

**Five Year Review of Equality Scheme
Section 75 of the
Northern Ireland Act 1998**



Belfast City Council

**Reporting Period
2015-2020**

Equality and Diversity Officers

**Stella Gilmartin / Lorraine Dennis
Belfast City Council
City Hall
Belfast
BT1 5GS**

Contents

- A. Executive Summary 3
- B. Introduction..... 4
- C. Consideration of evidence and research 6
- D. Key Questions in the Five Year Review of an Equality Scheme 23
- E. Main conclusions..... 42

A. Executive Summary

An Equality Scheme describes certain arrangements that a public authority has set-up and which it is obliged to apply, and follow as a means of fulfilling the duties imposed on it by Section 75(1) and (2) of the Northern Ireland Act. These duties are to have:

- due regard to the need to promote equality of opportunity, and
- regard to the desirability of promoting good relations.

This includes arrangements for training staff, assessing and consulting on the likely impact of policies adopted, or proposed to be adopted, by the authority on the promotion of equality of opportunity, and monitoring any adverse impact of those policies that have been adopted. The purpose of a 5 year review is to examine how those arrangements have been applied and to assess how effective they have been in assisting public authorities to comply with the Section 75 duties.

The review is based on evidence, including, but not limited to:

- An understanding of how senior staff are complying with their scheme commitments and providing appropriate leadership
- Analysis that decision-makers are aware of their obligations
- Section 75 annual progress reports that the public authority has completed
- good practice measures that the public authority itself has undertaken
- Evidence that the views of external stakeholders have been considered within the context of the scheme and its implementation

This review covers the period of implementation of the Equality Scheme from April 2015 until March 2020.

B. Introduction

1. Section 75 of the Northern Ireland Act 1998

Section 75 of the Northern Ireland Act 1998 (the Act) requires Belfast City Council to comply with two statutory duties:

a. Section 75 (1)

In carrying out our functions relating to Northern Ireland we are required to have due regard to the need to promote equality of opportunity between

- persons of different religious belief, political opinion, racial group, age, marital status or sexual orientation
- men and women generally
- persons with a disability and persons without
- persons with dependants and persons without.

b. Section 75 (2)

In addition, without prejudice to the obligations above, in carrying out our functions in relation to Northern Ireland we are required to have regard to the desirability of promoting good relations between persons of different religious belief, political opinion or racial group.

The Council's Equality Scheme, approved by the Equality Commission in March 2015 sets out how it proposes to fulfil the duties imposed by Section 75 and Schedule 9 of the northern Ireland Act 1998.

2. Ensuring compliance with the section 75 duties

Our Equality Scheme includes the following undertakings:

a. Our arrangements for consulting

We will consult on our Equality Scheme, action measures, equality impact assessments and other matters relevant to the Section 75 statutory duties.

We are committed to carrying out consultation in accordance with the following principles (as contained in the Equality Commission's guidance "Section 75 of the Northern Ireland Act 1998 – A Guide for Public Authorities (April 2010)").

We will carry out our consultation in a timely, open and inclusive way. Consideration will be given to such issues as accessibility, timing, location, and special requirements e.g. alternative formats and interpreters etc.

b. Our arrangements for assessing, monitoring and publishing the impact of policies

The Council will screen all policies in accordance with the Equality Commission guidance. The purpose of screening is to identify those policies that are likely to have an impact on equality of opportunity and/or good relations. If screening has identified that an equality impact assessment is necessary, we will carry out the EQIA in accordance with Equality Commission guidance. All Screening reports and EQIAss will be available.

c. Staff training

We will ensure that all elected Members of Council and staff are made aware of and understands the content of the Equality Scheme. This summary will be disseminated to all staff and the full copy will be placed on the internal website.

d. Public Access to Information and Services

We are committed to effective communication with the public and will ensure everyone has full access to and understanding of council information in a format that is appropriate to them.

3. Five year Review of our Equality Scheme

Public authorities who have Section 75 Equality Schemes are obliged to review those schemes periodically. "A public authority shall, before the end of the period of five years beginning with the submission of its current scheme, or the latest review of that scheme under this sub-paragraph, whichever is later, review that scheme and inform the [Equality] Commission of the outcome of the review." (Equality Commission for Northern Ireland, Guidance on conducting a 5 year review of an Equality Scheme, July 2016)

This means that the review must be done within 5 years of a public authority's current Equality Scheme being submitted to the Commission for approval, which was granted in March 2015 and the Commission must be informed about the outcome of each review. With our current scheme running for the period from April 2015 until March 2020, this review gathered evidence of the implementation of the scheme during that period; however, its development was impacted by the global pandemic.

C. Consideration of evidence and research

1. How the Scheme has benefitted individuals within Section 75 groups

Strategic initiatives

Belfast Agenda

The main purpose of the Belfast Agenda, the Council's community plan, is to improve the quality of life and wellbeing for all people. The Belfast Agenda was formally launched in November 2017. However, whilst addressing inequalities is inherent within the plan, we are also taking pro-active steps to ensure that inequalities are understood and addressed.

The Belfast Agenda, which sets out a long term vision for the city as a place:

- where everyone benefits from a thriving and prosperous economy;
- that is welcoming, safe, fair and inclusive for all;
- that is vibrant, attractive, connected and environmentally sustainable;
- where everyone experiences good health and wellbeing; and
- where everyone fulfils their potential.

In April 2017, (as a follow-up to the EQIA report on the Belfast Agenda) we met with the Equality Commission to consider how to improve understanding of equality implications within a strategic document such as the Belfast Agenda. As part of the ongoing enabling work of the Belfast Agenda, we agreed to explore the extent to which we could assess each of the population indicators through an equality lens. The first step in this was to finalise the technical report, which will form the basis for monitoring overall progress. This report, which documents and explains the indicators used, has now been drafted and we are engaging with our partners. Consultants have been commissioned to help us define and clarify need and potential priority areas of work based on, in the first instance, statistical evidence. Once completed it will enable us to begin to assess equality implications (data permitting).

The Belfast Agenda is an ambitious plan for the city, with a strong economic focus and far-reaching targets for population and jobs growth. We believe that in order to address the long term challenges facing people in Belfast, such as health and educational inequalities, the need for good relations, ensuring people feel safe and have good living conditions, we need to focus on growing our economy and ensuring the benefits are felt by everyone.

Community Planning Partners

There is an ongoing programme of work linked to the development of the Belfast Agenda and emerging work around civic voice and participation as well as the ongoing implementation of our Consultation and Engagement Framework. A Community Planning Partnership has been established for Belfast, which comprises statutory community planning partners (i.e. named in the legislation), as well as other non-statutory partners (i.e. organisations 'invited' to formally participate on the partnership). To enable community representation, and in recognition of their role within the city, the Belfast Area Partnership boards were invited to join the partnership as full members.

Inclusive Growth Strategy

Key to this is the work to develop our policy and approach to "Inclusive Growth". Although during this reporting period it was still at the data capture and analysis stage, this will be a key influencer and driver for Council policy over the coming years. To support our progress in this area we have commenced work on the development of an Inclusive Growth framework.

People Strategy

The new Director of City & Organisational Strategy, as part of the organisational development agenda, is leading on the development of a new People Strategy. The aim is to refresh the corporate values and ensure that the values of culture of respect, fairness and diversity are identified and championed by the new Corporate Management Team and are consistently embedded across the organisation.

Belfast Region City Deal

Other key strands of work currently underway include the creation of a Belfast Region City Deal and programmes of work to address health inequalities and inequalities in educational achievement. Addressing inequalities, in its widest sense, underpins the whole Belfast Agenda and supporting Council strategies and reflects the issues that people told us were important during the engagement process.

Customer Focus Programme

Belfast City Council has embarked on a customer experience transformation programme to provide more efficient and improved experiences to all our customers. The plans have been developed over the last few years with considerable consultation and engagement with our stakeholders. Over the next three years (2020-2023), we will begin putting in place the foundations to transform our customer experience, offering increasingly easy to use and accessible services.

Cultural Strategy- A City Imagining

It is widely recognised that cities of culture can drive transformation. In 2019, the council launched a Cultural Strategy 2020 - 2030 - A City Imagining to help meet the Belfast Agenda vision for 2035, which imagines a culturally vibrant city. It supports active citizenship and participation in cultural life, respecting the richness and diversity of our different cultural identities.

This 10-year cultural strategy is the result of an intensive, experimental and richly rewarding engagement process. It is an integrated approach to long-term cultural development in the city including: a citizen focused approach, consideration of the long-term sustainability of the cultural sector, a new approach to Events and Festivals, strengthening the tourism proposition in the city through greater understanding of the city's cultural narrative and international appeal and integration of planned major developments such as the Destination Hub into city and neighbourhood tourism.

Corporate Plan

"Respect, fairness and the promotion of equality, good relations and inclusivity" is one of our stated core values that underpin the Corporate Plan. In the Corporate Plan, we draw attention to key strategic programmes such as inclusive growth and a number of organisational improvement programmes which will help ensure those values are demonstrable.

Corporate Consultation and Engagement Plan

Work to embed the new on-line consultation platform (Citizen Space) continued throughout 17/18. Since July 2016, we have undertaken over 90 consultations (public and private) and have received over 18,800 on-line responses. Our new on-line consultation platform and central repository is helping to improve the visibility and information available to residents and consultees; it also enables us to share good practice in-house. The platform allows us to upload various types of media and documentation in a much more user friendly way; for example, videos, drop-down fact boxes etc. This included briefing sessions with Members and senior managers. Council now has 58 officers who hold the Consultation Institute's Certificate of Professional Development.

We also undertook a series of training and capacity building workshops in support of the draft Consultation and Engagement Framework throughout the reporting period and these include a focus on ensuring various sections of the community are given the opportunity to feedback in accessible and inclusive ways. A number of consultations have utilised a mix of on-line survey, events, roadshows and targeted workshops demonstrating that Council understands the need to tailor consultations as opposed to adopting a one-size fits all approach.

The Citizen Space consultation platform has been a great success. The Council is in the process of developing a more comprehensive Consultation and Engagement Strategy and online system which will be completed in 2020.

Activity supporting section 75 groups

Communication and engagement

Equality and diversity are key themes in the future of the marketing and communications strategy outputs. This area is something we consider when taking forward, implementing and executing all internal and external campaigns and we are in the process of designing a new internal communications strategy.

Over the course of the reporting period we ran 49 articles on our internal staff network, 16 in our staff magazine, 6 within our staff Team Brief and 12 within the Chief Executive's blog, which promoted various aspects of equality and diversity, both in relation to service provision and staff. The detail of these articles are available upon request.

Gender

We worked with the Women's Resource and Development Agency to engage women on the Belfast Agenda using a "storytelling approach". This process helped us hear the voices of women who were often marginalised from consultation processes, and was only made possible by utilising the networks and connections of the various women support networks in the city and by adopting a relatively non-traditional form of engagement.

Equality and diversity-related events and activities

In order to raise awareness of equality and diversity related issues and highlight the importance of ensuring, along with partner organisations, that services are designed to be accessible to all, several diverse events and activities have taken place during the reporting period. All these events and activities are recorded in our annual reports. Example of events and activities include:-

- National Deaf Children's Society (NDCS) Roadshow – BCC hosted a visit from the NDCS in the grounds of City Hall, attended by the Deputy Lord Mayor,
- DisabledGo training day to raise awareness of various disabilities and issues. Now rebranded as AccessAble during this reporting period,
- Working with Women in Business NI to promote business start-ups,

- Sponsorship of the Women In Business NI Leadership Conference,
- Deaf Awareness Week – BCC hosted a signed tour of the City Hall exhibition with 15 people from the Deaf community and gathered feedback afterwards to further improve the experience.
- We conducted a staff Equality and Diversity survey in 2018 to find out staffs' views on how equality and diversity is managed in the workplace. The results and recommendations for action will be followed up through further consultation with the staff network groups.
- Annual International Women's Day event for staff.
- Funding of annual external International Women's Day event
- Annual Transgender Day of Remembrance event
- Marking the annual Transgender Day of Visibility by flying the transgender flag and lighting up the City Hall
- Annual Holocaust Memorial Day event
- Annual Participation in Pride
- Attendance Stonewall best practice events
- Promotion and development of LGB&T, disability and women's staff networks
- Hosting of a Gender Budgeting conference
- Hosting of an International Day for Elimination of Violence against Women event
- Events to mark the annual International Day for People with Disabilities
- Held staff focus group on 'age'
- Participated in Business in the Community's Gender Programme
- Ongoing participation in the NI Diversity Charter Mark
- Participation in Stonewall's Workforce Equality Index
- Delivery of a pilot leadership development programme to help women in communities across Belfast develop their potential.

Our events raise awareness amongst staff and citizens and visibly demonstrates to various communities the Council's commitment to embracing equality and diversity and promotes BCC as an inclusive employer to both the employees and the community it serves. Knock on benefits include increased attendance at employee networks and requests for increased advice and guidance from Equality and Diversity Unit staff.

Healthy Ageing Strategic Partnership

The Healthy Ageing Strategic Partnership (HASP) held a series of briefings and workshops with a wide range of service providers and older people involving 200 participants during 2017/2018 to develop the draft Age-Friendly Plan 2018/2021. We sought the views of a diverse range of older people for the new Age-Friendly Belfast Plan through The Age-Friendly Belfast survey was distributed in a range of settings and focus groups with 'hard to reach' groups of older people carried out by Age NI peer facilitators.

Through our current Age-Friendly Belfast Plan we promoted equality and good relations through the delivery of the Positive Ageing Month Programme October 2017, the Age-Friendly Volunteer Awards December 2017 and a range of active ageing programmes in our parks and community centres 2017-21.

From recent surveys/consultations we know that 84% of older people in Belfast state that Belfast is a city where they can live life to the full; 70% of older people are happy with the service they receive on public transport (this has increased from 63% in 2015); 75% of older people visit parks in Belfast regularly and there has been an increase of 4% in older people feeling safe in their neighbourhoods.

Children and Young People Framework

The Youth Forum is a great resource for garnering views on BCC policies and strategies. In addition the Youth Forum agrees campaigns for each year. For example 2017/18 as follows: 'Poverty: It's not a choice' - Using their report, the Youth Forum hosted meetings with Councillors from each political party in BCC around their key tasks.

'Elephant in the Room' – The Youth Forum designed and began delivery of a youth led mental health campaign which to date has engaged more than 1,800 young people region wide through a survey and focus groups. The collected data was used to create a young people's mental health report, which was launched in Stormont on 4 October 2018.

Findings from the report will be used to shape key asks for government in relation to young people and mental health which our Youth Forum will use to lobby decision makers and influence policy and service development.

Other initiatives included a "Votes at 16 motion" sponsored and endorsed at Full Council meeting in November 2017 making Belfast the first official pro 'Votes at 16' city in NI.

In December 2017, the Youth Forum ran a sexual health event for young people in partnership with Positive Life NI. Young people's views on sexual health were gathered at the event and this data is being used to influence a new sexual health strategy for NI.

Summer Schemes

Community Services run summer schemes across the city, which aim to provide an accessible and inclusive scheme that meets the needs of all children that attend. Providing over 90 places including children with additional support needs. These include children with autism, Asperger's, ADHD, ASD, Down's syndrome, sight loss, and physical disability.

We are also able to offer places to children who require assistance with the use of epi-pens and inhalers.

Equality and Diversity Unit (EDU)

The EDU team has provided advice in relation to equality screening and relevant equality data available to be used by officers when developing policies and services throughout the course of the year. All staff have access to an equality toolkit on-line and a key issues paper, both of which are updated regularly.

Ad-hoc meetings and training sessions have been carried out on request with officers and briefing papers have been provided for CMT and senior managers in relation to areas of emerging importance. The rural needs assessment is now managed by the EDU staff.

Disability

The Council continually assesses and improves the disability related agenda. We designed a new Disability Action Plan and consulted extensively. We have created excellent networking relationships with a range of relevant stakeholders.

Inclusive Events Guide

This is a guide which was launched in June 2017, providing advice and guidance to council staff on issues to be considered when organising events. It includes first hand experiences from disabled people of what they believe made some events successful and others less so. In addition it also promoted the JAM (Just a minute) card used to make others aware that a person with a learning disability might need a little extra time to complete a particular action. Council staff are required to

complete an event plan when organising an internal or public event and from a good practice point of view, it guides council staff to make sure reasonable adjustments are in place during council events.

AccessAble

We have had a contract with Disabled Go/AccessAble since 2008 and the purpose of the contract is promote disability access at public venues, services, shops and restaurants across the City.

The Council signed up to the BSL & ISL Charter in March 2019.

Language Strategy

The Language Strategy aims to contribute to achieving the aims of the Belfast Agenda, which sets out a long-term vision of the city as a place. The Strategy commits to work across a number of areas of Council services including communications, media, support for the community and support for Council staff. Implementation of the Strategy is based around five language work streams:

- Irish;
- Ulster Scots;
- Sign Languages;
- New communities' languages; and
- Languages and communications for disabled people.

Deaf Community

The Council made a pledge to the Deaf Community that they would consult formally and informally with the local Deaf Community on a regular basis, ensure access for Deaf people to information and services and ensure council staff working with Deaf people can communicate effectively using British Sign Language. These pledges was formulated into our latest Disability Action Plan.

Good Relations

During this reporting period we have developed and implemented the District Council Good Relations Plan and Peace IV Local Action Plan. The District Council Good Relations Plan submits an evaluation of the Programme to The Executive Office on a number of outcomes related to Good Relations i.e. people feel that their cultural diversity is respected and valued. These progress reports are available on request. During this reporting period the Good Relations Unit began the process of designing a new Good Relations strategy.

Following years of conflict, the people of Belfast have made great progress towards normalization. Despite this, there remain key legacy issues that manifest themselves in segregation between communities. The Good Relations Strategy will promote cultural diversity and respect for everyone's cultural identity, not just the legacy issues following conflict but to address issues relating to hate crime and intolerance to show that Belfast is a city for all.

All of this activity in the Council, some of which has been, presented above has developed the capacity of the organisation in relation to equality and diversity; compliance with equality duty and raised awareness of relevant issues when making decisions.

Physical Programmes

The Council's Local Investment Fund (LIF) offers funding to local projects which aim to make a real difference in people's lives at a neighbourhood level by addressing local community need. Since 2012 we have committed £9m million into more than 125 grassroots organisations across the city to regenerate places and facilities that are important to them, providing much needed amenities in local areas.

As part of the project assessment process we introduced equality and good relations as one of the key principles against which proposals were assessed. Completed projects include new improved open spaces for a range of groups, such as, the transformation of waste land to a garden for residential facility for homeless men; creation of a new sensory garden at a residential care home; a new memory garden at a care home for people with dementia– and new or improved community facilities eg new Irish Language school; new Surestart building; new skills and training facility for young people; refurbished women's centre; refurbished boxing club.

In addition to investment in community-led capital investment, the Council's capital programme – programme of investment which either improves the existing Council facilities or provides new Council facilities– has seen the transformation of iconic facilities that has allowed for improved accessibility. Examples include: the introduction of a New Exhibition space at City Hall, Tropical Ravine restoration, and Girdwood Community Hub.

2. How leaders within the authority are engaged in the scheme's implementation

The Council is committed under the direction of the City Solicitor to ensure, good governance procedures are in place and are continually reviewed.

In addition we take our commitments seriously and ensure that an effective Equality Scheme is in place and all officers with Section 75 responsibilities i.e. senior managers, policymakers, those taking policy decisions and equality officers understand its requirements. We ensure staff are trained and they follow the procedures in place.

The quality of the equality assessments - both EQIA's and equality screenings are scrutinised and assisted by the equality team.

We are committed to ensuring the Council is an exemplar organisation in relation to communication and engagement both internally and externally. The importance of the Section 75 duties is regularly communicated, both internally and externally to our stakeholders.

We are in the process of auditing persistent inequalities and ensuring all the key staff are involved in ensuring the new Equality Action Plan is meaningful and effective.

The most significant change to our internal operating equality system has been the introduction of the new Equality and Diversity Network. This network aims to involve the council's leaders in the scheme's implementation. Previously we experienced challenges getting our messages consistently delivered across the Council. This network provides an ideal solution to receiving and disseminating information.

We established a two-tier structure of the Equality and Diversity Network incorporating:

- (i) Equality and Diversity Network: Strategic (EDNS)
- (ii) Equality and Diversity Network: Operational (EDNO)

The quarterly EDNS, chaired by John Walsh, City Solicitor, provides strategic leadership and direction for delivering the Equality and Diversity Framework/ Equality Action Plan across all departments. This group reports to the Corporate Management Team and onto Strategic Policy & Resources Committee for approval and resource allocation, where necessary.

The EDNO, jointly chaired by the Equality and Diversity Officers and HR Manager, provides an operational management process to implement equality and diversity related activities and report to the EDNS. A high-level officer represents each department and ensures key issues are circulated and communicated effectively to each department. In addition the EDNO ensures the collection of information from their relevant department for annual reporting purposes.

3. Challenges and how they have been overcome

The most significant challenge we face in a large public sector organisation is keeping our staff and elected Members trained on equality, good relations and diversity issues and to keep this training up-to-date, refreshed and relevant.

The other significant challenge is to continue to review our consultation mechanisms to ensure we provide relevant, accessible and inclusive consultation processes.

4. Good practice

Integrated Tourism Framework

The Belfast Integrated Tourism Strategy 2015-2020 set out priorities and activities to help us double the value of tourism to £870 million per year by 2020. The strategy was developed following extensive consultation with tourism partners and stakeholders. It aims to focus everyone's efforts around priority issues. The improvements that it suggests will be delivered in partnership with all organisations that have an interest in increasing tourism into the city.

The main improvements identified were:

- to enhance the city's reputation through better marketing, access to the city, improved services for all visitors and better events that will be accessible and appeal to many;
- to strengthen the tourism sector through quality assurance, training and by developing new products and experiences for visitors.

The Strategy committed to developing a city that welcomes visitors and is easily accessible to all. We ensured that promotion of the city was delivered through multiple platforms to reach all inclusive of S75 groups. Any activity or product experience developed went through full equality screening. Examples of this have included events such as the Twilight Market at St George's market and city animation programmes. This was a good example of mainstreaming and designing appropriate

services to meet the needs of different people representative of the S75 groups, by working collaboratively.

As this strategy closes, this learning and experience has been integrated within the development of the 10 year Cultural Strategy – A City Imagining during 2019, which includes a strategic focus on supporting cultural tourism. This will ensure alignment and ongoing collaboration of partners in the development and delivery of implementation plans.

Neighbourhood Renewal

This cross government strategy is directly targeted at the 10% of wards in NI that experience the highest level of deprivation, 15 of which are in the Belfast area. The strategy operates through locally based community/ statutory partnerships which develop and implement a thematic action plan to target need. Our officers sit on these partnerships supporting the work of sub groups and ensuring alignment with Council programmes and services at a local level.

The Council is moving to a local area approach to neighbourhood regeneration and delivery services to ensure needs of local areas are more effectively addressed. This will be reported in annual reports in due course.

Shared City Partnership

The previously named Good Relations Partnership underwent a review, one of the outcomes being that it changed its name to reflect its current broad remit, to the Shared City Partnership. Under this new title the group continued to meet monthly to direct the work of the Good Relations Unit and also agreed to hold a minimum of 3 meetings a year outside of the City Hall as part of its ongoing review.

The Partnership hosted a Shared City Forum at Girdwood Community Hub on 14 June 2016. The event was opened by the Deputy Lord Mayor Councillor Campbell with a keynote address given by the Partnership Chair, Councillor Kyle. 102 people attended the event which included presentations on the work of the Shared City Partnership and how good relations issues are influencing the development of a Community Plan for Belfast (the Belfast Agenda) as well as a presentation on the work of the NI Life and Times Survey. This event included facilitated sessions to help develop good relations outcomes for the city and examine how city partners can effectively work with local communities to maximise impact through greater engagement and involvement in the design of interventions. This will also assist in the development of the PEACE IV Action Plan for Belfast.

Key findings and feedback from the forum include:-

- 74% of attendees felt that the Forum had increased their knowledge of the Shared City Partnership and the context in which it operates by quite a bit or completely, with the remainder saying it had increased their knowledge a little.
- 100% of attendees felt that their experience of the workshop sessions was useful or would have some impact upon their own work.
- 90% of attendees stated that they would definitely attend similar events in the future.

The findings from the workshops were used to inform the ongoing development of the Belfast Agenda and in support of the Council's PEACE IV application.

Good Relations Audit

The Good Relations Unit undertook its 3 yearly independent audit of Good Relations need within Belfast City Council. The findings and recommendations of the audit identify key areas of work to be included in a Belfast City Council Good Relations Action Plan for 2017-2018. This audit included a review of existing and emerging policy such as Together; Building a United Community (T;BUC) and the Programme for Government. Belfast City Council is leading the development of a community plan for Belfast, 'The Belfast Agenda' and this also informed the content of the audit and action plan.

The audit was conducted between October 2016 and February 2017 and included an online survey as well as focus groups and a large scale event. One of the recommendations of the audit was that Council should seek to promote the range of work to support good relations that takes place across the city. In line with this the Good Relations Unit has produced an information booklet and short film; these can be viewed at www.belfastcity.gov.uk/goodrelations

Employability and Skills

A low skills level among the city's working-age residents is one of key challenges facing Belfast and without a focused and coordinated effort with our key partners this issue is set to continue. To ensure skills are matched to market needs, an Employability and Skills Framework for 2015-2025 was developed by the Economic Development Unit. Linked to the Belfast Agenda, the Employability and Skills Framework supports the need for specific, targeted interventions to ensure residents – especially those far from the labour market, have the opportunity to develop the skills necessary to apply for and secure employment. This Framework places a particular emphasis on ways we can help to improve the skills and employability of working age citizens especially in certain groupings; younger people, people with disabilities and ethnic minorities.

As one of the city's largest employer, we have engaged with a range of partners as part of our community outreach programme. These partners include schools, colleges, universities, disability organisations, Department for the Economy, women's organisations and other employability support organisations. The range of activity undertaken includes:

- provision of work experience opportunities. We have a target of 150 placements each year, including 30 placements for people with disabilities
- training and development opportunities on interview awareness skills using mock interview sessions
- site visits to promote the council as an attractive employer and attendance at careers fairs
- ring fencing of posts to the long term unemployed and delivery of pre-recruitment and training programmes targeted to underrepresented groups.

Social Clauses

We work with all Council contracts to ensure social clauses are implemented and are directly aligned to the priorities of the Council as contained within the Belfast Agenda and the existing social clause policy.

Overall, the implementation of social clauses across Council contracts, has resulted in the creation of over 160 jobs ring-fenced for long-term unemployed or apprentices and third level students. One example of this is the Leisure Transformation Programme (LTP) which provides an insight into the delivery of social responsibility. Using social clauses in LTP, we have engaged with the contractor to agree the delivery plan for economic and social regeneration activities. This outlines the KPIs and measurable medium and long term outcomes for social, economic, employment, environmental and community improvements, which will be monitored through a contract management regime.

A further example is the council's new partnership with Translink to deliver 'Buy Social' clauses during the construction and engineering phase and associated infrastructure of the new Weavers Cross station. It aims to maximise social and economic benefits for communities across the city. The partnership will see the creation of a Construction Employment Academy (CEA) which will host and deliver local interventions to promote these opportunities to local people. The CEA will provide information, training and on-going support to potential new entrants to ensure readiness in nearby communities for these construction jobs. Through 'Targeted Recruitment and Training clauses', the Weavers Cross project could see up to 100 'Buy Social' opportunities generated within the local construction sector through the build and engineering of the new station and associated engineering contracts.

Physical Programmes

The Council's Local Investment Fund (LIF) offers funding to local projects which aim to make a real difference in people's lives at a neighbourhood level by addressing local community need. Since 2012 we have committed £9m million into more than 125 grassroots organisations across the city to regenerate places and facilities that are important to them, providing much needed amenities in local areas.

As part of the project assessment process we introduced equality and good relations as one of the key principles against which proposals were assessed. Completed projects include new improved open spaces for a range of groups, such as, the transformation of waste land to a garden for residential facility for homeless men; creation of a new sensory garden at a residential care home; a new memory garden at a care home for people with dementia– and new or improved community facilities eg new Irish Language school; new Surestart building; new skills and training facility for young people; refurbished women's centre; refurbished boxing club. In addition to investment in community-led capital projects, the Council's capital programme – programme of investment which either improves the existing Council facilities or provides new Council facilities– has seen the transformation of iconic facilities that has allowed for improved accessibility. The following examples provide a very brief overview of the changes this investment has created:

- the introduction of a New Exhibition space at City Hall – £1.3m investment that has transformed the ground space of the East side of the City Hall. It offers a journey from the city's past to present, showing the vibrancy and diversity of Belfast City Hall across six themed zones over 16 separate rooms; visitor tours are free; sign Language videos are available and for a small fee visitors can enjoy the enriched exhibition content with an audio tour that is available in eight languages.
- Tropical Ravine restoration: £3.8m investment (BCC and HLF funding) transformed an old Victorian listed building in to a new public attraction, that has allowed for much greater accessibility through direct stakeholder engagement and feedback. The restored building won Project of the Year at the Royal Institute of Chartered Surveyors (RICS) Awards 2018 and was commented on being a model of best practice.

- Girdwood Community Hub: A £11.7m investment (BCC, DfC and SEUPB funding) in to a new community and leisure hub on a former Barrack site. Through extensive community dialogue and input, this state of the are facility is a modern, vibrant shared space, where the community can access a range of leisure and learning facilities, and community services. In addition, a changing places facility has been installed at this site.

Awards

Belfast City Council was re-accredited with the gold platinum award for our workplace charter on domestic violence in 2019. In 2019, we also retained the Business in the Community's Gender Charter Bronze Award. In 2017, we were highly commended at Legal Island's Equality and Diversity awards. We were also shortlisted for the Business in the Community Health and Wellbeing award.

In 2018, we were highly commended for the second year at the Employers for Childcare Family Friendly Awards.

Staff Networks

In 2016, the Equality and Diversity Network (EDN) was established. This cross- departmental network will champion and steer the organisation's strategy on all matters relating to diversity and equality in service delivery and employment. It will also monitor departmental actions in their progress in mainstreaming diversity and equality in all activity. During this 5 year period, the staff networks continued to grow and the disability staff networks invited carers, allies and supporters of people with disabilities to join the networks. The groups have benefitted from hearing from a number of guest speakers and from attending a variety of training sessions.

All staff networks groups feed into the development of the equality and diversity action plans.

Women's Pilot Mentoring Programme

This initiative was championed by the Women's Steering Group based on feedback from the Women' Network Group around the desire for more mentoring opportunities to support improving gender balance in the organisation.

12 mentors from WSG mentored and 12 mentees from WNG participated.

The mentees also participated in job shadowing of the Chief Executive as part of the mentoring programme.

During the course of the mentoring programme, mentees expressed a desire to enhance their political awareness. As a result, a “mock” committee meeting was facilitated to allow mentees to gain exposure to this type of environment and enable engagement with members. Both male and female elected members made this a very “real “learning experience for the participants and constructive feedback was provided.

Formal evaluation of the mentoring programme was completed at the end of the pilot. The positive outcomes were summarised as follows:

- Improved confidence for mentees
- Increased networking and engagement – with peers, senior staff and elected members
- Improved relationship building
- Skills development (e.g. mock committee session)
- Improved corporate and political awareness

A number of the mentees have subsequently gained promotion, and they have attributed that success in part to participating in the mentoring programme.

D. Key Questions in the Five Year Review of an Equality Scheme

1. 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?

The Council's Corporate Plan shapes the future direction of all its services. All Departments are required to include within their annual Departmental Business Plans and Service Business Plans the actions they intend to take which will support and help to achieve the council's corporate priorities.

The Corporate Plan has included 'Promoting Good Relations' as a corporate objective. The Corporate Plan itself included a number of specific actions for the year, indicated how success would be measured and outlined both committee and officer responsibilities in relation to equality and good relations.

The Council's has moved towards a competency based framework Achieving Through People (ATP) framework sets out the values and behaviours that are expected from all employees in carrying out their roles. There is an element which specifically relates to promoting equality and diversity within the workplace and service provision within this, effective managers are expected to "ensure compliance with our Section 75 statutory duties and policies and procedures in relation to equality, good relations and disability".

Within the same element, senior managers are expected to "promote and role model an inclusive working environment and culture that values equality of opportunity and diversity". The ATP framework also sets out that all employees within the organisation are expected to "actively challenge bias, prejudice, discrimination or intolerance".

As we have mainstreamed the equality agenda, all committee reports consider equality early in the process. All committee reports will have considered the equality agenda prior to presentation; early consultation processes are now commonplace. This process ensures the monitoring of the equality agenda throughout Council policy development. This has had a significant impact in focusing all senior staff on the equality agenda.

The Council's commitment to the Equality Scheme, through staffing, resources, time and energy and the comprehensive reporting mechanism has enabled the ongoing development of the equality agenda.

The Review of Public Administration has had a considerable impact on all Councils. In Belfast City Council there was a process of restructuring. Further opportunities to mainstream equality as the most important aspect of development is to build on the lessons of the previous years of the Equality Scheme.

2. 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.

The Council is committed to the implementation of the Equality Scheme and has provided adequate resources to support the process.

Salaries

The Council has had an Equality and Diversity Officer (job share) in post. They have direct responsibility for ensuring the implementation of the Equality Scheme, supported by other staff members, including managerial and business support. They are the budget holder and are responsible for the Council's agenda in relation to:

- Equality and Diversity
- Disability
- Rural Needs
- Language Strategy

In September 2018 the Council employed an Irish Language Officer, a Language Officer in October 2018 and an Equality and Diversity Support Officer in July 2019.

The Equality Officer is now located in the Legal and Civic Services Department (formerly Chief Executive's), following a restructuring exercise. All direct costs in relation to the Equality Scheme implementation such as consultation, catering, meetings, conferences, consultants and fees for external professional services, i.e. to undertake the equality impact assessments required, are quantifiable as they are centrally controlled within the Legal and Civic Services Department. The following figures indicate staff costs associated with the direct implementation of the Equality Scheme:

Year	FTE Staff	£	Grade	SCP
2014/15	1	£ 50,875.50	P05	47
2015/16	1	£ 53,237.65	P05	47
2016/17	1	£ 53,382.76	P05	47
2017/18	1	£ 56,934.78	P05	47
2018/19	3	£109,255.19	P05/ PO1/ PO1	41/ 33/ 33

However, it should be made clear that the implementation of the equality agenda is not solely the responsibility of the Equality and Diversity team or of one department. As the process of equality mainstreaming has developed and gained momentum throughout the Council, all departments are now responsible for directing their services to meet equality issues as they arise.

The figures listed above therefore do not include the considerably broader allocation of Council resources for equality related issues.

In addition, delivery of the workforce aspects of the Equality and Diversity agenda is managed by the Corporate HR section through the development and delivery of a number of diversity action plans. At a senior level this work is overseen by the Head of HR and HR Manager.

3. Outline 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.

- A Consultative Forum continues to operate comprising Section 75 groups. We provide information on policies and the screening process. Section 75 groups get access to key staff through the Consultative Forum.
- The Equality and Diversity Officer attends a multi-agency autism stakeholder forum.
- Consultation on all new or revised policies has kept Section 75 groups informed of all developments within the Council. We have developed an online consultation process. In addition all information is published on the website keeping the public up to date on all developments within the Council.
- The Equality and Diversity Officer has assisted all Departments in the Council to better target consultation to relevant groups in relation to pre -consultation, consultation and post consultation.
- Relationships with Section 75 groups are maintained by attending meetings, seminars, workshops, AGMs, launches and other general invitations.

4. 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?

Outcomes for people in Section 75 categories are listed below. Information relating to targets and outcomes for the past five years can be found throughout the body of the text and in Appendix 4.

- Equality is mainstreamed in the Council
- Staff are better trained
- Staff engagement and consultation is better
- Employee monitoring has been established. As a consequence of more informed knowledge of the composition of our employees we will be able to target policies to assist development when and where required. Employees are indicating that they wish to be involved in equality focus groups addressing Section 75 issues.
- A more focused concentration on youth issues. A Youth Forum is well established.
- Specific targeted employee projects relating to female gender development is well supported.
- Work Life Balance policies assists all staff to improve their work life balance. The main areas of interest include flexible working arrangements, leave provision, child care vouchers, occupational health and employment counselling. Whilst all staff benefit from the Work Life Balance policies we can see that people who are in a caring role are greatly encouraged by the option in this policy.
- A disability action plan has been developed during this period building on previous plans.
- The Good Relations Strategy addresses Section 75 (2). Officers have been employed to address the main issues relating to community relations and cultural diversity. A funding programme for cultural diversity and community relations issues continues.

Outcomes

The changes ensuing from the EQIAs directly improve our services and in turn impact on all our customers.

- Improvements in our community outreach work and targeted recruitment drives.
- Improvements in communication to stakeholders
- More awareness of Section 75 issues internally and externally
- Improved policy development processes

- Better partnership working
- Informed decision making
- Increased participation in decision making
- More knowledge of customers
- Addressing representation in the workforce
- Focus on disability issues.

Impacts

- The overall impact is that there is a noticeable difference in the attention afforded to equality of opportunity and good relations issues.
- All committee reports presented to Council are required to have an equality policy statement. This addresses equality in all documents in every Department.
- Annual reports are a good vehicle for recording the development cycle of equality.
- Belfast City Council is beginning to review the effectiveness of the Consultative Forum
- Annual reports are written and circulated internally to senior officers and the Chief Executive before being presented to the Strategic Policy and Resources Committee and the Council.
- Work with the Local Government Staff Commission has enabled the Council to share good practice in an informal development mechanism. Regular meetings were held to discuss common issues.

5. 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?

A variety of methods were used to conduct Equality Scheme related consultations indicated below.

1. Pre consultation
2. Consultation on Scheme
3. EQIA Consultation (Public, focus groups, staff)
4. Pre Consultation on Developing Policies
5. Screening Consultation
6. Consultation Forum

The Equality and Diversity Officer was involved in all EQIA consultations and Equality Consultation Forum meetings.

However, the Council is a large organisation and individual Departments are responsible for conducting their own pre consultation and consultation processes in relation to policy development. It is therefore difficult to ascertain the total number of consultation exercises undertaken throughout the Council.

The Council is committed to effective consultation and conducts its consultation in accordance with the guidelines set out in the Council's Equality Scheme which contains 178 groups and organisations on the AA list with whom the Council consults during the EQIA Process.

Consultation with Section 75 groups is a major element of the Council's commitment to the equality agenda. In addition some Council departments and services are now using a collaborative process with Section 75 groups and other affected groups to inform and develop new Council policies.

In order to address and meet this growing challenge we established a Consultative Forum for Belfast City Council. The Council is aware that Consultative Forums are not a substitute for other forms of consultation and are merely part of the overall process which must include wider consultation and the use of focus groups for specialist issues. In February 2019 the Council undertook a consultation exercise to review its current equality consultative mechanisms. A draft Consultation and Engagement Strategy is currently out for consultation.

The Equality and Diversity Officer created a reporting procedure to mainstream equality at the heart of the Council's decision making process. Every report presented to Council must enclose an equality statement in relation to the screening procedure. This has led to a greater appreciation of the equality agenda. It has embedded equality in the general work structure and practices of Council officers in the early stage of policy development.

Every year the Council's Disability Access Group organises a focus group meeting with organisations representing disability to discuss progress. This is an extremely effective consultation mechanism. The Council has developed excellent working relationships with disability organisations. This work has now been considerably enhanced with the introduction of the Language Strategy and Officers and the establishment of the Disability Advisory panel.

Every year the Council consults with stakeholders in relation to developing policies and the EQIA process. Relevant staff have been trained on pre consultation, consultation and final consultation processes.

The Equality and Diversity Officer is responsible for the co ordination of the formal screening processes for the Council, the dissemination of this information to the stakeholders and ensuring that the responses from stakeholders are satisfactorily addressed.

No. of Equality Consultative Forum meetings that took place during years 1-5 (2015-20)

Period	Date of ECF meetings
2014-15	14 May 2014 26 November 2014
2015-16	13 May 2015 11 November 2015
2016-17	20 April 2016 25 November 2016 28 February 2017
2017-18	27 February 2018
2018-19	11 October 2018 7 February 2019
2019-20	Scheduled for November 2020
Total no. of meetings	10 with one planned for 2020

6. 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 list of consultees on the AA has been amended in the past five years. All those on the AA list were contacted by email to check details and enquire if they wished to remain on the list. Most people wanted to remain on the list. Many opted for electronic data, some wished to be removed. We have recently conducted an audit for a second time; this exercise was conducted on the telephone. We have also had requests from organisations to join our consultee list.

7. To what extent did your authority consult directly with directly affected individuals as well as with representative groups.

Each department and section has its own stakeholder list. In addition each new policy is assessed and additions to the stakeholder list are added when appropriate.

Belfast City Council consults extensively with the disability sector as described in Section 2b. Both directly affected individuals and representative organisations are consulted. Mencap and Shopmobility are represented on the Consultative Forum.

The Council has expended considerable resources in training staff on consultation processes. Furthermore we have introduced an online citizen’s space consultation process and are now consulting on a comprehensive Consultation and Engagement Strategy.

Disability Advisory Panel (DAP) is an independent group of disabled people who come together to discuss Council projects. They provide advice on making events / projects inclusive and accessible.

No. of Disability Advisory Panel meetings that took place during years 3 to 5 (2017-20)

Period	Date of DAP meetings	Notes
2017-18	27 th October 2017	N/A
	10 th November 2017	Tropical Ravine
	19 th January 2018	N/A
2018-19	27 th April 2018	N/A
	13 th June 2018	City Hall Exhibition – Tour
	4 th October 2018	N/A
	26 th October 2018	Half Moon Lake
	21 st February 2019	N/A
Total no. of meetings	8	

8. 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.

Council policies are screened in accordance with our Equality Scheme. We prepare a Screening Outcome Report quarterly in line with our Equality Scheme requirements.

All key decision makers in the Council are requested to screen new policies on an on-going basis and submit them to the Equality Team.

We established a system to ensure equality issues are considered in the committee reporting procedure. All committee reports have an attached equality comment which ensures considerations of equality matters at the earliest stage of policy development. This has been a key feature of equality mainstreaming.

The Council will continue to ensure effective screening arrangements by maintaining the equality check in all reporting mechanisms.

No. of screenings undertaken during year 1 (2014-15)

Period	Title of Screening
Jan - May 2014	Centralisation of relevant grants
	Destination Belfast programme
	Public Bike Share Scheme
	Waste and recycling collection operational policy
Jun - Sep 2014	Connswater Community Greenway
	Age Friendly Belfast
	Belfast Welcome Centre
	Good Relations Action Plan
	Revision of a good and harmonious work environment
	Belfast resilience framework
	Corporate GPS-based fleet tracking system
	Leisure Transformation programme
Oct - Dec 2014	Review of the advertising requirements for Entertainment Licensing applications
	Local Government Reform Boundary Extension
	Achieve Belfast Bursary Fund
	Procurement Strategy
	Online Grants Application System

	Policy on the use of Social Clauses in Council Contracts Final
	Introduction of a new kerbside recycling scheme for the collection of glass from households in outer Belfast
	Belfast City Centre Regeneration and Investment Plan
Total	20

No. of screenings undertaken during year 2 (2015-16)

Period	Title of Screening
Jan - Apr 2015	Staging of the Tall Ships Races
	Disability Strategy and Action Plan
	Employability and Skills Strategy
	Belfast Integrated Tourism Strategy
	Castlereagh Kerbside Recycling Scheme
	Get Belfast Reading Project
	Belfast Corporate Plan
	Variation to pricing policy for 3G pitch provision at Brook Activity Centre
May - Sep 2015	Equality Action Plan
	Partnership Agreements
	Wheelie Box Recycling
Oct - Dec 2015	Environmental Improvements
	Use of Social Clauses in Council Contracts
	Disciplinary and Grievance
	Attendance Policy
Jan to Mar 2016	Statement of Community Involvement (SCI)
	Linen Quarter
	Shared Parental Leave
	Advertising requirements for planning applications
Total	19

No. of screenings undertaken during year 3 (2016-17)

Period	Title of Screening
--------	--------------------

Apr to Sep 2016	Changes to bereavement policy
	GLLs membership and pricing architecture for Belfast
	Soccer grass pitch allocation policy
	Forthriver Innovation Centre
	Twilight Market
	Belfast Waterfront Convention and Exhibition Centre - Operating Model
Oct to Dec 2016	Belfast City Local Development Plan (LDP) 2035
Jan to Mar 2017	Belfast City Council Volunteer Policy
Total	8

No. of screenings undertaken during year 4 (2017-18)

Apr-Jun 2017	Ban on Food Waste in Black Bins
	International relations framework 2017-2021
	Shared Parental Leave Policy
Jul-Sep 2017	City Hall Cenotaph - Upgrading, Refurbishment, Restoration and Enhancement
Oct 2017 - Mar 2018	Decision to cease the practice of providing child care vouchers when an employee who is on maternity leave is receiving SMP only or no pay
	Draft Policy on Linguistic Diversity
	Corporate Plan 2017-2021: Year 2 Update and Improvement Plan 2018-2019
	Belfast: Food and Drink Festival
	East Bank Development Strategy: Stages 1 and 2
Total	9

No. of screenings undertaken during year 5 (2018-19)

Period	Title of Screening
Apr to Sep 2018	Age-friendly Belfast Plan 2018-2021
	Belfast Inner North West Masterplan
	Belfast Region City Deal (BRCD) Outline Proposal

	The introduction of a Stacked Wheelie Box recycling scheme to households in Belfast
	Proposal to fill permanent posts by internal trawl
	Stadium Community Benefits Initiative
Oct to Dec 2018	Amateur Boxing Strategy for Belfast 2012-2022 - additional funding to IABA to deliver action plans for 17/18 and 18/19
	Belfast Planning Service Structural Review Voluntary Alignment Process for Staff on NICS Terms & Conditions
	The decision of the People and Communities Committee on 6th November 2018 to approve an application by Radius Housing Association for a dual language street nameplate to be erected at Rose Street, prior to the Rose Street development being fully occupied
	Language Strategy Action Plan October 2018 - March 2020
	Illuminate Project – Access to colour-wash facilities on City Hall façade
Jan to Mar 2019	Achieving Through People Framework
	An Aquatics Strategy for Belfast 2018-2030
	Belfast Green and Blue Infrastructure Plan
	Buddy Scheme Guidance
	Workplace Policy on Domestic Violence and Abuse
	Disability Action Plan 2019-2022
	Draft Developer Contributions Framework – A guide to developer contributions and planning agreements
	New staff rotas at Belfast Zoo from April 2019
Apr to Jun 2019	Corporate CCTV Policy
	Flying of the Rainbow Flag on Pride Day - Saturday 3 August 2019
	Health and Wellbeing Strategy 2018-2021
	Planning application recommendation for office development at Stewart Street, Belfast
Total	23

Equality Impact Assessments Completed

No. of policies screened between 2014 and 2019

Year	No. of policies screened
2014-15	27
2015-16	13
2016-17	8
2017-18	9
2018-19	19

As we have mainstreamed the equality agenda, all committee reports consider equality early in the process. All committee reports will have considered the equality agenda prior to presentation; early consultation processes are now commonplace. In addition the extensive staff training on equality has ensured the early consideration of equality matters. This has resulted in an improvement in the screening stage and a reduction in completing full EQIA's.

Changes were made to the equality schedule and new policies were screened. All consultees were notified of the changes. Please refer to 3 (a) for further information.

No. of EQIAs / Stage 7 undertaken during years 1 to 5 (2015-20)

Period	Title of EQIA
2014	No EQIAs undertaken in 2014
2015	Leisure Transformation Programme
2016	Preferred Options Paper 2020-2035
	Belfast Agenda
2018	Belfast Local Development Plan - draft Plan Strategy
2019	Local Development Plan - Phase 1 Preferred Options Paper (POP)
Total	6

All EQIA's have reached stage 7 of the EQIA process with the exception of the draft Local Development Plan. The Consultative Forum provides a mechanism to meet the officers involved in policy development and have an open discussion concerning the issues.

9. 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 monitors uptake of services as part of its normal procedure but details and standards vary. Consultation with service users is also common with many services having user forums, customer panels etc.

The Equality and Diversity Officer is in the process of facilitating more comprehensive equality monitoring systems throughout the Council's services and facilities.

10. 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.

- Information is placed on the web, consulted by email and discussed at the Council's Consultative Forum.
- All the Council's major public documents are available in alternative formats on request, i.e. in other languages, in disc or audio cassette, large print or in Braille. Some requests for documents in alternative formats have been received over the past five years. Our new language officer is developing improved methods of providing alternative formats and accessible communication. We have developed a new Accessible communication guide for staff and will launch this in 2020.

11. 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?

In general the EQIA process has been instrumental in the mainstreaming of the Council's equality agenda. The consultation process has been incredibly useful when the affected groups respond. Please see below some of the outcomes of the EQIA' process:

The EQIA process has had an impact on the consideration of equality issues in policy development. There is a need to consider that the EQIA format was 'of it's time.' It is envisaged that the same degree of rigorous EQIA focus will not be required in the future as equality mainstreaming becomes

a reality. A shorter more streamlined version is required and would be a more appropriate tool for public service managers in line with our requirements to provide quality services at best value.

12. The authority’s arrangements for training staff on issues relevant to the duties.

Belfast City Council has expended considerable efforts and resources in training and developing staff and Elected Members over the past five years. The courses listed below are only some of the courses related to equality and diversity issues.

The Council is conscious of the need to keep the training process dynamic and challenging. Training has to be continuous and innovative to keep equality issues at the heart of decision making and policy development. Specialist training such as – equality screening and EQIA’s - is also provided to key staff. Specialist equality related training is also available.

Staff Training – Annual Progress Report – number of staff trained

Course Title	2014/15	2015/16	2016/17	2017/18	2018/19
Diversity for employees	225	182	258	358	210
Diversity for managers and supervisors	11	49	41	25	20
Diversity e-learning	239	52	44	393	54
Disability Awareness for employees	228	173	83	66	89
Disability Awareness for managers and supervisors	36	41	10	10	29
Provide emotional health and wellbeing awareness training for staff and Council volunteers	90	187	21	23	57
Provide training for managers in managing	18	7	11	0	161

Course Title	2014/15	2015/16	2016/17	2017/18	2018/19
stress and mental health issues					
Mental Health, dyslexia and learning disability awareness training	0	11	15	0	0
JAM Card Training	-	-	-	31	-
Bespoke training – Disability Confident Training for employees	-	-	-	7	
Disability Positive Training and Accreditation Seminar	-	-	-	-	12
Equality screening training	-	-	-		50
Tackling inequality workshop	-	-	-	-	28

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

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

Sufficient arrangements were put in place to ensure public access to information and services provided by the Council e.g. Council meetings are available to the public live and the minutes are also accessible on the website. All documents are available in alternative formats on request and published equality documents contain a clear statement indicating alternative formats are available.

We communicate extensively with our residents through the distribution of City Matters magazine to every household. This provides information on key issues and has been provided in alternative

formats proactively to 800 households. The Council strives to ensure that all residents have access to information in the way that is suitable to them.

We have improved our understanding of and contribution to making our services more accessible with the introduction of Inclusive Event Plan. This process ensures all events are planned to ensure they are accessible to disabled people and information is provided in a range of formats so that the public can this access information.

The access to information and services throughout the Council is continually being developed and has progressed substantially in the last year with the introduction of a Language Strategy and a Consultation and Engagement Strategy.

Language Strategy

The Council launched its Language Strategy in April 2018. The Strategy commits to establishing a transparent set of principles for promoting, protecting and enhancing the linguistic diversity of the city.

The launch of the Strategy was followed by the recruitment of two language officers in September 2018 and the approval of an Action Plan in December 2018. The current Action Plan covered the period from October 2018 to March 2020.

The Strategy “aspires to create a place where linguistic diversity is celebrated and respected”. The Strategy presents an opportunity to address issues relating to Disability Communications moving forward through an agreed action plan. The aims and objectives of the Strategy are to:

- address language and communication challenges and opportunities within the Belfast Agenda outcomes;
- establish a transparent set of principles for promoting, protecting and enhancing the linguistic diversity of the city;
- increase the profile of different languages along with awareness and understanding of associated cultures, heritage and traditions;
- engage with language communities to address language barriers and promote equality of opportunity through the development and integration of different languages into mainstream civic life;
- enhance good relations within the city through the promotion of linguistic diversity and to celebrate the significance of language in the history and culture of the city;

- address staff training and capacity building needs in relation to the role linguistic diversity has in the workplace and in the delivery of services and
- work in partnership to promote linguistic diversity across the city, to move toward our shared vision of inclusive growth, where no one is left behind.

Customer Focus Programme

The Council has embarked on an ambitious customer focus programme which aims to give customers:

- Consistent, joined up, corporate approach, underpinned by standards.
- Customer centricity (first) to improve customer experience.
- Access to the right information at the right time and from anywhere.
- Deliver greater insight and analysis on customer behaviour, driving decisions based upon data.
- Digital First not Digital only to enable inclusivity and channel choice (i.e. digital first where possible).
- Improve the efficiency of processes to support the scale of growth required to meet the Belfast Agenda.

This programme will also incorporate the new guidelines for website accessibility which will ensure increased access to Council information for all.

The authority's timetable for measures proposed in the scheme.

- 14. Outline the extent to which measures set out in the action plan original timetable have been implemented. Any detailed information should be included in as an appendix to the report.**

The Council is pleased to report that it has achieved substantial progress during the past five years and no major delays have occurred in fulfilling the equality actions.

Details of how the scheme will be published.

- 15. Were scheme commitments in this section delivered and what evidence supports this view?**

The most recent Equality Scheme was approved in April 2015. All our consultees were informed of the newly approved Scheme. All Officers are made aware of the Equality Scheme and their commitments through induction and compulsory Equality and Diversity training.

Opportunities are taken where possible, to communicate the Council's commitment to equality and good relations; these include speeches by the Lord Mayor and Chairs of Committees, and the introductions to the Council's public documents such as the Corporate Plan and Annual Reports. On a more informal basis, the Equality and Diversity Officer has been asked to give advice to various departments on a range of equality issues.

The Equality Scheme is referenced in all specialist equality, diversity and disability related training sessions for example Equality screening, EQIAs and disability awareness training.

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

16. 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.

1 complaint received in relation to the Equality Scheme for 2014-15 re BCC failure to comply with its S75 duties in respect of 3G hybrid pitch at Falls Park.

We take all complaints and queries, related to Equality Scheme process, seriously. We respond immediately by arranging a meeting for all relevant personnel and follow the complaints procedure rigorously. We ensure all relevant senior personnel are advised of the complaint and we address all the issues raised efficiently. We are content with our complaint handling process.

17. 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. 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?

Reviewing any scheme is useful. Reviewing the last five years has given us a great opportunity to see how far the equality agenda has progressed, how it has been mainstreamed and how it has provided us with much needed time to reflect on other areas for development.

E. Main conclusions

1. 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?

- Belfast City Council's approved scheme provides a workable framework in which to discharge its statutory duty in relation to equality and good relations.
- The responsibility for the implementation of the scheme rests with the Elected Members of Council and the Chief Executive.
- To facilitate the process of implementation an Equality and Diversity Officer (EDO) was appointed at a principal officer level. This is currently managed on a job share basis. This function is currently under review.
- To give prominence to the equality agenda in the Council the Equality and Diversity function now resides in the Department for Legal and Civic Services. The EDO reports to the newly appointed Legal and Compliance Manager reporting to the City Solicitor / Director of Legal and Civic Services.
- The Equality Unit has increased its staff complement which indicates the importance we place on equality across the organisation. Pending a structural review, the Equality and Diversity Unit now consists of an Equality and Diversity Officer, two Language Officers and an additional Officer, an Equality & Diversity Support Officer and Business Support Clerk.
- The Good Relations Unit remains the core unit for work related to delivering Good Relations Strategy.
- The overall management of disability related issues resides under the Equality and Diversity function. The Disability Action plan is a corporate document. The actions included in the Plan are a testament to the value placed on removing barriers to services and increasing positive attitude to disabled customers.
- Top level commitment from Elected Members and the Chief Executive and the City Solicitor was essential in ensuring that the scheme was mainstreamed.
- The Council's reporting mechanism has changed considerably in the current review period. The Council has embraced Leadership in Equality and Diversity as a core theme as represented by the establishment of the Equality and Diversity Network Strategy and Operational group (EDNS and EDNO).
- The introduction of the Equality and Diversity Network (EDNS) an internal strategic network group led by Directors and chaired by the City Solicitor. The Equality and Diversity Operational

Group (EDNO) an internal operational network led by Policy Officers in each department. Chaired by the senior officers responsible for equality, diversity, HR and good relations.

- During the reporting period staff networks continued to grow and both the LGB&T and disability staff networks invited carers, allies or supporters of people with disabilities to join the networks. The groups have benefitted from hearing from a number of guest speakers and from attending a variety of training sessions.
- All staff networks groups feed into the development of the equality and diversity action plans.
- We are always delighted to be recognised for the work we do.

2. What key lessons have been learnt over the past five years in terms of effectively implementing the approved Equality Scheme?

- It is important to revise training programmes and systems. Whilst we have previously applied a developmental approach to training we have found that we need to take stock every five years. This review mechanism enables us to benchmark ourselves against other high performing organisations. We believe that our employees are given a series of excellent opportunities to learn and develop. The equality agenda is a cumulative learning process.
- Mainstreaming is key to delivering the equality agenda. Achieving ownership within departments is key and we have made great strides doing this. Mainstreaming equality and diversity has improved considerably with the introduction of the Equality and Diversity Network.
- Leadership training is very important, as is a commitment for equality and good relations from the top of the organisation. A structured approach to equality training is being delivered.
- It is imperative to review how we deliver our services, keeping abreast of improvements across other service providers.
- Important to keep staff on board with excellent communication systems and keep messages simple but effective.
- Continually refresh systems in order to deliver mechanisms to keep the equality messages fresh.
- The importance of consultation for both service users and providers.
- Positive relationship building with the Section 75 groups is essential.

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

- The Council has developed excellent working arrangements to further our knowledge of the key issues of Section 75. The Belfast Agenda is the Council's community plan and we are working

across multi-agencies in Belfast to improve all services. However we are not complacent. We have launched the Belfast Conversation listening to views about our shared city and how it should develop over the next 15 years.

- Our Belfast Conversation is just one of the ways we're working with residents, community groups and partner organisations to help identify and shape a number of social and economic outcomes for our citizens that will form the basis of the Belfast Agenda - the city's community plan.
- Local Development Plan: On 1 April 2015, as part of local government reform, Belfast City Council assumed responsibility for a number of functions previously carried out by government departments, including statutory town planning responsibilities. Alongside this, Belfast's district boundaries were expanded to take in around 53,000 additional residents, 21,000 households and 1,000 business premises from areas that were formally parts of Lisburn City Council, Castlereagh Borough Council and North Down Borough Council areas. In addition, the reform programme also introduced new Community Planning responsibilities. The new Council has evolved into a series of new ways of doing business and the last five years has witnessed considerable change on how we communicate with our service users. This is still in development. We have completed the Preferred Options Paper and the Local Development Plan and now we move into the final stage.
- Consultation and engagement is a key feature of all our policy development work. We are keen to hear views from the Section 75 groups on how we could improve our understanding of their needs. The Council established an Equality Consultation Forum to discuss emerging policies. This is one of the best mechanisms to enable real and meaningful policy development in terms of equality of opportunity and good relations. We now are in the process of reviewing this forum.
- The Council introduced an online Citizen Space consultation platform and invested considerable resources in training and equipping staff with the skills to consult and engage more effectively.
- The success of the consultation forum and Citizen Space has led to the development of a comprehensive Consultation and Engagement Strategy this is ongoing.
- The Council has developed a Customer Focus Programme to provide quicker and better experiences to all our customers. Over the next three years (2020-2023), we will begin putting in place the foundations to transform our customer experience, offering increasingly easy to use and accessible services.
- The Achieving Through People Framework is a new corporate framework which sets out new organisational values and behaviours for all employees (specified at employee, manager and senior manager levels). Once fully developed, the framework will be rolled out corporately to all staff and aligned to various key people management processes such as senior management

appraisal, staff PDP processes etc. The Framework sets out the effective behaviours that all employees are expected to display.

- The Council is aware that new issues are constantly developing. Continuous employee training is therefore required to keep up to date with all issues. Regular updates in best practice regarding Section 75 issues would be advantageous.
- The Council is aware that other Councils and organisations have a similar remit to ourselves and that it is sometimes more productive to join forces to advance work. We believe that partnership working can be a more efficient and effective way to do business. The statutory duty network organised by the LGSC has been very helpful.
- The Equality Commission events and seminars has been particularly helpful and we require more joined up thinking at joint events.
- Improved communication of our services is vital to keep the public informed. We have produced a magazine entitled 'City Matters' which is delivered to every house in Belfast. This enables us to be more effective and efficient in getting our message across and inform residents of changes and improvements to our services. We are always developing systems to improve communication. City Matters is delivered proactively in alternative formats to over 800 in the city. We aim to ensure that we increase our services to disabled people and ensure everyone is aware of the provision.
- Communication is key, however this is a complex area which requires ongoing review. We are including a page on our website for disability related issues to focus on improving our services.
- A new version of our website was launched in 2020 which aims to improve access for a wide range of people.
- During 2017, we conducted an extensive consultation on a Draft Policy on Linguistic Diversity together with a Proposed Language Framework. The formal consultation on the policy and framework ran from 23 May 2017 to 18 July 2017 and ended with the production of a Consultation Feedback Report. While the consultation endorsed the general strategic approach adopted there was also an evident need to take into account each of the linguistic communities of Belfast, and their diverse needs and priorities.
- Taken collectively the recommendations arising from the Draft Policy on Linguistic Diversity (2017) and from the Consultation Feedback Report (2017) form the basis of the Language Strategy 2018-23.
- Clearer monitoring approach is being developed in departments.