

Summary of the Northern Ireland Audit Office Equality Scheme

Background

1. The Northern Ireland Audit Office (NIAO), headed by the Comptroller and Auditor General for Northern Ireland, undertakes the external audit of public sector bodies in Northern Ireland, including:
 - Northern Ireland departments and their Executive Agencies, Non – Departmental Public Bodies and Health and Social Care Bodies in the central government sector: and
 - District Councils in the local government sector

The results of the NIAO's work on central government bodies are reported to the Northern Ireland Assembly and on local government bodies to the Department of the Environment.

NIAO Equality Scheme

2. Section 75 of the Northern Ireland Act 1998 requires NIAO, in carrying out its functions, 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; and
 - persons with a dependant and persons without.

The NIAO must also have due regard to the desirability of promoting good relations between persons of different religious belief, political opinion or racial group.

3. The NIAO Equality Scheme, approved by the Equality Commission in November 2011, sets out how the NIAO intends to fulfil these requirements. A copy of the full scheme can be obtained from the NIAO intranet site at www.niauditoffice.gov.uk or from:

Equality Officer
NIAO
106 University Street
Belfast
BT7 1EU

Telephone No: 02890 251040
Fax No: 02890 251051/ 02890 251106
SMS: 07800140767
E-Mail: equality@niauditoffice.gov.uk

Key Elements of the Scheme

4. NIAO is committed to the fulfilment of its section 75 obligations in all parts of its work. A timetable of key actions required is attached at Appendix 4 of the scheme.

The main elements cover

I. Organisational Arrangements

Integration of equality objectives into NIAO's business plans. Equality objectives will also be incorporated into the performance plans of relevant staff. In addition job roles will reflect a commitment to the principles of equality, fairness and diversity.

II. Progress Reporting

Regular reports will be provided to the NIAO Board and executive team. Annual reports will be sent to Equality Commission by 31 August each year and will be published on the NIAO website.

III. Consultation

The NIAO will engage in consultation with relevant consultees in a timely, open and inclusive manner. Consideration will be given to the consultation method in order to remove any barriers to the consultation process. The NIAO consultation list is available at Appendix 3 of our scheme. The consultation list will be reviewed annually to ensure ongoing relevance to our work.

IV. Assessing, monitoring and publishing the impact of policies

NIAO will use screening to identify those policies which are likely to have an impact on equality of opportunity and good relations. Following completion screening templates will be made available on the NIAO website. We will also publish quarterly screening reports detailing all policies screened over the period, screening decisions and where applicable a time table for conducting Equality Impact Assessments.

Equality Impact assessments will be carried out in accordance with Equality Commission guidance and the results made publicly available.

V. Staff Training

The NIAO will ensure that all relevant staff will receive training on their Section 75 obligations. All staff within the organisation will receive awareness training. Specialist training will be provided to those involved in the assessment of policies.

VI. Access to Information

NIAO will keep its arrangements under review to ensure that information is accessible to all parts of the community. To ensure equality of opportunity NIAO will provide information in alternative formats upon request.

VII. Timetable

Appendix 4 to the NIAO Equality scheme sets out our timetable for the measures we have proposed.

VIII. Complaints

A person wishing to make a complaint on the grounds that the NIAO has failed to comply with its approved Equality Scheme should contact:

Head of Human Resources
NIAO
106 University Street
Belfast
BT7 1EU

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Fax No: 02890 251051/ 02890 251106

SMS: 07800140767

E-Mail: equality@niauditoffice.gov.uk