



Management Board Paper

Submission Date 12 August
2009

Prepared by: June Butler

Good Relations Strategy

1. **The Issue**

This paper deals with the review of the EONI good relations strategy and the preparation of an action plan for 2009/10.

2. **Background**

Section 75(2) of the Northern Ireland Act 1998 places a legal duty on designated public authorities to have regard to the desirability of promoting good relations between persons of different religious belief, political opinion or racial group – collectively known as the “good relations duty”. The Equality Commission emphasises that Section 75(2) formalises the shift from managing diversity and difference to promoting diversity and integration. To this end it requires all public authorities to take a pro-active approach to contributing to a shared society. The Management Board in December 2007 agreed that a good relations strategy and associated action plan should be taken forward within the EONI equality agenda. A draft strategy was drafted, was subject to a consultation process and placed on the EONI website as part of that consultation in September 2008. After the end of the consultation period, the Management Board accepted the strategy document at its

meeting in January 2009. This included a short-term action plan. It was agreed at that meeting that the strategy would be reviewed periodically.

3. **Existing Policy and Practice**

Equality of opportunity and good relations are complementary and interdependent. Therefore, while the equality agenda has been mainstreamed within EONI for some years, it is essential that the good relations duty is to the fore in all EONI areas of work, this can be demonstrated and can be reported upon.

The EONI Equality Scheme includes our commitment to conducting an annual review of progress in complying with our statutory Section 75 duties. These commitments and arrangements relate to both the equality of opportunity and good relations duties. The scheme is now considered our primary framework for implementing the good relations duty.

4. **Options**

EONI has a statutory duty to develop a good relations strategy and to ensure that its principles are promoted throughout the organisation as well as with all stakeholders. The Board is asked to review and adopt the amended strategy and revised action plan for 2009/10.

5. **Advantages and disadvantages**

N/A

6. **Application of Section 75**

See 2 and 3 above.

7. **Human Rights Considerations**

None

8. **Resource implications**

These are likely to be minimal and can be met within the EONI budget as all actions should be part of EONI's normal work.

9. **Personnel implications**

These should not be significant. The Management Board initially appointed me as the Good Relations Officer to lead on developing the strategy and the action plan. Periodic review of the strategy and monitoring progress of the action plan will form part of the normal duties connected to my post and other staff will become involved, as necessary, in assisting with the implementation of the action plan.

10. **Presentation/media issues**

The Management Board may decide to publicise the strategy through a press release.

11. **Time constraints**

The European Elections in June 2009 has necessarily delayed some activities in this field. EONI now needs to move forward quickly with the Action Plan which covers 2009/10.

12. **Evaluation of the options**

The Board should decide whether or not to :

- adopt the strategy (Trim Ref - 2009/007164) with/without further revision
- publicise it, in addition placing it on the EONI website.

13. **Recommendations to the Board**

It is recommended that the Board

- adopt the Good relations strategy and action plan for 2009/10
- agree to review it annually.

Signed

Date

June Butler

12/8/09
