NIGALA
NI Guardian Ad Litem Agency
A voice for Children and Young People in Family Courts

Public Authority Statutory Equality and Good Relations Duties
Annual Progress Report 2019-20

Contact:

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Documents published relating to our Equality Scheme can be found at:
https://nigala.hscni.net/publications/equality-disability/ **(ECNI Q28)**

Our Equality Scheme is due to be reviewed by 31 March 2021.

Signature:

P. Reynolds

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

It presents our progress in fulfilling our statutory equality and disability duties.

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

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Chapter 1: Summary Quantitative Report

Screening, EQIAs and Consultation (ECNI Q15, 16, 19)

1. Number of policies screened (as recorded in screening reports)	Screened In	Screened out with mitigation	Screened out without mitigation	No concerns were raised by consultees on screening in 2019-20
9	**0**	**6**	**3**	
2. Number of policies subjected to Equality Impact Assessment	**0**			
3. Indicate the stage of progress of each EQIA	**Title** N/A		**Stage**	
4. Number of policy consultations conducted	**0**			
5. Number of policy consultations conducted with screening presented.	**0**			

Training (ECNI Q24)

6. Staff training undertaken during 2019-20 (see also Chapter 2, Q6).

Course	No of Staff Trained	No of Board Members Trained
Screening Training	2	0
Equality Impact Assessment Training	2	0
Mental Health Awareness Training for Line Managers	8	0

Course	No of Staff Trained	No of Board Members Trained
Conflict, Bullying & Harassment	40	0
Promoting Disability Equality in the Workplace	1	0
Promoting Mental Health & Wellbeing in the Workplace	1	0
Total	**54**	**0**

eLearning: Discovering Diversity

Module 1 to 4 – Diversity	**2**
Module 5 – Disability	**2**
Module 6 – Cultural Competencies	**2**

eLearning: Making a Difference

Part 1: All Staff	**63**
Part 2: Line Managers	**8**

Complaints (ECNI Q27)

7. Number of complaints in relation to the Equality Scheme received during 2019-20.

0

Equality Action Plan (see also Chapter 3) (ECNI Q7)

8. Within the 2019-20 reporting period, please indicate the number of:

Actions completed:	**0**	Actions ongoing:	**8**	Actions to commence:	**0**

Disability Action Plan (see also Chapter 4) (ECNI Part B Q1)

9. Within the 2019-20 reporting period, please indicate the number of:

Actions completed:	**6**	Actions ongoing:	**0**	Actions to commence:	**2**

Chapter 2: Section 75 Progress Report (ECNI Q1, 3, 3a, 3b, 23)

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.**

Table 1 below outlines progress to better promote equality of opportunity and good relations[i].

Facilitated by the BSO Procurement and Logistics Service, the NIGALA continued to actively promote equality of opportunity in contracts with recruitment agencies.

During 2019-20, the Procurement and Logistics Service conducted 2 audit exercises to assess how agencies were (i) promoting equality and (ii) adhering to contractual requirements in regards to equality monitoring. Audit findings will allow us for the first time to monitor the diversity of agency workers placed within regional HSC organisations and HSC Trusts. We can then engage with recruitment agencies in relation to measures to address under-representation and the user experience of specific equality groupings. The findings will also provide further information on how the agencies promote equality with reference to: training their staff; gathering feedback from agency workers; their provisions on making reasonable adjustments for agency workers; and outreach work to attract a diverse range of agency workers.

Table 1:

Outline new developments or changes in policies or practices and the difference they have made for specific equality groupings.	
Persons of different age	**Feedback App** In October 2017 we commenced work on the development of a phone app, suited to a range of ages for gathering feedback about the NIGALA service. During 2019/20 the app was finalised with a view to piloting and launching the app during 2020/21. **Resource for Preschool Children** During 2018/19 we began work developing a resource for preschool children, in order to assist guardians to work directly with them, to ascertain their wishes, feelings, and identify who is important to them in order to understand their world. The resource focuses on interaction and using pictorial images, and is in electronic format making it accessible to children of preschool age, as it is a medium they are comfortable using. During 2019/20 the resource was in its final stages with a view to piloting it during 2020/21.
Persons of different sexual orientation	**Pride Event** The Equality Unit (in conjunction with the PHA) issued a number of corporate communications publicising 2019 Pride Event. This invitation, encouraging HSC staff to stand alongside their lesbian, gay or bisexual colleagues in PRIDE, was issued to

| | staff in all the regional HSC organisations. This served to raise awareness and actively promote inclusion of lesbian, gay or bisexual colleagues.

Conflict, Bullying & Harassment

The regional Conflict, Bullying & Harassment policy was developed by HR and colleagues from other regional HSC organisations and HSC Trusts. In order to give LGB people more confidence in reporting incidences of conflict, bullying and harassment, sexual orientation is clearly defined in the policy as a protected Equality Group in the definition of harassment. Moreover, the policy states that line managers have a specific responsibility in the prevention and resolution of conflict, bullying and harassment. Training was provided to NIGALA staff during 2019/20 regarding this policy.

Communication

During 2019/20 a gap was identified in the communication we have available to the public on the service we provide in relation to Parental Order applications. This was reviewed and information has been prepared for heterosexual, same sex and single applicants regarding the process for applying to the court for Parental Orders. The information will be made available on NIGALA's website during 2020. |
|---|---|

Person of different genders and gender identities	**Domestic Violence Policy** This year, work was commenced (by BSO Human Resources on our behalf) to develop a Domestic Violence Policy to better support staff working in the regional HSC organisations. Given that domestic violence disproportionately affects women this will have an important impact on the HSC workforce, which is predominately female.
Persons with and without a disability	Please note: Our work on promoting equality for people with a disability in the workplace is reported on in detail in the Disability Action Plan – Progress Report 2019-20. This comprises, for example, our Disability Work Placement Scheme; Tapestry, our Disability Staff Network; and our Disability Awareness Days for staff. ■ Encouraging recruitment agencies to promote equality of opportunity: the audit specifically focused on how agencies made reasonable adjustments for candidates with disabilities. This looked at agencies' attitudes towards reasonable adjustments, and the steps taken by recruitment agencies to ensure that reasonable adjustments were made and reviewed on a regular basis. The aim of this work was to raise the profile of the issue with recruitment agencies. In turn, the intended outcome is to contribute to identifying and seeking to better meet the needs of candidates with a disability. ■ Disability Placement Scheme: After engaging with participants, regional HSC placement managers and employment support officers involved in the scheme, it was decided to include details on the prospective office environment to future placement descriptions. This has been implemented in the 2019-20 scheme, and

	will be evaluated in May 2020. The aim is to ensure that participants and their employment support officers had a good idea of what their working environment would look like, for example what floor is the office on? Is it a large open plan office or a small office? Is it a large team with lots of different people or a small team with fewer people? This helps participants and employment support officers to make an initial decision on whether the placement would be a good match as some of these environments may not suit some people with certain disabilities. In turn, this has contributed to reducing the number of placements ended prematurely due to unmet expectations. ▪ People with learning disabilities/People with sight impairments: NIGALA produced Easy read and audio versions of the Equality and Disability Action Plan, with support from the BSO Equality Unit. **Resources** ▪ The resource for preschool children mentioned above, has also been designed for professionals to use when working with children with learning disabilities. During 2019/20 the resource was in its final stages with a view to piloting it during 2020/21.
Persons with and without dependants	**Carers in the Workplace** (work carried out under our Equality Action Plan) As part of a qualitative research project, a group of BSO staff who are carers were interviewed on their views on balancing work and caring responsibilities. The themes and issues emerging from these interviews were used to inform questions for a baseline survey to capture the experiences of carers in all regional HSC organisations.

| | The results from this survey will help to inform work to progress commitment to support staff who are carers.

On our behalf, the Equality Unit developed a carers leaflet outlining the definition of a carer, the background to why this leaflet was needed and a list of all policies and procedures available for carers as well as a description of each. The leaflet also provides signposting to other resources and forms of support including Inspire and information on carers assessments. This will help inform staff and managers about what support is available to ensure a consistent and supportive approach. This has been published on the Tapestry Disability Staff Network website and will be heavily promoted in the coming year. |
| --- | --- |

Where changes resulted from screenings, these will be listed in Chapter 7, the mitigation report.

(ECNI Q4, 5, 6)

2. During the 2019-20 reporting period:

(a) Were the Section 75 statutory duties integrated within:

	Yes/No	Details
Job Descriptions	No	The new template for Job Descriptions and Personnel Specifications used across Health and Social Care no longer makes reference to the Section 75 duties.
Performance objectives for staff	Yes	Section 75 duties are integrated within performance objectives for staff in the following: ▪ Equality of opportunity and diversity. ▪ Anti-discriminatory practice. ▪ The welfare checklist.

(b) Were objectives and targets relating to Section 75 integrated into:

	Yes/No	Details
Corporate/Strategic Plans	Yes	Objectives relating to section 75 were integrated into corporate, strategic and business plans.
Annual Business Plans	Yes	

(ECNI Q11, 12, 17)

3. **Please provide any details and examples of good practice in consultation during the 2019-20 reporting periods, 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:**

Please refer to **Table 2** below.

Table 2:

Policy publicly consulted on	What equality document did you issue alongside the policy consultation document?	Which Section 75 groups did you consult with?	What consultation methods did you use? AND Which of these drew the greatest number of responses from consultees?	Do you have any comments on your experience of this consultation?
N/A	☐ Screening Template ☐ EQIA report ☐ None			

(ECNI Q21, 26)

4. **In analysing monitoring information gathered, was any action taken to change/review any policies?**

Yes / ~~No / Not Applicable~~ (delete as appropriate)

Please refer to **Table 3** below.

Table 3:

Service or Policy	What equality monitoring information did you collect and analyse?	What action did you take as a result of this analysis? AND Did you make any changes to the service or policy as a result?	What difference did this make for Section 75 groups?
Regional HSC Organisations - Disability Placement Scheme	Qualitative data was collected via a series of focus groups alongside experience of the scheme (specifically focusing on access to the scheme/ experience of the work placement/ outcome of the placement scheme).	Results from the analysis revealed that individuals with particular disabilities needed more information on the working environment than was currently being provided in order for them to make an informed choice as to whether the placement offered was acceptable. As a result, descriptions of the office environment have now been included in all placement descriptions so that it is immediately apparent whether the office is noisy/quiet; busy/calm; number of people, in addition to accessibility issues.	Individuals with specific disabilities, including those with mental health or sensory disabilities, are now more informed as to the office environment, which may help them decide whether a potential placement is suitable or not. In turn, this should lead to improved matching and a reduced risk of placements not going ahead due to unsuitable matching.

(ECNI Q22)

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

N/A

(ECNI Q25)

6. **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:**

The organisation avails of the joint Section 75 training programme that is coordinated and delivered by the BSO Equality Unit for staff across all 11 partner organisations. The following statistics thus relate to the evaluations undertaken by all participants for the training:

Screening Training Evaluation

The figures in bold below represent the percentage of participants who selected 'Very Well' or 'Well'. Participants were asked: "Overall how well do you think the course met its aims":

- To develop an understanding of the statutory requirements for screening: **98%**
- To develop an understanding of the benefits of screening: **95%**
- To develop an understanding of the screening process: **95%**
- To develop skills in practically carrying out screening: **95%**

The figure in bold below represents the percentage of participants who selected 'Extremely Valuable' or 'Valuable' when asked: "How valuable was the course to you personally?" **92%**

EQIA Training Evaluations

Participants were asked: "Overall how well do you think you have achieved the following learning outcomes":

- To demonstrate an understanding of what the law says on EQIAs **96%**
- To demonstrate an understanding of the EQIA process **96%**
- To demonstrate an understanding of the benefits of EQIAs **93%**
- To develop skills in practically carrying out EQIAs **96%**

The figures in bold represents the percentage of participants who selected 'Very well' or 'Well'.

Conclusion

Evaluations of screening training for 2019-20 continue to be very positive, as has been the case over recent years. The scores of **95%-98%** are significantly high and so the screening training will continue in its current format in next year's programme.

The EQIA training evaluations have been extremely positive again this year. The scores of **93%-96%** are significantly high and so the EQIA training will also continue in its current format in next year's training programme.

Making a Difference Training

The aim of 'Making a Difference' is to show how staff can make a difference to the culture of their organisation by:

- Promoting positive attitudes to diversity;
- Ensuring everyone is treated with respect and dignity;
- Behaving in a way that is in keeping with HSC values and equality and human rights law.

This eLearning package on equality awareness now forms part of mandatory training for all staff in our organisation. To date **63** members of staff (82**%**) completed the section for all staff and **8** members of staff also completed the section for line managers.

(ECNI Q29)

7. Are there areas of the Equality Scheme arrangements (screening/consultation/training) your organisation anticipates will be focused on in the next reporting period? (Please provide details)

In the coming year 2020-2021 NIGALA will focus on encouraging staff to complete equality screening and EQIA training. This will include arranging a facilitated screening workshop for staff involved in decision-making. The new Chair and Non-Executive Board Members will also be in attendance at equality training this year.

A further priority relates to ensuring the integration of references to the equality and disability duties in all job descriptions.

Chapter 3: Equality and Disability Action Plan Progress Report

Our action plan outlined actions related to our functions and took account of our equality scheme commitments relating to Section 75 of the Northern Ireland Act 1998. Our equality scheme is available on our website https://nigala.hscni.net/publications/equality-disability/

The law requires us when we carry out work to promote equality of opportunity across nine equality categories: age, gender, disability, marital status, political opinion, religion and ethnicity.

We have kept our equality action plan under review and reported annually to the Equality Commission on what we have done.

Equality Action Plan Progress Report

	Action Measure	Intended Outcome	Performance Indicator and Target	Timescale and Ownership
1	NIGALA has distinct responsibilities specific to children as defined under the governing legislation – The Children (NI) Order 1995 and The Adoption (NI) Order 1987. The importance of engaging with and consulting children to receive feedback to reflect on their experience of and develop the service is a shared interest that can be developed with other organisations.	Collaboration with the Patient and Client Council and the Regulation and Quality Improvement Authority initially in the development of our website to signpost children and young people to relevant supports and services and draw on each other's resources.	Child and user-friendly website with signposts to relevant services and supports provided by other organisations	Head of Corporate Services and Assistant Director (Public and Personal Involvement lead). 2020 **Ongoing**

What we did over the last year:

During 2018/19 we collaborated with the PHA and with the NIGALA youth forum in order to create and develop a website that would be accessible and relevant to children and young people. The website went live during 2019/20 and includes work developed by the NIGALA's Northern Ireland Youth Associates Board (NIYAB) based on their experiences.

On 14 February 2020, NIGALA held a conference 'Are We Listening'. NIYAB had a significant role in the development of the conference and participation on the day. The members of NIYAB prepared art work and poetry based on their experiences which was displayed around the conference venue. Some of the NIYAB members spoke at the conference, sharing their experiences with the audience which included health and social professionals, solicitors, barristers and judges.

	Action Measure	Intended Outcome	Performance Indicator and Target	Timescale and Ownership
2	Revise and implement guidance to achieve consistent corporate branding to ensure that our website and all the information (operational and corporate) generated by the Agency is accessible and complies with best practice guidance.	All information and materials produced by NIGALA comply with Agency guidance.	Consistent house style (font, format) in compliance with Agency guidance.	Corporate Services 2020 **Ongoing**

What we did over the last year:

This has been partially implemented. Templates on NIGALA case information system have been amended incorporating the agreed house style. There is further work to be done to introduce the house style to all staff and provide guidance around same. This will be completed during 2020.

	Action Measure	Intended Outcome	Performance Indicator and Target	Timescale and Ownership
3	Review the caring responsibilities of staff with/without dependents.	Staff who are carers feel more supported in the workplace.	Sickness absence of carers is reduced. Retention of staff who are carers.	NIGALA/BSO HR with support by Equality Unit 2018/19 **Ongoing**
4	Promote information for staff who are carers on available policies and measures that might meet their needs including signposting to relevant support organisations.			
5	Identify any gaps in available support for staff and explore how/if these could be met within existing policy and resources.			

What we did over the last year:

- In the last year, working with members of our Disability Staff Network and colleagues from within the Business Services Organisation (BSO) and other HSC organisations, the Equality Unit developed a leaflet on our behalf to provide information to staff who are carers. The leaflet was published this year on the Tapestry website, and provides

information for staff who are carers on available policies and measures that might meet their needs. The leaflet will be sent to staff in all regional HSC organisations.

- Last year, the Equality Unit completed interviews with staff who are carers on our behalf. These looked at different workplace issues and policies that carers feel would help to support them balance work and caring. While the interviews were conducted with BSO staff, the findings from this research were shared with all regional HSC organisations with a view to take learning. A survey for staff who are carers and who work in any of the regional HSC organisations has also been developed to explore and highlight different issues including suggestions for any additional support.

	Action Measure	Intended Outcome	Performance Indicator and Target	Timescale and Ownership
6	Deliver awareness and training initiatives to relevant staff as part of the roll out of the Gender Identity and Expression Employment Policy	Staff who identify as transgender and non-binary feel more supported in the workplace.	90% of relevant staff have been trained.	BSO HR with support by Equality Unit March 2020 **Ongoing**
What we did over the last year: The Making a Difference eLearning programme includes a module that is dedicated to gender identity issues in the workplace. To date, 63 members of staff have completed the programme.				

	Action Measure	Intended Outcome	Performance Indicator and Target	Timescale and Ownership
7	Making a Difference eLearning: Add module to suite of mandatory training for all staff Deliver on training targets	Increased staff awareness of equality and human rights	Making a Difference eLearning included in mandatory training for all staff. 75% in the first year and 100% thereafter of staff have completed the eLearning module.	BSO HR with support by Equality Unit **Ongoing**

What we did over the last year:

- Making a Difference eLearning has been made mandatory for all NIGALA staff.
- To date, 63 staff have completed Making a Difference eLearning, which is 82% of all NIGALA staff.

	Action Measure	Intended Outcome	Performance Indicator and Target	Timescale and Ownership
8	Undertake awareness raising relating to new support mechanisms (developed by BSO) to support staff with experience of domestic violence.	Staff with experience of domestic violence are better supported.	Awareness raising undertaken with 100% of staff.	BSO HR with support by Equality Unit March 2020 **Ongoing**

What we did over the last year:

Work has begun on the development of a Domestic Abuse policy for the regional HSC organisations based on existing Trust policies. As a next step, we will engage with key stakeholders within and outside our organisations to feed into the development of the policy and to determine what measures we need to put in place to support any staff experiencing domestic violence or who are at risk.

Conclusions for Equality Action Plan Report 2019-20

- In 2019-20, we completed **0** actions.
- We didn't do what we said we would do for **0** actions.
- We still have some work to do to complete **8** actions. All of the actions in our action plan are at regional and at local level.
- Our action plan is a live document. We will tell the Equality Commission about any changes.

Disability Action Plan Progress Report

Awareness Days

	Action Measure	Intended Outcome	Performance Indicator and Target	Timescale and Ownership
1	Raise awareness of specific barriers faced by people with disabilities including through linking in with National Awareness Days or Weeks (such as Mind your Health Day)	Increased staff awareness of the range of disabilities and needs	Two annual awareness days profiled. >50% of staff participating in the evaluation indicate that they know more about people living with disabilities as a result of the awareness days.	NIGALA Annually **Completed for 2019/20**

What we did over the last year:

In June 2019 NIGALA held a coffee morning to celebrate its IIP silver award and used this as an occasion to fundraise for FunDays, a small group run by local parents which relies completely on fundraising. Their purpose is to support families who have children with additional needs; providing a safe, social space for them to meet and play with friends / family members and siblings.

We held two Disability Awareness Days in 2019-20. Every year we ask staff what disabilities they would like to know more about. In a survey last year, staff said they wanted to know more about Fibromyalgia and Mental Health, so we made

these the focus of our Disability Awareness days this year. We made sure that all staff knew about the Awareness Days by email, and also advertised these in our staff newsletter.

During the Fibromyalgia Awareness Day, people from four different voluntary organisations came to talk to staff. These were Fibromyalgia Support NI, Hope 4 ME Fibro, Fibromyalgia Awareness NI and Versus Arthritis. Speakers talked to staff in five HSC organisations. Information stands with leaflets about the condition and the Disability Insight bulletin were set up across ten sites.

The Mental Health Awareness Day focused on three mental health conditions: mild forms of depression, anxiety and Obsessive Compulsive Disorder (OCD). Speakers from Inspire talked to staff at six sites and information stands were available at 16 sites.

NIGALA hosted a speaker and used this as opportunity to hold a coffee afternoon to raise money for the Niamh Louise Foundation and the Lighthouse charity. Both charities were nominated by NIGALA staff. Lighthouse is an organisation committed to the prevention of suicide and self-harm; the promotion of positive mental health and the provision of support services to families who have been bereaved due to suicide. The aim of the Niamh Louise Foundation is to provide a safe environment where anyone can drop in to chat about worrying thoughts, thoughts of suicide and/or self-harm.

Staff told Senior Management in their organisations and the Equality Unit that they thought the Mental Health Awareness Day was useful. Staff who attended the talks said they enjoyed them and learned from them.

	Action Measure	Intended Outcome	Performance Indicator and Target	Timescale and Ownership
2	Link the Awareness Days to the Agency's Health and Wellbeing Strategy	Information and materials provided through the awareness days is collated and stored centrally for ease of access and future reference.	Staff have access to relevant information and support services.	NIGALA Annually **Completed for 2019/20**

What we did over the last year:

As point 1 above.

Information and materials provided through the awareness days is shared with staff beforehand and stored centrally for future reference.

Placement Scheme

	Action Measure	Intended Outcome	Performance Indicator and Target	Timescale and Ownership
3	Consider how the organisation can create and promote meaningful placement opportunities for people with disabilities in line with good practice and making use of voluntary expertise in this area.	People with a disability gain meaningful work experience. Staff gain insight into the reality of the supports and adjustments required to enable a person with a disability gain employment opportunities.	Placement considered and where possible offered each year. Feedback indicates that placement meets expectations.	NIGALA Annually **Not complete**

What we did over the last year:

For the placement scheme ending in May 2019, the regional HSC organisations offered 12 placements in total. Overall, 3 of the placement offers from HSC organisations weren't filled by anyone. 9 people started, although 2 of these weren't able to complete their placements, so 7 participants completed the full 26-week placement. Of the 7 participants who completed the scheme, 3 people have found paid jobs since they finished their placement.

We held 3 focus groups in May 2019 to find out how well the placement scheme was working. All of those who took part said that they were happy with the scheme, and it met their expectations. Similar to previous years, participants on this year's scheme said they had learned important skills and had become more confident. Participants also used their experiences in job interviews. Managers spoke about the benefit to HSC organisations hosting the placements, with staff benefiting from the opportunity to work with people with disabilities.

Tapestry

	Action Measure	**Intended Outcome**	**Performance Indicator and Target**	**Timescale and Ownership**
4	Promote and encourage staff to participate in the disability staff network and support the network in the delivery of its action plan.	Staff with a disability feel more confident that their needs and experiences are understood and inform relevant planning and decision making.	Tapestry meeting notes indicate that actions to support staff have been delivered.	NIGALA Annually **Completed for 2019/20**

What we did over the last year:

During 2019-20, 10 new members came to Tapestry meetings and some new staff joined the Tapestry mailing list. We are still promoting Tapestry to all staff in the regional HSC organisations through posters, emails, and staff newsletters. We also give out Tapestry merchandise at training sessions and events.

This year, we have developed an easy read template for the agenda of Tapestry meetings. We hope to do the same with the meeting minutes this coming year.

Another member of staff with a disability has come forward to tell their story and act as a role model. Their story has been put up on the Tapestry website. We are trying to encourage staff with disabilities in each of the regional HSC organisations to act as role models for others.

This year Tapestry members decided that meetings should also be held in locations outside Belfast using a video link. We had planned that the first of these would be held in Armagh in March, but unfortunately this has had to be postponed due to COVID-19.

The Equality Unit, on behalf of Tapestry, made preparations for a staff Lunch and Learn session. The focus of the session is on 'getting it right' for staff with disabilities. The first part of the session shows how managers and their teams can prepare for the arrival of a new member of staff, including any reasonable adjustments. The second part of the session will look at the induction of new staff with a disability. The session will also include a talk by a staff member with a disability about how the process worked for them. Also, a line manager who has welcomed in an employee with a disability will talk about their experience. There will also be advice from the voluntary sector. This Lunch and Learn session was organised for 24 March 2020, but unfortunately had to be postponed due to Covid-19. We hope to hold it in 2020-21.

Monitoring

	Action Measure	Intended Outcome	Performance Indicator and Target	Timescale and Ownership
6	Encourage staff to declare that they have a disability or care for a person with a disability through awareness raising and providing guidance to staff on the importance of monitoring	More accurate data in place. Greater number of staff feel comfortable declaring they have a disability	Increase in completion of disability monitoring information by staff to 90%	BSO HR with support by Equality Unit Annually **Completed for 2019/20**

What we did over the last year:

A reminder was sent out to all staff across the regional HSC organisations to update their equality information on the Human Resources IT system, with instructions as to how to do this. On the Disability Awareness Days, the benefits for staff with a disability of disclosing to their employer were highlighted, both in the information materials distributed and by speakers from the voluntary sector.

The most recent figures for this year (March 2020) show that 80.88% had completed disability monitoring information, which is less than the number of staff who gave this information last year (83.08% in March 2019). In total, 1.54% of our staff had declared that they have a disability, which is the same compared to last year (1.54%). This means that we have to reinforce our efforts to encourage staff to complete the information.

	Action Measure	Intended Outcome	Performance Indicator and Target	Timescale and Ownership
7	Prompt staff to keep their personal equality monitoring records (via self-service on new Human Resources IT system) up to date.	Create an open and inclusive workplace culture that is proactive in supporting staff with a disability.	Annual reminder issued to staff to update their personal details on HRPTS.	BSO HR with support by Equality Unit Annually **Completed for 2019/20**

What we did over the last year:

As point 6 above.

	Action Measure	Intended Outcome	Performance Indicator and Target	Timescale and Ownership
8	Review staff profile data and sickness absence information to consider patterns/trends.	Devise guidance for managers on reasonable adjustments.	Targeted support for effective management of staff with a disability to reduce recurrent absence.	BSO HR and NIGALA Head of Corporate Services/Assistant Director 2019/20 **Completed**

What we did over the last year:

NIGALA's attendance rate is 95.17% rate and upon review no trends are apparent in relation to absence. All line managers received training in Absence Management in January 2020.

Training

	Action Measure	Intended Outcome	Performance Indicator and Target	Timescale and Ownership
10	Sign up to Mental Health Charter and Every Customer Counts	Agency commitment to creating open and inclusive workplace culture which displays respect for those with mental ill health. Supports and complements NIGALA's Health and Wellbeing initiatives.	Absence figures reduced. Increase in % of staff who declare they have a mental health condition.	BSO HR with support by Equality Unit March 2020 **Not complete**
What we did over the last year: We have decided to hold off with this work. This will allow us to work on this together with the other regional HSC organisations. They have planned to do this by March 2023.				

Additional Measures

- We always include disability on our list of things to talk about at our quarterly Equality Forum with our partner organisations.

- We report on progress against our Disability Action Plan to our Board and Senior Management Team (the people at the top of our organisation) every year.

Encourage Others

- We include questions relating to the two duties in our equality and human rights screening form. The screening form is completed for all policies and decisions. This includes work that other organisations will do for us, for example, contracts that we have with voluntary sector organisations for health and wellbeing promotion work.

Monitoring

During the year, we spoke to three groups of people involved in our work placement scheme together with our Health and Social Care partner organisations. These are the people who were on a placement with us, their Employment Support Officers and their Placement Managers. From these focus groups we evaluate how the scheme went this year. It also helps us to make changes to the scheme where we need to. Also, for the first time this year, we asked all participants to complete an equality monitoring form. We want to see whether we are successful at offering placement opportunities to a diverse range of people and, if not, which groups we want the provider to reach out to specifically.

Revisions

We have made no revisions to our plan in the last year.

Conclusions from Disability Action Plan report 2019-20

- We completed **6** actions.
- We didn't do what we said we would do under **2** actions
- We still have some work to do to complete **0** actions.
- All of the actions in our action plan are at a regional and local level.

- Our action plan is a live document. If we make any big changes to our plan we will involve people with a disability. We will tell the Equality Commission about any changes.

Chapter 4: Update Equality and Disability Action Plan (ECNI Q8, 9)

Introduction

We are committed to promoting equality and good relations. We recognise that we have to do more to promote positive attitudes and to encourage the participation of people with a disability in public life.

We want to make sure we do this in a way that makes a difference to people. We will put in place what is necessary to do so. This includes people, time and money. Where it is right to do so, we will include actions from this plan in the yearly plans we develop for the organisation as a whole. These are called 'corporate' or 'business' plans.

We will also put everything in place in the organisation to make sure that we do what we have to under the law. This includes making one person responsible overall for making sure we do what we say we are going to do in our Equality and Disability Action Plan.

We will make sure we let our staff know of what is in our plan. We will also train our staff and help them understand what they need to do.

The person in our organisation who is responsible for making sure that we do what we have committed to do is Sinéad Casey. When you have any questions you can contact Sinéad at:

4th Floor, Centre House
79 Chichester Street
Belfast
BT1 4JE
Telephone: 0300 555 0102
sinead.casey@nigala.hscni.net

Who we are and what we do

NIGALA is part of health and social care in Northern Ireland. We were set up in November 1996.

NIGALA is a special agency which employs social workers, called Guardians, to advise the courts of children's wishes and feelings and to independently represent and safeguard the interests of children in care and adoption proceedings in Northern Ireland.

We do things like:

- Read the Trust files to understand what work has been undertaken with the family and the decisions made and plans for the child.

- Appoint a Solicitor, someone who knows about the law, to help the court understand all about the child and make good decisions about the child's care.

- Assist the court to make sure that all the right information is available and avoid delay in making decisions.

- As an organisation we have a number of important issues that we have to manage such as:

- Finance: Making sure that we spend the money that we get from the Department well and provide a good quality service.

- Information Technology: Using computers to support the work that we do.

- Managing Information: Ensuring that the personal and sensitive information that we have is safe, secure and only available to people who need it.

- Human Resources: Employing staff, taking care of their salaries, general wellbeing and providing support for them to do their job.

How people can be involved in our work

There are a number of ways in which people can be involved in the work of the Northern Ireland Guardian Ad Litem Agency. NIGALA engages with relevant stakeholders from the HSCT's, Judiciary, Solicitors and relevant organisations e.g. Voice of Young People in Care (VOYPIC) and the Northern Ireland Commissioner for Children and Young People (NICCY) to inform and influence practice developments.

The Agency developed "About Me" and "About Court" resources for Guardians to use with children and young people to support their engagement and participation in court proceedings. The resources were piloted and feedback from children and young people was incorporated into the documents. The consultation process involved educators in the learning disability sector who provided tools and images used for children and young people with learning needs.

A young people's forum is being piloted to involve young people inform and support practice developments in NIGALA. They produced "My Expectations" 15 top tips for professionals working with children. Forum participants will be actively involved in the forthcoming NIGALA conference on 17/11/17 " 21 Years of Representing Children and Young People – What have we learned and Can we do Better?"

NIGALA has to follow the law under Section 75 of the Northern Ireland Act 1998. It says that in our work we have to promote equality and good relations. We have to treat people fairly and take account of their differing needs and to make things better for staff and people who use our services. It also says that we have to build better relationships between different groups of people.

There are nine different equality groups that the law requires us to take account of:

- Gender (and gender identities)
- Age
- Religion
- Political opinion
- Ethnicity
- Disability
- Sexual orientation
- Marital status
- Having dependants or not.

There are three good relations groups we need to consider:

- Religion
- Political opinion
- Ethnicity.

We also have to follow the law under the **Disability Discrimination (Northern Ireland) Order 2006**, which says that we have to:

- Promote positive attitudes towards disabled people and
- Encourage participation by disabled people in public life.

This includes people with any type of disability, whether for example, physical disabilities; sensory disabilities; autism; learning disabilities; mental health conditions; or conditions that are long-term. Some of these disabilities may be hidden, others may be visible.

Both pieces of legislation require us to develop an action plan: an Equality Action Plan and a Disability Action Plan. We have to send these plans to the Equality Commission for Northern Ireland and then report every year on what we have done.

How we reviewed our last plans and developed these new plans

In developing these plans we looked at what we have done so far to promote equality and good relations, to promote positive attitudes towards disabled people and to encourage their participation in public life.

We asked all teams in our organisation to consider the following questions:

- What has worked well?
- What hasn't worked well?
- What lessons have we learned?
- Did we do what we said we would do?
- Has this made a difference for people in the way we thought it would?

For the new plans, we asked them to consider two questions:

- In your area of work, what are the key issues for people in the equality groupings?
- What can you do to address these issues?

We encouraged our staff to look at a range of sources of information such as:

- New research or data
- Equality screening exercises that have been completed
- Their professional experience and knowledge
- Issues raised in consultations or through other engagement with staff and service users.

We also learned from what we heard when we:

- Held coffee mornings to talk with staff about issues important to those who have a disability and those who care for somebody who has a disability;
- Surveyed staff to find out what they think an Employer of Choice for people who have a disability or those who care for somebody with a disability looks like;
- Spoke with the members of our staff disability network "Tapestry" to find out what we should do to promote equality for those who have a disability and those who care for somebody who has a disability.

In collaboration with our colleagues in the Health and Social Care Trusts ran an engagement event with people from different equality groupings to find out what they think we could do to better promote equality.

We also read up on what the Equality Commission says would be good to do. All this helped us think about what else we could do to make a difference.
We then consulted publicly on our draft plans. When we started the consultation we informed all consultees on our consultation list of the details of the consultation and how people could engage with us directly or respond in writing. We invited consultees to attend one of two consultation events, one in Belfast and one on Derry/Londonderry. In addition we offered to meet in person with anyone preferring to do so.

We engaged closely with Tapestry, our Disability Staff Network, in the development of our Disability Action Plans. We also drew on the learning from a survey that we carried out with our staff who have a disability or who care for someone who has a

disability. The survey focused on what would made an organisation an "Employer of Choice" for them.

What we have done so far

This is some of what we have done to promote equality.

- We produced a signposting resource for our staff. It provides information on support networks in the community for people from each of the nine equality groups. We update this resource every year.

- We put in place an Accessible Formats Policy; this policy relates to all of the nine equality groups including age, gender, disability, ethnicity, sexual orientation, political opinion, dependants, religion and marital status. It addresses specific needs in relation to sensory impairment, learning disability, sexual orientation, older people, younger people, translation and interpreting for minority ethnic groups and more general literacy levels that are of particular importance.

- We compiled a directory of resources and services to assist staff access information in respect of the Section 75 groups.

- We undertook "An evaluation of Social Work practice in the Northern Ireland Guardian ad Litem Agency in Working with Children and Families from Black and Ethnic Minority Communities in Northern Ireland". The findings were published in the Child Care in Practice Journal 30/11/16.

- We devised a policy to inform the appointment of Solicitors from the NIGALA Solicitor Panel to support an equitable and transparent process. This is reviewed by the Senior Management Team and an anonymised report is issued to Solicitor bi-annually.

This is some of what we have done to promote positive attitudes towards disabled people and encourage the participation of disabled people in public life.

Promoting positive attitudes towards disabled people

- To date, we have held seven disability awareness days for our staff. Each looked at different disabilities: Epilepsy, Sight loss and blindness, Depression, Hearing loss and deafness, Learning disabilities, Cancer, and Arthritis and Musculoskeletal conditions. Information was e-mailed to our staff and displayed within the organisation. With our colleagues in the NI Practice and Education Council for Nursing and Midwifery we also hosted a number of information sessions for staff involving speakers and volunteers from local voluntary groups.

- We developed an e-learning resource on disability. It is available to all Health and Social Care staff. This was identified as one of our mandatory e-learning training inputs.

- We include the disability duties in all Equality Awareness and Equality Screening Training that the BSO Equality Unit delivers.

- We have delivered training sessions on mental health awareness to our staff, including on mental health first aid, mindfulness and managing stress; and courses for staff who are carers.

- We developed a staff resource on disability etiquette, a resource and checklist on how to positively portray people with a disability in their work.

- We have checked our website to make sure it is accessible.

Encourage the participation of disabled people in public life

- We participate in a disability work placement scheme together with our Health and Social Care partner organisations. To date, the Scheme has provided between 5 and 15 placements for people with a disability in our organisations every year. NIGALA facilitated a placement in 2015/16.

- We have developed standards and guidance for the involvement of people with a disability and a checklist for organising inclusive meetings.

- We have put in place a process for publishing screening templates as soon as they are completed. A disability organisation had suggested that we do so. We do the same for publishing the quarterly screening reports.

- We developed a resource for line managers on reasonable adjustments for staff with a disability.

- We set up a disability network for our staff. Part of the role of this network is to raise disability issues with decision makers in our organisation.

What we have learned so far

Monitoring

Even with proactive encouragement, our staff seem reluctant to declare their disability. We need to keep working on this, including trying to find out why staff do not declare their disability. We will work closely with our disability staff network on this.

Placements

The placement scheme was evaluated each year and changes were made in the next year's scheme to improve the experience for participants. We will carry this learning into our new plan. Managers and staff who have been involved in the scheme to date have told us that they have gained a better understanding of disabilities through working side by side a person who has a disability. Many have been impressed by the attitude and performance of the individual on placement.

Awareness Days

We have found that attendance at awareness events is greatest when the subject is most relevant to staff. This can be because they have the condition themselves or they know or work with someone who has the condition. We will continue to ask staff which areas relating to disability they would like more information on.

Training

We have found that our elearning training on Disability is a really useful resource to train our staff. We have also found that sometimes we need to run specific training courses, for example on autism awareness or deaf awareness when the need is identified. We will continue to take this approach of a combination of e-learning and classroom based training. People have told us that they take away a lot from sessions that are delivered by people with a disability themselves.

What is in the new plans?

There are two separate tables below. The first table lists all the actions that we will undertake to promote equality and good relations. This is our Equality Action Plan. The second table describes what we will do to promote positive attitudes towards people with a disability and to encourage their participation in public life. This is our Disability Action Plan.

In both plans we also say what difference we hope to make and when we will plan to complete these actions.

How we will monitor

Every year we write up what we have done. We also explain when we haven't done something. We send this report to the Equality Commission. We also publish this report on our website: http://www.nigala.hscni.net/

We have a look at the plans every year to see whether we need to make any changes to them. If we need to, we write those changes into the plans. Before we make any big changes we talk to people in the equality groupings to see what they think.

When we finish an action we take it off the plans for the next year. That way we will keep our plans up to date. They will show what we still have to do.
After five years we will look at our plans again to see how we have done. We will also see what else we could do.

Whenever we develop or look at our plans we will invite people who have a disability to help us.

The plans are also available on our website: http://www.nigala.hscni.net/

We send our plans to all organisations and individuals on our consultation list when we have finalised them and also when we have made major changes to them.

To find out whether what we do makes a difference, we will do a number of things, for example:

- For training and awareness events, we ask our staff about what learning they are taking away with them and what they may do differently as a result of what they have learned.

- We do a survey with people from a particular equality group after we have delivered an action targeted at them to ask whether they feel better supported as a result.

- We check summary figures to see whether, for example, more people from a particular under-represented group are availing of a service after promoting it to them specifically.

You can find further information on how we will monitor each action in the plans themselves.

Signed by:

Mr Peter Reynolds

Chief Executive

Date: 30 March 2018

What we will do to promote equality and good relations

Action Point		Intended Outcome	Performance Indicator and Target	By Whom/ When
1	NIGALA has distinct responsibilities specific to children as defined under the governing legislation-The Children (NI) Order 1995 and The Adoption (NI) Order 1987. The importance of engaging with and consulting children to receive feedback to reflect on their experience of and develop the service is a shared interest that can be developed with other organisations.	Collaboration with the Patient and Client Council (PCC) and the Regulation and Quality Improvement Authority (RQIA) initially in the development of our website to signpost children and young people to relevant supports and services and draw on each other's resources.	Child and user friendly website with signposts to relevant services and supports provided by other organisations.	Head of Corporate Services and Assistant Director (Public and Personal Involvement lead). 2020
2	Revise and implement guidance to achieve consistent corporate branding to ensure that our website and all the information (operational and corporate) generated by the Agency is accessible and complies with best practice guidance.	All information and materials produced by NIGALA comply with Agency guidance.	Consistent house style (font, format) in compliance with Agency guidance.	Corporate Services 2020

Carers				
3	Review the caring responsibilities of staff with/ without dependents.	Staff who are carers feel more supported in the workplace	Sickness absence of carers is reduced. Retention of staff who are carers.	NIGALA/ BSO HR with support by Equality Unit 2018/19
4	Promote information for staff who are carers on available policies and measures that might meet their needs; including sign-posting to relevant support organisations.			
5	Identify any gaps in available support for staff and explore how/if these could be met within existing policy and resources.			
Gender Identity				
6	Deliver awareness and training initiatives to relevant staff as part of the roll-out of the Gender Identity and Expression Employment Policy	Staff who identify as transgender and non-binary feel more supported in the workplace	90% of relevant staff have been trained.	BSO HR with support by Equality Unit March 2020

Training/Practice Development			
7	Making a Difference: elearning ▪ Add module to suite of mandatory training for all staff ▪ Deliver on training targets	Increased staff awareness of equality and human rights.	Making a Difference e-learning included in mandatory training for all staff. 75% in the first year and 100% thereafter of staff have completed the e-learning module.	BSO HR with support by Equality Unit 2018/19
Domestic Violence			
8	Undertake awareness raising relating to new support mechanisms (developed by BSO) to support staff with experience of domestic violence	Staff with experience of domestic violence are better supported	Awareness raising undertaken with 100% of staff	BSO HR with support by Equality Unit March 2020

Disability Action Plan 2018-2023:

What we will do to promote positive attitudes towards disabled people and encourage the participation of disabled people in public life

Action Point	Intended Outcome	Performance Indicator and Target	By Whom/ When
Awareness Days			
1 Raise awareness of specific barriers faced by people with disabilities including through linking in with National Awareness Days or Weeks (such as Mind your Health Day)	Increased staff awareness of the range of disabilities and needs.	Two annual awareness days profiled >50% of staff participating in the evaluation indicate that they know more about people living with disabilities as a result of the awareness days.	NIGALA Annually
2 Link the Awareness Days to the Agency's Health and Wellbeing Strategy.	Information and materials provided through the awareness days is collated and stored centrally for ease of access and future reference.	Staff have access to relevant information and support services.	

Placement Scheme			
3	Consider how the organisation can create and promote meaningful placement opportunities for people with disabilities in line with good practice and making use of voluntary expertise in this area.	People with a disability gain meaningful work experience. Staff gain insight into the reality of the supports and adjustments required to enable a person with a disability gain employment opportunities.	Placement considered and where possible offered each year. Feedback indicates that placement meets expectations	NIGALA Annually
Tapestry			
4	Promote and encourage staff to participate in the disability staff network and support the network in the delivery of its action plan	Staff with a disability feel more confident that their needs and experiences are understood and inform relevant planning and decision-making.	Tapestry meeting notes indicate that actions to support staff have been delivered	NIGALA Annually
5	Nominate a Disability Champion at Senior Management.	Staff with a disability feel better supported. Commitment to inform and influence collaborative actions to support the disability duties.	Attend six monthly Disability Champions Forum meeting and contribute to coordinated actions and initiatives.	NIGALA Disability Champion

Monitoring

6	Encourage staff to declare that they have a disability or care for a person with a disability through awareness raising and providing guidance to staff on the importance of monitoring.	More accurate data in place. Greater number of staff feel comfortable declaring they have a disability.	Increase in completion of disability monitoring information by staff to 90%	BSO HR with support by Equality Unit Annually
7	Prompt staff to keep their personal equality monitoring records (via self-service on new Human Resources IT system) up to date.	Create an open and inclusive workplace culture that is proactive in supporting staff with a disability.	Annual reminder issued to staff to update their personal details on HRPTS.	
8	Review staff profile data and sickness absence information to consider patterns /trends.	Devise guidance for Managers on reasonable adjustments	Targeted support for and effective management of staff with a disability to reduce recurrent absence.	BSO HR and NIGALA Corporate Services Manager/Assistant Director 2019/20

Training

9	In collaboration with disabled people design, deliver and evaluate training for staff and Board Members on disability	Increased staff and Board Member awareness of the range of disabilities and needs.	All staff trained (general and bespoke) within 2 years through eLearning or interactive sessions and staff	BSO Equality Unit Annually

		awareness initiatives delivered Training evaluation forms	
10	Sign up to Mental Health Charter and Every Customer Counts	Agency commitment to creating an open and inclusive workplace culture which displays respect for those with mental ill health. Supports and complements NIGALA's Health and Wellbeing initiatives.	Absence figures reduced Increase in % of staff who declare that they have a mental health condition	BSO HR with support by Equality Unit March 2020

Link to previous and forthcoming NIGALA Screenings for 2020-21:
http://www.hscbusiness.hscni.net/services/3086.htm

Policy / Procedure and Screening Documentation	Policy Aims	Date	*Screening Decision
Adverse Incident Policy	The aim of this policy is to set out NIGALA's commitment to ensuing an effective approach to the reporting, investigating, learning lessons, implementing and sustaining change as a result of investigations, findings and analysis of incidents in order to provide safe, high quality care to ur clients and a safe environment for our staff and members of the public. NIGALA will actively promote a culture in which errors can be reported andanalysed openly, and in which the reporting 'near miss' is actively encouraged.	July 2019	Screened without mitigation
Attendance at Work	The purpose of this policy is to set out how absence will be dealt with in a fair, consistent and proactive manner by providing clear and effective guidelines on the management and monitoring of absenteeism. This policy and its associated procedue0 also focuses on supporting manager and employee during periods of absence by providing a clear framework for progress.	Sept 2019	Screened out with mitigation

Policy / Procedure and Screening Documentation	Policy Aims	Date	*Screening Decision
Conflict, Bullying & Harassment Policy	The document provides guidance to managers and employees in relation to Conflict, Bullying And Harassment and seeks to provide all staff particularly those with responsibility how to handle conflict, bullying and harassment issues in line with best practice and employment law and to create and maintain a safe and harmonious, positive and enabling working environment for all.	Sept 2019	Screened out with mitigation
Equality of Opportunity	The aim of this policy is to communicate the commitment of the Chief Executive, Board and Senior Management Team to the promotion of equality of opportunity in and by the NIGALA.	July 2019	Screened out with mitigation
Environmental Management Policy	The NIGALA aims to ensure that its core business activities are aligned with its commitment to reducing the environmental impact.	July 2019	Screened without mitigation
Gender Identity & Expression Employment Policy	The policy aimed at creating a workplace where the dignity of and respect for transgender and non-binary people is protected and promoted.	July 2019	Screened out with mitigation

Policy / Procedure and Screening Documentation	Policy Aims	Date	*Screening Decision
Whistleblowing Policy	NIGALA recognises that many issues are raised by staff and addressed immediately by line managers – this is very much encouraged. This policy and procedure is aimed at those issues and concerns which are not resolved, require help to get resolved or are about serious underlying concerns.	Sept 2019	Screened out with mitigation
Workplace, Alcohol and Substance Abuse Policy	The purpose of this policy is to make clear to all staff by NIGALA's position on alcohol substance abuse while at work and the action to be taken if such circumstances arise.	July 2019	Screened without mitigation
Zero Tolerance Policy	NIGALA is committed to the creation of a culture and environment where employees, agency workers and self-employed guardians may undertake their duties without fear of abuse or violence. The policy outlines the definitions of Zero Tolerance, including non-physical abuse, physical abuse and anti-social behaviour.	Sept 2019	Screened out with mitigation

No concerns were raised by consultees on any of the screenings published in 2019-20.

Attendance at Work Policy

In developing the policy or decision, what did you do or change to address the equality issues you identified?	What do you intend to do in the future to address the equality issues you identified?
Gender NIGALA will not take into account any periods of pregnancy-related sickness absence when making a decision about employment i.e. when calculating employment rights to do with length of service or for taking action for poor attendance record. **Gender, Marital & Dependent Status** Managers need to be cognisant of the hidden reasons for absence which may include caring responsibility. Return to work interviews are designed to tease out both work and non-work related reasons for absence, with managers exploring other options with employees i.e. reduction in hours, flexible working. **Age** Managers will use return to work interviews to explore flexible working arrangements with employees, including reduction in hours. This will take into consideration the needs of individuals.	

Disability NIGALA's management is committed to supporting employees who have a disability and ensuring reasonable adjustments are in place. The particular needs of the individual being taken into account.	

Conflict, Bullying & Harassment Policy

In developing the policy or decision, what did you do or change to address the equality issues you identified?	What do you intend to do in the future to address the equality issues you identified?
Disability Ensure that this policy (and others) is in accessible formats for e.g. size 14 for those who are partially sighted and consideration given to all those with disabilities. Also, all staff are to be made aware of the policy, though such avenues as Awareness Sessions. There may be a need for support and any reasonable adjustments to practice to ensure a fair hearing. **Age** Younger members of NIGAL Agency workers may lack experience or confidence to report incidents of conflict, bullying and harassment, and therefore the policy states clearly what constitutes incidents of conflict bullying and harassment and gives examples.	For all issues identified under Section 75 it is important that this policy is shared with all, and targeted with the section 75 groups. Therefore communication is key when this policy is released. NIGALA will gather data in regards on all incidences of bullying and harassment (victims and harassers) and gather equality data in order to monitor the progress of this policy and procedure. To ensure the ongoing effectiveness of this policy and procedure, a review will be undertaken at regular intervals, and not more than 3 years from the date of implementation.

Sexual Orientation

In order to give LGB people more confidence in reporting incidences of conflict, bullying and harassment, sexual orientation is clearly defined as a protected Equality Group in the definition of Harassment. Moreover, the policy states that Line managers have a specific responsibility in the prevention and resolution of conflict, bullying and harassment. They are responsible for creating a safe, harmonious and enabling working environment, setting a good example for other staff members to follow, intervening when conflict arises and ensuring that their teams are aware of their obligations and relevant policies.

Ethnicity

It is recognised that cultural differences exist between different ethnic groups, and that staff from minority ethnic groups may be reluctant to report incidents of conflict, bullying and harassment. The policy explicitly states that harassment on is unacceptable behaviour, and there is a possibility of criminal proceedings should Harassment occur. The policy places a responsibility on Line Managers in prevention and resolution of conflict, bullying, or harassment.

Any additional communication needs of those who do not speak English as a first language will be considered and translation services available if requested.

Marital status Employees who do have the support of a spouse or partner may lack the confidence in bringing forward a compliant of bullying and harassment. However, the policy emphasises all employees' play a vital role to play in the creation, promotion and maintenance of a good harmonious working environment. Other sources of support include confidential counselling provided via the employee assistance programmes. **Gender** In some scenarios a Conflict, Bullying and Harassment policy may provide the support for those working in areas that may be dominated by other genders, i.e. where they are the minority. Examples of different forms of Conflict, Bullying and Harassment are described in the policy. Also, for those who are transgender, the policy is clear in that all complaints will be dealt with seriously, promptly and confidentially. The policy aims to have a positive impact in that it provides a mechanism for the prompt resolution of issues that may arise and to prevent future recurrence through on going monitoring arrangements.	

Equality of Opportunity

In developing the policy or decision, what did you do or change to address the equality issues you identified?	What do you intend to do in the future to address the equality issues you identified?
The Policy has been revised to reinforce the legislation which protects individuals from discrimination. Review S75 composition in relation to complaints/grievances from staff.	Gather section 75 data on all staff. Encourage staff to complete equality date on HRPTS.

Gender Identity & Expression Employment Policy

In developing the policy or decision, what did you do or change to address the equality issues you identified?	What do you intend to do in the future to address the equality issues you identified?
We actively encouraged those from the transgender and non-binary community to provide their input in the development of this policy. We listened to the needs of trans employees and encourage them to provide input in the establishment of awareness raising and training events. Reference was made to existing policies in order to determine ways of changing them making them more inclusive of the needs of transgender and non-binary people. **Disability** For any transgender and non-binary staff who have a disability reasonable adjustments will be considered in line	▪ Increase the avenues of support for transgender employees undergoing gender reassignment. ▪ For those who have completed the gender reassignment process on-going support will be provided. ▪ Awareness raising sessions will be provided to employees and HR staff who work in close proximity with transgender and non-binary employees. These sessions will be conducted with the utmost sensitivity respecting privacy of transgender and non-binary employees. ▪ Any incidents of workplace bullying or harassment on the basis of gender identity will be dealt with in the same way as other equality categories.

with our obligations under the Disability Discrimination Act. **Age** Information on the differences in the experience of 'passing' depending on the age of transitioning will be included in awareness raising for staff. **Marital status** Information for transgender staff on the need to nominate partners for pensions following divorce will be provided. **Religion** The need for dignity and respect to guide behaviour regardless of religious belief will be underlined in awareness and training for staff.	▪ Provide support to transgender and non-binary employees with caring responsibilities and where possible ensure that flexible working patterns are offered.

Whistleblowing Policy

In developing the policy or decision, what did you do or change to address the equality issues you identified?	**What do you intend to do in the future to address the equality issues you identified?**
General Staff will be provided with training on how to report incidences of concern in line with NIGALA's Adverse Incident Policy. Publicly display posters in NIGALA's offices advising people of Whistleblowing arrangements.	

Self-Employed Guardians will be provided with training on how to report incidences of concern in line with NIGALA's Adverse Incident Policy.	

Zero Tolerance Policy

In developing the policy or decision, what did you do or change to address the equality issues you identified?	What do you intend to do in the future to address the equality issues you identified?
Disability Training for staff on the potential for certain disabilities to be mistaken for aggression. Staff will be provided with training on how to deal with abuse/ violence, how to report incidences of abuse/ violence in line with NIGALA's Adverse Incident Policy. Publicly display posters in NIGALA's offices advising visitors of zero tolerance of abuse of employees. Self-Employed Guardians will be advised on how to report incidents of abuse/violence in line with NIGALA's Adverse Incident Policy. Appropriate support will be given to staff and Self-Employed Guardian ad Litem in relation to all incidents of abuse or violence at worker, including those that are related to Section 75 equality groups.	

Appendix 1 – Further Explanatory Notes

1. Consultation and Engagement

(ECNI Q10)

Targeting:

We did not undertake any public consultations or pre-consultation exercises during the year.

(ECNI Q13)

Awareness raising for consultees on Equality Scheme commitments:

During the year, in our quarterly screening reports we raised awareness as to our commitments relating to equality screenings and their publication. In any EQIA reports we explained our commitments relating to Equality Impact Assessments. We did the same when we held consultation events, such as in relation to our Equality Action Plan, and in the action plan document itself.

(ECNI Q14)

Consultation list – During the year, we reviewed our consultation list every quarter.

2. Audit of Information Systems

(ECNI Q20)

We completed an audit of information systems at an early stage of our Equality Scheme implementation, in line with our Scheme commitments.

[i] This includes as a result of:
- Screening/Equality Impact Assessments (EQIAs)
- Monitoring
- Staff training
- Engagement and consultation
- Improvements in access to information and services
- Implementation of Equality and Disability Action Plans

In most cases, it is not possible to ascribe developments and changes to one single factor. New initiatives, such as the Gender Identity Employment Policy for instance are not necessarily an outcome of screenings or Equality and Disability Action Plan implementation.

As mainstreaming progresses and the promotion of equality becomes part of the organisation culture and way of working, the more difficult it becomes to ascribe activities and outcomes to the application of a specific element of Equality Scheme implementation.

NIGALA
NI Guardian Ad Litem Agency
A voice for Children and Young People in Family Courts

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August 2020