

Equality Scheme Summary



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Background to our Organisation

NILGOSC is the administering body for the Local Government Pension Scheme in Northern Ireland. NILGOSC was set up by the Government in April 1950 to operate a pension scheme for local councils and other similar bodies in Northern Ireland. The pension scheme is a defined benefit scheme which provides retirement benefits to local government workers.

NILGOSC performs four main functions:

- Administration of the Local Government Pension Scheme;
- Investment of net income;
- Matters relating to employment; and
- Procurement of goods and services.

NILGOSC's vision is to provide an excellent and sustainable pension scheme.

Our Commitment to Equality

In accordance with Section 75 of the Northern Ireland Act 1998, NILGOSC is committed at all levels to the need to promote equality of opportunity between:

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

In carrying out its functions NILGOSC will also have due regard to the desirability of promoting good relations between persons of different religious belief, political opinion or racial group.

How we Promote Equality and Good Relations

NILGOSC has in place an Equality Scheme that sets out in detail the steps it will take to meet its statutory obligations and promote equality for all. A review of the effectiveness of the implementation of the Scheme was completed in 2016. The Equality Scheme was updated for minor changes and issued for a 12 week consultation in March 2017. A summary of the review of the Scheme and the consultation responses, along with other equality related documents, are available from our website at www.nilgosc.org.uk/equality-scheme.

To help demonstrate its commitment to mainstream equality throughout the organisation, NILGOSC has developed an Action Plan which sets out the steps it will take to address known and potential inequalities. The Action Plan forms part of the Equality Scheme and action measures have been incorporated in the NILGOSC Corporate Plan.

NILGOSC's Good Relations Policy for staff and Committee Members sets out its commitment and the ways in which good relations will be promoted, especially within the workforce. A copy of this policy is available on request from the Equality Officer.

Key Elements of our Equality Scheme

NILGOSC is committed to the fulfilment of its Section 75 obligations for all of its functions, powers and duties. In particular, the Equality Scheme incorporates the following key elements:

- **Effective internal arrangements to ensure compliance with Section 75 duties**

NILGOSC's internal arrangements include:

- Regular monitoring by the Senior Management Team of progress made in implementing the Equality Scheme;
- The integration of objectives relating to equality in corporate and operational planning;
- The integration of individual contributions to the implementation of the Equality Scheme in employee job descriptions and performance objectives; and

- The production of an annual Equality Statement to outline the progress made in implementing the Equality Scheme.

The Equality Officer will provide an annual report to the Committee and the Equality Commission on progress against the Equality Scheme.

- **Consultation**

NILGOSC will seek the views of those affected by its policies including members, pensioners, employing authorities, trade unions and other representative organisations regardless of whether they have a direct economic or personal interest. The consultation process addresses the formulation and revision of the Equality Scheme, screening exercises, Equality Impact Assessments and other matters relevant to the Section 75 statutory duties.

- **Screening**

NILGOSC will use screening tools to assess whether a policy should be subject to an Equality Impact Assessment. NILGOSC will publish quarterly screening reports that detail all policies screened, consideration of those policies and the decisions reached.

- **Equality Impact Assessments**

Equality Impact Assessments will allow NILGOSC to determine if a policy will have an adverse impact on its ability to fulfil its Section 75 duties. They also present an opportunity to demonstrate the likely positive outcomes of a policy and enable NILGOSC to seek ways to more effectively promote equality of opportunity and good relations. NILGOSC will publish the results of its Equality Impact Assessments when they have been completed.

- **Monitoring**

NILGOSC is committed to identifying opportunities to better promote equality of opportunity and good relations and will monitor the adverse impact upon the promotion of equality of opportunity and good relations of any policies adopted.

- **Communication and Accessibility of Information and Services**

NILGOSC wishes to ensure that it communicates effectively with, and its services are fully accessible to, all stakeholders. Requests from members, pensioners and all other stakeholders for information in an alternative format are recorded on the administration system in order that communications are, as far as possible, provided in a format to suit individual requirements.

On request from the Communications Officer, information can be provided in an alternative format, such as Braille, large print, audio cassette, or in an alternative language for those whose first language is not English, where reasonably practical.

- **Training**

NILGOSC staff are committed to providing the highest quality of service to its members and pensioners. Raising the awareness and training of staff on equality matters plays a crucial role in the effective implementation of NILGOSC's equality duties. NILGOSC has training programmes in place to ensure its staff can continue to provide a high quality of service which ensures equality of opportunity for all.

- **Timetable**

The Equality Scheme includes an Action Plan for implementing the Scheme, which includes target dates for each action identified.

Review of the Scheme

NILGOSC will conduct a thorough review of the Equality Scheme every five years. This review will evaluate the effectiveness of the Equality Scheme in relation to the statutory duties as relevant to NILGOSC's functions in Northern Ireland. A report of this review will continue to be made available from the website and on request.

Glossary

NILGOSC The Northern Ireland Local Government Officers' Superannuation Committee (the "Committee", which is appointed by the Department for Communities (DfC, consists of a chairperson, five members nominated by employers' organisations, five members nominated by employees' organisations and two independent members. The Committee's function is to manage the pension fund and administer the pension scheme for local councils and other admitted bodies in Northern Ireland. The day-to-day administration is carried out on the Committee's behalf by approximately 90 staff. The 'rules' which govern the operation of the pension scheme are statutory regulations made by the DfC.

Equality Scheme Under Section 75 of the Northern Ireland Act 1998, NILGOSC must deliver its services in a way which promotes equal opportunities and good relations. It must produce an Equality Scheme, which is effectively a document outlining its equality policies and an action plan to review its activities to ensure equality for all, and submit it for approval to the Equality Commission.

Stakeholders The stakeholders of NILGOSC are all those who NILGOSC serves, or have an interest in its activities. The primary stakeholders are the members and pensioners of the scheme and their dependants, the employers to which it provides a pension service, NILGOSC staff and the Department for Communities. The secondary stakeholders are all those who would seek to work for NILGOSC in the future and those who do or would wish to provide goods and services to NILGOSC.

Impact Assessment This is the term used by the Equality Commission to describe the process of reviewing the activities of an organisation to determine if any of the nine groups of people within the Section 75 categories are disproportionately affected. If so, steps are taken to remove this effect or reduce it. In undertaking an impact assessment, NILGOSC will consult with representatives of the nine groups.

Good Relations comprises three main principles:

- Equity – equality of access to resources
- Respecting Diversity – recognition, understanding and tolerance of difference
- Interdependence – obligations and commitments to others

Screening This is the term used by the Commission to describe the initial review of policy using consultation and supporting data to identify any potential areas which are likely to have a significant impact on equality of opportunity and result in a higher or lower participation by a particular group. Screening is carried out on all NILGOSC policies using screening tools to assess the policy against all elements of equal opportunity. If the screening exercise identifies any potential impacts on equality, an Equality Impact Assessment will be carried out on the policy.

Complaints

A complaint concerning equality of opportunity should be made directly to the Equality Officer using the details provided below. You can find more information in the booklet ‘Decisions, Reviews and Complaints’, which is available on request and can be downloaded from the NILGOSC website.

Contact Details

Equality matters are co-ordinated within NILGOSC by the Equality Officer who can be contacted using the details provided below:

Address:

NILGOSC
Templeton House
411 Holywood Road
Belfast
BT4 2LP

Telephone: 0345 3197 320

Email: equality@nilgosc.org.uk

Typetalk: (for Minicom users) 18001 0345 3197 320

Fax: 0345 3197 321

Website: www.nilgosc.org.uk

Copies of the Equality Scheme and other NILGOSC policies may be obtained on request from the Equality Officer or from the NILGOSC website www.nilgosc.org.uk.

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