, so that it can clearly demonstrate why a policy is screened in for impact assessment or screened out as not requiring an equality impact assessment.
- 5.6 Evidence may include information from the OSFC's own information management systems, including service monitoring and complaints handling systems, or from engagement in research, surveys or consultation exercises. Information may also be sourced from commissioned research or from research produced by other public authorities, representative groups, umbrella groups, and trades unions or universities. Information from consultation exercises on previous equality impact assessments, or those undertaken by other public authorities within the same sector will also be considered. Anecdotal evidence, feedback from service users and affected groups or ongoing experience within the authority will also be considered.

Prioritisation & Timetabling

- 5.7 Having screened existing policies or new policies using the four criteria (see 5.4), a view must then be reached on prioritising policies for equality impact assessment. Priorities may be established based on factors such as:
 - social need;
 - effect on people's daily lives;
 - effect on economic, social and human rights;
 - significance of the policy in terms of expenditure;

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- significance of the policy in terms of strategic importance.
- 5.8 An initial timetable will be developed setting out a programme and timescale for equality impact assessments (see appendix 5).

Screening Report

- 5.9 A detailed report of the screening exercise will be provided to consultees and included in the Annual Report sent to the Equality Commission. The report will include details of: (1) those policies which will be subject to equality impact assessment, (2) those policies proposed by those consulted, as appropriate for impact assessment, but have not been subsequently included – giving an explanation for this course of action, (3) the factors for prioritising assessments, and (4) the timetable for equality impact assessments.
- 5.10 Consultation on screening will allow at least eight weeks, and will comply with the Equality Commission's 'Guiding Principles of Consultation'. Consultations will seek the views of the Equality Commission, representative groups of Section 75 categories, other public authorities, voluntary groups, community groups, Trade Unions and other groups with a legitimate interest in the matter including those directly affected by the policy whether or not they have a direct economic or personal interest (see Appendix 2).

The Conduct of Equality Impact Assessments

- 5.11 All equality impact assessments carried out will be conducted in accordance with all the procedures outlined in Annex 1 of the Equality Commission's 'Guide to the Statutory Duties'.
- 5.12 In common with other aspects of the statutory equality duties, the OSFC will ensure that any equality impact assessment will be subject to consultation. All consultations will comply with the Equality Commission's 'Guiding Principles of Consultation' (see 5.10).
- 5.13 In making any decision on a current or proposed policy, the OSFC will take into account any relevant equality impact assessment and the outcome of associated consultation.

Monitoring Adverse Impact and Access to Services

- 5.14 A system will be established to monitor the impact of policies and access to services across all functions in order to identify their effects on the relevant groups and ensure equality of opportunity. This system will involve:
- an audit of existing information systems within one year of approval of the scheme, similar to that included in Appendix 4 of

the Commission's Practical Guidance on EQIA, to identify the extent of current monitoring and a plan to address any gaps so that impacts can effectively be monitored through equality impact assessments.

- the collection and collation of existing relevant primary quantitative and qualitative data across all nine equality categories on an ongoing basis;
- the collection and collation of existing relevant secondary sources of quantitative and qualitative data across all nine equality categories on an ongoing basis;
- identifying where more detailed data is needed in order to have the necessary information on which to base decisions;
- undertaking or commissioning new data if necessary.

5.15 If over a three-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, the OSFC will ensure that the policy is revised.

5.16 This system will be reviewed on an annual basis and the results will be published as part of the OSFC's annual report to the Equality Commission. In all cases relating to the holding of monitoring information or the collection of data, the OSFC will act sensitively in accordance with Equality Commission guidance and the wishes of representatives from S75 organisations.

Publication of Equality Impact Assessments and Monitoring

5.18 The OSFC will make publicly available the outcome of any equality impact assessment and of any monitoring undertaken to measure the adverse impact of policies. This material will be accessible on the OSFC'S website at www.osfci.org.uk It will also be available in printed form and on request in alternative formats such as Braille, disk, audio cassette and in minority languages from the responsible officer – The Office Manager, Office of the Social Fund Commissioner, Scottish Amicable Building, 11 Donegal Square South, Belfast. BT1 5JE

5.19 Extra consideration will be given to ensure that young people and those with learning disabilities are able to access impact assessments in a timely fashion.

5.20 The OSFC may inform the general public about the availability of this material through public relations such as press releases and media coverage. It will also directly inform appropriate bodies listed in Appendix 2 when this material is available.

5.21 All published information will comply with guidance outlined by the Equality Commission in its 'Guide to Statutory Duty' (Section 1). The OSFC will publish information on equality impact assessments that:

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- includes the aims of the policy to which the assessment relates;
 - details any consideration given to mitigating adverse impact of the policy on the promotion of equality of opportunity;
 - details any consideration given to the consideration of alternative policies which might better achieve the promotion of equality of opportunity.

6.0 PUBLIC ACCESS TO INFORMATION AND SERVICES

- 6.1. In disseminating information through the local press, the OSFC will ensure that press statements or public advertisements are carried by all three Provincial newspapers (Belfast Telegraph, Irish News & Newsletter).
- 6.2. Where press statements or public advertisements are aimed at a particular area within Northern Ireland, the OSFC will ensure that the information is disseminated through at least two local newspapers circulating in that area, ensuring that the information is accessible to both main political religious sections of the community.
- 6.3. The OSFC is committed to ensuring that the information it disseminates and the services it provides are made accessible to ensure equality of opportunity. It is aware that some groups will not have the same access to information as others. These include:
- children and young people who may have difficulties in accessing or understanding information;
 - people with sensory and learning disabilities that may have difficulties with information in print;
 - members of minority ethnic groups, whose first language is not English, and who may have difficulties with information provided only in English.

Consideration will be given on how to provide accessible information in a timely manner to all these groups.

- 6.4. The OSFC will, within a year of approval of this scheme, assess its arrangements for providing information in Braille, large print, audiocassette and minority ethnic language formats. The assessment will take account of the:
- statutory requirements of the Disability Discrimination Act 1995;
 - likely demand for information of various formats across its main policy areas.
- 6.5. In conducting this assessment the OSFC will outline existing systems as they operate at the current time. In addition the OSFC will inform the Equality Commission of any changes that will be made. The OSFC will consult with representative groups as it carries out this assessment and will consult on the findings and recommendations of the assessment prior to implementation.
- 6.6. The OSFC offices will maintain a welcoming and harmonious environment. The OSFC will ensure that no section of the community is deterred from visiting the OSFC office, for whatever reason. If

anyone is unable to gain access to the OSFC's office alternative arrangements will be made, such as a home visit or meeting in a venue which is agreeable to both parties.

7.0 TRAINING AND COMMUNICATION

- 7.1 The OSFC is a small organisation in terms of staff numbers. All staff who have any responsibility for the formulation of policy or for its delivery will receive relevant communication and training appropriate to their duties and responsibilities on the content and practical implications of the Section 75 obligations, the requirements of this scheme and arrangements for equality impact assessments and monitoring.
- 7.2 As the OSFC's sponsoring department, the Department for Social Development (DSD)⁵ has supplied general training in respect of the implications and operations of equality schemes and the legislation. All the OSFC's staff have now received this type of training.
- 7.3 The OSFC will work in partnership with DSD on the following key areas, awareness raising, screening, complaint handling, equality impact assessment, consultation, implementation and monitoring. Evaluation of training will follow DSD's approach. The OSFC will also ensure that additional training is provided for the OSFC's staff where necessary, to cover the particular circumstances of the organisation.
- 7.4 A report indicating the extent to which training objectives have been met will be reported on as part of the Annual Review of the implementation of the statutory duties, which will be sent to the Equality Commission.
- 7.5 All members of staff will be given a personal copy of the approved Equality Scheme, which incorporates the commitment of the Commissioner.
- 7.6 A copy of the approved scheme will become a part of the standard content of the OSFC's staff handbook which is given to all employees and is a part of the induction procedure for all new employees. The requirements of section 75 and the Equality Scheme will be included in the induction training given to all staff.
- 7.7 A member of staff will be designated to deal with any queries staff may have on the operation of the scheme.
- 7.8 The OSFC's commitment to the statutory duties will be made clear in the organisation's publications, such as the annual report.

⁵ ref DSD's approved Equality Scheme, page 24, paragraph 7.10 & DSD's approved Training and Communication Plan

8.0 **IMPLEMENTING THE SCHEME**

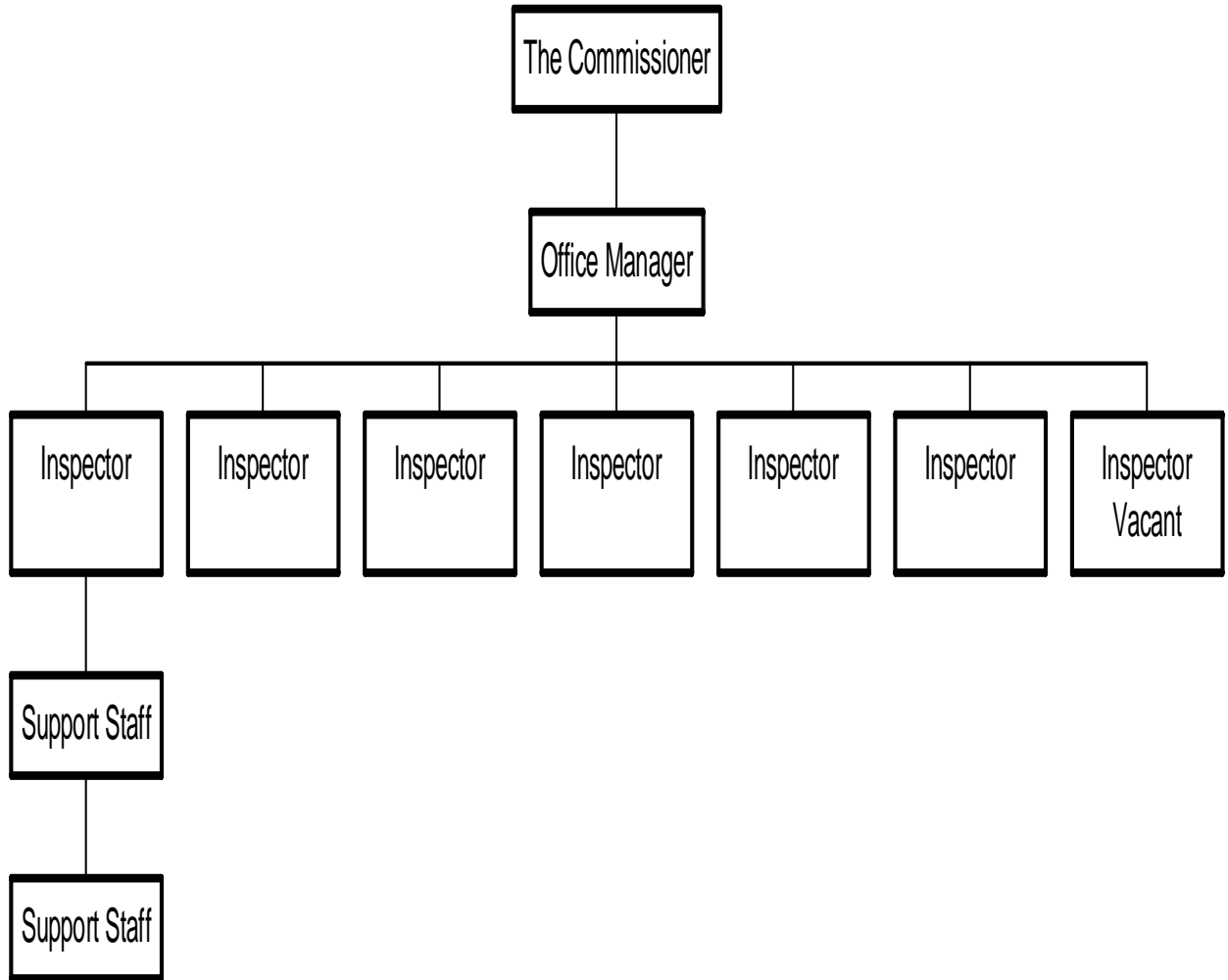
Publication of the Scheme

- 8.1 Following submission to the Equality Commission, this draft scheme will be available in print form and alternative formats (such as Braille, disc, and audiocassette and in minority languages to meet the needs of those not fluent in English) free on request from the OSFC. The OSFC will ensure that systems are in place to ensure that information in accessible formats in a timely fashion. Consideration will be given on how best to communicate information to young people and people with learning disabilities. The scheme will also be available on the OSFC's website.

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

- 8.2 Appendix 5 outlines an action plan for implementing the OSFC's Scheme including date milestones and performance indicators for each task.

APPENDIX 1: OSFC ORGANISATIONAL CHART



APPENDIX 2: LIST OF ORGANISATIONS TO BE CONSULTED

1. Active Community Unit, Home Office
2. Advice Services Alliance
3. Age Concern
4. Alliance Party of Northern Ireland
5. Archbishop of Armagh and Primate of All Ireland
6. Armagh Travellers Support Group
7. Association of Chief Officers of Voluntary Organisations
8. Association of Independent Advice Centres
9. Baha’l Office for Northern Ireland
10. Barnardo’s Tuar Ceatha Project
11. Barnardos
12. Belfast Butterfly Club
13. Belfast Partnership Boards
14. Belfast Resource Centre for the Unemployed
15. Belfast Travellers Education and Development Group
16. Brainwaves NI
17. British Deaf Association
18. Bryson House
19. Carafriend
20. Care
21. Carers National Association NI
22. Child Care Northern Ireland
23. Child Poverty Action Group
24. Children’s Law Centre
25. Chinese Welfare Association
26. Chrysalis Women’s Centre
27. Coalition on Sexual Orientation
28. Coiste na n-iarchimi
29. Community Development and Child Health
30. Co-operation Ireland
31. Council for the Homeless (Northern Ireland)
32. Counteract
33. Craigavon Standing Conference of Women’s Organisations
34. Cruse Bereavement Care (NI)
35. Democratic Dialogue
36. Democratic Unionist Party
37. Department for Social Development
38. Derry Well Woman
39. Disability Action
40. Down’s Syndrome Association
41. Equality Coalition
42. Equality Commission
43. Equality Forum NI
44. Extern
45. Falls Community Council
46. Falls Women’s Centre
47. Fermanagh Women’s Network
48. First Key

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49. Foyle Friend
 50. Foyle Women's Network
 51. Gay and Lesbian Youth NI
 52. Gingerbread
 53. Help the Aged
 54. Indian Community Centre
 55. Irish Congress of Trade Unions
 56. Lesbian Line
 57. Mencap
 58. Methodist Church in Ireland
 59. Mid-Ulster Women's Network
 60. Multi-Cultural Resource Centre
 61. Newry and Mourne Senior Citizen's Forum
 62. NIACRO
 63. NIPSA
 64. North West Community Network
 65. North West Forum of People with Disabilities (Derry)
 66. North West Forum of People with Disabilities (Enniskillen)
 67. Northern Ireland African Cultural Centre
 68. Northern Ireland Anti-Poverty Network
 69. Northern Ireland Association for Mental Health
 70. Northern Ireland Association of Citizen's Advice Bureaux
 71. Northern Ireland Council for Ethnic Equality
 72. Northern Ireland Council for Ethnic Minorities
 73. Northern Ireland Council for Voluntary Action
 74. Northern Ireland Federation of Housing Associations
 75. Northern Ireland Gay Rights Association
 76. Northern Ireland Housing Council
 77. Northern Ireland Human Rights Commission
 78. Northern Ireland Islamic Centre
 79. Northern Ireland Statistics and Research Agency
 80. Northern Ireland Unionist Party
 81. Northern Ireland Voluntary Trust
 82. Northern Ireland Volunteer Development Agency
 83. Northern Ireland Women's Aid Federation
 84. Northern Ireland Women's European Platform
 85. NSPCC
 86. Omagh Women's Area Network
 87. Parents Advice Centre
 88. Parents and Professional and Autism
 89. PHAB
 90. PRAXIS
 91. Presbyterian Church in Ireland
 92. Press for Change
 93. Probation Board for NI
 94. Progressive Unionist Party
 95. Putting Children First
 96. Queer Space
 97. Relate
 98. Royal Institute for the Blind

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99. Royal Institute for the Deaf
 100. Rural Community Network
 101. Rural Development Council
 102. Save the Children
 103. Sense NI
 104. Shelter NI
 105. Sikh Cultural Centre
 106. Simon Community (Northern Ireland)
 107. Sinn Fein
 108. Social Democratic and Labour Party
 109. Social Security Agency
 110. Sperrin Lakeland Senior Citizens' Consortium
 111. The Blind Centre NI
 112. The Community Relations Council
 113. The Guide Dogs for the Blind Association
 114. The Law Centre (NI)
 115. The Law Society
 116. The Most Reverend Bishop Walsh
 117. The Socialist Party
 118. The Women's Centre
 119. The Workers Party
 120. Traveller Movement for Northern Ireland
 121. Ulster Democratic Party
 122. Ulster People's College
 123. Ulster Scots Heritage Council
 124. Ulster Unionist Party
 125. Women Together for Peace
 126. Women's Coalition
 127. Women's Forum
 128. Women's Information Group
 129. Women's Resource and Development Agency
 130. Women's Support Network
 131. Youth Action
 132. Youth Council for NI

APPENDIX 3: COMMENTS RECEIVED FROM CONSULTATION

The OSFC published its draft Equality Scheme for consultation on 30 November 2004. The organisation specifically invited comments from 132 groups and individuals listed at Appendix 2. It was also available on request and was posted on the OSFC's website. The OSFC received a response from one organisation.

Organisation	Summary of Comments received
NIACRO	The organisation stated that they were confident that the OSFC will continue to set the highest standards in its decision-making and adjudication and were encouraged by the commitment shown in the OSFC's draft Equality Scheme to the needs of vulnerable groups.

**APPENDIX 4: MAIN GROUPS RELEVANT TO THE SECTION 75
CATEGORIES FOR NORTHERN IRELAND PURPOSES**

Category	Main Groups
Religious belief	Protestants; Catholics; people of non-Christian faiths; people of no religious belief
Political opinion	Unionists generally; Nationalist generally; members/supporters of any political party
Racial group	White people; Chinese; Travellers; Indians; Pakistanis; Black people
Men and women generally	Men (including boys); women (including girls), Trans-gendered people, Transsexual people
Marital status	Married people; unmarried people; divorced or separated people; widowed people
Age	Children under 16; people of working age (16/65); people over 65
Persons with a disability	Persons with a physical, sensory or learning disability as defined in sections 1 and 2 and Schedules 1 and 2 of the Disability Discrimination Act 1995
Persons with dependants	Persons with personal responsibility for the care of a child; persons with personal responsibility for the care of a person with an incapacitating disability; persons with personal responsibility for the care of a dependent elderly person
Sexual orientation	Heterosexual people; homosexual people; bisexual people

APPENDIX 5 – ACTION PLAN FOR IMPLEMENTING EQUALITY SCHEME

Year 1

- Briefing for all staff on Section 75 duty
- Specialist training for staff involved in screening and impact assessments. Training will cover key aspects such as awareness raising, screening, complaint handling, equality impact assessments, consultation, implementation and monitoring.
- Integration of commitment to statutory duties in all job descriptions
- Integration of equality objectives into organisation's business plan
- Integration of equality objectives into personal performance plans
- Approval of scheme
- Publication of scheme

Year 2

- Annual report to the Equality Commission
- Quarterly report to the Commissioner of the OSFC
- Assessment of monitoring arrangements
- Assessment of arrangements for providing information
- Screening of all policies
- Ongoing screening of new policies

Year 3

- Annual report to the Equality Commission
- Quarterly report to the Commissioner of the OSFC

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- Begin equality impact assessments (if necessary)
 - Ongoing screening of new policies

Year 4

- Annual report to the Equality Commission
- Quarterly report to the Commissioner of the OSFC
- Equality impact assessments (if necessary)
- Ongoing screening of new policies

Year 5

- Annual report to the Equality Commission
- Quarterly report to the Commissioner of the OSFC
- Ongoing screening of new policies
- Review of Equality Scheme