



DRAWN UP IN ACCORDANCE WITH
SECTION 75
OF THE NORTHERN IRELAND ACT 1998

Connswater Homes Ltd
157 Upper Newtownards Road
Belfast
BT4 3HX

Reviewed November 2006 to reflect changes within Association

FOREWORD

Section 75 of the Northern Ireland Act 1998 requires public authorities, in carrying out their functions, powers and duties, to promote equality of opportunity and good relations among a range of groups. Public Authorities, as defined by the legislation, are required to send an Equality Scheme to the Equality Commission, showing how they intend to carry out their new duties.

As Chairman and Chief Executive of Connswater Homes (the Association) we are pleased on behalf of the Board of Management (the Board) and staff to support this Equality Scheme which arises out of the implementation of Section 75 of the Northern Ireland Act 1998.

Commitments made in the Equality Scheme refer to how the Association carries out all its functions, powers and duties relating to Northern Ireland. The Association is committed to ensuring that all necessary resources (in terms of people, time and money) are made available to support the effective promotion of equality of opportunity and good relations in all its policies and practices. This also includes making sure there are effective internal arrangements in place to ensure that the duties are effectively complied with and for monitoring and reviewing progress.

The Association will actively seek to develop a programme of communication and training with the aim of ensuring all staff are made aware and understand the new equality obligations. The purpose of this draft Equality Scheme is to set out how Connswater Homes will fulfil the new statutory duties.

This scheme is also available on disk, in large print and can be made available in Braille, in minority languages or on an audio-cassette on request. The document can also be sent to you via email.

Kevin Butler
Acting Chairman

Jacqueline Locke
Chief Executive

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1.0 INTRODUCTION

1.1 Promotion of Equality of Opportunity

Section 75 of the Northern Ireland Act 1998 ('the Act') requires that Connswater Homes in carrying out all its functions, powers and duties gives 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; and
- Persons with dependants and persons without.

1.2 Promoting Good Relations

Also, without prejudice to its obligation above, the Association will, in carrying out its functions, powers and duties relating to Northern Ireland have regard to the desirability of promoting good relations between persons of different religious belief, political opinion or racial group.

1.3 The Scheme

Schedule 9 of the Act requires the Association to set out in an Equality Scheme showing how it proposes to fulfil the duties imposed by Section 75. This scheme has been developed to satisfy that statutory requirement.

2.0 DUTIES AND RESPONSIBILITIES

The Association was first registered in 1977. It exists to provide good quality homes at affordable rents in a secure and attractive environment. Where possible those involved strive to build homes that so far as possible sustain communities through innovative design and adaptability.

2.1 Key Objectives

The key objectives of the Association are:

- To build homes to the highest standards permitted within funding constraints
- To provide a comprehensive quality management service whilst demonstrating value for money
- To invest in training and technology to ensure efficiency
- To ensure the long term financial viability of the Association
- To ensure that properties are adequately maintained through their anticipated lifespan
- To provide a balanced mix of properties to meet the aspirations of existing and prospective tenants
- To support diversification of tenure
- To promote opportunities for the involvement of local residents in the Association's activities
- To work in partnership with voluntary and statutory agencies to support the efforts of local community groups in areas where we work

2.2 The Board of Management

The Board of Management of the Association comprises the Chair and currently eight other members. Prospective shareholding members are sought via public advertisement or by invitation to ensure a balanced skills base that enables the formation and continuation of a competent board of arrangement. Membership is open to all sections of the community as the Association seeks to ensure that the membership reflects the communities it serves. The Board ensures that a defined number of shares are available for tenants and those showing an interest at community level.

2.3 Functions of the Association

The functions of the Association for purposes of the Act is to rehabilitate existing dwellings or build new dwellings to meet housing need as determined by the Northern Ireland Housing Executive whilst striving to achieve its key objectives.

2.4 Area of Operation

Traditionally, the Association operated in a community-based capacity, in a Housing Action Area providing housing solely in the Connswater area of East Belfast (primarily Dee Street, Mersey Street and Severn Street). New regulations for associations have allowed the Board to consider developing social housing outside this area.

At the time of publishing the draft equality scheme, stock is contained within the original boundary. However, if this situation changes, the Association will add new stakeholders to its list of consultees as its remit widens.

2.5 Chief Executive

The Chief Executive is responsible to the Chairman and the Board of Management of the Association for the management and day to day running of the Association

2.6 Staff Team

The Association's staff team comprises the following officers:

Housing Manager

Finance Manager

Development Manager

Technical Officer

Housing & Quality Officer

Housing Services Assistant

Appendix 1 Organisational Chart

3.0 ARRANGEMENTS FOR ASSESSING COMPLIANCE WITH SECTION 75 DUTIES

3.1 Organisational Arrangements

The Association is committed to the fulfilment of its Section 75 obligations in all parts of its work. Statutory Responsibility for the effective implementation of the Scheme lies with the Chair of the Board of Management of the Association and the Chief Executive

3.11 The Housing & Quality Officer will be accountable to the Board of Management of the Association for the development, maintenance and review of the Scheme in accordance with the legislation, including any good practice or guidance that may be issued by the Equality Commission.

3.12 Responsibility for driving forward implementation of the equality scheme and the point of contact within the Association will be,

Name: *Michael Cooke*
Title *Housing & Quality Officer*
Address *Connswater Homes*
157 Upper Newtownards Road,
Belfast, BT4 3HX

Tel No *(Direct) 028 90474523 (Office) 028 90656155*
Fax No *028 90656388*
E Mail *michael@connswater.org.uk*

3.13 The Housing & Quality Officer will report regularly to the Board and respond to any queries for all those affected by the statutory duties.

3.2 Objectives and Targets

Objectives and targets relating to the statutory duties will be integrated into the Association's strategic and operational plans. Staff who are directly engaged in this work will include implementation of the statutory duties in their personal performance plans, which are subject to appraisal in the annual performance review. In addition, a commitment to the statutory duties will be included in all job descriptions. Progress on meeting the range of objectives will be monitored and reported upon to the Board.

3.3 Progress Reporting

The Association will conduct an Annual Review of Progress in relation to the implementation of the Equality Scheme, in complying with the statutory duties. The Association will forward a report of this review to the Equality Commission by 31 July each year. This report, which will follow any guidance on annual reporting issued by the Equality Commission, will also be included in the Association's annual report.

3.3.1 Moreover, the Association will liaise closely with the Equality Commission to build a close working relationship so that progress on the implementation of the Scheme is maintained.

3.4 Consultation

The Association acknowledges the emphasis on consultation in the development and implementation of the Scheme, and is committed to full and meaningful consultation on its Scheme as well as equality impact assessments and monitoring arrangements. Details of this commitment are set out in section 4.

3.5 Complaints

When a complaint is made on the grounds that the Association has failed to comply with the Scheme, the point of contact will be

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Tel No *028 90656155*
Fax No *028 90656388*
E Mail *jacqueline@connswater.org.uk*

3.5.1 The Chief Executive will carry out an internal investigation of the complaint and respond to the complainant within one month. During this process, the complainant will be kept fully informed of the procedures for dealing with the complaint under Schedule 9 of the Northern Ireland Act. The Association will also undertake to provide assistance to any complainant who requires information in a format that ensures equality of opportunity.

3.5.2 In any subsequent investigation by the Equality Commission, the Association will co-operate fully, providing access to any relevant documentation that the Equality Commission may require. Similarly, the Association will co-operate fully with any investigation by the Equality Commission under sub-para 11 (1) (b) of Schedule 9 to the Northern Ireland Act 1998.

3.6 Review of the Scheme

The Association will conduct a thorough review of the Scheme within five years of its submission to the Equality Commission. This review will evaluate the effectiveness of the Association in meeting its Section 75 obligations. In undertaking this review the Association will follow any guidance issued by the Equality Commission. A report of this review will be made public and sent to the Equality Commission.

4.0 CONSULTATION

4.1 Principles of Consultation

The Association recognises the importance of consultation in all aspects of the implementation of its statutory equality duties. It affirms that all consultation will be carried out in accordance with the Equality Commission's Guiding Principles as detailed in its 'Guide to Statutory Duties' (Blue Section 2c). In particular, it will endeavour to conduct all consultations in a timely, open and inclusive way in accordance with the Equality Commission's Guiding Principles.

- 4.1.2 The Association will consult as widely as possible to ensure that any organisation or group which has a legitimate, particular interest in its work and /or the likely impact of its policies on the promotion of equality of opportunity and good relations will be included in the process of engagement.

4.2 Those Being Consulted

A list of those being consulted on matters relevant to the Association's equality duties, including screening and equality impact assessments and the Scheme itself, is detailed in Appendix 2. The list is not exhaustive and may be amended and reviewed throughout the lifetime of the equality scheme to promote inclusive consultation. The Association welcomes enquiries from any organisation wishing to be added to the list of consultees, and should contact the Housing & Quality Officer to have their interest noted.

- 4.2.1 The Association will include the Equality Commission, the Community Relations Council, voluntary groups, community groups and Trade Union groups in all consultations whether or not they have a direct economic or social interest in the work of the Association Organisations representing the various categories included in Section 75 will also be included in any consultation carried out.

4.3 Timescale for Consultation

In order to facilitate meaningful consultation, the Association will ensure that consultation with groups and individuals will begin as early as possible.

- 4.3.1 The Association is conscious that some groups will need sufficient time to consult among themselves in order that their contributions to any consultation may be informed. All consultations will aim to allow a period of at least eight weeks except in emergencies. Such situations will include:

- Policies which have to be implemented urgently to protect health and safety;
- Policies which have to be implemented urgently to comply with court judgements.

4.3.2 The Association wishes to minimise the number of exceptions to good practice guidelines on the timescale for consultation. When exceptions do occur, the Association will report such instances. Exceptions to the normal eight week consultation period will be monitored, kept under review, justified very clearly and reported by the Association in its annual report to the Equality Commission.

4.4 Procedures for Ensuring Inclusive Consultation

In consulting on any matter to which this scheme relates, the Association will work with representative groups and individuals of the Section 75 categories in order to identify how best to obtain their views. This may involve face-to-face meetings, advisory groups, surveys, consultative panels, Internet discussions and other innovative ways of consulting as there will be different means of consultation for different groups and it will be important to establish the basis for dialogue and engagement during the life of the scheme.

4.4.1 It is intended that barriers to proper consultation will be removed by ensuring that language is as clear as possible. Systems will be established to make presentations on this Scheme, if requested, available in an appropriate format to representatives of people with learning disabilities, minority community language speakers, people with disabilities, young people, and travellers.

4.4.2 To ensure the highest level of inclusivity in any policy decision-making, information will be made available in consultation with groups affected by Section 75. Systems will be in place to ensure that information will be available on request in accessible formats in a timely fashion such as Braille, disc, and audiocassette and in minority languages to meet the needs of those who are not fluent in English.

4.4.3 Extra consideration will be given to ensuring that all consultations reflect the needs of young people and those with learning disabilities through the provision of accessible formats in a timely manner. The Association will liaise with representatives of young persons and learning disability organisations in the first place (by correspondence/direct communication) and take account of good practice elsewhere (e.g. Lead Report/MENCAP's guidance on accessible formats), in order to reflect the needs of these groups in consultations.

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- 4.4.4 The Association believes it especially important that sufficient timely and appropriate information is provided to enable all affected groups and individuals to consider the full implications of proposals, and it will take steps to ensure this. This will include quantitative and qualitative data that the Association holds or has collated, and other documents such as consultants' reports. This will apply to all consultations.
- 4.4.5 Specific training will be arranged for Association staff undertaking consultation exercises to ensure they have the necessary skills to communicate effectively. Any training delivered will be developed in consultation with relevant Section 75 groups.
- 4.4.6 Steps will also be taken to ensure full participation in any consultation meetings that are held. The Association will consider the time of day, the suitability of the venue, whether it can be accessed by those with disabilities, how the meeting is to be run, the use of languages other than English, whether a signer is needed, and childcare arrangements.

5.0 ASSESSING THE IMPACT OF POLICIES ON THE PROMOTION OF EQUALITY OF OPPORTUNITY

5.1 Screening

The Association is committed to carrying out a systematic review of all its existing and new/proposed policies to determine whether there are any equality of opportunity implications.

5.1.1 The definition of a 'policy' under the Equality Commission's Guide to the Statutory Duties has a wide remit and includes policies relating to all functions and activities. The Association will monitor the implementation of a policy that it operates on behalf of another public authority, and will work in partnership with other bodies where such a policy is subject to an equality impact assessment.

5.1.2 The Association will consider the impact of each current and new/proposed policy on equality of opportunity in terms of the nine categories listed at Section 75 of the Act when considering which policies will be subject to equality impact assessment. A systematic review of each policy is required and the Association will take the following steps when screening:

- Identify all policies, written and unwritten;
- Internally appraise the significance of equality of opportunity and good relations for each policy, taking account of the screening criteria and prioritisation factors detailed below;
- Produce a list detailing policies to be subject to equality impact assessment, together with a draft timetable for conducting the assessments. This should take account of the need to join up equality impact assessments of related policies;
- Consult with Section 75 groups to seek their views on whether all policies have been identified, whether all equality impacts have been identified, and whether they agree with the list of policies to be subject to equality impact assessment and the proposed timetable;
- Consider and take account of feedback from the consultation exercise;
- Provide information to consultees on the conclusions reached following the initial consultation on screening, on amendments made to the list of policies, and on the final equality impact assessment timetable, in a screening report.

5.1.3 For each policy the following criteria will be applied:

- Is there any indication or evidence of higher or lower participation or uptake by different groups*?
- Is there any indication or evidence that different groups have different needs, experiences, issues and priorities in relation to the particular policy?
- Have previous consultations with relevant groups, organisations or individuals indicated that particular policies create problems that are specific to them?

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- Is there an opportunity to better promote equality of opportunity or good relations by altering the policy or working with others in government or in the larger community?

* The main groups within each of the nine categories are identified at Appendix 4.

If the answer to any of these four questions is yes, consideration will be given to whether to subject the policy to the equality impact assessment procedure.

5.2 Evidence

The Association will make arrangements to obtain relevant information, whether quantitative or qualitative, so that it can clearly demonstrate why a policy is screened in for impact assessment or screened out as not requiring an equality impact assessment.

5.2.1 Evidence may include information from the Association's own information management systems, including service monitoring and complaints handling systems, or from engagement in research, surveys or consultation exercises. Information may also be sourced from commissioned research or from research produced by other public authorities, representative groups, umbrella groups, and trades unions or universities. Information from consultation exercises on previous equality impact assessments; or those undertaken by other public authorities within the same sector will also be considered. Anecdotal evidence, feedback from service users and affected groups or ongoing experience within the authority will also be considered.

5.3 Prioritisation & Timetabling

Having screened existing policies or new policies using the four criteria set out above, a view must then be reached on prioritising policies for equality impact assessment. Priorities may be established based on factors such as:

- Social need;
- Effect on people's daily lives;
- Effect on economic, social and human rights;
- Significance of the policy in terms of expenditure;
- Significance of the policy in terms of strategic importance.

5.3.1 An initial timetable will be developed setting out a programme and timescale for equality impact assessments, see Appendix 5.

5.4 Screening Report

A detailed report of the screening exercise will be provided to consultees and included in the Annual Report sent to the Equality Commission. The report will include details of:

- Those policies which will be subject to equality impact assessment

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- Those policies proposed by those consulted, as appropriate for impact assessment, but have not been subsequently included and giving an explanation for this course of action
 - The factors for prioritising assessments
 - The timetable for equality impact assessments.

5.4.1 Consultation on screening will allow at least eight weeks, and will comply with the Equality Commission's 'Guiding Principles of Consultation'. Consultations will seek the views of the Equality Commission, representative groups of Section 75 categories, other public authorities, voluntary groups, community groups, Trade Unions and other groups with a legitimate interest in the matter including those directly affected by the policy whether or not they have a direct economic or personal interest (see Appendix 2).

5.5 The Conduct of Equality Impact Assessments

All equality impact assessments carried out will be conducted in accordance with all the procedures outlined in Annex 1 of the Equality Commission's 'Guide to the Statutory Duties'.

5.5.1 In common with other aspects of the statutory equality duties, the Association will ensure that any equality impact assessment will be subject to consultation. All consultations will seek the views of the Equality Commission, representative groups of Section 75 categories, other public authorities, voluntary groups, community groups, Trade Unions and other groups with a legitimate interest in the matter whether or not they have a direct economic or personal interest and those directly affected by the policy (see Appendix 2).

5.5.2 In making any decision on a current or proposed policy, the Association will take into account any relevant equality impact assessment and the outcome of associated consultation.

5.6 Monitoring Adverse Impact and Access to Services

A system will be established to monitor the impact of policies and access to services across all functions in order to identify their effects on the relevant groups and ensure equality of opportunity. This system will involve:

- An audit of existing information systems within one year of approval of the scheme, similar to that included in Appendix 4 of the Commission's Practical Guidance on EQIA, to identify the extent of current monitoring and a plan to address any gaps so that impacts can effectively be monitored through equality impact assessments.
- The collection and collation of existing relevant primary quantitative and qualitative data across all nine equality categories on an ongoing basis
- The collection and collation of existing relevant secondary sources of quantitative and qualitative data across all nine equality categories on an ongoing basis

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- Identifying where more detailed data is needed in order to have the necessary information on which to base decisions;
 - Undertaking or commissioning new data if necessary.

5.6.1 If over a three year period monitoring and evaluation show that a policy results in greater adverse impact than predicted, or if opportunities arise which would allow for greater equality of opportunity to be promoted, the Association will ensure that the policy is revised.

5.6.2 This system will be reviewed on an annual basis and the results will be published as part of the Association's annual report to the Equality Commission. In all cases relating to the holding of monitoring information or the collection of data, the Association will act sensitively in accordance with Equality Commission guidance and the wishes of representatives from S75 organisations.

5.7 Publication of Equality Impact Assessments and Monitoring

The Association will make publicly available the outcome of any equality impact assessment and of any monitoring undertaken to measure the adverse impact of policies. Systems will also be established to make available, on request, impact assessments in accessible formats and a timely fashion (i.e. Braille, large print, disk, audio cassette and minority languages) from the responsible officer – **Michael Cooke, Connswater Homes, 157 Upper Newtownards Road, Belfast, BT4 3HX**

5.7.1 Extra consideration will be given to ensure that young people and those with learning disabilities are able to access impact assessments in a timely fashion.

5.7.2 The Association will inform the general public about the availability of this material through public relations such as press releases and media coverage. It will also directly inform bodies listed in Appendix 2 when this material is available and it will place information in publications associated with Section 75 categories.

5.7.3 All published information will comply with guidance outlined by the Equality Commission in its 'Guide to Statutory Duty' (Section 1). The Association will publish information on equality impact assessments that:

- Include the aims of the policy to which the assessment relates
- Details any consideration given to mitigating adverse impact of the policy on the promotion of equality of opportunity;
- Details any consideration given to the consideration of alternative policies which might better achieve the promotion of equality of opportunity.

6.0 PUBLIC ACCESS TO INFORMATION AND SERVICES

6.1 Ensuring Access

The Association is committed to ensuring that the information it disseminates and the services it provides are made accessible to ensure equality of opportunity. It is aware that some groups will not have the same access to information as others. These include:

- Children and young people who may have difficulties in accessing or understanding information
- People with sensory and learning disabilities that may have difficulties with information in print
- Members of minority ethnic groups, whose first language is not English, and who may have difficulties with information provided only in English.

Consideration will be given on how to provide accessible information in a timely manner to all these groups.

6.1.1 The Association will, within a year of approval of this scheme, review its arrangements for providing information in Braille, large print, audio cassette and minority ethnic language formats. The assessment will take account of:

- The statutory requirements of the Disability Discrimination Act 1995; the likely demand for information of various formats across its main policy areas;
- The resource implications and recommendations from the Northern Ireland cross-departmental Promoting Social Inclusion (PSI) working groups on minority ethnic people and on access to information.

6.1.2 The review will make recommendations on how public access to information can be better ensured by improving arrangements for providing information in different formats and languages. The Association will ensure that it will publicise the current situation, the findings of its review, and any proposed changes to any aspect of information and services to such groups and individuals.

6.1.3 In disseminating information through the media, the Association will seek to advertise in the press. This arrangement will be kept under review, in terms of promoting wide access throughout the implementation of statutory equality duties. The Association intends that all of its services are fully accessible to all parts of the community in Northern Ireland.

6.1.4 The Association will ensure that no section of the community is deterred from visiting the Association's office, for whatever reason. The Association's office will maintain a welcoming and harmonious environment. The Association will adhere to relevant provisions of the Disability Discrimination Act 1995.

7.0 TRAINING AND COMMUNICATION

7.1 Staff Training

The Association will ensure that an effective communication and training programme will be developed for all staff. A series of targets for the implementation of the commitment to training and communication will be outlined in Equality Scheme Action Plan section of this document (Appendix 5).

7.1.2 In order to share resources and expertise, the Association will work closely with other bodies and agencies in the development and delivery of training.

7.2 Training Requirements

The Association will draw up a detailed training plan for all staff over the 5 year period to which this Scheme refers which will aim to achieve the following objectives:

- To raise awareness of current anti-discrimination legislation, including the provisions of Section 75 and Section 76 of the Northern Ireland Act 1998. This will include an explanation of the duties and their implications for all employees;
- To provide those employees involved in screening of policies with the necessary skills and knowledge to do this work effectively;
- To provide those employees involved in the equality impact assessment of policies with the necessary skills and knowledge to do this work effectively;
- To provide those employees who deal with complaints in relation to the implementation of the Housing association 's Scheme, with the necessary skills and knowledge to investigate and monitor complaints effectively;
- To provide those employees involved in consultation processes with the necessary skills and knowledge to do this work effectively;
- To provide those employees involved in the implementation and monitoring of the effective implementation of the Housing association 's Equality Scheme to do this work effectively; and
- To evaluate the extent to which all participants in this training programme have acquired the necessary skills and knowledge to achieve each of the above objectives.

7.2.1 A report indicating the extent to which training objectives have been met will be reported on as part of the Annual Review of the implementation of the statutory duties, which will be sent to the Equality Commission.

7.2.3 All staff in the Association will receive training within one year of the approval of the Scheme (including those being inducted). Thereafter focused training will be provided for all specialist staff within the

Housing association, and specific training will also be provided for those engaged in consultation.

7.2.4 All training will be developed in association with the appropriate Section 75 groups.

7.3 Association's Commitment to Ensuring Awareness Amongst Staff

The Chief Executive wishes to positively communicate the commitment of the Association to the statutory duties (both internally and externally). The Association will:

- Provide access to copies of the full Scheme via email for all staff
- Ensure that the Housing association 's commitment to the statutory duties are made clear in Association publications (such as the Annual Report)
- Will ensure that any queries or questions of clarification from staff are addressed effectively.

8.0 IMPLEMENTING THE SCHEME

8.1 Publication of the Scheme

Following submission to the Equality Commission, this scheme will be available in print form and alternative formats free on request from the Association.

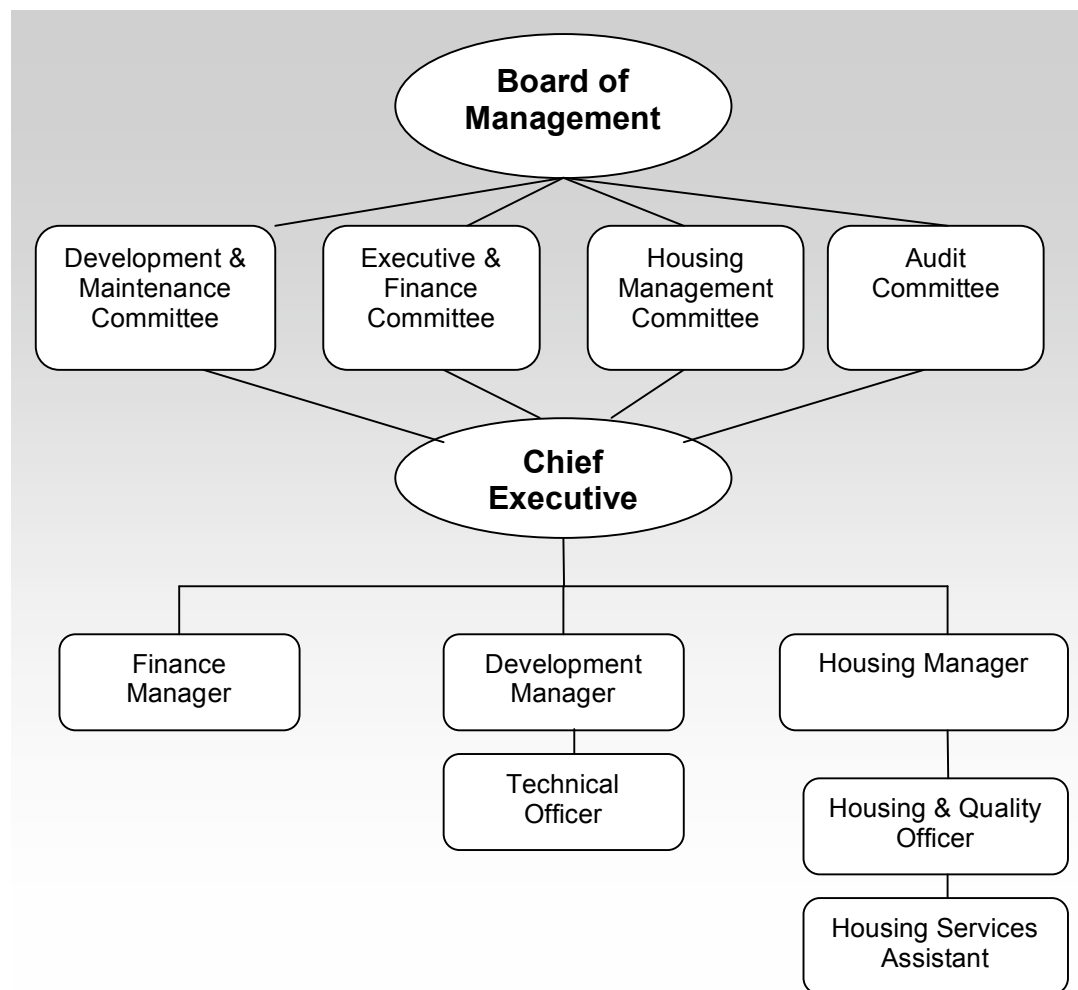
8.1.2 The following arrangements will be made for the publication of the Scheme and to ensure equality of access:

- The Scheme will be available on request in formats such as Braille, disc, and audiocassette and in minority languages to meet the needs of those not fluent in English;
- Systems will be in place to ensure that requests for the Scheme in accessible formats will be dealt within a timely manner;
- Specific consideration will also be given to how best to communicate the Scheme to young people and those with learning disabilities;
- The Association will develop a plain English summary of the Scheme;
- A press release and a prominent advertisement in the press will be placed by the Association whenever the Scheme is approved by the Equality Commission;
- Reference to the Scheme will also be posted on the Association's website;
- Copies of the approved Scheme will also be sent to key stakeholders.

8.2 Implementation Timetable

Appendix 5 outlines an action plan for implementing the Scheme including date milestones and performance indicators for each task.

APPENDIX1: ORGANISATIONAL CHART



Chairman:	Mr K Butler
Honorary Treasurer:	Mr G Atkinson
Honorary Secretary:	Cllr M McKenzie
Board Member:	Mrs Shirley Meikle
Board Member:	Prof D Johnston
Board Member:	Mr John Beattie
Board Member:	Mr William Mortimer
Board Member:	Mr Dawson Clark
Board Member:	Mrs V Sterne

Chief Executive:	Ms J Locke
Housing Manager:	Mrs N Menice MBE
Finance Manager:	Mrs J Hill
Development Manager:	Mr J Brooks
Technical Officer:	Mr MGriffin
Housing & Quality Officer:	Mr M Cooke
Housing Services Assistant:	Ms L Laverty

APPENDIX 2: LIST OF ORGANISATIONS TO BE CONSULTED

Age Concern Northern Ireland
Alderdice, Cllr. David
Alliance Party for Northern Ireland
Altnagelvin Area Hospitals HSST
Amalgamated Engineering & Electrical Union
Amalgamated Transport & General Workers Union
Antrim Borough Council
Armagh & Dungannon HSST
Armagh District Council
Association of Chief Officers (ACOVO)
Association of Independent Advice Centres
Bahai Council for Northern Ireland
Ballymena Borough Council
Ballymoney Borough Council
Banbridge District Council
Baptist Union of Ireland
Barnardos
Belfast City Council
Belfast City Hospital HSST
Belfast Hebrew Congregation
Belfast Islamic Centre
Belfast Trade Unions Council
Belfast Travellers Education & Development Group
Blind Centre for NI
Brainwaves Northern Ireland
British Deaf Association (NI)
Carafriend
Carers Northern Ireland
Carew Centre
Carrickfergus Borough Council
Castlereagh Borough Council
Causeway HSST
Central Services Agency
Chartered Institute of Housing
Child Poverty Action Group (NI)
Children's Law Centre
Chinese Welfare Association
Coalition on Sexual Orientation (CoSO)
Coleraine Borough Council
Committee on the Administration of Justice (CAJ)
Community Development & Health Network (NI)
Community Relations Council (CRC)
Community Relations/Training Learning Consortium

Cookstown District Council
Council for the Homeless (NI)
Craigavon & Banbridge Community HSST
Craigavon Area Hospital Group HSST
Craigavon Borough Council
Democratic Unionist Party
Department for Social Development
Derry City Council
Derry Well Woman
Disability Action, Belfast
Disability Action, Derry
Down District Council
Down Lisburn HSST
Down's Syndrome Association
Dungannon District Council
East Belfast Community Development Agency
East Belfast Partnership
Eastern Health & Social Services Board
Empey, Sir, Reg
Employers' Forum on Disability
Equality Commission for NI
Equality Forum NI
Falls Community Council
Family Planning Association (NI)
Fermanagh District Council
Fermanagh Women's Network
First Key
Foyle Friend
Foyle HSST
Free Presbyterian Church of Ulster
Gay & Lesbian Youth Northern Ireland
General Consumer Council
Gingerbread Northern Ireland
Green Park Healthcare HSST
Help the Aged Northern Ireland
Hollywood Arches Health
Homefirst Community HSST
Housing Rights Service
Indian Community Centre
Irish Council of Churches
Irvine, Cllr. David
Larne Borough Council
Lesbian Line
Limavady District Council
Lisburn Borough Council

Long, Cllr. Naomi
Magherafelt District Council
Magheraflet Women's Group
Mater Infirmorum Hospital Trust
MENCAP
Mersey Street Area Residents Association
Mersey Street Primary School
Methodist Church in Ireland
Moyle District Council
Multi-Cultural Resource Centre
Newry & Mourne District Council
Newry & Mourne HSST
Newton, Cllr. Robin
Newtownabbey Borough Council
Newtownards Borough Council
NIGRA (Northern Ireland Gay Rights Association)
NILGOSC
NIPSA
NITAP
North & West Belfast HSST
North Down Borough Council
North West Community Network
North West Forum of People with Disabilities
Northern Health & Social Services Board
Northern Ireland Africian Cultural Centre
Northern Ireland Anti-Poverty Network
Northern Ireland Association for Mental Health
Northern Ireland Association of Citizens Advice Bureaux
Northern Ireland Committee, Irish Congress of Trade Unions (NIC-ICTU)
Northern Ireland Council for Ethnic Minorities (NICEM)
Northern Ireland Council for Voluntary Action (NICVA)
Northern Ireland Filipino Association
Northern Ireland Housing Council
Northern Ireland Human Rights Commission (NIHRC)
Northern Ireland Mixed Marriage Association
Northern Ireland Office
Northern Ireland Statistics & Research Agency (NISRA)
Northern Ireland Women's Aid Federation
Northern Ireland Women's European Platform (NIWEP)
Northern Ireland Youth Forum
NUS USI
Office of the First Minister & Deputy First Minister
Omagh District Council
Omagh Women's Area Network
Parents & Professionals & Autism

PHAB Northern Ireland
PRAXIS
Press for Change
Probation Board for Northern Ireland
Progressive Unionist Party
Queer Space
Robinson, Peter MP
Rogers, Cllr. Jim
Royal Group of Hospitals & Dental Hospital HSST
Royal Institute for Deaf People (NI)
Royal National Institute for the Blind (NI)
Rural Community Network
Sense NI
Sikh Cultural Centre
Simon Community
Sinn Fein
Social Democratic & Labour Party
South & East Belfast HSST
Southern Health & Social Services Trust
Sperrin Lakeland Health & Social Care Trust
St Christopher's Church of Ireland Mersey Street
Staff Commission for Education & Library Boards
Strabane District Council
The Cedar Foundation
The Guide Dogs for the Blind Association
The Local Government Staff Commission for Northern Ireland (LGSC)
The Rainbow Project
The Women's Centre
Traveller Movement Northern Ireland
UCATT
Ulster Community & Hospitals HSST
Ulster Democratic Party
Ulster Scots Heritage Council
Ulster Unionist Party
UNISON
United Hospitals Group HSST
United Kingdom Unionist Party
West Belfast Economic Forum
Western Health & Social Services Board
Wilson, Cllr. Sammy
Women's Forum Northern Ireland
Women's Information Group
Women's Resource & Development Agency (WRDA)
Women's Support Network
Workers Party

Youth Action

Youth Council for NI

Appendix 3: COMMENTS RECEIVED FROM CONSULTATION EXERCISE

Organisation	Summary of Comments Received	Association's Response
Coalition on Sexual Orientation	<ol style="list-style-type: none"> 1. CoSO recommends that all associations try to ensure that any material they produce is gender neutral e.g. partner instead of spouse 2. Scheme should define precise resources being made available in this context. 3. The first annual reviews should be comprehensive. 4. CoSO welcomes open, inclusive and constructive dialogue, however we may on occasion require more that two months for consultations 5. CoSO welcomes decision to defer screening until after the scheme has been approved as this gives time for greater consideration. 6. CoSO looks forward to being involved in consultation on screening processes and EQIAs. 7. Screening of policies should cover informal or unwritten policies as well as the formal policies. 8. CoSO considers it essential that associations develop a sensitive system of voluntary and confidential indications of sexual orientation in close consultation with LGBT groups. 	<p>Accepted</p> <p>In such a small organisation, precise resources cannot be defined</p> <p>The Association intends the reviews to be as comprehensive as possible.</p> <p>The Association has committed to a minimum of 8 weeks consultation (4.3 refers), but will consider requests for increased time.</p> <p>Screening will be done after scheme approval in line with appendix 5</p> <p>The Association has and will continue to consult with CoSO.</p> <p>The Association is committed to a systematic review of all polices (5.1 refers).</p> <p>NIFHA is working with CoSO on behalf of associations to address this issue.</p>

	<p>9. The necessary funds must be made available to undertake research into the impact of association policies on the LGBT community.</p> <p>10. Draft schemes are sparse on the mechanics of impact assessment.</p> <p>11. CoSO is disappointed at the lack of detail on 'mitigation and alternatives' in draft schemes in relation to the way in which associations propose to deal with these issues. CoSO believes that all s75 categories are given equal weight when mitigation and alternatives are being considered.</p> <p>12. CoSO feels strongly that there may be instances where it would be preferable if meetings for consultation on EQIAs or the publication of results of EQIAs were publicised only in the LGBT press. This would help LGBT people feel that they can safely attend meetings without fear of 'outing'.</p> <p>13. CoSO objects strongly to the indication in some schemes that a charge may be made for documentation, which the authority is obliged to provide as part of the consultation process.</p> <p>14. Training should be provided for all staff around LGBT issues.</p> <p>15. CoSO approves of providing information online and would encourage the links to the CoSO and website and those of other LGBT organisations.</p>	<p>Resources permitting, the Association will take into account existing research</p> <p>Section 5 of the scheme outlines the process for EQIA in accordance with EC's model</p> <p>The Association does not wish to pre-empt the outcome of impact assessment.</p> <p>The Association appreciates the concerns raised by CoSO and recognises the need for a safe environment. Intention is full accessibility to all parts of the community in Northern Ireland, and this intent will inform the composition of the media used.</p> <p>This comment is not relevant to the Association, as we have not suggested charging for documentation.</p> <p>Equality awareness training is planned/ ongoing within the Association.</p> <p>The Association will, within technical capabilities add links from its web site to other organisations</p>
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	16. The timetable for implementing the statutory duty should include a one-year review of screening/scoping decisions.	A detailed report of the screening exercise will be issued and included in the Annual Report sent to the Equality Commission. (5.4 refers)
Disability Action	<ol style="list-style-type: none"> 1. Include name of Chairperson in revised scheme. 2. Requires information on Board of Management (BOM) to enable informed comment. 3. HAs should have textphone to enable deaf people to have same access as hearing people. 4. Progress should be reported to BOM on quarterly basis. 5. Should offer scheme in range of formats, including large print. 6. Complaints procedure should outline how it will support the individual to bring their complaint e.g. interpreter support, specialist transport costs, advocacy services. 7. It is unacceptable that there is a five-year period to assess the effectiveness of the Association in meeting its section 75 duties. The Statutory Duty guidelines state that equality scheme measures are implemented in a 'timely fashion' 8. The Association should purchase the Bobby standard programme to ensure that their website is fully accessible to people with disabilities. 	<p>Name and signature on final scheme.</p> <p>Details of BOM included in final version of scheme. (Appendix 1)</p> <p>Association will use email until demand for service is apparent</p> <p>Quarterly reporting to BOM is standard business process.</p> <p>Statement of available formats included as part of Foreword. Section 8 reflects commitment.</p> <p>Association will consider its complaints policy and adopt reasonable opportunities for assistance</p> <p>Commitment to assess the effectiveness of the Association in meeting s75 duties within five years is in accordance with the statement in the Equality Commission's model scheme. The scheme will also be monitored and reviewed throughout this period.</p> <p>Due to resources and technical capabilities within Association, opportunities are limited. This point will be borne in mind in any future upgrades and expansion</p>

	<p>9. Exceptions to the normal eight week consultation period with appropriate and careful planning reduced periods should be unusual.</p> <p>10. Disability Action requests that large print be included in the list of accessible formats available.</p> <p>11. The use of simple language and availability of accessible formats should have commenced with this Equality Scheme.</p> <p>12. It is Disability Action's view that each public authority will be responsible for complying with Equality Scheme duties for any policy formulated, adopted or imposed on the authority. Such policies once accepted and put into practice become its policy.</p> <p>13. Please amend persons with a disability to read persons with a physical, sensory, mental or learning disability (App. 4).</p> <p>14. Any consultant commissioned for research should be fully conversant with specific equality issues pertinent to the target groups.</p> <p>15. Disability Action would query the decision to review the arrangements for providing a range of accessible formats. The Equality Commission guide states that a public authority should a commitment to the allocation of necessary resources in terms of money, time and people.</p> <p>16. Disability Action would recommend the use of specialist press of the 9 affected groups.</p>	<p>The association will aim to keep reduced consultation periods to a minimum. In some cases we may increase the consultation period as with the draft schemes.</p> <p>The Association will supply large print format on request</p> <p>See above comment</p> <p>The Association takes the view that responsibility for imposed policies remains with the body that formulated the policy, however we are committed to highlighting inequalities caused by such policies.</p> <p>Completed</p> <p>This will be stated in appointment brief</p> <p>As stated in the scheme, the intention of the review is to make recommendations on how public access to information can be better ensured by improving arrangements for providing information in different formats.</p> <p>Intention is full accessibility to all parts of the community in N. I and this intent will inform the composition of the media used.</p>
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	<p>17. Regarding training and communication Disability Action requires specific actions, targets and a timeframe to enable informed comment to be made.</p> <p>18. Disability Action is concerned that access to copies was provided rather than giving a copy to all staff.</p> <p>19. Disability Action requests the Association to include large print in the range of accessible formats.</p> <p>20. Disability Action recognised the time and effort that has gone into producing this document for consultation and thanks the Association for the opportunity to respond.</p>	<p>Details are outlined in Appendix 5</p> <p>This commitment is in line with the Model Scheme issued by the Equality Commission.</p> <p>Completed</p>
Housing Rights Service	<p>1. Briefly, reviewed schemes on disk at time of issue. Unable to make a written response as due to other consultation priorities during the associations' public consultation period.</p>	None received
Irish Congress of Trades Unions	<p>1. Daunted at receiving 37 Equality Schemes all at one go and even though it is possible to submit a general response, all 37 Schemes need to be read in order to collate that general response. Appreciate that NIFHA has allowed 11 weeks instead of the usual 8 for consultation but, it may be rather difficult to respond in a meaningful manner. Will try to make a response.</p>	None received
N I Mixed	<p>1. Associations should bear in</p>	Housing associations do not

Marriage Assoc	mind needs of mixed couples and their families who make up around 1 in 10 marriages and may need a safe space. This is an availability issue as public housing is estimated to be only 5% mixed.	define housing need; however we would be eager to play an integral role in any work to address this issue.
West Belfast Economic Forum (WBEF)	<ol style="list-style-type: none"> 1. The Forum acknowledges the many positive features within the Scheme and the commitment to equality. 2. All Equality Schemes should have a strong focus on affirmative action. 3. The associations should extend the principles of the equality duty to private, voluntary and community sector partners contracted to supply goods or services. 4. The duty of ensuring linguistic equality must be included. 5. The central tenet of the Scheme must be to actively promote equality of opportunity. 6. The Scheme should specify the precise resources being allocated to the process. 7. The timeframes for implementation should be clear and workable. 8. The Scheme should be written in clear and accessible language. 9. Necessary resources should be made available for relevant training and awareness-raising. 	<p>The association is committed to fulfilling its s75 obligations and will work within the law and with the Equality Commission (EC) to achieve this aim.</p> <p>NIFHA is currently exploring ways of addressing this issue.</p> <p>Refer to Foreword, 4.4, 6.0 and 8.1 re: commitment to ensuring access and reviewing process within year.</p> <p>The Association believes the body of the scheme reflects our commitment to do so.</p> <p>Necessary, reasonable and sufficient resources will be made available.</p> <p>The Association has outlined its timetable for implementation in Appendix 5</p> <p>The Association has aimed for clarity and used the model Scheme issued by the EC.</p> <p>Refer to section 7 and Appendix 5. The Association will make the resources available to ensure these intentions are met</p>

	<p>10. Objectives and targets relating to the equality duty must be included in annual business plans.</p> <p>11. The Equality Scheme needs to state that employees should disclose membership of oath bound organisations.</p> <p>12. Consultation must be done in such a way that there are no barriers for those who are affected by the policies of the association.</p> <p>13. Screening must apply to all policies.</p> <p>14. Impact assessments must be undertaken in a clear and transparent fashion and perceived conflicting legal obligations must not be used to 'screen out' policies.</p> <p>15. A formal review must include consultees.</p>	<p>Targets, with timeframes are recorded in Appendix 5 and will be included in business plan.</p> <p>The Association recognises the concerns raised. We will address this issue within the law and while respecting the individual right to privacy.</p> <p>Methodology for consultation is outlined in scheme.</p> <p>5.1 Refers to Association's commitment to full screening.</p> <p>5.5 Refers to Association's intention</p> <p>This commitment is made in scheme.</p>
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**APPENDIX 4: MAIN GROUPS RELEVANT TO THE SECTION 75
CATEGORIES FOR NORTHERN IRELAND PURPOSES**

Category	Main Groups
Religious belief	Protestants; Catholics; people of non-Christian faiths; people of no religious belief
Political opinion	Unionists generally; Nationalist generally; members/supporters of any political party
Racial group	White people; Chinese; Travellers; Indians; Pakistanis; Black people
Men and women generally	Men (including boys); women (including girls), Trans-gendered people, Transsexual people
Marital status	Married people; unmarried people; divorced or separated people; widowed people
Age	Children under 16; people of working age (16/65); people over 65
Persons with a disability	Persons with a physical, sensory or learning disability as defined in sections 1 and 2 and Schedules 1 and 2 of the Disability Discrimination Act 1995
Persons with dependants	Persons with personal responsibility for the care of a child; persons with personal responsibility for the care of a person with an incapacitating disability; persons with personal responsibility for the care of a dependant elderly person
Sexual orientation	Heterosexual people; homosexual people; bisexual people, transgendered people

APPENDIX 5 – ACTION PLAN FOR IMPLEMENTING EQUALITY SCHEME

Area of Implementation	Element	Performance Indicator	Milestone	Responsibility
Organisational Arrangements	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <input type="checkbox"/> Integration of equality objectives into departmental business plans <input type="checkbox"/> Integration of equality objectives into personal performance plans 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <input type="checkbox"/> Board and Chief Executive agree equality objectives <input type="checkbox"/> Equality objectives included in business plans for 2004-2005 <input type="checkbox"/> Equality objectives reviewed annually in consultation Board and staff <input type="checkbox"/> Chief Executive/ Board agrees draft guidance for staff <input type="checkbox"/> Objectives included in performance management systems 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <input type="checkbox"/> annually <input type="checkbox"/> annually <input type="checkbox"/> annually <input type="checkbox"/> ongoing <input type="checkbox"/> annually 	Chief Executive / Board
Progress Reporting	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <input type="checkbox"/> Regular reports to the Board of Management <input type="checkbox"/> Annual reports to Equality Commission <input type="checkbox"/> Review of Scheme 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <input type="checkbox"/> Minuted reports at least quarterly <input type="checkbox"/> Report sent after approval by Board of Management <input type="checkbox"/> Summary of Annual Progress Report incorporated in Associations' Annual Report <input type="checkbox"/> Review conducted, published and sent to Commission 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <input type="checkbox"/> ongoing <input type="checkbox"/> annually in July <input type="checkbox"/> annually in June <input type="checkbox"/> 10/05 	Chief Executive / Board Chief Executive Chief Executive Chief Executive

Area of Implementation	Element	Performance Indicator	Milestone	Responsibility
Consultation	<input type="checkbox"/> Overview of Consultation <input type="checkbox"/> Consultation on Equality Impact Assessments	<input type="checkbox"/> Meeting takes place to consider joint approaches to consultation with other Registered Housing Associations Bodies <input type="checkbox"/> Consultation takes place for Screening of policies in line with the 2 stage approach (see p.12) <input type="checkbox"/> Report of consultation on screening exercise to be included as part of annual report to equality commission. <input type="checkbox"/> Consultation takes place on each Equality Impact Assessment	<input type="checkbox"/> Completed <input type="checkbox"/> 09/05 <input type="checkbox"/> 07/06 <input type="checkbox"/> Ongoing	Chief Executive
Training	<input type="checkbox"/> Training programme <input type="checkbox"/> Top Level briefing on Equality Scheme <input type="checkbox"/> Awareness training <input type="checkbox"/> Specialised/focused training	<input type="checkbox"/> Training programme agreed by Chief Executive /Board <input type="checkbox"/> Briefing on Equality Scheme by for Association members, Board of Management and Senior Managers takes place <input type="checkbox"/> All staff trained by end 2005 <input type="checkbox"/> All new staff to receive equality awareness training within 1 year of joining. <input type="checkbox"/> Specialised/focused training (see Section 8 of Scheme for types of training) for key staff (minimum of 1 in year 1)	<input type="checkbox"/> Ongoing <input type="checkbox"/> 12/05 <input type="checkbox"/> 12/05 <input type="checkbox"/> ongoing <input type="checkbox"/> ongoing	Chief Executive

Area of Implementation	Element	Performance Indicator	Milestone	Responsibility
Equality Impact Assessments (EQIAs)	<input type="checkbox"/> Screening	<input type="checkbox"/> Finalise screening format and procedures, and pilot with sample of policies <input type="checkbox"/> Screen all policies <input type="checkbox"/> Prioritise policies for EQIA <input type="checkbox"/> Consult with relevant interest groups on outcome of screening exercise (including proposed priorities for EQIA)	<input type="checkbox"/> 01/05 <input type="checkbox"/> 02/05 <input type="checkbox"/> 03/05 <input type="checkbox"/> 04/05 – 09/05	Chief Executive
	<input type="checkbox"/> Plan for EQIAs	<input type="checkbox"/> Develop plan for carrying out EQIAs, taking account of consultation responses <input type="checkbox"/> Agree plan for EQIAs with Board and staff <input type="checkbox"/> Agree plan with Registered Housing Associations	<input type="checkbox"/> 09/05 <input type="checkbox"/> 09/05 <input type="checkbox"/> 09/05	Internal and in co-ordination with other HAs in the joint process
	<input type="checkbox"/> Carrying out EQIAs	<input type="checkbox"/> Begin EQIAs <input type="checkbox"/> Review Plan for EQIAs <input type="checkbox"/> Carry out EQIAs in accordance with for EQIAs	<input type="checkbox"/> 10/05 <input type="checkbox"/> annually in May <input type="checkbox"/> ongoing	Internal and in co-ordination with other HAs in the joint process

Area of Implementation	Element	Performance Indicator	Milestone	Responsibility
Communication	<input type="checkbox"/> Publication of Equality Scheme <input type="checkbox"/> Dissemination to key stakeholders	<input type="checkbox"/> Scheme to be published after approval from the Equality Commission <input type="checkbox"/> Summary of Scheme to be developed and made available <input type="checkbox"/> Scheme to be made available in accessible formats on request <input type="checkbox"/> Scheme to be published on website <input type="checkbox"/> Copy of Scheme to be made available to all staff <input type="checkbox"/> Copy of Scheme mailed to all those consulted on the Scheme, and to others on request <input type="checkbox"/> Press Release to the media informing them of the publication of the Equality Scheme	<input type="checkbox"/> 10/05 <input type="checkbox"/> 11/05 <input type="checkbox"/> ongoing <input type="checkbox"/> 12/05 <input type="checkbox"/> 10/05 <input type="checkbox"/> 10/05 <input type="checkbox"/> 10/05 or when all HA schemes are approved	Chief Executive NIFHA to issue joint press release on behalf of all HAs
Access	<input type="checkbox"/> Review of Access to Information and Services	<input type="checkbox"/> To conduct a review within one year of the implementation of the scheme covering all aspects of access to information and services, and produce report making recommendations <input type="checkbox"/> To consult on review with key stakeholders <input type="checkbox"/> Produce action plan for acting on review recommendations <input type="checkbox"/> Implementation of action plan begins <input type="checkbox"/> Carry out action plan to meet performance indicator targets	<input type="checkbox"/> 10/06 <input type="checkbox"/> 03/07 <input type="checkbox"/> 06/07 <input type="checkbox"/> 07/07 <input type="checkbox"/> ongoing <input type="checkbox"/> ongoing	Chief Executive
Complaints	<input type="checkbox"/> Complaints procedure	<input type="checkbox"/> To respond to any complaints of non-compliance within one month of complaint being made <input type="checkbox"/> To report on complaints made on an annual basis to the Equality Commission as part of annual report	<input type="checkbox"/> ongoing <input type="checkbox"/> annually in July	Chief Executive