

# The Consumer Council



## Public Authority Statutory Equality and Good Relations Duties Annual Progress Report

### Contact:

• Section 75 of the NI Act 1998 and Equality Scheme	Name:	Maeve Holly
	Telephone:	02890 251617
	Email:	maeve.holly@consumercouncil.org.uk
• Section 49A of the Disability Discrimination Act 1995 and Disability Action Plan	As above	<input type="checkbox"/> (double click to open)
	Name:	Maeve Holly
	Telephone:	02890 251617
	Email:	maeve.holly@consumercouncil.org.uk

Documents published relating to our Equality Scheme can be found at:

The Consumer Council draft Corporate Plan 2016-21

<https://www.consumercouncil.org.uk/node/944>

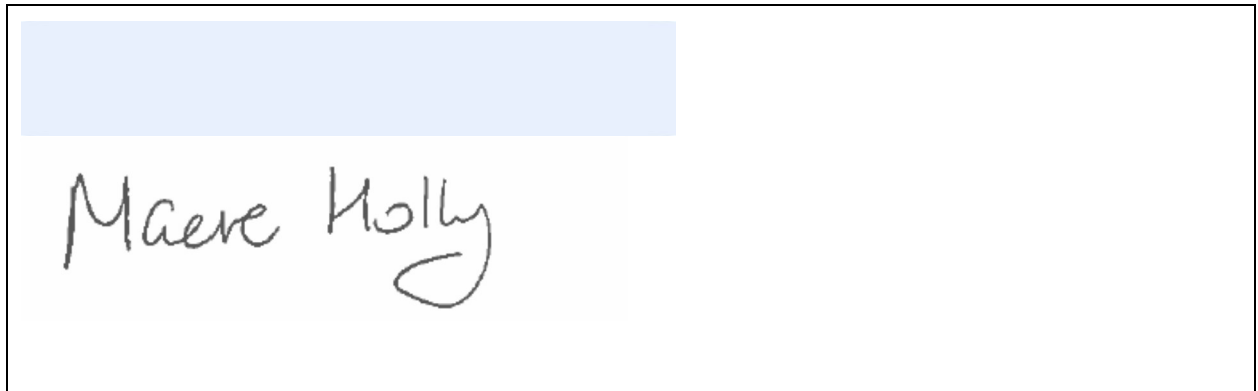
The Consumer Council Annual Report and Accounts 2019-2020 has been approved by the board of The Consumer Council. The report will be available on The Consumer Council website in due course.

The Consumer Council Equality Scheme was updated in April 2019 and shared with the Equality Commission for review and has been approved.

<https://www.consumercouncil.org.uk/node/442>

**Signature:**

---



**This report has been prepared using a template circulated by the Equality Commission.**

**It presents our progress in fulfilling our statutory equality and good relations duties, and implementing Equality Scheme commitments and Disability Action Plans.**

**This report reflects progress made between April 2019 and March 2020**

## **PART A – Section 75 of the Northern Ireland Act 1998 and Equality Scheme**

### **Section 1: Equality and good relations outcomes, impacts and good practice**

- 1** In 2019-20, please provide **examples** of key policy/service delivery developments made by the public authority in this reporting period to better promote equality of opportunity and good relations; and the outcomes and improvements achieved.

*Please relate these to the implementation of your statutory equality and good relations duties and Equality Scheme where appropriate.*

The Consumer Council works to actively promote and safeguard the interests of all consumers in Northern Ireland. During 2019-20, we have looked to make a real difference for consumers by continuing to develop the five strategic aims of our 2016 - 21 Corporate Plan:

1. Empowering consumers;
2. Representing consumers;
3. Protecting consumers;
4. Understanding the needs of future consumers; and
5. Providing value for money and good governance.

As our principal statutory duty is to promote and safeguard the interests of consumers, we represent all types of consumers, regardless of age, race, sex and all of the Section 75 categories.

The Consumer Council in delivering its work-plan met with and delivered results for groups and individuals in the Section 75 (S75) categories over the year. We specifically looked for opportunities to help with the needs of younger and older people and those with a disability or reduced mobility.

This year provided extra challenges for vulnerable consumers and those in the S75 equality groups which we had not planned for. As COVID-19 accelerated during March, we turned our attention to meeting the urgent needs of consumers who relied on The Consumer Council to resolve complaints and lobby on their behalf to ensure high levels of consumer protection across a number of statutory areas.

As The Consumer Council continues to go forward and develop our new corporate plan (2021-2026) we will build on this work and our mission of promoting and safeguarding the interests of consumers in Northern Ireland, by empowering them and providing a strong representative voice to policy-makers, regulators and service providers.

In summary, the developments were:

- Ran 173 outreach sessions to inform consumers of their rights and responsibilities;
- Delivered a Consumer Parliament event and 4 regional events;
- Developed policies, chaired and attended meetings with industry, regulators and other bodies to better protect consumers in our statutory areas;
- Responded to 4,158 consumer complaints and enquiries;

## PART A

- Provided staff training to improve understanding consumer needs within the Section 75 groups;
- Developed online and direct mail campaigns to inform consumers;
- Became a member of a range of accredited organisations with a view to improving assistance to those in the S75 groups.

More detailed examples are set out in question 2.

- 2 Please provide **examples** of outcomes and/or the impact of **equality action plans/** measures in 2019-20 (*or append the plan with progress/examples identified*).

### Consumer Outreach

- Consumer education and outreach was undertaken through 173 presentations and events, which have engaged with over 11,508 consumers. We made connections and met with a range of established groups to meet the needs of many people in the Section 75 groups. For example ethnic minorities, older, younger, disabled, with dependants. The following table is a summary of the numbers of consumers with have engaged with at a smaller group level over the past year. We have set out specific examples of event below.

<b>Type of Event</b>	<b>Number</b>	<b>Attendance</b>
Businesses	9	232
General Consumers	32	5792
Disability/Long term illness	25	458
Migrants	4	53
Older	24	1396
Staff	38	2072
Stakeholders	4	105
Students	34	1334
Youth	2	66
<b>TOTAL</b>	<b>173</b>	<b>11508</b>

- We arranged consumer stands at two events with specific target demographics:
  - Holiday World Show in January 2020 to promote our accessible travel rights information and advice. We particularly aimed at reaching consumers with a disability and mobility issues to promote our guides on Access to Air Travel and Access to Ferry Travel.
  - The Balmoral Show in May 2019 targeting rural consumers, with specific information about money management.
- We delivered 4 presentations to migrant consumer groups including Freedom Acts in Lurgan and Banbridge, Belfast Unemployment Centre and the Wah Hep Chinese Community in Craigavon. In total, we engaged with 53 consumers and provided information about how The Consumer Council can assist through our complaints function, our telephone translation services and 'Recite Me' available in 100 different languages on our website.
- We engaged with 1,334 students at 34 events throughout Northern Ireland with presentations and information stands at the start of the academic year in 2019. Students attending regional colleges, training programmes and universities were provided with

information about their consumer rights and scams and also received copies of our Student Guide.

- We delivered a presentation to students with learning disabilities studying at Belfast Met and incorporated The Consumer Council video on The Consumer Rights Act 2015 and our consumer rights quiz.
- We delivered a Summer Scheme for Derry City and Strabane District Council to young consumers through their cross-community programme. We engaged with 16 young consumers on information on consumer rights through quizzes and activities.
- We delivered 25 events for people with a long-term illness and disability and engaged with 458 people through information stands and presentations. We tailored the presentation content for these groups to include information on Critical Care Registers and Customer Care information from NI Water, NIE and the utility companies and information regarding special assistance when travelling. We have engaged with the Chest, Heart and Stroke Association, Action Mental Health and the Stroke Association to meet with their clients.
- We engaged with 1,396 older consumers at 24 events. Examples include the Bann Maine West group in Portglenone and the Senior Citizens Club in Fintona. We provided information on how we can help through our complaints function, consumer rights, scam awareness information, Critical Care Registers and Customer Care information from NI Water, NIE and the utility companies and information special assistance when travelling.
- In addition to our annual Consumer Parliament in Belfast with over 300 attendees, we held four regional Parliaments in Enniskillen, Coleraine, Omagh and Newry. This gave us the opportunity to hear from rural consumers and engage with consumers across Northern Ireland. A range of established groups joined us for the meetings and we particularly met the needs of consumers with disabilities and older and younger people as they put forward opinions about issues affecting them in relation to energy, water, post and transport policy and general consumer issues.
- We worked with Radius Housing to develop a Summer Scheme for residents and families. This summer scheme involved £1,000 funding from Radius Housing with a number of consumer rights themed games and quizzes, and took place in an area of high deprivation in Belfast. We engaged with over 60 residents and their families, with a focus on consumers with dependants. We delivered a similar scheme in conjunction with Derry City and Strabane District Council on consumer rights activities and quizzes with young adults through its cross-community programme and engaged with 40 young adults.

## PART A

- We launched the “Scamwise Champion” resource booklet for leaders and members with the six uniformed organisations (Girlguiding Ulster, The Scouts, The Boys’ Brigade, The Girls’ Brigade, Scouting Ireland and Catholic Guides) at Parliament Buildings Stormont on 10 September 2019. Therefore we reached out to faith-based and youth groups. This resource was funded by the Department of Justice (DoJ), and produced by The Consumer Council, and has a potential reach of 16,000 young consumers to make them aware of scams and to promote safe messages to their family, friends and wider community. As a result, we continue our collaborative work with Youth Work Alliance to educate and inform young children who are not members of a uniformed organisation. This has a further reach of 20,000 young consumers.
- We continue to develop Scamwise Champion resources for Youth Work Alliance and The Reserve Forces & Cadets Association Northern Ireland with a further potential reach of 25,000 young people and further opportunities with Libraries NI and CCEA. We have delivered tailored presentations to young adults with learning disabilities studying in Belfast Met, the Chinese Community and staff workshops for Ulster University.

### Consumer Website and Communications

- The Consumer Council website uses ReciteMe accessibility software to make it fully accessible in any browser. ReciteMe allows users to customise in a way that works for them. This includes: Translating content into multiple languages; having text read aloud; and changing formatting, colours and fonts to suit people with dyslexia, learning difficulties, sight impairment, reading issues, colour blindness and other forms of neurodiversity. We receive monthly reports from ReciteMe to indicate how often it is being used and which features are used the most.
- Our website has been built to comply with the Priority 2 (Double A) accessibility checkpoints, as established in the World Wide Web Consortium’s Web Accessibility Initiative. The initiative promotes usability and accessibility for people with disabilities. The majority of the website’s pages conform to the World Wide Web Consortium (W3C) Web Accessibility Initiative’s ‘AA’ standard. It also conforms to the UK government guidelines for websites. HTML5, CSS 2.0, WAI WCAG Level 2 have been set as technical standards.
- Our website is fully compatible with multiple browsers’ font changing facilities. If users find text is too small or too large, they can simply adjust their browser’s settings. This is compatible with a range of browsers including Internet Explorer, Mozilla Firefox, Google Chrome, Microsoft Edge, Silk, Samsung Internet and Android Webview.
- In March we developed a new section on The Consumer Council website to help consumers with new and arising issues as COVID-19 accelerated. We developed specific web pages for vulnerable consumers needing more detailed advice pages on website for vulnerable consumers. The new webpages have since had 60,000 hits.

## PART A

- In March 2020, The Consumer Council was a finalist at the Chartered Institute of Housing Awards for our work with Triangle Housing Association. This involved producing a series of instructional videos for tenants with learning disabilities to manage their home energy.
- We offer a telephone and face-to-face translation service through Big Word Translation.
- We translate our documents into different languages, and other formats (eg Braille, large print), upon request. We do this with the help of other organisations, such as the RNIB.

### Consumer Policy and Complaints Handling

- We continued to champion the needs of vulnerable and disabled consumers in our policy work related to water, energy, postal services and transport policy for consumers in Northern Ireland.
- In response to COVID-19 in March, staff proactively contacted consumers who had previously used The Consumer Council's services and were known to be in specific Section 75 groups, for example those who had been widowed (no longer were married) and had long term health problems. Information and help was offered, particularly in sourcing food deliveries to those who were shielding. In particular, staff were proactively in touch with older consumers who had become stranded in other countries and helped those who had difficulties getting home heating oil deliveries where access was necessary inside homes.
- We chaired the quarterly Consumer Vulnerability Working Group with the aim of improving care registers for energy and water consumers who are disabled, long term ill and older people who require additional and special services.
- We informed consumers about energy switching and promoted our resources at outreach events, and we engaged with Shelter, Northern Ireland Housing Executive and the Housing Rights Service to promote energy switching in the private rented and social housing sectors.
- We conducted research on the views of Northern Ireland consumers relating to using natural gas and electricity products at home to better understand how their needs were being met. Six focus groups were conducted with the specific aim of hearing the views of consumers in various S75 groups about these services, for example older people, those with a disability, those with dependants and without.
- In March 2020, we made representation to the Utility Regulator, DfE and the energy industry at the outset of COVID-19 outbreak to ask that energy consumers in Northern Ireland, in particular the most vulnerable, receive at least the same level of protection as their counterparts in GB.
- In December 2019 we agreed steps to raise awareness and improvements in support for water consumers in vulnerable circumstances. We have agreed with DfI, in relation to NI Water, improved provision in the draft PC21 Social and Environmental Guidance on



vulnerability, including securing commitments for firm targets around services for consumers in vulnerable circumstances, a first for a Northern Ireland utility.

- We worked with households at flood risk as a member of the Regional Community Resilience Group (RCRG), established to deliver community engagement and resilience across Northern Ireland, and the Regional Recovery Forum (RRF) looking at the support provided to consumers when rebuilding, restoring and rehabilitating the community following an emergency.
- We also responded to public consultations in June 2019 and September 2019 respectively on the approach to flood risk management and water resources supply and resilience.
- The Consumer Council helps vulnerable consumers with postal complaints. During the year we dealt with 52 complaints from consumers who we felt it was not reasonable to expect them to pursue the complaint themselves. Some of these consumers were representative of the S75 groups.
- The Postal policy Team commissioned research of 1014 NI consumers asking their views on EU exit and any impacts re delivery of post and parcels. The sample represented the NI population, including gender, age, rural/urban and those with a disability.
- Continued our funding partnership with HM Treasury (HMT) to undertake consumer education, research and development of new low-cost credit options in Northern Ireland. Through this work we have developed educational resources in partnership with local schools (St. Louise's College and Hazelwood Integrated College) and Stranmillis College.
- Our True Cost campaign ran from 9 – 22 March 2020. The purpose of the campaign, in line with the terms of reference of the Responsible Lending Forum, was to increase consumer awareness of free debt advice and alternative forms of credit. It focused on consumers in low income areas, with high populations of social housing.
- A social media campaign was targeted to consumers in these areas (primarily Belfast and Derry/Londonderry) accompanied by a leaflet and poster campaign. Leaflets were sent to over 58,000 households because, when asked what form of media they would like to find out about financial products, the majority of low income consumers indicated a leaflet would be the best option. The campaign directed consumers to a specific landing page which provided more information on how to get help depending on individual circumstances.
- We worked in partnership with Volunteer Now, Department for Communities and Stranmillis College to deliver a pilot of primary school resources on safer borrowing. Stranmillis Teaching College recruited 31 students who were trained on the primary school packs. They provided safer borrowing lessons to over 300 pupils in 15 schools across Northern Ireland.
- In January 2020, we started to deliver presentations to workforces. Presentations were given to over 160 participants at five different work places. The topics covered were: Reasons why Financial Education is important in Northern Ireland; Benefits of saving; Importance of shopping around to ensure you have the best deal; Expenses that you

should not cut out; Self-help; Types of borrowing; Illegal lenders; Alternative Credit; and sources of advice and help.

- We worked in partnership with the Inclusive Mobility and Transport Advisory Committee (IMTAC) to look at accessibility provision on board the Rathlin Island Ferry and at the new Translink Northwest Transport Hub. We also organised visits with passengers with a disability to assess the accessibility of services at Belfast International Airport, and on board a P&O ferry and at its Larne Port facility. We worked with the Department for Infrastructure (DfI) and IMTAC to develop a passenger charter for the Rathlin Ferry and with the DfT to develop an Accessibility Toolkit for ferry services.
- In June 2019, The Consumer Council gave a presentation at the Civil Aviation Authority's (CAA) Annual Accessibility Conference in London on the partnership work we undertake with the three Northern Ireland airports on accessibility for disabled travellers.
- During the year, The Consumer Council has worked in partnership with IMTAC to undertake visits with users to look at accessibility provision for passengers with disabilities on board the Rathlin Island Ferry and at the new Translink Northwest Transport Hub. We also organised a visit with passengers with disabilities to assess the accessibility of services on a P&O ferry and at its Larne Port facility.
- The Consumer Council attends twice yearly accessibility forums at Belfast international Airport, George Best Belfast City Airport and City of Derry Airport.
- Accessibility visits to Belfast International Airport and City of Derry Airport were unfortunately postponed due to COVID-19.
- In our statutory passenger representative role we have reviewed and responded to 28 bus permit applications.

#### Staff and Corporate Achievements

- The Consumer Council was a finalist in the public sector category of Employers for Childcare's Family Friendly Employer Awards 2019, which recognises employers who provide and actively promote family friendly working policies.
- In August 2019, The Consumer Council was awarded the Bronze Diversity Charter Mark. This Charter Mark recognises our commitment to diversity, inclusion and equality, thereby helping improve the working environment for everyone in the organisation. We have established an internal working group comprising 6 members of staff and have developed a diversity, inclusion and equality policy. We have also attended a range of meetings and conferences with stakeholders to learn more about best practice in this area and how we can use it to promote equality for both staff and consumers.
- Work has been ongoing throughout 2019-20 in maintaining the Investors in People standard. The Consumer Council achieved the Bronze Diversity Charter Mark accreditation in August 2019 which supports the IiP initiative. Our progress was reviewed in February 2020 by an independent IiP assessor, with the aim of achieving Gold Standard accreditation in 2021.

## PART A

- We are a JAM Card friendly organisation. JAM stands for 'Just A Minute' – it's a special card created by NOW group (a social enterprise supporting people with learning difficulties and autism into jobs with a future) service users for when they need more time and patience.
- In June 2019, The Consumer Council recertified against the Customer Service Excellence (CSE) Standard. The assessment included an in-depth examination of The Consumer Council's policies and practices, as well as discussions with its customers and staff. At this assessment, The Consumer Council achieved a further three "Compliance Plus" signifying best practice. This brings our total "Compliance Plus" to 15 and the remaining 42 are scored as fully "Compliant".
- The Consumer Council also became a member of Business in The Community (BITC) and will continue to work alongside BITC to try to achieve the BITC CORE Accreditation in 2020-21 in positively engaging with employees and developing a strong corporate responsibility culture within the organisation.
- All staff at The Consumer Council attended a 'supporting vulnerable consumers training' session to better understand the needs of consumers with disabilities.
- Line managers attended a Mental Health Awareness training session for line managers in November 2019.
- Three new members were appointed to the board of The Consumer Council. The board now has a more balanced representation of men and women. It previously had a higher representation of woman than men.
- All staff were invited to attend and observe board meetings on a rota as a training opportunity. In addition to this a staff member completed 'Strictly Boardroom' the Board Room Apprentice scheme in NI.
- Staff received monthly emails from Inspire to help with work/life balance and consider mental health awareness.
- Staff availed of workspace assessments in the office and specialist desks and chairs were support them in work place.
- The Consumer Council invested resources into achieving the following accreditations to support the health and well-being of all staff and consumers:
  - Disability Confident Employer<sup>1</sup>;
  - Cycle Friendly Employer - Bronze<sup>2</sup>;
  - Every Customer Counts;<sup>3</sup> and
  - Mental Health Charter<sup>4</sup>- The Equality Commission.

---

<sup>1</sup> <https://www.gov.uk/government/collections/disability-confident-campaign>

<sup>2</sup> <https://www.cyclinguk.org/cyclefriendlyemployer>

<sup>3</sup> <https://www.equalityni.org/everycustomercounts>

<sup>4</sup> <https://www.equalityni.org/MentalHealthCharter>

PART A

**3** Has the **application of the Equality Scheme** commitments resulted in any **changes** to policy, practice, procedures and/or service delivery areas during the 2019-20 reporting period? *(tick one box only)*

Yes                       No (go to Q.4)                       Not applicable (go to Q.4)

Please provide any details and examples:

Yes, we developed an Equality, Diversity and Inclusion policy and ran a staff awareness seminar.

**3a** With regard to the change(s) made to policies, practices or procedures and/or service delivery areas, what **difference was made, or will be made, for individuals**, i.e. the impact on those according to Section 75 category?

Please provide any details and examples:

Staff now have a better understanding of our duty as a public body with regards to equality. Unconscious Bias Training has been completed across the organisation and is incorporated within the policy. We have implemented some best practice in relation to advertisement of jobs to encourage a more diverse workforce, thus promoting equality in the workplace.

**3b** What aspect of the Equality Scheme prompted or led to the change(s)? *(tick all that apply)*

As a result of the organisation's screening of a policy *(please give details):*

As a result of what was identified through the EQIA and consultation exercise *(please give details):*

As a result of analysis from monitoring the impact *(please give details):*

As a result of changes to access to information and services *(please specify and give details):*

Other *(please specify and give details):*

As a result of meeting with Diversity Mark NI and joining the scheme.

## Section 2: Progress on Equality Scheme commitments and action plans/measures

### Arrangements for assessing compliance (Model Equality Scheme Chapter 2)

4 Were the Section 75 statutory duties integrated within job descriptions during the 2019-20 reporting period? (*tick one box only*)

- Yes, organisation wide
- Yes, some departments/jobs
- No, this is not an Equality Scheme commitment
- No, this is scheduled for later in the Equality Scheme, or has already been done
- Not applicable

Please provide any details and examples:

5 Were the Section 75 statutory duties integrated within performance plans during the 2019-20 reporting period? (*tick one box only*)

- Yes, organisation wide
- Yes, some departments/jobs
- No, this is not an Equality Scheme commitment
- No, this is scheduled for later in the Equality Scheme, or has already been done
- Not applicable

Please provide any details and examples:

6 In the 2019-20 reporting period were **objectives/ targets/ performance measures** relating to the Section 75 statutory duties **integrated** into corporate plans, strategic planning and/or operational business plans? *(tick all that apply)*

- Yes, through the work to prepare or develop the new corporate plan
- Yes, through organisation wide annual business planning
- Yes, in some departments/jobs
- No, these are already mainstreamed through the organisation's ongoing corporate plan
- No, the organisation's planning cycle does not coincide with this 2019-20 report
- Not applicable

Please provide any details and examples:

### Equality action plans/measures

7 Within the 2019-20 reporting period, please indicate the **number** of:

Actions completed:  Actions ongoing:  Actions to commence:

Please provide any details and examples *(in addition to question 2)*:

The Consumer Council has carried out a significant range of actions in accordance with the Equality Scheme Action Plan during this reporting period. As an organisation we are constantly reacting to change in the consumer landscape and therefore the actions are noted as 'ongoing' rather than 'complete'. They will continue throughout the lifespan of the Equality Scheme.

Details of projects are outlined in the response to question 2.

In line with the plan we have done the following:

- Provided advice and information to consumers.
- Worked in partnership with the advice sector.
- Worked with education organisations to develop consumer education packages in schools, further education colleges and universities.
- Continued to meet with the North/South consumer group and the Consumer Protection Partnership.
- Worked with energy, postal, water and transport providers to ensure the needs of consumers were met.
- Promoted consumer switching to develop competitive markets.
- Played a leadership role in Northern Ireland consumer issues.
- Developed strategies for consumers who are disabled, ill, older people, those on low incomes and those who reside in rural areas.

PART A

- Kept up to date with regional differences between Northern Ireland consumers and those in Great Britain.
- Worked with regulators on price controls to represent consumers and ensure they are getting the best value for money possible.
- Represented passengers with a disability or reduced mobility.
- Ensured consumers have convenient access to Royal Mail's service through Post Office outlets across Northern Ireland.
- Provided help with consumer complaints.
- Worked with business to ensure consumers receive a fair price and launched an electricity and gas price comparison tool for small businesses.
- Protected consumers through working with regulators in the development of regulations/licences.
- Monitored the cost of living.
- Worked to increase trust in Northern Ireland markets so consumers are more informed and have access to better deals.
- Monitored consumer trends and emerging areas of detriment.
- Analysed data to understand the impact of consumers today on consumers of tomorrow.
- Encouraged consumers to develop sustainable consumption.
- Worked to ensure the capability gap between prosperous and less prosperous does not increase.
- Worked with the relevant bodies to ensure energy and water infrastructure meets the needs of future consumers.

8 Please give details of changes or amendments made to the equality action plan/measures during the 2019-20 reporting period (*points not identified in an appended plan*):

none

9 In reviewing progress on the equality action plan/action measures during the 2019-20 reporting period, the following have been identified: (*tick all that apply*)

- Continuing action(s), to progress the next stage addressing the known inequality
- Action(s) to address the known inequality in a different way
- Action(s) to address newly identified inequalities/recently prioritised inequalities
- Measures to address a prioritised inequality have been completed

**Arrangements for consulting (Model Equality Scheme Chapter 3)**

10 Following the initial notification of consultations, a targeted approach was taken – and consultation with those for whom the issue was of particular relevance: (*tick one box only*)

- All the time
- Sometimes
- Never

**11** Please provide any **details and examples of good practice** in consultation during the 2019-20 reporting period, on matters relevant (e.g. the development of a policy that has been screened in) to the need to promote equality of opportunity and/or the desirability of promoting good relations:

- Consumer education and outreach was undertaken through 198 presentations and events and we engaged with over 11,508 consumers. Some of these were specifically with established groups in the churches, young people, older people, ethnic minorities and those with a disability.
- Undertook a Consumer Insight Survey, with a sample representative of the demography of Northern Ireland. The survey has uncovered a range of consumer issues and in particular we have noted concerns from consumers who are disabled.
- Ran a range of information sessions to give consumers with disabilities the opportunity to voice their concerns.
- We ran our fourth annual Consumer Parliament in Belfast to give consumers the opportunity have their voices heard. We also ran additional events in Omagh, Enniskillen and Newry giving a voice to consumers in more rural areas.
- We completed 14 consumer focused research reports.

**12** In the 2019-20 reporting period, given the consultation methods offered, which consultation methods were **most frequently used by consultees**: (*tick all that apply*)

- Face to face meetings
- Focus groups
- Written documents with the opportunity to comment in writing
- Questionnaires
- Information/notification by email with an opportunity to opt in/out of the consultation
- Internet discussions
- Telephone consultations
- Other (*please specify*):

Please provide any details or examples of the uptake of these methods of consultation in relation to the consultees' membership of particular Section 75 categories:

The Consumer Council consulted on its draft Forward Work Programme for 2020-21, we used a variety of means to do this:

- Face to face discussions;
- Public consultation event;



PART A

- Online - The Consumer Council website including contact details for a specific member of staff;
- Social media - facebook and twitter
- Online Survey Monkey; and
- Formal consultation response.

**13** Were any awareness-raising activities for consultees undertaken, on the commitments in the Equality Scheme, during the 2019-20 reporting period? *(tick one box only)*

Yes                       No                       Not applicable

Please provide any details and examples:

**14** Was the consultation list reviewed during the 2019-20 reporting period? *(tick one box only)*

Yes                       No                       Not applicable – no commitment to review

**Arrangements for assessing and consulting on the likely impact of policies (Model Equality Scheme Chapter 4)**

[Insert link to any web pages where screening templates and/or other reports associated with Equality Scheme commitments are published]

**15** Please provide the **number** of policies screened during the year *(as recorded in screening reports)*:

none	The Consumer Council comments on policies designed by other bodies such as Translink, The Utility Regulator and the Financial Conduct Authority. As such the policies have already been screened. The HR policies come directly from the NICS therefore they have also already been screened. The Consumer Council uses the NI Civil Service policies therefore no need to screen.
------	--

**16** Please provide the **number of assessments** that were consulted upon during 2019-20:

0	Policy consultations conducted with <b>screening</b> assessment presented.
0	Policy consultations conducted <b>with an equality impact assessment (EQIA)</b> presented.
0	Consultations for an <b>EQIA</b> alone.

PART A

- 17 Please provide details of the **main consultations** conducted on an assessment (as described above) or other matters relevant to the Section 75 duties:

N/A

- 18 Were any screening decisions (or equivalent initial assessments of relevance) reviewed following concerns raised by consultees? (*tick one box only*)

Yes                       No concerns were raised                       No                       Not applicable

Please provide any details and examples:

**Arrangements for publishing the results of assessments (Model Equality Scheme Chapter 4)**

- 19 Following decisions on a policy, were the results of any EQIAs published during the 2019-20 reporting period? (*tick one box only*)

Yes                       No                       Not applicable

Please provide any details and examples:

**Arrangements for monitoring and publishing the results of monitoring (Model Equality Scheme Chapter 4)**

- 20 From the Equality Scheme monitoring arrangements, was there an audit of existing information systems during the 2019-20 reporting period? (*tick one box only*)

Yes                       No, already taken place  
 No, scheduled to take place at a later date                       Not applicable

Please provide any details:

- 21 In analysing monitoring information gathered, was any action taken to change/review any policies? (*tick one box only*)

Yes                       No                       Not applicable

Please provide any details and examples:

PART A

- 22** Please provide any details or examples of where the monitoring of policies, during the 2019-20 reporting period, has shown changes to differential/adverse impacts previously assessed:

N/A

- 23** Please provide any details or examples of monitoring that has contributed to the availability of equality and good relations information/data for service delivery planning or policy development:

N/A

**Staff Training (Model Equality Scheme Chapter 5)**

- 24** Please report on the activities from the training plan/programme (section 5.4 of the Model Equality Scheme) undertaken during 2019-20, and the extent to which they met the training objectives in the Equality Scheme.

- Staff received training on awareness of unconscious bias.
- All staff attended a full day training session on vulnerable consumers and their needs.

- 25** Please provide **any examples** of relevant training shown to have worked well, in that participants have achieved the necessary skills and knowledge to achieve the stated objectives:

Nil

**Public Access to Information and Services (Model Equality Scheme Chapter 6)**

- 26** Please list **any examples** of where monitoring during 2019-20, across all functions, has resulted in action and improvement in relation **to access to information and services**:

Use of social media to complement all of the communications campaigns over the year. Outreach activities- reaching a diverse range of audiences, including older people, schools and colleges, church and special interest groups, and working age consumers at workplace education events.

**Complaints (Model Equality Scheme Chapter 8)**

**27** How many complaints **in relation to the Equality Scheme** have been received during 2019-20?

Insert number here:

0
---

Please provide any details of each complaint raised and outcome:

**Section 3: Looking Forward**

**28** Please indicate when the Equality Scheme is due for review:

The scheme document was updated in April 2019 and approved by the Equality Commission. A new scheme will be developed during 2021, in line with the next corporate plan which will be ready for public consultation at the end of 2020.

**29** Are there areas of the Equality Scheme arrangements (screening/consultation/training) your organisation anticipates will be focused upon in the next reporting period? *(please provide details)*

- Training
- Continual scrutiny of policies to ensure they meet the needs of all consumers
- Engagement with consumers to help them understand their specific rights

**30** In relation to the advice and services that the Commission offers, what **equality and good relations priorities** are anticipated over the next (2019-20) reporting period? *(please tick any that apply)*

- Employment
- Goods, facilities and services
- Legislative changes
- Organisational changes/ new functions
- Nothing specific, more of the same

PART A

Other (please state):

**PART B - Section 49A of the Disability Discrimination Act 1995 (as amended) and Disability Action Plans**

**1. Number of action measures for this reporting period that have been:**

4

Fully achieved

Partially achieved

Not achieved

**2. Please outline below details on all actions that have been fully achieved in the reporting period.**

2 (a) Please highlight what **public life measures** have been achieved to encourage disabled people to participate in public life at National, Regional and Local levels:

Level	Public Life Action Measures	Outputs <sup>i</sup>	Outcomes / Impact <sup>ii</sup>
National <sup>iii</sup>	Ran 4 Consumer Parliament events in Belfast, Omagh, Enniskillen and Newry in February and March 2020	We invited disability organisations and opened the event invitation to all consumers, particularly those with disabilities. We put measures in place to ensure those with a disability were welcomed and their needs met in relation to premises (hearing loop where possible, disabled access and toilets, presentations	The event was successful and met the needs of all consumers, allowing those with a disability to fully participate and have their voices heard.

PART B

		along with audio and a sign language interpreter) and assistance with getting to and from the event.	
	Consumer Outreach activities	Ran a series of events to promote consumer rights for all consumers. This included meeting with a range of groups including visually impaired, students with learning disabilities, consumers with dementia.	Events allowed those with a disability to fully participate and have their voices heard.
Regional <sup>iv</sup>			
Local <sup>v</sup>			

PART B

2(b) What **training action measures** were achieved in this reporting period?

	Training Action Measures	Outputs	Outcome / Impact
1	Unconscious bias training	Highlighted situations where people may have unconscious bias.	Staff in a better position to recognise occasions where there may be bias towards people with a disability.
2	Vulnerable consumer training	Highlighted issues consumers with a disability may or may not have in relation to consumerism and every day activities.	Staff more confident to make adjustments where needed for people with a disability.

2(c) What Positive attitudes **action measures** in the area of **Communications** were achieved in this reporting period?

	Communications Action Measures	Outputs	Outcome / Impact
1	Promotion of mental health awareness	Weekly insight shared regarding the impacts of poor mental health and how to seek help.	Staff are aware of how mental health issues can affect people and know where to signpost for help.
2			

2 (d) What action measures were achieved to '**encourage others**' to promote the two duties:



PART B

	Encourage others Action Measures	Outputs	Outcome / Impact
1			
2			

2 (e) Please outline **any additional action measures** that were fully achieved other than those listed in the tables above:

	Action Measures fully implemented (other than Training and specific public life measures)	Outputs	Outcomes / Impact
1			
2			

3. Please outline what action measures have been **partly achieved** as follows:

	Action Measures partly achieved	Milestones/ Outputs	Outcomes/Impacts	Reasons not fully achieved
1				
2				

PART B

4. Please outline what action measures **have not been achieved** and the reasons why.

	Action Measures not met	Reasons
1		
2		

5. What **monitoring tools** have been put in place to evaluate the degree to which actions have been effective / develop new opportunities for action?

(a) Qualitative

Focus groups and other research in the areas of water, postal services, transport and energy policy.

(b) Quantitative

Complaints handling database, annual Insight Survey with specific data on consumers with a disability.

PART B

6. As a result of monitoring progress against actions has your organisation either:

- made any **revisions** to your plan during the reporting period or
- taken any **additional steps** to meet the disability duties which were **not outlined in your original** disability action plan / any other changes?

No

Please select

If yes please outline below:

	Revised/Additional Action Measures	Performance Indicator	Timescale
1			
2			
3			
4			
5			

7. Do you intend to make any further **revisions to your plan** in light of your organisation's annual review of the plan? If so, please outline proposed changes?

## PART B

No

---

<sup>i</sup> **Outputs** – defined as act of producing, amount of something produced over a period, processes undertaken to implement the action measure e.g. Undertook 10 training sessions with 100 people at customer service level.

<sup>ii</sup> **Outcome / Impact** – what specifically and tangibly has changed in making progress towards the duties? What impact can directly be attributed to taking this action? Indicate the results of undertaking this action e.g. Evaluation indicating a tangible shift in attitudes before and after training.

<sup>iii</sup> **National** : Situations where people can influence policy at a high impact level e.g. Public Appointments

<sup>iv</sup> **Regional**: Situations where people can influence policy decision making at a middle impact level

<sup>v</sup> **Local** : Situations where people can influence policy decision making at lower impact level e.g. one off consultations, local fora.