

EQUALITY COMMISSION FOR NORTHERN IRELAND
Public Authority 2008 - 2009
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 2008 to 31 March 2009**. This template also includes a number of questions regarding implementation of Section 49A of the DDO from the **1 April 2008 to 31 March 2009**. 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 2009**.

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

Public Prosecution Service (PPS)

Equality Officer

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DDO (if different from above):

S75 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), established in 2005 and designated as a public authority for the purposes of S75 compliance in 2006, has been through a period of continuous development and expansion necessitated by the drive to change from a centrally based organisation to a regionally based operation following recommendations of the Criminal Justice Review. In March 2009, the fifth regional office opened in Londonderry, known as Foyle Chambers, the others being situated in Lisburn, Belfast, Ballymena and Omagh. Negotiations during the year to procure a site for the sixth office in Newry unfortunately failed to reach a satisfactory conclusion, however it is still anticipated that a Newry office will be operational by the end of the current financial year (March 2010). The provision of regional offices has greatly improved access to services and increased the support available at a local level to victims and witnesses, through the locally based Community Liaison Teams which are located and accessible in each office.

Media and Communications

An important initiative during the reporting year was the appointment of a Media and Communications Officer with the specific remit of introducing a proactive approach to engagement with the media, as has not been the case previously, and to undertake the development of a wider Communications Strategy. This will promote a better understanding within the media, and consequently within the general public, of the role of the PPS and how the organisation is striving to provide a first class prosecution

service for all the people of Northern Ireland. The Director of Public Prosecutions has stated that the PPS must make every effort to explain to the community what we do as prosecutors and what services we provide to and for them. These initiatives will build upon the work carried out within the service's Community Outreach Strategy.

Disability Action Plan

As required under DDA legislation, the PPS produced its first draft Disability Action Plan (2009 to 2011) during March 2009, which issued as a joint consultation with the outcome of the screening exercise that had been undertaken to consider equality of opportunity within existing PPS policies. This full consultation was advertised in the press and placed on the PPS website. It was also notified individually to all the bodies listed in the Equality Scheme, with the consultation period running to 30 June 2009. Specific actions within the plan aim to raise awareness of the needs of people with a disability through staff training, improve accessibility to both our website and buildings and continue to further develop links with community and voluntary representative groups to inform our service provision.

Appointment of Youth Champions

Dedicated 'Youth Champions' were appointed in each region during the year as part of a strategy to improve consistency and to promote best practice in dealing with cases involving young persons. In many cases, Youth Champions now take the prosecution decision and prosecute the case themselves in the Youth Court. The Youth Champions were nominated this year for a CJSNI award in the category of "Outstanding

contribution to working with young people in the CJSNI” and were highly commended by the judging panel.

Witness Referral Scheme

A key development in service provision during this year has been the introduction of a Witness Referral Scheme in partnership with Victim Support Northern Ireland (VSNI). Details of adult witnesses in Magistrates’ and Youth Court are sent by PPS to VSNI in advance of their attendance at court, which enables VSNI to contact the witness and offer their services. While all witnesses are given an opportunity to opt out of the scheme, early evaluation has demonstrated a high level of witness participation to date.

- **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?**

Accommodation

The PPS regional accommodation programme was not completed during 2008-09, largely due to difficulties in the procurement of suitable accommodation in Newry. It is intended that the Newry office, which is the last of the six regional offices planned for the PPS, will be opened by the end of this financial year, providing an accessible, local service for the people in the southern area.

Communication Strategy

The PPS is at the heart of the criminal justice system and is committed to providing a service in which all the people of Northern Ireland can have confidence. The organisation is aware that community engagement is key to fulfilling this objective. During this summer, we will design and

implement a comprehensive communication strategy for the period 2009-2011 to engage with the community, the media and key stakeholders including the voluntary sector. Through more open communication with both the media and our service users, the PPS aims to increase public awareness and understanding of the work of the service and confidence in how it operates.

‘Giving of Reasons’

In cases where there has been a decision not to prosecute, the current PPS policy is to give reasons in all cases, albeit in the most general terms. Where a request for detailed reasons is made, prosecutors will consider what further information may reasonably be given. A pilot scheme ran in Southern region from August 2008 to January 2009 where detailed reasons were provided to victims and their families in cases where there has been a ‘no prosecution’ decision without them having to make a specific request for more information. Victim Support were consulted on the operation of the pilot and provided valuable assistance in the drafting of sample letters. A total of 170 such letters were issued to victims explaining the reasons for no prosecution. Following the evaluation it has been decided to extend the scheme to a limited category of cases in which no prosecution decisions are made – these categories include homicide, sexual offences, hate crime and those involving victims who are vulnerable on account of their age or mental or physical incapacity. In setting out these categories of cases, the Director has considered the findings of the NI Omnibus Survey (January 2009) which included questions on the types of crime in Northern Ireland that are of greatest public concern. The revised scheme will be

implemented during 2009-10 and will include a training programme for all prosecutors.

'Hate Crime' Policy

Once an offence is perceived by the victim or any other person to be motivated by hate or prejudice towards a person's race, religion, sexual orientation or disability then it is a Hate Crime. Work continued throughout 2008-09 on the development of the PPS's policy on 'hate crime', which introduces new processes to assist in the identification of cases in which there is an aggravating motive for an offence. This will also allow prosecutors to alert the courts to such a factor prior to sentencing. The PPS Hate Crime policy statement was issued in July for a full public consultation which will close on 30 September 2009. During 2009-10, the new processes will be implemented and training will be provided for approximately 170 legal staff.

Rape Policy

The policy for prosecuting cases involving rape will issue for consultation during the summer. The Policy aims to explain the way the PPS deals with cases involving rape and provide guidance about how decisions as to prosecution are taken in these cases and the assistance which will be given to victims and witnesses. The Policy also provides guidance to prosecutors on dealing with cases involving rape. This includes what happens when a victim withdraws support for the prosecution or no longer wishes to give evidence, considerations when a decision is taken to continue with a prosecution against the victim's wishes, Public Interest considerations, bail and sentencing. It is intended to raise awareness of the relevant issues amongst prosecutors (both Public Prosecutors and

Barristers in independent practice who may be instructed by the Director) and to address and challenge the myths and stereotyping that can exist in relation to rape. The Policy applies to all types of rape case, including marital, relationship, acquaintance and stranger rape against both male and female victims.

Complaints

Complaints about the service delivered by the PPS (ie non-prosecutorial complaints) are dealt with by an Independent Assessor. The Annual Report of the Independent Assessor of Complaints was published in June 2009 and is available on the PPS website at www.ppsni.gov.uk

Information in the report is used by senior management to identify areas for improvement within our service delivery and to develop the necessary action to address issues. Complaints regarding compliance with the PPS Equality Scheme are dealt with as set out in that document (see Section 8).

Please give examples of changes to policies or practices which have resulted in outcomes. If the change was a result of an EQIA please tick the appropriate box in column 3:

	Outline change in policy or practice which have resulted in outcomes	Tick if result of EQIA
Persons of different religious belief	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Rollout of the Witness Referral Scheme which enables Victim Support to offer assistance to adult witnesses at an early stage has resulted in a high level of witness participation 	
Persons of different political opinion	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Rollout of the Witness Referral Scheme which enables Victim Support to offer assistance to adult witnesses at an early stage has resulted in a high level of witness participation 	
Persons of different racial groups	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Rollout of the Witness Referral Scheme which enables Victim Support to offer assistance to adult witnesses at an early stage has resulted in a high level of witness participation Tender exercise conducted to procure language interpreter services 	
Persons of different age	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> improved 'special measures' procedures for vulnerable witnesses Appointment of 'Youth Champions' in each region to deal specifically with cases involving young persons Rollout of the Witness Referral Scheme which enables Victim Support to offer assistance to adult witnesses at an early stage has resulted in a high level of witness participation 	
Persons with different marital status	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Rollout of the Witness Referral Scheme which enables Victim Support to offer assistance to adult witnesses at an early stage has resulted in a high level of witness participation 	
Persons of different sexual orientation	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> improved 'special measures' procedures for vulnerable witnesses Rollout of the Witness Referral Scheme which enables Victim Support to offer assistance to adult witnesses at an early stage has resulted in a high level of witness participation 	
Men and women generally	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> policy on prosecution of domestic violence cases Rollout of the Witness Referral Scheme which enables Victim Support to offer 	

	assistance to adult witnesses at an early stage has resulted in a high level of witness participation	
Persons with and without a disability	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • improved 'special measures' procedures for vulnerable witnesses • Rollout of the Witness Referral Scheme which enables Victim Support to offer assistance to adult witnesses at an early stage has resulted in a high level of witness participation • Tender exercise conducted to procure sign language interpretation services 	
Persons with and without dependants	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Rollout of the Witness Referral Scheme which enables Victim Support to offer assistance to adult witnesses at an early stage has resulted in a high level of witness participation 	

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 2008-09**

The Corporate Plan 2008-2011 includes objectives to “improve public confidence by engaging with the community” and “to ensure that our service delivery addresses the needs of victims and witnesses of crime” under two of its Strategic Priorities.

To Improve Public Confidence by Engaging with the Community

The key milestones for 2008-09 under this objective included the commitment to develop the PPS Communication Strategy; to continue to progress the work started to mainstream equality and diversity awareness throughout the PPS through appropriate staff training; and to review provision of documents in alternative formats or languages. Progress with staff training is on target and is set out in Section 4 of this report. Following an unavoidable delay in the appointment of a Media and Communications Officer until August 2008, work on the Communications Strategy was also subject to delay. This work is now underway and the strategy should be published by the end of July 2009 (see Executive Summary). Following on from this, as part of a wider review of the PPS’s provision of information policy, which will include an equality impact assessment, arrangements for the provision of main PPS documents in alternative formats and languages will also be considered.

To Ensure that our Service Delivery Addresses the Needs of Victims and Witnesses of Crime

Three key milestones under this second objective for 2008-09 were to introduce improvements in the Community Liaison function within the Regional Offices, including the introduction of a new enquiry handling system; to complete the 'giving of reasons' pilot (see Executive Summary); and to have improved arrangements for the recording of 'special measures' for vulnerable or intimidated witnesses in place by the end of March 2009.

Community Liaison

The review of the Community Liaison function resulted in a revision of the letters that the PPS issues to victims and witnesses. Training and guidance for staff was improved and processes agreed across the regions to ensure consistency of approach in our service provision. Call handling arrangements have been improved so that everyone who wishes to contact PPS can speak to an appropriate member of staff quickly. Provision of information has been enhanced through the publication of a series of information leaflets explaining the role of the PPS, what services are available to victims and witnesses and the Director's policy on the prosecution of offences relating to domestic violence.

Special Measures

Prosecutors may apply for the grant of 'special measures' to assist vulnerable or intimidated witnesses, to give evidence in court. This may be appropriate where a witness is a child, is in fear, or otherwise vulnerable whether because of age, physical or mental infirmity or impairment of intelligence or social functioning. Special measures include, for example,

the use of screens in court or the provision of evidence via a live video link. It is regarded as good practice for the PPS prosecutor or the independent counsel to consult with the victim or witness and to provide information where an application for special measures has been made. Revised procedures have been implemented to ensure that victims and witnesses are informed of the grant of 'special measures' as well as an indication of the type of measure granted. This more proactive approach to information provision should help to alleviate the fears and concerns of vulnerable witnesses about giving evidence at court. The recent NIO Victims and Witnesses Survey indicated that the provision of 'special measures' has indeed assisted in alleviating the levels of concern people have about giving evidence.

The PPS Annual Business Plan for 2009-10 was published in June 2009, and also includes milestones for both of the above stated objectives (see the Executive Summary), which aim to improve our service delivery to all sections of the public and which remain key to the successful implementation of the organisation's strategic priorities for the current year.

Section 2: Screening

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

Following the publication of the PPS Equality Scheme in October 2008, a programme was initiated to train appropriate staff involved in developing policies in the procedures required to screen policies for potential equality impact on one or more of the Section 75 groups. This enabled the screening of all existing PPS policies to commence in December 2008, and which continued to March 2009. The policies screened are listed below. The results of this screening exercise were issued for a full consultation which closed on 30 June 2009. The PPS received two responses to the consultation, which was issued jointly with a consultation on the draft Disability Action Plan. A summary report will be produced and made available on the PPS website.

Title of policy subject to screening	Was the <u>F</u>ull Screening Report or the <u>R</u>esult of initial screening issued for consultation? <i>Please enter <u>F</u> or <u>R</u></i>	Was initial screening decision changed following consultation? <u>Y</u>es/<u>N</u>o	Is policy being subject to EQIA? <u>Y</u>es/<u>N</u>o? If yes indicate year for assessment.
Provision of Information	R for all – however consultees were invited to request copies of any of the full reports	N	Y – 2009/10
ICT		N	N
Data Protection		N	N
Security Guidance		N	N
Corporate Governance		N	N
Grading & Loading		N	N
Estates		N	N

Health & Safety		N	N
Travel & Subsistence		N	N
Air Travel		N	N
Gifts & Hospitality		N	N
Procurement		N	N
Security Vetting		N	N
Sustainable Development		N	N
External Recruitment & Selection		N	N
Terms & Conditions		N	N
Car Parking (staff & users)		N	N
Learning & Development		N	N
Reward, Recognition & Performance Management		N	Y – 2010/11
Policy for Prosecuting Cases of Domestic Violence		N	N
Victims & Witnesses		N	N
Code for Prosecutors		N	N
Community Outreach Strategy 2006-09		N	N
Appointment of Panel Counsel		N	Y – 2009/10

Section 3: Equality Impact Assessment (EQIA)

- **Please provide an update of policies subject to EQIA during 2008-09, stage 7 EQIA monitoring activities and an indicative EQIA timetable for 2009-10**

As stated above, the screening of existing policies was completed by the end of March 2009, and screening outcomes and policies proposed for EQIA issued for consultation to 30 June 2009. As a result, no EQIAs were undertaken in the reporting year.

EQIA Timetable – April 2008 - March 2009

Title of Policy EQIA	EQIA Stage at end March 09 (Steps 1-6)	Outline adjustments to policy intended to benefit individuals, and the relevant Section 75 categories due to be affected.
NONE		

- Where the EQIA timetable for 2008-09 (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.

Not applicable.

Ongoing EQIA Monitoring Activities April 2008- March 2009

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		

2009-10 EQIA Time-table

The following EQIAs have been identified as a result of the initial screening exercise.

Title of EQIAs due to be commenced during April 2009 – March 2010	Existing or New policy?	Please indicate expected timescale of Decision Making stage i.e. Stage 6
Provision of Information	Existing	June 2010
Appointment of Panel Counsel	Existing	December 2010

Section 4: 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 training was a key area in the training priorities for 2008/09.

PPS staff are recruited by the Northern Ireland Civil Service and are currently seconded to the Northern Ireland Office (NIO). The NIO has provided mandatory Equality & Diversity awareness training for all PPS staff within an ongoing programme which commenced in 2007. At the end of this reporting period, over 92% of current staff had received this specific training.

Human Resources branch is to undertake a full review of the PPS Induction Training Programme during 2009. This review will explore the options available to ensure that all new staff will receive sufficient and appropriate equality and diversity awareness training as part of their induction in the future.

As part of the Equality Scheme implementation plan, Section 75 awareness training has been undertaken throughout the year, following a 'top down' approach. This commenced with a full briefing for the Management Board in October 2008 on the statutory duties placed on public authorities under Section 75, and information was provided on other relevant equality legislation. Similar awareness training followed for members of the Senior Management Team and all Assistant Directors and Regional Prosecutors.

Towards the end of the reporting period, training was provided for the PPS Business Managers, who supervise the majority of the administrative staff throughout the organisation, including those working in the Community Liaison Teams in the Regional Offices.

More recently, Section 75 awareness training was provided to the PPS 'Equality Drivers', who are representatives from each Division or Regional Office who will take on responsibility as the contact points for communicating equality issues on a two way basis between the Equality Officer/Equality and Diversity Steering Group and our staff in the regions.

All awareness training to this level has been carried out by an independent external consultant with many years' experience in working with Section 75 legislation. Feedback from the Management Board and other staff has been very positive.

Senior Management within the PPS undertake a series of regional Roadshows on a regular basis 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. Although not appropriate to this reporting period, the Roadshows held in May 2009 included awareness raising sessions on both the statutory duties imposed under Section 75 and also the duties required by Section 49A of the DDO 2006, including the Disability Action Plan.

Victim Support were engaged in 2008 to provide awareness raising to the regional Community Liaison staff on victims' issues. A Victims and

Witnesses Conference (see Section 9) was also held in October which aimed to provide wider information to legal staff from the perspective of victims and also to highlight the services available to witnesses from other organisations. Feedback from those attending the conference showed that the majority of our staff felt the event noticeably improved their level of knowledge in this area, and that they could incorporate much of what they had learnt into their role within the PPS.

In March 2009, the Royal National Institute for the Deaf (RNID) were engaged to provide 'deaf awareness' training to appropriate HQ staff who may deal with the public, and to the PPS Business Managers, who are responsible for provision of services to customers within the Regional Offices. Fifteen staff attended this training, which incorporated advice on the use of Textphones, these having been provided to the Customer Liaison Teams in each of the regional offices and in several HQ locations.

PPS legal staff also provided training to volunteers from the National Society for the Protection of Cruelty to Children (NSPCC) in order to increase their knowledge of court processes and therefore enable them to provide the necessary support to young victims and witnesses going through the court system.

Section 5: 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.**

The PPS Equality Scheme was published in October 2008, half way through the period covered by this report. Communication to service users of the organisation's engagement with Section 75 following publication of our Scheme has focused to date on the provision of a dedicated equality section on the PPS website at www.ppsni.gov.uk. The site includes background information on Section 75 commitments; our full Equality Scheme and also a summary version; the Annual Progress Report compiled for 2007-08; and details and documents associated with the recent joint consultation on policy screening/draft Disability Action Plan. The page will continue to be updated and expanded with suitable information, for example, further progress reports, EQIAs as they develop, the Five Year Review and others. Details of our headquarters textphone and a 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 'consultation zone' has also been set up on the website which will be used to publicise all future policy consultations as they issue. The consultation mentioned above was advertised in the main newspapers. Details of policy screening activity and forthcoming EQIAs or consultations will be notified to all consultees as set out in our Equality Scheme at least once a year commencing in the autumn.

A dedicated equality section has also been set up for staff on our internal intranet site. This makes available our Annual Progress Report, the Equality Scheme and provides much other useful information on Section 75 together with links to other organisations' websites, for example the Equality Commission, and to specific equality publications. Staff are encouraged to provide ideas for inclusion on the site.

Staff have also been made aware of and will continue to be updated on all progress within the PPS to implement our Section 75 duties and the work around our Disability Action Plan through the regional Roadshows undertaken by senior management, which are now run three times a year. Other internal communication forums, for example the Business Managers Forum, Community Liaison Team Forum will continue to be used to communicate Section 75 implementation and issues. A team of Equality Drivers has recently been appointed to provide a two-way communication link between the Equality Officer and the Equality and Diversity Steering Group and staff throughout the PPS regional offices.

Section 6: 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.**

Equity Monitoring

The Criminal Justice Review (Recommendation 5) tasked the Criminal Justice Board and its research sub-committee with developing and implementing a strategy for equity monitoring across the criminal justice system. The development of an equity monitoring framework in Northern Ireland has been taken forward on this basis, led by the Northern Ireland Office, via the Criminal Justice Board's Equity Monitoring Sub-Group. The membership of the Sub-Group includes a PPS representative.

The PPS continues to support the equity monitoring initiative. While a pilot equity monitoring scheme was introduced in 2008, an agreed CJSNI-wide monitoring framework is not yet in place. Therefore the position as reported in 2007/08 is largely unchanged; i.e. only limited information re the various s75 categories is available to PPS through the 'Causeway' Data Sharing Mechanism (primarily age and gender of victims, witnesses and defendants).

It should be noted that, pending the implementation of a CJSNI scheme, it has not been possible for PPS to develop its own interim arrangements. PPS staff have only limited contact with defendants, victims and witnesses

and are reliant on other agencies within the CJSNI for supply of this data and for ensuring that it is accurate.

Policy on 'Hate Crime'

During 2008/09 work has continued on the development and implementation of the PPS's policy on 'hate crime'. Whilst the intention had been to publish the policy statement during the summer of 2008, publication was deferred in order to allow sufficient time for the relevant monitoring arrangements to be put in place. New processes have now been developed to assist in the identification of cases in which there is an aggravating motive for an offence. This will also allow prosecutors to alert the courts to such a factor prior to sentencing.

The PPS Annual Report for 2008/09 will include details of the number of cases considered by the PPS to have been aggravated by hostility; i.e. cases broadly classified as 'hate crimes', based on an assessment by the prosecutor (i.e. the decision-maker) as to whether incidents were homophobic, sectarian or racial in nature or related to the victim's disability. The statistics will also include summary data on the prosecutorial decisions taken in such cases.

PPS Staff Composition: Publication of Statistics

As previously reported, information on the gender and community background of PPS staff is included in returns of the Northern Ireland Office to the Equality Commission *and is generally not disaggregated*. However, from time to time the information has been published, most recently as part of the 2007/08 PPS Annual Report, published in July 2008, which included

a percentage breakdown of staff according to both gender and community background. Following devolution, however, it is likely that the PPS will not be part of the proposed Justice Department. Dependent on the new status awarded the service, an opportunity may be provided at that time for the PPS to explore separate monitoring of its own staff in line with good practice.

PPS Research

The PPS has continued to develop its research strategy, focusing primarily on the development of internal (staff) and external (stakeholder) surveys. The key surveys conducted during 2008/09 included the following:

- **NI Omnibus Survey**

In January 2009, the PPS commissioned questions for inclusion in the Northern Ireland Omnibus Survey, which is carried out by the Central Survey Unit of the Northern Ireland Statistics and Research Agency (NISRA).

A total of eight questions were included in the survey to gauge public awareness of the PPS and its role, to examine public perceptions of the Service's independence, fairness and impartiality and its views on issues such as diversionary options and the categories of crime of greatest concern to the community.

The analysis provided by NISRA included a breakdown of the survey results according to respondents' age, community background, gender and marital status.

The results of the survey have been considered in detail by the PPS Management Board and have helped to inform the development of the draft PPS Communication Strategy and the formulation of PPS policy, and in particular the Director's policy in relation to the giving of reasons for no prosecution.

The survey will be repeated in early 2010.

- **PPS Victim and Witness Survey**

Over the course of the year the PPS's Victim and Witness Survey was extended to take in the Foyle office of the PPS Northern Region.

The purpose of the survey is to ensure that the services offered meet the needs of users and to improve our present arrangements. The monitoring data collected has included age, gender and disability.

The Service has also been involved in the development of a more extensive NI-wide victims and witnesses survey ("NIVAWS") which is being taken forward by the NIO. This new survey, which was piloted in 2008, will include a more extensive range of s75 monitoring data. It is anticipated that this information will be made available to PPS in respect of those questions that relate to various aspects of PPS service delivery, such as Community Liaison.

PPS Staff Survey

The purpose of the PPS staff survey (“Your Views”) is to provide all members of staff with an opportunity to put forward their views and opinions about the PPS, its work and their role within the Service.

The second Your Views survey was conducted in October 2008 and included a number of ‘demographic’ questions (gender, disability and responsibility for the care of dependants).

The 2008 survey also included a new section focusing on the Service’s obligations under Section 75. All respondents were asked if they felt they were treated with fairness and respect and if, in their opinion, all staff were treated equally. A number of questions also focused on the PPS approach to s.75 more generally and whether the Service promoted equality of opportunity (for example, between persons of different religious belief or persons of different political opinion) in all relevant areas of its work, such as recruitment and community outreach. The results of this module of the survey have been analysed by NISRA statisticians and made available to relevant parties, including the Equality and Diversity Steering Group.

On the whole the findings in respect of the various equality and diversity issues were fairly positive, with only a very small minority of staff members disagreeing that the PPS promote equality of opportunity – for example only 2.9% disagreed that the Service promotes equality of opportunity

between persons of different religious belief. No significant differences were apparent by gender, disability etc.

However in some instances the percentage of respondents registering a 'neutral' response (Neither agree nor disagree) was relatively high. This has signaled the need for PPS to communicate more clearly to staff the steps taken to address s.75 issues and the newly appointed Equality Drivers are viewed as key to our efforts to getting this message across locally.

It should be noted that only a small number of staff reported in the survey that they considered themselves to have a disability. Again these responses were analysed, however no specific disability issues were raised.

- **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 on the Intranet site. Senior Management discussions around our monitoring obligations are scheduled for August, and the Commission's guide will help inform these discussions.

Section 7: 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.**

A number of initiatives have been taken forward during this period.

Language Translation to Accompany Summons

A summons 'cover sheet' was produced which provides basic information in 14 of the most prevalent languages currently used in Northern Ireland. This explains the importance of the summons document and its purpose. The cover sheet is issued to all defendants and witnesses and is of great assistance to those whose first language is not English in understanding the significance of receiving a summons. The correspondence that issues to potential witnesses is currently being considered for a similar translation exercise.

Information Leaflets

The PPS has extended its range of information leaflets during the reporting period to raise public awareness of the services available to victims and witnesses and to explain the role of the PPS. Information on the policy regarding the prosecution of offences relating to domestic violence has also been made available in leaflet form. The leaflets provide contact details for all the regional offices including email and website addresses.

Interpreter Services

A joint contract for the provision of face-to-face interpreter services has now been agreed between the PPS, PSNI and Northern Ireland Court Service (NICtS) and a provider. PPS has also contracted with RNID to provide sign language interpreters for the deaf or hard of hearing, where witnesses have been called by the PPS.

Appointment of Media and Communications Officer

The forthcoming information review and Communications Strategy will proactively address the service's external communications, including the dissemination of information to the public and the media.

Section 8: 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.**

No complaints relating to Section 75 were received during the reporting period.

Section 9: Consultation and Engagement

- **Please provide details of the measures taken to enhance the level of engagement with individuals and representative groups during the year.**

The PPS was an active participant in events during 'Criminal Justice Week' at the start of the reporting period. The Director provided an interview for BBC's Newsline and an article was written for the BBC website featuring the PPS's work on community outreach. Representatives from the community and voluntary sector attended a Criminal Justice Seminar with the theme of 'community engagement' where one of the PPS Regional Prosecutors was a workshop facilitator.

A first Victims and Witnesses Conference was held in October 2008 in Belfast Chambers for PPS staff along with members of the other criminal justice organisations also invited to attend. Speakers at the event included the Chief Executive of Victim Support and the Area Director of the NSPCC, who provided information on the services and support they are able to provide to those who become involved in the criminal justice system. The conference was very successful in bringing together both support groups and the criminal justice organisations. The key message that emerged was the need for the various agencies, whether from the statutory or voluntary sector, to work more closely together in the interests of victims and witnesses.

Senior staff throughout the regions undertake a series of outreach initiatives and events throughout the year in order to provide a clearer understanding of the role of the PPS and to engage with the voluntary and

community sector and the public. For example, Regional Prosecutors are involved in a wide range of community activity at a local level, such as speaking at October's Inter Ethnic Forum Advocates' Information Day in Ballymena and at the opening of Dungannon Women's Aid Resource Centre in November. The Regional Prosecutor for Eastern Region appeared on ITV's 'Spotlight' programme regarding the case where a 90 year old woman was evicted from her home following fraudulent action. Senior staff also attended the Foyle Day of Action against Domestic Violence in February 2009. Useful discussions have been held with representatives from the Rainbow Project, NICEM, Age Concern/Help the Aged and RNID. The Director and other senior members of staff met with the Children's Commissioner in April 2008 to discuss their areas of work and to explore ways of interacting in the future.

Presentations were held on Youth Conferencing in Bangor and Portadown to explain processes on decision taking, to advise that each region has a Youth Champion in place, and on attending youth courts. These presentations were attended by members of local voluntary and community groups, young people and victims. Court prosecutors provided information on the work of the PPS at Open Days in Craigavon (for the general public) and Downpatrick (for schoolchildren). Presentations have also been given during the year to Victims and other voluntary sector groups, such as Victim Support, Women's Aid, the Inter Ethnic Forum and the Western Domestic Violence Partnership.

Policy Division within the PPS has had an extremely constructive year as regards community engagement. Senior policy staff delivered a

presentation to a delegation of Turkish probation officers in connection with Turkey's proposed accession to the EU. Policy staff also represent the PPS on a wide range of interagency groups, many of which cut across the criminal justice organisations and include voluntary sector representation. Some examples of these are:

Hate Crime Steering Group

Interpreters Sub Group

Victim and Witness Task Force

Witness Service Steering Group

Sexual Violence Public Information Sub Group

Rape Steering Group

Regional Strategy on Sexual Violence Group

Regional Strategy on Domestic Violence Group

Protection and Justice Group in relation to Sexual Violence

Personality Disorder Working Group

NI Council for the Homeless

Bamford Mental Health Sub Group

The Equality Officer represented the PPS at a number of local events held by representative groups and other organisations, including an awareness day on transgender issues provided by A:gender, a group which supports transgender people in government employment throughout the UK.

As part of the Northern Ireland Office (NIO), the Equality Officer also represents the PPS on the Diversity Management Steering Group. The work of this group is supported by 5 Diversity Champions at Board level (for

gender, race and ethnic minority, LGBT, Disability and Carers) with staff in the PPS actively encouraged to participate in the associated Diversity Network Groups. It is hoped these groups will continue to expand over the coming year and will form useful forums for consultation on equality issues for policymakers in the future. The NIO through its Equality and Diversity Team supports local events, such as Belfast Pride, and the Department participated recently in benchmarking its HR policies against the Stonewall Workplace Equality Index.

Section 10: 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 is working with its partner agencies such as the police and the NI Court Service to help ensure that the whole criminal justice process brings perpetrators of hate crime to justice. The new Hate Crime policy procedures will help the PPS as public prosecutors to ensure offences that have been motivated by hostility receive an appropriate sentence. Effective implementation and monitoring of this policy should improve public confidence that the PPS provides an independent, fair and effective prosecution service to all sections of the population, and should therefore increase the reporting levels of such incidents. In particular those people in the groups that are generally the victims of Hate Crime offences should feel they are receiving increased recognition and support from within the wider society from which they can often feel excluded.

The fifth regional office of the PPS, known as Foyle Chambers, was opened in Derry in March 2009. Having an office located in the heart of the community it serves provides increased accessibility for our service users and also provides new opportunities for direct engagement with community and voluntary groups and local criminal justice partners. The PPS Northern region is now served by two offices, one in Ballymena and the new Derry premises. Members of the public can now make contact directly with all five of our regional offices rather than directing queries through the Belfast Headquarters.

The proposed devolution of policing and justice to the Northern Ireland Assembly is seen as a major step in progressing good relations throughout the jurisdiction. The Director of Public Prosecution Services is involved in ongoing meetings with the Assembly Executive Review Committee (AERC) Donaldson Committee which will ensure the necessary arrangements are in place to take devolution forward in a manner which will benefit the whole community.

The PPS is represented on the Inter Governmental Project Advisory Group on Victims and Witnesses in a cross-border initiative. The Group meets on a regular basis to share best practice between the two jurisdictions.

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

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

Section 11: Additional Comments

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

The PPS Equality Scheme was published in October 2008, more than half way through this reporting period. In view of this, the organisation feels it has made significant progress in implementing its statutory duties since that time. We will continue to build upon the considerable awareness raising that has taken place around Section 75 and how it affects the PPS and work to engage with all sections of the community through consultation processes and the continuing development of both our communication and outreach strategies.

Disability Action Plan

The following questions which are specific to progress with the Disability Action Plan measure have not been completed. The PPS draft Disability Action Plan for the period April 2009 to March 2011 was, as the Commission was informed, not completed until the end of March 2009, and was out for a full consultation until 30th June 2009. Responses have still to be analysed before issue of the final plan by September 2009. Implementation of action measures identified for 2009/10 is underway and is currently being monitored by the Equality and Diversity Steering Group. No actions were therefore included in the Plan for this reporting period, but progress will be reported on in the next annual report to the Commission.

Annual Report 1 April 2008 / 31 March 2009
'Disability Duties' Questions

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



Fully
Achieved



Partially
Achieved



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 ¹	Outcomes / Impact ²
National ³			
Regional ⁴			
Local ⁵			

¹ **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.

² **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.

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

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

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

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			
2			
3			
4			

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

	Encourage others Action Measures	Outputs	Outcome / Impact
1			
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			
2			
3			

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

	Action Measures partly achieved	Milestones ⁶ / Outputs	Outcomes/Impacts	Reasons not fully achieved
1				
2				
3				
4				

4. Please outline what action measures have not been achieved and the reasons why?

	Action Measures not met	Reasons
1		
2		
3		

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

5. What **monitoring tools** have been put in place to evaluate the degree to which actions have been effective / develop new opportunities for action?

(a) Qualitative

(b) Quantitative

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.

Please delete: Yes / 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 organisations annual review of the plan? If so, please outline proposed changes?
