



## **ANNUAL PROGRESS REPORT 2008- 09**

**Report to the Equality Commission on progress in the implementation of our equality and good relations duties under Section 75 of the Northern Ireland Act 1998 and Section 49A of the Disability Discrimination Order (DDO) 2006**

This report can be found on the EONI website [www.eoni.org.uk](http://www.eoni.org.uk) and can also be made available in alternative formats on request

**Name of Public Authority:** Chief Electoral Officer for Northern Ireland

### **Equality contact names and details:**

Lisa Cherry

HR Officer

Email: [lisa.cherry@eoni.org.uk](mailto:lisa.cherry@eoni.org.uk)

June Butler

Assistant Chief Electoral Officer

Email: [june.butler@eoni.org.uk](mailto:june.butler@eoni.org.uk)

Electoral Office for NI

St Anne's House

15 Church Street

Belfast BT1 1ER

Tel: 02890 446688

[www.eoni.org.uk](http://www.eoni.org.uk)

## **S75 Executive Summary**

- What were the key policy/service developments made by the authority during this reporting period to better promote equality of opportunity and good relations and what outcomes were achieved?

A developmental objective within EONI's overall 08/09 Business Plan focused on encouraging electoral registration. To address this issue EONI pro-actively undertook a 'Schools Initiative' and attended more than 95% of all secondary schools in Northern Ireland before March 2009, including special needs schools, to invite pupils to register to vote and to obtain electoral ID cards. EONI also encouraged citizens of other EU countries who are resident in NI to register to vote prior to the European Election scheduled for June 2009. EONI staff also assisted the Lithuanian elections at their polling stations in Northern Ireland in October 2008.

In July 2008 EONI published a booklet giving information on the adjustments made to electoral law and practice to assist those with a disability. The provision of such a booklet was another first for Northern Ireland in the field of electoral administration and the publication of the booklet was timed to coincide with a number of important changes to electoral law to assist those with a disability to play their full part in the democratic process. Amongst these was the removal of the dated common law provision on mental capacity which prevented some individuals from registering and voting.

A further welcome change was additions to the list of documents that could be produced to prove identity at polling stations which now include the War Disabled SmartPass, the Blind Persons SmartPass and the 60+

SmartPass. Preparations were also made for the introduction of the Restricted Access Polling Station Scheme at the European Parliamentary elections. This involved identifying, as a result of site surveys, the small number of polling places which, despite the provision of ramps, were unsatisfactory for those electors with restricted mobility. In an initiative unique to Northern Ireland, these electors were offered the opportunity of voting at another fully DDA compliant polling station.

EONI continued to progress the implementation of its Equality Scheme obligations including screening any new/amended policies and procedures; providing equality awareness training for staff; disability action plan duties and good relations strategy. EONI has striven to ensure the best possible service at public counters of all Area Electoral Offices and action has been taken to improve access including accessibility audits; a new counter in the Omagh office which has a lower counter to the side for use by a wheelchair user; relocation of Belfast Area office with fully accessible entrance and counter; automatic main entrance door installed at St Anne's House and evac chairs including training for dealing with the mobility impaired.

- What are the main initiatives planned in the coming year to ensure the authority improves outcomes in terms of equality of opportunity and good relations for individuals from the nine categories covered by Section 75?

EONI is currently preparing for the General election in early 2010.

Equality considerations are built into all aspects of the preparations.

Actions that have already been identified include further work on access to polling stations, the provision of a range of materials in other languages, requesting the Electoral Commission, who at present have responsibility for

voter awareness issues, to publicise the availability of the selector device to assist the visually impaired when voting, and continued close liaison with RNID, RNIB and Disability Action.

In terms of registration, again a key focus this year will be the registration of young people and other under-represented groups and the simplification, insofar as practical within the statutory requirements, of the registration process.

EONI will continue to undertake accessibility audits of all Area Offices and continue its restricted access/alternative polling station scheme. This scheme allows persons with a disability who have been allocated to a polling station which does not have full disability access to choose an alternative polling station in which to vote.

- Please give examples of changes to policies or practices which have resulted in outcomes.

	Outline change in policy or practice which have resulted in outcomes	Tick if result of EQIA														
Persons of different racial groups	<p>Encourage ethnic minority registration - Outcome - Registration Forms downloaded in other languages:</p> <hr/> <table data-bbox="446 1480 1214 1869"> <tr> <td>Polish</td> <td>1,094</td> </tr> <tr> <td>Portuguese</td> <td>941</td> </tr> <tr> <td>Filipino</td> <td>265</td> </tr> <tr> <td>Lithuanian</td> <td>150</td> </tr> <tr> <td>Romanian</td> <td>144</td> </tr> <tr> <td>Latvian</td> <td>84</td> </tr> <tr> <td>Slovak</td> <td>78</td> </tr> </table>	Polish	1,094	Portuguese	941	Filipino	265	Lithuanian	150	Romanian	144	Latvian	84	Slovak	78	
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<p>Persons of different age</p>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Schools Initiative – number of under 18s registered increased from 244 in December 2006 to more than 13,000 by January 2009.</li> <li>• Annual electoral registration week – targeted young persons.</li> </ul>	
<p>Persons with and without a disability</p>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Introduced booklet giving details of adjustments made to law and practice to facilitate registration and voting.</li> <li>• Access to polling stations reviewed – ramps provided where practicable.</li> <li>• Restricted Access polling Station Scheme introduced.</li> </ul>	

In addition, a development objective introduced a process to evaluate all initiatives. This enables outcomes to be monitored and considered by the Management Board and outreach has included migrant workers, travelers events, centres for disabled, schools, women’s and homeless hostels.

**Section 1: Strategic Implementation of the Section 75 Duties**

- Please outline evidence of progress made in developing and meeting equality and good relations objectives, performance indicators and targets in corporate and annual operating plans during 2007-08.

EONI submitted its Equality Scheme five year review in April 2008. The review considered experience gained over the last five years since the Scheme was approved in 2003. EONI also revised its Disability Action

Plan which was approved by the Management Board at its meeting in November 2008. Action taken during the year includes:

- accessibility audits of all Electoral Office premises with consequential work where required.
- work with the voluntary sector and others to secure so far as possible that those affected were aware of the changes to the law which came into force on 1 July 2008 and which abolished the restriction on those with mental incapacity to register and to vote.
- a review of access to potential polling stations and where appropriate the identification of alternative premises with unrestricted access.
- close liaison with Disability Action, RNIB and RNID on a range of subjects.

EONI's Good Relations Strategy was approved by the Management Board in January 2009. In the main it simply formalised existing practice within the Electoral Office on such matters as impartiality and respect for others irrespective of their gender, race, political or religious beliefs or other section 75 category and the taking of all opportunities to promote good relations between all individuals.

Targets also met during 08/09 included revising and updating the Equal Opportunities Policy and ensuring all staff received equality refresher training by 31 March 2009.

## Section 2: Screening

- Please provide an update of new/proposed/revised policies screened during the year.

Title of policy subject to screening	Was the <u>F</u> ull Screening Report or the <u>R</u> esult of initial screening issued for consultation? <i>Please enter <u>F</u> or <u>R</u></i>	Was initial screening decision changed following consultation? <u>Y</u> es/ <u>N</u> o	Is policy being subject to EQIA? <u>Y</u> es/ <u>N</u> o? If yes indicate year for assessment.
Equal Opportunities Policy	R	N	N
Grievance and Disciplinary Procedures	R	N	N
Call Recording and CCTV Policy	R	N	N
Good Relations Policy	R	N	N

## Section 3: Equality Impact Assessment (EQIA)

- Please provide an update of policies subject to EQIA during 2008-09, stage 7 EQIA monitoring activities and an indicative EQIA timetable for 2009-10

No policies were subject to EQIA during 08/09.

Ongoing EQIA Monitoring Activities April 2008- March 2009

Title of EQIA subject to Stage 7 monitoring	Indicate if differential impacts previously identified have reduced or increased	Indicate if adverse impacts previously identified have reduced or increased
Function of Preparing and maintaining an accurate electoral register	Those with a mental incapacity can now register and with the proactive approach to school children it is unlikely that it will not have reduced.	Reduced
Polling Station Scheme	<p>Reduced (Fewer locations with poor disability access are used as polling stations).</p> <p>Ramps to facilitate access provided at 43 polling stations.</p> <p>Restricted Access Polling Station Scheme introduced where access unsatisfactory despite ramping.</p>	Reduced

2008-09 EQIA Time-table

There are currently no EQIAs due to be commenced during 09/10. The Northern Ireland Office is responsible for maintaining the legal framework for elections, including electoral registration, in Northern Ireland.

Consultation is currently underway by the NIO on improving electoral registration procedures in NI. Therefore, it is unlikely that an EQIA will be

conducted internally by the EONI as these arrangements are taken forward by the NIO.

#### **Section 4: Training**

- Please outline training provision during the year associated with the Section 75 Duties/Equality Scheme requirements including types of training provision and conclusions from any training evaluations.

In February 2009 an equality refresher session was conducted by an Equality Commission representative for all EONI staff. The evaluation of this training was very positive and participants found the training particularly useful.

Training was provided by Area Electoral Offices to give a much greater understanding of electoral office matters and which is associated with Section 75 categories.

Training on the new legislative requirements on registering and voting by people with reduced mental capacity was provided to all staff in the summer of 2008, in advance of registration activities in special schools that autumn.

#### **Section 5: Communication**

- Please outline how the authority communicated progress on delivery of the Section 75 Duties during the year and evidence of the impact/success of such activities.

EONI is continuously pro-active in ensuring that access to information is clear throughout the website. The equality section has been streamlined and a new section added for consultations.

The Management Board have considered all activities in achieving EONI's Section 75 duties, including the 5 year review, updated the Disability Action Plan and Good Relations Strategy.

Area Office communicate progress on delivery of Section 75 duties through a central list of activities which is accessible by all staff.

### **Section 6: Data Collection & Analysis**

- Please outline any systems that were established during the year to supplement available statistical and qualitative research or any research undertaken/commissioned to obtain information on the needs and experiences of individuals from the nine categories covered by Section 75.

The number of young people on the register was monitored to assess the success of the schools initiative.

### **Section 7: Information Provision, Access to Information and Services**

- Please provide details of any initiatives/steps taken during the year, including take up, to improve access to services including provision of information in accessible formats.

EONI continues to ensure that all screening and consultation information is available on the website and in alternative formats, on request. EONI is committed to improving access to services and during 2008 introduced an information booklet for people with a disability including easy read version for those with learning disabilities. This booklet is also available in braille, audio and daisy disk.

Information provision and engagement of ethnic minorities has been taken forward through consulates and community groups to encourage electoral participation. All Area Offices are responsible for undertaking steps to improve access to services and providing information. This includes information sessions and liaison with schools, youth organisations, nursing homes, contacts with interest groups representing migrant workers, disability groups, political parties and the traveller community. Staff inspect polling stations in constituencies to assess voting arrangements, including disabled access.

EONI's Absent Vote application forms for electors with a disability are now available in Braille and audio, and RNIB quote EONI as an example of how other organisations should respond to the needs of disabled customers. EONI's website has been improved to include the full range of forms including a careers leaflet which is available in alternative formats upon request.

### **Section 8: Complaints**

- Please identify the number of Section 75 related complaints:
  - received and resolved by the authority (including how this was achieved);
  - which were not resolved to the satisfaction of the complainant;
  - which were referred to the Equality Commission.

Complaints are dealt with under a Charter mark compliant EONI complaints procedure. Two complaints were received alleging discrimination. Neither was upheld - one related to evidence requirements for young people and one to correspondence to households perceived to have "multiple occupancy".

## **Section 9: Consultation and Engagement**

- Please provide details of the measures taken to enhance the level of engagement with individuals and representative groups during the year.

EONI continues to consult with all key equality stakeholders. The CEO maintains close liaison with Disability Action, RNIB, RNID. Specific consultation with organisations representing the various categories included in Section 75 is ongoing in relation to policies and practice. In advance of the introduction of a restricted access/alternative polling station scheme for the European Elections – June 2009, informal consultation was carried out with the Electoral Commission, disability groups and political parties.

At a local level, Area Electoral Officers continue to develop and improve contacts with disability and ethnic minority groups in the areas which they administer for registration and elections.

## **Section 10: The Good Relations Duty**

- Please provide details of additional steps taken to implement or progress the good relations duty during the year. Please indicate any findings or expected outcomes from this work.

EONI conducted a good relations internal survey in early 2008. The results indicated that relations between the various community groups represented across EONI staff is good – by far the majority of staff EONI staff believed that their working environment was free of sectarianism and racism; believed EONI offered development training to staff without regard to their religion/community or ethnic/racial origin; felt EONI welcomed all political communities/opinions and that EONI's services were welcoming to all

people regardless of race, religion or political opinion and that a person from a minority religion/ethnic minority was unlikely to encounter greater barriers to service/access by EONI than someone from a majority religion/community.

In addition EONI considered how it could do more to increase the visibility of the Management Board to our stakeholders and members of the public. A Management Board page has been created on the EONI website to show photographs of the Board members and other management staff and a brief description of the work areas for which they have responsibility. In addition to developing a Good Relations action plan for 2008/09, Board minutes are now available on the website with the purpose of increasing public confidence in the electoral process as well as having a beneficial impact on good relations.

Annual Report July 2008/ March 2009  
'Disability Duties' Questions

**1. How many action measures** for this **reporting period** have been?

9

Fully  
Achieved

2

Partially  
Achieved

0

Not  
Achieved

2. Please outline the following detail 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>1</sup>	Outcomes / Impact <sup>2</sup>
National <sup>3</sup>	N/A		
Regional <sup>4</sup>	<p>1. Polling station scheme – review of premises to ascertain where ramps might be required and consultation on Alternative Polling Station Scheme where ramps could not be provided.</p> <p>2. Electoral Registration</p>	<p>Preparations for European 2009 election.</p> <p>Schools Initiative and Themed Week to encourage registration.</p>	<p>Review of polling stations to improve disabled access. Ramps provided where practicable. Restricted Access Polling Station Scheme introduced</p> <p>Media coverage/feedback.</p>
Local <sup>5</sup>	Access to Area Offices/HQ	Accessibility Improvements	DDA Compliant

<sup>1</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>2</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>3</sup> **National** : Situations where people can influence policy at a high impact level e.g. Public Appointments

<sup>4</sup> **Regional**: Situations where people can influence policy decision making at a middle impact level

<sup>5</sup> **Local** : Situations where people can influence policy decision making at lower impact level e.g. one off consultations, local forums.

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

	Training Action Measures	Outputs	Outcome / Impact
1	Training and awareness activities by Area Office	Undertook a number of training sessions throughout NI; Good Relations Strategy	Increase in Electoral Register and EONI profile
2	Evaluation of Initiatives	Statistics gathered (where practicable).	See annex A.

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

	Communications Action Measures	Outputs	Outcome / Impact
1	Promotion of awareness on changes to electoral administration – rules on mental incapacity	Disability Booklet produced	Positive feedback.
2	Schools Initiative	Media Coverage – Prize draw.	Positive feedback

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

	Encourage others Action Measures	Outputs	Outcome / Impact
1	Disability Action Plan Good Relations Action Plan	Consultation	Engagement with EONI staff.

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

	Action Measures	Milestones <sup>6</sup> / Outputs	Outcomes/Impacts	Reasons not fully achieved
1	Dependent on outcome of election pilots in GB, consider use of candidate’s photographs and coloured party emblems on ballot papers	Dependent on outcome of pilots		No pilots planned at present.
2	Carry out review of polling station scheme	Survey results from June 2009 election.	Restricted access polling station scheme	Legislation did not permit EONI to carry out a fundamental review.

<sup>6</sup> **Milestones** – Please outline what part progress has been made towards the particular measures; even if full output or outcomes/ impact have not been achieved.

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

All action measures were either fully or partially achieved.

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

- The evaluation of all initiatives on cost/number of registration forms (Annex A).
- Increase in the electoral register monitored.

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.

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

The disability action plan was reviewed in November 2008 and published on EONI's website.

## EVALUATION OF INITIATIVES 2008/09

Office	Date	Event	Comments
Belfast	09/04/08	Migrant Workers event	This event raised our profile.
Belfast	24/04/08	CBS Secondary school	25 ID photos taken The event was successful.
Belfast	30/04/08 13/05/08	Orchardville and Morton Day Centres for learning difficulties and disabled	25 ID photos taken. 25 new contacts made. The events were successful. Raised our profile and contributed to Charter Mark targets.
Omagh	31/05/08	Sinn Féin Invitation (Dungannon Office)	Also took 8 ID applications and updated SF on schools initiative and mini canvasses.
Londonderry	31/05/08	One World Diversity Festival - Derry	6 ID photos taken Event unsuccessful. Would only visit One World Centre again if separate from other events (this was a carnival event).
Belfast	05/06/08	Belfast Foyer Centre (Simon Community)	Also took 13 ID applications. Disappointing attendance. In future will ask organiser to ensure a minimum turnout of 20 to justify attendance. Event did raise profile and contribute to Charter Mark targets.
Newtownards	12/06/08	Polish Information Evening, Willowfield Parish Church Hall	Unless the organisers could guarantee a large group of eligible people it would not be worth the time and effort to attend this type of event.
Londonderry	06/06/08	Registration/ID event Coleraine (DUP)	41 ID photos taken

Banbridge B	19/06/08	Registration: ASCERT – Licensed Trade Newcastle (SF)	5 of 8 required to produce evidence, 11 ID photos taken.
Londonderry	01/07/08	Prisoner Registration HMP Magilligan	6 ID photos taken Pilot – will not normally involve EONI Staff
Londonderry	03/07/08	Traveller's event	
Banbridge A	14/08/08	An Munia Tober / Bessbrook Travellers	Very unsuccessful. I feel our time would be better spent processing forms in the office unless a better turnout could be arranged.
Ballymena	01/09/08 – 13/09/08	Mini Canvass – Ardeevin	The methodology worked well. Successful in terms of updating the accuracy of the register.
Banbridge 2	04/09/08	Shimna Integrated College – Registration and ID	12 forms fully completed. 1 duplicate form. 42 forms no NINO.
Newtownabbey	04/09/08 – 11/12/08	Schools Initiative	1,840 ID applications also taken.
Londonderry	08/09/08 – 12/11/08	Schools Project	3,074 ID applications also taken.
Londonderry	09/09/08	Limavady Regional College	Successful event.
Londonderry	09/09/08	Templemore Private Nursing Home Eglinton	I would do this again, the outcome was positive for the residents. There was a reasonable number of new electors added to the register and also we were able to update the records of others.
Londonderry	10/09/08	N/ West Reg College	Successful event.
Ballymena	15/09/08 –	Schools Registration	Yes I would do this again.

	16/12/08	and ID Initiative	
Banbridge 2	19/09/08	Down High – Registration and ID	172 forms fully completed. 78 forms no NINO. 3 no ID required.
Banbridge 2	19/09/08	St Malachy's Castlewellan – Registration and ID	109 forms fully completed. 78 forms no NINO.
Belfast	24/09/08	Simon Community Registration / ID Clinic	Overall successful. The commitment to the Simon Community to enable registrations and the provision of ID counts towards our Charter Mark scoring.
Banbridge 2	23/09/08	St Patrick's Lisburn – Registration and ID	9 forms fully completed. 14 forms no NINO.
Banbridge 2	25/09/08	Newry High – Registration and ID	74 forms fully completed. 13 forms no NINO.
Banbridge 1	12/10/08	Lithuanian Election	Very unsuccessful and disappointing. Although we handed out approximately 30 forms and evidence requirements only two forms were returned.
Belfast	14/10/08	Regina Coeli Hostel for Women	This activity satisfies our Charter Mark criteria in making contact with and enabling marginalised groups to achieve registration and obtain ID Cards.
Ballymena	16/10/08	Rathmoyle Nursing Home, Ballycastle	Successful in terms of updating the accuracy of the Register. Also good PR for the new disability legislation. Too costly unless there are at least 40 residents.
Ballymena	06/11/08	Sperrin DEA Sinn Féin Event – South Derry Heritage Centre, Gulladuff	It was a very successful event due to the high volume of attendance. The event was very well organised by Sinn Féin, as they canvassed households in the area explaining evidence requirements and date of the event. On the night they controlled the admission of applicants. They have requested further events in Mid Ulster and North Antrim.
Ballymena	12/11/08	Mountview Nursing Home, Magherafelt	Successful in terms of updating the accuracy of the Register (8 new additions). Also good PR for the new disability legislation. Too costly unless there are at least 40 residents.

Banbridge 1	03/09/08 – 19/11/08	Schools Initiative	Also 3,191 photos taken for Electoral ID Card.
Ballymena	26/11/08	Sinn Féin Event – Credit Union, Glenravel	The event was very costly, but about 13 people will be added to the register. We have advised that in future there must be at least 30 added to the register to make the event worthwhile.
Ballymena	01/12/08	Sinn Féin Event – Parish Hall, Dunloy	The event went quite well. There was a good turnout and there will be over 20 new additions to the Register. The venue was good as it was central in location.
Ballymena	15/12/08	Sinn Féin Event – Ballycastle	The turnout was very low (most of the expected attendees were covered by the schools initiative).
Ballymena	12/01/09	Sinn Féin Event – Cushendall	49 ID applications also taken.
Banbridge 1	24/01/09	SDLP Conference, Armagh	I would not do this event again. I do not feel it was worth attending as most of the forms completed were by other “stall” holders as anyone involved in politics would be registered.
Ballymena	13/02/09	Sinn Féin Event – Gulladuff	30 ID applications also taken.
Banbridge 1	06/03/09	An Munia Tober Travellers Event – Armagh	More successful than the last clinic arranged where no-one showed up. Also took 23 applications for the ID card.
Londonderry	27/03/09	Registration Clinic for Travelling Community – Shantallow	The initiative was successful. The travelling community are traditionally not on the electoral register. The advantage of running this event is that all of the applicants are going on the register for the first time.