

# EQUALITY COMMISSION FOR NORTHERN IRELAND

## Public Authority 2013 – 2014 Annual Progress Report on:

- **Section 75 of the NI Act 1998 and**
- **Section 49A of the Disability Discrimination Order (DDO) 2006**

This report template includes a number of self assessment questions regarding implementation of the **Section 75 statutory duties** from *1 April 2013 to 31 March 2014 (Part A)*.

This template also includes a number of questions regarding implementation of **Section 49A of the DDO** from the *1 April 2013 to 31 March 2014 (Part B)*.

Please enter information at the relevant part of each section and ensure that it is **submitted** electronically (by completing this template) and in hardcopy, with a signed cover letter from the Chief Executive or, in his / her absence, the Deputy Chief Executive to the Commission **by 31 August 2014**.

In completing this template it is essential to focus on the application of Section 75 and Section 49. This involves progressing the commitments in your equality scheme or disability action plan which should lead to outcomes and impacts in terms of measurable improvement for individuals from the equality categories. Such outcomes and impacts may include changes in public policy, in service provision and/or in any of the areas within your functional remit.

**Name of public authority** (Enter details below)

Public Prosecution Service for Northern Ireland (PPS)

**Equality Officer** (Enter name and contact details below)

S75: Anna Scott  
Central Management Unit  
Corporate Services  
Linum Chambers  
2 Bedford Square  
Bedford Street  
Belfast  
BT2 7ES  
Tel: 028 90 544870  
Fax: 028 90 544868  
Email: [anna.scott@ppsni.gsi.gov.uk](mailto:anna.scott@ppsni.gsi.gov.uk)

DDO (if different from above):

# **Part A: Section 75 Annual Progress Report 2013 - 2014**

## **Executive Summary**

- **What were the key policy / service developments made by the authority during this reporting period to better promote equality of opportunity and good relations and what outcomes were achieved?**

The Public Prosecution Service (PPS) was established in 2005 by the Justice (Northern Ireland) Act 2002 and designated as a public authority for the purposes of Section 75 compliance in 2006. Since that time, the Service has changed from a centrally based organisation to a regionally based operation in line with the recommendations of the Criminal Justice Review.

Regional offices have been established in Londonderry, known as Foyle Chambers, Belfast (which also serves as the headquarters of the PPS), Ballymena, Lisburn, Omagh and Newry. The provision of regional offices has allowed the Service to better assess and address local issues through increased accessibility to local community and voluntary organisations.

Following the devolution of policing and justice matters in April 2010, the PPS was established as a non-ministerial government department. In accordance with Section 42(1) of the Justice (Northern Ireland) Act 2002 the functions of the Director are exercised by him independently of any other person.

Section 75 of the Northern Ireland Act 1998 (the Act) requires public authorities 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. It must be noted that matters relating to the prosecution of offences are excluded from Section 75 by Section 38 of the Justice (Northern Ireland) Act 2002.

## **Approved Equality Scheme**

The Equality Commission for Northern Ireland approved the PPS's revised Equality Scheme on 28 March 2012, following a period of consultation between 8 July 2011 and 7 October 2011.

## **Equality and Disability Action Plans**

Work on the development of new Equality and Disability Action Plans for the period 2014 – 2017 was due to commence. However as these plans are aligned with our corporate planning framework, new action plans will not come into effect until 1 April 2015. As an interim measure, equality and disability objectives and targets for 2014-15 have been approved, published and forwarded to the Equality Commission.

## **Corporate Activity**

The PPS Corporate Plan for the period 2011-2014 was published in June 2011.

The Corporate Plan is supported by Annual Business Plans which set out PPS priorities for the year, the measures and milestones we will use to assess our progress and the risks we will have to manage in order to ensure that we deliver. The Annual Business Plan for 2013-14 was published in May 2013.

Performance against key objectives / milestones such as the Intermediaries Scheme and the Victim and Witness Care Unit (VWCU) is outlined at Section 1 below.

## **Equality and Diversity Steering Group (EDSG)**

The Service's Equality Officer is a member of the PPS Equality and Diversity Steering Group (EDSG), chaired by the PPS Equality and Diversity Champion. The EDSG is a group consisting of staff representing a range of business areas within the PPS. The role of the EDSG is to provide assurances to the Director and Management Board that the PPS complies with all its statutory obligations in relation to equality and diversity and DDA.

Meetings of the Equality and Diversity Drivers have also been arranged in order to share good practice across the various PPS regions and sections.

## **Section 75 Outcomes / Impacts**

A number of measures within the PPS Equality Action Plan address key inequalities. For example one of the measures within the PPS's Equality Action Plan was to consider, as part of an interagency Project Board, the introduction of a Registered Intermediary Service as an additional 'special measure' available to assist witnesses and defendants who have communication difficulties and may otherwise be unable to give their best evidence. The Section 75 groups affected included disability, age and vulnerable people in all other groups.

The pilot of the scheme commenced in May 2013 and was restricted to indictable only offences occurring within the Belfast District Council area and which were prosecuted in Belfast Crown Court. From November 2013 this pilot was extended to include all indictable only offences committed in Northern Ireland and prosecuted in any Crown Court. It is anticipated that the pilot will run until November 2014, at which point a decision will be taken as to whether or not the scheme will be rolled out.

## **Screening / Consultations**

The Service continued to screen policies for equality and good relations impacts. During 2013-14 equality screening exercises resulted in two policies being screened out. No consultations were carried out during 2013-14. However it is anticipated that a number of new / updated policies will be subject to consultation over the 2014-15 financial year.

## **Training**

Equality and Diversity remained a key training priority for the Service during 2013-14.

During 2013-14, 42 staff completed the classroom Diversity training. An e-learning training platform was released in December 2013 to enable staff to undertake mandatory 'refresher' training on Equality and Diversity at 3 yearly intervals, 144 staff who required the refresher training have completed this. Classroom training remains in place for new entrants to the NICS.

In August 2013, 64 PPS staff attended Registered Intermediaries training over 2 days. The sessions were delivered to train PPS staff in

the use of Registered Intermediaries for criminal proceedings in Northern Ireland. Further Registered Intermediaries training is planned for June 2014 when PPS staff and counsel will be in attendance.

In January 2014, induction training was provided to PPS and PSNI staff within the Foyle Victim and Witness Care Unit. Training included a range of areas like Victim and Witness Awareness, Special Measures and Mental Health Issues. Induction training will be ongoing until the Unit's staffing is up to full capacity.

Opportunities were also taken throughout the year to raise awareness of the Service's Section 75 commitments, including updates from the Equality and Diversity Steering Group, Equality and Diversity Drivers meetings and the Annual Progress Report for example via the staff brief, e-mail and intranet.

## **Communication**

The main channel for communicating information to service users on the PPS's Section 75 commitments is the dedicated equality section on the PPS website at <http://www.ppsni.gov.uk/Equality-5023.html>.

The site contains background information on our Section 75 commitments, including our Equality Scheme (plus an Easy Read version); consultation summary reports; the Annual Progress Reports; Equality Action Plan; PPS Users Guide on Consultation; Disability Action Plan; Equality and Human Rights Screening Forms; Equality Screening Reports; and current consultations (if appropriate). This site will continue to be updated and expanded with relevant information.

During 2013-14, the Equality Officer continued to circulate information and provide updates (for example on equality and diversity events / issues / progress on the implementation of actions set out within the Equality Scheme / Action Plan and Disability Action Plan). Such updates were provided to staff, the Service's Equality and Diversity Steering Group, the Senior Management Group and Management Board as appropriate.

The PPS Staff Brief, launched in June 2011, is a key tool for the dissemination of information. It is published quarterly and used as the basis for team meetings throughout the PPS. Staff also have an

opportunity to raise issues for inclusion in the Brief and to provide feedback.

In January 2014 the Equality Officer provided the Management Board with an overview of how the Service promotes equality of opportunity and how it complies with Section 75 statutory duties.

During the year, the Equality Officer also met with relevant staff to discuss Section 75 issues.

### **Data Collection and Analysis**

The PPS has maintained its research capacity, focusing primarily on the development of internal (staff) and external (stakeholder) surveys such as the Northern Ireland Omnibus Survey and NICS Staff Survey.

Other data collected included information provided through membership of, and engagement with, a large number of interagency groups and through other meetings with external voluntary and community organisations; complaint follow-up questionnaires; postal survey of victims and witnesses who have been in contact with the Victim and Witness Care Unit (VWCU) and the monitoring arrangements established to record the numbers and types of outreach events which PPS has delivered or supported.

### **Information Provision, Access to Information and Services**

The Service has undertaken a number of initiatives / steps during the year to improve access to services. These have included the implementation of the new Victim and Witness Care Unit; design and development of a new 'online' Victim and Witness Information Portal; worked with the Youth Justice Agency, PSNI and other partners in piloting a new 'Youth Engagement' initiative; provision of quarterly updates to consultees; reviewing and updating its S75 consultation list; and the provision of information in accessible formats.

### **Complaints**

The Service did not receive any Section 75 complaints during 2013-14.

## **Consultation and Engagement**

Under the umbrella of the PPS community outreach strategy, senior staff across all regions and business areas participate in events throughout the year. The broad aim is to provide a clearer understanding of the work of the PPS and the role of the prosecutor, via engagement with the statutory, voluntary and community sectors, politicians, schools and universities, health professionals and the wider public.

During the year the Service has continued to promote Business in the Community's Employee Volunteering Scheme. PPS staff members have participated in a number of individual projects, such as the annual Cares Shop Challenge.

The Service has also provided input into the proposed legislative reforms relating to mental health issues in the criminal justice system. It has provided information to the DOJ-chaired interagency group set up to examine how such issues are currently dealt with, issues arising, and how they can best be addressed by new legislation.

The Service participated in community events such as MELA, Belfast Pride and the Multi-Cultural Festival and Children's fun day at Magherafelt.

The Service also continued to hold information events at which disability equality speakers, such as Mindwise and The National Autistic Society addressed key staff within the organisation, with the aim of increasing the knowledge and understanding of the attitudinal barriers facing staff and/or service users.

### **Autism Act (Northern Ireland) 2011**

The Autism Act (NI) 2011 came into law in August 2011. It both extended the remit of the Disability Discrimination Act 1995 and required that an inter-departmental Autism Strategy be produced.

The Strategy was published by the Department of Health, Social Services and Public Safety in January 2014 and has been produced with the input of, and consultation with, all government departments and other interested parties, such as the voluntary and community sector

and users of public services. Its aim is to make public services better for people with autism, their families and carers.

One of the key actions for the DOJ (including the PPS) related to the production of new guidance written for people working in the Criminal Justice System. 'Autism: A Guide for criminal justice professionals' produced by The National Autistic Society and supported by the Department of Justice for Northern Ireland was published in February 2014. The PPS provided input into the guide by providing practical examples of cases involving people with autism.

This strategy and the guidance documents have been disseminated to all PPS staff to help ensure an appropriate response to individuals with autism who come in contact with the Service, whether as victims, witnesses, alleged offenders, or as employees of the PPS.

- **What are the main initiatives planned in the coming year to ensure the authority improves outcomes in terms of equality of opportunity and good relations for individuals from the nine categories covered by Section 75?**

During 2014-15 the Service will continue to monitor progress on the agreed objectives detailed in the Equality Scheme, Equality Action Plan and Disability Action Plan.

Copies of these documents are available on the PPS Website at <http://www.ppsni.gov.uk/Equality-5023.html>.

The Service will develop new Equality and Disability Action Plans to take effect from 1 April 2015.

A planned review of court witness expenses has now commenced and a revised scheme will be implemented during 2014-15.

The Service will continue to screen policies for equality and good relations impacts and carry out full equality impact assessments as appropriate.

The Service will continue to prioritise Equality and Diversity training during 2014-15, for example Disability Awareness and Diversity Now training.

The PPS will continue to develop its research capacity, focusing primarily on the development of internal (staff) and external (stakeholder) surveys, for example the VWCU postal survey and complaint follow-up questionnaires.

The PPS website will be updated regularly with relevant information, for example, Annual Progress Reports and quarterly equality screening reports to consultees.

The Service will continue to participate in outreach events and activities and will play an active role in various forums, groups, interagency groups etc.

The Service will continue to hold information events at which disability equality speakers will address key staff within the organisation with the aim of increasing the knowledge and understanding of the attitudinal barriers facing staff and/or service users.

The Service will continue to support Business in the Community (BITC) initiatives such as employee volunteering. The PPS is now taking its engagement with BITC to the next membership level. A strategic review of Corporate Responsibility in the PPS has now been carried out. Its aim was to identify key gaps in its approach to managing its social responsibilities and present opportunities for the PPS to maximize potential under the three key themes of People, Planet and Place. A Corporate Responsibility Action Plan will be developed over the coming months.

Staff will be updated regularly on progress or developments within the PPS to fulfill the Section 75 obligations and the Disability Discrimination Order 2006 duties through, for example, regional 'roadshows' and the Staff Brief.

On an annual basis the Service will continue to monitor access to information and services across all of its functions, to ensure that equality of opportunity and good relations are promoted.

The Service's Equality and Diversity Steering Group and Equality and Diversity Drivers will continue to meet on a regular basis and appraise the Director and Management Board as to how the Service is properly discharging its equality and diversity responsibilities.

The Equality Officer will review and update the Service's Section 75 consultation list annually and on request.

### **Planned Policy Development**

A number of policy statements were to be published for consultation during 2013-14, including policies in relation to the handling of cases involving youth offenders and cases involving people with mental health problems. However publication of these documents was deferred, pending legislative changes and / or the implementation of related initiatives within the criminal justice sector. For example, the youth offender policy was deferred in order for an evaluation to be conducted

of the CJSNI 'Youth Engagement' Pilot scheme, which has materially changed the arrangements for offering alternatives to prosecution to young people.

## **New / Revised Equality Schemes**

- **Please indicate whether this reporting period applies to a new or revised scheme and (if appropriate) when the scheme was approved?**

The Equality Commission for Northern Ireland approved the PPS's revised Equality Scheme on 28 March 2012, following a period of consultation (between 8 July 2011 and 7 October 2011). Consequently, this report refers to the new Equality Scheme.

## **Section 1: Strategic Implementation of the Section 75 Duties**

- **Please outline evidence of progress made in developing and meeting *equality and good relations objectives*, performance indicators and targets in corporate and annual operating plans during 2013-14.**

The PPS Corporate Plan for the period 2011-2014 was published in June 2011.

The Corporate Plan is supported by Annual Business Plans which set out PPS priorities for the year, the measures and milestones we will use to assess our progress and the risks we will have to manage in order to ensure that we deliver.

There are 4 strategic priorities for the Service. These are:

- Delivering an efficient and effective prosecution service;
- Building the confidence and trust of the community we serve;
- Strengthening our capability to deliver; and
- Building the capability of our people.

The Annual Business Plan for 2013-14 was published in May 2013. Performance against key objectives / milestones is outlined below.

### **Strategic Priority 2:**

#### **Building the confidence and trust of the community we serve**

##### ***Objective 2.1:***

***To provide an enhanced service to victims and witnesses***

##### ***Objective 2.2:***

***To engage effectively with stakeholders and the wider community***

## **Victim and Witness Care Unit**

Improving services and support is vital to building effective relationships between victims and witnesses, the PPS and the criminal justice system.

A key initiative in this area is the implementation of a new Victim and Witness Care Unit (VWCU) which has been developed with police and other partners, including the Department of Justice and Victim Support. The purpose of the VWCU model is to improve the experience of victims and witnesses by, for example, providing a single point of contact and identifying particular needs at an early stage. The PPS Management Board recognises the importance of the VWCU initiative in terms of engaging with this key stakeholder group.

The VWCU, which is based in the PPS's Belfast and Foyle Offices, has now been rolled out across Northern Ireland. An initial pilot was established in November 2012, covering the Magistrates', Youth and County Courts in Belfast. Pilot arrangements in the Belfast Crown Court were subsequently implemented in April 2013. Over the course of 2013-14, the coverage of the Belfast Office has been extended to take in the PPS Eastern Region. The Foyle unit was also opened, covering the Service's Western and Southern and Northern Regions.

An interim evaluation of the Belfast unit was conducted in spring 2013, which was intended to highlight any areas where processes and procedures needed to be amended or refined. A more comprehensive evaluation will be conducted during 2014-15 and will include consultation with VWCU stakeholders and service users.

## **Victim and Witness Task Force**

The PPS is a member of the inter-agency Victim and Witness Taskforce (VWTF) and has contributed to the new five year 'Making a Difference' Strategy. The PPS provides regular updates to the DOJ who chair this group, and they in turn update the Minister for Justice, and the Justice Committee as required.

## **Intermediaries Scheme**

Registered Intermediaries, a new special measure, are provided to assist witnesses and defendants who have communication difficulties and may otherwise be unable to give their best evidence.

The pilot of the scheme commenced in May 2013 and was restricted to indictable only offences occurring within the Belfast District Council area and which were prosecuted in Belfast Crown Court. From November 2013 this pilot was extended to include all indictable only offences committed in Northern Ireland and prosecuted in any Crown Court. It is anticipated that the pilot will run until November 2014, at which point a decision will be taken as to whether or not the scheme will be rolled out.

## **Victims and Witnesses Policy**

A planned revision of the PPS Victims and Witnesses Policy was deferred pending a review of the policy on the 'Giving of Reasons', and also to allow for any lessons learned from the implementation of the VWCU.

## **Victim Personal Statement Scheme**

A new scheme has been established (as of 31 December 2013) to ensure all victims, in cases where there has been a conviction, have the opportunity to make a Victim Personal Statement to inform the court of the impact a crime has had on them. The operation of the new scheme will be kept under review. This is in partnership with DOJ, PSNI, VSNI and NSPCC.

## **Witness Expenses**

PPS is responsible for the payment of expenses to prosecution witnesses arising from their attendance at court in respect of proceedings to which they have been summoned.

A planned review of court witness expenses has now commenced and a revised scheme will be implemented during 2014-15.

## Strategic Priority 3:

### Strengthening our capability to deliver

#### **Objective 3.2**

***To strengthen our accountability as a non-ministerial department by developing and maintaining a transparent and effective governance framework***

### **Disability Action Plan**

The Service's Disability Action Plan (DAP) covered the three year period to 31 March 2014. The plan set out a range of actions through which the Service would seek to implement its disability duties in areas such as communication, partnership working and staff training. Issues addressed during 2013-14 included a quality assurance review of the operation of the PPS Hate Crime Policy and participation in the Registered Intermediaries pilot. However several matters, such as a planned review of special measures, were deferred until 2014-15. This was mainly due to the availability of resources.

### **Equality Scheme**

A new PPS Equality Scheme, which sets out how the Service proposes to fulfil its obligations under S.75 of the Northern Ireland Act 1998, was approved by the Equality Commission on 28 March 2012.

The Service has also published a detailed Equality Action Plan. Key objectives achieved during 2013-14 included the scoping and design of a new Victim and Witness Information Portal. Outstanding issues, such as the provision of training for PPS staff in respect of mental health, will be addressed during 2014-15.

The Annual Progress Report on Section 75 of the NI Act 1998 and Section 49A of the Disability Discrimination Order (DDO) 2006 was sent to the Equality Commission in August 2013.

Copies of the Equality Scheme, Equality Action Plan and Disability Action Plan are available on the PPS website at <http://www.ppsni.gov.uk/Equality-5023.html>

A copy of the PPS's Annual Report and Resource Accounts 2013-14 is available on the PPS Website at <http://www.ppsni.gov.uk/Annual-Reports---5077.html>.

### **Equality and Diversity Steering Group (EDSG)**

The Service's Equality Officer is a member of the PPS Equality and Diversity Steering Group (EDSG), chaired by the PPS Equality and Diversity Champion. The EDSG is a group consisting of staff representing a range of business areas within the PPS. The role of the EDSG is to provide assurances to the Director and Management Board that the PPS complies with all its statutory obligations in relation to equality and diversity and DDA.

Meetings of the Equality and Diversity Drivers have also been arranged. Their role is to promote and raise awareness of Equality and Diversity matters at Region/Section level within the PPS and to act as points of communication for the Equality and Diversity Steering Group (EDSG) and the Equality Officer.

## **Section 2: Examples of Section 75 Outcomes / Impacts**

Given the renewed focus of Section 75 aiming to achieve more tangible impacts and outcomes and addressing key inequalities; please report in this section how the authority's work has impacted on individuals across the Section 75 categories. Consider narrative in the following structure:

- *Describe* the action measure /section 75 process undertaken.
  - *Who* was affected across the Section 75 categories?
  - *What impact* it achieved?
- 
- **Please give examples of changes to policies or practices using *screening or EQIA*, which have resulted in outcomes or impacts for individuals. If the change was a result of an EQIA please indicate this and also reference the title of the relevant EQIA.**

There were no changes to policies or practices during the reporting year as no adverse impacts were identified using screening.

- **Please give examples of *outcomes or impacts on individuals* as a result of any *action measures* undertaken as part of your Section 75 action plan:**

One of the measures within the PPS's Equality Action Plan was to consider, as part of an interagency Project Board, the introduction of a Registered Intermediary Service as an additional 'special measure' available to assist witnesses and defendants who have communication difficulties and may otherwise be unable to give their best evidence. The Section 75 groups affected included disability, age and vulnerable people in all other groups.

The pilot of the scheme commenced in May 2013 and was restricted to indictable only offences occurring within the Belfast District Council area and which were prosecuted in Belfast Crown Court. From November 2013 this pilot was extended to include all indictable only offences committed in Northern Ireland and prosecuted in any Crown Court. It is anticipated that the pilot will run until November 2014, at which point a decision will be taken as to whether or not the scheme will be rolled out.

A key inequality previously identified was that communications with victims and witnesses and the information channels used did not always meet their needs. A review of all letters issued by the PPS to victims and witnesses was carried out in order to simplify these where possible. As a result letters will be in a more easily read, simplified format with a more empathetic style which will contribute to increased satisfaction of service users. The majority of these letters have now been implemented.

In addition in order to support the enhanced services now being delivered via the Victim and Witness Care Unit, the Service has taken forward the design and development of a new 'online' Victim and Witness Information Portal. Victims and witnesses will be able to log on securely to the portal to obtain details of their case, such as forthcoming court dates. It is anticipated that the portal will be implemented during 2014-15.

Action measures completed during 2013-14 are listed below:

Key Inequality identified	Action Measure	Performance Indicator/Outcome	Lead Responsibility
<p><b>1. Communications with victims and witnesses and the information channels used do not always meet their needs</b></p>	<p>A review of all letters issued by PPS to victims and witnesses will be carried out in order to simplify these where possible</p>	<p>Letters will be in a more easily read, simplified format with a more empathetic style which contributes to increased satisfaction of service users.</p> <p>Increased level of response from youth offenders to youth conferencing invitations at an early stage.</p>	<p><b>Assistant Director, Policy and Information Section</b></p>
<p>As above</p>	<p>To consider, as part of an interagency Project Board, the introduction of a NI Witness Intermediary Service as an additional 'special measure' available to vulnerable witnesses</p>	<p>The PPS will consider making applications to the court for an order to appoint an intermediary. The intermediary will ensure they can understand and participate fully in the prosecution process. Leading to the admission of evidence and better quality evidence.</p>	<p><b>Assistant Director, Policy and Information Section</b></p>
<p>As above</p>	<p>Through Community Outreach Strategy events and meetings, senior PPS staff will take every opportunity to address the perceptions of people in affected S75 groups that Hate Crime offences do not</p>	<p>Increased understanding within the affected groups of the reasons why a case may not proceed to a successful prosecution should help to dispel negativity within the community about reporting incidents of hate crime.</p>	<p><b>Assistant Director, Policy and Information Section</b></p>

	result in prosecution and explain the PPS role in the overall process		
<b>Key Inequality identified</b>	<b>Action Measure</b>	<b>Performance Indicator/Outcome</b>	<b>Lead Responsibility</b>
<b>2. Current arrangements for liaison between PPS staff and victims and witnesses are not always fully effective in dealing with their concerns or in gaining their confidence in the process</b>	Investigate the business requirement for the provision of a Victims Information Portal	Design of a portal will be taken forward in 2012/13 if business need is proven.	<b>Senior Assistant Director (Regions)</b>
<b>Key Inequality identified</b>	<b>Action Measure</b>	<b>Performance Indicator/Outcome</b>	<b>Lead Responsibility</b>
<b>4. Advocates appointed to the current Panels of Junior and Senior Counsel may not all be assigned an appropriate amount of the work available</b>	Introduction of revised procedures and clarity of process put in place for staff responsible for the allocation of briefs – mini Panels established in each Region.  Monthly reports presented to Senior Management Group and Management Board re: financial and operational performance.	All Panel Members are offered appropriate briefs which will ensure a fairer distribution of work during the life of a Panel in line with briefing guidance issued to staff	<b>Senior Assistant Director (Resources and Change)</b>  Introduced during 2011 and will be subject to ongoing monitoring

- **Please give examples of *outcomes or impacts* on individuals as a result of any other Section 75 processes e.g. consultation or monitoring:**

### **PPS Policy for Prosecuting Cases of Human Trafficking**

A new policy statement on the handling of cases involving human trafficking was published in October 2013, following a period of consultation, which took place between 8 June 2012 and 19 December 2012 (extended following requests from a number of organisations). This policy statement addresses the significant degree of public concern about this class of offending.

A number of detailed comments were received as part of the consultation exercise. Careful consideration was given to the comments raised and a number were actioned within the document. A summary of the comments raised together with the PPS's response is available on the PPS Website [www.ppsni.gov.uk](http://www.ppsni.gov.uk) .

### **Section 3: Screening**

- Please provide an update of new / proposed / revised *policies screened* during the year.

For those authorities that have started issuing of screening reports in year; this section may be completed in part by appending, to this annual report, a copy of all screening reports issued within the reporting period.

Where screening reports have not been issued, for part or all of the reporting period, please complete the table below:

Title of policy subject to screening	What was the <i>screening decision?</i> E.g. screened in, screened out, mitigation, EQIA...	Were any <i>concerns raised about screening by consultees;</i> including the Commission?	Is policy being subject to EQIA? Yes/No If yes indicate timeline for assessment.
PPS/PSNI Victim and Witness Care Unit Pilot Project (covering the Magistrates' Court, Crown Court, County Court & Youth Court in Belfast)	Screened out	None	No
Business Case Guidance	Screened out	None	No

## **Section 4: Equality Impact Assessment (EQIA)**

Please provide an update of policies subject to EQIA during 2013-14, stage 7 EQIA monitoring activities and an indicative EQIA timetable for 2014-15.

- EQIA Timetable: April 2013 - March 2014

Title of Policy EQIA	EQIA Stage at end March 2014 (Steps 1-6)	Outline adjustments to policy intended to benefit individuals and the relevant Section 75 categories due to be affected.
Recruitment and Use of Panel Counsel	Step 5, moving to Step 6	This EQIA considers the appointment process and the constitution of the two Panels of junior and senior Counsel that are called upon to work on PPS cases. It also considers the policy around the allocation of such available work amongst these Panel members since the Panels were established.

The 'Recruitment and Use of Panel' EQIA was issued for consultation on 27 May 2011 and closed on 19 August 2011. It was anticipated in last year's report that it would reach Step 6 by the end of 2013.

However this EQIA has now been superseded due to the establishment / refresh of the PPS Panel Counsel Scheme and setting up of a Central Fees Team in Headquarters.

In 2009 the Service established a Panel Scheme for the instruction of counsel. A refresh of the scheme was taken forward in 2012, via an open competition, with new panels of junior and senior Counsel appointed. These Panels have continued to operate successfully during 2013-14. Briefs are allocated to counsel on a 'taxi rank' system.

The Central Fees Teams has been established to administer all payments to Counsel.

**Where the EQIA timetable for 2013-14 (as detailed in the previous annual S75 progress report to the Commission) has not been met, please provide details of the factors responsible for delay and details of the timetable for re-scheduling the EQIA/s in question.**

None scheduled within the 2012-13 Annual Report.

- Ongoing EQIA Monitoring Activities: April 2013- March 2014

Title of EQIA subject to Stage 7 monitoring	Indicate if differential impacts previously identified have reduced or increased	Indicate if adverse impacts previously identified have reduced or increased
NONE APPLICABLE		

**Please outline any proposals, arising from the authority’s monitoring for adverse impacts, for revision of the policy to achieve better outcomes the relevant equality groups:**

N/A

2014-15 EQIA Timetable

Title of EQIAs due to be commenced during April 2014 – March 2015	Revised or New policy?	Please indicate expected timescale of Decision Making stage i.e. Stage 6
NONE CURRENTLY SCHEDULED		

## **Section 5: Training**

- **Please outline training provision during the year associated with the Section 75 Duties / Equality Scheme requirements including types of training provision and conclusions from any training evaluations.**

Equality and Diversity remained a key training priority for the Service during 2013-14. PPS staff are NI Civil Servants, recruited through the Northern Ireland Civil Service (NICS) process. The Centre for Applied Learning (CAL) is contracted to provide a range of generic training courses to the whole of the NICS. PPS staff also attend other training events, conferences and seminars that are arranged to provide staff with the required skills and knowledge.

The following training was provided during the year:

<b>Training Course</b>	<b>Attendees</b>
Disability Awareness	9
Diversity (Classroom)	42
Diversity (E-Learning)	144
Communicating With Children & Child Development (NSPCC)	17
Registered Intermediaries	64
Hate Crime Conference	1
Management of Crown Court Case Including Vulnerable Witnesses	13
Prosecuting Cases of Rape and Serious Sexual Assault	1
Child Sexual Exploitation (Barnados)	13
Special Measures Professional Training and Development Seminar	2
Voice of the Child Defendant in Criminal Proceedings	1
Fundamental Rights Conference	1
Foyle Victim & Witness Care Unit Induction	12
Victim Support Training for Victim & Witness Care Unit	21

Members of the Service also provided training to statutory and voluntary organisations, for example Nexus and NSPCC.

## **Disability Awareness Training**

In April 2014, 9 VWCU staff attended Disability Awareness Training for Front-Line Staff provided by CAL. Additional Disability Awareness Training for nominated staff will be taken forward during 2014-15.

## **Equality and Diversity Training**

During 2013-14, 42 staff completed the classroom Diversity training. An e-learning training platform was released in December 2013 to enable staff to undertake mandatory 'refresher' training on Equality and Diversity at 3 yearly intervals, 144 staff who required the refresher training have completed this. Classroom training remains in place for new entrants to the NICS.

## **Communicating With Children & Child Development (NSPCC) Training**

In March 2014, the NSPCC delivered a pilot training session on the skills required to communicate with children within the justice system. The session was delivered to 17 PPS staff who are Youth Specialists and Sexual Offences Specialists within the organisation.

## **Registered Intermediaries Training**

In August 2013, 64 PPS staff attended Registered Intermediaries training over 2 days. The sessions were delivered to train PPS staff in the use of Registered Intermediaries for criminal proceedings in Northern Ireland. Further Registered Intermediaries training is planned for June 2014 when PPS staff and counsel will be in attendance.

## **Foyle Victim & Witness Care Unit Induction**

In January 2014, induction training was provided to PPS and PSNI staff within the Foyle Victim and Witness Care Unit. Training included a range of areas like Victim and Witness Awareness, Special Measures and Mental Health Issues. Induction training will be ongoing until the Unit's staffing is up to full capacity.

## **Awareness Raising**

Opportunities were also taken throughout the year to raise awareness of the Service's Section 75 commitments, including updates from the Equality and Diversity Steering Group, Equality and Diversity Drivers meetings and the Annual Progress Report for example via the staff brief, e-mail and intranet.

The PPS Staff Brief, launched in June 2011 is also a key tool. It is published quarterly and used as the basis for team meetings throughout the PPS. Staff also have an opportunity to raise issues for inclusion in the Brief and to provide feedback.

Senior Management within the PPS present regional Roadshows on a regular basis throughout the year which all staff are expected to attend. The Roadshows are used to keep staff up to date with developments within the organisation at a corporate level, for example, to provide updates on the roll out of the Victim and Witness Care Unit and diversity training.

The Roadshows will continue to be a valuable method of communicating with a large number of staff and will be utilised in 2014-15 to raise staff awareness.

## **Section 6: Communication**

- **Please outline how the authority communicated progress on delivery of the Section 75 Duties during the year and evidence of the impact / success of such activities.**

### **External Communication**

The main channel for communicating information to service users on the PPS's Section 75 commitments is the dedicated equality section on the PPS website at <http://www.ppsni.gov.uk/Equality-5023.html>.

The site contains background information on our Section 75 commitments, including our Equality Scheme (plus an Easy Read version); consultation summary reports; the Annual Progress Reports; Equality Action Plan; PPS Users Guide on Consultation; Disability Action Plan; Equality and Human Rights Screening Forms; Equality Screening Reports; and current consultations (if appropriate).

The site will continue to be updated and expanded with relevant information, for example, further progress reports, EQIAs and others. Details of our specific equality 'mailbox' have been provided in our Equality Scheme, as well as names and direct contact details of the staff responsible within PPS for equality issues. A 'public consultations' area is also available on the website and is used to publicise policy consultations as they issue.

Equality Screening Reports to Section 75 consultees, providing information on all policy screening exercises, current, forthcoming and closed consultations, and EQIAs (if appropriate), are issued quarterly in line with the PPS's commitments within the Equality Scheme. These reports and full screening documents are also made available on the PPS website.

The Service issued its 2012-13 Annual Progress Report to the Equality Commission in August 2013. This report includes progress on the actions contained within the Service's Equality and Disability Action Plans.

The PPS Communication Strategy recognises the need to develop systems to ensure that information is available in accessible formats, where it is appropriate and practicable to do so. Where necessary, the PPS will also consult with relevant interested parties. The PPS is fully committed to meeting its equality obligations and its communications will be timely, inclusive and informed.

In 2013 the Director commissioned an independent review of the PPS's approach to external communication, encompassing the overall strategy for engagement with the public, the media and key stakeholders. The recommendations from this review are now being taken forward via the First Class Prosecution Service Programme. This will include the preparation of a new Communication Strategy for the organisation.

A new Head of Communications role has also been established to lead in the development of communications on behalf of the PPS.

The PPS's Section 75 Consultation List is reviewed and updated annually and on request throughout the course of the year.

## **Community Outreach**

The PPS Community Outreach Strategy for 2012-2014, published in July 2012, includes a number of key milestones which the Service will seek to achieve in order to deliver the objectives of the strategy.

Over the course of 2013–14 a series of outreach events and activities were conducted across the PPS. These included:

- Meetings with victims and witnesses and victim and witness groups;
- Presentations to various groups within the Criminal Justice System, for example to the Antrim Policing and Community Safety Partnership;
- Presentations to the voluntary sector and community and minority groups, such as Women's Aid;
- Participation in multi-agency working groups, such as the Domestic Violence Partnership, the Children and Young Persons Strategic Partnership, Court User Group meetings and the Victim and Witness Steering Group;

- Meetings with elected representatives such as MPs and MLAs;
- Presentations to prosecutors and law enforcement agencies from other jurisdictions;
- Participation in Business in the Community initiatives;
- Provision of work experience to university students;
- Participation in community events, such as MELA and Pride; and
- Radio and television broadcasts and articles in newspapers and journals.

## **Internal Communication within the PPS**

The staff intranet site has a dedicated equality section. This makes available our Annual Progress Report, Disability Action Plan, Equality Scheme/Action Plan, Section 75 Consultation List, minutes from the Equality and Diversity Steering Group (EDSG) / Equality and Diversity Drivers meetings and current consultations.

For staff in policy areas, who are involved in screening or equality impact assessments, the site provides other useful information on Section 75 implementation, together with links to other organisations' websites, (for example the Equality Commission, Participation Network), and specific equality publications and good practice guidance, such as the PPS User Guide to Stakeholder Consultation. There is also a dedicated area on the staff website for diversity issues. Staff are encouraged to provide ideas for inclusion on the site.

During 2013-14, the Equality Officer continued to circulate information and provide updates (for example on equality and diversity events / issues / progress on the implementation of actions set out within the Equality Scheme / Action Plan and Disability Action Plan) to staff, the Service's Equality and Diversity Steering Group, Senior Management Group and Management Board as appropriate. This was achieved via the PPS intranet, e-mail etc.

The PPS Staff Brief, launched in June 2011 is also a key tool. It is published quarterly and used as the basis for team meetings throughout the PPS. Staff also have an opportunity to raise issues for inclusion in the Brief and to provide feedback.

In January 2014 the Equality Officer provided the Management Board with an overview of how the Service promotes equality of opportunity and how it complies with Section 75 statutory duties.

During the year, the Equality Officer also met with relevant staff to discuss Section 75 issues.

## **Section 7: Data Collection & Analysis**

- **Please outline any systems that were established during the year to supplement available statistical and qualitative research or any research undertaken / commissioned to obtain information on the needs and experiences of individuals from the nine categories covered by Section 75, including the needs and experiences of people with multiple identities.**

### **PPS Research**

The PPS has maintained its research capacity, focusing primarily on the development of internal (staff) and external (stakeholder) surveys. The key surveys conducted during 2013-14 included the following:

- **Northern Ireland Omnibus Survey**

In January 2014, the PPS commissioned questions for inclusion in the Northern Ireland Omnibus Survey, which is carried out by NISRA's Central Survey Unit. A total of seven questions were included in the survey to gauge public awareness of the PPS and its role. Just over seven-tenths (71%) of those who had heard of the PPS were very or fairly confident regarding the fairness and impartiality of the Service. This compared with 68% in 2013.

The results of the survey, which were published in April 2014, have been considered by the Management Board and will help to inform the development of PPS policy.

- **NICS Staff Survey**

The PPS participate in the NICS Staff Attitude Survey. It provides all members of staff with an opportunity to put forward their views about the PPS, its work and their role within the organisation and the wider Civil Service. The findings of the latest survey, conducted in September 2013, have been made available to all staff.

While there have been positive developments since the previous survey in 2011, there has also been a decline in rates of staff satisfaction across a number of other areas, including aspects of internal communication, organisational culture and managing change.

The Management Board has reviewed the findings, with a particular focus on specific issues highlighted by staff. The Board is keen to ensure that action is taken to address these matters and has tasked the People and Resources Sub-Committee with examining the results in detail and to develop an action plan in response. It is also anticipated that a number of issues will be addressed via the First Class Prosecution Service Programme.

- **Informal Feedback**

PPS policy staff have developed a wide network of informal contacts through their membership of, and engagement with, a large number of interagency groups and through other meetings with external voluntary and community organisations. These contacts provide qualitative data to the team which is used to inform policy development on an ongoing basis and is shared with other criminal justice partners where appropriate.

- **Complaint Follow-up questionnaire**

The PPS is committed to ensuring that the complaint handling arrangements are effective. Therefore on completion of each complaint case, a short follow-up questionnaire is sent to complainants asking them to provide feedback on the way their complaint was handled.

Monitoring is undertaken in a confidential way. All information provided is held securely and questionnaires can be submitted anonymously. In addition, complainants are asked to provide some information about themselves (for example, age and gender). Monitoring of complaints is essential in this regard and can assist the PPS to deliver a better service.

- **Community Outreach**

Monitoring arrangements have been established to record the numbers and types of outreach events which PPS has delivered or supported. These results are analysed on a monthly basis to ensure consistency of approach, to identify particular sectors of the community with which PPS has not engaged and to ensure that the widest possible audience is reached.

Reports are published on the PPS website.

- **Victim and Witness Care Unit**

The PPS conducts a postal survey of victims and witnesses who have been in contact with the Victim and Witness Care Unit (VWCU). The purpose of the VWCU model is to improve the experience of victims and witnesses by, for example, providing a single point of contact and identifying particular needs at key stages throughout the prosecution process. Therefore at various stages a short follow-up questionnaire is issued by staff asking victims and witnesses to provide feedback on the service provided.

Monitoring is undertaken in a confidential way. All information provided is held securely and questionnaires can be submitted anonymously. In addition individuals are asked to provide some information about themselves (for example, age and gender). Again such monitoring can assist the PPS to deliver a better service.

- **Please outline any use of the Commission's Section 75 Monitoring Guide.**

The Equality Commission's Section 75 Monitoring Guide is available to staff within the PPS. The publication can also be accessed by staff on the Intranet site and is used in the development of questionnaires etc.

## **Section 8: Information Provision, Access to Information and Services**

- **Please provide details of any initiatives / steps taken during the year, including take up, to improve access to services; including provision of information in accessible formats.**

Work began towards the end of 2010-11 on a systematic review of the format and content of 55 template letters and forms that PPS issues to victims and witnesses and young offenders. The purpose of this review was to produce correspondence in an easily read format, using plainer language and in an empathetic style that is more appropriate. Special focus has been given to reaching young offenders. In doing so, the views of legal and administrative staff and victims' representatives were sought and taken into account. This review is complete and formal consultation took place with other agencies, including Victim Support, the Youth Justice Agency, NSPCC and CJINI, in order to advise as to the preferred content and to quality assure all final documents. The majority of these letters have now been implemented.

On a quarterly basis the Service has issued a letter to S75 consultees containing a list of policies both external and internal for which the PPS carried out screening exercises and forthcoming, current and closed consultations. This allowed consultees the opportunity to request consultation documents, to register an interest in forthcoming work and in respect of screened out policies, whether they wanted to challenge the decision. In addition consultees could also request documents in alternative formats and comment on any aspect of the Service's equality work. These updates were also posted on the PPS website.

The Service reviewed and updated its S75 consultation list, seeking confirmation from consultees if they wished to remain on the list or if they wished their details to be removed, as well as their preferred method of contact. In addition, consultees were asked to identify other organisations which may wish to be added to the list.

The Equality Officer continued to maintain and update the Equality and Diversity pages on the Service's intranet and internet sites. Information available on these pages includes our Equality Scheme (including an

Easy Read version); consultation summary reports; the Annual Progress Reports; Equality Action Plan; PPS Users Guide on Consultation; Disability Action Plan and current consultations (if appropriate).

All new PPS publications include a statement to the effect that the document may be available in alternative formats upon request.

The Service continued to provide alternative formats and provided interpreters as appropriate.

Improving services and support is vital to building effective relationships between victims and witnesses, the PPS and the criminal justice system.

A key initiative in this area is the implementation of a new Victim and Witness Care Unit (VWCU) which has been developed with police and other partners, including the Department of Justice and Victim Support. The purpose of the VWCU model is to improve the experience of victims and witnesses by, for example, providing a single point of contact and identifying particular needs at an early stage. The PPS Management Board recognises the importance of the VWCU initiative in terms of engaging with this key stakeholder group.

The VWCU, which is based in the PPS's Belfast and Foyle Offices, has now been rolled out across Northern Ireland. An initial pilot was established in November 2012, covering the Magistrates', Youth and County Courts in Belfast. Pilot arrangements in the Belfast Crown Court were subsequently implemented in April 2013. Over the course of 2013-14, the coverage of the Belfast Office has been extended to take in the PPS Eastern Region. The Foyle unit was also opened, covering the Service's Western and Southern and Northern Regions.

An interim evaluation of the Belfast unit was conducted in spring 2013, which was intended to highlight any areas where processes and procedures needed to be amended or refined. A more comprehensive evaluation will be conducted during 2014-15 and will include consultation with VWCU stakeholders and service users.

In addition in order to support the enhanced services now being delivered via the Victim and Witness Care Unit, the Service has taken forward the design and development of a new 'online' Victim and Witness Information Portal. Victims and witnesses will be able to log on

securely to the portal to obtain details of their case, such as forthcoming court dates. It is anticipated that the portal will be implemented during 2014-15.

The PPS has worked with the Youth Justice Agency, PSNI and other partners in piloting a new 'Youth Engagement' initiative. The underlying idea is that if the young person is provided with more support early in the process to help them to make a properly informed decision about the offer of a diversion, it should be possible to avoid cases being taken to court that do not need to be there. The pilot, which was conducted in PSNI's A and B Districts, ran until May 2013.

An evaluation of the pilot has been completed. While the evaluation report reflected positively on the benefits arising from the initiative, it also flagged a number of technical issues which will need to be addressed before the scheme is rolled out across Northern Ireland.

PPS is committed to adhering to the Health and Safety at Work (NI) Order 1978 and all subordinate legislation to ensure that staff and service users enjoy the benefits of a safe environment. Throughout the year a range of health and safety assessments were carried out, not only on an individual level, but in relation to buildings and various facets of the work within the PPS. A full programme of inspections was carried out on PPS accommodation in the regional courthouses. A number of relatively minor accidents were also investigated over the course of the year.

During 2012-13 HSENI carried out a Stress at Work Survey within the PPS. A working group has considered the findings in detail and produced an action plan to ensure that priority issues are addressed as a matter of urgency.

A 'public consultations' area is also available on the PPS website and is used to publicise policy consultations as they issue. Previous consultations are stored in the 'Consultation Archive'.

## **Section 9: Complaints**

- **Please identify the number of Section 75 related complaints:**
  - **received and resolved by the authority (including how this was achieved);**
  - **which were not resolved to the satisfaction of the complainant;**
  - **which were referred to the Equality Commission.**

The Service did not receive any Section 75 complaints during 2013-14.

## **Section 10: Consultation and Engagement**

- **Please provide details of the measures taken to enhance the level of engagement with *individuals* and representative groups during the year.**
- **Please outline any use of the Commission's guidance on consulting with and involving children and young people.**

Under the umbrella of the PPS community outreach strategy, senior staff across all regions and business areas participate in various forums and events throughout the year. The purpose of outreach is to provide a clearer understanding of the work of the PPS and the role of the prosecutor, through engagement with the statutory, voluntary and community sectors, politicians, schools and universities, health professionals and the wider public.

Regional Prosecutors are involved in a wide range of community activity at a local level, having established links with Court User Groups, Community Relations Forums and other community groups, including groups working with victims of sexual or domestic violence. Members of legal staff also give talks at universities which has increased requests for work shadowing from law students.

Senior Policy and Information Section staff also continued to take an active role in outreach engagement throughout the year. They participated in a wide range of inter-agency groups, many of which cut across the criminal justice organisations, and also include voluntary sector representation - for example, Women's Aid and NSPCC. Policy Section staff represent the Service on numerous working groups both within the criminal justice system and with outside agencies such as the Hate Crime Delivery Group, the Human Trafficking Sub-Group and a cross border working group on the Mutual recognition of Penalty Points.

The Service has also provided input into the proposed legislative reforms relating to mental health issues in the criminal justice system. It has provided information to the DOJ-chaired interagency group set up to examine how such issues are currently dealt with, issues arising, and how they can best be addressed by new legislation.

Every year (for the past 3 years) the PPS participate in the Attorney General's Living Law Programme. This programme involves 6<sup>th</sup> form pupils from non-grammar schools. The numbers have grown every year from about 20 the first year to approximately 100 this year. The programme consists of a presentation on the PPS and its role, the Test for Prosecution; pupils have an opportunity to take prosecutorial decisions on mock cases and are shown how a case is progressed at court.

As a result of the programme we have had increased requests for work shadowing from students who have attended it.

Presentations were made to various groups within the Criminal Justice System and to the voluntary sector, community and minority groups such as Justice Committee Members, NGOs Group on Human Trafficking and Women's Aid.

Policy and other senior staff have regularly attended conferences and events arranged by voluntary and community sector organisations during the year, particularly to hear about issues which impact on the service provided by the PPS.

The Service continues to work closely with the Youth Justice Agency to address issues that affect young offenders, particularly through the Youth Engagement initiative which has closely involved representative groups such as the NSPCC and Engage Youth.

Members of the Service also provided training to statutory and voluntary organisations, for example Nexus and NSPCC.

Where appropriate, senior staff met with members of the public to address issues of particular concern. This commonly arises where a victim seeks a meeting to discuss the decision taken in a particular case.

During the year the Service has continued to promote Business in the Community's Employee Volunteering Scheme. PPS staff members have participated in a number of individual projects, such as the annual Cares Shop Challenge.

The Service participated in community events such as MELA, Belfast Pride and the Multi-Cultural Festival and Children's fun day at Magherafelt.

The Service also continued to hold information events at which disability equality speakers, such as Mindwise and The National Autistic Society addressed key staff within the organisation, with the aim of increasing the knowledge and understanding of the attitudinal barriers facing staff and/or service users.

The Director officially launched the PPS Policy for Prosecuting Cases of Human Trafficking by hosting an event at Belfast Chambers. Over seventy guests from a number of organisations across the criminal justice system and stakeholders from a number of Section 75 groups attended.

This year also saw the launch of phase 2 of the Victim and Witness Care Unit. The unit is now responsible for victims and witnesses involved in cases proceeding through Belfast Crown Court.

### **Autism Act (Northern Ireland) 2011**

The Autism Act (NI) 2011 came into law in August 2011. It both extended the remit of the Disability Discrimination Act 1995 and required that an inter-departmental Autism Strategy be produced.

The Strategy was published by the Department of Health, Social Services and Public Safety in January 2014 and has been produced with the input of, and consultation with, all government departments and other interested parties, such as the voluntary and community sector and users of public services. Its aim is to make public services better for people with autism, their families and carers.

One of the key actions for the DOJ (including the PPS) related to the production of new guidance written for people working in the Criminal Justice System. 'Autism: A Guide for criminal justice professionals' produced by The National Autistic Society and supported by the Department of Justice for Northern Ireland was published in February 2014. This guide provides background information about autism spectrum disorders and aims to assist all professionals working in the

Criminal Justice System, particularly police officers, solicitors, barristers, the Public Prosecution Service, the judiciary and the courts who may come into contact with someone who has autism. The PPS provided input into the guide by providing practical examples of cases involving people with autism.

A copy was forwarded to all staff and published on the PPS website and intranet. An 'Autism Factsheet', a one page summary of relevant information was also produced and provided to staff.

Training will also be arranged over the next year to raise awareness of Autism.

## **Section 11: The Good Relations Duty**

- **Please provide details of additional steps taken to implement or progress the good relations duty during the year. Please indicate any findings or expected outcomes from this work.**

The PPS works in partnership with the Police Service of Northern Ireland, the Northern Ireland Courts and Tribunals Service, the Northern Ireland Prison Service, the Probation Board for Northern Ireland, the Youth Justice Agency and the Department of Justice, as part of the Criminal Justice System Northern Ireland. The PPS is represented on the Criminal Justice Board which comprises the Heads of these Services.

The Director is a member of the Criminal Justice Delivery Group which is chaired by the Minister of Justice. This was established by the Minister to improve engagement between the most senior leaders within the criminal justice system, and to provide strategic oversight to the work of the Criminal Justice Board.

The provision of a regionally based service has provided new opportunities for Regional Prosecutors and their senior legal staff to increase direct engagement with community and voluntary groups and local criminal justice partners. The 2012-14 Community Outreach Strategy sets out the Service's commitment to strengthen and widen its engagement with all sections of the community. Through the outreach programme, the Service works to increase confidence across the whole community in the PPS as an organisation which provides an independent, fair and effective prosecution service to every section of society.

To this end, the PPS continues to work with its partner agencies, such as the police and the NI Courts and Tribunals Service, to help ensure that the whole criminal justice process brings perpetrators of hate crime to justice. The procedures set out in the PPS Hate Crime policy (which was published in December 2010) is aimed at ensuring consistency of approach in prosecuting hate crime and particularly in making the Court aware of its enhanced sentencing powers in relation to offences aggravated by hostility. Effective implementation and monitoring of this

policy should improve the confidence of the affected Section 75 groups and increase the reporting levels of such incidents.

During 2013-14 Policy and Information Section staff carried out a quality assurance review of the operation of the PPS Hate Crime Policy and an action plan has been devised to assist with the delivery of the policy. The key findings and recommendations will be shared with PSNI and DOJ.

- **Please outline any use of the Commission's Good Relations Guide.**

The Equality Commission's Good Relations Guide is available within the PPS. In addition, it is also available on our Intranet site along with other reference material on the statutory duties placed on public authorities.

## **Section 12: Additional Comments**

- **Please provide any additional information/comments.**

N/A

**Part B: 'Disability Duties'**  
**Annual Report 1 April 2013 / 31 March 2014**

**1. How many action measures for this reporting period have been**

9

Fully  
Achieved?

3

Partially  
Achieved?

5

Not  
Achieved?

2. Please outline the following detail on **all actions that have been fully achieved** in the reporting period.

2 (a) Please highlight what **public life measures** have been achieved to encourage disabled people to participate in public life at National, Regional and Local levels:

Level	Public Life Action Measures	Outputs <sup>1</sup>	Outcomes / Impact <sup>2</sup>
National <sup>3</sup>	The PPS does not have any responsibility for public appointments.	N/A	
Regional <sup>4</sup>			
Local <sup>5</sup>	Consider additional ways to establish links with disabled people: <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>to provide advice or assistance to PPS in</li> </ul>	Policy Team continues to actively participate in a range of meetings at which this group is represented.	Increased participation of disabled people in the policy development process resulting in more effective service provision.

<sup>1</sup> **Outputs** – defined as act of producing, amount of something produced over a period, processes undertaken to implement the action measure e.g. Undertook 10 training sessions with 100 people at customer service level.

<sup>2</sup> **Outcome / Impact** – what specifically and tangibly has changed in making progress towards the duties? What impact can directly be attributed to taking this action? Indicate the results of undertaking this action e.g. Evaluation indicating a tangible shift in attitudes before and after training.

<sup>3</sup> **National** : Situations where people can influence policy at a high impact level e.g. Public Appointments

<sup>4</sup> **Regional**: Situations where people can influence policy decision making at a middle impact level

<sup>5</sup> **Local** : Situations where people can influence policy decision making at lower impact level e.g. one off consultations, local fora.

	<p>relation to improving services or evaluating policy and practice.</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• to encourage inclusion of disabled people or their representatives within interagency groups.</li> </ul>	<p>For example the Hate Crime Delivery Group.</p>	<p>Increased participation of disabled people in these groups will provide insight on the impact of hate crime leading to better understanding of their needs.</p>
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2(b) What **training action measures** were achieved in this reporting period?

	Training Action Measures	Outputs	Outcome / Impact
1			
2			
3			
4			

2(c) What Positive attitudes **action measures** in the area of **Communications** were achieved in this reporting period?

	Communications Action Measures	Outputs	Outcome / Impact
1	A yearly request will be issued to staff to invite them to provide HR with confidential disability declarations.	'PEEPs' Forms – all staff were circulated and where appropriate advised to complete the form.	Improved data held and increased awareness of individual needs. Increased levels of staff confidence.
2			
3			

2 (d) What action measures were achieved to ‘**encourage others**’ to promote the two duties:

	Encourage others Action Measures	Outputs	Outcome / Impact
1	Set out our commitment to disability equality in the Corporate and Business Plans, of which this action plan forms a part.	The Corporate Plan 2011-14 and Annual Business Plan 2013-14 include commitments to take forward Equality and DDA requirements.	Key PPS planning documents take account of, and reinforce commitment to implementation of the disability duties and other requirements under DDA legislation.
2			
3			
4			

2 (e) Please outline **any additional action measures** that were fully achieved other than those listed in the tables above:

	Action Measures fully implemented (other than Training and specific public life measures)	Outputs	Outcomes / Impact
1	Seek opportunities for key disability equality speakers to address the Equality and Diversity Steering Group.	The Service held information events at which disability equality speakers, such as Mindwise and The National Autistic Society addressed key	Increased knowledge and understanding of the attitudinal barriers facing staff and / or service users will help to promote positive

		staff within the organisation.	attitudes across the wider PPS.  Policy development in this area will be better informed and support the participation of disabled people who need to engage with the PPS.
2	The Equality and Diversity Steering Group will monitor delivery of the actions within the Disability Action Plan and report to the Management Board/Senior Management Group	Regular updates are provided to the Management Board and Senior Management Group.	Commitment of senior management / policy makers will ensure a top down approach to embedding the disability duties and encouraging positive attitudes across the organisation.
3	Use will be made of staff roadshows, core briefs and other regular staff forums to maintain the awareness of disability equality legislation and PPS Disability Action Plan.	Staff are regularly updated via for example the staff brief and email.	Staff are aware of the continuing need to create and maintain a harmonious working environment and to ensure equality of service provision.
4	Introduce an Intermediary Scheme by April 2012 to assist people with communication difficulties or learning disabilities	The pilot of the scheme commenced in May 2013 and was restricted to indictable only offences occurring within the	A panel of accredited intermediaries will be established.

	to give evidence at court.	Belfast District Council area and which were prosecuted in Belfast Crown Court. From November 2013 this pilot was extended to include all indictable only offences committed in Northern Ireland and prosecuted in any Crown Court. It is anticipated that the pilot will run until November 2014, at which point a decision will be taken as to whether or not the scheme will be rolled out.	An evaluation of the scheme will consider the outcomes achieved, including whether there is increased participation by these groups of people.
5.	Conduct a Quality Assurance Review of the Operation of Hate Crime.	Review carried out by Policy and Information Section and an action plan has been devised to assist with the delivery of the policy. The key findings and recommendations will be shared with PSNI and DOJ	The evaluation will be enhanced through seeking views of people with disabilities, as one of the groups affected by Hate Crime, and will help to identify additional training needs.

3. Please outline what action measures have been **partly achieved** as follows:

	Action Measures partly achieved	Milestones <sup>6</sup> / Outputs	Outcomes/Impacts	Reasons not fully achieved
1	Conclude the review of correspondence to victims and witnesses, including accompanying leaflets, taking into account the specific needs of people with a range of disabilities including learning disabilities.	Review of correspondence to victims and witnesses completed. The majority of these letters have now been implemented.	Recommendations of the review implemented. Victims and witnesses with disabilities receive information from the PPS in a suitable format which will encourage their engagement the criminal justice process.	Review of accompanying leaflets and alternative formats still to be completed mainly due to the availability of resources.
2	The Diversity section on the intranet will be reviewed. Staff will be encouraged to provide articles or other items of interest and publicise events of particular interest to disabled staff or staff caring for disabled dependants.	Review completed and diversity pages updated.	Promotion of good staff attitudes, increased support for, and inclusion of, disabled staff	To be taken forward on appointment of the new Head of Media and Communications.

<sup>6</sup> **Milestones** – Please outline what part progress has been made towards the particular measures; even if full output or outcomes/ impact have not been achieved.

3	<p>Arrange equality and disability legislation awareness sessions for all staff including senior management through existing communication mechanisms and training sources.</p>	<p>The Equality Officer has provided the Management Board and the People and Resources Sub-Committee with an overview of how the Service promotes equality of opportunity and how it complies with Section 75 statutory duties.</p> <p>In April 2014, 9 VWCU staff attended Disability Awareness Training for 'Front Line Staff' provided by CAL.</p>	<p>Staff survey reflects and increasingly inclusive working environment.</p> <p>Raised staff awareness improves service delivery.</p>	<p>Disability Awareness training for nominated personnel to be taken forward in 2014-15.</p>
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**4. Please outline what action measures have not been achieved and the reasons why?**

	Action Measures not met	Reasons
1	Develop a designated policy in relation to the prosecution of cases involving victims, witnesses and defendants who have a mental, physical learning or sensory Disability	Publication of this policy was deferred, pending legislative changes.
2	Review the effectiveness of the 'special measures' arrangements to be introduced by the provisions of the Justice (NI) Bill 2010.	Deferred to 2014-15 mainly due to the availability of resources.
3	PPS will seek the views of disabled people and their representative organisations within its review of the Court Witness Expenses policy.	A planned review of court witness expenses has now commenced and a revised scheme will be implemented during 2014-15.
4	PPS will allocate a proportion of the overall Corporate Training Budget for provision of disability equality related training and will consider the use of external disability organisations to deliver training whether this may be appropriate.	The Centre for Applied Learning (CAL) provide a half day course on Disability Awareness for Frontline Staff. Three of these half day courses will be provided to nominated PPS staff in Autumn 2014. Staff will be nominated from all Regions and Functions, with a cross section of grades who are on the "frontline". These staff will then provide feedback on the suitability of the course. If the course is found fit for purpose, the course will be delivered to all PPS staff.
5	Review current disability legislation/awareness	As above

training provision and materials, including provision from the disability sector to ensure PPS staff continue to receive appropriate training.	
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5. What <b>monitoring tools</b> have been put in place to evaluate the degree to which actions have been effective / develop new opportunities for action?
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(a) Qualitative

Progress with the implementation of the Disability Action Plan is overseen by the Equality Officer and the Equality and Diversity Steering Group (EDSG) throughout the life of the plan. The EDSG consists of managers from across a wide range of business areas and includes both administrative and legal staff, as well as volunteer staff with an interest in diversity issues. The group is chaired by the Equality and Diversity Champion, who is a member of the PPS Management Board. Regular reports are provided to both the Senior Management Group and the Management Board.

(b) Quantitative

The PPS is committed to ensuring that the complaint handling arrangements are effective. Therefore on completion of each complaint case, a short follow-up questionnaire is sent to complainants asking them to provide feedback on the way their complaint was handled.

Monitoring is undertaken in a confidential way. All information provided is held securely and questionnaires can be submitted anonymously. In addition complainants are asked to provide some information about themselves (for example, age and gender). Monitoring of complaints is essential in this regard and can assist the PPS to deliver a better service.

6. As a result of monitoring progress against actions has your organisation either:
- made any **revisions** to your plan during the reporting period or
  - taken any **additional steps** to meet the disability duties which were **not outlined in your original** disability action plan / any other changes?

No

If yes please outline below:

	Revised/Additional Action Measures	Performance Indicator	Timescale
1			
2			
3			
4			
5			

7. Do you intend to make any further **revisions to your plan** in light of your organisation's annual review of the plan? If so, please outline proposed changes?

A revised Disability Action Plan has been developed for 2014-15 and has been published and forwarded to the Equality Commission.