



Section 75 of the Northern Ireland Act 1998

Five-Year Review of Equality Scheme

Public Authority Five-Year Review Report

This report template includes a number of self-assessment questions under the twelve key elements of an equality scheme. Please enter information at the relevant part of each Section in the template and ensure that it is submitted to the Commission electronically (by completing this template) **and** in writing, with a signed cover letter from the Chief Executive or, in his/her absence, the Deputy Chief Executive (or equivalent).

Name of public authority (Enter details below)

Eastern Health and Social Services Council

Equality Officer name and contact details (Enter details below)

Sean Brown

Telephone: 02890 321230

E mail: sean.brown@ehssc.n-i.nhs.uk

Executive Summary

Please provide some main conclusions in terms of:

a) To what extent has your public authority's approved scheme provided a workable basis for mainstreaming the need to promote equality of opportunity and good relations into policy-making over the past five years?

As an independent organisation which represents the views and opinions of the general public, specific communities and individuals in all areas of health and social services mainstreaming the need to promote equality into the work of the Council is essential to it fulfilling its primary role. As a small body the Council has produced few policies but its equality scheme has acted as a prompter and direction indicator for the Council's equality agenda. The Council is administratively serviced and supported by the Eastern Health & Social Services Board.

A thorough understanding of the equality scheme and its Section 75 obligations has enabled the Council to challenge service providers in providing equity to the section 75 groups in their services and planning. The following key points can be made on the past five years

- The scheme provided a workable basis for mainstreaming but needed more explanation in the early stages to be effective.
- As an advocate for service users in health and social services the Council was able to use its equality scheme as a basis for challenging providers to ensure that all sections and individuals in the community were given equity in accessing services
- On commencement there was insufficient guidance and training provided on key areas such as screening and equality impact assessments.
- The scheme demanded extensive engagement and consultation which demanded a considerable commitment by the Council in terms of resource. The Council currently employs 7 full time equivalent staff.
- The scheme has proven to be very bureaucratic and this led to disengagement by consultees.
- The timescale of five years for review was too long. The very dynamic environment in which the Council operates has changed dramatically in five years.
- Equality is now a key platform for the Council's work, reflected through its work programme and its inclusion as a specific objective.
- The Council is a member of the Eastern Area Equality Best Practice Group, along with the EHSSB and 9 Trusts in the locality.
- The importance of the equality agenda exemplified through the scheme ensured that the personal development of staff and their training was given a priority and was in fact delivered.
- All job descriptions contain references to the jobholder's responsibility in respect of Section 75.
- The training resource in respect of section 75 and equality in general was fostered by the commitment demanded through the scheme.
- There was too much emphasis on section 75 drivers to the detriment of "Good Relations" throughout the five years. The Council is a partner to the "Good Relations" statement issued by the Eastern Area Equality Best Practice Group in 2004.

- ❑ As a member of statutory bodies and associated committees the Council has used its influence in the development and promotion of equality objectives.
- ❑ Every opportunity is taken to promote the Council's equality objectives in public statements, interviews, responses to consultation documents and representing the public interest on committees and working groups

b) What key lessons have been learnt over the past five years in terms of effectively implementing the approved equality scheme?

Effective implementation of the Council's equality scheme has demanded a constant awareness of the diversity of our community and in particular the 9 groups specified by Section 75. In looking at the past five years the following key lessons are evident in implementing the scheme;

- ❑ Adequate resources need to be secured to deliver on the scheme
- ❑ Collaborative working gives better outcomes e.g. the Council is a member of the Eastern Area Equality Best Practice Group
- ❑ The Equality function is most effective when positioned in the corporate function and not as an add on to the Human Resources department
- ❑ Senior management commitment and leadership is essential to success
- ❑ Effective communication is essential
- ❑ Training needs to be correctly sourced e.g. anti racism equality from NICEM
- ❑ Capacity building needs to be recognized as a key need on equality. There are insufficient skilled resources available to deliver effective and relevant training.
- ❑ Good screening leads to fewer EQIAs and the development of better policies

c) What more needs to be done to achieve outcomes for individuals from the nine equality categories?

- ❑ The changing society of Northern Ireland demands a constant evolution for public bodies and places an onus on them to pro-

actively engage the nine groups as specified in section 75. These nine named groups though are the starting point for equality.

- Good Relations legislation needs to be extended to cover hate crimes.
- Under the RPA programme there exists an opportunity to inform the public of Section 75 and the equality commitment/obligation of the new bodies.
- In the case of health and social services the DHSSPSNI needs to be more engaged with all providers and public bodies to ensure that effective outcomes for the nine categories are realized.
- Senior management for HPSS providers need to have a specifically stated, measurable objective in their annual personal performance plan challenging them to achieve outcomes for individuals from the nine equality categories
- Incorporation of the nine categories into the Knowledge and Skill Framework under Agenda For Change will imbed a commitment to equality as a key competency in the HPSS for each individual from the Chief Executive down.

1. A general introductory statement specifying the purpose of the scheme and the public authority's commitment to the statutory duties.

1a) To what extent were senior management involved in ensuring scheme compliance over the 5 year period and what further steps could be undertaken to ensure effective internal arrangements?

- As a small organization the lead on developing the Equality scheme was initially taken by the Chief Officer and subsequently led by a designated senior manager.
- The scheme was endorsed by the Council membership
- The Chair of the Council, the Chief Officer and the membership received quarterly updates on the equality agenda and the annual progress return to the Equality Commission
- *Key enabler:* The appointment of a manager with specific Equality responsibilities energized and drove forward the scheme
- *Key enabler:* In the past five years the equality agenda was located outside the Human Resources function, and rested with

senior management, avoiding a very narrow “personnel” perspective.

- *Key enabler*: Senior management ensured that the performance management system for the Council team had a specific objective on equality for each team member
-

1b) Outline annual direct expenditure of resources to ensure that the statutory duties were complied with, in terms of staff and money over the past 5 years, and comment on the extent that all necessary resources were allocated.

Year	Full Time Equivalent Staff	£'s
2001/02	0.2	£5,000
2002/03	0.2	£5,000
2003/04	0.2	£5,000
2004/05	0.2	£5,000
2005/06	0.2	£5,000

- The Council has a total of 7 staff and responsibility for equality is specified to the Senior Manager for Council operations. The key points of the equality remit for the role are laid down in the job description as follows:
 - To take a lead in the development of an appropriate methodology for impact assessment within the Council, providing advice and support as required with regard to implementation of screening and assessment processes for existing and/or new policies.

- To be responsible for the design and delivery, where appropriate, of training programmes for all staff (including new staff) and Council members.
 - To develop and take a lead in the provision of timely analyzed reports on the progress against the Council's equality scheme programme for the Chief Officer as required.
 - To register, acknowledge and investigate on behalf of the Organization any complaints relating to Organization's actions under its equality scheme and to provide reports on outcomes of such as and when required to the Chief Officer and Council Members.
 - To participate in and support a review of the Council's arrangements for the provision of information to the public with particular emphasis on development of special formats of media to facilitate communication with those with disabilities / minority ethnic groups.
- In 01/02 the Council's approved Equality Scheme was circulated to all organizations, groups and individuals on its consultation list. An advertisement was placed in the Belfast Telegraph, Irish News and Newsletter notifying the public that the scheme was approved and available on request.
- In 02/03 teambuilding exercises were conducted, which not only focused staff on the role and activities of the Council but also on the promotion of good relations within the workplace.
- In 02/03 the Council set up its own website, www.ehssc.org The Equality scheme, minutes of Council's monthly public meetings and research reports conducted by the Council can be downloaded from the site. The Council's website has an interactive page making the Council more accessible to the community. The Council's website also includes a children's section. The website has been constructed following the 'Bobby Test' principles
- In 03/04 all members of staff received training on 'Religious Diversity in the Workplace'. Senior members of staff received training from the Coalition of Sexual Orientation (CoSO) which helped members of staff to have a better understanding of how the Council as a service provider and employer can promote Equality of opportunity for people who are Lesbian, Gay or Bisexual. A

senior manager was also trained through the Regional Interpreting Project on 'Working well with Interpreters'

- In 04/05 the Council committed £6000 of funding to a pilot project establishing a health advocate for the Chinese community. This funding will be spread over two years.
- In 05/06 the Council has devoted time and resource to the setting up of a NI Chinese Patients Forum and provided the terms of reference for the proposed group
- In 05/06 the Council provided its key information leaflet in the following formats at a cost of £1586
 - Lithuanian
 - Irish
 - Ukrainian
 - Urdu
 - Chinese
 - Portuguese
 - Russian
 - Latvian
 - Polish
 - Braille
- In 05/06 the Council recorded its 8 key information leaflets and made them available on CD.
- The Council provides its core 8 key information leaflets in Irish, Urdu, English and Chinese.
- In 05/06 the Council has engaged NICEM to deliver training for all staff on "Anti Racism". This cost £350. The session lasted a ½ day.
- The equality commitment for staff is now incorporated into the Knowledge and Skills Framework under Agenda for Change. This ensures that development of the individual and career progression is linked to ongoing development in the equality competency. This is reviewed quarterly with all staff and the objectives reaffirmed annually.
- As a member of the Eastern Area Equality Best Practice Group the Council is able to participate and contribute to activities promoting the equality agenda. The group is funded through the EHSSB equating to £8,000 per group member in 05/06. The group has, among other activities funded the following over the past five years.

- “Working Well with Diversity web site”
- Equality video
- Good Practice Review (5 Cs of Information Provision)
- E- learning

A more complete list is available through the EHSSB 5 year Equality Review

- *Key impediment:* A major impediment to equality development of individuals and organizations is the limited training resource available to public bodies.
- *Key enabler:* The provision of a specific budget on Equality ensures that the issue is held high on its agenda and incorporated into its work programme.
- *Key enabler:* The Eastern Area Equality Best Practice Groups “Working with Diversity” web site has been a valuable tool for conveying key information on section 75 and maintaining awareness
- *Key enabler:* The Eastern Area Equality Best Practice Group has proven to be a valuable resource in sharing training resources and accessing equality funding.
- *Key enabler:* Council had a specific equality objective in 05/06, which permeated all the objectives for the year, to be more inclusive and representative of different communities in the Eastern Board area.

- ❑ **2. An outline of how the public authority intends to assess its compliance with the Section 75 duties and for consulting on matters to which a duty under that section is likely to be relevant.**

2a) Outline impacts and outcomes (for the public authority and/or individuals from the nine equality categories) over the past five years and what further steps could be undertaken to build on these or address underreporting?

- ❑ The nine equality categories have been positively addressed over the past 5 years. The Council worked harder to reach other groups as a result of an awareness of section 75.
- ❑ The Council has contributed to and endorsed the Good Relations statement of the Eastern Area Best Practice Group. This was formally launched in 2004.
- ❑ The Council has undertaken annual training on a number of themes including the Disability Discrimination Act, Anti Racism, Good Relations and Section 75 obligations for the Council and staff
- ❑ All annual equality progress reports were reviewed by the Chief Officer and ratified by Council members before submission to the Commission.
- ❑ The Council has advocated strongly to service providers to meet their obligations under Section 75 in various forums including complaints groups, patient participation groups and Board meetings.
- ❑ The Council has provided quarterly updates to its members on progress against core work plan objectives in regards to equality. This has reinforced the compliance with and priority for equality legislation
- ❑ To move further forward Section 75 needs to move away from being a subject reported on. It has needed other legislation to support it e.g. Hate Crimes
- ❑ *Key enabler:* The Eastern Area Best Practice Group has been an exemplary example of shared best practice. Meeting on a quarterly basis it has promoted good ideas and ensured a momentum was given to the equality agenda. Importantly it has provided a forum for disseminating information on equality initiatives and given access for members to skilled resource.

2b) Outline the number of equality scheme related consultation exercises undertaken by your authority over the past five years? Set out the number and percentage related to screening exercises and to EQIAs and indicate the extent that your scheme helped you to engage with external stakeholders?

- The Council as part of the family of public bodies in Health, Social Services and Public Safety has been involved in the regional programme of Equality Impact Assessments (EQIA) and Good Practice Reviews.
- The Council in its response to consultation documents, new policy and research projects, regularly conducts consultation exercises being inclusive of the 9 categories. Methods of consultation have varied from large public meetings to small steering groups and one to one interviews.
- In 02/03 the Council met and listened to users of the maternity service in response to the consultation document about the Central Belfast Maternity Hospital, the Council approached various women's groups. Three focus group meetings in venues accessible to the women were arranged. Representatives from ethnic minorities' and the lesbian community were included in those groups.
- In 03/04 a Senior Manager was directly involved in the EQIA on Post-Mortems
- In 04/05 the Council conducted several group discussions both rural and urban in the Eastern Area in relation to the new out of hours arrangements implemented from the new General Medical Services Contract. The Council expressed those views to the Eastern Health and Social Services Board.
- In 04/05 the Council also set-up a steering group for the research project into the Palliative Care Services within the Eastern Area. This group consisted of service users, service providers and commissioner.

2c) Indicate if your list of consultees was amended during the 5-year period and what further steps could be taken to develop your level of engagement and consultation?

- The Council has used its knowledge of section 75 groups to target specific groups in any consultations it has undertaken.
- An awareness of the Section 75 groups has led the Council engaging wider than the named 9 groups and to remain proactive in remaining aware of the changing community in which it operates.
- Any group who requested the opportunity to engage in the consultation process would be accommodated for their input.

-
- Council consultation has moved from public meetings and is now focused on engaging interested parties in face-to-face meetings or workshops. Throughout 05/06 the Council has increasingly developed community engagement as a mainstay of its operations.
- *Key recommendation:* Good consultation is reliant on clear consultation aims and their effective communication
- *Key recommendation:* Collaborative exercises across public bodies would reduce duplication and consultees feeling “I’ve been asked this before”
- *Key recommendation:* Consultation should take place at locations where people feel comfortable, in their locality.
- *Key recommendation:* Good consultation comes from a well-trained and resourced consultation team.
- *Key recommendation:* Public bodies must actively seek out groups who are difficult to reach.

2d) To what extent did your authority consult directly with directly affected individuals as well as with representative groups, particularly in relation to young people and those with learning disabilities, and was this sufficient?

- As the Council has mainstreamed section 75 into its consultation process it has adjusted its methods of consultation to be more effective. Consultation takes place at locations where people feel comfortable, in their locality, and involves face-to-face meetings as opposed to a reliance on large public events.
- A core function of the Council is to provide advocacy for groups and individuals. As part of this the Council has ensured face-to-face, direct communication for a diverse range of people as a matter of routine.
- The Council as part of the Eastern Area Equality Best Practice Group has sought to feedback to consultees as effectively as possible and to show where their input was used e.g. In the production of the “Equality Vision” video produced by the group.
- *Key Impediment:* Key to feeding back on consultation responses is managing expectations of consultees.
- *Key enabler:* The key enabler in providing feedback has been an open and honest dialogue

3. The authority’s arrangements for assessing and consulting on the impact of policies adopted or proposed to be adopted on the promotion of equality of opportunity.

3a) Outline and discuss the number of policies your authority subject to screening over the past five years, setting out the number and percentage of ‘policies screened in’ on the basis of equality considerations and the percentage ‘screened in’ on the basis of the good relations duty.

- The Council as part of the family of public bodies in Health, Social Services and Public Safety has been involved in the regional programme of Equality Impact Assessments (EQIA) and Good Practice Reviews.
- The Council receives Human Resources and administrative services from the EHSSB. The Board in this regard screens all relevant policies.

- The Council, as a small organization, does not devise new policies very often. However any new policies will be assessed to ensure that they comply with the statutory Equality duty.

3b) To what extent did your authority's consideration of the screening criteria **not** identify equal opportunity implications on any of s75 categories, but for which consultees then highlighted problems

-
- The Council did not have any such instances
- *Key Impediment:* A key challenge for public bodies has been defining "policies" in light of the "Guide to Statutory Duties".

3c) Outline over the past five years how many EQIAs your authority commenced as a result of i) initial screening and ii) as a result of screening new/revised policies subsequently, and discuss the extent that your authority has become more effective at identifying equality of opportunity dimensions in its policies.

- As part of its role as an advocate for the public in the provision of health and social services the Council has consistently made use of Section 75 to promote effective engagement of service users. This has enabled equality issues to be addressed at the formulation stage of policies. This has reduced any perceived or real differential impact
- The Council as part of the family of public bodies in Health, Social Services and Public Safety has been involved in the regional programme of Equality Impact Assessments (EQIA) and Good Practice Reviews
- The Council, as a small organization, does not devise new policies very often. However any new policies will be assessed to ensure that they comply with the statutory Equality duty.

3d) Outline over the past five year period the percentage of your authority's initial EQIA timetable that reached i) stage 6 of the EQIA process i.e. decision making, and ii) stage 7 of the EQIA process i.e.

annual monitoring & publication of results, and indicate the extent that your authority has become more effective at progressing EQIAs.

- The Council as part of the family of public bodies in Health, Social Services and Public Safety has been involved in the regional programme of Equality Impact Assessments (EQIA) and Good Practice Reviews. The DHSSPSNI would

4. The authority's arrangements for monitoring any adverse impact of policies adopted by the authority on the promotion of equality of opportunity.

4a) To what extent were sufficient arrangements put in place to collect data relating to the nine equality categories to monitor the impact of policies and what could your authority do in future to develop monitoring arrangements?

- The Council receives Human Resources and administrative services from the EHSSB. Human Resources have reflected the nine equality groups in its procedures and monitoring arrangements
- Public bodies have found it difficult to change systems to monitor the impact of policies on the nine equality groupings
- The Council replied to the Equality Commission's study (by Tony Dignan) on baseline equality information in August 2004.

5. The authority's arrangements for publishing the results of equality impact assessments and of monitoring any adverse impact of policies adopted by the authority on the promotion of equality of opportunity.

5a) Indicate the number of reports published outlining the results of EQIAs and monitoring over the past five years, and outline what your authority could do in future in relation to improving the publication of EQIA results and monitoring.

- The Council as part of the family of public bodies in Health, Social Services and Public Safety has been involved in the regional programme of Equality Impact Assessments (EQIA) and Good Practice Reviews. Reporting of any of the associated EQIAs or monitoring would be through the DHSSPSNI

6. A commitment that in making any decision with respect to a policy adopted or proposed to be adopted by it, that the public authority shall take into account any equality impact assessment and consultation carried out in relation to the policy.

6a) In terms of the number of EQIAs that reached stage 6 (i.e. decision making) to what extent were mitigation measures and alternative policies adopted?

- The Council as part of the family of public bodies in Health, Social Services and Public Safety has been involved in the regional programme of Equality Impact Assessments (EQIA) and Good Practice Reviews. Reporting of any EQIA or monitoring would be through the DHSSPSNI

6b) To what extent did consideration of EQIAs and consultations contribute to a change in policy, as opposed to policy decisions which would probably have been made in any event by your authority?

- As part of its role as an advocate for the public in the provision of health and social services the Council has consistently made use of Section 75 to promote effective engagement of service users.
- The unique nature of HPSS demands that equity and an understanding of section 75 are essential to the effective delivery of resources.
- *Key recommendation:* To improve the decision making process for service commissioners and providers the council needs to continue to advocate the involvement of service users in the process

7. The authority's arrangements for training staff on issues relevant to the duties.

7a) To what extent were sufficient arrangements put in place to develop and deliver a training programme in accordance with scheme commitments?

- Training on section 75 developed over the five-year period. Initially there were little or no training resources. The Eastern Area Equality Best Practice Group nurtured the capacity of training resources and in many cases piloted particular programmes.
- Council is aware of its responsibilities to ensure that members are fully aware of our statutory duties and works with them to assess their training needs and arrange training as appropriate. All members have to receive statutory training on joining the Council.
- The council has delivered training for all its staff on its equality agenda
 - All staff undertake induction training on joining the Council. This includes Corporate Induction training provided by the EHSSB. This includes a specific content on Section 75 obligations for employees and the organization itself.
 - During 01/02 and through the past five years the Council worked collaboratively with the Eastern Health and Social Services Board's Human Resources Directorate on a series of Corporate Training days. This was to ensure that Equality Duties became part of the mainstream agenda for all staff. This training was mandatory and was attended by all Council staff.
 - In 01/02 specialist Equality Impact Assessment Training was provided for all staff at Grade 6 and above
 - In 02/03 teambuilding exercises were conducted, which not only focused staff on the role and activities of the Council but also on the promotion of good relations within the workplace.
 - In 03/04 all members of staff received training on 'Religious Diversity in the Workplace'.
 - In 03/04 Senior members of staff received training from the Coalition of Sexual Orientation (CoSO) which helped

members of staff to have a better understanding of how the Council as a service provider and employer can promote Equality of opportunity for people who are Lesbian, Gay or Bisexual.

- In 03/04 a senior manager was also trained through the Regional Interpreting Project on 'Working well with Interpreters'
- In 04/05 the Council trained all its staff on Good Relations to support the launch of the Eastern Area Best Practice Equality Group's statement on "Good Relations"
- In 05/06 the Council trained staff on Disability Equality Training provided by the Bangor Omnibus Partnership in Bangor. The training lasted ½ day.
- In 05/06 the Council engaged NICEM for "Anti Racism" training. The training lasted ½ day.
- In 05/06 staff received training on Good Relations through the Trademark organization. The training lasted ½ day.

7b) Have all staff received awareness training and what could your authority do in future to deliver an effective training programme?

- The Council has an annual work programme which includes objectives on promoting equality in its activities. All staff are given an opportunity to input to this programme and contribute to its delivery
- All staff have a commitment to the Council Equality Agenda in their personal objectives. This is formally reviewed on an annual basis and renewed with agreed actions for the coming year. This has been formally placed in the Knowledge and Skills Framework which is the basis for developing a career in the Council and HPSS
- All new staff receive mandatory induction training which includes a module on equality.
- Equality training is supplemented by training on other complimentary subjects such as Human Rights.
- The main impediment to the Council's training commitment on equality is the small numbers within the team and the restricted capacity for delivering such training. It should be noted that the latter has improved with the support of the Eastern Area Equality Best Practice Group.

- The main enabler to training in the Equality agenda has been the collaborative work of the Eastern Area Equality Best Practice Group.
- A key enabler in delivering training is the “Equality Vision” video, which the Eastern Area Equality Best Practice Group produced.
- The Working With Diversity web site is an initiative of the Eastern Area Equality Best Practice Group and is valuable in communicating the Council’s commitment to Section 75
- The Council members are appointed through the public appointments process. Each member is bound through their appointment and subsequent orientation training to respect the principle of equality and particularly Section 75 commitments.

8. The authority’s arrangements for ensuring and assessing public access to information and to services provided by the authority.

8a) To what extent were sufficient arrangements put in place to ensure and assess public access to information and to services provided by the authority?

- In 05/06 the Council provided it’s key information leaflet in the following formats
 - Lithuanian
 - Irish
 - Ukrainian
 - Urdu
 - Chinese
 - Portuguese
 - Russian
 - Latvian
 - Polish

This was in response to the evolving make up of the service users coming to the Council for help.

- The Council provides its 8 information leaflets in Irish, Urdu, English and Chinese

- In 05/06 the Council recorded its 8 information leaflets and made them available on CD.
- The Council provides its web site in a text only version
- The Council participated in an “Accessible Formats” initiative
- The Council has signed up to the Regional Translation Service
- The Council is a strong advocate of the Regional Interpreting Service

9. The authority’s timetable for measures proposed in the scheme.

9a) Outline the extent to which measures set out in the original timetable have been implemented. Any detailed information should be included in as an appendix to the report. (see appendix1)

- As a small organization the Council has striven to meet all its all its equality obligations. This has included
 - Equality Objectives for the Council in its work programme
 - Regular reporting on equality actions to Council
 - Equality training for all staff
 - Equality objectives for each member of staff
 - Membership of the Eastern Area Equality Best Practice Group
 - Launch of the “Working with Diversity” web site
 - Production of the “Equality Vision” video
 - Promotion of equality of opportunity in all recruitment processes

9b) If your authority was to be reconstituted in the next five years what would be the main scheme actions/equality considerations that an incoming authority should address? Any detailed information should be included in as an appendix to the report.

- At present there are four health and social Services Councils representing service users in Northern Ireland. They will be reconstituted under one organization. This body should transfer the current equality schemes, which are consistent, with a review on actions for the future
- Continuity in setting up a new scheme is essential to ensure knowledge gained over the past five years is not lost
- The appointment of a manager with specific responsibility for equality would ensure that section 75 and associated issues remain a high priority
- Good practice forums should be established across HPSS bodies to share knowledge and experiences in an ever-evolving environment. This will also ensure consistency of approach
-

10. Details of how the scheme will be published.

10a) Were scheme commitments in this section delivered and what evidence supports this view?

- In 01/02 the Council's approved Equality Scheme was circulated to all organizations, groups and individuals on its consultation list. An advertisement was placed in the Belfast Telegraph, Irish News and Newsletter notifying the public that the scheme was approved and available on request.
- The Council's equality scheme was posted on the EHSSC web site.

11. The authority's arrangements for dealing with complaints arising from a failure to comply with the scheme.

11a) Outline the number and nature of complaints received by your authority, and what your authority could do in future to develop its complaints handling process and learn from complaints.

- The Council has received one complaint under Section 75 during the period covered by this report. The complaint was in relation to the Council support of the Northern Ireland Inter Faith Forum calendar for 2005. In addition to formally replying to the complaint

the Council fed the comments to the Inter Faith Forum who will proactively engage the complainant to address his concerns.

- The Council has assisted individuals to make complaints to other organizations within this category. In terms of the Councils role in assisting complainants through the complaints procedure the Senior Managers are kept updated as to what a complainants rights are in relation to S75 obligations and will advise them accordingly.

12. A commitment to conducting a review of the scheme within five years of its submission to the Equality Commission and to forwarding a report of this review to the Equality Commission.

12a) What has been your authority's experience of conducting this review? To what extent has the Commission's guidance been useful in undertaking the review?

- The Council as part of its consultation process place the following on its web site
 - "As a public body the Eastern Health and Social Services Council is currently undertaking a review of the effectiveness of its equality scheme. In completing the Review the Council is keen to take on board comments from any individual or group. If you have any comments to make please [Click here](#)"
 - In the course of one month (March 2006) the web page received 4030 people visited the site and saw the insert but no comments were received.
- The Eastern Area Equality Best Practice Group placed a joint ad in the local press. The cost was
 - Belfast Telegraph 17/02/06 £951.72
 - Irish News 17/02/06 £568.89
 - Newsletter 17/02/06 £586.30
 - Replies to the replies were managed by the EHSSB and incorporated into its review
- The template itself was not a user friendly document and was repetitive in the questions and accompanying answers

- The sessions provided by the Equality Commission were informative but should have been held prior to the template being produced to incorporate any feedback.