

SUMMARY OF CONSULTATION RESPONSES

The PPS's Consultation on the Draft Equality Scheme issued on 8 July 2011 and closed on 7 October 2011. Five responses were received.

Responses were received from:

The Northern Ireland Association for Care and Resettlement of Offenders (NIACRO);
 Disability Action;
 The Committee on the Administration of Justice (CAJ)
 NICEM;
 The Equality Commission for Northern Ireland.

The comments raised were taken fully into consideration.

We have provided feedback to each consultee and a summary of the main points raised is set out below.

	NIACRO	
	Comment	PPS Response
1	The current consideration of equality schemes should be viewed as an opportunity to move beyond simply ticking the boxes of the Section 75 list, and to acknowledge the reality that people cannot be simplistically categorised or defined by one particular characteristic of their life. Whilst it is important to ensure that negative differential impacts are avoided, it is more important that the government and statutory bodies seek to target resources and interventions positively towards areas of greatest need.	Comments noted. PPS is in the process of developing a staff guide to stakeholder consultation. This guidance will emphasise the importance of early and effective consultation in the policy-making process.

	<p>Keen to share their experience of working with the most vulnerable in communities to assist others in making such decisions.</p> <p>Feel that there should be a shift in emphasis from simply committing the “necessary resources to make sure that the Section 75 statutory duties are complied with” to attempting to foster good relations and secure genuine engagement with as wide a range of stakeholders and interested parties as possible.</p> <p>We are keen that organisations re-engineer their processes to illustrate clearly that they are committed to early and genuine engagement with the community and voluntary section, and open to actually reconsidering policies and procedures in response to feedback received.</p> <p>The process of writing a consultation paper itself involves decisions in terms of what is within and outside the scope of consideration, and it is therefore essential that organisations routinely seek to engage at the initial drafting stages with community and voluntary sector organisations.</p>	
	DISABILITY ACTION	
	Comment	PPS response
1.	DA recommends the PPS to clearly commit the necessary resources in	An appropriate amendment has been

	terms of people, time and money within the revised equality scheme.	made to the Equality Scheme foreword.
2.	DA recommends the PPS to commit to effectively fulfilling its Section 75 duties across all rather than “appropriate” functions as per the Foreword in the ECNI Model Equality Scheme. (Foreword, page 2)	The wording has been amended to ‘across all of the relevant functions’.
3.	DA believes that the PPS should have cross referenced its arrangements for assessing its compliance with the relevant paragraph of the equality scheme for ease of reference (item 2.1, page 11)	An appropriate amendment has been to the Equality Scheme.
4.	Regarding questions and comments DA recommends the PPS to include paragraph 2.4 of the ECNI Model Equality Scheme in the revised equality scheme (page 11).	Paragraph already included at 2.10 (page 13)
5.	DA believes that the PPS should also commit to consulting on its Audit of Inequalities and screening of policies (item 3.1, page 16).	We have retained the wording in our consultation draft. This is broadly in line with the ECNI Model Equality Scheme. Consultation on screening of policies is covered in Chapter 4.
6.	DA has concerns in regard to targeted consultation. The PPS must ensure that it monitors and reviews this approach to consultation to ensure that it is open and accountable to all	New text has been added to para 3.2.1.

	representative and affected individuals and does not result in a “closed shop” list of consultees (item 3.2.1, page 16).	
7.	DA believes that 20 working days seems somewhat beyond a timely manner and requests the PPS to reduce this timescale in the revised equality scheme (item 3.2.3, page 17).	We have retained the timescale within the consultation draft. This is in line with other PPS commitments, for example, in respect of complaint handling and FOI.
8.	Consultation periods should be planned to ensure that they do not take place over holiday periods and the PPS should make the commitment to this in the equality scheme. (Item 3.2.7, page 18)	Para 3.2.7 has been amended to ‘the Service will consider allowing a longer period for the consultation’.
9.	DA believes that the PPS must commit to providing feedback in formats suitable to consultees as per paragraph 3.2.11 of the ECNI Model Equality Scheme (item 3.2.11, page 16)	Wording has been inserted stating that feedback can be provided on request in formats suitable to consultees.
10.	DA recommends that policy and decision makers receive general training on Section 75 and specific training on each of the 9 categories listed under Section 75 to ensure all equality of opportunity implications are considered.	Chapter 5 (para 5.4) has been amended to outline the PPS’s commitment to training. Para 5.5 mirrors the wording within the ECNI Model Equality Scheme.
11.	Likewise, for those deciding on the likely impact of a policy on equality of	Noted. Chapter 5 outlines the PPS

	<p>opportunity as being minor/major/none. DA believes that the PPS must establish a process and provide training to enable these decisions to be made consistently and with informed reasoning throughout the organisation (item 4.6, page 21).</p>	<p>commitments in relation to training, in particular paras 5.4 and 5.5.</p>
12.	<p>Regarding availability of the screening outcomes on the website DA believes consultees should be informed as soon as possible of results otherwise they may not be aware of a screening outcome for 3 months.</p> <p>Furthermore it is impossible for the under-resourced community voluntary section to check public authority websites on a daily basis (item 4.15, page 27 and 4.20, page 25).</p>	<p>We have not incorporated this suggestion however screening reports will be published quarterly on the PPS website and all the Service's consultees will receive notification of their publication.</p>
13.	<p>DA believes that the PPS must also commit to the collation, collection and analysis of existing relevant secondary sources of quantitative and qualitative data across all 9 categories. (item 4.29, page 27)</p>	<p>This wording has been inserted into the equality scheme.</p>
14.	<p>DA recommends that all Section 75 training should be reviewed and updated accordingly. Where training is centralised DA believes that the PPS must use its influence with the training provider (item 5.4, page 30).</p>	<p>Chapter 5 outlines the PPS's commitment to training, monitoring and evaluation.</p>
15.	<p>DA believes that the complaints procedure should outline how it will support the individual to bring his/her complaint (e.g. interpreter support, specialist transports costs, advocacy</p>	<p>It is not currently PPS policy to pay travelling expenses under such circumstances;</p>

	<p>services). The complaints procedure must be fully accessible and proactively disseminated to those affected by the Section 75 duties. (Chapter 8, pages 36-37)</p>	<p>however it is PPS policy to try to meet the particular needs of a person for example, by offering to meet at a location convenient to them.</p> <p>The Service will investigate the scope for provision of additional support, such as a sign language interpreter.</p>
COMMITTEE ON THE ADMINISTRATION OF JUSTICE		
Comment		PPS Response
1.	<p>CAJ acknowledges PPS’s efforts in producing a comprehensive draft equality scheme. We are encouraged to see that PPS has adopted the ECNI model scheme as a basis for its draft equality scheme, and expanded on it in parts. However, we are concerned by some divergences from the ECNI model scheme, which could affect the application of the PPS equality scheme in practice. In this submission, we will query the divergences from the ECNI model scheme and also suggest a few additions, which we believe would strengthen the PPS equality scheme.</p>	<p>Comments noted.</p>
2.	<p>Exemption for prosecution of offences:</p> <p>We acknowledge, that further to s38 Justice (Northern Ireland) Act 2002</p>	<p>Comments noted. Wording has been amended to ‘these exemptions apply to</p>

	<p>and s75(4A) Northern Ireland Act 1998, PPS's functions related to the prosecution of offences is exempt from s75(1) and (2). However, we believe that PPS has extended this exemption by applying it 'to prosecution decisions and also prosecutorial policies relating to such decisions' (para 1.1).</p> <p>We therefore recommend that the PPS limit the exemption of s75 to its functions relating to the selection and running of individual cases. We recommend that s75 should be applied to prosecutorial policies and that prosecutorial decisions should be monitored <i>ex post facto</i> in order to ensure the prosecutorial policy is appropriate and/or effectively applied in practice. We therefore request amendments to both para 1.1 and para 4.28 PPS draft equality scheme in order to reflect this change.</p> <p>(paras 1.1 and 4.28)</p>	<p>all functions in relation to decisions as to prosecution and to the prosecutorial function, which includes prosecutorial and pre-charge advice'.</p>
<p>3.</p>	<p>Consultation methods:</p> <p>We note that PPS's draft equality scheme diverges from the ECNI model scheme in relation to consultation, which we believe could affect the application of s75 in practice.</p> <p>CAJ highlighted matters in relation to:</p> <p>Para 3.2.1 Para 3.2.2 Para 3.2.3 Para 3.2.11</p>	<p>Comments noted.</p> <p>Paragraphs have been amended as appropriate.</p>

	Para 3.28	We have retained the wording in our consultation draft.
4.	<p>Screening of policies:</p> <p>In relation to the publication of screening, it would be helpful for consultees to be informed when screening forms are posted on the PPS Website.</p>	We have not incorporated this suggestion however screening reports will be published quarterly on the PPS website and all the Service's consultees will receive notification of their publication.
5.	<p>Monitoring of data:</p> <p>In relation to the monitoring of data, CAJ recommends five key changes to the PPS's draft equality scheme.</p> <p>1. we recommend that monitoring also be applied to the application of PPS's prosecutorial policy in order to ensure that any adverse impacts on s75 groups be addressed.</p> <p>2. we recommend that PPS commit to 'monitoring more broadly to identify opportunities to better promote equality of opportunity and good relations in line with Equality Commission guidance'. We recommend that the</p>	<p>Comments noted. However at present the Service will restrict its monitoring to those aspects of providing a public prosecution service which are not directly linked to prosecution decisions.</p> <p>Para 4.28 has been amended to include the commitment to identifying opportunities to better promote equality of</p>

	<p>PPS explicitly commits to monitor more broadly than ‘adverse impacts’. (Paras 4.28 & 4.32 ECNI Model Scheme).</p> <p>3. we note that PPS has not committed in its draft equality scheme to carry out ‘the collection, collation and analysis of existing relevant secondary sources of quantitative and qualitative data across all nine quality categories’. (Para 4.29)</p> <p>4. we welcome that PPS has published and is consulting on its audit of inequalities and action plan. We recommend that PPS commits to publishing and consult on its audit of inequalities in the future, by explicitly adding it as a document for which PPS will seek input from its stakeholders.</p> <p>We therefore hope that any data gaps identified in the audit of inequalities will be addressed, and that the audit will provide a useful tool for policy-makers when applying s75 beyond the scope of the action-based plan.</p>	<p>opportunity and good relations.</p> <p>This wording has been inserted into the equality scheme.</p> <p>The PPS is not publishing and consulting on its audit of inequalities. As per ‘Section 75 of the Northern Ireland Act 1998 A Guide for public Authorities’ issued by the Equality Commission, consultation will take place on the Action Plan.</p> <p>The PPS inequalities were identified through surveys/research, by evidence provided by service users and those affected by its policies e.g. interagency groups, CJINI reports etc and from the direct experience of staff within the Service who deal with and</p>
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	<p>5. the way in which PPS uses its data and monitoring information is vital to promoting equality of opportunity. We are therefore concerned that in the PPS draft scheme, where monitoring has found that a policy results in greater adverse impact than expected, PPS has qualified the action that it would be prepared to take. In the ECNI Model Scheme, public authorities should 'revise' the policy. The PPS only commits that a policy should be 'revisited where appropriate' (para 4.30)</p>	<p>assist persons in affected groups.</p> <p>The Service will monitor and update the action plan as necessary throughout the lifetime of the equality scheme to ensure that it remains effective and relevant to its functions and work.</p> <p>Wording has been amended to 'the service will ensure that the policy is revised, where appropriate, to achieve better outcomes for relevant equality groups'.</p>
<p>6.</p>	<p>Complaints procedure:</p> <p>We note, with concern, that PPS has added a qualification to the ECNI recommendations with which it will comply post-investigation (para 8.8).</p>	<p>Comments noted. The wording as been amended to 'The service will make all efforts to implement promptly any recommendations arising out of any</p>

		Commission investigation’.
7.	CAJ recommends that PPS include statements in its equality scheme to explain the operation of s75, which is often misunderstood.	We have taken the lead from the ECNI’s Model Equality Scheme in the content of the Equality Scheme. A glossary of terms is included at Appendix 5.
	NICEM	
	Comment	PPS Response
1.	NICEM considers that the bureaucratic application of equality schemes by many public authorities has turned section 75 from an equality ‘mainstreaming’ duty into an equality ‘sidelining’ duty. NICEM considers that section 75 itself and Schedule 9 of the Act have many deficiencies. Nonetheless the Effectiveness Review conducted by the EC, the third edition of its guide on Statutory duties and the introduction of audits of inequality and action plans all provide a stimulus for the reinvigoration of the mainstreaming duty in section 75.	Comments noted.
2.	NICEM expects the Service to submit a mature equality scheme to the ECNI. It should build on the experience of nine years of operating under its	Comments noted. It should be noted that the PPS, established in 2005, was

	<p>original scheme and reflect the particular functions of the Service and challenges that it faces.</p> <p>NICEM also accepts that drafting an audit of inequalities and an action plan is ‘new territory’ for everyone involved in the process. We look forward to the production of the Service’s draft audit of inequalities and action plan.</p> <p>NICEM expects both audits and action plans to be ‘living documents’ within the work of the Service. We expect them to be regularly reviewed and made more comprehensive and effective.</p> <p>We consider that the development of audits and action plans is not some form of alternative to the effective compliance of the Service with its equality scheme, but rather a means of helping the Service adopt best practice in the proactive promotion of equality of opportunity in its work.</p>	<p>designated as a public authority for the purposes of S75 compliance in 2006. The first PPS Equality Scheme was published in 2008.</p> <p>The Service will monitor and update the action plan as necessary throughout the lifetime of the equality scheme to ensure that it remains effective and relevant to its functions and work.</p>
<p>3.</p>	<p>Consistency with ECNI Model Scheme:</p> <p>In NICEM’s view, there should be a non-regression principle in relation to the consistency of draft equality schemes with the ECNI Model Scheme. We would have preferred if the Service has been required by the Commission to indicate any deviation from the minimum requirements of the Model Scheme with an explanation of the deviation. We feel that public</p>	<p>Comments noted. The summary report on the consultation will specifically address respondents’ comments on the consultation.</p>

	<p>authorities should be required to explain deviations from the Model Scheme in the schemes which they submit to the Commission for approval and that the submitted schemes should be circulated to consultees so that they can comment upon the deviations and explanations.</p> <p>It would appear that the Service has broadly followed the Model Scheme and welcome this approach.</p>	
<p>4.</p>	<p>Customised Equality Schemes:</p> <p>NICEM nevertheless believes that public authorities should make more efforts to customise their schemes to their own functions.</p> <p>We do not accept that, because the scheme is a 'legal document', it should merely reiterate the terms of the Model Scheme. No doubt, the Commission wishes to approve a scheme within which the obligations of the Service are clearly set out, so that the Commission can, if necessary, conduct its investigations into alleged failures to comply with it. But this genuine concern is met by the 'non-regression' principle outlined above.</p> <p>In our view, the scheme should be both inward and outward looking. It should be relevant to those who work for the public authority, so that they can see its role in mainstream equality in its organisation.</p>	<p>Comments noted.</p> <p>Chapter 1 sets out the Service's structure and functions.</p> <p>Regular updates are provided to staff</p>

	<p>It should also explain fully to recipients of services, and the public more generally, what the authority actually does so that they can also see how the mainstreaming of equality is relevant to them. Given that most public authorities have been operating under their original schemes, it should be easy to include practical examples of how the authority has already complied with its original scheme, not just on screening and EQIAs but also on other commitments such as the collection of evidence and the monitoring of policies.</p> <p>The Service’s draft scheme sets out the scope for its work in some detail but more could be done to give practical examples, perhaps through case studies of previous screening and EQIAs.</p> <p>The Scheme could be customised to the Service’s own particular circumstances and give examples of what it has done under its original scheme, taking examples from its Annual Reports to the Commission.</p>	<p>regarding Section 75 and disability matters via the regular PPS staff brief. The PPS also has in place a number of local equality drivers.</p> <p>The scheme broadly follows the ECNI Model Equality Scheme.</p>
5.	<p>Collection of Data:</p> <p>We consider that 4.29 of the Service’s Scheme sets out these important commitments in a compressed but adequate fashion. We look forward to</p>	<p>Comments noted.</p>

	<p>all the recommendations on monitoring of the Criminal Justice Inspectorate¹ being implemented across the criminal justice system, including in the Service.</p> <p>We would encourage the Service to adopt the OFMDFM Guidance for Monitoring Racial Equality (July 2011), which provides monitoring questions that will disaggregate the ‘white’ category to identify members of newcomer communities.</p>	<p>PPS will consider this policy in any future monitoring arrangements.</p>
6.	<p>NICEM welcomes the Service’s commitment to screening and EQIAs in §§4.4-4.15, particularly the commitment in §4.11 “normally” to conduct an EQIA where the likely impact is ‘major’, and its commitment to conduct EQIAs in accordance with ECNI Guidance in §4.17.</p>	<p>Comments noted.</p>
7.	<p>One significant variation on the Model Scheme is in relation to training.</p> <p>A number of comments were noted in relation to paras 5.4 and 5.5 and the Centre for Applied Learning (CAL).</p> <p>Can the Department give us an assurance that it will undertake a wide-ranging consultation exercise on its commitment to develop “[t]raining and awareness raising</p>	<p>Chapter 5 (para 5.4) has been amended to outline the PPS’s commitment to training.</p> <p>The Centre for Applied Learning is the sole provider of generic-equality related training for the Northern Ireland Civil Service. However</p>

¹ CJINI, Section 75 The impact of Section 75 of the Northern Ireland Act 1998 on the criminal justice system in Northern Ireland (2009).

<p>programmes ... in association with the appropriate Section 75 groups”?”</p> <p>In our view, it is essential that officers in the Service are fully “aware of the issues experienced by ethnic and religious minorities” in order to perform their duties under section 75 and more generally. We would like to know how the Service proposes to fulfil its commitment, in §5.5, that “[t]raining and awareness raising programmes will, where relevant, be developed in association with the appropriate Section 75 groups and staff.”</p> <p>Can the Service give us a commitment that it will enter into discussions with the Equality Commission and s75 groups on its training commitments?</p> <p>We are also strongly of the view that this phrase “by or sourced through CAL” should be deleted from the relevant sub-paragraph in §5.4.</p>	<p>where appropriate more focused training will be provided to ensure that staff are aware of the issues experienced by the range of Section 75 groups. As stated in the Equality Scheme (para 5.5) training and awareness raising programmes will, where relevant, be developed in association with the appropriate Section 75 groups and staff. Where a specific need is identified PPS is keen to engage with voluntary sector groups in the delivery of training and seminars. Recent examples have included sessions for staff delivered by Mindwise and Mencap and further training events are planned.</p> <p>The scope of such training is reviewed on an ongoing basis by the PPS Equality and Diversity Steering Group, in conjunction with the</p>
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		PPS Policy Section.
8.	<p>Draft Audits of Inequality and Action Plans:</p> <p>We look forward to receiving the Service’s draft Audits and Action Plans</p>	Comments noted.
9.	<p>Equality outcomes through the effective operation of equality schemes:</p> <p>NICEM welcomes the introduction of audits of inequalities and action plans as part of the equality scheme revision process. However our first concern is to see the section 75 mainstreaming duty work much more effectively than it has over the past 10 years. The primary purpose of the audit of inequalities, and subsequent gap analysis, is to satisfy the Service’s duty under its scheme to collect evidence of inequalities for the purpose of effective screening and EQIA processes and to improve the monitoring of policies across the nine section 75 grounds.</p> <p>Similarly the primary purpose of the Service’s action plan is to show examples of actions, outputs and outcomes which the Service intends to achieve in the process of mainstreaming equality throughout its work and through the implementation of its equality scheme. The content of the action plan, even when reviewed and updated every year, is not a roadmap of all that the Service seeks</p>	<p>Comments noted.</p> <p>It should be noted that the PPS, established in 2005, was designated as a public authority for the purposes of S75 compliance in 2006. The first PPS Equality Scheme was published in 2008.</p>

	<p>to achieve through its screening and EQIA processes and must complement, rather than displace, the timetable appended to the Service's equality scheme.</p> <p>In short, the valuable addition of audits of inequalities and action plans is not an alternative to the effective operation of the Service's equality scheme. Rather these audits and action plans allow the Service, not merely to comply with its equality scheme, but also to adopt best practice in terms of tackling the inequalities which ethnic and religious minority communities face.</p>	
10.	<p>Corporate and business planning:</p> <p>We accept that this call by the ECNI for revised schemes may well have occurred in the middle of business and corporate planning cycles. However we do wish to see the rapid integration of scheme timetables and action plans into these planning processes.</p>	Comments noted
11.	<p>We note that a key recommendation in the CJI Report was in relation to a Consultative Forum for the sector:-</p> <p>"We recommend that a consultative forum on criminal justice matters be established encompassing the major criminal justice agencies represented on the Criminal Justice Service. One of its first tasks should be to review, in</p>	Work is ongoing through the Equity and Diversity Sub-Group of the Criminal Justice Board.

	<p>conjunction with the section 75 representative groups, current consultation methods across the criminal justice system (paragraph 3.27).”</p> <p>In our view, we also think it would be very useful to have a Consultative Forum across criminal justice sector including representatives of the section 75 groups. This Forum should be an annual opportunity to step away from day-to-day consultations on screening and EQIAs. The focus should be on a holistic overview of the operation of the Service’s scheme, including the ‘underpinning’ duties, such as collection of evidence, training of staff and monitoring of policies. This Forum could also consider the Service’s gap analysis and actions directed at filling those gaps.</p> <p>We suggest that this overview Forum meeting should take place when the Service has its Annual Report to the ECNI in a late draft form, as the details to be considered at the Forum meeting should all be included in that draft</p>	
12.	<p>We consider that the Service has made a conscientious effort to follow the Model Scheme in its drafting of its revised Scheme. However, we have concerns on the training provided to the Service and how the Service proposes to involve section 75 groups in both the development and delivery of its awareness-raising</p>	<p>Comments noted. See point 7 above.</p>

	training.	
	EQUALITY COMMISSION	
	Comments	PPS Response
1.	<p>The Commission acknowledges and welcomes the fact that the approach taken by the PPS in producing a revised equality scheme is one which is broadly consistent with the Commission’s model equality scheme. The Commission notes the particular statutory context of the PPS in relation to the discharge of its Section 75 statutory duties and the exclusion, as per Section 75 (4), (A) of the Northern Ireland Act 1998 (as amended), of its functions relating to the prosecution of offences from those duties.</p> <p>The Commission also notes that the PPS is in the process of developing an equality action plan which will be based on an audit of inequalities. The Commission looks forward to the completion of the PPS’s audit of inequalities and the development and implementation of its equality action plan. The Commission would advise that key stakeholders are kept fully informed of progress on their development.</p>	Comments noted.
2.	<p>Foreword:</p> <p>We note the intent of the PPS to demonstrate leadership at the highest level and high level commitment to the discharge of the Section 75 statutory</p>	Comments noted.

	<p>duties through the commitments contained in the foreword.</p> <p>We welcome that the foreword sets out the responsibilities of the PPS. It may be helpful to include information in the first paragraph of the foreword that the Directors' relevant functions will be delivered by the PPS.</p> <p>We would recommend that the PPS clarifies in the foreword that the Acting Director of Public Prosecution is fully committed to the effective fulfilment of the Section 75 statutory duties across all of the relevant functions of the PPS including its employment and procurement functions.</p> <p>In addition, we would recommend that this commitment includes the necessary resources in terms of people, time and money in order to ensure effective implementation of the PPS's equality scheme and compliance with its Section 75 statutory duties.</p>	<p>The wording has been amended to 'across all of the relevant functions'.</p> <p>An appropriate amendment has been made to the Equality Scheme.</p>
<p>3.</p>	<p>Introduction:</p> <p>The Commission welcomes the inclusion of information on the functions undertaken by the PPS. Whilst recognising the statutory context in respect of PPS functions, the Commission would however, recommend that you expand upon and provide more detailed information on the range of options available for dealing with offenders other than through prosecution and how such</p>	<p>Comments noted. An appropriate amendment has been made to the Equality Scheme.</p>

	<p>functions are delivered.</p> <p>In addition you may wish to provide some further detailed information on the range of additional services available to enhance the effectiveness of the PPS. It is not clear from the draft equality scheme which functions PPS consider to be in the exclusion of prosecutorial functions and which they consider are subject to the duties e.g. is prosecutorial advice and pre-charge advice excluded from the Section 75 statutory duties. The Commission recommends that this text is amended to clarify which functions the PPS consider would be subject to the Section 75 statutory duties.</p>	<p>Comments noted. Wording has been amended to 'these exemptions apply to all functions in relation to decisions as to prosecution and to the prosecutorial function, which includes prosecutorial and pre-charge advice'.</p>
<p>4.</p>	<p>Arrangements for assessing compliance with the Section 75 duties:</p> <p>The Commission notes that the PPS is currently developing an equality action plan which will be developed on the basis of an audit of inequalities.</p> <p>The Commission welcomes the fact that the PPS's equality action plan, once developed, will be aligned with its corporate and business planning cycles and that implementation of action measures will be incorporated into its business planning process.</p> <p>In addition, the Commission welcomes the appointment of an Equality Champion and the establishment of an Equality and Diversity Steering Group</p>	<p>Comments noted.</p>

	<p>within the PPS to ensure fulfilment of the PPS's Section 75 statutory obligations.</p>	
<p>5.</p>	<p>Arrangements for consulting:</p> <p>Page 16, Para 3.2.1, the Commission advises that the PPS may wish to adopt the model equality scheme wording at this paragraph and also provide examples of how consultation will be undertaken.</p> <p>Page 14, para 3.2.5 of the model equality scheme refers to a programme of awareness raising on the Section 75 statutory duties. The Commission would advise that PPS commitment (page18, para 3.2.5) to notification of the development of an equality scheme and equality action plan, internal organisational and consultation meetings, whilst welcome, would not equate to a programme of awareness raising for consultees on the Section 75 statutory duties. We would advise that the PPS may wish to give further consideration to the development of such an awareness raising programme.</p> <p>Page19, para 3.2.8, the Commission would advise PPS adopts the model equality scheme wording at this paragraph.</p>	<p>New text has been added to para 3.2.1.</p> <p>Paragraph 3.2.5 has been amended to include the bullet point 'seek opportunities through the Community Outreach programme to raise awareness of individuals or representatives of Section 75 groups'.</p> <p>We consider that the commitments given in para 3.2.8 are proportionate. Of course the PPS will consider particular needs of individuals</p>

	<p>Page 19 para 3.3 the Commission recommends that full contact details, including a textphone/SMS number are provided at this point.</p>	<p>such as provision of interpreters or signer.</p> <p>Full contact details have been added.</p>
<p>6.</p>	<p>Arrangements for assessing, monitoring and publishing the impact of policies:</p> <p>We note the PPS's arrangements for assessing, monitoring and publishing the impacts of policies and welcome its commitment to utilising the tools of screening and equality impact assessment for the assessment of policies.</p> <p>Page 27, para 4.28 the Commission recommends that the PPS include in this paragraph, a commitment to monitoring more broadly to identify opportunities to better promote equality of opportunity and good relations.</p> <p>The Commission notes the commitments to collection, collation and analysis of data and would recommend that the PPS adopts the commitments in relation to secondary data collection, as contained in the model scheme.</p> <p>Para 4.30, the Commission notes the inclusion of a caveat 'where possible'</p>	<p>Comments noted.</p> <p>Para 4.28 has been amended to include the commitment to identifying opportunities to better promote equality of opportunity and good relations.</p> <p>This wording has been inserted into the equality scheme.</p> <p>Wording has been amended to 'the</p>

	<p>in this paragraph and a commitment to 'revisit', rather than 'revise' a policy as per model equality scheme recommendations.</p> <p>The Commission would recommend that the PPS outlines in this section any additional arrangements it has in place for monitoring.</p>	<p>service will ensure that the policy is revised, where appropriate, to achieve better outcomes for relevant equality groups'.</p> <p>Recommendation has been noted.</p>
7.	<p>Staff training:</p> <p>The Commission welcomes the PPS's training commitments as detailed in its draft equality scheme</p>	<p>Comments noted.</p>
8.	<p>Arrangements for ensuring and assessing public access to information and services we provide:</p> <p>The Commission notes the PPS's arrangements for public access to information and its services.</p> <p>The Commission would recommend that in section 6.3 on access to information/services, the PPS sets out more detailed information on its arrangements for providing information to children and young people, people with learning disabilities and minority ethnic communities.</p> <p>In addition, the Commission would recommend that the PPS further outlines at para 6.7 any other arrangements it has in place for</p>	<p>Comments noted.</p> <p>An appropriate amendment has been made to para 6.3.</p> <p>Para 6.7 has been amended to outline the Service's arrangements put in</p>

	ensuring public access to its services.	place for ensuring public access to its services.
9.	<p>Timetable for measures we propose in this equality scheme:</p> <p>Paragraph 7.2 refers to Appendix 4 as including the PPS's commitment to develop an equality action plan. The Commission would recommend that Appendix 4 also includes a measure 'to implement/deliver an equality action plan'.</p>	Measure added to Appendix 4.
10.	<p>Our complaints procedure:</p> <p>The Commission notes the commitment of the PPS to resolving any complaints it receives in relation to compliance with its equality scheme.</p>	Comments noted.
11.	<p>Publication of our equality scheme:</p> <p>The Commission welcomes and notes that the PPS will produce its equality scheme in Easy Read and other alternative formats. The Commission also welcomes the PPS's arrangements for disseminating its equality scheme to children and young people and to people with disabilities.</p>	Comments noted.
12.	<p>Review of our equality scheme:</p> <p>The Commission welcomes the PPS's commitment to undertake a thorough review of its equality scheme within the statutory timeframe.</p>	Comments noted.

13.	<p>Appendices:</p> <p>The Commission notes the content of the Appendices to the PPS's draft equality scheme.</p>	Noted.
14.	<p>Appendix 4: Timetable of Measures, the Commission would advise that the timetable of measures includes a measure to implement an equality action plan</p>	Measure added to Appendix 4.
15.	<p>Equality Action Plan:</p> <p>The Commission welcomes that the PPS, following the undertaking of its audit of inequalities, will publish its equality action plan which details the action measures the PPS will undertake to better promote equality of opportunity and good relations.</p> <p>As you know, the Commission will not consider the content of equality action plans as part of the approval process for equality schemes. However, we welcome the PPS's demonstration of commitment to the implementation of its equality scheme and the discharge of its statutory obligations under Section 75 of the Northern Ireland Act 1998 through the commitment to develop an equality action plan following the completion of an audit of inequalities.</p> <p>The Commission would advise that the PPS reviews and updates its equality action plan to ensure that it remains effective and relevant to the PPS's</p>	<p>Comments noted.</p> <p>The Service will monitor and update the action plan as necessary throughout</p>

	functions and work. We would also advise that the PPS inform the Commission of any changes or amendments to its equality action plan and include this information in its annual progress report to the Commission.	the lifetime of the equality scheme to ensure that it remains effective and relevant to its functions and work.
16.	<p>Conclusion:</p> <p>The Commission welcomes the approach taken by the PPS, particularly with regard to use of the Commission's model equality scheme and the new Guide to the Statutory Duties. However, the Commission would recommend that the additional advice contained in this response is fully considered by the PPS.</p>	<p>Comments noted. Full consideration was given to the matters raised by consultees and their comments have helped to shape the final document.</p>

The PPS would like to thank all those who responded for their comments.



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