

Revised Equality Scheme for Ards and North Down Borough Council

26 March 2020 – 31 March 2025



Drawn up in accordance with Section 75 and Schedule 9 of the Northern
Ireland Act 1998

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contact us with your requirements (see contact details below).

Shirley Poxon
Town Hall, The Castle,
Bangor
BT20 4BT
Tel: 0300 013 3333
07718 159 275 SMS text only
E-mail:
shirley.poxon@ardsandnorthdown.gov.uk

Original Equality Scheme approved by the Equality Commission for Northern Ireland
on 25 March 2015

Section 75 of the Northern Ireland Act 1998

Section 75 of the Northern Ireland Act 1998 (the Act) requires public authorities, in carrying out their functions relating to Northern Ireland, to have due regard to the need to promote equality of opportunity and regard to the desirability of promoting good relations across a range of categories outlined in the Act.

Ards and North Down Borough Council (the Council) is 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 or without
- persons with dependants or without.

In addition, without prejudice to the obligations above, Council is required to have regard to the desirability of promoting good relations between persons of different religious belief, political opinion or racial group.

Council is committed to fulfilling the Section 75 statutory duties across all functions (including service provision, employment and procurement).

The Council's Equality Scheme sets out how the Council proposes to fulfil its Section 75 statutory duties:

- through direct, representative and consultative engagement;
- through committing the necessary resources in terms of people, time and money;
- having effective internal arrangements in place for ensuring our effective compliance with the Section 75 statutory duties, monitoring and reviewing our progress;
- training and updating all Council employees and Elected Members; and
- developing a programme of awareness raising for its consultees.

It is acknowledged by the Council the important role employees, Elected Members, community and voluntary sectors and the general public have to play to ensure the Section 75 statutory duties are implemented.

Delivery of our statutory obligations

- There is an action plan relevant to Council functions. This is developed and prioritised on the Council's audit of inequalities to help promote and mainstream equality of opportunity and good relations throughout the organisation. The Council will undertake regular, relevant and timely consultation on its actions and progress.
- The Council's Action Plan is available on request and available from the Council's website. It is updated annually to reflect the Council's Corporate Plan and the changes to service delivery.
- To ensure all policies and procedures are compliant with our statutory obligations they are screened to identify if there is any adverse or potential adverse impact on equality of opportunity and/or good relations. The screening template is developed to include the Commission's guidance of April 2010.
- Our screening reports are published quarterly on the Council's website.
- Where adverse impact is identified within a policy decision an Equality Impact Assessment will be carried out – also in line with ECNI Guidance.
- As required by Schedule 9 paragraph 8 (3) of the Northern Ireland Act 1998 we will conduct a thorough review of this Equality Scheme every 5 years.

Consultation

- Council will consult on all Section 75 policy screening outcomes.
- Consultations will be carried out in accordance with the principles contained in the Equality Commission's guidance 'Section 75 of the Northern Ireland Act 1998 – A Guide for Public Authorities (April 2010)'. Council will seek the views of those directly affected, the Equality Commission, representative groups of Section 75 categories, individual residents, other public authorities, voluntary and community groups, our employees and their trades unions and any other groups who have a legitimate interest in the matter.
- Consultation will begin as early as possible and be carried out in an appropriate method.
- The accessibility and format of every method of consultation will be given careful consideration, particularly how best to communicate with people with disabilities (in particular people with learning disabilities), minority ethnic communities and children and young people. Account will be taken of existing and developing good practice.
- The Council is committed to achieving effective two way communication using a range of communication channels and alternative formats to enable access to information.
- Information will be made available on request in alternative formats, usually within 5 working days. We will ensure that such consultees have equal time to respond.

- Council will also offer specific training to those facilitating consultations and will request interested individuals and groups to become part of an External Consultative Panel on Equality and Good Relations.

Reporting on progress

- The Council prepares an annual report on the progress it has made on implementing the arrangements set out in this Equality Scheme (Section 75 annual progress report). This report will be sent to the Equality Commission by 31 August each year.
- Quarterly progress reports will be submitted to the Council to inform them on the progress which has been made enacting the action plan.
- The latest Section 75 annual progress report will be available on the Council's website.

Complaints procedure

- Schedule 9 paragraph 10 of the Act refers to complaints. A person can make a complaint if they believe he or she may have been directly affected by an alleged failure to comply with the approved Equality Scheme.
- The Council are responsive to the views of members of the public. We will endeavour to resolve all complaints made to us.
- If a complaint is not resolved within a reasonable timescale, the complaint can be brought to the Equality Commission. A person wishing to make a complaint that the Council has failed to comply within its approved Equality Scheme should contact Shirley Poxon.
- Complaints will be accepted in the format that best meets the complainant's needs and will be acknowledged within five working days of a complaint being made.