

# CHIEF ELECTORAL OFFICER FOR NORTHERN IRELAND



## Public Authority Statutory Equality and Good Relations Duties Annual Progress Report 2017-18

### Contact:

|  |            |  |
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| • Section 49A of the Disability Discrimination Act 1995 and Disability Action Plan | As above   | <input checked="" type="checkbox"/>                                  |

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

<http://www.eoni.org.uk/Utility/About-EONI/Equality-scheme>

### Signature:



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**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 2017 and March 2018**

## **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 2017-18, 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.*

A number of key developments have been made during the reporting year including:

- Digital registration – CEO has engaged with a number of section 75 related groups in relation to registering on-line in Northern Ireland. As part of this digital strategy EONI is taking forward an initiative in relation to registering attainers in particular to automate as far as possible the registration process.
- Outreach strategies including disability action partnership, internship with Hazelwood Integrated College and partnership with NI Assembly Education Team including events at Stormont, Derry and Belfast. The assembly has a full-time team working with schools and EONI is trying to become part of their programme.
- Scoping work around areas of deprivation and lower registration in relation to identifying and addressing the needs of hard to reach groups.
- Special Needs educational visits
- Planning with Equality Commission for equality good relations duty.
- Mencap film for election partnership and a number of other training videos.

The Chief Electoral Officer and Northern Ireland Office published a joint consultation ‘The Future Delivery of Electoral Services in Northern Ireland which closed in 2017. The paper sought views on a range of measures to modernise and improve the provision of Northern Ireland’s electoral services after the introduction of digital registration and before the next cycle of elections. The CEO will take forward the response to the consultation during the next reporting year.

- 2 Please provide **examples** of outcomes and/or the impact of **equality action plans/** measures in 2017-18 (or append the plan with progress/examples identified).

|    | <b>Action Point</b>   | <b>Intended Outcome</b>                         | <b>Performance Indicator</b>               | <b>Progress</b>  |
|----|---|---|--|--|
| 1. | Introduction of online electoral registration in NI.  | Improved accessibility of registration system.  | Increase in electoral register             | Completed. EONI will continue to provide a paper based registration facility to ensure no Section 75 group is disadvantaged eg older or disabled people. |
| 2. | Registration / Education Initiative   | Contact with schools.                           | Increase in attainers registration levels. | Ongoing. EONI aims to continue building on the success of this initiative. Work with Hazelwood Integrated College during 2017/18.                        |
| 3. | Encourage completion of registration forms from various public, voluntary and private sector organisations, areas of deprivation. | Promote participation in the electoral process. | Improve registration outreach.             | Ongoing strategy to further involve Section 75 groups. Information received from BSO and General Registrar.  |
| 4. | Contact nursing homes on the  | To offer the facility to register               | Increase in electoral                      | Existing initiative to ensure residents are  |

PART A

|    |  |   |                                 |   |
|----|--|---|---------------------------------|---|
|    | property database, enclosing electoral registration forms and application forms for absent voting. | and apply for a postal or proxy vote.                             | register                        | registered but not commenced during 17/18.  |
| 5. | Citizenship ceremonies -contact all those who attended to offer electoral registration.            | To ensure ethnic minorities are offered the facility to register. | Increase in electoral register  | Completed. NIO will continue to provide information on all those in NI who became British citizens. |
| 6. | Encouraging people with disabilities to work.  | Participation in the workforce                                    | Increase in applicants.         | Ongoing. Affirmative action strategies to be developed where appropriate.                           |
| 7. | All new and revised policies equality screened   | Adverse impact identified and mitigation where appropriate.       | Equality Screening carried out. | Screening report published on website.  |

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

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

Introduction of on-line registration, however, EONI will continue providing the alternative method of registering through a paper based system to ensure the needs are met of people who may experience social or personal inhibitors in accessing digital registration.

Changes to polling station scheme prior to the elections in 2017

## 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 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:

No permanent staff recruitment during the reporting year but incorporated into election staff job description for future recruitment.

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

Managers with responsibility for implementing the Equality Scheme.

6 In the 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

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- No, the organisation's planning cycle does not coincide with this 2013-14 report
- Not applicable

Please provide any details and examples:

Strategic aim for Corporate Plan 2015-2018

**Equality action plans/measures**

7 Within the 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*):

See Section 2 above.

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

Following 5 year review of equality scheme equality action plan updated.

9 In reviewing progress on the equality action plan/action measures during the 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 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:

Development of EONI's strategy on engaging with young people eg, pilot project with Hazelwood in training students to work at elections. Promotion work with Education Team at Stormont who also met with CEO and staff in relation to Hazelwood project.

EONI is now taking forward participation in the internship programme with Hazelwood.

PART A

**12** In the 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:

CEO attended regular meetings eg NIO, Electoral Commission, Assembly Parties Panel meetings to discuss elections, registration, electoral law and practice, including initiatives and planning arrangements for the elections.

EONI began a process with Disability Action to improve our training materials with the aim of increasing access to employment positions for people with disabilities.

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

- Yes                       No                       Not applicable

**14** Was the consultation list reviewed during the 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)**

EONI's screening report is available on our website.

Note: The NIO is responsible for reforms regarding electoral law and registration and through public consultation provides an opportunity for stakeholders including Section 75 groups and the wider public to contribute to proposed changes.

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

|   |
|---|
| 0 |
|---|

PART A

16 Please provide the **number of assessments** that were consulted upon during 2017-18:

There were no EQIAs during the period.

|   |  |
|---|--|
| 0 | Policy consultations conducted with <b>screening</b> assessment presented. |
| 0 | Policy consultations conducted <b>with an EQIA</b> presented.              |
| 0 | Consultations for an <b>EQIA</b> 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:

There were no EQIAs carried out specifically by EONI, however, a joint consultation was issued with NIO on the future of electoral services.

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

**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 reporting period? *(tick one box only)*

- Yes                       No                       Not applicable

**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 reporting period? *(tick one box only)*

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

In relation to the electoral register, staff in the Area Offices, as part of continuous registration, encourage registration and participation in the democratic process for all Section 75 groups through on-going systems. For example, information on all those in Northern Ireland who became British citizens is received from NIO and between 1 April 2017 and 31 March 2018 EONI sent letters to approx 550 individuals who were not already registered or changed their details in order to add them to the electoral register. As at the publication of the last full register in December 2017, there were 608 attainees added. Updates to the electoral register are published monthly.



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

Yes  No  Not applicable

Due to on-line registration in Northern Ireland a different data capture system for attainers in schools is currently underway. EONI therefore reviewed the 2017 autumn roll out schools initiative.

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

The number of attainers has decreased due to the significant impact of unplanned elections. It is anticipated that the data matching systems will increase the figure.

- 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:

EONI continued to receive quarterly data from the Business Services Organisation (BSO) which is 'data matched' against the information held on the EONI database. As a result, invitations to register or to update information on the register were issued to over 85,461 electors resulting in responses, representing nearly 45% of those contacted.

#### **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 2017-18, and the extent to which they met the training objectives in the Equality Scheme.

UK Parliamentary election took place in June 2017 - A handbook for poll staff was developed which included assisting voters with disabilities including access issues and providing assistance.

EONI Staff also set up a mock polling station and count to train young people at Hazel Integrated College.

- 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:

Training evaluations eg election staff and feedback directly from students.

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

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

The introduction of on-line electoral registration service has improved the accessibility of EONI registration service, offering all section 75 groups the opportunity to register at a time and location most convenient to them including mobiles devices.

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

**27** How many complaints **in relation to the Equality Scheme** have been received during 2017-18?

Insert number here:

|   |
|---|
| 0 |
|---|

**Section 3: Looking Forward**

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

A five year review took place in 2017/18.

**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)*

Considering how EONI estate might best meet the needs of the electorate given on-line registration. EONI also needs to review polling station scheme. The CEO will consult with key stakeholders.

**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

Digital registration and it's impact on EONI office estate, and a polling station scheme review to minimise any adverse effects including elderly and disabled voters and in the use of neutral premises, to ensure equality of opportunity and good relations.

**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:**

**5**

Fully achieved

**1**

Partially achieved

**1**

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> | N/A   |   |                                 |
| Regional <sup>iv</sup>  | Polling Stations Scheme   | Ensuring optimal locations for persons with a disability in accordance with legislation.                | Accessible polling stations.    |
| Local <sup>v</sup>      | Access to information and services including Area Electoral Offices | Engagement with groups to encourage electoral registration to ensure accessibility to the voting system | Outreach initiatives undertaken |

PART B

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

|  | Training Action Measures                        | Outputs   | Outcome / Impact  |
|--|---|---|---|
|  | Training for poll staff and senior count staff. | Providing assistance to voters with disabilities. | Training evaluation forms – high percentage of those trained felt they were provided with sufficient training on dealing with customer 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                 |
|--|---|--|----------------------------------|
|  | Public consultation by NIO on future delivery of electoral services | Contribution by CEO to the process eg on the consultation paper and liaison with stakeholders. | Outcome on consultation awaited. |

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

|  | Encourage others Action Measures | Outputs   | Outcome / Impact              |
|--|----------------------------------|---|-------------------------------|
|  | Recruitment opportunities        | Information sent to EFDNI job bulletin board for vacancies as required. | Welcoming disabled applicants |

PART B

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 |
|--|---|---------|-------------------|
|  | N/A   |         |                   |

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

|  | Action Measures partly achieved | Milestones / Outputs | Outcomes/Impacts                  | Reasons not fully achieved   |
|--|---------------------------------|----------------------|-----------------------------------|--|
|  | Disability Information          | Guidance pack        | For front line and election staff | Poll staff handbook produced during elections only, EONI still to develop information pack for front line staff. |

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

|  | Action Measures not met           | Reasons        |
|--|-----------------------------------|----------------|
|  | Evaluate Disability Action survey | Not published. |

PART B

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

Qualitative/Qualitative:

- information and research from the electoral commission and GB organisations
- Staff evaluations and feedback
- Screening of policies, and consultation

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?

N/A

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.