



## **ANNUAL PROGRESS REPORT 2009-10**

**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

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## **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?

EONI continued to build on the success of its schools initiative and during 2009/10 engaged proactively with young people who had left school. EONI made contact with colleges and universities to encourage electoral registration. A number of other registration initiatives were undertaken including providing ID clinics for the Chinese Community and ensuring the elderly had an opportunity to register by contacting all nursing homes.

Following the European Parliamentary elections in June 2009 a number of recommendations were made to the Northern Ireland Office to amend the law to make it less difficult for those with a disability to engage in the democratic process. The recommendations, which included changes to the requirement for valid applications for postal and proxy votes, were implemented by way of the Representations of the People (Northern Ireland) (Amendment) Regulations 2010 which were in place prior to the General Election.

Prior to the General Election, the HR Section developed a recruitment system to address imbalance in relation to community background and gender of casual staff who work at elections. Following a public advertisement, all new and existing count staff were tested prior to appointment.

As part of our commitment to ensure all have an opportunity to participate in the democratic process, EONI worked in partnership with RNIB and launched a braille version of the Electoral ID card which is available free of charge to blind and partially sighted people.

- 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?

A polling station scheme review will be completed before the elections scheduled for May 2011. This should improve outcomes in terms of equality of opportunity by ensuring that, wherever practicable, all polling stations used have adequate disabled access rather than providing ramps or deploying the alternative polling station option.

EONI will prepare an application for Customer Service Excellence (CSE) as this will replace EONI's Charter Mark status during 2011. CSE adopts a more customer focused approach to the delivery of high standards of customer care and is a useful tool for reviewing our equality performance and share good practice.

EONI plans to continue with registration initiatives undertaken in 2009/10 and to contact various public sector organisations to target under-represented groups eg NIHE will be incorporating information on electoral registration in their corporate circular to tenants.

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

There were no changes to policies or practices which resulted in an EQIA

Elections – A number of polling stations were reviewed during 2009 to ensure accessibility to vote at the Parliamentary Election. EONI either provided ramps or an alternative polling station.

Registration – There was a mini-canvass carried out to target areas of low registration, this was mainly in locations with high levels of social deprivation and marginalized groups. Also, DWP now provide quarterly information on young people who have reached the age of 17. All those not already registered receive a letter outlining the benefits of registration and a registration form. 11744 letters were issued from July to December 2009 resulting in 3443 additions to the register.

Recruitment – Staff working at elections tend to show an imbalance in terms of gender and community background. EONI began work to reconstitute the pool of election staff and the first tranche concentrated on the recruitment of count staff and the results were positive. It is expected that the second tranche in relation to poll staff will take place after the 2011 elections.

## **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.

Strategic implementation of the section 75 duties is supported by the mainstreaming of equality and good relations objectives in all EONI activities, targets and development objectives.

Targets in 2009/10 included conducting fair elections and much work was undertaken to provide accessible polling stations, registration forms in a range of languages/formats and objective recruitment practices.

The December 2009 register showed an increase of over 2.4% in the electorate. Prior to the elections voters were advised of polling stations with restricted access making them aware of alternatives if they were blind or had a mobility disability.

In relation to the new recruitment system for count assistants, the breakdown of applicants was very encouraging almost 50:50 in relation to community breakdown.

The Management Board monitors targets on a monthly basis including progress made on equality of opportunity and good relations.

## 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.
Casual Staff Policy	R	N	N
Recruitment Policy	R	N	N

## Section 3: Equality Impact Assessment (EQIA)

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

No policies were subject to EQIA during 09/10.

### Ongoing EQIA Monitoring Activities April 2009- March 2010

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	Reduced – proactive engagement with young people	Accuracy remains at a high level.
Polling Station Scheme	Reduced – Alternative Polling Station scheme and ramps provided for restricting polling stations	Polling Station Scheme review underway.

## 2010-11 EQIA Time-table

There are currently no EQIAs due to be commenced during 10/11. The Northern Ireland Office is responsible for maintaining the legal framework for elections, including electoral registration, in Northern Ireland.

Consultation will take place during 2010 on the revised polling station scheme.

### **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.

Staff receive equality training as part of their induction, attend seminars on updates to equality legislation and have attended workshops on guidance released on the new procedures for Section 75 to ascertain the full impact of the duties required in terms of a new equality scheme and action plans.

### **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.

The equality implications of proposals to implement or change policy or practice must be addressed in all papers submitted to the Management Board. Minutes of meetings and results of initiatives are made available to all staff and published on the website.

Area Electoral Officers continue to 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, including the needs and experiences of people with multiple identities:.

Information is provided to EONI by a number of public authorities and the number of young people on the register is monitored to assess the success of the schools' initiative.

Qualitative data is collected from comments cards and outreach events provide an effective way of obtaining information on experiences of individuals covered by Section 75, and action is taken accordingly. For example comment cards received at the European Election in 2009 ensured necessary adjustments were made for the Parliamentary election in 2010.

### **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.
  - During the reporting year comment cards have been translated into Polish, Portuguese and Lithuanian.

- Easy read format of polling station information and lights for visual aid in polling booths.
- Complaints questionnaire translated into Irish.
- Feedback from outreach at universities led to improvement to website in relation to registration.
- Improvements to electoral ID card procedure for elderly and those with mobility issues in relation to introduction of declaration facility where no photographic ID is available.

### **Section 8: Complaints**

- Please identify the number of Section 75 related complaints:

There were a small number of Section 75 related complaints in relation the 2009 European Election and mini-canvass. No matters were referred to the Equality Commission.

### **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.
- Please outline any use of the Commission's guidance consulting with and involving children and young people.

Consultation and engagement with Disability Action, RNIB, RNID is ongoing. Area Electoral Officers continue to develop and improve contacts with disability and ethnic minority groups in various areas as part of their outreach work.

## **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.

The Management Board reviewed and adopted an amended Good Relations strategy on 12 August 2009.

There is devolved responsibility to Area Officers to promote good relations and Area officers attended a number of outreach events eg, racial awareness at Lisburn Civic Centre and registration and ID card events at various organisations including the Chinese Welcome Centre, An Munia Tober and as requested by diverse political parties. The findings and outcomes of these events are reported to the Board. Many are successful and, although some events may be unsuccessful from a marketing viewpoint, they are positive in relation to networking with migrant communities.

Annual Report July 2009/ March 2010  
'Disability Duties' Questions

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

9

Fully  
Achieved

1

Partially  
Achieved

1

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>	Polling station scheme	Preparations for 2011 elections.	Review of polling stations to improve, inter alia, disabled access.
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
	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(c) What Positive attitudes **action measures** in the area of **Communications** were achieved in this reporting period?

	Communications Action Measures	Outputs	Outcome / Impact
	Polling Station Information	Easy read format of polling day information.	Positive feedback.

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

	Encourage others Action Measures	Outputs	Outcome / Impact
	Review of Good Relations Strategy	Consultation	Engagement with EONI staff.

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

	Action Measures	Milestones/Outputs	Outcomes/Impacts	Reasons not fully achieved
	Carry out Polling Station Scheme review	All polling stations with disabled access, where practicable	Measured after 2011 elections	Statutory timescale was amended. Review commenced August 2010 and will be completed by February 2011.

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

CEO made recommendations to the NIO to amend primary legislation to permit use of candidate's photographs and coloured party emblems on ballot papers. The legislation has not yet been amended.

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

- Evaluation of all outreach initiatives undertaken by Area Officers are reviewed by the Management Board on a monthly basis.
- 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?

No revisions have made to the disability action plan which was reviewed in November 2008 and published on EONI's website. EONI intends to review its plan in 2011/12.