

**EQUALITY COMMISSION
FOR NORTHERN IRELAND**

DRAFT

**Public Authority Progress Report
2004 - 2005**

Newry and Mourne District Council

Newry and Mourne District Council Progress Report 2004 - 2005

Introduction

This report covers the period 1 April 2004 to 31 March 2005 and has been submitted to the Equality Commission for Northern Ireland further to approval by Newry and Mourne District Council at its Equality Committee at their meeting on 10 October 2005.

This report follows the guidance set out by the Equality Commission for Northern Ireland on assessing the extent to which progress has been made. The report contains thirteen sections encompassing important developments in the effective implementation of Newry and Mourne District Council's Section 75 duties.

Name of public authority

Newry and Mourne District Council

Equality Officer name and contact details

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Section 1: Executive Summary

Please provide information about the impact of the implementation of Section 75 from April 2004 to the end of March 2005. This could include existing policies changed to better deliver equality of opportunity, information on the impact of new policies, or better provision and access to services.

Information should be provided in relation to:

1a) outcomes which have impacted on the authority in terms of efficiency or effectiveness.

Response

The establishment of Newry and Mourne District Council's Equality Unit, located within the Administration Department, has been pivotal in taking forward the Council's Section 75 statutory duties. The Equality Unit has responsibility for equality, good relations, best value, public relations and communication and as an example of mainstreaming of equality it provides employees of the Council an opportunity to seek information, advice and support on inclusion of Section 75 groups in their daily work activities.

Highlighting the individuality of each specific section, whilst reinforcing the integrative and strategically focused nature of the Equality Unit's work, the Equality Unit's mission statement is:

“to enable the council to make decisions and deliver its services having recognised the impact of its actions in terms of promoting equality of opportunity, good relations, best value and good communications.”

Having undertaken a community relations audit, Newry and Mourne District Council has followed up on recommendations recognizing distinct work externally and internally. This has led to the re-grading of the Community Relations Officer and Community Relations Assistant positions within the Council, and the renaming of these posts as Internal Good Relations Officer and External Good Relations Officer.

Newry and Mourne District Council is committed to delivering efficiency and effectiveness, and programmes and training during the period 1 April 2004 to 31 March 2005 were aimed at achieving this. Such examples are the intercultural awareness training for Council's Management Team, frontline employees and Elected Members, diversity awareness training for line managers and supervisors, interagency roundtable discussions and meet and greet sessions with members of the minority ethnic and foreign national community in the Newry and Mourne area. These type of events allowed for an interchange of ideas between the Council and Section 75 groups, so enabling greater understanding of needs, which in turn impacts upon improved service delivery.

In addition, in furthering our duty of care towards employees and recognizing the sensitivity and personal nature of many issues faced by employees, the Council has provided a 24 hour Careline with Staffcare. Being confidential and independent, this gives advice and support. This service complements the work of line management, personnel and occupational health. The availability of this service is constantly communicated through various mechanisms such as information leaflets, staff notice boards and 'The Grapevine / Personnel News', a Council news sheet which all employees receive on a monthly basis.

1b) outcomes for people in the nine equality categories.

Response

Newry and Mourne District Council's programme of work has strong partnership dimensions. In addition, this is a people centred approach which has flexibility and the ability to respond and adapt to the changing needs of the community.

The Council is committed to promoting civic dialogue and engagement between and within communities. This has led to many pioneering initiatives such as the establishment of a Household Panel, the Newry Good Relations Forum, a Teacher's Information Pack for Schools addressing the issues of citizenship, culture and diversity, developing a Disability Employment Plan, production of the Citizens News in different formats targeted at all sections of the community, directly engaging with the minority ethnic communities,

and providing substantial funding for community initiatives through its grant aid programme.

1c) policy considerations and decisions which took account of equality implications in relation to major policy issues – in particular, please provide information in relation to:-

- employment policy;
- public procurement including PPP/PFI projects and programmes;
- accessibility to public services across the nine categories, and particularly in relation to migrant workers and Irish Travellers;
- early consideration of the Review of Public Administration; and
- any other significant policy areas relevant to your authority's work.

Response

Newry and Mourne District Council has an affirmative employment action plan which has been approved by the Equality Commission for Northern Ireland.

In addition to this, during the period 1 April 2004 to 31 March 2005, Newry and Mourne District Council has been working with the Equality Commission for Northern Ireland and other selected public authorities to develop a Disability Employment Action Plan. This will be implemented during 2005-2006.

In furthering our duty of care towards employees and recognizing the sensitivity and personal nature of many issues the Council has provided a 24 hour Careline with Staffcare. Being confidential and independent, this gives advice and support with the service complements line management, personnel and occupational health.

Accessibility to public services is of major importance to Newry and Mourne District Council. The Council has identified the emerging issue of increasing numbers of minority ethnics and foreign nationals living within the Newry and Mourne District Council area. This had led to initiatives such as interagency roundtable discussions, the production of a welcome pack in five different languages, information

evenings attended by Elected Members, Council Officers and members of the minority ethnic communities, and specific training for employees and Elected Members in intercultural awareness training.

Although the outcome of the Review of Public Administration may significantly impact upon Newry and Mourne District Council, as no final decisions have as yet been made it has been difficult to assess the consequences of this forthcoming review.

1d) Outline problems encountered and solutions developed in terms of achieving better equality outcomes.

Response

Groups and organisations have indicated that consultation fatigue and the decline in the numbers of the community interested in volunteering are major issues for them. This has significantly impacted upon the level of written consultation received and the number of people who attend consultation events.

As stated previously, Newry and Mourne District Council view interactive and participative engagement through civic and community dialogue as important dimensions in mainstreaming equality of opportunity and good relations. This is reflected in the development of initiatives such as the Household Panel, Newry Good Relations Forum, School's Information Pack events, and organized post primary school events for Local Democracy Week in conjunction with the Electoral Commission.

These types of initiatives show that all levels of engagement with groups and organizations, be they formal or informal, are viewed by Newry and Mourne District Council as being an opportunity to better understand views and opinions regarding the Council, its policy and its delivery of services.

Section 2: Strategic Implementation of the Section 75 Duties

Note: Please enter specific progress on implementation of the good relations duty under section 11 of this template.

- Outline evidence of progress made in developing equality and good relations objectives, performance indicators and targets for inclusion in corporate and annual operating plans during 2004-05. Your response should include any targets for 2005-06.
- Outline what additional strategic areas the Board and/or Senior Management Team identified for action by the authority during the year.
- Outline steps taken to work with other public authorities in progressing the duties.
- Outline any details of partnership work developed or further progressed with the voluntary and/or community sector as a consequence of Section 75 work.
- Please provide details of the **direct** resourcing of Section 75 work during 2004–05. This should include staff appointed/directed (*not names*) and details of any budget allocation, to specifically deliver equality scheme commitments.

Bullet 1

Newry and Mourne District Council has various methods of developing equality and good relations objectives such as:

- An Equality Unit encompassing the functions of equality, best value, good relations, public relations and communications.
- The Council commissioned a Community Relations Audit, and in line with the recommendations of this audit the Council's Community Relations Section has been reorganized. Instead of having a Community Relations Officer and Community Relations Assistant, the two posts have been regraded and the title changed to Good Relations Officer (Internal Good Relations Officer and External Good Relations Officer), each with a specific role and responsibility.
- Creation of a Household Panel which meets on a quarterly basis. This assists the Council directly engage with citizens and seek their views on Council policies and services.
- In conjunction with Mediation Northern Ireland, Newry and Mourne District Council co-ordinates and facilitates civic dialogue through

hosting the Newry Good Relations Forum. The aim of the forum is to positively contribute to good relations in Newry between people of different political, religious and ethnic background and improving relationships between Newry and other parts of the district of Newry and Mourne. This forum provides 'quiet' space for citizens of the Newry area to discuss, debate and challenge perceptions so enabling participants to improve understanding both their own and other participant's views on issues impacting upon the area.

- In addition to the monthly Equality Committee meetings, the Council has continued to mainstream equality objectives into the corporate structure. In assisting the process mainstreaming equality of opportunity and good relations into decision-making and service delivery this means the screening of all new or proposed policies, regular service reviews and the Council's grant process which ensures all applications are systematically equality screened to ensure the Council's funding

Bullet 2

The Council has identified the issue of increasing numbers of minority ethnics and foreign nationals within the Newry and Mourne District Council area. This had led to initiatives such as interagency roundtable discussions, the production of a welcome pack in five different languages, information evenings, and specific training for employees and Elected Members in intercultural awareness training.

In addition, in furthering our duty of care towards employees and recognizing the sensitivity and personal nature of many issues the Council has provided a 24 hour Careline with Staffcare. Being confidential and independent, gives confidential advice and support and the service complements line management, personnel and occupational health.

Bullet 3

Newry and Mourne District Council is a member of the Local Government Statutory Duty Network which meets on a regular basis to share information and best practice regarding the implementation of the statutory duties.

Through work with the Equality Commission for Northern Ireland and in conjunction with Northern Ireland's other 'City' Councils, Newry and Mourne signed up to the Barcelona Declaration which promotes the theme of accessibility with a city environment.

Newry and Mourne District Council has also been working with the Equality Commission in Northern Ireland and other selected public authorities to develop a Disability Employment Action Plan and Policy. This will be implemented during 2005-2006.

In addition, Newry and Mourne District Council is currently liaising with Belfast City Council, in conjunction with Mediation Northern Ireland, with regard to a project addressing the concept of what it means to be a diverse city with a modern Europe. This project will evolve during 2005 and 2006.

Bullet 4

Newry and Mourne Council continues to avail of opportunities to meet with various community and voluntary organisations on a regular basis for the sharing of information and has co-ordinated events and seminars. During the period 1 April 2004 to 31 March 2005 examples of this included:

- A seminar with members of Disability Action at which the Council's Equality Officer and Building Control Officer, along with representatives of the Equality Commission for Northern Ireland raised awareness of accessibility issues and service delivery.
- Roundtable discussions with various groups such as Women's Aid, the Confederation of Community Groups, Southern Education and Library Board, St Vincent De Paul, the Salvation Army, Newry Baptist Church etc to discuss the impacting issue of the growing population of minority ethnics and foreign nationals within the Newry and Mourne District Council area.
- Information awareness seminars, in conjunction with the Council's Community Safety Officer, with community luncheon clubs and community organisations.

Newry and Mourne District Council also has various committees which comprise Councillors and lay members of the community who have a specific interest and knowledge. Examples of these committees are the Council's Sports Development Committee,

Museum Committee, Irish Language Committee and Ulster Scots Committee. It should be noted that each of these committees have specific budgets which allow the committee to allocate funding to the development of the various themes.

Examples of other partnership work include:

- Newry and Mourne District Council's Clerk and Chief Executive membership of the Northern Ireland Race Forum.
- Newry and Mourne District Council membership of Opportunity Now and the Employees Forum on Disability.
- The Council's Assistant Director of Administration (Equality) is on the Board of Opportunity Now NI which strives to progress equality in the workplace.
- The Council's Environmental Health Department, in conjunction with Newry Institute of Further and Higher Education, continues to organize Food Hygiene Training in Cantonese and Mandarin for members of the Chinese community.

Bullet 5

- The Director of Administration is accountable for the overall development, implementation and review of our equality scheme.
- The Assistant Director of Administration (Equality) will advise the Council of progress in relation to the scheme and delegates the Equality Officer, the duty to supervise implementation of the scheme and be a point of contact.
- The Assistant Director of Administration (Equality) is the lead officer of Newry and Mourne District Council's Equality Unit. This unit encompasses the functions of equality, community relations, best value, public relations and communications, and has six full time employees. Whilst the Equality Officer has a specific remit to advance work on the equality scheme delivery, the Internal Good Relations Officer and External Good Relations Officer also have a specific role in promoting good relations.
- Whilst the Council does not have a specific budget allocation to deliver equality scheme commitments, the Equality Officer was allocated £11,500.00 in the period 2004/2005 for Training, Positive / Affirmative Action and Consultancy fees.

Section 3: Screening & Equality Impact Assessment (EQIA)

3a) If a Screening Report has not yet been submitted to the Commission please advise us on the current position with regard to producing this report and forwarding to the Commission.

Response

N/A

3b) If a Screening Report and EQIA Timetable has **previously been submitted** to the Commission please provide an update (**using the matrices in Appendix A**) detailing: -

- i) those policies that were subject to EQIA during 2004-05;
- ii) new/proposed/revised policies screened during 2004-05;
- iii) ongoing EQIA monitoring activities during 2004-05; and
- iv) timetable for Equality Impact Assessments in 2005-06.

Section 4: Training

- Indicate your organisation's progress on the delivery of Section 75 related training and development during 2004-05. Please state if the training is provided within a 5-year Training Plan.
- Outline details of staff and Management Board/Committee training associated with the Section 75 duties/Equality Scheme requirements. Provide details of types of training provision (e.g. general awareness raising, specialist training on EQIA, Screening and Consultation) and who this training was provided for.
- Provide details of training on awareness raising for new staff and refresher training for existing staff.
- Provide details of how affected groups have been involved in the development and/or delivery of training.
- Provide a summary of any training evaluations and comments on the benefits of such training.
- Provide details of arrangements to review training needs as a result of staff recruitment, promotion or reorganisation.

Bullets 1 to 6

Newry and Mourne District Council's commitment to training was set out in Section 12 of its Equality Scheme and further in the Summary Action Plan and Timetable. The Council's believes that the training

plan should evolve to not just meet the needs participants over the lifespan of its Equality Scheme but further into the future. Newry and Mourne District Council is committed to mainstreaming equality which means that all training related to people management and service delivery includes details of the Council's statutory duties to promote equality of opportunity and good relations across the Section 75 categories.

Training undertaken to date has been aimed at increasing awareness and greater understanding of emerging issues, in addition to the Council's statutory equality duties to promote equality of opportunity and good relations and to ensuring improved delivery of our services. Newry and Mourne District Council values training that is of both a formal and informal nature.

Examples of training delivered 1 April 2004 to 31 March 2005 has included:

- Intercultural Communication training for Councillors, Management Team and frontline employees – delivered by Fee Ching Leong, Omi Consultancy
- Diversity Awareness training – delivered by Business in the Community
- Investigators training
- Selection interviewing training
- Child protection training
- Good relations training seminars for Elected Members
- Lunchtime seminars for all employees exploring issues such as cultural diversity, the Ulster Scots and Irish Language, stress and domestic violence.

The views expressed by affected groups during consultation are included in training. An example of this was the delivery of intercultural communication training for Councillors, the Council's Management Team and frontline employees which was developed after roundtable discussions facilitated by the Council's equality Unit.

Evaluations of training have enabled participants to indicate their views upon the benefits and relevancy of their training, and identifying further training needs. While reviews of training evaluations have indicated a positive response, the Council is currently in the process

of reviewing training needs with a view towards recruitment of an employee who will have overall responsibility for the Council's programme of training.

Section 5: Communication

- Provide details of internal and external communication of the authority's commitment to the statutory duties.
- Provide details of how the authority communicates progress on delivery of the statutory duties.
- Provide details of any review of communication activities to ensure effective communication on progressing the statutory duties.

Bullets 1, 2 & 3

Newry and Mourne District Council are fully committed to communicating our commitment to the statutory duties. Examples of internal and external communication include:

- The location of the Council's Corporate Press Office within the Equality Unit. The Corporate Press Office is administered by the Assistant Director of Administration (Equality) and Public Relations Officer. All speeches, press releases, statements and corporate documents reiterate our commitment to equality.
- The Council has a communications strategy, which has been equality screened and is continuously updated.
- The Mayor, Clerk and Chief Executive, Officers and Elected Members express their commitment to the Council's Section 75 duties during speeches at corporate events and public meetings etc.
- The Council's website is used to disseminate information. This can be viewed in both the English and Irish language.
- Publication of the 'Citizens News' booklet which is available in all accessible formats such as braille, large print, audio transcription, and the Irish language. This is produced on a six-monthly basis and circulated to all households in the Newry and Mourne District Council area.
- Council's monthly internal newsletter – 'The Grapevine'.
- Use of the Equality Unit stand at all promotional events.
- Production of staff information leaflets on a range of issues.
- Awareness raising seminars and lectures for the community. Newry and Mourne Council continues to meet with various

- community and voluntary groups on a regular basis for the sharing of information and has co-ordinated events and seminars such as that with Disability Action and the Equality Commission for Northern Ireland.
- Presentations to target groups such as Newry Deaf Club and Shopmobility.

Section 6: Data Collection & Analysis

- Describe any systems that have been established to supplement your available statistical and qualitative research, including consideration given to using internal organisational data and external networks.
- Describe any systems established to monitor the future adverse impact of policies that have been equality impact assessed.
- Detail any research undertaken/commissioned to obtain data/information relating to the nine equality categories.
- Detail the Section 75 equality categories which were covered in any surveys which the authority commissioned/used during the year.

Bullets 1,2,3 and 4

To supplement available statistical and research the Council continues to look to develop and enhance the quality of its relationships and links in the voluntary, community and private sectors.

A variety of these have been established and these include:

- The Equality Commission for Northern Ireland
- LGSC Statutory Duty Network
- Southern Region Community Relations Officers Forum
- Membership of Opportunity Now
- Membership of Employers Forum on Disability
- Links with locally based community networks e.g. ROSA, ROMAL, Confederation of Community Groups,
- Future Ways/Counteract
- Newry and Mourne Deaf Club, RNID and RNIB
- Newry and Mourne Women, South Armagh Rural Women's Network
- Newry and Mourne Users Consortium

- Links with NISRA and the Community Relations Council
- Liaison with other organisations such as NICEM, CoSO, Mediation Northern Ireland and the Parades Commission etc.
- Internet research

The Council's Corporate Communications Strategy has undergone an equality impact assessment.

Section 7: Information Provision, Access to Information and Services

- Outline what action has been taken to review and develop arrangements for the provision of information in accessible formats.
- Detail any initiatives/steps taken to improve access to services.
- Describe any arrangements to develop monitoring systems regarding access to information and services to ensure equality of opportunity.

Bullet 1

During the period 2004-2005 Newry and Mourne District Council continued to liaise with service providers, individuals and consultants such as Visual Access Northern Ireland, Language Express, RNID, RNIB, Disability Action, Newry Deaf Club and Newry and Mourne Users, to enable the provision of information in accessible formats. This has also meant seeking advice and support from organizations such as the Equality Commission for Northern Ireland, Department of Culture, Arts and Leisure, POBAL, Ulster Scots Heritage Council and Plain English Campaign. Examples of this work includes:

- Production of a minority ethnic welcome pack. This was produced in Russian, Spanish, Italian, Polish and Portuguese.
- Publication of the Council's 'Citizens News' booklet. This booklet is produced on a six-monthly basis and circulated directly to all households in the Newry and Mourne District Council area. This publication is also produced in accessible formats such as braille, large print, audio CD, and the Irish language, and is distributed to relevant members of the community.
- Newry and Mourne District Council, and in particular the Council's Environmental Health Department produce leaflets

- and correspondence to the Chinese community in their chosen language.
- The Council's Environmental Health Department continues to use a specialist food hygiene trainer to deliver the Chartered Institute of Environmental Health, Foundation Certificate in Food Hygiene in both Mandarin and Cantonese.
 - The Council Boardroom has a loop system installed. In addition, signers, and where appropriate, loop systems are made available at all conferences organised by the Council.
 - Council's Bilingualism Policy which enables anyone who receives a service from the Council to do so through the medium of Irish or English according to his/her personal choice, and promotes the use of Irish in the internal administration of the Council, in its dealings with other public bodies and also with bodies which provide services to the public of Newry and Mourne.
 - Our website can be viewed in either the English or Irish language.

Bullet 2

Various initiatives have been undertaken to improve access to services. Examples of this include:

- Three events across the Council District where members of the minority ethnic community were invited to attend. At this event they could speak with Elected Members and Council Officers regarding services which the Council can provide. This was organized in conjunction with various community and volunteering organisations who undertake English language classes for minority ethnics within the Newry and Mourne area.
- Public launch and production of a minority ethnic welcome pack in Russian, Spanish, Italian, Polish and Portuguese.
- Directly promoting and funding ESOL classes in conjunction with Newry and Kilkeel Institute of Further and Higher Education.
- All corporate documents continue to be made available in large print, audio CD, braille, and Irish Language.
- Actively promoted to groups through meetings and seminars. An example of this was the series of meetings with Senior Citizen Luncheon Clubs to inform them of services provided by the Council and also seeking their views on these.

- Production of a Teacher's Information Pack for Schools which introduces young people to the Council, and the issues of citizenship, culture and diversity. This was designed in conjunction with teachers.
- Publication of the Council's 'Citizens News' booklet is produced on a six-monthly basis and circulated to all households in the Newry and Mourne District Council area. This provides information regarding services offered by the Council such as assisted bin collections for members of the community who are unable to move bins to the front of their houses. The Customer Services Section monitors the levels of this service provision.
- Information leaflets and correspondence to the Chinese community translated in the appropriate language.
- Training courses organised by the Council's Environmental Health Department employ a specialist food hygiene trainer to deliver these in both Mandarin and Cantonese.
- Ensuring press statements and public advertisements are accessible to all sections of the community.
- Council's Bilingualism Policy which enables anyone who receives a service from the Council to do so through the medium of Irish or English according to his/her personal choice, and promotes the use of Irish in the internal administration of the Council, in its dealings with other public bodies and also with bodies which provide services to the public of Newry and Mourne.
- Our website can be viewed in either the English or Irish language.

Bullet 3

Various systems of monitoring access to information and services are in operation such as:

- The Council's Customer Services Section monitors refuse collection and the numbers of households receiving assisted bin collections.
- The Council's Finance Department keeps a detailed record of groups who are successful in receiving grant aid from the Council's Voluntary Contribution programme.
- The Council's Irish Language Department monitors the implementation of the Council's Bilingualism Policy for the

promotion and use of the Irish Language and prepares regular reports to the Irish Language Committee.

Section 8: Complaints

- Identify, during 2004-05, the number of Section 75 complaints:
 - received by the authority;
 - resolved by the authority;
 - which were not resolved to the satisfaction of the complainant; and
 - which were referred to the Equality Commission.

Response

Newry and Mourne District Council received no Section 75 complaints during 2004-2005.

Section 9: Scheme Timetable

- Provide an update of your equality scheme implementation timetable (covering all the scheme commitments), identifying any changes since your previous report. Please detail any planned actions outstanding.

Response

The five-year equality scheme implementation timetable is endorsed by Newry and Mourne District Council's Equality Committee. This committee is a full Council committee including all 30 Elected Representatives.

The Equality Committee meets on a monthly basis and the agenda is comprised of a variety of issues that enable the elected members keep up to date with work undertaken to promote equality of opportunity and good relations.

At 31 March 2005 Newry and Mourne District Council the Equality Impact Assessment of the Council's Bilingualism Policy, on the promotion and active use of the Irish Language, was at a decision making stage.

In addition, with regard to the equality scheme implementation timetable Newry and Mourne District Council has decided that to best

mainstream equality, future reviews of policies and practices be integrated into ongoing service reviews.

Section 10: Consultation, Participation and Engagement

- Provide details of organisational arrangements for managing Section 75 consultation exercises e.g. processes, methods and communication channels used.
- Provide details of processes adopted to engage with representative groups during 2004-05.
- Please indicate how effective your engagement was with Section 75 representative groups.
- Outline measures taken to enhance the level of engagement that were successful and unsuccessful.

Bullets 1 to 4

Newry and Mourne District Council's Equality Unit has responsibility for co-ordinating and managing Section 75 consultation exercises and processes.

The Council set out its commitment to consultation on its equality scheme, namely:

- ensuring that it is proactive, in its work with representative groups and individuals of the Section 75 categories;
- finding out how best to obtain their views;
- using participative and user-friendly consultation techniques to ensure that consultation is innovative, inclusive and meaningful; and
- ensuring that any barriers to effective consultation are removed.

All levels of engagement with groups and organizations, be they formal or informal, are viewed by Newry and Mourne District Council as being an opportunity to better understand views and opinions regarding the Council, its policy and its delivery of services.

In view of the limited nature of engagement and feedback based purely on using written consultation, Newry and Mourne District Council prefers a more qualitative interactive approach to engaging consultees. This ensures processes are meaningful and inclusive,

with consultation events being designed to raise awareness of the Council, engage interest, be user friendly, non-wordy, participative, time efficient and encourage positive feedback.

During the period of 1 April 2004- 31 March 2005, the Council used various mechanisms to engage and consult. Examples of these included our Household Panel, interagency roundtable discussions, information and meet and greet evenings with the minority ethnic and foreign national community, the Newry Good Relations Forum, Disability Action, and events such as Local Democracy Week and School's Information Pack events which encouraged participation by primary and post primary schools.

Section 11: The Good Relations Duty

Provide details of steps taken to implement or progress the good relations duty during the year. Examples of such steps might include: undertaking a good relations audit; developing a strategy or adopting a framework; providing training; and/or any targeted work done to promote or achieve better relations with or between one or more relevant group (e.g. Irish Travellers; groups dealing with political opinion issues etc). Please indicate any findings or expected outcomes from this work.

Response

Since 1989, Newry and Mourne District Council has had an active Community Relations / Good Relations Programme. The Council's annual strategic plan must be submitted to the Community Relations Unit in the Office of the First Minister and Deputy First Minister for approval.

The Council commissioned a Community Relations Audit in 2003, and following the recommendations of this audit the Council's Community Relations Section has been reorganized. The two full-time posts have been re-graded and their titles changed to Good Relations Officer (Internal Good Relations Officer and External Good Relations Officer), each with a specific role and responsibility.

The focus of the Council's Community Relations programme is primarily on relationship building and in providing space for difficult conversations to take place between citizens of different backgrounds

and traditions. During the period 1 April 2004 to 31 March 2005, in line with good relations duty under Section 75 (2) the traditional two-identity approach has been further expanded to include the recent growth the ethnic minority communities and foreign nationals.

Newry and Mourne District Council's Good Relations Strategic Plan has four aims:

Aim 1 – To encourage greater understanding within the community in Newry and Mourne.

Aim 2 – To enable the Council make decisions and deliver services recognizing the impact of its actions.

Aim 3 – To encourage the development of civic capacity.

Aim 4 – To continually improve the capacity of the Good Relations team to provide a quality service.

Under the four aims of the Council's Good Relations Strategic Plan key elements of Newry and Mourne District Council's programme of work has included:

- Meet and greet sessions with members of the minority ethnic and foreign national community.
- Interagency roundtable workshops reviewing the issues associated with the growing minority ethnic community within the Newry and Mourne area.
- A Good Relations Grant Programme which provides financial assistance for groups and organizations addressing issues of good relations within the community.
- Facilitating and co-ordinating community discussion and dialogue including the unique Newry Good Relationships Forum, which is widely regarded as a model of good practice both in Northern Ireland and also in Great Britain.
- Working in partnership with the Community Relations Council to organize and deliver a programme of good relations training to meet the needs of the Elected Members of Newry and Mourne District Council.
- Support for a programme of cross community events with a particular focus upon diversity and a programme of events aimed at increasing understanding of cultural traditions and identity.

- Providing advice and support to individuals, groups and organizations.
- Continuing to mainstream a good relations ethos throughout the Council through the REDI¹ initiative.

Section 12: Additional Comments on Mainstreaming

The main aim of the statutory duties is to mainstream equality of opportunity and good relations considerations into the functions of the authority, leading to better policies and service delivery. Many of the questions in the previous sections of this template relate to equality scheme commitments. Please provide any additional information/comments you think may be relevant including:

- any factors that enhanced or impeded equality scheme implementation during 2004-05;
- benefits for the authority resulting from mainstreaming; and
- ideas for future effective mainstreaming of the duties.

Response

The Section 75 duties continue to enable Newry and Mourne District Council meaningfully engage issues which previously may have been viewed as contentious and / or sensitive. As an ever evolving statutory function the process of implementation has allowed the development of a learning environment within the organisation.

The Council believe the statutory duties have encouraged greater consultation and specific projects and programmes, which have enabled organizations and persons from the nine groups to have greater access to decision-makers in the area.

Newry and Mourne District Council therefore view the Section 75 statutory duties as having a positive impact and contributing to decision-making processes and formulation of policy.

¹ Relationships in Equity, Diversity and Interdependence.

Section 13: Concluding Questions

This short questionnaire is included in the template to enable you to provide an overall view of the effectiveness of the statutory duties for your authority (Question A) and for the Section 75 categories (Questions B & C).

QUESTION A

Does the authority believe its work to date on implementing the statutory duties has produced positive benefits for the organisation? (Please tick) YES X NO _____

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

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

QUESTION B

Does the authority believe its work to date on implementing the statutory duties has produced positive benefits for groups within the Section 75 categories? (Please tick) YES X NO ___

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

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

QUESTION C

If you answered **yes** to **QUESTION B**, for each of the categories where a noticeable or very noticeable change has occurred, please give examples of those changes to policies or practices which have resulted in positive change. If the change was a result of an EQIA please tick the appropriate box in column 3:

	Policy or Practice	Column 3: Result of EQIA
Persons of different religious belief	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Civic and community dialogue such as Newry Good Relations Forum 	
Persons of different political opinion	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Civic and community dialogue such as Newry Good Relations Forum 	
Persons of different racial groups	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Meet and greet sessions with minority ethnic and foreign nationals within Council area. • Welcome pack produced in five languages outlining key services and contact details. • Directly promoting and funding ESOL classes in conjunction with Newry and Kilkeel Institute of Further and Higher Education. 	
Persons of different age	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Teacher's Information Pack for Schools. • Events for post primary schools during Local Democracy Week, conducted in conjunction with the Electoral Commission. • Intergenerational conference in conjunction with the Newry and Mourne Senior Citizens Consortium. 	

	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Household Panel 	
Persons with different marital status	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Flexible working policies 	
Persons of different sexual orientation	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Staff Care 24 hour Careline • Investigators Training 	
Men and women generally	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Staff Care 24 hour Careline • Household Panel 	
Persons with and without a disability	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Disability Employment Action Plan • Council signed up to Barcelona Declaration 	
Persons with and without dependents	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Flexible working policies • Support of Carers Conference 	

Appendix A

Screening & EQIA Update

Please enter details relating to the authority's progress using the following matrices.

i) EQIA Timetable – 2004-05

Title of policy EQIA underway during April 2004- March 2005	Stage (as per Steps 1-7 of EQIA Process) As at end March 2005	If joint-EQIA please state partner authorities	Outline any adjustments to policy intended to benefit individuals from the nine equality categories and outline the relevant categories affected.	Were adjustments to policy a result of <u>A</u>ssessment of adverse impact/ feedback from <u>C</u>onsultation, or <u>B</u>oth <i>Please enter A, C or Both</i> 	If EQIA decision making stage completed, is amended policy being implemented? <u>Y</u>es/<u>N</u>o
1. Bilingualism Policy	Decision making stage	N/A	Increased awareness and understanding of policy	Both	

ii) Ongoing Screening Activities 2004-05

Title of policy subject to screening during April 2004- March 2005	If joint policy please state partner authorities	Was initial screening decision changed following consultation? <u>Yes/No</u>	If Screening completed is policy being subject to EQIA? <u>Yes/No</u>	If EQIA planned indicate year for assessment
1. None				

iii) Ongoing EQIA Monitoring Activities 2004-05

Title of EQIA subject to Stage 7 monitoring during April 2004- March 2005	If joint policy please state partner authorities	Indicate if differential impacts previously identified have reduced or increased	Indicate if adverse impacts previously identified have reduced or increased
1. None			

iv) 2005-06 EQIA Time-table

Title of EQIAs due to be commenced during April 2005 – March 2006	Existing or New policy? Please enter E or N below.	If joint-EQIA please state partner authorities	Please indicate expected date of completion of EQIA Stage 6 i.e Decision making stage
1. None			