

# The Consumer Council



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

### Contact:

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

The Consumer Council draft Corporate Plan 2021 - 2024  
[2021 - 2024 Draft Corporate Plan](#)

The Consumer Council Annual Report and Accounts 2020-2021 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>

**Contact:**

**Signature:**

A rectangular box containing a handwritten signature in black ink that reads "R Malley".

**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 2020 and March 2021**

## **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 2020-21, 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 2020-21, we have developed our Corporate Plan for 2021 – 2024 and have identified five strategic aims that will define our work over the coming years:

- Understand consumers
- Influence policy
- Represent consumers
- Protect consumers
- Empower consumers

As our principal statutory duty is to promote and safeguard the interests of consumers, we represent all types of consumers, irrespective of where they fall within the Section 75 categories.

The Consumer Council in delivering its work-plan met with and delivered results for groups and individuals throughout the Section 75 (S75) categories over the year. We specifically looked at ways in which we could reach out to those who may have been disproportionately affected by the pandemic such as the elderly, those with disabilities / clinical vulnerabilities or those in rural areas.

This year continued to present extra challenges for vulnerable consumers and those in the S75 equality groups and as a result of this, we engaged with 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.

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

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

In summary, some of the developments for 2020 - 2021 were:

- Achieved the British Standard 18477 Inclusive Service Provision, the best practice requirements for identifying and responding to consumer vulnerability.
- Held the first ever online Northern Ireland Consumer Week. 42 videos were released over the week and total video views surpassed 210,000.
- Designed online family activities about scams including quizzes, puzzles, and crosswords for various age groups.
- Worked in partnership with various stakeholders, including Financial Institutions and the PSNI, to develop scam awareness campaigns and to distribute this information to consumers.
- Invited by the Department of Finance (DoF) to deliver the first virtual Northern Ireland Civil Service (NICS) Live events in December 2020 with a further invitation in February 2021.
- Engaged with over 3,500 consumers over the year through Webinars, Facebook live events and information stands.
- Became a member of Helplines NI, a membership-led organisation consisting of over 30 different helplines across Northern Ireland.
- Achieved ISO 9001 and ISO 22301 certification.
- The Consumer Council was awarded Gold accreditation by Investors in People in 2021.

- 2 Please provide **examples** of outcomes and/or the impact of **equality action plans/** measures in 2020-21 (or append the plan with progress/examples identified).

### Consumer Outreach

- Consumer education and outreach was undertaken through various channels including webinars and information stands which in total, led to engagement with over 3,599 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 older consumers, students, disabled, consumers living on a lower income. The following table is a summary of some of the consumers that the Consumer Council have engaged with over the past year.

Event	Audience	Attendees
<b>Webinar</b>		
Action Mental Health	Consumers with a long term illness	5
University 3rd Age	Older consumers	4
University 3rd Age	Older consumers	5
Banne Maine West	Older consumers	14
College of Agriculture, Food and Rural Enterprise	Students	36
Ulster University	Students	18
Southern Regional College	Students	40
Northern Ireland Rural Women's Network	Rural consumers	5
Kilcooley Women's Centre	Women	9
Disability Action	Consumers with a disability	15
<b>Information stand</b>		
Falls Road Association	Consumers living on a lower income	100
Falls Road Association	Consumers living on a lower income	100
Falls Road Association	Consumers living on a lower income	200
<b>Facebook Live Event</b>		
Q&A Session	All Consumers	750
Q&A Session with Mayor of Derry & Strabane	All Consumers	750
		<b>2,051</b>

## PART A

- Consumer Empowerment delivered 43 virtual presentations and seminars to various consumer groups and organisations such as staff from the Education Authority, Her Majesty's Revenue and Customs (HMRC), Belfast Health and Social Care Trust (BHSCT), Southern Health and Social Care Trust (SHSCT) and Western Health and Social Care Trust (WHSCT).
- The Consumer Council was invited by the Department of Finance (DoF) to deliver the first virtual Northern Ireland Civil Service (NICS) Live events in December 2020 with a further invitation in February 2021. Over 500 staff from nine government departments and grades attended these two virtual NICS Live events.
- The Consumer Council hosted two Facebook live events with a question and answer session from consumers as well as a Facebook live event with the Mayor of Derry and Strabane. These Facebook live events had an attendance of approximately 1,500 consumers.
- Conducted a survey and 11 focus groups to better understand the real and perceived impacts of EU Exit on consumers in Northern Ireland.
- During 2020-21 The Consumer Council held virtual presentations for students of Ulster University (UU) and the College of Agriculture Food & Rural Enterprise (CAFRE) alongside designing a student animation which was disseminated to colleges and universities during fresher's week.
- The Consumer Empowerment team identified the need to continue to engage with consumers about scams, particularly as more consumers were buying online due to the pandemic. As a result, animations on scams to help consumers protect themselves were designed (viewed over 36,000 times) as well as new online family activities (downloaded over 9,500 times).
- The Consumer Empowerment department designed an information flier to inform consumers about the Consumer Council and how we could assist them via our complaints function during the COVID-19 pandemic. This was delivered to 700,000 households in Northern Ireland.

<b>Campaigns 2020/21</b>	<b>Number</b>
Family activities completed	9,616
COVID-19/Farm leaflet downloaded	1,378
Scam animation views	36,099
Online quizzes completed	1,800
Scamwise bookmarks disseminated by financial Institutions	15,000
Covid-19 scam leaflets and bookmarks for Libraries NI	7,000
Northern Ireland Consumer Week	210,000

### **Consumer Website and Communications**

- The Consumer Council website uses Browsealoud accessibility software to make it fully accessible in any browser. Browsealoud 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 Browsealoud to indicate how often it is being used and which features are used the most.
- The Consumer Council is committed to making its website accessible, in accordance with the Public Sector Bodies (Websites and Mobile Applications) (No. 2) Accessibility Regulations 2018. Our website is partially compliant with the Web Content Accessibility Guidelines version 2.1 AA standard. This website has been built to comply with the Priority 2 (Double A) accessibility checkpoints, as established in the World Wide Web Consortium's (Wc3) Web Accessibility Initiative. The initiative promotes usability and accessibility for people with disabilities. This website 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. The webpages on our website are designed to be used with screen readers, so that visually impaired users can easily access the content and navigate the site.

## PART A

- In 2020 we developed a new section on The Consumer Council website to help consumers with new and arising issues as COVID-19 accelerated. We added to this in April 2020 by developing specific web pages for vulnerable consumers who required more detailed advice. By 31 March 2021, the COVID-19 web pages had achieved 201,017 hits and the Vulnerable Consumers page had achieved 9,082 hits.
- 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 offer a signing service with the Royal National Institute for Deaf People (RNID), for personal consumer advice or for those attending group events.
- We translate our documents into different languages, and other formats (e.g. Braille, large print), upon request. We do this with the help of other organisations, such as the Royal National Institute of Blind People (RNIB).

### **Consumer Policy and Complaints Handling**

- We monitored and reported on financial resilience and spending behaviours of NI consumers versus GB consumers in relation to grocery shopping.
- Produced a short film 'Hand to Mouth' which looked at the challenges facing low-income consumers in feeding themselves and their families a healthy, balanced and socially inclusive diet on a limited budget.
- We continued to support and represent vulnerable consumers through our statutory complaints handling role by acting on their behalf to raise enquiries and complaints in the areas of energy, water, transport and post.
- We assisted over 10,000 consumers in 2020/21, an 88% increase compared to the previous year. We investigated 6,971 enquiries and complaints, and assisted 3,213 consumers by providing general advice and signposting them to other organisations. In 20/21, we returned over £1 Million to consumers through our complaints handling role.
- In response to Covid-19 and to better assist vulnerable consumers, we pro-actively contacted all of the food banks across Northern Ireland to request to become a referral agent. This allows us to directly refer consumers who need assistance from their local food bank. The food banks have also been sent copies of our budget planners and



information on switching energy providers to further assist consumers who use their services.

- The Consumer Council assisted local food banks in 2020 by doing a reverse advent calendar, so during the month of November we collected a non-perishable food item every day for 24 days to make up a food hamper for a local food bank. The hampers were then distributed to a number of different food banks across Northern Ireland.
- We have been assisting vulnerable consumers who were struggling to purchase electricity by contacting the supplier on their behalf to request emergency top ups. These consumers were also given advice on switching supplier to see if they could save money, as well as increasing consumer awareness around free debt advice and alternative forms of credit available to them from organisations such as CAP and Advice NI.
- During Covid-19, we were contacted by a number of consumers who were left in a vulnerable situation, as they were unable to purchase home heating oil because they lived in terrace houses with no external access to their oil tank and suppliers were unwilling to enter their homes. We worked with the NI Oil Federation to identify a number of suppliers across NI who would deliver to homes with no external access. Once identified, we shared the information with the consumer and publicised the details on our Covid-19 web page.
- During Covid-19 we assisted vulnerable PAYG gas customers who could not leave their home to purchase gas due to self-isolation. We contacted local agencies who were assisting vulnerable consumers by travelling to the consumer to obtain the prepayment card and money to purchase the gas for them. If the consumer was particularly vulnerable with no support, we requested that the PAYG meter was replaced with a credit meter to ensure that the consumer had continuous supply of gas and that the necessary processes were put in place to ensure that regular meter readings were taken to avoid estimated bills.
- The Consumer Council became a member of Helplines NI, a membership-led organisation consisting of over 30 different helplines across NI. The helplines provide a variety of vital support services including, information, advice, counselling, a listening ear and be-friending, and offer immediate support to those with a wide-range of health and wellbeing needs, often for those who are the most vulnerable in our community. Many of the services take place over the phone, but some can help via email, text and live web-chat.

## Staff and Corporate Achievements

- In April 2021 The Consumer Council achieved the British Standard 18477 Inclusive Service Provision, the best practice requirements for identifying and responding to consumer vulnerability. The Consumer Council is the first organisation in Northern Ireland to achieve this Standard. The Standard:
  - encourages the adoption of fair, ethical and inclusive practices;
  - demonstrates best practice for organisations in the identification and treatment of vulnerable consumers;
  - assists organisations to understand what consumers have a right to expect from them;
  - improves accessibility to services for all;
  - Increases consumer confidence.
- Awarded the Bronze Diversity Mark reaccreditation from Diversity Mark NI. The Diversity Mark accreditation is awarded to companies following an assessment process which ensures they have reached the required standard of commitment to advancing Diversity and Inclusion.
- The Consumer Council was awarded Gold accreditation by Investors in People in 2021. Benchmarked against Global industry standards, the IIP, expect Gold accreditation to be awarded to the top 2 percentile of organisations that are assessed and focus on the areas of leading, supporting, improving and organisation ambition when awarding businesses.
- A member of our diversity working group sits upon the Digital Assist Inclusion steering group which is chaired by Business in the Community (BITC).
- We continue to be a JAM Card friendly organisation. This card is designed to assist service users who may have communication barriers and require more time when availing of assistance.
- The Consumer Council is a Disability Confident Committed Employer. We show our commitment by ensuring that our recruitment is inclusive and accessible, making reasonable adjustments during the recruitment process and supporting our existing staff members.
- We have an Equality, Diversity and Inclusion Working Group within the organisation. This group meets every two months to discuss training opportunities for all staff, policies, best practice and to ensure we are treating all staff and consumers fairly.

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- Replaced the 'Diversity Now' training with 'Unconscious Bias' (CAL eLearning course). The course is the equality and diversity foundation course for all Consumer Council staff and reminds staff about important legislation and policies around equality and diversity, and being sensitive to the diverse needs of staff.
- The Consumer Council works with Trade Unions to develop and review HR policies; in addition it liaises with statutory bodies, including the Equality Commission for Northern Ireland, and benchmarks with other employers to ensure that The Consumer Council continues to adhere to the principles of equality, diversity and inclusion.
- Various training sessions were undertaken by staff that promote equality, diversity and inclusion as well as staff health and wellbeing including "Action for LGBTQ Inclusion in the Workplace", "Health Champion", "Action on Hearing Loss 'Overcoming Communication Barriers during Covid-19'", "Mental Health and Suicide Prevention", "How to Create Accessible and Inclusive Digital Content", "Employers for Disability Training" and "Supporting Psychological Well-being for you and your Organisation Through the Pandemic".
- The Director of Corporate Services completed the Business in the Community (BITC) Age-Inclusive Employer Network which resulted in changes to our recruitment practices and the development of additional policies, for example, financial wellbeing that reached across all our employees regardless of age.
- We have maintained our Customer Service Excellence (CSE) accreditation for the third year. The CSE standard was developed to drive customer focused change within organisations by placing the consumer at the heart of service provision. To maintain the accreditation, we must provide evidence of development and continuous improvement within the organisation.
- The 'empty seat at the board room table' programme continues, whereby a member of staff attends board meetings as a learning and development opportunity. To date there have been a total of 12 people that have taken this opportunity.
- We continue to provide staff with membership of Women in Business where they can access training programmes, mentoring and peer support.
- Staff continue to receive monthly emails from inspire to offer help and guidance on work/life balance and mental health awareness.
- Staff can avail of workspace assessments to ensure they have the desks/chairs/equipment to support them in the workplace.

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- A member of staff has officially been recognised as a point of contact for any staff member who may wish to make a whistleblowing disclosure.
- Achieved ISO 9001 certification. ISO 9001 relates to Quality Management and demonstrates the ability to consistently provide products and services that meet customer and regulatory requirements. We also achieved ISO 22301 certification which is the Business Continuity Management System standard.

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 2020-21 reporting period? *(tick one box only)*

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

Please provide any details and examples:

We developed a financial wellbeing policy as a result of the completion of the Business in the Community (BITC) Age Inclusive Network forum. We made some slight changes to our recruitment and selection procedures, again, as a result of participation in this forum.

**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:

Removal of date of birth from application forms which is a departure from the civil service norm

**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):*

Completion of the age inclusive network forum

## 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 2020-21 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:

Our candidate booklets clearly reflect our commitment to Section 75. The booklet which includes a job description states: *“The Consumer Council is committed to equality of opportunity in employment and welcomes applications from all suitably qualified candidates irrespective of religious belief, gender, disability, age, race, political opinion, marital status, sexual orientation or whether or not they have dependents.”*

5 Were the Section 75 statutory duties integrated within performance plans during the 2020-21 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:

The values of our organisation include a commitment to equality and inclusivity and it is therefore expected that these values would be incorporated when completing performance plans. All staff, without exception, have equal access to opportunities including recruitment and learning and development.

6 In the 2020-21 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 2020-21 report
- Not applicable

Please provide any details and examples:

The 2021 – 2024 Corporate Plan that was developed in 2020-21 outlines our commitment to promoting equality of opportunity and good relations through acknowledging our obligation to equality screening, and if appropriate, full equality impact assessments (EQIA) as outlined in Section 75 of the Northern Ireland Act 1998.

The plan also confirms our support of diversity and inclusion in our workplace: *“We operate in an increasingly diverse society and the people who provide and use our services have diverse characteristics and different experiences, needs and aspirations. Understanding and valuing these differences can result in greater participation. It will help bring about success at an individual, team and organisational level. We are committed to creating an inclusive working environment where individual differences are valued and respected, and in which each employee is able to fulfil their potential and maximise their contribution”*

**Equality action plans/measures**

7 Within the 2020-21 reporting period, please indicate the **number** of:

Actions completed:	25	Actions ongoing:		Actions to commence:	1
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Please provide any details and examples *(in addition to question 2)*:

**Action to Commence:** Sign language training for staff that are involved in outreach/education

**Actions Completed:** The Consumer Council has carried out a significant range of actions in accordance with the Equality Scheme Action Plan during this reporting period.

During this reporting period, our remit has expanded to include COVID-19 and EU Exit and the resulting impact on consumers in Northern Ireland

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.
- 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.



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- Conducted a survey and 11 focus groups to better understand the real and perceived impacts of EU Exit on consumers in Northern Ireland
- Monitored and reported on financial resilience and spending behaviours of Northern Ireland consumers versus GB consumers in relation to grocery shopping
- Produced a short film 'Hand to Mouth' which looked at the challenges facing low-income consumers in feeding themselves and their families a healthy, balanced and socially inclusive diet on a limited budget.

8 Please give details of changes or amendments made to the equality action plan/measures during the 2020-21 reporting period (*points not identified in an appended plan*):

Inclusion of COVID-19 and EU Exit action points

9 In reviewing progress on the equality action plan/action measures during the 2020-21 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 2020-21 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 webinars, internet discussions and presentations, leading to direct engagement with 3,599 consumers. Our online Consumer week led to over 200,000 views of the various videos we released educating and advising consumers across all of the Section 75 groups.

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- The latest consumer insight survey identified that less than half of consumers with a disability knew where to report a scam. We created new online family-friendly activities, which were downloaded over 9,500 times as well as designing animations on scams to help consumers protect themselves which has been viewed over 36,000 times.
- Conducted a survey and 11 focus groups to better understand the real and perceived impacts of EU Exit on consumers in NI
- We developed a financial wellbeing policy as a result of the completion of the Business in the Community (BITC) Age Inclusive Network forum. We also removed the date of birth question from our application forms on foot of this forum.
- Active involvement of disabled people in conducting site visits to audit the accessibility of ferry ports, terminals and the ferry itself.

12 In the 2020-21 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)*: Zoom/MS Teams etc.

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:

As a result of COVID-19, face to face meetings were halted in line with government restrictions and therefore, a lot of interactions were moved online using public consultation, social media, Zoom, MS Teams etc.

13 Were any awareness-raising activities for consultees undertaken, on the commitments in the Equality Scheme, during the 2020-21 reporting period? *(tick one box only)*

- Yes       No       Not applicable

Please provide any details and examples:

PART A

14 Was the consultation list reviewed during the 2020-21 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)*:

1
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Resource Budget allocation 2020/21. As the budget was materially unchanged from the previous year, it was decided that there was no equality impact.

16 Please provide the **number of assessments** that were consulted upon during 2020-21:

0
0
0

Policy consultations conducted with **screening** assessment presented.

Policy consultations conducted **with an equality impact assessment (EQIA)** presented.

Consultations for an **EQIA** alone.

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:

PART A

**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 2020-21 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 2020-21 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:

**22** Please provide any details or examples of where the monitoring of policies, during the 2020-21 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 2020-21, and the extent to which they met the training objectives in the Equality Scheme.

- Staff continue to receive training on awareness of unconscious bias at induction and every 2 years.
- Staff continue to receive training on vulnerable consumers and their needs.
- The Equality & Diversity Policy is mandated viewing for all staff on an annual basis and forms part of the new start induction pack.
- All new starts and staff have mandatory training on our Positive mental health toolkit.
- All staff attended personal resilience training.

- 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:

Consumer Vulnerability training as it directly correlates with the work that we undertake

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

- 26** Please list **any examples** of where monitoring during 2020-21, across all functions, has resulted in action and improvement in relation **to access to information and services**:

- Use of social media to compliment all of the communication campaigns throughout the year.
- Outreach Activities to reach a diverse range of audiences including older people, schools and colleges, church and special interest groups as well as 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 2020-21?

Insert number here:

0
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Please provide any details of each complaint raised and outcome:

N/A

**Section 3: Looking Forward**

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

The scheme document was updated in 2019 and approved by the Equality Commission. This will be reviewed in Q4 of the 21/22 Financial Year

**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
- Continued scrutiny of policy to ensure that they are meeting 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 reporting period? *(please tick any that apply)*

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

9

Fully achieved

0

Partially achieved

0

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>	Consumer Parliament	Create awareness and signposting for consumers notably, those who are vulnerable and those who have a disability	Reached 200,000 views on the videos and material that we created for our first online Consumer Parliament
	Corporate Plan 2021 - 2024	Our 2021 – 2024 Corporate Plan sets out our guiding principles and frames our policy position and approach to resolving consumer disputes with industry, offering a straightforward checklist to analyse and validate outcomes, in	Nationwide consultation

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Level	Public Life Action Measures	Outputs <sup>i</sup>	Outcomes / Impact <sup>ii</sup>
		particular amongst vulnerable groups.	
Regional <sup>iv</sup>	Consumer Council employees took a ferry trip to Scotland with 8 consumers who either have disabilities or reduced mobility	The trip included time in both the ferry terminal and a return trip to Scotland	<p>This trip allowed Consumer Council employees to identify areas for improvement when travelling via ferry for those with disabilities or reduced mobility.</p> <p>The trip also highlighted to those who attended the ease with which they could travel via ferry as an alternative mode of transport</p>
Local <sup>v</sup>			

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

	Training Action Measures	Outputs	Outcome / Impact
1	Vulnerable Consumer Training	Highlighted issues that consumers with disabilities may encounter in relation to consumerism and every day activities	Staff more confident in making adjustments where necessary for those with disabilities
2	Age Inclusive Network	Greater understanding of the needs of employees across all ages. This has become more apparent upon the removal of the default retirement age	Adjustments to recruitment policy and procedures and financial wellbeing policy



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	Training Action Measures	Outputs	Outcome / Impact
	Unconscious Bias	Highlighted situations where people may have unconscious bias	Staff are in a better position to recognise occasions where there may be bias towards people with disabilities

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	Mental Health Awareness exacerbated by COVID-19	Periodic articles and information shared on the impact of poor mental health and how to seek help	Staff awareness on the impact of poor mental health and the signs to look out for personally and with colleagues
2	Disabilities Guide created and circulated to line managers	A comprehensive guide was created and circulated to all line managers which provides information on the Disability Discrimination Act 1995 (DDA) Along with guidance on recruitment & selection, working with and making adjustments for those with disabilities, It also provides advice on aspects such as language and communication and links to various organisations that can provide further information on specific disabilities.	Line managers have access to information and guidance on how best to ensure an inclusive culture and that those with disabilities have equal access and opportunity within our organisation

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

	Encourage others Action Measures	Outputs	Outcome / Impact
1	Vulnerable Consumers Training	All staff attended vulnerable consumer training	This training has been put in place to ensure all staff can demonstrate best practice in the identification and treatment of vulnerable consumers
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			

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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				

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

	Action Measures not met	Reasons
1		
2		

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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

(b) Quantitative

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?

Please select

If yes please outline below:

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

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	Revised/Additional Action Measures	Performance Indicator	Timescale
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?

N/A

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<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.