

EQUALITY COMMISSION FOR NORTHERN IRELAND

Public Authority Five Year Review Report

This report template includes a number of self assessment questions under the twelve key elements of an equality scheme. Please enter information at the relevant part of each Section in the template and ensure that it is submitted to the Commission electronically (by completing this template) **and** in writing, with a signed cover letter from the Chief Executive or, in his/her absence, the Deputy Chief Executive (or equivalent).

Name of Public Authority

Newry and Mourne District Council

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Executive Summary

Please provide some main conclusions in terms of:

a) To what extent has your Public Authority's approved scheme provided a workable basis for mainstreaming the need to promote Equality of Opportunity and Good Relations into policy-making over the past five years?

Our Equality Scheme set out Newry and Mourne District Council's various responsibilities and set a five year timetable for the Council.

Newry and Mourne District Council has found that its Equality Scheme has helped to mainstream the principles of equality of opportunity and good relations through outlining the Council's responsibility to meet its statutory duties contained within the Section 75 of the NI Act 1998.

This has been primarily delivered through the Council's Equality Unit and Equality Committee. The establishment of the Council's Equality Unit, having responsibility for equality, good relations, best value (performance management), public relations and communication, is an example of the move towards mainstreaming of equality into decision-making, policy decisions and operational processes within our organisation.

The Equality Scheme has also afforded an opportunity for difficult issues to be discussed not just within the workplace and Council chamber, but also in terms of consultations with Section 75 groups.

b) What key lessons have been learnt over the past five years in terms of effectively implementing the approved Equality Scheme?

Newry and Mourne District Council has found that it is important an Equality Scheme should be easily understood, realistic in terms of its time frame of implementation, and relevant to the needs of those individuals who have the responsibility to implement it. It may also have proved beneficial to receive more detailed

information in terms of focussed training, in-depth screening, and consultation processes.

In addition, more consideration needed to be given towards understanding the complex nature of local government within Northern Ireland, and how this could affect the pace of equality scheme implementation. In this respect Newry and Mourne District Council placed great emphasis upon relationship building through dialogue which leads towards encouraging individuals to embrace the spirit of the legislation.

c) What more needs to be done to achieve outcomes for individuals from the nine equality categories?

As stated above, meaningful dialogue and consultation can allow organisations to actually ‘grow’ in the spirit of the legislation. This sustainable relationship building is key to the successful long-term delivery of equality of opportunity and good relations, not just in the Newry and Mourne District Council area but to within Northern Ireland.

Newry and Mourne District Council believes that its Equality Scheme, in combination with its Good Relations Programme, has been a means of raising awareness and challenging mindsets and attitudes.

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.

Our Council has been committed to promoting civic dialogue and engagement between and within communities. This has led to many 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.

1. A general introductory statement specifying the purpose of the Scheme and the Public Authority's commitment to the statutory duties.

1(a) To what extent were Senior Management involved in ensuring scheme compliance over the five year period and what further steps could be undertaken to ensure effective internal arrangements?

Prompt – Identify any changes to arrangements for managing scheme implementation, and what were the lessons learnt in terms of enablers and impediments to monitoring scheme implementation?

Senior Management have been committed to ensuring that the Council has been compliant with their commitment to deliver the legislation in spirit and practice through the Council's Equality Scheme.

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 to 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, performance management, 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.

The Council's Equality Committee, a committee of which all Councillors are a member, meets on a monthly basis and approves the Council's yearly progress reports to the Equality Commission for Northern Ireland on the implementation of the Council's Equality Scheme.

The Equality Committee has also been a place for impacting equality issues to be debated, discussed and decided upon. This has enabled Elected Members to gain a greater understanding of their civic role and responsibility in terms of promoting equality of opportunity and good relations.

1(b) Outline annual direct expenditure of resources to ensure that the statutory duties were complied with, in terms of staff and money over the past five years, and comment on the extent that all necessary resources were allocated.

Prompt – Identify costs related to equality unit staff, use of consultants, allocation of budgets to training/publications/research, extent of in-year bids and/or reallocation of resources. What were the lessons learnt in terms of enablers and impediments to monitoring resourcing? What could the Public Authority do in future to ensure effective allocation and monitoring of necessary resources?

It should be noted that whilst the Council does not have a specific budget allocation to deliver equality scheme commitments, the Equality Officer is allocated funding for project areas such as Training, Positive / Affirmative Action and Consultancy fees.

The table below outlines Newry and Mourne District Council's allocation of resources to the Equality Officer to ensure the statutory duties are complied with. This includes direct salary costs and programme / project costs.

Financial Year	Full-Time Equivalent Staff	Allocated Budget (£)
2001/02	Equality Officer	64624
2002/03	Equality Officer	62508
2003/04	Equality Officer	73990
2004/05	Equality Officer	69918
2005/06	Equality Officer	70974

While the previous table is a reflection of funding directly allocated to equality, Newry and Mourne District Council does not view this as being the sole level of resources. As we move forwards in mainstreaming equality and good relations, it is the view of Newry and Mourne District Council that all budgets across Council Departments will continue to take account of the need to promote equality of opportunity and good relations through integrating this into their decision-making and programming processes.

2. An outline of how the Public Authority intends to assess its compliance with the Section 75 duties and for consulting on matters to which a duty under that section is likely to be relevant.

2(a) Outline impacts and outcomes (for the Public Authority and/or individuals from the nine equality categories) over the past five years and what further steps could be undertaken to build on these or address underreporting?

Prompt – Were outcomes delivered for all of the nine equality categories? Were annual progress reports critically reviewed before or after submission to the Commission. What examples of good practice from other Public Authorities could be adopted?

The following are examples of impacts and outcomes:

- Creation of an Equality Unit encompassing the functions of equality, performance management, good relations, public relations and communications.
- Commissioning of a Community Relations Audit. 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 more targeted and focused Good Relations Grant Scheme which has a clear evaluation process to identify benefits and outcomes of projects funded through the Good Relations budget.
- Creation of a Household Panel which meets on a quarterly basis. Members of the Council's Senior Management Team attend each of these meetings, and this assists the Council directly engage with citizens and seek their views on Council policies and services. This is a direct example of participative democracy in operation.

- 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.
- All Councillors are members of the Council's Equality Committee. This committee meets on a monthly basis and considers items directly relating to Equality and Good Relations matters.
- Mainstreaming 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, and regular service reviews.
- The Council's Grant Awarding process has been amended to ensure all applications are systematically screened. The application form has been amended for easier completion, and the decision on how far all project applications address equality of opportunity and good relations has been integrated into the scoring and prioritising process.
- Producing and making Council documents available in a range of alternative formats which have included large print, Braille, audio CD, in Irish language, Polish, Cantonese and Mandarin.
- All Council Members, Officers, line managers and employees have received training in their roles and responsibilities as employees and Members of Council.

- All new and revised Council policies and procedures are screened to identify if they do, or could, adversely impact on any of the nine categories or dimensions within these categories. These policies are then amended to mitigate adverse impact so ensuring increased equality of opportunity and good relations.
- 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.
- Production of a Teacher's Information Pack for Schools addressing the issues of citizenship, culture and diversity.
- Development of a Disability Employment Plan, in conjunction with the Equality Commission for Northern Ireland.
- Bullying/Harassment training provided and appointment of harassment advisors.
- Production of the Citizens News. This is produced twice a year and is circulated to all households within the Newry and Mourne District Council area.
- Directly engaging with the minority ethnic communities, producing a welcome / information pack in five different languages, providing specific training for employees and Elected Members in intercultural awareness, and holding 'meet and greet' evenings across the District.
- Diversity Awareness Training for all Line Managers, and the initiation of a Diversity Tool Assessment in conjunction with Business in the Community.
- Training, organised by the Council's Environmental Health Department, provided for the Chinese community in Mandarin and Cantonese.

- Hosting an Open Spaces event to actively engage employees in a participative, responsive and transparent manner.
- Providing substantial funding for community initiatives through its grant aid programme.
- Through the Disability Discrimination Act 1995 legislation, a broad range of reasonable adjustments to physical access to buildings and access to Council's services, along with signage, have been introduced. This has included the purchase of a portable loop system.
- Lay members are members of various committees such as the Irish Language Committee, Ulster Scots Committee, Sports Development Committee, and Arts / Museum Committee.
- Flexible working policies allowing the opportunity for employees to request job-share, condensed working hours etc.
- 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.
- Undertaking a Diversity Dimension Model assessment to develop and enhance a diversity culture within the Council.

It must be noted that this list is by no means inclusive of all outcomes, but represents how Newry and Mourne District Council has meaningfully embraced its Section 75 responsibilities and statutory duties.

While there may many examples of good practice in other public authorities, it must be recognised that not all initiatives are directly transferable to other Local Authorities within Northern Ireland.

However, Newry and Mourne District Council believes that working to maintain sustainable relationships is the key principle underpinning civic society and initiatives centred around structured dialogue processes such as household panels, community forums and Councillors forums are pathways to this.

The Council's Good Relations Forum, facilitated by Mediation Northern Ireland and Council Officers, has been an example of good practice to many other Councils. This has provided '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.

2(b) Outline the number of Equality Scheme related consultation exercises undertaken by your Authority over the past five years? Set out the number and percentage related to screening exercises and to EQIAs and indicate the extent that your scheme helped you to engage with external stakeholders?

Prompt – Identify your Authority's most and least successful means of consultation in relation to Section 75 categories. Why were some means of consultation more or less successful in relation to particular equality categories?

Over the past five years Newry and Mourne District Council's Equality Unit has had 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.

From the outset it must also be recognised 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.

In view of the limited nature of engagement and feedback based purely on using written consultation, Newry and Mourne District Council has preferred a more qualitative and 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 five year period the Council has 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, an Open Spaces Event for employees, participating at events organised by the Equality Commission for Northern Ireland, Disability Action, the Local Government Staff Commission, Business in the Community and the Employers Forum for Disability, and events such as Local Democracy Week and School's Information Pack events which encouraged participation by primary and post primary schools.

Over the five year period of our Equality Scheme, the following public consultation exercises were undertaken by Newry and Mourne District Council:

- 2000, public consultation on Draft Equality Scheme – the written consultation exercise was found to provide a poor response with many groups complaining of consultation fatigue at this early stage of equality scheme development.
- 2001, final Equality Scheme consultation.
- Screening exercise of policies - In an attempt to ensure a meaningful and inclusive consultation process, the consultation events were designed to raise awareness of the

Council, engage interest, be user friendly, non-wordy, participative, and time efficient.

In general, the consultation exercise was integrated into the existing agendas of groups at their normal meetings. Doing so enabled people to be more comfortable in their own environments, affording ordinary group members, rather than spokespeople and development workers, an opportunity to make a valuable contribution. It also ensured higher numbers of people participating in each event.

Four types of consultation methods were used:

- Open Spaces - 13 Open Spaces events were held and a total of 80 groups and individuals representing Section 75 categories were involved. The Open Spaces events were positively received and participants found the process stimulating, considerably raising the awareness of what the Council does.
 - Joint Consultation - Joining with other District Councils, and with other public bodies was an attempt to utilise public resources more effectively, and to enable consultees to respond to public bodies strategically.
 - Focus Groups - Focus groups with a fixed agenda were held with 7 groups to suit their needs.
 - Written Consultation - A total of 7 organisations out of 250 responded in writing to requests for comment on all Council policies, and the Equality Impact Assessment timetable.
- Consultation on the outcome of Screening Exercise that considered all identified Council policies relevant at the time of writing the Equality Scheme.
 - Good Relations Forum (ongoing from 1999) - ten full meetings per year running in the period September to June, with three smaller contact meetings held during the months of July and August. Facilitated by Mediation Northern Ireland, these are run under Chatham House Rules.
 - Elected Members Forum (ongoing from 1998) – four meetings per year, facilitated by Duncan Morrow, Chief executive of the Community Relations Council.

- May 2003, Equality Impact Assessment consultation on Council's Corporate Communications Strategy.
- January 2004, Equality Impact Assessment consultation on Council's Bilingualism Policy.
- Household Panel – meets on a quarterly basis. The members of the Panel, which was selected by an independent research company, are citizens from across the District.

The Panel meets to discuss Council services and facilities and to suggest how we can continually improve the services we deliver to our citizens. It provides a direct opportunity for Citizens to have a say in how our services are designed and delivered and the Council welcomes the useful feedback which it receives at these meetings.

- 2004 / April 2005, consultation with user groups over a proposal seeking to develop a full size gaelic pitch with changing room facilities within the boundary of Kilbroney Park, a Council owned facility in the town of Rostrevor.
- Meet and greet evenings with the minority ethnic and foreign national community (2005) – three meetings held in Kilkeel, Newry and Newtownhamilton which invited representatives from statutory agencies such as the Health Trust, Education and Library Board, PSNI and Councillors to speak with new residents in the District.
- December 2005, consultation with user groups regarding the potential sale of Derryleckagh Playing Fields to Newry Mitchels GFC.
- December 2005 – internal employee survey relating to disability within the workplace. This was in conjunction with the Council's Disability Employment Plan.
- June 2006, Equality Impact Assessment consultation on Council's Voluntary Contributions Policy.

- May 2006, meetings with members of Newry Polish Resource Centre.

Again it should be stressed that all levels of engagement with individuals, groups and organizations, be they formal or informal, are viewed as being an opportunity to better understand views and opinions regarding the Council, its policy and its delivery of services.

2(c) Indicate if your list of consultees was amended during the five year period and what further steps could be taken to develop your level of engagement and consultation?

Prompt – Outline the extent your Authority did or did not move away from formal consultation and on what criteria was any such consultation targeted? To what extent were requests to be included and/or objections from those not included in the consultation process received and how were these addressed?

During the five year period to ensure consultation processes continue to be meaningful, the Council regularly updated its consultation list.

In addition to ensure consultations are targeted and focused Newry and Mourne District Council does not carry out written consultation through large mailing of a general nature any more, but targets correspondence to individuals and organisations who have a specific interest in the area being looked at. However, the Council does continue to advertise equality impact assessment consultations in its six local newspapers.

All comments received during an equality impact assessment consultation period are acknowledged and reported to the Equality Committee for consideration and a decision.

2(d) To what extent did your Authority consult directly with directly affected individuals as well as with representative groups, particularly in relation to young people and those with learning disabilities, and was this sufficient?

Prompt – How effective was your Authority at providing feedback to consultees as a result of consultation exercises? What were the lessons learnt in terms of enablers and impediments to consulting directly with affected individuals? What could your Authority do in future to provide effective consultee feedback?

Some of these issues have been referred to in 2(b) above. However, in relation to young people and those with learning disabilities Newry and Mourne District has been proactive in consulting with young people through the following:

- 2000 / 2001 – Direct consultation with young people regarding the Council's Equality Scheme and Screening of Policies. Members of the Equality Unit directly engaged with young people by meeting them at their youth centre.
- Schools Pack (2003 / 2004) – this involved the production of a Teachers' Information Pack for Schools which introduces young people to the Council, and the issues of citizenship, culture and diversity. This work pack was designed in conjunction with teachers. In addition, the Council also ran a series of events to complement the Pack to reinforce the meaning of diversity for the schoolchildren.
- Allsorts Project (2005 / 2006 ongoing) – a youth initiative, run by the Good Relations Section in conjunction with the Community Safety Partnership and Youth Service, involving the Bosco Youth Club and members of the Travelling Community. This looks at exploring issues and personal experiences of prejudice and discrimination, with the culmination being the publication of a book by the young people.
- 'Play in a Week' (2006) – this was a joint initiative, involving members of the Council's Environmental Health Department

and Equality Unit, to consult with young people on Environmental issues relating to the District.

- Photographic Youth Project (2006) – a youth initiative through the Good Relations Programme where twenty young people from across the Council area were asked to take photographs of issues of importance affecting them. The young people then presented this to Councillors, and it is hoped that this may form the basis of a future youth panel / forum.

Newry and Mourne District Council has engaged with people with learning disabilities through:

- Newry and Mourne District Council's Disability Liaison Officer – this post was created in 1985 and the role of this Officer is to provide participation opportunities for people with a disability in sport and recreation to include participation in the Arts and other Council activities i.e. access, training, employment.
- Engaging Disability Action, Newry and Mourne User Group, Newry Vision Forum, and the Conifers Resource Centre, Newry Health Trust for advice regarding those with Special Needs and how Council could engage with them.

3. The Authority's arrangements for assessing and consulting on the impact of policies adopted or proposed to be adopted on the promotion of equality of opportunity.

3(a) Outline and discuss the number of policies your Authority subject to screening over the past five years, setting out the number and percentage of 'policies screened in' on the basis of equality considerations and the percentage 'screened in' on the basis of the good relations duty.

Prompt – What were the lessons learnt in terms of enablers and impediments to screening in terms of, screening criteria and priority factors? Are there any other criteria which could usefully be included? What lessons are there regarding responsibility for screening at regional level and subsequent screening of local policy? What could your Authority do in future to ensure effective screening arrangements? Set out in an Appendix a list of all policies screened out during scheme implementation.

Newry and Mourne District Council screened 85 identified Council policies in 2001. From this initial screening exercise, carried out using the four questions as provided by the Equality Commission for Northern Ireland in their Statutory Duty Guidance, 17 policies were identified as having a potential adverse impact on at least one of the nine identified categories. This exercise set the EQIA timetable for the period of Newry and Mourne District Council's Equality Scheme. The proposed timetable and the screening proforma used for this process are contained within Appendix 1 and Appendix 2 respectively.

However, as Council gained more understanding, confidence and experience of the statutory duties and began to implement the proposed timetable of equality impact assessment it became apparent there was a need to review the original screening exercise.

It was found that Equality Impact Assessments were not the most appropriate method for Newry and Mourne District Council to review Council policies and procedures, and the Council decided

that to best mainstream equality of opportunity and good relations, future reviews of policies and practices be integrated into ongoing service reviews.

Through working with organisations such as the Department of the Environment, the Department of Finance and Personnel, and the Local Government Staff Commission for policies associated in the areas of recruitment, finance, employment and procurement. In addition to the sharing of data and revising policies, this ensured against there being limited duplication of work in these policy areas.

In addition, all new or proposed policies or notices of motion are equality screened at either the draft stage or at the policy adoption stage. In line with trying to mainstream the principles of equality of opportunity and good relations all new or proposed policies are screened, in conjunction with the Council's Equality Officer, by the Line Manager or Departmental Director responsible for implementing the new or proposed policy.

The outcome of each of these screening exercises is reported through the Council's Equality Committee or the appropriate Committee where a decision on the issue may be made.

3(b) To what extent did your Authority's consideration of the screening criteria not identify equal opportunity implications on any of Section 75 categories, but for which consultees then highlighted problems?

Prompt – Identify the extent the collection of quantitative and qualitative data informed screening processes. Outline the extent consultations with representative groups produced data to inform the screening process which was not otherwise available to your Authority. Outline any difficulties in identifying policies and equality implications using the definition policy set out in the Guide to the Statutory Duties.

Newry and Mourne District Council has not found any occasion where consideration of the equality screening criteria did not identify equal opportunity implications on any of the Section 75 categories, but for which consultees then highlighted problems.

3(c) Outline over the past five years how many EQIAs your Authority commenced as a result of i) initial screening and ii) as a result of screening new/revised policies subsequently, and discuss the extent that your Authority has become more effective at identifying equality of opportunity dimensions in its policies.

Prompt – Were changes made to the screening process? Outline any examples of any changes made to policies to better promote equality of opportunity and/or good relations, rather than to address any perceived differential impact, as a result of screening policies that were ‘screened out’?

The following Equality Impact Assessments were commenced as a result of initial screening:

Corporate Communications Strategy

The key areas addressed within this equality impact assessment were:

- Media Relations
- Public Information
- Consultation Research
- Corporate Identity
- Promotions
- Public Affairs
- Internet Communications

Bilingualism Policy

This equality impact assessment addressed the key aims and objectives of the Council’s Bilingualism Policy which represented the basis of Council’s approach to the promotion and usage of the Irish Language which were as follows:

- To enable anyone who receives a service from Council to do so through the medium of Irish or English according to his/her personal choice.
- To foster and promote the use of Irish in the internal

administration of Council, in its dealings with other public bodies and also with bodies which provide services to the public of Newry and Mourne.

Voluntary Contribution Policy

This equality impact assessment addressed the key aims and objectives of the Council's Voluntary Contributions Policy which represents the basis of Council's approach to the allocation of funding and is as follows:

- Acting as the civic leader in Newry and Mourne, either alone or in partnership, to provide capital and recurrent grant assistance to bona fide groups within the district in order to improve the quality of life of citizens and visitors and to enhance the local environment.

As stated within section 3(a), all new or proposed policies or notices of motion are equality screened at either the draft stage or at the policy adoption stage. In line with trying to mainstream the principles of equality of opportunity and good relations all new or proposed policies are screened, in conjunction with the Council's Equality Officer, by the Line Manager or Departmental Director responsible for implementing the new or proposed policy.

The outcome of each of these screening exercises is reported through the Council's Equality Committee or the appropriate Committee where a decision on the issue may be made.

3(d) Outline over the past five year period the percentage of your Authority's initial EQIA timetable that reached i) stage 6 of the EQIA process i.e. decision making, and ii) stage 7 of the EQIA process i.e. annual monitoring and publication of results, and indicate the extent that your Authority has become more effective at progressing EQIAs.

Prompt – Explain any slippage that occurred and what was done to rectify it. To what extent did you notify representative groups of this slippage and what was

their reaction? What were the lessons learnt in terms of enablers and impediments to monitoring EQIAs?

The following Equality Impact Assessments have reached stage 6 of the EQIA process:

- Corporate Communications Strategy
- Bilingualism Policy

The following Equality Impact Assessments have reached stage 7 of the EQIA process:

- Corporate Communications Strategy

The following Equality Impact Assessment is currently at stage 5 (consultation):

- Voluntary Contributions Policy

While slippage within the timetable has occurred due to work commitments, the Equality Officer's post being vacant for a period midway through the five year period, and the limited availability of accurate and meaningful data, Newry and Mourne District Council has found reviews of policies and practices being integrated into ongoing service reviews to be effective in terms of organisational learning.

To date, Newry and Mourne District Council has received no complaints about any of these changes to its Equality Scheme and its Equality Impact Assessment timetable, and we believe our openness, and overriding commitment to direct engagement through civic dialogue initiatives and relationship building has contributed to addressing community confidence in Newry and Mourne District Council's commitment to the Section 75 statutory duties to promote equality of opportunity and good relations.

4. The Authority's arrangements for monitoring any adverse impact of policies by the Authority on the promotion of equality of opportunity.

4(a) To what extent were sufficient arrangements put in place to collect data relating to the nine equality categories to monitor the impact of policies and what could your Authority do in future to develop monitoring arrangements?

Prompt – What were the lessons learnt in terms of enablers and impediments to monitoring and developing new/additional quantitative data over the past five years. Did your Authority consult its own employees or collaborate with other authorities to collect data? Did your Authority engage with representative groups to develop monitoring arrangements?

In the beginning the area of ascertaining and collating meaningful data relating to the nine categories was a daunting task. While the Equality Commission for Northern Ireland's guidance on available data was useful as a reference source, there was little data applicable to information at a local level.

However, this changed with the publication of the 2001 Census figures. These helped provide baseline information available which could be applied more usefully to issues faced by Newry and Mourne District Council within their area. Further information released by NISRA during 2002 and 2003 continued to provide even greater details at a local level, and even afforded opportunities to undergo comparisons with other Council areas.

Newry and Mourne District Council has also benefited from membership of organisations such as the Employers Forum on Disability and Business in the Community, and the Local Government Statutory Duty Network meetings have provided networking opportunities to explore shared issues and data sources.

While the past five years has seen great strides in the quality and quantity of information available, there are still gaps evident in the areas of information relating to racial groups and sexual orientation.

In addition, it has also be difficult to accurately ascertain information relating to political opinion as often this has been done through either reflecting upon voting habits at local government elections which only happen every four years, or using religious affiliation as a crude measure of political opinion.

In such a politically contested District Council area figures for political party support could be deemed inaccurate because all political parties do not contest every District Electoral Area. An example of this is where no unionist parties contest seats within the Slieve Gullion District Electoral Area, so leaving it to be a clear contest between the SDLP and Sinn Fein for the five available Council seats.

This has led to Newry and Mourne District Council continuing to develop close links with not only the Community, Voluntary and Statutory sector, but also the Business sector within the area to ensure it can build up knowledge and understanding of the impacting issues for people and organisations.

Examples of this are how Newry and Mourne District Council works closely with organisations such as the Southern Education and Library Board, Newry Health and Social Services Trust, Newry Enterprise Agency, Newry Chamber of Commerce and Trade, the Northern Ireland Housing Executive, the Confederation of Community Groups, and Altnaveigh House to help develop and implement service delivery and funding initiatives which can be of benefit to the district.

Monitoring of data, both quantitative and qualitative, has played a significant role in transforming Newry and Mourne District Council's understanding of its area and the people who live within its boundaries.

5. The Authority's arrangements for publishing the results of equality impact assessments and of monitoring any adverse impact of policies adopted by the Authority on the promotion of equality of opportunity.

5(a) Indicate the number of reports published outlining the results of EQIAs and monitoring over the past five years, and outline what your Authority could do in future in relation to improving the publication of EQIA results and monitoring.

Prompt – Identify the number of reports that were provided in alternative formats. What were the lessons learnt in terms of enablers and impediments to publishing the results of EQIAs and monitoring?

Equality Impact Assessment carried out during the five year period of Newry and Mourne District Council's Equality Scheme had the result of its final Equality Impact Assessment published.

In accordance with the commitment made within Newry and Mourne District Council's Equality Scheme all Equality Impact Assessments were advertised as to their availability, produced in Arial font size 14, and circulated to relevant consultees. These were also offered as being available in alternative formats such as audio CD, large print, Braille and the Irish language. To date none have been requested to be produced in these formats.

While monitoring of Equality Impact Assessments takes place on an annual basis, it should be noted that Newry and Mourne District Council is still awaiting the Equality Commission for Northern Ireland's publication of best practice guidance on monitoring.

6. A commitment that in making any decision with respect to a policy adopted or proposed to be adopted by it, that the Public Authority shall take into account any Equality Impact Assessment and consultation carried out in relation to the policy.

6(a) In terms of the number of EQIAs that reached stage 6 (i.e. decision making) to what extent were mitigation measures and alternative policies adopted?

Prompt – Outline the extent to which your Authority produced EQIAs that did not identify adverse impact on any of Section 75 categories, but which consultees then gave an indication of adverse impact of Section 75 category and/or proposed mitigation measure or alternative policies.

As stated, the following Equality Impact Assessments have reached stage 6 of the EQIA process:

- Corporate Communications Strategy
- Bilingualism Policy

Equality Impact Assessment undertaken on the above policies identified adverse impact and the means to mitigate the said adverse impact were initiated. These have been delivered, or are being delivered upon, by Newry and Mourne District Council.

The following details the measures initiated to mitigate adverse impact:

Corporate Communications Strategy

Having considered available data and research and considered any adverse impact which could arise out of existing policies, the Council initiated the following actions in respect of its Corporate Communication Strategy.

- a) The Council revised its Corporate Communication Strategy with particular relevance to particular Section 75 dimensions and in particular:

- Race
- Disability
- Age
- Sexual Orientation

This involved considering:

- a. How to target its communications especially in order to address the divergent needs of these groups,
 - b. Using different mechanisms / alternative formats to communicate effectively, and
 - c. Communicating accessibly and appropriately so as to raise people's levels of awareness of Council work
- b) The Council would produce best practice guidance for use by officers in order to ensure its communication is accessible and transparent. This guidance would be equality screened.
 - c) The Council should identify and implement monitoring mechanisms to track accessibility and transparency of its communications.
 - d) The Council would clarify the relationship between its Bi-Lingualism, Ulster Scots and Street Naming policies.
 - e) The Council would review the range and scope of its communication tools generically to communicate effectively in terms of culture, language, gender, caring responsibilities, locality, disability, literacy levels, systems and structures.
 - f) The Council would review its complaints systems to take account of and identify complaints of an equality nature.
 - g) The Council would review its consultation mechanisms and develop partnerships to enhance accessibility of information e.g. set up and use reader panels / consultative panels.
 - h) The Council should develop appropriate training on good communication practice to take account of equality issues.

- i) The Council would conduct an internal communications audit to review the manner in which it communicates with employees.
- j) The Council should proactively promote the availability of its publications / documents / all communications in different formats and through different channels in accordance with user requirements.

Bilingualism Policy

After giving consideration to measures which might mitigate any adverse impact and measures which might better achieve the promotion of equality of opportunity and good relations, the recommendations were as follows:

- a. In line with its commitment to accessibility and communication the Council would raise awareness of the bilingualism policy. As an initial step in informing the community and addressing the issue of possible confusion over the use of the term "*Bilingualism Policy*" the policy's title would be revised thus:

Newry & Mourne District Council's Bilingualism Policy: Promotion and Usage of the Irish Language

In promoting its civic leadership role the Council would mainstream the use of the Irish Language as part of its overall Corporate Communications Strategy. This would enable the use of Irish to be an effective means of communication with its citizens on a professional non-partisan basis, in particular this would focus on the opportunity for choice contained within the policy i.e. the ability to avail of services monolingually or bilingually.

6(b) To what extent did consideration of EQIAs and consultations contribute to a change in policy, as opposed to policy decisions which would probably have been made in any event by your Authority?

Prompt – Set out any key examples. What were the lessons learnt in terms of enablers and impediments to making a decision and taking into account and EQIA and consultation? What could your Authority do in future to ensure decision making effectively takes these issues into account?

As stated in section 6(a) as a result of the Equality Impact Assessment process a number of policies were amended, or changed.

However, it should be noted that many other policies at the beginning of, and during the past five years, were also in the process of being amended without the need for the Equality Impact Assessment process. These changes to policy may have directly resulted from either ongoing service reviews, changes in legislation, or recommendations in line with the Local Government Staff Commission guidelines which required changes to be implemented.

Newry and Mourne District Council believes that where they ensure to take account to provide quality, equitable and accessible services, mitigating adverse impact can be achieved without a full Equality Impact Assessment.

Many such examples are within the areas of Personnel / Human Resources, and Purchasing and Procurement. Such examples of policies that were amended, and continue to be revised, without the process of an Equality Impact Assessment include:

- Smoke Free Workplace Policy
- Disability Employment Policy
- Absence and Disciplinary Policies
- Flexitime policy and procedure
- Corporate Wear Policy
- Equal Opportunities Policy
- Child Protection Policy

- Civic Receptions Policy
- Dignity at Work Policy and Harassment Complaints Procedure
- Pension Scheme Regulations
- Recruitment and Selection
- Annual Leave and Flexible Working Policies
- Job Evaluation
- Training
- Purchasing and Procurement Procedures in relation to quotations and tender processes

Amendments and proposed changes to any policies are discussed with the Trade Unions and must be approved by the Council's Staff and Policy Committee and /or Equality Committee before being adopted by full Council.

As stated previously, Newry and Mourne District Council is currently undertaking consultation on an Equality Impact Assessment of its Voluntary Contributions Policy. However, during the preliminary review in the early stages of the Equality Impact Assessment process, it was decided to amend the policy in line with Section 75 obligations.

Newry and Mourne District Council initiated changes in the process which would address difficulties organisations, applying for funding, were already experiencing. Changes which Newry and Mourne District Council made in advance of consultation on the Equality Impact Assessment of its Voluntary Contribution Policy included:

- Amending the Voluntary Contribution Application Form from 33 pages to 12 pages
- Reducing the time taken for applications for funding to be considered by creating an integrated assessment process involving Officers from the Finance Department, District Development Department and the Equality Unit.
- Creating an assessment criteria which allowed for greater understanding through consideration being given towards introducing a scoring and prioritising system which could be used as an essential tool for the Council

7. The Authority's arrangements for training staff on issues relevant to the duties.

7(a) To what extent were sufficient arrangements put in place to develop and deliver a training programme in accordance with scheme commitments?

Prompt – Was the training programme focused on the initial period of scheme implementation or did it effectively cover all five years? To what extent were outside trainers from representative groups used in designing or delivering training? Was focused training for staff in management and roles associated with aspects of scheme implementation provided on an ongoing basis?

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. This committed the Council to the following:

- *The Council will ensure that all employees and Elected Members receive training on the Section 75 obligations, the requirements of this equality scheme and the arrangements for Equality Impact Assessment, appropriate to their grade and responsibilities. This training will be completed within two years of the Scheme introduction.*
- *All new employees, newly elected or co-opted Elected Members will receive appropriate training in line with the training objectives listed below in 12.3 as part of their induction programme.*
- *The Council undertakes to provide comprehensive training for all Council employees and Elected Members over the 5-year period. This will aim to:*
 - *raise awareness of current anti-discrimination legislation in Northern Ireland including the provisions of Section 75, 76 and Schedule 9 of the Northern Ireland Act 1998*

- *provide employees involved in the screening of policies with the necessary skills and knowledge to do this work effectively*
 - *provide those employees involved in the Equality Impact Assessments of policies with the necessary skills and knowledge to do this work effectively*
 - *provide those employees who deal with complaints in relation to the implementation of Council's scheme with the necessary skills and knowledge to investigate and monitor complaints effectively*
 - *provide those employees involved in the consultation processes with the necessary skills and knowledge to do this work effectively*
 - *provide those employees involved in the implementation and monitoring of the effective implementation of the Council's Equality Scheme to do this work effectively*
 - *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.*
-
- *Affected groups will be involved in the development and delivery of the training programme so that the training objectives can be realised, and so that there is a real awareness of issues affecting the groups.*
 - *Where appropriate more focused training will be provided for those employees working in specialist roles, for example senior management, trainers, and employees involved in research and data collection.*
 - *Training will be provided in-house or by external trainers dependant upon the level of employees, the extent of their involvement in implementing the Scheme and the depth of knowledge required.*
 - *The Council will provide copies of this scheme to all Elected Members and employees. A summary of the scheme and regular updates on measures to promote equality of opportunity and good relations will be communicated to all Elected Members and employees.*
 - *The Council will also provide on an on-going basis, training for all Elected Members and employees on matters relating to promotion of equality of opportunity and good relations*

- *The Council will report on the extent to which the above training objectives have been met in its annual review to the Equality Commission.*

Newry and Mourne District Council introduced a detailed training programme for all included in, or who had agreed, to engage in the process of delivering Section 75 on behalf of the Council.

The following table outlines specific training within the first two years of our Equality Scheme:

Training issue	Participants	Training providers
Equality Impact Assessments	Senior management, Section heads, Councillors, Equality Unit staff, Personnel	John Kremer and Fiona Cassidy Follow up by Equality Unit
Equality Scheme and diversity awareness	Compulsory for all employees	Equality Unit
Attendance Training	Compulsory for staff with line management responsibility, Personnel staff, Trade Unions	Personnel
Recruitment and Selection	Compulsory for staff with line management responsibility and involved or likely to be involved in Recruitment & Selection, Personnel staff	Alison Patrick
Harassment Advisor	10 people further to recruitment campaign	People Solutions
Investigator training Harassment issues	Section heads	People Solutions
Gender Awareness training	Councillors, Senior staff, Specialist staff, female staff	Specialist providers

The Council also believed that the training plan should evolve to not just meet the needs of participants over the lifespan of its Equality Scheme but further into the future. This meant that training programmes were written, delivered, updated, revised and tailored for specific groups, where necessary.

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 further training delivered over the five year period 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
- Disability Awareness training
- REDI Leadership Group training
- Anti-sectarian and anti-harassment training
- Human Rights training
- Supervisory Management training
- Investigators training
- Voluntary Contribution Assessment 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, flags and emblems, Travellers, sport and politics, 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. These training evaluations were reported to the Council's Equality Committee.

While reviews of training evaluations indicated a positive response, in reviewing training needs Council, during 2005, recruited an Officer who has overall responsibility for developing the Council's programme of training.

7(b) Have all staff received awareness training and what could your Authority do in future to deliver an effective training programme?

Prompt – Does the Authority have evidence that over the past five years staff understood their role in implementing the scheme? What were the lessons learnt in terms of enablers and impediments to communication and training?

As detailed in section 7(a) employees received awareness training across a wide spectrum of issues. This included training which was both of a formal and informal nature such as lunchtime seminars. While some training may have been provided for all staff, resource and time issues necessitated that some training was targeted and focused for specific groups such as Line Managers and Supervisors.

In addition to staff undertaking training, Councillors also received training on issues and processes relevant to them so enabling the further development of informed decision-making processes.

The following table outlines specific Section 75 training provided for Staff and Councillors within the first two years of our Equality Scheme:

Training issue	Participants	Training providers
Equality Impact Assessments	Senior management, Section heads, Councillors, Equality Unit staff, Personnel	John Kremer and Fiona Cassidy Follow up by Equality Unit
Equality Scheme and diversity awareness	Compulsory for all employees	Equality Unit
Attendance Training	Compulsory for staff with line management responsibility, Personnel staff, Trade Unions	Personnel
Recruitment and Selection	Compulsory for staff with line management responsibility and involved or likely to be involved in Recruitment & Selection, Personnel staff	Alison Patrick
Harassment Advisor	10 people further to recruitment campaign	People Solutions
Investigator training Harassment issues	Section heads	People Solutions
Gender Awareness training	Councillors, Senior staff, Specialist staff, female staff	Specialist providers

Further examples of training delivered over the five year period has included:

- Intercultural Communication training for Councillors, Management Team and frontline employees – delivered by Fee Ching Leong, Omi Consultancy
- Disability Awareness training
- Equality Impact Assessment training

- Diversity Awareness training – delivered by Business in the Community
- Anti-sectarian and anti-harassment training
- Human Rights training
- Supervisory Management training
- REDI Leadership group training
- Investigators training
- Voluntary Contribution Assessment 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, flags and emblems, Travellers, sport and politics, the Ulster Scots and Irish Language, stress and domestic violence.

Evaluation of the Council's training programme has indicated that those undertaking training became more fully engaged in the learning process when it was targeted, focused and directly relevant to the participants' specific area of responsibility.

Further learning from the process meant the Council ensured locations were accessible and times suitable for those attending. As far as was feasibly possible training was of an interactive nature and delivered to groups on a cross departmental basis. This has the ability to not only engage the participants in the process, but also allowed staff to know more about work which is ongoing within different departments across the Council.

It should also be noted that Newry and Mourne District Council does not view training provided as being an end in itself, and refresher training has continued to be delivered where a need has been identified or new services have been introduced.

8. The Authority's arrangements for ensuring and assessing public access to information and to services provided by the Authority.

8(a) To what extent were sufficient arrangements put in place to ensure and assess public access to information and to services provided by the Authority?

Prompt – Was an audit of information provision undertaken? To what extent did you provide accessible formats without specific requests? What were the lessons learnt in terms of enablers and impediments to ensuring and assessing public access to information and to services? What could your Authority do in future to ensure equality of opportunity in public access to information and to services?

Even prior to the introduction of the statutory duties contained within Section 75 of the Northern Ireland Act 1998, Newry and Mourne District Council was committed to engaging with potential stakeholders.

This commitment was initiated through the Council's REDI¹ initiative which began in 1998. As a pilot project with two external partners, Future Ways and Counteract, REDI was about mainstreaming good relations principles, and focused on how the Council acts as:

- A civic leader
- An employer
- A deliverer of services

In essence REDI was about learning the best ways for working and living together in the same place with different people. Integrated the two themes of good relations, and organisational change and learning through dealing with the issues of:

- Equity – making sure people from all parts of the community are treated fairly
- Diversity – respecting and understanding of differences between people

¹ Relationships in Equity, Diversity and Interdependence

- Interdependence – recognising how decisions we take affect others, and how others' actions impact on us as people and as an organisation

The experience of the REDI initiative, and its Declaration of Principles, was the foundation for Newry and Mourne District Council in how it approached many issues in terms of how to communicate with the public.

In addition, the Council's Corporate Communication Strategy, which was subjected to an Equality Impact Assessment, initiated the following actions in respect of its Corporate Communication Strategy.

- The Council revised its Corporate Communication Strategy with particular relevance to particular Section 75 dimensions and in particular:
 - Race
 - Disability
 - Age
 - Sexual Orientation

This involved considering:

- How to target its communications especially in order to address the divergent needs of these groups,
- Using different mechanisms / alternative formats to communicate effectively, and
- Communicating accessibly and appropriately so as to raise people's levels of awareness of Council work
- The Council would produce best practice guidance for use by officers in order to ensure its communication is accessible and transparent. This guidance would be equality screened.
- The Council would identify and implement monitoring mechanisms to track accessibility and transparency of its communications.

- The Council would clarify the relationship between its Bi-Lingualism, Ulster Scots and Street Naming policies.
- The Council would review the range and scope of its communication tools generically to communicate effectively in terms of culture, language, gender, caring responsibilities, locality, disability, literacy levels, systems and structures.
- The Council would review its complaints systems to take account of and identify complaints of an equality nature.
- The Council would review its consultation mechanisms and develop partnerships to enhance accessibility of information e.g. set up and use reader panels / consultative panels.
- The Council should develop appropriate training on good communication practice to take account of equality issues.
- The Council would conduct an internal communications audit to review the manner in which it communicates with employees.
- The Council should proactively promote the availability of its publications / documents / all communications in different formats and through different channels in accordance with user requirements.

As a matter of good practice, Newry and Mourne District Council makes all corporate documents available in alternative formats such as large print, audio CD, Braille and Irish Language. The Council has also produced documents in Cantonese, Mandarin, Polish, Russian, Italian, Portuguese and Ulster Scots.

However, following consultation with Newry and Mourne Health and Social Services Trust, many of the documents are now purely provided on request, which has led to a cost effective approach to providing documents in alternative formats.

Newry and Mourne also advertises widely using the six local weekly papers, to communicate Council events and services such

as changes to bin collection, funding opportunities, sporting summer schemes etc.

In addition, Newry and Mourne District Council engages directly with stakeholders to discuss and provide information regarding services provided by the Council.

Examples of this include:

- Quarterly meetings of the Household Panel
- Monthly meetings of the Good Relations Forum
- 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.
- Information seminars run in conjunction with the Equality Commission for Northern Ireland, Disability Action
- Speaking at meetings of Newry Users Group, Newry Vision Forum, Shopmobility etc
- Partnership events involving the Community Safety Partnership, Newry and Mourne Senior Citizens Consortium, Conifers Resource Centre etc
- Information roadshows regarding the Council's Voluntary Contribution grant process
- Meet and greet sessions with minority ethnics

9. The Authority's timetable for measures proposed in the scheme.

9(a) Outline the extent to which measures set out in the original timetable have been implemented. Any detailed information should be included in as an Appendix to the report.

Prompt – Update any progress previously reported as underway or delayed. Has a mechanism been developed to report by exception i.e. on specific issues that have not been progressed?

Newry and Mourne District Council's Equality Scheme implementation timetable clearly outlined work in the areas of screening Council policies and procedures, the time tabling of Equality Impact Assessments, and proposed training.

Screening Policies and Procedures

As already stated within section 3(a), Newry and Mourne District Council conducted an original screening process of its policies.

In addition, all new or proposed policies or notices of motion are equality screened, using the proforma contained in Appendix 1, at either the draft stage or at the policy adoption stage.

In line with striving to mainstream the principles of equality of opportunity and good relations all new or proposed policies are screened, in conjunction with the Council's Equality Officer, by the Line Manager or Departmental Director responsible for implementing the new or proposed policy.

The outcome of each of these screening exercises is reported through the Council's Equality Committee or the appropriate Committee where a decision on the issue may be made.

Equality Impact Assessment Timetable

From this initial screening exercise, carried out using the four questions as provided by the Equality Commission for Northern Ireland in their Statutory Duty Guidance, 17 policies were identified

as having a potential adverse impact on at least one of the nine identified categories. This exercise set the EQIA timetable for the period of Newry and Mourne District Council's Equality Scheme. The proposed timetable and the screening proforma used for this process are contained within Appendix 1 and Appendix 2 respectively.

However, as Council gained more understanding, confidence and experience of the statutory duties and began to implement the proposed timetable of equality impact assessment it became apparent there was a need to review the original screening exercise.

It was found that Equality Impact Assessments were not the most appropriate method for Newry and Mourne District Council to review Council policies and procedures, and the Council decided that to best mainstream equality of opportunity and good relations, future reviews of policies and practices be integrated into ongoing service reviews.

Through working with organisations such as the Department of the Environment, the Department of Finance and Personnel, and the Local Government Staff Commission for policies associated in the areas of recruitment, finance, employment and procurement. In addition to the sharing of data and revising policies, this ensured against there being limited duplication of work in these policy areas.

To date, Newry and Mourne District Council has received no complaints about any of these changes to its Equality Scheme and its Equality Impact Assessment timetable, and we believe our openness, and overriding commitment to civic dialogue initiatives and relationship building has contributed to addressing community confidence in Newry and Mourne District Council's commitment to the Section 75 statutory duties to promote equality of opportunity and good relations.

Training

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.

Newry and Mourne District Council introduced a detailed training programme for all included in, or who had agreed, to engage in the process of delivering Section 75 on behalf of the Council.

In addition, the Council also believed that the training plan should evolve to not just meet the needs of participants over the lifespan of its Equality Scheme but further into the future. This meant that training programmes were written, delivered, updated, revised and tailored for specific groups, where necessary.

Therefore, as detailed within section 7(a) and 7(b), Newry and Mourne District Council believes it has fulfilled, and indeed strived to go beyond, its commitments made towards training.

9(b) If your Authority was to be reconstituted in the next five years what would be the main scheme actions/equality considerations that an incoming authority should address? Any detailed information should be included in as an Appendix to the report.

Prompt – Outline what arrangements could be put in place to transfer equality scheme knowledge.

This should be considered in light of the impending changes which will result with the Review of Public Administration.

If the review of Public Administration proceeds with the proposal for seven Local Government Authorities, this would mean Newry and Mourne District Council would be amalgamated with Armagh City and District Council, Banbridge District Council and Craigavon Borough Council.

This amalgamation will have significant impact ranging from direct personnel issues, deciding upon policies and procedures, and managing the different cultures and norms already operating within the different Council areas etc. While these refer to the internal dimension of Council there will also be the external dimension of providing services to not only a larger Council area, but also to a very diverse community which will have very different needs and expectations.

It is in this respect Newry and Mourne District Council has initiated new work, through its Diversity Dimensions Model, in terms of recognising and respecting diversity within its organisation and the community it serves. We believe the development and implementation of this Model will provide the basis for the strategic evolution for promoting equality of opportunity and good relations in the Newry and Mourne District Council area.

10. *Details of how the scheme will be published.*

10(a) Were scheme commitments in this section delivered and what evidence supports this view?

Newry and Mourne District Council's has:

- Ensured the availability of the Equality Scheme was advertised.
- Advised the Equality Scheme was available in accessible formats upon request.
- Communicated the Scheme and its contents through ongoing work and meetings with young people, people with disabilities and people with learning difficulties.
- Published a summary Equality Scheme.
- Provided all employees with a copy of the summary Equality Scheme.
- In accordance with the Council's Bi-lingualism Policy, advised the Scheme is also available in the Irish language upon request.
- All employees would receive a summary Scheme and be provided with a full Scheme on request.

11. The Authority's arrangements for dealing with complaints arising from a failure to comply with the scheme.

11(a) Outline the number and nature of complaints received by your Authority, and what your Authority could do in future to develop its complaints handling process and learn from complaints.

Prompt – Outline the nature of complaints and scheme element e.g. screening, consultation. What effect did complaints have on the operation of your scheme?

The Council's Complaints Procedure is detailed in section 15 of Newry and Mourne District Council's Equality Scheme and on the summary Equality Scheme leaflet.

At the time of writing, the Council has received no complaints arising from a failure to comply with our Equality Scheme.

12. A commitment to conducting a review of the scheme within five years of its submission to the Equality Commission and to forwarding a report of this review to the Equality Commission.

12(a) What has been your Authority's experience of conducting this review? To what extent has the Commission's guidance been useful in undertaking the review?

In many respects this review has been conducted very much along the same lines as the Annual Progress reports which Newry and Mourne District Council must undertake. However on further consideration, while this has been a time consuming process, it has allowed an element of reflection for Newry and Mourne District Council on how the Council has strived to deliver its equality scheme, and live the spirit of the statutory duties to promote equality of opportunity and good relations

In addition, Newry and Mourne District Council found that the Equality Commission for Northern Ireland did provide good advice and support through training and information sessions related to the forthcoming five year review. These sessions were of great assistance in helping to focus upon the issues which should be addressed within the report.

However, Newry and Mourne District Council must record its disappointment that the review has failed to address issues pertaining to the promotion of the Good Relations statutory duty. Within Newry and Mourne District Council, members of our Equality Unit work closely with each other in all matters relating to equality of opportunity, good relations, continuous improvement, and communications. This has enabled a greater degree of mainstreaming and better understanding of the overarching principles.

We believe that it is difficult to progress the equality agenda without a twin track process which also addresses good relations issues. For Newry and Mourne District Council civic dialogue and relationship building initiatives continue to be key motivators for enabling individuals, groups and organisations to live the spirit of the statutory duties, so creating informed decision-making process.

It is in this respect Newry and Mourne District Council has initiated progressive work in terms of recognising and respecting diversity within its organisation and the community it serves through its Diversity Dimensions Model. It is through the development and implementation of this Model, which will provide the basis for the strategic evolution of promoting equality of opportunity and good relations over the immediate future in the Newry and Mourne District.

Appendix 1 – Original Proposed Equality Impact Assessment Timetable

Year 1 (2001 – 2002)

- Building Maintenance
- Grounds Maintenance
- Tourism
- Personnel
- Licensing, naming and numbering, energy management and architectural services
- Health Promotion, Consumer Protection, Agenda 21
- Pollution control
- Food Control
- IT Services
- Purchasing

Year 2 (2002 – 2003)

- Waste disposal
- Payroll, Internal Audit, Financial services

Year 3 (2003 – 2004)

- Arts / Culture, Newry Museum, Irish Language
- Member services, Administration, Registration
- Equality Unit

Year 4 (2004 – 2005)

- Refuse Collection
- Leisure Services
- Economic Development
- Community Services

Year 5 (2005 – 2006)

- Street cleansing, Public Conveniences, Litter control
- Vehicle Maintenance
- Dog Control
- Sports Development
- Building Regulations
- Travellers Site

Appendix 2 – Newry and Mourne District Council Screening Proforma

<i>Policy Title</i>	<i>Department / Section</i>	<i>Date introduced</i>
<i>Details</i>		

Stage 1

	Religion	Political Opinion	Gender	Race	Disability	Age	Marital status	Dependants	Sexual Orientation
1. Is there evidence of higher or lower of participation or uptake by different groups?									
2. Is there any evidence that different groups have different needs, experiences, issues and priorities in relation to the particular policy issue?									
3. Is there an opportunity to better promote equality of opportunity or better community relations by altering the policy or working with others in government or the wider community?									
4. Have consultations with relevant groups, organisations or individuals indicated that particular policies create problems which are specific to them?									

Stage 2

- If the answer to any of the above policies is YES consideration must be given to the policy being subjected to full impact assessment.
- If the answer to all the above questions is NO a full impact assessment is not required.
- Consideration must be given to the carrying out of impact assessments. Impact assessment is confined to those policies considered to have significant implications for equality of opportunity.

Prioritisation

Criteria	High	Medium	Low
The effect of the policy on people's daily lives			
The effect of the policy on economic, social and human rights			
The opportunity to promote equality of opportunity			

Consider – effect on promoting good relations

Any other circumstances which should be taken into account in deciding the priority which should be given to the timetabling for impact assessment?

Signed _____ Dated _____