



PUBLIC PROSECUTION SERVICE (PPS)

SUMMARY OF EQUALITY SCHEME

January 2009

Section 1

Structure, Services and Functions of the PPS

The PPS was established in 2005 and is the principal prosecuting authority in Northern Ireland. It is responsible for all criminal cases previously prosecuted by the former Department of the Director of Public Prosecutions and the Police Service of Northern Ireland. The PPS is a regionally based organisation and is headed by the Director of Public Prosecutions for Northern Ireland. There is also a Deputy Director of Public Prosecutions, and a PPS Management Board.

The primary role of the PPS is to reach decisions to prosecute or not to prosecute and to have responsibility for the conduct of criminal proceedings. A range of additional services are available which have been designed to enhance the effectiveness of the Service, including the provision of prosecutorial and pre-charge advice to police and an improved service to victims and witnesses. A range of options is also available to deal with offenders other than through prosecution, for example restorative cautioning and youth conferencing. The PPS also provides appropriate input to policy development within the criminal justice system.

Under Section 38 of the Justice (Northern Ireland) Act 2002, matters relating to the prosecution of offences are excluded from the organisation's statutory obligations under Section 75 and 76 of the Northern Ireland Act 1998.

A summary of functions provided in the full Equality Scheme on pages 6 to 9 identifies those that relate to the prosecution of offences and which are therefore excluded.

Section 2

PPS Commitment to Equality

Section 75 of the Northern Ireland Act 1998 requires the PPS, in carrying out its functions, to have due regard to the need to promote equality of opportunity between:

- Persons of different religious belief, political opinion, racial group, age, marital status or sexual orientation;
- Men and women generally;
- Persons with a disability and persons without; and
- Persons with dependants and persons without.

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

The PPS Equality Scheme, approved by the Equality Commission, sets out in detail the organisation's commitment to fulfil these obligations, and details the steps it will take to ensure equality of opportunity for all. PPS has undertaken to carry out a review within 5 years of approval. A copy of the full Scheme can be obtained from the PPS website at www.ppsni.gov.uk or from:

The Equality Officer
Human Resources
Public Prosecution Service
Belfast Chambers
93 Chichester Street
Belfast
BT1 3JR

Tel: 028 90 544722
Email: equality@ppsni.gsi.gov.uk
Textphone: 028 90544896

Accessible formats of the Scheme can be made available on request.

Section 3

Key elements of the PPS Equality Scheme

A timetable for the key actions required is attached as Annex D of the Scheme. The main elements cover:-

3.1 Organisational Arrangements

The PPS Management Board will agree equality objectives for the organisation and include these in annual business plans. Equality objectives will be incorporated into the annual Personal Performance Plans of appropriate staff.

3.2 Progress Reporting

The Equality Steering Group will meet quarterly and report to the Management Board. Annual reports to the Equality Commission will be published on the PPS website on the dedicated Equality section.

3.3 Consultation

Following the screening of all appropriate existing policies for impact on any of the nine Section 75 categories, the PPS will consult on the screening outcomes, including the proposed timetable for any policies identified to proceed to a full equality impact assessment (EQIA). Consultation will also take place on any future EQIAs. The PPS consultation list is produced at Annex B of the Scheme.

3.4 Training

The PPS will ensure that all relevant staff receive training on their Section 75 obligations as appropriate to their grade and responsibilities. All staff within the organisation will receive awareness training. Specialist training will be provided to key staff, for example, those that will be involved in the EQIA process.

3.5 Equality Impact Assessments

Any EQIAs identified in the initial screening of existing policies will be prioritised for completion as per the Equality Commission guidance over the lifetime of the Equality Scheme. Any further EQIAs that arise as a result of future policy development during this period will be incorporated into this timetable, which will be kept under review.

3.6 Communication

A copy of the approved Scheme will be mailed to all those previously consulted on the draft scheme (Annex B) and to others on request. It will also be made available to all PPS staff. The PPS will make publicly available the outcome of any equality impact assessment and of any monitoring undertaken to measure the adverse impact of relevant policies. The general public will be informed of the availability of this material through a variety of media, including use of the PPS website. If requested, accessible formats of this material such as Braille, or disk will be made available.

3.7 Access to Information and Services

The PPS is committed to ensuring that access to information and services provided by the organisation ensures equality of opportunity. It is aware that some Section 75 groups will not have the same access to information as others, for example, children and young people, those with sensory and learning disabilities and those who are not fluent in English.

The PPS will, within a year of the implementation of the Scheme, review its arrangements for providing information in an accessible and timely manner. Findings of this review will be published on the website and Section 75 groups will be notified of any proposed changes.

3.8 Complaints

Any complaint on the grounds that a person believes they have been directly affected by a failure of the PPS to comply with this Scheme should be made in the first instance to:

Assistant Director of Corporate Services
Public Prosecution Service
Belfast Chambers
93 Chichester Street
Belfast BT1 3JR

Tel: 028 90 544828

Fax: 028 90 544830

Email: equality@ppsni.gsi.gov.uk

Textphone: 028 90 544896